DEPARTMENT OF SOIL AND WATER SYSTEMS

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The Department of Soil and Water Systems (SWS) addresses resource issues related to soil, water quality and quantity, and sustainable food, energy, agricultural and waste systems. The unit combines faculty with expertise in soil science, hydrology, sediment transport, water resources, irrigation engineering, bioenergy, precision agriculture, nutrient cycling, waste management, agronomy, and agricultural systems management to study complex problems and inform the management, use and sustainability of agro-ecosystems. SWS faculty fulfill this commitment through focused excellence in research, teaching and extension. With faculty located at four research centers throughout the state, SWS has statewide responsibility and impact. The department’s teaching program includes a Bachelor of Science in Soil and Water Systems (B.S.S.W.S.) with majors in Environmental Soil Science, Water Science and Management and Agricultural Systems Management. A college-wide major in Sustainable Food Systems is also administered through SWS. Graduate programs (MS and PhD) are available in Soil and Land Resources. Graduate degrees in water are offered through an interdisciplinary program in Water Resources.

The Agricultural Systems Management major prepares students to apply biological, physical, mechanical, and business knowledge to the production, service, sales, application, and management of the equipment and processes used in agriculture. The curriculum stresses courses in agricultural systems management, and basic and applied sciences. It also includes a strong background in agricultural economics, accounting, and business. It prepares students for a variety of important and rewarding career opportunities across the entire spectrum of the food and fiber sector. Many graduates return to farming, while others pursue careers as farm managers or are employed in agricultural and natural resource-oriented businesses, banking firms, educational institutions, or governmental agencies.

The Environmental Soil Science major prepares students to work in a variety of fields related to natural resource management. The curriculum stresses in-depth understanding of the field through interdisciplinary training in pedology, soil chemistry, soil physics, soil ecology and fertility. Graduates are employed as soil scientists, conservationists, agronomists, laboratory managers, and consultants. Students gain hands-on experience by working in laboratories and conducting undergraduate research. Students work towards becoming certified soil scientists prior to graduating.

The Water Science and Management major produces graduates that understand the critical importance of using science to better manage water resources. Graduates fill critical roles in the agricultural industry, research facilities and state and federal agencies. The breadth of the major offered in this curriculum allows students to develop strong expertise in managing water in complex ecosystems including agriculture, forestry, and rangeland. The degree includes additional math and GIS-based mapping requirements to ensure that graduates have the ability to be successful in job roles such as quantitative hydrologist, and irrigation, precision agriculture, and watershed management technicians.

The Sustainable Food Systems major takes an interdisciplinary, farm-to-plate approach to understanding of food, farming and human health. The degree is designed to provide a science-based understanding of the many facets of food- from sustainable production, food chemistry and safety, to policy and human nutrition. Students tie everything together in sophomore and senior level courses that explore local, regional and global food systems. Many laboratory-based courses offer hands-on experience. Students may specialize in specific areas of the food system. Students gain hands-on experience through required practicum courses and internships and can put concepts taught in courses to work while operating the campus organic farm.

Degree offerings within SWS are designed to prepare students for graduate school and a variety of rewarding career opportunities. All of our programs are based on curricula designed to prepare students for present and future employment. We offer students the opportunity to work closely with faculty in classroom and field situations. Our faculty members offer additional specialization through directed study, special topics, seminars and other courses as needed. Internships are available to provide students with practical job experience and to open doors for career opportunities. Students are encouraged to participate in international exchanges offered through the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

We offer many opportunities to conduct advanced, in-depth studies with our important scientific collections and cutting-edge facilities. The Maynard A. Fosberg Monolith collection is one of the largest in the world with 232 soil monoliths. We have a state-of-the-art analytical laboratory facility to accommodate faculty, staff and students. We also offer a greenhouse facility with controlled temperature and light-programmed rooms and growth chambers. The University has 1,145 acres located close to campus for field crops, orchards and livestock. Excellent field and laboratory facilities are also available at our research and extension centers at Aberdeen, Parma, Kimberly, and Twin Falls.

Majors
- Agricultural and Life Sciences Core (https://catalog.uidaho.edu/colleges-related-units/agricultural-life-sciences/curricular-requirements)
- Agricultural Systems Management (B.S.S.W.S.) (https://catalog.uidaho.edu/colleges-related-units/agricultural-life-sciences/soil-water-systems/agricultural-systems-management-bssws)
- Environmental Soil Science (B.S.S.W.S.) (https://catalog.uidaho.edu/colleges-related-units/agricultural-life-sciences/soil-water-systems/environmental-soil-science-bssws)

Minors
- Soil Science Minor (https://catalog.uidaho.edu/colleges-related-units/agricultural-life-sciences/soil-water-systems/soil-science-minor)
Soil and Water Systems Graduate Programs

- Soil and Land Resources (Ph.D.) (https://catalog.uidaho.edu/colleges-related-units/agricultural-life-sciences/soil-water-systems/soil-land-resources-phd)
- Soils (M.S.) (https://catalog.uidaho.edu/colleges-related-units/agricultural-life-sciences/soil-water-systems/soils-ms)