

USDA-NRCS Minnesota Civil Rights Committee Minutes
June 28th, 2006; 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Waite Park Field office, Waite Park, MN

Attendees: Amy Stratton, Chair of Civil Rights Committee
 John Nicholson, ASTC FO, Area 7
 Shannon Bengtson, Area 3 Committee Secretary
 David Wise, AISEPM
 Ann English, Advisor/CR Coordinator
 Stephen Lutes, Area 2 Rep.
 Cory Drummond, Area 5 Rep.
 Christiane Roy, Area 7 Rep.
 Mike Walker, MLRA Office Rep.
 Cutrina Moreland, State Office Rep.
 Martin Goettl, Area 4 Rep.
 Gloria Larson, HR Specialist
 Deb Walchuk, State Outreach Coordinator
 Stanley Musielewicz, FWP representative, Area 2

Not Present: John Anderson, Area 1 Rep
 George Montgomery Jr., BEPM
 Mike Taylor, Area 6 Rep.

9:30 am Amy Stratton Civil Rights Chair called the meeting to order. Amy asked if there were any additions to the agenda.

Cutrina Moreland moved to approve the agenda with the addition of the LEP Plan. The motion was 2nd by Steve Lutes. The motion passed unanimously.

- Minutes February 15, 2005 [motion]

A motion to approve the minutes for February 15, 2005 was made by: Cory Drummond and 2nd by: Steve Lutes. The motion passed unanimously.

- Area Civil Rights Reports [motion]

A motion was made by: Steve Lutes to approve the area civil rights reports and 2nd by: Mike Walker. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Register from 2/15/05

Action	Description	Responsible Person(s)	Due Date	Complete
MN Civil Rights Appraisal Guide Photos	Add pictures of required Civil Rights Posters to the MN NRCS Civil Rights Appraisal Guide	John Anderson	June 1, 2006	6/28/06
Mentor Info	Email mentor info to all CR Committee	Mike Walker	March 1, 2006	2/17
Mentor info to web	Put mentor info on web site and create General Manual	Gloria Larson	June 1, 2006	Gloria stated this is in

	instructions			progress
Update Web Site	Add power points form Nat'l CRC	Mike Walker	June 1, 2006	Mike added four PowerPoint's completed
Update Web Site	Add MN Civil Rights Compliance Guide (w. photos from J. Anderson) and Nat'l Guide	Mike Walker	June 28, 2006	In progress
Compliance Cards	Print another set for all new employee packets and for summer students	Amy Stratton	June 1, 2006	New employees- In progress
All Cultures Day	Set budget for event and keep the CRC updated with events	Shannon Bengtson and committee	April 1, 2006	6/28/06
Training at All Cultures Day	Draft a training directory with all Civil Rights training options (videos, power points, handbooks, etc.)	John Anderson and committee	June 1, 2006	6/28/06
Self Certification of Disability	Work with HR to send out the form to all MN NRCS Employees and ask them to update	Amy Stratton and Kay Burnison	April 1, 2006	6/28/06
College Diversity data	Acquire college diversity data from Natural Resources and Agriculture Programs in MN and WI	Cutrina Moreland	June 1, 2006	In progress
MN CLF and DN 714	Acquire the CLF data specific to MN and compare to DN 714 data	Amy Stratton	June 1, 2006	Cory ca still in progress
Recruitment tracking form	Create a standard form to track recruiting efforts and create a General Manual standard	Cutrina Moreland and Gloria Larson	June 1, 2006	6/28/06
Send Recommendations to Mr. Hunt, STC	Create a letter from the MN NRCS Civil Rights committee with recommendations (1. have list of available videos at state office for training and contact, Julie MacSwain, with a GM standard, 2. Request Nat'l CRC change the <i>Self Certification of Handicap</i> to have "people first" language)	Amy Stratton	March 10, 2006	In progress
Summer Students	Email list of students to CRC from Gloria	Gloria Larson and Amy Stratton	June 1, 2006	6/28/06
Call Summer Students	Each CRC member will contact the summer students in their area to	Cutrina Moreland, Mike Walker, John	June 28, 2006	Some are here

	welcome them and inform them of the CRC	Anderson, Shannon Bengtson, Steve Lutes, Martin Goettl, Christiane Roy, Cory Drummond, and Mike Taylor		
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Amy shared that 9.98% MN workforce has reported having a disability; nationally 5% of employees have disabilities.

