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James Cassidy, at the Drew's Road Overlook, sampling a piece of diatomaceous lacustrine mudstone on Stop 2 of the 2011 OSSS Summer Tour.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*by James Cassidy*

Hello, Oregon Society of Soil Scientists! Hope you are all well and enjoying watching the earth wake up after a long winter's nap. Every increase of 10 degrees soil temperature results in a doubling of biological activity – but you already know that! Thanks, soil, for making EVERYTHING possible – again!!! Speaking of “again,” I am the OSSS President AGAIN!!! Wha-? Why would anyone do that? you might ask – I have no answer for you other than my quest for raw power! And the opportunity to interact with some of the most fun and interesting people I have ever known. Seriously, getting to know the OSSS folks over the years has been very rewarding and I look forward to seeing you all again this year. So, together let's continue to advance the cause, our quest to share that which we all know – SOIL IS TRUTH!!!!

I am honored to serve the society again and I hope you will like what we have in mind for the upcoming year. First, I would like to thank Josh and Cory Owens for their great leadership these past few years and also to welcome Teresa Matteson as this year's Vice President. As you may recall Teresa, Josh, Cory, and myself put together a great, joint winter meeting in Portland with the OSSS and the Oregon Soil and Water Conservation Society, where we looked at the subject of Soil Quality; it was a great success (see Teresa's article inside for the whole wrap-up!). The meeting really brought lots of voices to the cause and we had some excellent fieldtrip activities. The whole thing ran like clockwork (Teresa is amazing!). That meeting was Part 1 of a two-year effort to continue to broaden the scope of soils and find more partners to improve the long-term health of our soil – our life support system. Next year, Part 2 will build on what we learned. One thing we learned is that OSSS members want more soily stuff (it was a little too ag-based, some of you said), so we will comply with your wishes – you'll see! (But you have to come...is it a deal?) There are a lot of other ideas in the mix already, so stay tuned.

As for the summer tour this year, we have something very special in the works. This is going to be for the hard-core only, so brace yourself – The Orifices of Oregon Summer Tour 2012 is a reality! On August 9-11 we are going out, WAY out into the no-man's land of south-central Oregon to witness the greatness of nature on the grandest of scales! For the first night, we'll camp at Fort Rock and then head further south to hole-in-the-ground, crack-in-the-ground, obsidian flows, sun stone mining, camping at two different hot springs, and lots of other amazing geologic stops along the way. Seriously, this is going to be great and for hard-core, out-in-the-rough folks, so get ready! Put it on your calendar and start getting your camping gear together! We will probably have a few vans just to keep the group tight and I am still working on getting some folks to meet us out there to tell us all about it. Suggestions? Let me know!

In other news, the society continues to get more legit and cover our bases in regards to liability and good business practices, member relations, etc. Also, the website is fully functioning and is terrific, thanks to a great team! So please thank Ryan, Josh, Cory, and Justin Hartman for their efforts in this regard. Well, I am really looking forward to another term serving the society and the cause – SOIL!!! And, really, don't miss this summer's tour(!) – it is going to be great!!!

# SQN 2012 – Winter Meeting Report

by Teresa Matteson



## The Soil Quality Network: A West Coast Movement to Revive Regard for Soil

In the summer of 2011, OSSS Board members vowed allegiance to a western USA movement known as the Soil Quality Network (SQN). The mission: to highlight the importance of soil quality and raise awareness on how agricultural practices impact soil function. Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Professional Development Program awarded support for this 3-year project, including two workshops – the first being the joint OSSS and Oregon Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) winter meeting - SQN 2012. Additional collaborators included: Benton Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Small Farms, Clackamas County SWCD, and Wasco County SWCD.

In preparation, SQN project manager, Amy Garrett, OSU Extension Small Farms, worked with Teresa Matteson, Benton SWCD, to lead the SQN 2012 planning committee's weekly teleconferences. The event success was due to this group's input on topics that ranged from menu selection to speaker recruitment and tour logistics. Special thanks to two invaluable mentors, Dewayne Johnson (SWCS) and Russ Hatz (USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service), who shared their event planning and budget management expertise.

