



AL SWCS Holds Annual Meeting

The Alabama Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society held their annual meeting in Huntsville on June 11-13, 2014. The meeting entitled “Our Changing Landscapes” was hosted at the Holiday Inn Research Park.

The meeting opened on Wednesday, June 11 as Moderator Perry Oakes requested Chapter President Gary Banks; Dr. Lloyd Walker, Dean at Alabama A&M University, and Shane Davis, the Director of Urban development for the city of Huntsville to make welcoming remarks.

Dr. Gary Lemme, Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES), Auburn University, AL, gave the Keynote speech. He talked to the group about “Changing Landscapes in Alabama” and compared past and present agriculture and forestry products and trends.

Other speakers on Wednesday included Dr. Eve Brantley, ACES, Auburn University, who spoke about urban development with minimal environmental consequences; Dr. John Fulton, Auburn University on feeding a growing world; and Falguni Patel from Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments who spoke about the history and future of transportation in northeast Alabama.

Thursday the attendees loaded a bus for a field day tour. The stops included:

1. Bridgeforth Farms in Tanner to look at their irrigation project,
2. Water Works Center in Hartselle to view a constructed wetland and other “green” additions to the building which housed the Alabama Mountains Rivers and Valley RC&D Council,
3. AL Department of Transportation (DOT) site on I-565 in Madison where a new interchange was being constructed. The group looked at best management practices installed for erosion and sediment control.
4. The group ate lunch at the Alabama A&M University Research Station in Hazel Green. Afterwards they viewed a trailer that housed the “Water Wheels Outdoor Water Conservation Lab.” They also received information about some research being done at the station on carbon and the ecosystem,
5. Bragg Farms in Toney to learn about their crop irrigation system using a large reservoir that is filled by pumping water from a nearby stream during periods of high flow.
6. Tate Farms in Meridianville to learn of the farm’s use of conservation practices and the Cotton Pickin’ Pumpkin Patch business they developed to attract people to the farm to buy pumpkins and allow people to spend a day on a farm.

On Friday, the last day of the meeting, an AL-SWCS business meeting was held. The outgoing president Gary Banks from ALDOT received a plaque. He then welcomed the incoming president Dr. Monday Mbila from Alabama A&M University.

Additional speakers included Athena Clark from the US. Geological Survey in Montgomery who spoke about tools for planning landscape changes; Dr. Edzard van Saten from Auburn University who examined the role of GMOs in Agriculture; and Dr. Stephen Enloe, ACES, Auburn University who spoke on the current science of herbicide resistant plants.

The silent auction proceeds totaled \$250. The funds will be divided between the existing AL-SWCS university student chapters.

The meeting was hailed as one of the best to date. The good food, good information, and good networking made the meeting a huge success.

Special thanks go to our sponsors and exhibitors: Alabama A&M University; Auburn University; IECA-Southeast Chapter; Norton and Associates; and Sunshine Supplies, Inc.

The next meeting will be held in south Alabama in June 2015.