



Illinois Soil Classifiers Association Newsletter

Fall-December 2018

Message from the President

My Opinion on Being a Professional Soil Classifier

Submitted by: Mark Bramstedt

Upcoming Events:

43rd Annual Meeting March 16th,
Champaign, IL

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The 2018 Soils of North-Central Illinois tour and the Soils and Septics workshop the following day were an outstanding success! It took many ISCA members, CPSCs, and Friends of the Soil to pull off the events in an organized, professional way. ISCA has always considered that being a Professional Soil Classifier requires high standards, and these events demonstrated that. In our general informational brochure about ISCA, the first objective that is listed is to protect the public welfare. Two of the ways that ISCA desires to protect the public welfare are: a) establish and maintain high standards of technical competence and ethical conduct in the profession of soil classifying, and b) develop widespread awareness of the profession and an understanding of available technical information. Using our objectives as a measure of quality, the 2018 Fall Event was one of our best!

During the event however, I observed some things that concerned me. In all of my training, three soil properties stand out as being critical in every soil description – they were hammered home in my past training and in the training we give to others. These properties are color, texture, and structure. These three properties are critical in soil interpretations for almost every soil use. I have also been trained (even more so with wetland determinations) that if it wasn't documented, it wasn't observed. So, with these thoughts in mind, I was taken aback when I heard that some Soil Classifiers (including CPSCs) do not document soil colors in their descriptions. The color is relevant. Whether our clients care or not about a matrix color, to me is irrelevant. I feel that, above all, we are scientists. We are not just scientists, we are Soil Scientists. In addition, as Soil Classifiers, we are specialized Soil Scientists. We have skills that other Soil Scientists don't have and there are very few who have the specialized skills that it takes to be a Soil Classifier. As part of being a Soil Classifier, we document what we find, regardless of the final needs of the client. Our first role is to be a Soil Classifier, that specialized scientist. Our secondary role is to be a Soil Consultant or employee. I have never left the field thinking that I wrote down too much information. We record color, texture, and structure. Scientists document what is observed. It's just what scientists do.

In addition to not writing down colors, I was also taken aback when I heard a CPSC confess to a health department official, that he doesn't even use the Munsell Book in the field. It is one thing to confess quietly to another CPSC that one may feel confident in estimating soil color that the book is hardly used. However, to openly brag at a training session to non-soil classifiers, seemed out of place to me. Even though we think we "know" 10YR 4/2 vs. 10YR 4/3, to not use, or even carry a Munsell Color Book for a reference check, is bad science to me. One color chip difference can cost a client hundreds of dollars, or one color chip difference can be responsible for a septic system that fails to function or treat the effluent properly. We need to check the book!

Message from the President

Soil Scientists and Soil Classifiers have fought an image battle for years – Dirt Bags, Dirt Daubers, Scum Buckets – we've all heard the jokes. We struggled for recognition from our employers, we received left-over, worn-out office furniture, we were put in dumpy, wet basement soil survey offices, we were assigned the vehicles that no one else wanted (like a tiny Chevy Chevette or Dodge Rampage that were too small for a 5 foot soil probe). People have made comments that Soil Taxonomy is just a mumbo-jumbo language and that soil science is a pretend science where we just make stuff up. To confess that we guess at soil colors and that we don't follow certain standards and guidelines, nor record critical information, just gives credence to others' critiques of who they think we are.

I believe that the examples I have noted here represent a minority of our CPSCs, as I know other Soil Classifiers who, as busy and successful consultants, fully document matrix colors, redox colors, and even colors of coatings. In my opinion, we are doing our discipline a disservice by not recording matrix colors and redox colors and by estimating soil color without using the Munsell Book. I feel that it is important to write a soil description that another Soil Classifier could review, visualize the soil, and come up with similar results. What makes us different from a Soil Technician or a casual observer, if we don't document like a scientist and use the tools that are critical in our trade? We are being observed every day in the work that we do. One misstep has the potential to threaten the entire discipline and profession. Let's take pride in who we are as PROFESSIONAL Soil Classifiers and make sure that our discipline as a Certified Professional Soil Classifier stands for something.

SAVE the DATE

43rd ISCA Annual Meeting

March 16th, 2019

1816 S. Oak St., Champaign, IL

More information will be available via email soon!

Burton W. Ray Award 2018

Submitted by Scott Wiesbrook

Congratulations to Grace Trankina!!!



The Burton W. Ray Scholarship Award for Soil Science for 2018 winner is Grace Trankina. Grace is a senior in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She served as a Pathways Intern for NRCS this past summer and is interested in a career working with soils and natural resources. Despite this being her first year on the soil judging team, Grace placed ninth overall at the 2018 Region 3 Soil Judging Contest in Prairie du Chien, WI. (Grace is the one holding the plaque in the middle of the team photo.)

Soils of Illinois Fall Tour Write-up

Submitted by Alicia Metzger

ISCA had the pleasure of hosting a successful Soils of North-Central Illinois Tour in October 2018 which took place over two days in parts of DeKalb and Kane Counties. Overall, there were more than 40 attendees from many practice areas, including soil classifiers, septic contractors, and health department employees.