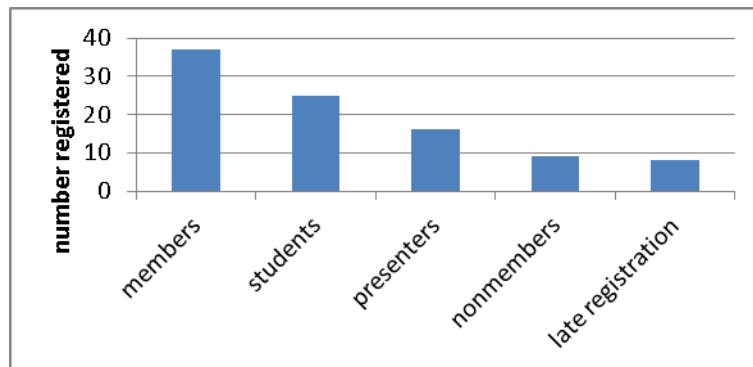
Many brains make work bright! Thank you to the Planning Committee Members (listed alphabetically):

- Luca Destefanis, NRCS Conservation Planner
- Rex Dufour, National Center for Appropriate Technology
- Rick Fasching, USDA-NRCS Agronomist
- Steve Fedje, USDA-NRCS, Oregon SWCS Board
- Giulio Ferruzzi, NRCS-WNTSC Agronomist
- Amy Garrett, OSU Extension Small Farms, SQN Project Manager
- Rhoda Givens, Clackamas SWCD, Rural Conservation Assistant
- Russ Hatz, NRCS-WNTSC, National Technology Specialist, Oregon SWCS Past President
- Dana Higgins, USDA-NRCS Soil Conservationist, Oregon SWCS Treasurer
- Dewayne Johnson, SWCS National Office, Professional Development Director
- Jane Keppinger, Marion SWCD District Manager, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts
- Alicia Leytem, Oregon State University Graduate Student
- Teresa Matteson, Benton SWCD, Soil Quality Project Manager
- Jenny Meisel, Marion SWCD, Resource Conservationist
- Cory Owens, NRCS Soil Scientist, OSSS Past President
- Dan Scalas, Jackson SWCD
- Mark Steffek, SWCS West Region Director
- Joe Williams, NRCS Plant Materials Center, Oregon SWCS President
- Don Wysocki, Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center Extension Soil Scientist

The SQN 2012 workshop was held February 23 and 24 at the Portland Lloyd Center DoubleTree. Over 100 soil quality devotees from Oregon, Washington, Utah, California, and Ohio assembled for this soil quality extravaganza.

State	Attendees (%)
Oregon	84
Washington	8
Utah	4
California	2
Ohio	1

Attending were 37 members of various affiliations, including OSSS and Oregon SWCS. Categories of attendees are shown in the graph below:



Special workshop components were incorporated to encourage student attendance and facilitate their interaction with professionals. Twenty-six students attended from these PNW schools: Oregon State University, Oregon State University – Cascades, Portland Community College, Columbia Gorge Community College, and Evergreen State College. The students benefited from reduced registration fees (\$50) and in turn provided event support by performing duties such as: photographer, presenter assistant, AV technician, tour lead, and evaluation aide. Thanks to generous donations from OSSS and Oregon SWCS, the students had free lodging as well. During Friday’s lunch, a Speed Mentor activity moved students from table to table and encouraged career-path conversations with natural resources professionals.



James Cassidy, emcee extraordinaire

**February 23** – James Cassidy, emcee extraordinaire, launched the two-day workshop, kept the audience chuckling, and recruited folks to volunteer on various committees throughout the event. **Rick Fasching, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**, delivered the keynote address, titled *Soil Quality – Our Future*. Rick’s historical perspective on the importance of healthy soils to society’s well-being evolved into the contemporary concern that 75 years after the Dust Bowl, our knowledge of soil processes is riddled with chasms. To ensure the survival of mankind, Rick recommended that we take a holistic approach to agricultural management based on improvement of soil quality.

Next, contrary to usual workshop protocol, enthralled soil quality enthusiasts boarded [Blue Star](#) biodiesel-powered buses for the Troutdale field tour, with stops at Dancing Roots Farm and McMenamins Edgefield. This early-in-the-game tour strategy worked well to focus the group on soil quality issues and assessments. Introductions by the site managers and five field demonstrations kept small groups on the move and in the groove. The fast-paced field day was blessed by the weather goddess, who halted precipitation, calmed the wind, and eked the temperature into the mid-50s.

At mid-day, McMenamins Edgefield’s fabulous fajita buffet fueled attendees for the afternoon round of field demonstrations. Tour presenters included these generous folks who dedicated their time and energy to advance the soil quality movement:

**Shari Sirkin, Dancing Roots Farm – Site Introduction**

*Dancing Roots Farm - Soil Observations and Management* – Shari shared soil observations from the last 9 years and discussed the soil fertility program at the farm, including cover crops, amendments, compost applications, foliar sprays, and practice changes based on soil test results.



