



## MAKING CONSERVATION A PRIORITY

## TSPN Annual Meeting

by: Joe Lally

The annual membership meeting of our TSPN organization was held on September 9th, 2016.

The annual meeting is held according to the by-laws of our non-profit organization to detail the business side of the company, but is also intended to provide education and training content. Election of officers is held as part of the business meeting.

This year's featured speakers were Doug Peterson, USDA-NRCS Regional soil health specialist, and Todd Peterson, Winfield/LOL/United Suppliers representative on Partnership's and Sustainability.

Doug Peterson detailed in both powerpoint and demonstration format the soil health indicators, the properties of soil health and the advantage for landowners to work to improve soil health.

Todd Peterson detailed the "new" partnership venture within his organization to bring additional science and skill sets of the ag retail community to ensure sustainability and productivity of all U.S. landowners.

Kurt Simon, Iowa NRCS State Conservationist, attended the meeting and spoke to the membership of the need to work together with TSPs/NRCS to achieve the maximum conservation on the land. Mr. Simon has a long history working with TSPs in his previous assignments within NRCS, and expressed his pleasure to be



Kurt Simon speaks at the TSPN meeting

included in our meeting and looked forward to continuing dialogue on future opportunities working with farmers and landowners.

Alan Lange served as the luncheon speaker, where he detailed the new RSET tool being developed by NRCS in conjunction with conservation planning.

Marty Adkins, partnership specialist with Iowa NRCS outlined the various partnerships within NRCS and the private sector to leverage additional dollars for conservation.

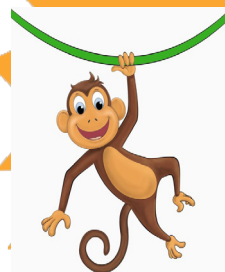
The TSPN annual business meeting followed, conducted by Dallas Heikens, TSPN President. Joe Lally, TSPN Executive Director, detailed the highlights of the past year's activities during this portion of the meeting.

Following the formal business agenda (by-law updates, election of officers) the meeting was gaveled to a close at 3:30 p.m.

# Technical Service Provider Network (TSPN)



## ATTENTION!



Be sure to look for a survey about TSPN from SurveyMonkey to arrive in your inbox soon!

## Meet Aimee!



Aimee Burch is the Public Relations and Marketing Coordinator for Prairie Rivers of Iowa. She will be working with TSPN to handle marketing needs, including website maintenance and newsletter publication. She will also coordinate new memberships and membership renewal through the form on the TSPN website.

Please contact her at [aburch@prred.org](mailto:aburch@prred.org) with newsletter submissions and any questions.

## How to become a TSPN member using the TSPN website and PayPal

1. Visit <http://tsp-network.org/twp/>
2. Click the Join/Renew tab at the top of the page
3. Fill out the form and click “Proceed to Payment” at the bottom of the page.
4. This will take you to PayPal, the site we use to handle our transactions
5. If you have a PayPal account, proceed as you usually would to complete the transaction.
6. If you do NOT have a PayPal account, know that you do not need one to proceed to payment. Simply check out as a guest and your payment will be processed.

If you have any questions, please let us know!



### President's Letter

by: Dallas Heikens



Has it already been two years?! I took over the helm of TSPN presidency in September 2014. There was a whirlwind of transformation going on at that time: a recent trip to Washington D.C. by a few of the board members to discuss a National MOU, the TSPN website and functionality, and the McKnight grant undertaking, just to name a few. Shortly after taking over as president, TSPN also lost our biggest promoter and voice within NRCS, Judy Martinson, as she was moved from the TSPN coordinator position. I really wondered how I had ever let myself get talked into this, but an energized board, willing to keep this new venture progressing, has accomplished quite a bit in the last two years!

For starters, the new website is up and operational! It is a work in progress, but you can renew your membership and sign up for upcoming training opportunities on the website: [tsp-network.org](http://tsp-network.org). Copies of the newsletters and how to contact board members can easily be found here.

