



In memoriam: David F. Bezdicek

May 15, 2025

David F. Bezdicek

Dr. David F. Bezdicek, a distinguished Washington State University (WSU) soil biologist, educator, and lifelong musician, passed away in Pullman, WA, on Jan. 5, 2025, at the age of 86. Born on Sept. 18, 1938, in rural Jackson, MN, Bezdicek was the oldest of nine siblings. His intellectual curiosity led him to earn a bachelor of science degree from South Dakota State University in 1960, followed by a master of science in 1964 and a Ph.D. in Soil Science from the University of Minnesota in 1967.

[Bezdicek](#) began his career in 1967 as an assistant professor at the University of Maryland, College Park. Subsequently, he joined the faculty of WSU in Pullman in 1973 as an associate professor of soil science, achieving full professorship in 1978. Bezdicek focused his award-winning research and teaching to soil biology and sustainable agriculture. He served as first director of WSU Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources. His leadership was key in establishing the WSU Compost and Recycling Center, which focused on recycling university wastes and reducing

landfilling. Bezdicek directed the Center to provide community leadership in establishing Pullman Community Gardens at Koppel Farms. He also acquired funding to support Washington sustainable agriculture competitive grants. As an effective administrator, Bezdicek led the USDA-funded tristate project Solutions to Environmental and Economic Problems (STEEP) for several years to reduce soil erosion and water and air pollution.

As Senior Scientific Fellow at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Bezdicek and colleagues developed research methods for detecting genetically modified soil organisms. He also studied the ecology of *Rhizobium leguminosarum*. He demonstrated that different serological groups dominated at different slope positions in the Palouse hills. In addition, Bezdicek conducted novel research on biological control of nodule-feeding insects of peas and alfalfa. He extended his research internationally by researching sustainable cropping systems in Turkey and Chile. In the mid-1990s, Bezdicek was an early adopter of distance education, delivering his courses to multiple locations in Washington state via teleconferencing. He worked hard to develop distance education classrooms and the required technical infrastructure. Over his career, Bezdicek was major adviser to 17 graduate students and seven post-graduate research associates.

David Bezdicek was a terrific faculty colleague and selfless civil servant who served on and chaired many departmental, university, and professional society committees, invited scientific panels, and task forces over the arc of his career. He was honored as a Fellow of the American Society of Agronomy and the Soil Society of America in recognition of his scientific accomplishments and public service and was a member of both organizations for more than 50 years.

Bezdicek is survived by his beloved wife, Trish. Together, they cherished and raised their two daughters along with their five grandchildren. He was a talented, self-taught musician who learned how to play double bass and tuba in college and later added harmonica, mandolin, fiddle, and acoustic guitar to his repertoire. He continued to play music daily until he passed away. His bluegrass and folk band Hog Heaven opened for Bill Monroe in 1978 at Beasley Coliseum in Pullman, WA. He was a member of the Old-Time Fiddlers music group since 1997 as well as a member of a church folk group. He also loved fly fishing and playing racquetball and poker with friends.

Family and friends gathered in Pullman, WA on February 21 for a Celebration of Bezdicek's incredible life and career.

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