

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GREAT PLAINS SOIL FERTILITY CONFERENCE

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The Great Plains Soil Fertility Conference began in 1980 as the Great Plains Soil Fertility Workshop at the Denver Sheraton Hotel on Quebec in Denver, CO. This Workshop was patterned off the successful North Central Extension Industry Soil Fertility Workshop which had been in existence since 1971. Several companies provided some initial funding to get the project off and running.

The objectives of the Workshop/Conference were to bring together researchers and industry personnel from the Great Plains region to discuss research, education needs and future research opportunities.

The original area covered by the Workshop included the states of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas. Later, the Canadian Prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta were added to the region.

Originally, the presentations at the Workshop were not summarized into proceedings. That changed in 1986 at the time that the North Central Extension Industry Soil Fertility Conference began publication of a proceedings. Since 1986, the Great Plains Soil Fertility Workshop/Conference has published ten volumes of Conference proceedings, the tenth being the current Conference in 2004.

In 1990, the meeting name was changed from the Great Plains Soil Fertility Workshop to the Great Plains Soil Fertility Conference. The term Workshop produced some problems in obtaining travel authorization for some attendees and the term Conference was more generally accepted as a meeting to include formal papers.

The original idea of the Great Plains Soil Fertility Workshop/Conference was originated by the Potash & Phosphate Institute in discussions with Colorado State University, Kansas State University and the University of Nebraska personnel. From its inception, the meeting program has been determined by a committee comprised of university and industry personnel. Each state or province was contacted to obtain a report on current soil fertility research and that originally constituted the majority of the program presentations. A list of Conference chairmen over the years follows.

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| 1980 | Dr. Larry Murphy<br>Potash & Phosphate Institute |
| 1982 | Dr. Gary Colliver<br>Farmland Industries         |
| 1984 | Dr. Hunter Follett<br>Colorado State Univ.       |
| 1986 | Dr. Bob McCaslin<br>New Mexico State Univ.       |

- 1988      Dr. John Havlin  
              Kansas State Univ.
  
- 1990      Dr. Jeff Jacobsen  
              Montana State Univ.
  
- 1992      Dr. Ardell Halvorson  
              USDA-ARS
  
- 1994      Dr. Dale Leikam  
              Farmland Industries
  
- 1996      Dr. Julian Smith  
              J.R. Simplot Co.
  
- 1998      Dr. Bob McCaslin  
              New Mexico State Univ.
  
- 2000      Dr. Ardell Halvorson  
              USDA-ARS
  
- 2002      Dr. Dwayne Westfall  
              Colorado State Univ.
  
- 2004      Dr. Adrian Johnston  
              Potash & Phosphate Institute

Later, the committee began identifying specific topics that were invited as presentations along with voluntary papers designated by the various states and provinces.

Program content gradually expanded to include poster papers, which now represent a significant portion of the information, disseminated through the Conference. Those poster papers since their inception have been included as part of the Conference proceedings publication.

Early on in the development of the Workshop/Conference, the participation of graduate students was recognized as an important opportunity for their professional development. From the early days of the Conference, the agricultural supply industry has provided support for the Graduate Student Travel Awards which offset some of the expenses the students incur in Conference participation.

The Program Committee also identified the need to provide recognition for individuals who have contributed substantially to soil fertility research and education in the Great Plains region. The Great Plains Leadership Award was established in 1988 with recognition of Drs. Paul Fixen, Ron Gelderman, Jim Gerwing of South Dakota State University. Since that initial Award, individuals who have been recognized include Dr. Don Sanders, University of Nebraska, 1990; Dr. Jay Goos, North Dakota State University, 1992; Drs. John Havlin, Hans Kok and Kevin Dhuyvetter, Kansas State University, 1994; Mr. John Harapiak, Western Cooperative Fertilizers Ltd., (Westco), 1996; Dr. Ray Lamond, Kansas State University, 1998; Dr. Loraine

Bailey, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2000; and Dr. Larry Murphy, Fluid Fertilizer Foundation, 2002.

Over the years the Great Plains Soil Fertility Conference has developed into one of the premiere meetings in the United States and Canada and one in which applied research relating to soil fertility has been emphasized. That emphasis remains the central theme of the Conference. The Conference continues in its role of dissemination of production information applicable to this vast region.