

In Memoriam

June 19, 2024



Diana Wall

Diana Wall, a 32-year member of SSSA and one of the world's most internationally respected environmental scientists, passed away on Mar. 25, 2024.

Wall grew up in North Carolina and earned her doctorate degree in plant pathology from the University of Kentucky, Lexington. A professor of biology and University Distinguished Professor at Colorado State University (CSU), Wall was a soil ecologist who spent her research career in the dry valleys of Antarctica, where she and her team showed that soil nematodes—microscopic roundworms—represent the top of the terrestrial food chain.

In 2004, as recognition for her work on the continent, she had an Antarctic feature named after her: Wall Valley. For more than 25 years, Wall and her colleagues researched in the Antarctic McMurdo Dry Valleys and helped clarify the critical links between climate change and soil biodiversity.

Her interdisciplinary research uncovered dramatic impacts to invertebrate communities in response to climate change, the key role nematode species play in soil carbon turnover, and how they survive such extreme environments.

Wall was an elected member of the National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the 2013 Laureate of the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement, and received the SSSA Presidential Award in 2013.

She also was scientific chair of the Global Soil Biodiversity Initiative, which, with the European Union Joint Research Initiative, released the *Global Soil Biodiversity Atlas* in May 2016 at the United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya.

Wall began her research in Antarctica in 1989. She arrived at CSU in 1993 and went on to hold several research and leadership positions, including director of the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory. At CSU, she was well known as an educator who was a generous and inspirational teacher and dedicated mentor.

—Source: Nik Olsen, Colorado State University

Richard Wiese

Richard A. Wiese, 95, professor emeritus in agronomy and horticulture at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and a member of SSSA (68 years) and ASA (49 years), passed away on Feb. 22, 2024.



Richard Wiese

Wiese was born Apr. 3, 1928, in Stanton County, Nebraska, and raised on the family farm in Dodge County. He attended one-room rural schools and graduated from Dodge High School in 1946. During World War II, he was drafted into the United States Army Air Corps and became a radar repairman. He served as a reservist in the Navy for 24 years and retired at the rank of captain in 1978.

Wiese completed a bachelor's degree in technical agriculture in 1954 and a master's degree in agronomy specializing in soils in 1956, both at the University of Nebraska. He then moved to North Carolina and was employed with the Soil Testing Division of the State Department of Agriculture during which time he completed a doctorate degree

in soil chemistry and plant nutrition from North Carolina State University. In 1967, he joined the faculty in the Department of Agronomy at Nebraska as associate professor and extension soils specialist.

He directed educational programs in partnership with agribusinesses in Nebraska and developed management systems for growing soybeans in high pH soils. His interest in water quality resulted in the development of Nebraska's first water plans. Because of his involvement in developing both management plans, he concentrated his work in water and nitrogen management for field crops.

After retirement, Wiese was engaged for 10 years in consulting and contract educational work, served as an interim president of a research foundation, was an adviser to major corporate farm suppliers, and on the board of directors of an international research foundation. Work took him to Nigeria, China, Brazil, and several states, culminating in a final retirement after serving production agriculture for a total of 47 years.

—Source: Lana Koepke Johnson, University of Nebraska

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