LEP- survey Ann English reported that the Federal Language Access survey was sent out by national office. MN does not have a plan in place to address this issue. We need to develop a language barrier plan. Put a plan in place as to how to deal with LEP concern. Next meeting we should be working on the plan.

National Civil Rights-National committee has 3 committee SEPM positions meant open Oct.1,2006 in email from Amy
Encourage our employee's to apply

Training Subcommittee (Chair - Anderson)

- Training information for All Cultural Appreciation Events

Martin –handed out the training –resources will email to each presenters to promote the all cultural events.

Martin will email out a short summary of what needs to be covered at each event and the materials for each event. A PowerPoint with the training materials will follow after the events are over. We will present these at the area meetings.

Email Martin with changes to the website, he will work with Susan.
Update the website

- List of training available for new employees..... Goettl
Amy added a class tot the last of required courses for all employees' Civil Rights compliance and program delivery.

- CR Compliance Guide training/check list for all employees

Photos were taken of the new required posters by John Anderson. Those will need to be added to the MN Compliance review guide when it is updated.
Cutrina is the disability, Asian specific Islander, and Hispanic SEPM.

All Cultural Appreciation Subcommittee (Chair – Bengtson)

- Wilder Farm, Marine on the St. Croix, 7/11
- Farmamerica, Waseca, 7/12
- Kandiyohi County Historical Museum, Willmar, 7/13
- Kathio State Park, Mille Lacs Lake, 7/17
- White Earth Reservation, Mahnomen, 7/18

Shannon handed out the proposed budget for the five All Cultural Day events. Travel was authorized for Amy to attend the Stillwater event, and Shannon to attend the Mahnomen event. Shannon also handed out the sign in sheet that will be for each location, do to the importance of knowing who attended each event in regards to the budget it is mandatory that everyone needs to sign in. It was mentioned that non-monetary awards should be given to those presenters at each

location. Martin asked if MN DNR- employee's could receive non-monetary awards. Shannon will check with the park manager before the event. Gloria said that she would be willing to get the non-monetary awards ready and mail them out. Below are the number of presenters for each location.

Awards- Waseca 0, Stillwater-3, Mille Lacs-5, Mahnomon-2, Willmar-2, =a total of 12 pen sets for presenters at the All Cultural Day events.

Recruitment Subcommittee (Chair- Moreland)

- View Power Point on MN and provide suggestions

Power point not here, George Montgomery was not present.

- Recruitment Manual and Training

- Recruitment Reporting Form

Cutrina stated that the document is in progress –open to suggestions for changes to the checklist. Form for events- trucking form Gloria is recreating from memory.

Everything will be electronically available.

Martin- What are the targeted groups? Look at series first then ethnic group stated Ann English.

Should a line be added line per purpose of recruitment?

Martin asked if we can change the word targeted to targeted series.

John Nicholson brought up the AEP and how that really becomes the recruitment plan. John challenged the committee to have and AEP/Recruitment plan for 2007.

AMY- Civil rights committee –do we have opportunities to recruit or will that be HR and the leadership team. Ann English stated that the Civil Rights Committee will have opportunities to recruit.

John Nicholson. 457 series he can't get any answers for this issue. Work with the institutions that we recruit from to make sure they understand what the guidelines for the 457 series.

Gloria has been working with the counselors at these institutions, but we can only provide our guidelines and they can choose to counsel their students as they choose.

