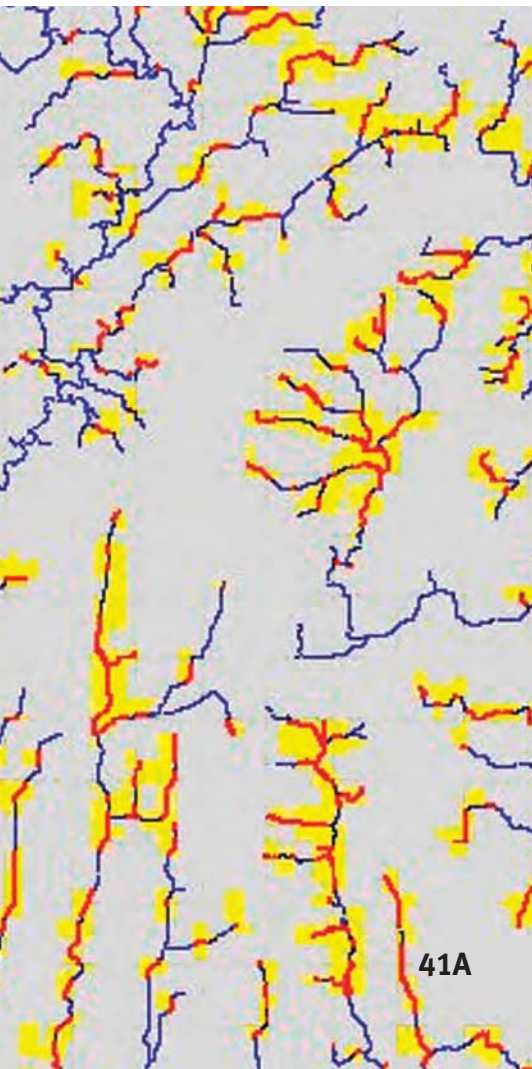


# JOURNAL OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION

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## DO EROSION CONTROL AND SNAKES MESH?

Wildlife—specifically snakes—need to be considered when using erosion control products.

By Christopher Barton and Karen Kinkead

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## THE VALUE OF CARBON CREDITS

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## GETTING CONSERVATION ON THE LAND USING GIS

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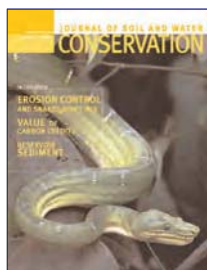
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## RAISE YOUR VOICE

YOUR FORUM TO REACT TO PUBLISHED ARTICLES, TO EXCHANGE IDEAS, AND DESCRIBE INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO CONSERVATION INCLUDING LEGISLATION

### Before Native Americans

Elliott West illustrates how historical research can aid current conservation efforts (September–October 2004). Early 20th century observers described sparsely-timbered riparian areas in the Great Plains, which greatly influenced current concepts of the “natural” state. However, West’s pre-20th century research revealed a more heavily timbered condition existed prior to the concentration of the Native American population in the Great Plains, driven by the coming of the horse, the Gold Rush to Colorado, and European settlement. Thus, current reforestation efforts should not be constrained by misreading the historical record.

The West article is a timely reminder of an early research effort of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). Based on a recommendation by the geographer Carl Sauer, SCS hired historical geographers who researched indigenous conservation practices devised by farmers. Also they investigated a broader question, the changes in land conditions wrought by humans.

—*J. Douglas Helms, Historian  
Washington, D.C.*

### Dirty little secret

Ted Napier (Raise Your Voice November/December 2004) has exposed the dirty little secret of “organic” proponents who attempt to justify “organic” production by equating it to sustainable agriculture. The truth is that “organic” is the antithesis of sustainability because tillage (a lot of it) is needed for weed control. We, as conservationists, know that tillage causes erosion and a soil tilled excessively will soon lose productivity because of erosion of topsoil and nutrients.

“Organic” doesn’t allow the use of modern plant breeding techniques or the use of today’s safe herbicides. The MOST sustainable of all cropping systems (no-till) would not be possible without the advancements (GMO’s and new herbi-

cides) of the scientific community.

So, why are many conservationists enthusiastic promoters of this practice that is so devastating to our environment? The answer, quite frankly, is they buy the propaganda of the extremist environmental views of PETA, Greenpeace, Earth Liberation Front, Waterkeepers Alliance, and certain factions of legitimate groups such as Sierra Club and etc. But perhaps the more persuasive reason is that it is the “politically correct” thing to do.

We need to make our conservation decisions based on the newest information available from modern science and common sense—not the self-serving rhetoric of those who really don’t care about our environment.

—*Jerry Crew*

#### Readers are invited to express their views on land and water management.

Please make your letter less than 150 words. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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— *Deb Happe, editor*