SQN participants timing measured ring water infiltration into a native soil.



Shari Sirkin explaining farm operations with Alica Leytem looking on.

**Nick Andrews, Oregon State University Extension**

*Cover Crop Sample Collection for Analysis* - Nick and friends demonstrated the proper technique for cover crop sample collection with a discussion of sample handling and lab analysis.

**Andy Gallagher, Red Hill Soils**

*Deep Soil Quality- Interpreting the Soil Profile to the Grower* - Andy discussed how soil morphology and classification principals are used as part of a soil quality assessment package on a working farm. An interactive discussion related pre-pulled Dancing Farm soil cores to the hydrology, parent material, terrain and management.



Nick Andrews packaging dried covercrop sample for lab analysis.



Andy Gallagher interpreting significance of soil cores to site conditions.

**Kim Kincaid, McMenamins Edgefield, Garden Manager, Site Introduction**

*Water and Weed Impacts at McMenamins Edgefield* – Kim provided a history of the Edgefield site and discussed the changes in soil management concerns throughout her twenty years of experience as garden management crew member.

**Stefan Seiter, Linn-Benton Community College**

*The WV Soil Quality Card* – Stefan helped participants discover this handy field observation tool that is fine-tuned for the Willamette Valley.



Kim Kincaid telling about the Edgefield's garden and grounds management history.



Stefan Seiter explaining a field observation tool for measuring soil quality.

**Rick Fasching and Steve Campbell, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**

*The Soil Quality Test Kit* – Rick and Steve coached participants in hands-on soil quality field tests.



Rick Fasching demonstrating the importance of soil aggregate stability in measuring soil quality.



Steve Campbell explaining the significance of water infiltration for measuring soil quality.



Teresa Matteson telling us about the Benton Soil Quality Project report.

**Teresa Matteson, Benton SWCD**

*The Answer is in the Bag!* Teresa discussed site preparation, sample handling, compaction testing and two strategies for sample collection and provided a brief overview of the Benton SWCD's Soil Quality Project.



Dawn Ferris talking about soil scientist certification in Oregon.

Back at the DoubleTree, a no-host social hour preceded a presentation by **Dawn Ferris, Soil Science Society of America**, titled: *An Overview of the Implementation of the Oregon Agricultural Soils Capability Assessment or HB 3647 –*

Dawn discussed the history and current status of the State of Oregon's *Agricultural Soils Capability Assessment*, which requires that soil scientists, approved through a state process, perform assessment work associated with proposed land use changes to agricultural land. She also gave an overview of how SSSA is involved with state soil science societies, the facilitation of certification and networking across the U.S.

The OSSS members moved the party to a nearby pizzeria for sustenance, libations and elections.



OSSS Board Meeting's toast and, during said meeting, Josh Owens hands off presidential duties to new president, James Cassidy (inset).

**February 24** – SQN 2012 day two kicked off with a breakfast presentation by **Carrie Sanneman of Willamette Partnership** titled *Ecosystems Markets 101*. Carrie focused on defining ecosystem service markets, explained how they work, and outlined ways they can intersect with soil quality improvements. She encouraged the audience to ponder the role of soil quality as a marketable service that adds to ecosystem function.

Three breakout sessions, labeled *Crop Mingle*, *Soil Assessments*, and *Soil Building Practices*, overwhelmed participants with four concurrent choices.

### **Crop Mingle**

#### **Craig Cogger, Washington State University, Department of Crop and Soil Sciences**

##### *Soil Quality in Intensive Organic Management Systems*

Craig's presentation summarized results from the organic vegetable production systems experiment at WSU Puyallup, from 2003 to date. The trials compared how two types of amendments, two types of tillage, and three cover cropping systems impacted vegetable yield, nitrogen availability, and physical and biological soil quality.

#### **Ryan Costello, Oregon State University, Crop and Soil Science Department**

##### *Compost as Alternative Soil Amendment for Blueberry Production*

Ryan researched the use of composts in blueberry production at Oregon State University. He discussed his method of compost acidification and the research trials conducted with acidified and non-acidified composts with blueberry.



Ryan Costello (upper right) informing participants about composting amendments for blueberry production.

#### **Andy Gallagher, Red Hill Soils**

##### *Describing and Mapping Inherent Soil Characteristics for Vineyard Management*

Andy discussed the use of inherent soil properties in the management of high value crops in a complex soil landscape. His work includes mapping soils and providing soil interpretations to Western Oregon winegrowers.