Gloria- Packets for recruitment will be available electronically

-Scholarship all opportunities

-benefits

-outstanding scholarships

-USDA job for reference

-careers list

-MN office of tourism- input is needed from CRC

John Nicholson recommended a little information be put into the packet about the necessary - after nine eleven-background checks that go with employment opportunities with NRCS.

John also recommended taking pictures at the all culture day events to be placed in the new brochures.

Notification Subcommittee (Chair- Lutes)

- Web site updates

Problem with PowerPoint program has been corrected

Laurie Otte has the reports and can share the progress for next time.

Files for compliance documents are on the website --bottom of main page.

Civil rights posters and PowerPoint's are updated and in late May added PowerPoint's

In May up dated the membership/meeting dates and minutes on the website.

- 2005 Accessibility reports – findings?

John Nicholson stated that under item four signage --Laurie Otte will purchase the signs and installed

- Personal visits with students

Personal visits- Dave, Steve, Christiane had made visits with the students in their areas. Amy and Martin need to address the A4 students and Shannon will contact the A3 Student when she starts work.

- MN Civil Rights Compliance Review Guide – on the web
John Anderson was not present, table until next meeting.

Accessible Vehicle – options discussion

2 people special needs – Steve visited with each employee and found out what they needed
1 person needed a left footed pedal and he could drive a vehicle. The cost of installing a left footed peddle is \$299.00. This pedal can be installed and removed into any vehicle we desired it to be moved too. The pedal folds up so that persons who do not need or wish to use the left footed gas pedal can move it out of their way.
The other employee, Jim Axel gave Steve a quote for him to purchase a vehicle with all the equipment for him to drive would be \$41,355.00. Because of the high cost of his vehicle we should increase the gas mileage payment.(rent not an option) to rent a vehicle it would cost 125 to 60 dollars for a month. We could rent for a minimum of 3 day rental for 375 dollars, with the location of the rental company being in St. Cloud. Then we would incur the cost of an employee going to pick up the vehicle and returning it.
Comment was made to suggest a multi agency vehicle in Jim's case and then recommend that we place a left footed pedal in a vehicle for the other person.
Cory recommended to management to pay her for a 299.00 for a left footed gas pedal and Shannon 2nd the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Steve will help put a letter together for management with Chair Amy.
In regards to Jim Axels needs it was suggested to gather input from other states as to how to they handle the reasonable accommodations
Cutrina will visit with the national disability SEPM about Jim Axels situation
John Nicholson recommended visiting with the Twins Cities Executive Board to explore sharing
It was also recommended to visit with Laurie Otte and Steve Muyskens about the federal contracts with a vehicle, Cutrina will contact them.

NRCS Human Capitol Survey (view PPT and discussion)

Amy reviewed the results of the national SES senior executive survey.

John Nicholson- mentioned that the Chief (Bruce Knight) stated how important our strategic plan and the vision is to where the agency is going.

-go on the web to get a copy at this plan.
-venture goals

John Nicholson mentioned that when folks in MN filled out this survey that they identified that they did not have an IDP plan...this is probably a false representation or a miss understanding that each employee had a training plan which qualifies as an Individual development plan –IDP and training plan working training plan.

Human Resources Update

- Self Id of Handicap- results from MN resurvey
Has been covered

- 457 Series – update on OPM decisions and impacts in MN
Last update- changed the outline on how to determine the qualifications for the 457 series.

The Chief is involved in the issue at this point, so answers should be coming forth and further decisions made.

Option A- degree now -30 semester hours

An Animal Science Degree is no longer a qualifying degree.

Option B- the course work qualifications.

Major Field of study is not necessarily mean that a person is not qualified.

Those that are on the list are frozen within the series and will not lose their jobs.

Graduate degree-GS-9 instead of a GS-5 or 7

A qualifying degree does not mean you qualify for the series you still need the 30 semester hours.

