



SSSA Outreach: Dig It: The Secrets of Soil, Public Service Announcements, and Science Policy Efforts

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The Soil Science Society of America has invested heavily in two significant outreach efforts to help raise awareness of the soil resource among the general public and with elected officials and relevant federal agencies in Washington DC. Dig It: The Secrets of Soil began as an exhibit at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History and ran from July 2008 through January 2010. The exhibit was rich in the use of audio-visual elements and contained a collection of the state soils from all 50 states and numerous interactive displays for all ages. Variations of the exhibit have been on display at three locations outside of Washington DC with the current location being the Bell Museum of Natural History in Minneapolis. The exhibit has been extremely successful in elevating awareness of soils to audiences with little preconceived knowledge on the subject. The success of the Dig It exhibit encouraged SSSA to further invest in three public service announcements that have been widely distributed with 570 downloads and >17,000 views (in English and Spanish) on YouTube and the I "Heart" Soil web site. In addition, I "Heart" Soil stickers were developed and >50,000 have been requested and distributed. Our Science Policy Office has recently been expanded based on evidence of positive impact in Washington DC. The formation of the Congressional Soils Caucus has increased awareness of soils within the House of Representatives and is being expanded to the Senate. A new Urban Lands Coalition has been developed that will greatly expand awareness of the value of soils in urban environments, particularly for elected officials. The Science Policy office organizes member visits with elected officials to advocate for science funding, agency visits to promote awareness of the discipline among a wide ranging of funding sources for research, has had substantial impact on a number of high profile reports, and works closely with allied scientific and professional organizations with common interests.