#### **Sarahlee Lawrence, Rainshadow Organics**

##### *Intercropping in Organic Wheat*

Sarahlee discussed the Western SARE farmer/rancher grant that allowed her to conduct wheat-legume intercropping trials on her organic farm in Central Oregon, including methods, results, and outreach events.



Sarahlee Lawrence talking about her wheat-legume intercropping trials in Central Oregon.

### **Soil Assessments**

#### **Dan M. Sullivan, Oregon State University, Crop and Soil Science Department**

##### *Managing Soil Fertility to Meet Soil Quality, Crop Production and Environmental Goals*

Dan's audience learned how organic inputs and outputs affect long term soil fertility trends for nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus, and how soil nutrient management fits within the larger umbrella of soil quality. He showed how nitrogen mineralization potential, active carbon, total carbon (organic matter), and soil tilth are inter-related. He demonstrated how to interpret soil quality tests to adjust mineral fertilizer or organic fertilizer applications.



Woody Lane discussing a holistic ranch management approach in managing livestock.

**Woody Lane Ph.D., Lane Livestock Services**

*Soil Assessments in a Livestock Ranch Situation*

Woody discussed the use of commercial soil test reports to guide fertility decisions in real ranching situations. He recommended a whole ranch approach to livestock management, nutrition, grazing and haying operations, and herd health.

**Rick Fasching and Steve Campbell, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**

*Soil Quality Test Kit*

As a complement to the field tour, during this session Rick and Steve showcased more NRCS Soil Quality Test Kit components and distributed publications related to soil health.

**Rex Dufour, National Center for Applied Technology**

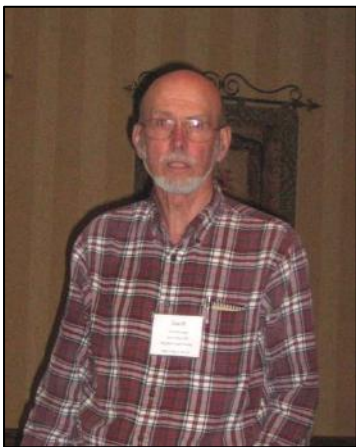
*Soil Quality, Soil Quality Assessment, and Organic Certification*

Maintaining good soil quality is very important to organic farmers because they have fewer "tools" to remediate low-quality soils. In this session, Rex discussed soil quality factors and basic assessment tools for beginning and seasoned organic farmers and identified the relevance of soil quality to the National Organic Standards and Organic System Plans.



Rex Dufour pointing out resources for Organic Soil Assessment and Management.

**Soil Building Practices**



David Brown provided the farmer's perspective on cover cropping in organic vegetable production.

**Nick Andrews, Oregon State University Extension & David Brown, Mustard Seed Farms**

*Nitrogen Management & Cover Cropping in Vegetables*

Nick discussed cover cropping in organic vegetable production and demonstrated the use the OSU Organic Fertilizer and Cover Crop Calculator. David Brown shared his experience in growing cover crops at Mustard Seed Farms.

**Woody Lane Ph.D., Lane Livestock Services**

*Soil Building for Livestock Nutrition*

Woody presented the challenges of managing livestock operations on western Oregon soils. To address how grazing and haying affect soil quality, he discussed soil responses to different types of grazing management including rotational grazing. He revealed how ranchers and farmers can build soils and renovate pastures through the use of soil assessments and proper animal management.



**Don Wysocki, Oregon State University Extension**

*Soil Quality Lessons from 80 Years of Soil Management*

Don presented information on long-term wheat trials conducted in eastern Oregon, the oldest of which have been managed continuously since 1931. The audience learned how burning crop residues, tillage intensity, crop rotations and manure additions have had marked influences on soil quality and crop yields.

**Mike Omeg, Omeg Orchards**

*Improving Soil Biology in Cherry Orchards*

Mike discussed the practices he uses to improve the soil quality at Omeg Orchards, near The Dalles.

The culminating panel discussion, titled **Soil Quality and the Preservation of Agricultural Land**, highlighted the threat of urban development on Willamette Valley's prime agricultural soils from three expert perspectives:

- Jim Johnson, [Oregon Department of Agriculture](#), Land Use Specialist
- Laura Masterson, [47<sup>th</sup> Avenue Farm](#), Portland, OR
- Larry Thompson, [Thompson Farms](#), Damascus, OR

The SQN 2012 closed with a great sense of accomplishment (or was it exhaustion?). As I drove south on I-5, the rain returned.