Once you have been deemed qualified for the series you are qualified and the burden of proof is up to the state in which the person is first hired in.

- "Student Thank You Event" August

13-14 students were here this summer and most of them had been here before. The consensus was to not do this element this year, rather carry it out in the 2007 Business Plan.

Thank you training

-Martin made a motion to carry this item to the 2007 business plan, motion was 2nd by Cutrina.

- Mentor program update

Gloria stated that the mentor program is an Area responsibility.

A5 has sent out info to area about the mentor program

It was asked that each CRR work with their AC to get mentors program up and running in their area.

Affirmative Employment Plan & Civil Rights Report

Martin asked about the terminology of protected vs under representative

Evaluation of the state- Bill Hunt or being graded on this work for diversity

Barriers to Employment for Underrepresented Classes – Discussion

List of Barriers for employment for underrepresented Classes:

- Look at the workforce and plan accordingly to relief the under representative
- Dave wise mentioned that the Indian customer-vs- our representative within NRCS are not representative.
- John Nicholson stated that Mr. Hunt talks about this first when it comes to visiting about the under representative groups within the MN NRCS workforce.
- Identify good candidates for these positions
- Getting a complete application to be sent in
- Getting information out about NRCS and careers.
- Budget
- 457/401- course requirements
- MN Reputation as cold (emphasis weather)
- PR for the state – make it sound good. Good promotion.
- Nice representation of ethnic groups in MN already....how do we get them info about our career options
- Not showcasing MN – need to look professional in our flyers
- Information/testimonials of summer experiences and what to expect
- Diversified workforce experience for the summer
- Lack of visual aids and testimonials about MN summer experiences
- Address needs of current employees – i.e. accessibility
- Individual mobility – spousal placement
- Help students understand that mobility is needed for NRCS career
- Not knowing what qualifies you to work for NRCS

- FERS - more portable than CSRS -retention
- Dental ☺

How to address the barriers?

Have a video on MN with students to use at the state fair.

2:15 MN NRCS Civil Rights Committee Business Plan

- Review 2006 Business Plan achievements..... all

Move to next time

- 2007 Business Plan (goals & objectives) all

Steve made a motion to table until next meeting. Motion was 2nd by Christiane

Area and SEPM Reports/Upcoming Events/Advisor updates

Civil Rights Committee Chair, Amy Stratton

The MN NRCS Civil Rights Committee has been busy completing action items in their Business Plan. The All Cultural Appreciation events are planned for July and already employees are registering. The MN NRCS Civil Rights Committee has been working closely with Human Resources to re-survey employees on their disability status. Sub committees have met to discuss All Cultural Appreciation Events and recruitment. Committee members are creating civil rights trainings lists, reviewing accessible vehicle options, creating recruitment report forms, and assisting with Civil Rights Field Office appraisals. Civil Rights training materials have been sent to the State Office to add to the video library there for all employees. The FY 2005 Civil Rights Awards have been distributed and a MN NRCS Civil Rights Committee meeting was held in February. The Civil Rights Committee has provided input for the Affirmative Employment Plan. The next Civil Rights Committee meeting will be June 28, 2006 at the Waite Park Field Office.

Soils, Mike Walker

The NRCS Center of Excellence at the Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College is ending its role in the compilation and digitization of soil survey information. While playing a key role in digitizing the soil survey information for twenty-eight Minnesota counties, the Center has offered its student employees:

- . an introduction to a scientific career
- . an opportunity to understand basic soil survey and soil science concepts
- . an introduction to aerial photo interpretation and remote sensing fundamentals
- . an opportunity to understand applications of soil survey information in Geographic Information Systems

The Center was established in 1998. Since then, more than seventy students have served on the staff.

State Office, Cutrina Moreland

Continue to work with SEPM upon their request.

