

VAPSS Newsletter

Virginia Association of Professional Soil Scientists Newsletter

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Smithsonian Soils Exhibit Opens By Bill Sledjeski, CPSS

Dig It ! The Secrets of Soil the new 5000 square foot exhibition at the Smithsonian's Natural History Museum in Washington D.C. opened on July 19th. The exhibition is an attempt to show people the importance of soil in their daily life. It was several years in the making and thanks to many individual, corporate and association sponsors the exhibit is a reality. It provides an opportunity for soil scientists to receive recognition and should be an inspiration for future soil scientists. I realized a sense of self-satisfaction after reviewing the exhibit, knowing that our profession is valued for its knowledge and achievements. In an era of increasing environmental and engineering applications of soil use it should strengthen a soil scientist's role as a major contributor. We lack advocacy. The exhibit is a great motivator.

A reception and preview at the invitation of the Director of the Smithsonian and the Fertilizer Institute was held at the Museum on Thursday evening, July 18th. Over 500 hundred soil scientists and related professionals attended.

Among those in attendance were VAPSS members Nan Gray, Bill Sledjeski and their spouses and Mary Ellen Cook. Following a substantial buffet and all-you-can-drink beverages, the Exhibit Curator and the president of SSSA made opening remarks. Thanks were given to the more than 1500 sponsors and those individuals, including Jim Ware, who were responsible for the original concept. The exhibit is located on the second floor adjacent to the popular mineral hall featuring the Hope Diamond.

The exhibition includes interactive displays, videos and models of soil. One section includes soil monoliths representing all "state soils". Pamunkey is displayed with recognition given to the Virginia Association of Professional Soil Scientists for its contribution. The individual members and firms are to be congratulated for their support.

Virginia was also evident in an individual display regarding the Reclamation of Acid Sulfate Soils at the Stafford Regional Airport. Look closely and see Dr. Lee Daniels.

Dr. Tom Simpson, formerly of VT, long time supporter and one of the founding fa-

thers of VAPSS and Dr. Del Fanning, U Md, acid sulfate specialist and contributor to VAPSS (field trips) were present. Tom is in near retirement status and Dr. Fanning was there with his soil sampling tools (always prepared).

The exhibit will be on display until 2010. Afterwards it will become a traveling exhibit touring schools and other locations throughout the country proclaiming the to the public the value of soil.

Don't miss this one; bring your family, kids and grandkids. They will get to know you better and for once you won't have to explain why your job is "digging holes or playing in the dirt".

Note from VAPSS Board: Thanks to Bill and Barbara for their efforts in carrying us over the top to ensure that our organization and state soil is well represented at the Dig It exhibit.

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Special points of interest:

- *Mark your calendar for the Fall Meeting.*
- *Visit www.vapss.org*
- *Sign up for the State Fair*

SUMMER TIME

And the weeds are high –

Always practice safety when working with a backhoe. Minor lapses can cause major problems.

Stay hydrated.

Tick borne illnesses can take 24 hours to go from the tick to you. Check daily and get them things off you.

Virginia Tech Soil Judging Team Finishes Second in Team Judging and Combined Score at the 2008 National Championships (by the Judges)

On Thursday and Friday, April 17 and 18, 2008, the Virginia Tech Soil Judging Team finished second in both Team Judging and Combined Score at the National Championships held at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, RI. This finish was a wonderful accomplishment because only one of the eight team members had ever studied glaciated terrain and soils before. There were 21 teams entered and 82 students. The top finishing teams in the Team competition were Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Virginia Tech, Texas A&M, Kansas State, and Maryland. The top finishing teams in the Overall competition were Kansas State, Virginia Tech, Maryland, Purdue, and West Virginia. In the individual competition, the top five finishers were:

Maryland	1	Anastasia Vinnikova
Kansas State	2	Leah Ferdinand
West Virginia	3	Randy Riddle
Texas A&M	4	Cortland Winkle
Virginia Tech	5	Joe Marshall

In the past five years, Virginia Tech has finished in the top five combined scores all five times, and finished in the top five of the Team Judging part of the competition four times. This is more than any other school in the nation during that time.

The contest was very difficult and the soils very different than in Virginia. The team saw moraines, drumlins, eskers, lacustrine deposits (varves), outwash plains, ice-contact stratified drift, stream terraces and floodplains, kame terraces, anthropogenic soils, and sand dunes. The Team judges included all eight students and they were one difficult classification decision away from first place. The team members had other class assignments that they completed early or during the trip, and several left for weekend field trips within hours of arriving back home. The team held a moment of silence on April 16th at noon.

Congratulations to all of the team members: Joe Marshall (Louisa), Amy Gail Fannon (Pennington Gap), Nick Haus (Rice lake, WI), Tim Woodward (Madison), Hannah Clayton (Virginia Beach), Joyce Kammerzell (Annandale), Luke Joyce (Fieldale), Brent Foltz (Draper, who filled in for teammate Steven Waller (Fort Chiswell), who could not attend because of severe illness), and next year's team members Katy Wooten (Orange) and Eric Sheppard (Christiansburg).

Coach John Galbraith and the team would like to thank VAPSS for all of their moral support and the donations from a few members.



