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# SWSPCP FALL NEWSLETTER

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

BY ELLEN KRACAUER HARTIG,  
SENIOR PROFESSIONAL  
WETLAND SCIENTIST

Dear Professional Wetland Scientists,

You are all amazing! The work that we do to find, demarcate, investigate and conserve wetlands is demanding and not always appreciated. We often have to explain what we do for a living. Sometimes it is to family who may not grasp why we are going to odd and sometimes long neglected places. But nevertheless, here we are consulting, teaching, researching, advocating, advising, and guiding on tidal and freshwater wetlands.

As a certified PWS we may be working in isolation, and sometimes as a lone voice at our place of employment. Yet we give ourselves the opportunity to gather at the SWS annual meetings, at smaller more regional meetings, or at more narrowly defined workshops and forays. There we can compare experiences, discuss dilemmas and gain perspectives that may have eluded us.


I find that when feeling too isolated or overwhelmed, there is this wonderful community of wetland scientists to serve as a source of inspiration. The Society of Wetland Scientists Professional Certification Program, Inc. (PCP) will be approaching thirty years of granting Professional Wetland Scientist (PWS) status to applicants.

I think back to the excitement I felt in 1995, when a co-worker told me she had heard that a certification process had opened up. That we could apply by putting together a portfolio of relevant semester-long courses from our schooling, relevant short courses that we had taken since, descriptions of wetland projects we were involved with, talks we had given, conferences we had attended, and any publications. I found that whereas I hadn't yet realized it I had a lot I could draw on. I had not previously considered the need for something akin to a qualifying certification process by a professional society. I had previously taken regional training courses that had deepened my professional involvement with wetland specific issues and allowed me to perform wetland delineations as part of my consulting job. That first course was sandwiched between the publication of the 1987 Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual and the 1989 Federal Unified Manual that had closely followed.

It was a fascinating time where political discourse included efforts to redefine wetlands and water down the regulations, simultaneous to the regulators and consultants increasingly recognizing methodologies for collecting data on vegetation, soils and hydrology that could be used to determine a wetland boundary. Different scientists could separately demarcate a wetland and come up with the same basic delineated line. It was repeatable. The regulators then had the power to issue a jurisdictional determination on the wetland boundaries.



TITLE: ELLEN KRACAUER HARTIG AT THOMAS PELL SANCTUARY IN PELHAM BAY PARK, BRONX, NY.  
PHOTO BY: WILLIAM BRENT MCCABE



It was in this milieu that the need for professional certification came about. For me personally, this jump from a certificate of completion of a week-long training course, to having the capacity to be a certified wetland scientist gave me a new-found perspective. On the one level I found myself grappling with differences in federal methodology plus the different state methodologies. But at another level I increasingly realized that I no longer was at the mercy of one employer. If I was laid off from one job, I could take my certification as a PWS elsewhere. I found this to be incredibly freeing. I was a wetland scientist whether I worked in consulting, government agency work, or in academia. I could be very straightforward in my approach to my work. It allowed a certain honesty, and in my case, I was fortunate in that that was mainly appreciated. Standing out for me was the ethics portion of the certification that matched my passion and commitment to wetland habitat protection.

I have to say that I had been under the impression that it was because I was among the early cohorts for certification that there were no courses specifically on wetlands but that now it was different. I had thought that these days anyone interested could take the right courses already in college and be on the road to their wetland career. However, on inquiring, I found out I was wrong. Not every environmental science department offers wetland courses. It still can be necessary to cobble together a portfolio as you apply for being a PWS or WPIT.


I see that this need is being addressed by several committees within PCP. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee and the Globalization Committee are in the process of reviewing ways to increase pre-approved online courses and ways to receive credits toward recertification.

It is thanks to the many Professional Wetland Scientists who laid the groundwork for certification and continue to make the PCP program successful. They provided the shoulders I stand on. I want to especially thank the current Past President, Robert McInnes, and the outgoing Past President, Gillian Davies for their continuing support and guidance. I am grateful to Kimberli Ponzio as it was with her encouragement that I said yes to running for president of the PCP.

Congratulations to the DEI committee under the leadership of Kimberli Ponzio and Swapan Paul on the DEI Action Plan.

I look forward to working with you all through this year.