Held an Asian Pacific Islander Celebration on May 24th at St. Paul State Office, had approximately 25 people in attendance. The speakers for this event were Yorn Yan, Executive Director of United Cambodian Association of Minnesota, and Ly Vang, Executive Director of Association for the Advancement of Hmong Women in Minnesota. I've included some highlight for the speakers enjoy!

**SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
Between Southeast Asian
Cambodian, Hmong, Lao and Vietnamese**

Subject	Cambodian	Hmong	Lao	Vietnamese
Hello	Chum Reap Suar	Nyob Zoo	Sabye Dee	Chao
Country	Cambodia	Laos	Laos	Vietnam
Concentration	Ramsey	Ramsey and Hennepin	Hennepin	Hennepin
Family Structure	Extended	Extended	Extended	Extended
Type	City & Country	White & Green	Lowlander Midlander Highlander	North & South
Religion	Buddhism	Animism Christianity	Buddhism	Buddhism
Language	Bali & Sanskrit	Latin Characters	Bali & Sanskrit	Latin Characters
Decision Making	Top Down	Top Down	Top Down	Top Down
Handshake	Men do Women don't	Same	Same	Same
Calling while holding a finger up	Taboo	Taboo	Taboo	Taboo
New Year	Mid-April	Nov. 24-30	Mid-April	January
Marriage	Traditionally, it must be approved by parents	Same	65% yes 35% no	Same
Respect of Parents and Teachers	Parents are more respected than teachers	Same as Vietnamese	Same as Cambodian	Teachers are more respected than parents
Death	Cremated	Buried	Cremated	Buried

**BACKGROUND OF THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEES
(VIETNAMESE, HMONG, LAOTIANS AND CAMBODIANS)**

VIETNAMESE

The Vietnamese were the earliest Southeast Asian refugees to arrive in Minnesota following the fall of South Vietnam in 1975. These early Vietnamese arrivals demonstrated an ease of acculturation which surpasses that of other Southeast Asian refugee groups. Many Vietnamese were well-educated city dwellers already familiar with western culture. This group has shown an ability to utilize public assistance as a temporary stepping stone to self-sufficiency while pursuing educational opportunities and obtaining a foothold in their new land. More recent Vietnamese arrivals tend to lack the educational background and sophistication of their predecessors.

- T F** The elderly (parents) are supported by married or unmarried children until they die.
- T F** Most Southeast Asians use eye contact to show their respect when they communicate.
- T F** Calling with finger up is used only toward an animal or an inferior.
- T F** Culturally, Southeast Asians don't shake hands with people of the opposite sex.
- T F** Most Southeast Asians believe in the theory of Karma: One's present life is pre-determined by his/her good or bad deeds in his/her previous life.

For Answers – please contact Cutrina Moreland

Area 1, John Anderson

Civil Rights appraisals have been completed for the Bagley, McIntosh, Hallock, and Baudette Field Offices. A common issue is that the Field Offices do not have clear guidance on what documents are needed for the 230 EEO and Civil Rights files. The work often is completed, however not documented in the files. A suggestion is to work with the MN NRCS Civil Rights Committee to develop a checklist and additional guidance for the Field Offices.

Mr. Anderson has asked a client who uses a wheel chair to come into the Field Office at Roseau and offer suggestions on accessibility. The client offered to provide this assistance in the fall.

Area 2, Steve Lutes

Area 2 has once again been very active with conservation program signups and contracting. EQIP, CRP WRP WHIP and Swamp Buster have kept our people very busy in the office and the field. In 2006 Area 2 received 236 new EQIP contracts with cost share and incentives of 3.9 million dollars. These 236 contracts that were developed, 2 were for Native Americans, 8 were for female landowners and the rest are identified as white male landowners. Once again we need to somehow address contracts written and reported on white males when actually many are developed for husband and wife teams.

CRP continues to be very active in Area 2 many new contracts have been developed in 2006. The CRP buffer program seems to be a very popular program. Elbow Lake Field Office has started a CRP Buffer Initiative that has been targeting female landowners and operators for receiving CRP buffer program information. Across Area 2 15 new CRP program contracts have been developed for female landowners.

