Dr. Ghezzi, students, judge NACTA soil competition

The 2016 North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Judging Conference, located at the University of Minnesota Crookston, was the recent destination of Dr. Jessi Ghezzi and the Ball State Soil Judging team. Ghezzi, the team’s coach, Kris Green, graduate assistant coach, and nine undergraduate student members made the 12-hour drive for the three day competition in April.

Soil judging is an activity than many people outside the field of soil science aren’t very familiar with. According to Ghezzi, “In 1961 intercollegiate soil judging was started by the American Society of Agronomy. There are seven collegiate regions in the US that host a regional contest each fall. The top schools from each region advance to National competition in the spring. The regional and national contests are hosted by different schools every year, so students get to experience different soils, landscapes and management practices across the nation.”

Arriving on a Tuesday, the team visited multiple soil judging sites, called “practice pits,” for the next two days in Crookston and surrounding cities to learn about the soils in the area. On Friday, Ghezzi’s team then utilized this knowledge to compete against other students by viewing and judging four different soil pits.

Both Green and Ghezzi agree that the most difficult part about soil judging is the extensive memorization of new soil knowledge required, plus the necessary ability to think quickly and proficiently when working in the pit.

“They only have a few days to cram as much knowledge about the characteristics and interpretations of those soil types as they can before they are thrown into the fire of competition. To make it even harder, they are in a 6-foot deep, maybe 6-12 foot wide hole, with at least six to eight other students, trying to characterize a 2-foot wide section of soil. They have to do this in 15-minute increments over an hour’s time. It’s stressful for them but it’s also a great way to learn to handle high stress situations, along with efficiency and time management,” Ghezzi said.

The team placed sixth out of 14 teams and out of the 79 individuals competing, one Ball State student placed within the top 10. Ghezzi and Green were extremely proud of the enthusiasm and hard work that the team, comprised of all first-year soil judgers, exhibited.

“This is only the second year that soil judging has been offered in the NREM department and we are already going toe-to-toe with major land grant agriculture universities. As a team, we are proud to be a part of something great and to be nationally representing our department. This couldn’t have been done without the enthusiastic learning spirit of our undergraduate students, as well as the countless hours and resources put into the team by my fellow graduate assistant, Cathy Egler, and coach, Dr. Jessi Ghezzi,” Green said.
NREM Alumni Society hosts 2016 Awards Dinner

Alumni, students, faculty, and staff all came together the evening of April 15 to enjoy the annual Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Management Awards Dinner. The event, hosted at the Ball State Alumni Center, began with a reception, which enabled alumni to meet current students and faculty in an informal setting. Posters presenting student course work and research were displayed for guests to enjoy.

During the dinner hour, laughter and conversation could be overheard at each table, with guests both networking and sharing stories of where their careers have taken them.

Following dinner, the award presentations were emceed by NREM Alumni Society president, Denise Wright, '86, and vice president, Bruce Oldham, '98, with an invocation given by Megan Bolyard, '06.

Dr. Amy Gregg, recently appointed as the department’s first female chair, gave a short presentation about the department today, also introducing all of the current NREM students and faculty that were in attendance.

The six members of the 2016 NREM Alumni Awards Committee presented six individuals to receive awards in four different categories.

The first award, Friend of NREM, was presented to John Taylor, '92 MS '97 (biology) for his partnership with the department. Taylor, the land manager for the BSU Field Station Properties and Environmental Education Center, works often with the NREM to provide opportunities for its student to utilize theses spaces. Additionally, he is commonly a familiar face at the NREM Internship & Career Fair, as well as the department picnics.

The Award of Merit was presented to three alumni who graduated within the past 10 years: Nick Johnson, '05, Luke Libby, '06, and Angela Garcia Miller, '06.

Johnson is a Specialist in Plant Health Safeguarding with the USDA, successfully moving up the supervisory chain with USDA APHIS (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service) since graduation. He has worked with U.S. Customs officials to inspect luggage and locate smuggled food items. He is also responsible for monitoring and compliance of the Japanese Beetle Program at the FedEx International Airport hub. He regularly notifies Ball State about internship opportunities for current students.

Libby is a Project Manager at Creek Run L.L.C., a full service consulting firm in Indiana. He is a Certified Hazardous Materials Manager and is responsible for preparation and installation of remediation systems. Previously, he had been an intern at Gallatin Steel in Ghent, KY, an environmental manager with North American Stainless, and a radiochemistry analyst with General Engineering Laboratories, LLC.