EDITOR'S NOTE (from Editor Ed Horn): Big thanks to Teresa Matteson, Amy Garrett, and the army of helpers, presenters, and sponsors! All of their hard work and support made this event a huge success! Thanks again!

Teresa wanted to specially thank the 2012 Soil Quality Network event sponsors, which include (in no particular order): The Benton Soil and Water Conservation District, Western SARE – Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education, Oregon Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society, The Oregon Society of Soil Scientists, Oregon State University Extension Service – Small Farms, The Clackamas County Soil and Water Conservation District and last, but not least, The Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District.

## THE WISE MAN

by Stan Winther

Two soil surveyors sought the sage advice of the retired federal employee on Forbidden Mountain. This wise man had lived through cycles of: tight budgets and year-end spending sprees, no travel and attending basin team meetings in gambling casinos, struggling with the old vehicles and buying huge pickups with alternate fuel options, hiring freezes and hiring the entire graduating class. He had become wise in the mystical ways of government and learned to profit from that knowledge.



He was the surveyors' last hope. As they climbed the mountain, wind and rain buffeted their bodies. Eventually, they had to hike over trails made by mountain goats but their mission was so important that their physical well-being was ignored. Frequently a slab of rock would dislodge underfoot and plunge down the slope. Fog shrouded the mountain's peak, but they continued on. Since this mountain had never been mapped before, they stopped occasionally to note the soil texture, coarse fragments, and vegetation while clinging to the mountain side. They achieved this by gripping a mountain mahogany shrub with one hand and taking notes with the other. Occasionally a mountain goat would walk by on the same narrow ledge and insist on squeezing past each man.

They reached the summit and found a primitive village bathed in bright sunlight. An old man sat before a hut as women wove baskets nearby in the morning chill. Based upon their photo, his name was once Fred Barnes. The honored one had long since shed his dress shirt and tie in favor of a robe. With his head shaved, he sat cross-legged on a flat, bare rock. His mind and body are in a state of complete relaxation—his breathing is very slow, as is his heart rate. The sun warmed his body as incense from burning sticks filled the air. A sign around his

neck declared his new name as "Kimbarswhee." He rarely spoke. Later he will eat what remains of a half eaten rice wafer.

Then his portable communication device rings, jingles, beeps, hums, shakes, and plays the "Star Spangled Banner." His blood pressure immediately shot up, adrenaline was pumped into his arteries, and dopamine gushed into his brain. He frantically searched his robe for his phone but found nothing. All the other monks look at him with disgust. Finally a nearby cobble moved from all the shaking to reveal his phone. His hand trembled as he reached for it. Instead of raising the receiver to his ear, he turned it off and his body slowly returns to normal. The two surveyors approached him.

It had been years since he had mapped his last acre. During his early days in the NRCS, Fred Barnes had moved slowly up the promotional ladder to that of state soil scientist. As state soil scientist, most of his days were occupied by attending meetings. Otherwise, life for him consisted of juggling men and materials based upon the amount of money he was allocated. Now the only soil he ever saw was when a mole left a mound in his front yard. This is not a criticism, but as a person moves up in an organization, he moves further and further away from what first attracted him to the job. That was all behind him now. He was at peace with the world.

Some people said he lost most of his money when he converted from the old CSRS retirement system to the new FERS retirement system. This cannot be confirmed though. What is certain is that his ex-wife took what was left.

Kimbarswhee rose, bowed slowly to the men, and then bade them to sit opposite him in cross-legged fashion. He turned to the right and struck a metal gong with a large stick. The sound signaled a monk to bring a rice wafer on a tray for the surveyors to share.

Kimbarswhee then asked what prompted them to come to his humble hill. Could they be seeking the meaning of life...from a federal perspective? "No," they replied. Were they looking for the golden auger with the wonderful ratcheting handle? "No," they said again.

Kimbarswhee was confused. These were the standard questions he usually received. Nonetheless, his answers to most of these questions were the same. Namely, surveyors should ...

- dig their pits deeper.
- travel to Lincoln, Nebraska at least once in their career.
- never make a global change in NASIS.

"No, no!" the two responded to all of the above answers. They explained that they both had fallen for the beautiful Ashley Skinner at the State Office. They both loved her from afar, but who would get the hand of the fair maiden? Unfortunately, they were lowly GS-7 soil scientists and she was a sophisticated GS-12 Soil Psychologist. (Even their title was lower case.) Her specialty was encouraging soil surveyors to dig their pits deeper without experiencing vertigo, a fear of depths. This condition resulted in dizziness whenever the rear end is higher than the head while digging. Her thesis was entitled, "Bottoms up – a closer look at mooning."