Wheaton Field Office is reporting a large WHIP contract has been developed with a female cooperator. As with all springs most of the field offices are reporting a lot of activity with drainage request and 1026 determinations many of these request are from female landowners and cooperators.

Spring is an active time for outdoor youth educations programs. Ottertail county report approximately 900 students attended during the 3-day affair.

The Perham and Fergus Falls field offices participated has educators in the program. Wheaton's Field Day included over 150 students and Alexandria Ground Water Feast reported over 500

students participated. Hispanics, Native Americans and Asian Pacific Islanders made up 5 to 10 percent of the students attending these events.

Mary Jane in Brainerd has been very busy helping form and working with the Onakissippi Watershed District. These watershed involves over 3300 landowners, Mary Jane estimates that 20 to 25% of these to be female landowners.

Rick in the Walker FO has been very busy working with the Leach Lake Band of Ojibwe on an EQIP contract modification for a Forest Management project.

George and Jeff in Becker County have worked very hard with the White Earth Tribe on a serious lakeshore erosion problem. Their effort has produced the two new EQIP contracts with Native Americans.

Sharon and Nancy in Clay County have been working with fellow federal, state and county agency to put on a Farmers Forum to discuss concerns and programs in Clay County.

Area 3, Shannon Bengtson

Kevin Daw, Assistant State Conservationist (FO)-Area 3 reports that the Duluth Area Office resolved the remaining handicap access issues by relocating to newly remodeled space. We are recruiting students from FDLTCC for a summer project related to watershed assessments.

Marge Sella, DC in St. Louis County reports a total of 18 EQIP and WHIP contracts. Individuals and groups served include Bois Forte Band of Chippewa; Green Lake Lutheran Ministries, a female limited resource producer, a couple corporate farms and another female producer.

Mary Monte, DC in Isanti County reports that she is working with one female WHIP applicant, one limited resource producer, and one female producer with contracts in EQIP.

Larry Nelson, Onanegozie RC&D reports that two funding applications that would 1. provide increased handicapped access to the Mille Lacs County Fair and 2. improve playground equipment for handicapped children in the Princeton School District have been developed and awaiting funding.

Bob Korth DC in Pine County reports that two female operators and Luoma Egg Ranch (owned and operated by four sisters) have been approved to EQIP contracts in 2006. I've had a female WAE employee who worked 375 hours this FY. She graduated from the U of M this spring and will be joining the Soil Survey crew in Sandstone June 12th. NRCS and SWCD staff assisted with the area Environthon and Waters Festival where several minority students participated.

Shannon Bengtson, DC in Mille Lacs County reports that she facilitated the meeting of Dwight Tober, Bismarck, ND plant materials center director, Jason Sickmann, area resource conservationist, Scott Kittleson, Aitkin County DC, Mike Oja, area plant materials representative, and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe on an erosion project directly having an impact on burial mounds. Dwight brought plant materials from Bismarck to assist with the erosion control concern.

At the area meeting, as civil rights representative, Shannon presented information on the EEO and customer complaint processes. Shannon provided information on the 457-soil conservation series as guided by the HR department at the Civil Rights meeting. The Area employee's were instructed to contact HR for all guidance or questions in regards to the eligibility of employee's for the 457-Soil Conservation series, and that further guidance will be coming from national office on

how to proceed. Shannon also presented a challenge to the area on their knowledge of Black History, in honor of Black History Month.

Shannon participated in the area 3 Envirothon, and the 5th grade education day in Mille Lacs County. Shannon also provided training on the basics of Soil to the Mille Lacs County Planning commission and the Mille Lacs County District Board members.