The National MOU is still progressing. There have been several discussions between TSPN and the national team. In the last two years, TSPN has been involved in providing CNMP training opportunities to TSPs to help fulfill some of the requirements for NRCS, and we have been a big promoter of providing NRCS and TSP training together. We continue to keep an open line of communication going with NRCS leadership to assist our members with any issues they may have.

The first phase of the McKnight grant went so well, and Joe Lally was so frugal with the grant money, that two more phases were added to the original grant. Additional information regarding the McKnight grant is included in this newsletter.

One of the biggest accomplishments of the TSPN board was the addition of an Executive Director position. Joe Lally resigned as TSPN treasurer in December of 2015 to fill the ED position. We are so gracious for the time and dedication he donates to fill this position. He works tirelessly to promote the Technical Service Provider Network and its mission.

Lastly, I'd like to thank the TSPN board and its members for giving me the opportunity to serve as TSPN president. It was a learning curve for me to take a leadership position, but one that I have gained exceptional experience and growth from, mainly due to the expertise and guidance from the board itself. I am happy to announce that Dennis Godar will be the new president of TSPN. I know he will do an amazing job in continuing to keep TSPN progressing forward.

## TSPN names Executive Director



Joe Lally

Joe Lally, a member of TSPN board of directors, has been named Executive Director by the board of directors.

Joe has had a long career in the agriculture industry, serving both livestock and crop farmers,

first as a livestock manager within Farmland Foods (now Smithfield Foods), followed by serving as Project Coordinator for the Heartland Regional Water Project, a four-state, land-grant project between Iowa State University, University of Missouri, Kansas State University, and University of Nebraska, with support from USDA-NRCS and USEPA – Region 7.

Joe received his graduate degree from Iowa State University in Pro-Ag in 1999. His undergraduate degree was awarded by ISU as well.

TSPN was certified as a 501(c)(3) non-profit education and training business in January 2014 for certified TSPs in the Midwest who struggled to find the necessary CEUs to meet certification requirements of USDA-NRCS.

The all-volunteer seven-member board of Certified TSPs has worked to set up the formal business structure, include academic advisors and NRCS liaisons, to craft the long-term strategy. To date, memberships have reached 60 members primarily from around the midwest, but also includes states as far away as New York and Tennessee.

The primary mission is to continue to provide the membership with educational and training events important to current and future certification requirements by USDA-NRCS.

Joe can be reached by phone at 712-263-9729 or via email at [lally@tsp-network.org](mailto:lally@tsp-network.org).

## TSPN BOARD CONTACT LIST

President	Dennis Godar	<a href="mailto:Godar@manplan.net">Godar@manplan.net</a>	217.622.4199
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Executive Director	Joe Lally	<a href="mailto:lally@tsp-network.org">lally@tsp-network.org</a>	712.263.9729

## TSPN Annual Meeting Agenda Sept. 9, 2016 (see meeting recap on page 1)

9:00-9:30 am	Registration	
9:30 am – 9:45 am	Welcome	Dallas Heikens – TSPN President Joe Lally – Executive Director
9:45 am – 10:30 am	Soil Health Initiative	Doug Peterson – NRCS Regional Soil Health Specialist
10:30 am – 11:15	Sustainability - Partnership	Todd Peterson – Winfield/LOL/United Suppliers
11:30 am – 11:50	NRCS – Working together	Kurt Simon – State Conservationist Iowa
Lunch – 1 p.m.	Luncheon speaker Resource Stewardship Evaluation Tool (RSET)	Alan Lange – Resource Conservationist
1:00 pm – 1:30 pm	Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)	Marty Adkins – Iowa NRCS Assistant State Conservation for Special Projects
1:30 – 2:15 pm	TSPN Annual Meeting 1. By-Laws changes 2. Treasurers Report – Membership update 2. Executive Director Assignment a. National MOU 3. Election of Directors	Dallas Heikens
2:15 pm – 2:45 p.m.	TSP Panel of CAP Plans	
2:45 p.m.- 3:00 pm	Wrap Up	Dallas Heikens
3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Board Reorganization	Board and TSP Liaisons



## Conservation Heroes Needed

by: Dennis Godar, TSPN President  
Joe Schultz, TSPN Secretary

Joe Schultz and I attended the 71st Annual Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) International Conference this past summer in Louisville, KY. Through our booth exhibit, TSPN had many interactions with conservation professionals in attendance from New England to California. It was a very good conference to raise awareness for TSPN and allowed us to have conversations with many NRCS and academic colleagues.