"Could Kimbarswhee resolve their dispute?" they wondered. As Kimbarswhee meditated upon their problem, he fell into a trance lasting two days. He awoke, unscrewed the cap off of a plastic bottle, and sipped the spring water. Then he arose quickly and shuffled off to an outbuilding. They were still waiting when he returned. Kimbarswhee faced them and spoke in a quiet voice. "The one who maps the last acre of ground in Harney County will marry the lady." Unfortunately, Ashley did not know she was a part of the deal.

"But, but," they stuttered, "the Harney soil survey was finished years ago."

Kimbarswhee appeared to be stunned. The last he knew, the Harney survey had been in progress for more than 20 years. Children had been born and gone off to college in that amount of time. There had been time for graduate school as well. Each year a new ending date had been formulated but the survey was still going on. He had not foreseen this development! Had anyone told Tom Clark yet? Tom had gone off to map soils for a week along the Nevada border and, while he was away, the decision was made to close the office and move to the next county. The rationale was that Harney County would never be finished so why bother? Everyone seemed to lose interest. The Harney soil survey crew was packing up to leave when the new party leader arrived and gave a stirring speech. In the speech he spoke in glowing terms of the importance of a soil survey to ranchers, environmental groups, and off-road vehicle enthusiasts of Harney County. He was careful not to mention that

each group distrusted the other groups intensely. Soon everyone was energized and was eager to get back to work. Tom was unaware of any of this.

“Well, then, whoever maps the last acre of Malheur County,” Kimbarswhee said, after he recovered his composure.

“But, but,” they said, “that will take years because there are more than six million acres in Malheur County. Someone else will woo Ashley away in the meantime.”

“Not to worry,” Kimbarswhee said. “First, she will be available and second, most of Malheur County is owned by BLM and it is their problem to map their portion.”

Lastly, each surveyor was given a backpack with an uprooted sagebrush shrub, a packet of cheatgrass seed, and the latest edition of the *Wit and Wisdom of Soil Taxonomy*. Kimbarswhee suggested they set off on their quest by riding the gondola down the back side of the mountain to their truck. It would be easier. As Kimbarswhee watched them go, he shook his head and thought of the folly of youth.

When he was in his early sixties, Fred Barnes was feeling poorly so he went to see his regular doctor. After a few questions and scanning his forehead with a thermometer, his doctor concluded that eating a lunch of whole wheat sandwiches, carrot sticks, fruits and nuts, and drinking cold water on the tailgate of his government pickup as a young soil surveyor had undermined Fred’s health. Now he was unable to digest junk food including coffee, jelly donuts, cookies, etc. This was standard fare during long meetings. Based upon this diagnosis, he decided to retire and become a monk in this monastery on Forbidden Mountain. Because being a soil surveyor and monk are both solitary and lonely professions, the transition was easy.

Now that he was retired, Kimbarswhee realized he did not have to spend so much time at the Temple of Technology. The monk there always wanted Kimbarswhee to buy more and more items from his gift shop. Kimbarswhee had already purchased boxes of incense and fake paper money to gain favor with the spirits. Each item would be burnt. In so doing, the smoke would carry his prayers and the money to heaven. But the real money was in software. Each program, the monk promised, would simplify Kimbarswhee’s work load while processing mountains of data. Kimbarswhee really did have a pile of paper behind his shack that needed to be inputted. Extensive training would be required to learn and to implement the new software though. The monk was very convincing; he was once a used-car salesman.

Other temples that occupied the village square on Forbidden Mountain were fertility, harvest, patience, cooperativeness, and reverence for life. These are traits or goals that have allowed civilizations to survive, grow, and prosper. Yet these principles had been replaced with temples devoted to diversity, self esteem, and noble intent.

Now there was time to celebrate “white men’s” month. He had assumed the government was so busy observing other groups that there was no time for white guys. All twelve months had been spoken for by other groups. Nonetheless, he planned on having “white guys” celebrations complete with balloons, posters, parades, and speeches at the monastery. He chose the month of June to celebrate, which undoubtedly would offend another group if they knew.