Garcia Miller is a rural conservationist with the Tippecanoe SWCD, where she has worked since 2013. She coordinates rentals, presents educational programs, and works alongside NRCS staff providing technical assistance on conservation and agriculture. She particularly enjoys helping customers improve wildlife habitat on private lands. She has also served as an interpretive naturalist at Mounds and Turkey Run State Parks, as an assistant herpetologist with the DNR Division of Fish & Wildlife, and as State Coordinator of the North American Amphibian Monitoring Program.

The Award of Achievement was presented to Brandt Baughman, '93. Baughman is the property manager at Indiana Dunes State Park with the IDNR, and previously served as assistant property manager at both Ouabache and Spring Mill State Parks. He played an influential role in the extension of the Lake Michigan Water Trail through northwestern Indiana in 2011. Baughman is affiliated with the Indiana Resource Managers Association and serves on the Coastal Advisory Board for the DNR Lake Michigan Coastal Program.

Lastly, the Award of Distinction was presented to Dr. Hugh Brown, NREM Associate Professor Emeritus and natural resource consultant. Brown served as Chair of the NREM department from 2000-2006, retiring in 2008. He has more than 35 years of experience in the field of environmental management. He was Field Station Director at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute from 2011-2013. He has served as president of the Indiana Association of Professional Soil Classifiers, the Indiana Land Protection Alliance, and the Red-tail Land Conservancy. He co-authored Caring for Land Trust Properties, and has written articles in multiple academic journals. Brown is actively engaged in environmental causes and resides in Hastings, Michigan.
Where will summer 2016 take NREM students?

ALASKA
Dr. John Pichtel and eight Ball State students traveled to Alaska on May 15 for a 20-day field study on mining, energy, and land management in the state. The trip provides students with opportunities to examine the management of Alaska’s stunning array of natural and cultural resources by visiting national parks and forests, along with the southern coast, remote interior, and multiple research centers.

Students will tour sites of cultural and archaeological interest, visit salmon hatcheries, meet smoke-jumpers and other emergency responders, observe gold mining sites, and explore the Chugach National Forest and Denali National Park.

The group also plans to meet with government agencies and attend seminars on native Alaskan issues, Alaska’s energy and mining policies, wildlife conservation, and park and forest management.

Pichtel has taken 11 previous groups on field studies to Alaska and believes the experience has many benefits, such as the opportunity to interact with professionals in the field and experience the unique landscape first hand. He describes it as an experience that really sticks with each student for a lifetime.

LIBERIA
Across the Atlantic Ocean, in the small West African country of Liberia, Daoda (Socrates) Carlon will begin his master’s thesis research on developing a community-based approach to forest resource management in post-war Liberia.

Carlon, a native of Monrovia, Liberia and current NREM graduate student, worked hard as a child to overcome many obstacles in achieving his education. Despite his struggles, he was able to earn a bachelor’s degree from Temple University in adult and organizational development in 2011.

He explained that his determination to help his country overcome the many challenges that it faces, especially natural resource mismanagement and the squandering of public funds, are the driving forces behind his decision to attain a master’s degree in Natural Resources and Environmental Management at Ball State.

After an internship with the Liberia Forestry Department in May, Carlon will begin conducting his research, which will consist primarily of interviewing key informants and other locals in Rivergee and Sinoe Counties of Liberia, during June and July. According to Carlon, his biggest challenge will be encouraging the national government of Liberia to one day implement recommendations based on his findings.
NREM students create ‘Earth Day in the Village’ fundraising event

The 30 students of instructor Megan Sharp’s International Community Development class (NREM 357) were issued a challenge. Sharp asked her students to choose an international non-profit organization and devise a way to support that organization in a method of their choosing. Working in groups, the students developed eight different proposals, ultimately deciding on one to pursue as a class.

They chose to host a fundraising event on Earth Day, April 22, that would support Concern Worldwide U.S., an international humanitarian organization. According to the organization, their aim is to, “...help the world’s extreme poor and most vulnerable recover from disaster, fight malnutrition and deadly diseases, strengthen their resilience to climate extremes, and more.”

The class reached out to the Muncie community in hopes of finding interested groups and sponsors, gaining Muncie Delaware County Clean-Beautiful and Be Here Now DIY Music Venue & Craft Brew Bar as partners. Other participating sponsors included Art Mart, Greek’s Pizzeria, TIS Bookstore, The Cup, Let’s Spoon, Hotbox Pizza, and Ball State Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Management.