In the area of Civil Rights representative, Shannon has scheduled five teleconferences to plan and execute the "All Cultural Day Events", in July of 2006. As Chair of the subcommittee of four people, we planned five tours at five locations throughout the state. A bulletin went out in May requesting information and help from the Assistants to get numbers of those who wish to attend the events. The five locations are, along with the planner for that location: Waseca, Christiane Roy; Willmar, Cory Drummond; Mahnomen, Dusty Jasken & Shannon Bengtson; Kathio State Park, Shannon Bengtson; Wilder Farm, Amy Stratton. Shannon has also been working with John Anderson on the training portion of the All Cultural Day Events.

Dave Wise, American Indian Employment Program SEPM reports that he facilitated a meeting between FDLTCC and MN NRCS State Office Water Resources Staff and Assistant State Conservationist to plan rapid watershed assessment summer project for FDLTCC/NRCS Center of Excellence.

Dave held a planning circle meeting with Fond du Lac elders and MN NRCS leadership to discuss plant materials phase of the Center for Excellence

Dave has scheduled meeting with Grand Portage Tribal Chair and staff to discuss Cultural Resources MOU.

Dave served as college representative on FDLTCC Tribal College Workgroup.

He also helped to plan field plantings of native fruit bearing shrubs on the Fond du Lac Reservation with the NRCS Regional Plant Materials Specialist from Bismarck, ND and elders from the Reservation.

Paul Sandstrom, DC from the Duluth FO reports that the Duluth FO has 5 new EQIP contracts with female decision maker/landowners two of which are CNMP/grazing contracts. He has one new contract with the Grand Portage Indian Reservation, along with two new contracts with limited resource producers.

State office, Area office and Field office staff are assisting the Fond du Lac Reservation with the Fond du Lac Lake management study. This is a tribal EPA funded cooperative project. NRCS is providing TA and FA assistance along with the USGS to assess, model, and plan watershed management activities. NRCS engineers and hydrologists are working with historical hydrologic data and determining needed data to understand surface water conditions. USGS will assist with the work needed to understand ground water influence on the systems hydrology. A minority owned engineering/survey firm was contracted by NRCS under an IDIQ to assist with detailed cross section surveys of the old ditches that now serve as a stream bed and regulator of flow conditions in Stony Brook. All together this effort will result in providing the tools and guidance Fond du Lac needs in order to facilitate the restoration and management of natural stands of wild rice in the lake system of the Stony Brook Watershed. This restoration effort has long been one of the Fond du Lac's highest natural resource priorities.

Mike Oja, DC from the Grand Rapids FO reports that he attended the Ethics Conference sponsored by the Itasca Community College.

Scott Kittleson, DC from the Aitkin FO reports that he participated in a plant materials meeting with the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe with Shannon Bengtson, Dwight Tober, Mike Oja, Jason Sickmann, and Scott Hansen & Elisse Aune from the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe DNR department.

John Zinn, Grazing Specialist, Grand Rapids reports that he has made four grazing visits with females landowners.

Area 4, Martin Gottel

Area Office

- ✚ Presented Farm Bill information to Immigrant farmers, 25 to 30 in attendance along with partners.
- ✚ Wetland Biologist attended Southeast Asian History and Culture presentation at state office.
- ✚ May 30 Sangeetha Gummadi and Hebe Bernardo EOD to Area Office, summer interns.

Foley

- ✚ A series of three informational meetings were held in January and February. These meetings were held in cooperation with the Mille Lacs SWCD and NRCS office. The topics were "Wetlands", "Upland Habitat" and "Backyard Conservation". In order to encourage participation by underserved clientele, a mailing was sent to all female and minority landowners in Benton County.

Waite Park

- ✚ Jaime Schaunaman, a Soil Conservationist from the Waite Park field office helped with the soils station this year at the Area 4 Envirothon by setting up, correcting tests, and cleaning up. The Area 4 Envirothon was held at University of Minnesota's Landscape Arboretum Thursday May 4, 2006
- ✚ Presenters at the Middle Sauk River Water Festival that was held on Friday May 19th in Melrose, MN were Greg Berg SWCD, Meghan Lene, Lee Zabinski and Jaime Schaunaman NRCS.