After months of meditation, fasting, silence, and, of course, cleaning and washing, Kimbarswhee was granted a few days off to buy more wafers for the monastery. He decided to travel to the State Office and view this Ashley for himself. He was seeking help with his electronic device addiction anyway and she might be able to help. But was she a thing of beauty? Well now, not so fast. More precisely, she could be described as a thing of “rugged” beauty. She wore deep-lugged leather boots, thick baggy pants, a sweatshirt under a down vest, and had closely cropped hair under an NRCS baseball cap. He noted that she had an interesting way of smiling when she wasn’t being so serious.

Because Kimbarswhee’s time was limited, she agreed to see him that afternoon. During his session, Kimbarswhee reminisced about his early childhood and work experiences.

- He recalled how he was destined to be a government employee. Both his father and mother were federal workers. When he was born, his parents referred to him as GS-1. Of course, baby steps would move a child up the ladder but slowly.

- His childhood allowance coincided with pay periods and was split into spending, giving (taxes), and saving (TSP).
- As a student trainee with the SCS, it was his job to mail OSDs back and forth to the State Office, hand count the number of acres within each polygon using the dot overlay sheet, and pre-map areas using a stereoscope and airplane photographs.
- He worked his way up the ladder by working in small towns in which few people were willing to go. Finally, higher positions began to open up. With his experience and knowledge, he grabbed those positions and ultimately became a state soil scientist. About this time there came an explosion of electronic devices and, at first, he loved them. The ability to be in contact with anyone at any time was wonderful. Or was it? Now he was always jittery and anxious.

Ashley's advice was for him to slowly rid himself of all his mobile devices and rely solely on the simple telephone. Being a monk in a monastery was a good start, she told him. Now that he was retired, phone calls were becoming less and less frequent. In those calls that did come, the caller wanted to know where the stapler was... Or did he wish his stack of Louis L'Amour books returned...and what about the colorful posters of distant, exotic lands stuck to the walls? But he missed the excitement.

Finally, she replied that the only way to recapture the excitement was for him to return to work as a "private contractor" doing a similar job. One such job revolved around juniper in portions of Eastern Oregon, with the issue being, "Should junipers be declared a tree?" If so, then every time a juniper is cut down to allow for more grass to grow and for cattle to eat, a new juniper must be planted in its place. This is Oregon law. His administrative skills would help to resolve this matter.

In the meantime, the two surveyors went to Malheur County and were assigned their own survey area.

To Be Continued

## STUDENTS' CORNER

by Gabriella Coughlin & Roslyn Albee



The 2012 National Collegiate Soil Judging Team consisted of (from left): Austin Suing, Will Austin (advisor and coach), Roslyn Albee, Gabriella Coughlin, Leslie Michel, and Carl Evans.

Greetings Everyone! Roslyn Albee and I (Gabriella Coughlin) will lead you through OSU's trip to the Collegiate Soil Judging Nationals held this spring in Morgantown, West Virginia.

Having just made our way through final exams and an unseasonable snowstorm en route to Portland, the five of us were greeted at the airport by our fearless leader, Will Austin, and away we went to the land of Ultisols and 80 degree weather.

The first four days were spent feverishly calibrating our soil skills to fit the regional soil concepts. These sites were located within the greater Morgantown area, complete with hilly hardwood forests, pastures, and cropland. We also got a peek at West Virginia University's experimental orchard and a reclaimed coal site on a rolling terrace. Just before seeing our first anthropic soil horizon at the reclaimed site, a lightning storm chased us out of the field for the day and under a covered bridge (see photo). Disappointment aside, the team really gained new perspectives on texturing kaolinic clays, locating landscape position from aerial topo maps, distinguishing residuum vs. colluvium, identifying fragipans, and strengthening taxonomy skills.

Once the practice pits were over WVU hosted a delightful banquet filled with food, music, and comradery surrounding the next day's individual competition. Four of our team members competed on three different pits in a forested area near a Boy Scout camp, where a sneaky fragipan foiled plans for perfect scorecards.

It was in the team judging where OSU made its way onto the scoreboard, accurately describing a fine-loamy hapludalf and fragiudalf. This placed OSU 10<sup>th</sup> in the team judging round, beating our West Coast counterparts and many of the East Coast regionalists.

So here we are at the end of the competition, when feelings of accomplishment and gratitude set in after our experience in "Wild and Wonderful West Virginia."

The OSU Soil Judging Club would like to send a BIG "Thank You!" to all you wonderful people who helped us get to the competition. This was an unforgettable experience for all.



The team takes shelter under Dents Run Covered Bridge, Monongalia Co., West Virginia.



This is what it's all about—TEAM JUDGING! Austin Suing and Leslie Michel are texturing in the pit, while Gabby Coughlin (with clipboard) looks on. Roslyn Albee and Carl Evans prepare for their turn in the pit.