Sincerely,  
Ellen Kracauer Hartig, SPWS  
SWSPCP President



# THE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI) COMMITTEE UPDATE

## 1. DEI Statement updated

Following the recommendations from the DEI Committee to the SWSPCP Board of Directors (BOD), the DEI Statement has been revised to include the words, "physical appearance". Accordingly, the SWSPCP website has also been updated, as below:

*We recognize diversity to be the representation of various identities and differences in our program which broadly include, among other dimensions, race, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, physical appearance, religion, economic status, country of origin and citizenship, ethnic background, disability, education, career stage, and professional status.*

Along the same sentiment, the PCP Code of Ethics was also revised.

## 2. DEI Connect Session

To update DEI initiatives and to enhance the existing level of perception and awareness of the professionals about DEI, a DEI Connect Session was held on the 25th of April 2023. The webinar can be viewed from the below link: [Click Here](#)

However, to appreciate whether further Connect Sessions should be organized, the DEI Committee would like to know whether Certificants think that their DEI webinars or training sessions could improve their levels of awareness and ultimately help improving the DEI situation at their workplaces.

Please let us know by emailing to Adrianna Borczyk on [ABorczyk@association-resources.com](mailto:ABorczyk@association-resources.com) and also proposing any specific aspect of DEI that you would like the DEI Committee to address.

## 3. DEI Action Plan in progress

Following the DEI survey, that was conducted in January 2022, the DEI Committee has been drafting an Action Plan. This Plan is near complete, and it is now placed to the SWSPCP BOD for their endorsement. Given the SWSPCP relies on the collective activities of various other related committees, groups and organizations, the accomplishment of the listed actions will heavily lean on the cooperative and synergistic involvements of such groups and teams. Once the Action Plan is endorsed by the BOD, those groups and teams will be consulted at the implementation stage. The Action Plan will be also made available to the Certificants in the due course.

# REVISED RATES

**Sara Kreisel**, PWS, Outreach Committee Chair, DEI and Globalization Committee Member

**R. Harold Jones**, PWS Emeritus, Globalization Committee Member

Over the last few years, the Society of Wetland Scientists Professional Certification Program (SWSPCP) Board of Directors and Committees has recommitted to fostering connectedness of its members, and those who have yet to become certificated members. This has manifested in an effort to understand who our members are through a recent, anonymous, voluntary survey and also in efforts to better assist members by providing a forum and resources for members through Connect Sessions ([posted on our website](#)).

SWSPCP has been able to reflect on what it has learned, and now looks to the future to continue to bring diversity, equity, and inclusivity (DEI) to its program. In this way, the makeup of the future membership can begin to better reflect the inherent diversity of the wetland professions we represent, and wetland resources we aim to assess, manage, and protect worldwide.

At the time of implementation of the SWSPCP over 30 years ago in the United States (US), the application fee structure was based on comparable schedules established by similar certification programs in the US, in US dollars (\$). However, with the worldwide expansion of the Society of Wetland Society (SWS) Chapters and various SWS and SWSPCP Committee initiatives (Globalization, Outreach, and DEI in particular), an increase in individuals exploring Professional Certification from non-North American countries has continued to rise steadily.



Unfortunately, and predictably, as SWSPCP has learned, a primary obstacle for many individuals is the application and maintenance fees. The current 2023 \$400 application fee for PWS certification (non-SWS member) represented greater than 50% of an individual's median yearly income for 23 nations, as established by the [World Bank](#).

To design a more equitable worldwide application fee structure, the Globalization Committee established a starting base by taking the current 2023 fee of \$400 and dividing by the median annual individual income (\$25,332) of the US population;  $\$400/\$25,332 = 0.01579$  rounded to 0.0158%. That ratio was then applied to the mean annual income (in US dollars) of the countries listed in the three lower brackets:

Upper Middle-Income Countries & Territories --- \$8,599  
 Lower Middle-Income Countries & Territories --- \$3,049  
 Low Income Countries & Territories --- \$1,045

All other fees were then pro-rated on the rate of reduction currently established for Developed Countries, rounded up or down as appropriate. These fees are based on income brackets established by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for [Economic Co-operation and Development](#) using the latest income levels for each country calculated for 2022-2023 economic assistance flows. Four income brackets were established based on a country's per capita Gross National Income (GNI) as compiled by the World Bank in US Dollars.