The 2008 Spring Virginia Tech Soil Judging Team

Front row, left to right to left: Coach John Galbraith, Hannah Clayton, Amy Gail Fannon, Eric Sheppard. Back row, left to right: Tim Woodward, Nick Haus, Joe Marshall, Steven Waller, W. Luke Joyce. Not present: Katy Wooten, Joyce Kammerzell, Brent Foltz.

Jim Baker Retires

Jim Baker, Professor of Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences at Virginia Tech, retired August 1 after 30 years of service to the University and the Commonwealth. His work in teaching, research, and soil survey, has touched the lives of many individuals through those years. The VT Soil Survey, of which Dr. Baker was the project leader, trained 139 professional soil scientists and 69 received advanced degrees through work with the project. He is a charter and lifetime member of VAPSS and has contributed mightily to our cause and profession.

A celebration will be held in his honor at the VT CSES Turf Center Saturday, August 23rd, 2008 at 4 pm. Contact suebrown@vt.edu for more info.

State Fair Coming Soon

The state fair coming Set 25 thru Oct 5, 2008 and VAPSS could use your help to man or mam our booth. This is a major outreach (it's like a mini Dig It) to spread the word about the importance of soils and its also a lot of fun. In the comings weeks someone will be contacting you about helping out. You'll dig it if you do.

Fall Meeting Preview

The VAPSS Annual Meeting and Fall Conference is coming soon. It will be held in and around Blacksburg, VA on October 23rd and 24th, 2008. The fun will include a field trip on Karst geology and geomorphology, a session on ridge and Valley geomorph, and a chance to judge some soils pits. The conference is being held at the same time as the Regional Soil Judging Competition at VT so it should be an exciting time. More details will be coming out as we get closer to the conference but mark your calenders for it now.

Mail

Dear VAPSS Newsletter: As a professional soil scientist, being limited to a title such as "on-site soil evaluator", conventional or advanced, is a thing that is relevant only in the economic confines of a very specific industry. "On-site" is PC talk, which means the septic system industry. **An evaluator of "on-site soils" produces a single use interpretation of the soil and landscape for the septic system industry.** One which is or is not suitable for "on-site" sewage disposal. The interpretation system is driven mostly by regulatory constraints not science although science is behind some regulation..

Virginia's Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation already recognizes certified soils professionals with the designation Certified Professional Soil Scientist. This certification covers a broad range of soils expertise suitable for a more complete interpretation of a given soil and landscape. Nan Gray, CPSS says "Those of us who are Soil Scientists are Soil Scientists. We practice "practical" applications of soils for many things above and beyond waste disposal in soils. Waste disposal in soils is just one thing. We Soil Scientists have unique training in all aspects of soils: microbiology, hydrology, physics, chemistry, topography, taxonomy, laboratory, farming, etc." Right on. But we also evaluate soils, and a big chunk of our collective change comes from evaluating soils for the septic system and other industries.

DPOR already certifies soils professionals. Why is it **creating a competing soils profession** for a single use interpretation? I will grant that on-site work requires specialized knowledge about certain "non-soils" related aspects of the work. Mostly they deal with design and regulatory issues. But that's not soil evaluation or soil science. Jeff Walker, CPSS says "DPOR already has a Certification for soil evaluation (CPSS), they only lack a mechanism for licensing onsite design. **Clearly an important step has already been accomplished if you do not have to distinguish those capable of evaluating the soil**, only those that are qualified to design in compliance with the regulations concerning the siting of onsite wastewater treatment systems." Or any regulated use of natural soils for that matter.

We as CPSS's are getting shafted. Do you know that the new VDH GMP 146 makes no allowance for CPSS's to submit soils information as part of an engineered septic system? It does specifically mention the former carpenters and English teachers currently serving as AOSE's and EHS's, although they are not recognized by DPOR as soils professionals. At least they've had soils week.

I urge your members to stay informed and vigilant in your response to these attacks on our profession. This is only the beginning. What if, in the coming privatized government, every agency that requires a soils evaluation of some type comes up with their own Frankenstein soils man? Ouch. Sincerely CPSS #140

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Soil Survey News

The soil survey mapping of Virginia is closer than ever to being completed. Just a few counties left. As many of you are aware, the WebSoil Survey and Soil Data Mart have become a great way of delivering new and or updated soils information to the public. NRCS is continuing to update the soils data in the state, and we would like to gather as much information as possible from those of you that have mapped and/or used soil survey information throughout the years. Comments can be about the county survey, legend, individual map units, mapping concepts, parts of the county needing additional attention, etc. Remember that this can be praises, general comments, opinions or deficiencies noticed. This is of course voluntary. I would like to gather as much information as possible now before it is forgotten. We have a National Database we can put this type of information in to assist with prioritizing the known issues, and to preserve the history of how and why things are the way they are. Please feel free to share this with others that you know of that may have something to add. I would appreciate this to be completed and returned by August 1. Though any history at any time is very appreciated.

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Important Announcement

Submit your articles or announcements for the November Newsletter by the end of October via email to davidh@swva.net or by fax to 540 381-9430.