And we still have so much to look forward to! This spring we will be making our way East to join forces with the Cascades campus to go over plans for 2013 Nationals in Platteville, WI.

Signing out,

Roslyn and Gabriella  
OSSS Student Liaisons



OSU Soil Judging Team's President, Carl Evans, reflects on a job well done while visiting Gettysburg National Park.

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

### ~ LESLIE MICHEL ~

I grew up in Eastern Washington on a farm. I started out studying business, and spent my time during the summer working on farms. About two years into college I realized I loved working on farms more than I did studying business. I dropped out of school and went to work on an organic berry farm here in Oregon. It was there that the idea of studying agriculture was first presented to me. Though I grew up on a farm, I didn't know that one could go to college to study agriculture. I started at OSU in the fall of 2009 as a General Agriculture major, but quickly decided that I was interested in irrigation and water management, which led me to soil science. I switched my major before I had even taken a soils class, and was so glad I did.

Many aspects of soils fascinate me; I've been most interested in pedology. I like getting my hands in the soil and the tactile discovery of the secrets held in each horizon. I recently took a soil mineral and organic interactions class and was fascinated by the chemistry that takes place in the soil.

I work with Teresa Matteson at the Benton Soil & Water Conservation District—it's been a fantastic opportunity to gain some hands-on experience with her. I've done a bit of everything—lab work, data entry, and workshop planning. I've also been volunteering with Cory Owens and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, which has been more fun than work as I've gotten to tag along with Cory to help her dig up soil temperature data loggers, visit with



Leslie Michel is shown taking a break while climbing the Santa Maria volcano in the Western Highlands of Guatemala.

farmers, and do a little bit of computer work. Both of these positions have given me a “real world” look at the opportunities that exist for soil scientists and they have both been great experiences.

My spare time is spent hiking, camping, and climbing mountains; I love traveling and seeing new terrain, whether it's visiting remote places in Guatemala or road tripping through Utah. Often I'll snap some pictures, and sometimes I'll grab a baggy of soil to add to my colorful array of soil from around the states. This year I've set a lofty goal of climbing Mt. Rainier, Mt. Hood, and Mt. Whitney, as well as other less intimidating mountains throughout the Northwest. Rainy days usually keep me tucked inside sewing, cooking, and crocheting.

## DATES TO REMEMBER



**May 31 – June 1, 2012:** Washington Society of Professional Soil Scientists Summer Tour, Spokane, WA, in conjunction with the Northwest Forest Soils Council (NWFSC) – Technical presentations & Dig It! The Secrets of Soil Exhibit Tour - May 31. Field Day – June 1. Visit their web page for the latest information and registration:

[http://www.ieway.com/wspss/WSPSS\\_2012Summer\\_Tour\\_reg.pdf](http://www.ieway.com/wspss/WSPSS_2012Summer_Tour_reg.pdf)

**June 25 – 27, 2012:** Western Society of Soil Science Meeting, “It All Builds on Soil! Practical Applications of Soil Surveys for Land Management Decision-Making,” Davis, CA. Joint Meeting of the Western Soil Science Society and the West Regional Cooperative Soil Survey. Visit their meetings page for the latest information:

<https://www.soils.org/membership/branches/wsss>

**August, 9 – 11, 2012:** Oregon Society of Soil Scientists 2012 “Orifices of Oregon” Summer Tour. Located in South Central Oregon, this includes Ft. Rock, hole-in-the-ground, crack-in-the-ground, lava flows, sunstone mining, and more. For the latest information visit the OSSS events page at:

[http://www.oregonsoils.org/?page\\_id=5](http://www.oregonsoils.org/?page_id=5)

**February 4 – September 22, 2012:** “Dig It – The Secrets of Soil,” Smithsonian Traveling Exhibit at The Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture (MAC), 2316 West First Avenue, Spokane, WA. Visit the Spokane Conservation District website for more information: <http://www.sccd.org/digitpromo/digit.html>

**October 21 – 24, 2012:** ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Annual Meetings, “Visions for a Sustainable Planet,” Cincinnati, OH. Visit their meetings page for the latest information: <https://www.soils.org/meetings>

**Spring 2013:** 2013 National Collegiate Soils Contest, Platteville, WI. More information to come.

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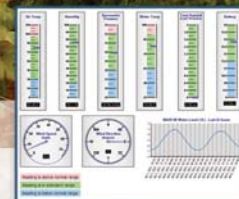
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## Sharpshooter

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