The tour kicked off on Friday, October 19 at the Bayer Crop Science Research Center, where attendees received an overview of the crop science research being conducted at the center by Rachel Welch and Zak Swanson, observed two soil pits for septic evaluation as presented by Bruce Putman, and received an overview at one of the three Wildlife Habitat Council approved pollinator habitats, presented by Nancy Leffler. The soil pits provided a nice overview of loess thickness and hydric conditions in Mollisols and loess over glacial till from the Batestown formation.

The tour continued at Headwaters Conservation Area, a 220-acre wetland mitigation bank constructed by V3 Companies in Campton Hills. George Milner, a senior ecologist from V3 Companies, provided an overview of wetland mitigation bank design and construction, pollinator habitat in upland prairie areas and cover crop selection for wetland and prairie areas. Three soil pits were available for the discussion of septic suitability as presented by Bruce Putman and Tom Copenhaver. Although the weather did not cooperate, attendees seemed to enjoy discussion at the soil pits which provided a nice visual representation of soil changes across a landscape and variety of loess over till in Mollisols.

The tour concluded at Gray Willows Farm in Campton Hills, a property newly acquired by Campton Township that is currently being constructed as a wetland mitigation bank by V3 Companies. George Milner and Alicia Metzger, both of V3 Companies, provided an overview of the wetland mitigation bank design process, construction, and management aspects required to achieve regulatory sign off for the mitigation bank. Two soil pits were available for observation and provided an overview of loess over till in Alfisols.

Day two of the tour took place on Saturday, October 20 at Environmental Design Service located in Kane County where ISCA members were given hands on training and overview of site septic evaluation. Ted McCannon graciously hosted the tour on his property and provided two soil pits for use in the demonstration, as well as a nice warm barn for discussion and lunch! Brad Cate, Bruce Putman, Ted McCannon and Mike Konen assisted with the demonstration and provided guidance to ISCA members on how to conduct a septic evaluation on a property. In addition to the demonstration, ISCA members had a chance to practice their texturing skills and recalibrate with soil samples provided by Scott Wiesbrook and Bill Teater.

Overall, the tour was a success! Many thanks to those who donated their time, property, as well as sponsored the event, including Northern Illinois University, Bayer Corporation, V3 Companies, Campton Township, Environmental Design Service Illinois Environmental Health Association and NRCS. A special thanks goes out to those who presented and dedicated their time, including Bruce Putman, Mike Konen, Tom Copenhaver, Brad Cate, Ted McCannon, Rachel Welch, Zak Swanson, Nancy Leffler and George Milner. An extra thanks to Chris Miller, Karla Hansen Petges, and Natalie Irizarry from Juneau, WI Soil Survey Office from coming all the way down to dig the pits! Lastly, the tour would not have been possible without the hard work of several ISCA members, including Sarah Smith, Mark Bramstedt, Don Fehrenbacher, Mike Konen, Bruce Putman, Brad Cate, Rachel Welch and Alicia Metzger.

Soils of Illinois Fall Tour Pictures

Photo credit: Alicia Metzger



Officers of the Illinois Soil Classifiers Association: An Historical Review

Submitted by Bill Kreznor, ISCA Historian

“When one loves one’s Art, no service seems to large.” O. Henry (William Sydney Porter)

The holiday season serves to mark the beginning of the final third of our Association’s administrative year. The Nominations Committee, chaired by the Past President, will begin to seek candidates for the offices of President-Elect, Vice President, and Treasurer. (Note: Treasurer and Secretary serve a 3-year term. The term of the current Treasurer ends in 2019. The term of the current Secretary will end in 2021). The current President-Elect, who will assume the office of President this spring, will be looking to select chairpersons for the various standing committees and make two appointments to the Certification Board.

In its infancy, the ISCA was mainly comprised of professionals serving the public sector employed by federal and state agencies, and educators employed by Illinois universities. Its officers and committee chairs included a mix of such individuals. The results of the first election in June of 1975 included President Rex Mapes and President-Elect Wiley Scott, both USDA-SCS employees. University of Illinois professors Ivan Jansen and John Alexander were elected to the offices of Vice president and Secretary-Treasurer, respectively. George Walker, a retired USDA-SCS employee who had served as Temporary Chair of the group of soil classifiers working since January 1974 to establish a formal professional association, was named Past President.

The 1980s ushered in an acceleration of the project soil survey program. This coincided with new opportunities for soil classifiers in the private sector. Some of the seasoned USDA-SCS employees retired from federal service but continued working as private consultants to local units of government and land developers. One of the first of these consultants, Jack Paschke, became the first such ISCA President in 1981. It also led to more women entering career paths as field soil classifiers. In 1987, Tonie Endres became the first woman ISCA President.

ISCA membership has become more balanced with the numbers of soil classifiers employed in the private sector and in local units of government such as county agencies approaching those employed in federal and state agencies and in academia.

