



Healthy Land
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Oklahoma Chapter SWCS

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Links:

www.swcs.org

Check out activities on the international web site.

www.okswcs.org

Check out activities on the Oklahoma SWCS web site.

<http://envirothonok.com/>

Learn more about Oklahoma Envirothon.

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<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Oklahoma-Soil-and-Water-Conservation-Society/110815548967772>

By-Laws Revision

Members of Oklahoma Chapter SWCS should have received ballots for voting on the proposed revision of the chapter by-laws. One area in particular is updating the by-laws to allow the use of electronic media in conducting business. The use of email, teleconferencing, web sites, etc. are very useful to effectively and efficiently conduct business in the busy world of all of our members. President Moriasi is also asking members to respond to a survey included with the ballot to indicate areas of interest in serving the chapter. The proposed by-laws for approval may be viewed on the www.okswcs.org website.

Communicating with New Producers: How to Reach Them, How to Teach Them

Agricultural educators, public agencies, consultants and extension agents are seeing a new type of producer. Many of these producers don't have a traditional background in agriculture, requiring industry professionals to adapt their outreach and education methods. Who are these new producers? What works? How do you incorporate social media? Get answers at a one-day workshop, *Communicating with New Producers: How to Reach Them, How to Teach Them*,

9 a.m. – 4 p.m. March 20, 2012

OSU-OKC Auditorium, 900 N. Portland Ave.

Oklahoma City, OK 73107

Cost: (includes lunch) \$35 if registered by March 2

\$50 at the door, For more information or to register, go to www.noble.org/AgEvents or call 580.224.6411.

The following is a recent story on a project the Oklahoma Chapter SWCS is funding.

Oklahoma State University's faculty, staff talk about food security in Sierra Leone

BY SILAS ALLEN sallen@opubco.com

Published: December 13, 2011

STILLWATER — A group of 25 Oklahoma State University students and faculty will travel to communities in Sierra Leone this month to try to improve the food and water situation there.

The group will leave Dec. 27 and remain in Sierra Leone for about two weeks. The visit is the latest in a series of trips OSU faculty and students have made to the West African nation since 2007.

During that time, students have begun work on projects to improve the availability of food and water, said Michael Dicks, a professor in OSU's Department of Agricultural Economics.

Those projects include setting up a cooperative extension center to teach local residents about fruit and vegetable production, drilling water wells, setting up water filtration systems and giving local residents information about how to improve their diets, Dicks said. The projects are designed to give the communities the ability to produce the food they need.

The project began in 2007 with well drilling and nutrition assessments, Dicks said. As the project has developed, the group from OSU has been forging ties with a number of nongovernmental organizations working in the region, as well as nearby Njala University, a public school that specializes in training agriculture extension workers.

Kate Arroyo, the trade and development assistant for OSU's Office of International Trade and Development, said the communities where the group works don't have running water and only have electricity by generator for a few hours in the evenings. Women and children spend a few hours each day fetching water from nearby wells, she said.

Arroyo went on one of the university's previous trips to Sierra Leone.

Seeing the conditions in the communities is eye-opening, she said — sanitation practices are a rarity, since the residents don't always have access to basic toiletries like soap.

As a result, she said, the residents' health tends to suffer.

According to World Bank World Development Indicators for 2010, Sierra Leone had one of the highest mortality rates for children under age 5 in the region, at 174 deaths per 1,000 children. That tops Sierra Leone's two neighboring countries, with



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Liberia seeing 102.6 deaths per 1,000 children and Guinea seeing 129.9 deaths per 1,000.

By giving residents in the communities access to clean water, Arroyo said, the group hopes to prevent potentially fatal illnesses.

“There's a great need,” she said.

Jesi Lay, a biosystems engineering major and a member of Engineers Without Borders, is coordinating the group's well-drilling efforts. Lay said the group will be working in a community near Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. The OSU group will be working with a local group to teach local residents to dig a well using hand tools. Those residents will then set up a business digging wells, she said.

Lay went to Sierra Leone as a part of the university's trip in March. Aside from clean water and improved sanitation, Lay said the communities are in dire need of better education. The civil war that raged throughout Sierra Leone from 1991-2002 essentially wiped out an entire generation and left the country's formal economy in shambles, she said.

The group has been working with an orphanage that mainly serves children whose parents were killed in the war, Lay said. Working with the children from the orphanage and connecting with other residents in the region has been one of the more rewarding aspects of the job, she said.

The trip also gives her a chance to put her engineering training to use in a way that can improve the quality of life for an entire community, she said.

“It was hard work, but you feel like you're actually doing something,” she said. “I didn't want to leave.”

Liberty Galvin, OSU-SWCS student chapter member, is coordinating the construction of water filtration systems. The systems are made using layers of gravel and sand that filter out things like earthworms and large particles, she said. After two months, a layer of bacteria forms on top of the gravel and sand — “a layer of black sludge-looking stuff,” she said. Those bacteria feed on microbes in the water, meaning the water that comes out of the filter is safe to drink, she said.

The filters are a good option for underdeveloped regions, she said, because they're simple, effective and easy to replicate with basic materials. The OSU group will be working with graduate students from

Njala University who will be taking the project over once the students leave.

Galvin has been involved in the project in the past. She got involved because she's interested in doing work with the Peace Corps after graduation. She has an interest in food security and water security

issues, she said, so her faculty adviser suggested she get involved with the Sierra Leone project.

Dicks said he's pleased to see students taking a greater interest in the project. He's encouraging students to participate in the project in their early college career — freshman or sophomore year — because it tends to affect their attitudes toward their college experience.

In some cases, he said, students who went on one of the Sierra Leone trips have gone on to start projects of their own. In one case, two students have returned to Sierra Leone to develop courses that prepare students in the area for engineering and mathematics disciplines at Njala University.

Seeing students who are as bright and have as much potential as themselves but don't have the same opportunity because of socioeconomic conditions leaves students with a better sense of how lucky they are, he said.

“That's a painful understanding for these kids,” he said.



Kate Arroyo and Liberty Galvin stand in front of assorted jewelry, houseware and clothing from West Africa, South Africa and Central and South America at the Farmer's Market at the OSU parking garage near University Avenue. Money raised from the items will be used to lower the cost of Galvin and other student's upcoming trip to Sierra Leone in West Africa.

The **Harrah Cub Scout Den 9** is working on their Cub Scout **World Conservation Award** and need assistance in the following areas:

1. Describe the different layers of soil at an excavation project.
 2. Visit a burned-out forest or prairie area and talk to a soil or water conservation officer about how the area will be planted and cared for.
 3. Learn about erosion
 4. Visit a lake, stream or river. Plan and do a project to help clean up this source of water.
- If any of you (members) are interested in providing assistance please let me know.