From this collaboration, “Earth Day in the Village” was born. The day-long event consisted of a Village clean-up and sustainability fair in the afternoon, featuring lawn games, sidewalk chalk murals, raffle tickets, prizes, and informational tables about sustainability. The tables included Timmy Global Health, the Natural Resources Club, Air and Waste Management Association, Animal Rescue Fund (ARF), The Sierra Club, Global Brigades, Ball State Energy Action Team (BEAT), Jason Donati (Muncie Sanitary District), and the Hoosier Environmental Council. The evening entailed a night of music, with two environmentally conscious and nationally-touring acts, Sidewalk Chalk and Native Sun, performing shows at Be Here Now.

Sharp estimated that the event brought in close to 50-60 people throughout the day. Fun was had by all involved in the successful Earth Day celebration, which resulted in nearly $200 in donated funds for Concern Worldwide.

At the end of the day Sharp was pleased that her students had gained a better understanding of real-world fundraising, community organizing, outreach, and event planning; all skills that can prove valuable in future careers in this field.

2016 NREM Department Awards & Recognitions

- Clyde W. Hibbs Memorial Scholarships
  - Taylor Wilson
  - Riley McManus
- Alex and Anna I. Nicoloff Scholarships
  - Isaiah Counts
  - Ben Rodenas
  - Hannah Winter
  - Melanie Komasinski
- Charles Mortensen Fellowship
  - Andrew Imboden
- Graduate Merit Award Fellowship
  - Emily Hart
- Cooper Award
  - Lucas Clay
- Outstanding Service
  - Karee Buffin
  - Stan Ross
- Outstanding Community Service
  - Hayden Wolfe
- Outstanding Senior
  - Colleen Pea
- Outstanding Graduate Student
  - Lindsey Hylton
  - Kim Richardson
- Outstanding Research Paper
  - Khaloud Al Rodini
- Outstanding Service to NREM
  - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) - Wesley Slain
The Ball State University Alumni Association has historically provided “active status” to alumni when they make monetary gifts to the BSU Foundation. These monetary gifts may be of any amount, to any BSU Foundation account, and take the place of a dues paying program that some other universities utilize. Please consider becoming active by supporting NREM scholarships and programs.

Your gift may be designated to any account in the BSU Foundation, including NREM. (Indiana residents can receive a 50% gift tax credit up to $200 when they file form CC-40 with their state taxes, reducing their out-of-pocket cost). Want more information? Contact the Ball State University Foundation or ask your accountant or CPA.

Alumni and friends are asked to consider an annual gift to one or more of the following BSU Foundation accounts that support programs and scholarships related to NREM:

- 6201 General operations of the NREM department
- 6203 Operation of the Hults Environmental Learning Center
- 6204 NREM Alumni Society activities and award programs
- 6216 Research programs with the NREM department
- 6217 Soil research projects with the NREM department
- 6218 Soil and water conservation education activities
- 6219 Renewable energy and industrial ecology research
- 6250 NREM scholarships
- 6253 Clyde Hibbs Scholarship
- 6254 Alex and Ana Nicoloff Scholarship
- 6255 Charles Mortensen Fellowship

Questions?
To make a gift, please visit the NREM website and click on the link labeled “Make a Gift,” or visit: www.bsu.edu/giving

- For more information about giving to NREM, contact Kassie Cosgrove at kkcrosgrove@bsu.edu
- To support the creation of a new scholarship, contact Dr. Amy Gregg at 765-285-5781 or algregg2@bsu.edu

Visit us on the Web!
http://www.bsu.edu/nrem

Contact NREM and submit news for consideration in the newsletter.

- For more information about news and upcoming events, contact Karee Buffin, administrative coordinator, 765-285-5780, nrem@bsu.edu

- Please send news about promotions or new positions, recognitions, and changes in your contact information to NREM Alumni Society at suetaylor@bsu.edu or 765-285-1408.

- “Like” NREM Alumni Society on Facebook, and visit their website. Click here to nominate an alumnus for an award. Also, visit NREM at Ball State University on Facebook for updates on current events.

Thank You!

NREM would like to thank those individuals who contributed to this issue of the newsletter. Your input is appreciated! Our gratitude goes to:

- Megan Sharp
- John Pichtel
- Jessi Ghezzi
- Kris Green
- Socrates Carlon
- Sue Taylor
- Lindsay Hylton