In the course of updating the list of past officers and committee chairs, including those who have served as Certification Board Chair, it’s clear that members representing all categories of public service and private practice have served our Association for at least one term as an officer, committee chair or member, or Certification Board member. ISCA remains relevant as a result of active participation by its members. We could not provide our members nor serve the public with the opportunities for education, technical advice, networking, and leadership without an active membership willing to serve. Special acknowledgement for those who have stepped up to serve our Association in a large way is highlighted, below.

Officers of the Illinois Soil Classifiers Association: An Historical Review



The Rock of Gibraltar:

Chuck Frazee has served continuously as Treasurer since 1993. That's 25 years (and counting). He's up for re-election in 2019 if he decides to seek another term. Will this rock be moved? Stay tuned.

Tip of the Chance the Rapper Hat:

Several members have served two terms as President. But only two have been elected three times: Mark Bramstedt and Bruce Putman. When you consider the President will serve on the Executive Council over a three-year stretch as President-Elect, President, and Past President, that's a lot of years.



Lighter of the Banker's Lamp:

Three members have served as Vice President for three terms, developing a budget and auditing the books: Dale Calsyn, Bill Kreznor, and Bill Teater.

The Swiss Army:

A number of members have served in multiple capacities as officers, standing and *ad hoc* committee chairs, and Certification Board Chair over their careers. Some of these veterans will "re-enlist" and be available to mentor those less-experienced members willing to step up as an officer or committee chair. Mark Bramstedt may be considered Army Captain, having held ten such positions. The infantry includes Bill Kreznor (9), Bruce Putman (8), Les Bushue, Don Fehrenbacher, and Roger Windhorn (7), and John Alexander, Brad Cate, Tonie Endres, Todd Soukup, and Steve Zwicker (6).



Interested in running for an office or serving as committee chair or member, or as a member of the Certification Board (if certified)?

Contact Past-President (and chair of the Nominations Committee) **Todd Soukup**, if you are interested in running for office. Contact any member of the Executive Council, if you would like to serve as a chair or member of one of the standing or *ad hoc* committees. If you are a "first-timer," know that there is a cadre of members available who are eager to mentor and support you as you take that next step in service of the ISCA.

(Author's note: the spreadsheet of the list of officers, committee chairs, and Certification Board Chairs for 1975 through 2018 is available upon request. Contact Bill Kreznor at wkreznor@wrksoiltesting.com.)

New Member Bio

Welcome To ISCA, Virginia Brown!!!



Virginia Brown is a consulting soil scientist at Duraroot Environmental, based out of the Chicago area. Virginia graduated from the North Carolina State Soil Science program, with a background primarily in erosion control, stormwater, and restoration. She has experience working on the environmental side of construction projects including roadwork, oil and gas pipelines, and electric transmission. Her career in environmental compliance has taken her all over the US, working in a variety of environments from the mountains of Appalachia to the plains of the Dakotas.

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Submissions

This is **YOUR** newsletter. If you wish to submit material, here are some preferences.

- Send information by the last week of the month before the newsletter is scheduled to be published.
- Digital copy in Microsoft Word
- Use as little formatting (indents, bullets, charts) as possible. This increases the work to get it into Publisher. It can be done, but increases work load for the committee.

The Newsletter Committee reserves the right to make edits/corrections deemed appropriate

Publication Schedule

- Winter (February)
- Spring (May)
- Summer (August)
- Fall (November)



The Illinois Soil Classifiers Association is an organization promoting the wise use of the soil resource. ISCA is made up of professional soil classifiers in public service, private industry, and education and includes students and others interested in preserving soil. A soil classifier maps, describes and interprets soils according to a national system of soil classification. ISCA was established in 1975 and is affiliated with the American Registry of Certified Professionals in Agronomy, Crops, and Soils.

ISCA on Facebook

For those of you who want to keep in touch with ISCA members and others interested in soils in Illinois, join our group on Facebook. Search Facebook for "Illinois Soil Classifiers Association" and become a friend of ISCA. Anyone may post messages, announcements, pictures or events that may be of interest to our membership. This is a great venue for posting meetings of other associations or organizations who use soil information. This is also a great place to post pictures of recent projects, interesting soils, or maybe something unrelated to soils, but of general interest to the membership. If you don't have a Facebook account, it is easy to set up. Just go to www.facebook.com and follow the instructions. Unfortunately, the Facebook site is restricted on some government computers, so many of you will need to do this at home. Contact webmaster@illinoissoils.org if you have any difficulty in accessing the ISCA Group or if you have any questions or comments.



ISCA Newsletter Committee is looking for pictures of its members, past or present, to include in future newsletters.

Submissions can be sent electronically or hard copy to the staff address, see above and left. Please include a narrative for the caption! If hard copies are sent please indicate, if they are to be returned otherwise photographs will be retained in an archive photos file.

www.illinoissoils.org

New, exciting links have been added to the "announcements" page on our website. Be sure to bookmark this page. Its an excellent resource to keep you informed on the latest soils issues.

Better yet... make it your home page!



Visit the ISCA website to see the color version of this newsletter

www.illinoissoils.org/news

.....Cut.....Cut.....

Change of Address Form

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*Mail to: Scott Wiesbrook, ISCA Secretary, 1816 S. Oak St., IL 61820