This new fee structure was brought before the Board of Directors for a discussion and vote and was approved effective [April 27, 2023](#). Its approval is an important first step in better realizing the [PWS Mission and Vision](#)

SWSPCP continues to look to welcome new Wetland Professionals into certification, knowing certification will enhance the acumen and ethical standards of those working with wetlands resources. Therefore, SWSPCP will continue to seek new and innovative ways to foster connectivity between Wetland Professionals around the globe.

Table 1. Application Fee Structure for PWS/SPWS and WPIT for SWS members and SWS non-member from Developed Countries.

Fees (USD)	Developed Countries	
	SWS Member	SWS Non-Member
PWS Application Fee	\$300.00 US	\$400.00 US
WPIT Application Fee	\$100.00 US	\$200.00 US

Table 2. Application Fee Structure for PWS/SPWS and WPIT for SWS members and SWS non-member from Upper Middle Income Countries & Territories.

Fees (USD)	Upper Middle Income Countries & Territories	
	SWS Member	SWS Non-Member
PWS Application Fee	\$102.00 US	\$136.00 US
WPIT Application Fee	\$34.00 US	\$68.00 US

# SHARE THE NEWS

## WHY THE INTEREST ?

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### **Meike de Vringer, PWS Senior Scientist II**

Originally from the Netherlands, I moved to Florida in 2013 to escape the cold and rainy climate. Little did I know, Florida is a lot like the Netherlands: flat, green, and with water and wetlands everywhere (and still rainy, but at least warm!). After finishing my Master's degree in Earth Sciences at the University of Amsterdam, I started working as an environmental consultant in south Florida doing wetland delineations and permitting. I've had my eye on the PWS certification for a while to get formal recognition of my experience, both to satisfy minimum requirements for government bids and to support my career advancement with my current employer. Earlier this year, I finally obtained sufficient hours to complete my application and I'm now my department's wetland specialist!



# SOCIAL MEDIA VOLUNTEERS

Robbyn Myers, M.S., SPWS/PWS  
Senior Professional Wetland Scientist

The Society of Wetland Scientists Professional Certification Program is currently taking applications of interest for a Social Media Membership Scholarship.

Eligible applicants must be active Wetland Professionals in Training (WPIT) who have a strong interest in and flair for social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

Scholarships awarded are available for up to three years of service participating in the Program Outreach Committee. Scholarship recipients are expected to participate in media creation and posting schedules to engage members on a regular basis.

The anticipated time allocation is 1–2 hours a week at a minimum. Scholarships are distributed as a waiver for annual fees of up to **\$200**.

Interested WPITs should send a letter of interest and resume to Adrianna Borczyk, SWS Professional Certification Program, 2800 W. Higgins Rd. Suite 440, Hoffman Estates, IL 60169.



# GLOBALIZATION COMMITTEE

Matthew Simpson, PWS, Chair

SWSPCP has a program to support practitioners around the world to get certified as a PWS, helping them gain local and international recognition for their knowledge and experience and to raise the profile of a profession in wetland science.

We have a network of Champions across the globe that are raising awareness about SWSPCP and supporting applications from their country and regions. We'd like to thank them for their work in helping grow the program.

This year, the Champions have promoted or will be promoting the program at the following international and regional meetings, as well as publicizing the program through their networks.

**SWS International Chapter Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean – November 7th to 10th - <https://members.sws.org/event-calendar/Details/society-of-wetland-scientists-2023-colombia-853513?sourceTypeId=Website>**

We are also working to gain recognition for the program from the Convention on Wetlands, also known as the Ramsar Convention. 172 countries are signatories to the convention, and we're working with several countries to gain formal recognition at the next Conference of Parties in Zimbabwe in 2024.

We're always willing to hear new ideas on how to promote the program globally, so if you have any or would like more information, please get in touch.

# Welcome!

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***SWSPCP proudly welcomes the following people who have become members in the last 30 days.***

Meike de Vringer as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Robert Van Herik as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Dezarae Fagan as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Lauren Norris as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Joel Redding as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Ben Oelke as a Wetland Professional In Training.  
Aileen Driscoll as an upgrade from WPIT to PWS.  
Felicia Lamphere as a Professional Wetland Scientist.  
Stephanie Beck as a Wetland Professional In Training.  
Nicholas Romano as an upgrade from WPIT to PWS.  
Sara Lindstrom as a Wetland Professional In Training.  
Garrett Reinsfelder as a Wetland Professional In Training

