

## **PRESIDENT'S CORNER – 9/8/21**

This message is an update to keep our membership current with the latest deliberations of the Executive Committee. We meet by conference call on a monthly basis to discuss current issues that fall generally under the categories of Old Business and New Business. This message summarizes our discussions from our meetings in July, August and September.

### **7/7/21**

The key issue under Old Business relates to certification requirements for Soil Scientists. The Soil Classifiers Certification Advisory Committee voted unanimously at their meeting in February 2021 and DPH has agreed to reduce the required hours of CEUs for certification from 40 to 30. This applies to active Soil Scientists (renewing in February, 2022) as well as members or former members who are interested in reestablishing their certification as a Soil Classifier with Georgia DPH. The new rule will allow soil scientists to be recertified by submitting CEU's equivalent to a standard two-year cycle (30 hours) regardless of the number of years that certification has lapsed. If anyone knows of a soil scientist who is contemplating returning to the profession but has let their certification lapse, please pass this news along.

Another item under Old Business is a request from Chris Kumnick for us to provide input to DPH on any recommended changes to rules and regulations that require legislative action. I spoke with Chris today and he is going to advise me of specific sections where our input is needed. One of the key issues is whether we want to recommend any changes to the education and experience requirements to be certified as a Soil Classifier. The Executive Committee has been discussing and DPH wants to hear from us on ways to increase the number of practicing soil scientists in the state who are qualified to perform soil investigations for on-site wastewater systems. Reducing the experience requirements of Soil Classifiers in Training from 4 years to 3 years has been suggested as one way to increase our numbers. We will put this to a vote of our membership before recommending any change in this regard. Other issues that I discussed with Chris are the requirement that Certificates of Insurance be attached to every report and the practice of submitting reports electronically with a digital signature.

A topic that falls under New Business that is related to the experience requirement for certification is a suggestion from Rusty Royston, SSSGA Past President, to consider creating a new category of practicing professional that would be called something like Certified Soil Technician. This might be an avenue for someone who has worked under a Certified Soil Classifier but does not meet all the soil science education requirements to enter the profession. Any such individual would have to complete the soil science course work to be considered for approval as a Certified Soil Classifier. This proposal would have to get the blessing of DPH since they would be handling the certification process.

Also under New Business, the Executive Committee has established a new ad hoc committee to study and report on the State of the Soil Science Profession in Georgia. Headed by President-Elect, Rick Joslyn, this committee will be working to come up with formal steps that we can take as an organization to strengthen our society and insure the long-term success of our profession. All of us have taken heat from the public and regulators about the long lead time to get a soil investigation completed. The best way to address this problem is for us as business owners to hire and train more soil scientists. The committee will be communicating with university faculty and regulators to figure out a way to help this happen.

### **8/18/21**

New Business: Rusty Royston reported that during their most recent meeting the DPH Soil Classifier Certification Advisory Committee voted to recommend to DPH that the Fundamentals of Soil Science exam administered by SSSA be dropped from the requirement for Soil Classifier certification. This recommendation has not yet been acted upon by DPH. The Fundamentals

exam will be replaced by the exam that was developed by Larry West for the initial round of certification in 2000. That exam focuses on knowledge of the Georgia On-Site Manual. Rusty reported that other states have taken a similar approach because the Fundamentals exam requires such a broad knowledge of soils that is really not required to conduct soil investigations for on-site wastewater disposal. The field exam that is currently required for Soil Scientists will remain. The committee also recommended to DPH to allow engineers and geologists the option to take the written and field exams in lieu of the current requirement to have "at least 3 semester hours (or equivalent) of college courses related specifically to soils classification and suitability of sites for on-site sewage management systems."

### **9/7/21**

New Business: A virtual training session with Eric Daniels of Eljen Corp. has been set for October 13, 8:30-10:30 AM. Details for connecting to the session will be forthcoming. Participants will receive 2 hours of CEUs and will receive a certificate from Eljen as a certified designer. The training session will concentrate on understanding and using their Design Manual. If you choose to participate download the manual ahead of the session from their web site under Resources – Georgia.

Another training opportunity is being offered in Rincon, Effingham County on November 4 and 5 by Donnie Bradshaw and Troy Smith. More than half the time will be spent in the field looking at different soils from on-site wastewater and wetland delineation perspectives. Class time will be at an outdoor pavilion next to a pond to allow effective social distancing.

US EPA On-Site Wastewater Program is sponsoring Septic Smart week 9/20-9/26. A series of videos have been created and one will be available for viewing each day of that week through a YouTube link. Our very own Rusty Royston appears in one of the videos. Links will be sent out through the SSSGA ListServ.

Finally under training, for those who missed our ethics training session back in March of this year SSSA and the Soil and Water Conservation Society are offering [Ethics for Soils Professionals: The Gray Areas.](#) Click on the link to register for the free session being offered on September 9. Registration allows you to view the session anytime during the next 30 days.

Save the Date: SSSGA Annual Meeting is scheduled for 2/21&22/22.

More to follow in the coming weeks. In the meantime feel free to give me a call, text or email to discuss whatever is on your mind.

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