

# Colorado Celebrates Final Acre Ceremony

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**W**e went back to the family farm to celebrate.

Colorado's Soil Survey Program celebrated the completion of the "once-over" of our state with a Final Acre Ceremony held at the Schlagel Family Farm in Longmont, Colorado, on a beautiful late-September day in 2010.

The walls were decorated with student poster projects about soils, and two tables were dedicated to the display of historic soil survey equipment and books. The Schlagels kindly allowed us to dig a soil pit and, after speeches and snacks, the guests went outside to view and discuss the local soils.

Allen Green, Colorado State Conservationist, spoke to the assorted soil scientists, spouses, guests, and NRCS employees gathered at the farm. He took some time to honor Mr. Bob Schlagel and Mr. Louis Rademacher, two local men who served on the Longmont Conservation District Board of Supervisors and were very active in conservation efforts; sadly, both men passed away in 2009, but the work that mattered so much to them continues.

Allen briefly sketched the history of Colorado's soil survey efforts, which began with a Reconnaissance Soil Survey of the nearby Cache La Poudre Valley back in 1899, and brought us up to the 75th anniversary of NRCS, celebrated this same year. He named and thanked our partners: Colorado State University, the US Forest Service, the Park Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, with particular appreciation given to the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts and the local conservation districts, saying, *"Conservation districts have not only been pivotal in the successful completion of Colorado's initial soil survey but they were also pivotal in the establishments of the agency as without them, the agency may have never been formed. They have been and continue to be one of the most important partners of NRCS as well as one of the country's leading natural resource and conservation advocates."*



*The soil pit is in the foreground, the Rocky Mountains in the background.*



*Mr. Everett "Elmo" Geib receives his "Million-Acre Mapper Award" from Steve Park.*



*Colorado's soil scientists: old, new, and retired.*

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Steve Park, Colorado State Soil Scientist, was very pleased to preside over the completion of the initial soil survey of Colorado. Of all the details involved in planning such an event, his highest priority was to locate and honor the many retired soil scientists who had worked in Colorado's landscapes. Steve's speech focused on acknowledging the massive effort of completing the initial soil survey, the challenges faced by soil scientists, and their accomplishments. He also pointed out that this may be the end of the initial survey, but the beginning of updating soils information by MLRA phase.

Steve told a couple of funny stories from his time as a field soil scientist; like all "dirt-diggers" I've met, his "wildlife encounters" are becoming more dangerous with each narration! After Steve's speech, he distributed some "Million-Acre Mapper" awards to those very hardworking soil scientists who had not been present at our last gathering.

Another guest speaker who honored us with his presence was Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture John Stulp. *"It was a great day,"* Commissioner Stulp later told me. *"I really enjoyed getting out to the farm and celebrating the Final Acre."*

Colorado's U.S. Senators Mark Udall and Michael Bennet sent congratulatory letters, which were read aloud by their representative staff members, Pamela Shaddock and James Thompson.

The Schlagel family has been farming acreage in Longmont for about 100 years, and love being Colorado farmers. Don Graffis, Soil Conservationist in the Longmont Field Office, has been working with the Schlagels for a long time. As Don likes to say, *"It only took 15 years and 15 seconds to ask them if we could hold our Final Acre Ceremony at their place!"*

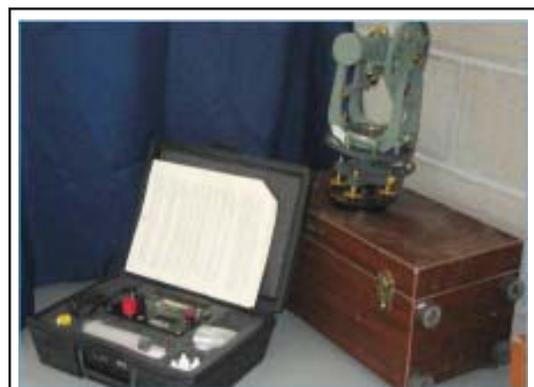
Don's talk, which was held at the edge of the soil pit, included descriptions of how the Longmont Field Office and the Schlagel family have implemented conservation measures at the farm over time, working hand-in-hand on irrigation and other land management issues.



*Our hosts, the Schlagel Family.*



*Back: James Thompson, John Stulp, and Allen Green. Front: Steve Park and Pamela Shaddock.*



*Some of the "old equipment" display items.*

**We went back to the family farm to celebrate 110 years of work together, and we enjoyed every minute of it!**