Science Societies

2023 Western Society of Crop Science Meeting Recap

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February 2, 2024



Attendees of the Western Society of Crop Science 2023 meeting held in Honolulu, HI from June 26–28.

The Western Society of Crop Science (WSCS) is a CSSA branch that comprises western states, territories, and provinces in Canada, Mexico, and the U.S.

The WSCS 2023 meeting was held in Honolulu, HI from June 26–28. The theme of the meeting was the same as that of the 2023 ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Annual Meeting: “Open Science Inspires.” The meeting was hosted by Michael Kantar from the Department of Tropical Plant and Soil Sciences, University of Hawaii at Manoa, HI.

The WSCS meeting provides a great opportunity to network with colleagues and students from around the West and exchange scientific information. The meeting was attended by more than 60 participants from numerous universities. Student participation increased significantly since the students received travel grants of $800.

This year, participants arrived on Monday, June 26. Activities started the next day with a welcome from meeting host Drs. Michael Kantar and Anowar Islam, WSCS President. Islam discussed his fundraising efforts to provide student stipends to participate in the meeting in Hawaii.

Waimanalo Research Station Tour

The agricultural tour at Waimanalo Research Station was one of the highlights of the conference:

The first stop was the Go Farm Program, originally known as the Agribusiness Incubator Program formed at the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTHAR). The program is designed to support the business needs new and existing agribusinesses and providing hands□on training for local farmers.

The corn genetics research plots were the next tour stop. The attendees got an opportunity to learn about corn genome engineering to sustain crop improvement.

Next, the attendees visited the shower tree maintained by Kenneth Leonhardt who gave a presentation about the production and introduction of sterile landscape

shower trees, polypoid induction, and the release of several ornamental and landscape plants.

The next stop on the tour was hosted by Ted Radovich, principal investigator of the Sustainable and Organic Farming Systems Laboratory at the University of Hawaii. His research program focuses on understanding how crop yield and quality can be optimized in agricultural systems that reduce reliance on conventional chemical inputs and increase use of sustainable farming practices. The group visited his plots and learned sustainable production practices.

The attendees then walked towards the breadfruit agroforestry and learned about the techniques that can sustain productivity for long periods of time while regenerating land degraded by erosion, compaction, overgrazing, and loss of organic matter.

The next stop was the erythrina gall wasp resistant Wiliwili plot where attendees had an opportunity to learn about Wiliwili, a keystone species in dry forests used for landscaping, soil conservation, and windbreaks. Gall wasp's larvae feed inside the leaves, making them curled and misshapen, and severe infestations can kill the trees. Therefore, the program develops erythrina gall wasp resistant Wiliwili varieties. The group then visited the lizard ecology program site where attendees learned about lizard diets and temporal effects on lizard ecology.

The final stop on the tour was a coffee site, and attendees learned the Hawaii's innovative research in coffee growing and processing.

After the tour, the afternoon meetings and presentations were held, including a keynote speaker Dr. Jonathan L. Deenick, Chair of the Department of Tropical Plant and Soil Science who presented on "Soils of Hawaii" at the Campus Center Ballroom of the University of Hawaii.



During the Waimanalo Research Station Tour, the group visited the lizard ecology program site where they learned about lizard diets and temporal effects on lizard ecology. Photo by Sandya Kesoju.

Student Presentations and Awards

On Wednesday, June 28, 2023 CSSA President Seth Murray began the day with some remarks via Zoom, and Irene Grimberg, Deputy Regional Coordinator of Western SARE, provided an overview of grant programs. Then, oral presentations were entered into the student competition. Sixteen student presentations were delivered discussing various topics including agronomic performance, remote sensing, coal char, cover crops, fertility management, species mixtures, irrigation water and nutrient management practices, and plant breeding issues for various crops.

Next, the student poster presentation competition took place. There were 18 entries addressing management practices for crops ranging from forage to food crops and also soil and plant breeding topics. Professional poster presentations followed on different topics of related to crop physiology, agronomy, and soil science.

After a break, the WSCS business meeting was held followed by the awards ceremony. Every year, the WSCS offers the A.K. Dobrenz Student Awards for three student oral

and three student poster presentations.

Awards included certificates and monetary prizes. The 2023 winners of the student oral competition were: first place—Tina Sullivan (Utah State University); second place—Jessica Williams (Montana State University); and third place (tie)—Ritika Lamichhane (University of Idaho) and Francisco Bautista (University of Idaho). Poster presentation winners were first place—Tina Sullivan (Utah State University); second place—Chandan Shilpakar (University of Wyoming), and third place—Erik Spitzer (California State University–Chico).

We congratulate the award winners and wish them great success in their future careers.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Susan Chapman, Director of Special Projects for ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, for the efforts to help organize the 2023 meeting. Special thanks are extended to Dr. Seth Murray, 2023 President of CSSA, for opening remarks and encouragement for students' success. We would like to extend our thanks to the Agronomic Science Foundation and Western SARE for providing financial assistance in the form of travel grants to students. The event wouldn't have been successful without their support. We are also grateful to Dr. Michael Kantar and his team for hosting the meeting at the University of Hawaii, the program section moderators, the student oral and poster competition judges, and all speakers for making this year's program successful.

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