

## WHY CONSERVING WISCONSIN SOIL AND WATER RESOURCES IS A GLOBAL NECESSITY

Rick Cruse<sup>1/</sup>

As the world population continues to grow, and the environmental uncertainty of a less stable climate becomes more manifest, the importance of our soil resources will only increase. The goal of this presentation is to synthesize the catalysts of soil degradation, to highlight the interconnected nature of the social and economic causes of soil degradation, and articulate why maintaining or improving Wisconsin's soil and water resources is imperative. An expected three billion people will enter the middle class in the next 20 years; this will lead to an increased demand for meat, dairy products, and consequently grain. As populations rise so do the economic incentives to convert farmland to other purposes. With the intensity and frequency of droughts and flooding increasing, consumer confidence and the ability of crops to reach yield goals are also threatened. In a time of uncertainty, conservation measures are often the first to be sacrificed. In short, we are too often compromising our soil resources when we need them the most.

<sup>1/</sup> Professor, Dept. of Agronomy, Iowa State University, Ames, IA.