One of the highlights for me was the keynote speaker of the conference, Chad Pregracke from Moline, Illinois.

Chad was once a high school kid growing up on the banks of the mighty Mississippi, who during summer vacations would harvest river mussels with his older brother to earn spending money. He spent a lot of time on the river and noticed lots of garbage and no one was doing anything about it. He did not accept the status-quo of the river's banks and islands being a dumping ground over the last couple hundred years. The accumulation of tires, refrigerators, cars and car parts, plastic bags, styrofoam, and other man-made and discarded items were too numerous to count. Through his passion, dedication and high energy, this young man has put into motion an amazing organization, "Living Lands & Waters", (for more information view the website [www.living-landsandwaters.org](http://www.living-landsandwaters.org)).

As Chad told his story, it became evident to me how he achieved his goals, and with his Mark Twain style, he also could have a successful career as a standup comedian, but he was delivering a very serious message.

So as a fellow 'river-rat', (I grew up along the banks of the Illinois river), I bought his book afterwards. It is a good read and details his many successes and failures along the way. The organization he founded is "the only industrial strength river cleanup organization in the world".

The LLW crew, along with volunteers, operate a fleet of barges that cruise the rivers of the U.S. and collect and recycle trash



from the rivers. LLW also participates in watershed conservation initiatives, workshops, tree plantings, and hosts educational events on a classroom barge.

The moral of the story is this: we need more conservation heroes like Chad out there that are not willing to accept the status quo of erosion, nutrient loss, and pollution, etc when there are viable achievable alternatives for resource conservation. Persistence and dedication to conservation causes can and does achieve positive results in the long run.

In the closing message, Joe Schultz had the great opportunity to listen to and speak with current Chief of the NRCS, Jason Weller. Jason had a very positive message about the future of the NRCS and the structural and program changes the NRCS is implementing to streamline processes and improve interaction with producers and Technical Service Provider partners.

One graphic that stood out as especially helpful was a concept depicting each farm/producer as the hub of a wheel and the NRCS Conservation Activity Plans components as spokes supporting sound, profitable, and conservation based farming practices on the land.

Conversation with Mr. Weller was short, but Joe was able to inform him that the Technical Service Provider Network (TSPN) is there and ready to assist the agency to administer that critical link between the producer (hub) and the land (wheel).

## McKnight Foundation Grant Update

by: Joe Lally, TSPN Executive Director

This \$25,000 grant to TSPN, Agren, and Iowa State University provided funding to determine the Ag Retail Community in Iowa with a perspective on "ag retailer barriers to offering conservation services to their respective farming customers".

Phase 1 of the grant was completed in the Spring of 2016, with Phases 2 and 3 set for completion during the spring of 2017.

Phase 2 is designed to meet with small groups of farmers to explore the same questions, while Phase 3 is designed to meet with absentee landowners with the same inquiries.

The Phase 1 summary found three generalized conclusions:

- Ag retailers would be concerned about whether some farmers would switch retailers if the conservation subject was brought up by their retail salesman
- Ag retailers doubt they have the education and training adequate for that conversation
- Ag retailers would need to be paid for their staff time spent on conservation discussions

We will continue with additional farmer meetings this spring. Four have already been held, and ten are planned.

## 2016 TSPN Meeting Highlights



Alan Lange presents the RSET Tool



Group photo



TSP Coordinator Kevin Kuhn addresses the group



Joe introduces Doug Peterson



Soil aggregate display



Doug Peterson's soil health presentation



Marty Adkins gives his presentation



Water infiltration display



Todd Peterson's presentation



TSPs at the annual meeting

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