



Science
Societies

Wilson named CCA Conservationist of the Year

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Michael Wilson of Allandale, IL, was named this year's recipient of the CCA Conservationist of the Year Award. The announcement was made by USDA–NRCS Acting Chief Kevin Norton during a virtual ceremony on Dec. 8, 2020. The award annually recognizes CCAs who exhibit dedication to exceptional conservation delivery and customer service and has shown to be a leader in their industry.

“Mr. Wilson has made significant contributions to the agriculture industry through his experience and dedication to conservation,” said National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) CEO Jeremy Peters while presenting the award. “His work and achievements truly make him a leader of stewardship and soil health.”

“Admirably, Mr. Mike Wilson is a true example of NRCS's mission of delivering conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect our natural resources and feed a growing world,” said Acting Chief Norton. “It takes partners like those in agribusiness with an eye toward natural resource conservation to achieve our goals to increase the overall stewardship of our nation's farming, ranching, and forest landowners' operations on private lands.”

This year's award recognizes Wilson's more than 30 years of crop–advising experience. He currently works for the Wabash Valley Service Company with a group of CCAs to reach growers on about 600,000 ac in southeast Illinois. His work includes demonstrating to farmers practices and products to increase nutrient use efficiency, maintain or improve yield, and reduce nutrient loss to the environment. His teamwork with growers has resulted in an increased use of nitrogen stabilizers with 85% of all nitrogen applications receiving a stabilizer in the product.

"Agricultural retailers and their employees play a dynamic and trusted role in conservation planning, and Mike is a great example of this," said Daren Coppock, President and CEO of the Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA). "ARA congratulates Mike on his award and is proud to be a partner in this annual recognition."

"TFI has known Mike for many years now, and it is no surprise to us that he was chosen as the Conservationist of the Year," said Corey Rosenbusch, President and CEO of The Fertilizer Institute (TFI). "His commitment to conservation and to the principles of 4R Nutrient Stewardship is exemplary and reflects the values of agricultural retailers across the country who work with farmers to implement best practices."

"Mike is a great example of the value of Certified Crop Advisers working closely with farmers and ranchers to promote conservation stewardship," said Nick Goeser, CEO of the American Society of Agronomy (ASA), the Crop Science Society of America (CSSA), and the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA). "Not only is he a conservation and agriculture leader, but Mike is dedicated to training the next generation of CCAs to continue the legacy of economic and environmental sustainability."

"Soil health and conservation are critical elements of agriculture sustainability," said Dr. Barb Glenn, CEO of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA). "We congratulate and thank Mike for his committed stewardship of our natural resources."

Wilson was named a 4R Advocate by The Fertilizer Institute in 2013 for his commitment to helping growers implement the principles of 4R Nutrient Stewardship. He is also a regular guest speaker at Wabash Valley College in Mount Carmel, IL and works to support students by hosting field trips and tours of the Wabash Valley Service Company's operations.

“Mr. Wilson is a natural teacher, and his real-world experience ... always elicits questions from students about how to implement these strategies in our region of Illinois,” said Steve Hnetkovsky, Assistant Professor of Agriculture at Wabash Valley College and Wilson's nominator for the award. “He is a force of nature when it comes to advocating for responsible nutrient management and stewardship of our soil resource.”

The CCA Conservationist of the Year Award is supported by a conservation and agribusiness partnership among USDA-NRCS, ARA, ASA, CropLife America, CSSA, NACD, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, SSSA, and TFI. Learn more at www.agronomy.org/awards.

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