Buffalo

- ✚ On March 15th the Wright Service Center participated in a diversity culture appreciation lunch. Different questions were asked about some of the different nationalities that are represented in the service center.

Farmington

- ✚ There was one applicant for the outreach EQIP program. The landowner plans practices of the following: no-till and prescribed grazing.
- ✚ The DC attended the Federal Exec Board Diversity Day on May 23rd.
- ✚ On May 30 Chee Lor and Karin Nordling EOD, summer intern.

Jordan

- ✚ A mailing of 2700 pieces was sent in March to all operators and landowners recruiting participation in '07 EQIP and CRP.EQIP 2006
- ✚ Derrick Harmon EOD on May 14th, summer intern.

Elk River

- ✚ The Elk River FO sent letters to 20 new immigrant agricultural producers informing them of the special EQIP initiative.
- ✚ Justin Linder EOD on May 14th, summer intern.

Waconia

- ✚ Solicited applications from minorities for possible WAE position.

Area 5, Cory Drummond

Marshall Area Office

Area Staff mtgs:

Jan – New articles on the Hajj celebration – Beth Collins

Feb – Notable Black Athletes during the Winter Olympics Games – Mike Nienaber

March - Janine Milbrandt presented a ppt overview of Women History Month

Special Emphasis Months Information:

Feb – Black History Month – George Montgomery & Cory Drummond emails

March – Women History Month – Lisa Buckner & Cory Drummond emails

Sandy Jerzak submitted a poster for NRCS consideration during WHM

Articles routed from Worthington

“Welcome to my World – Retreat offers students a glimpse into immigration & prejudice”

Article routed from Paul Bridgland:

“Candidate’s Iraq Injuries Prompted Her Run”

MN NRCS Soils Program – National Review write up was reviewed on Jan 3, 2006. A5 Soils staff participated in the review.

The Area V staff participated in the Meals on Wheels program and assisted in taking food to the sick and shut-in for a 2-week period in January of 2006.

DC/Tech mtg – March 7, 2006

A civil rights report given by Cory Drummond. EEO cards were distributed to all A5 employees.

An FWP report was given by Janine Milbrandt. Janine showed a PPT on March Women’s History Month.

Big Stone County Field Office (Ortonville, MN):

Krecia Leddy, District Conservationist worked with a Hutterite Colony located in her county. The Big Stone Hutterian Brethren Church were accepted for EQIP funding this March for 320 acres of Nutrient and Pest Management.

Chippewa County Field Office (Montevideo, MN)

The Chippewa County Field Office completed FO Civil Rights Review in March. Action Items have been outlined with target date set.

Nobles County Field Office (Worthington, MN)

Steven Woltjer, District Conservationist submitted several articles regarding diversity issues/activities taking place in Nobles County.

The Nobles Field Office NRCS and SWCD staff attended a session at the Minnesota West Community and Technical College (Worthington) where they listened to Dr. Leslie McLemore, a Civil Rights speaker whom addressed the issue of Race and the Hurricane Katrina Failures.

Pipestone Field Office (Pipestone, MN):

Jerry Purdin, District Conservationist, completed a CRP eligibility field review for Earl Telhueson, a Native American. Mr. Telhueson has eligible land that he intends to sign up for CRP this fall after harvest.

Redwood Falls Field Office (Redwood Falls, MN):

The Redwood Falls Field Office completed FO Civil Rights Review in March. Action Items have been outlined with target date set.

Rock County Field Office (Luverne, MN):

Kurt Halfmann, District Conservationist, gave a presentation on EQIP practices at a Water Planners meeting attended by Eva Christians, wife of a dairy farmer, who represented dairy farmers in the County.

2/8/06 Kurt represented NRCS at a CREP II Round Table discussion attended by male/female landowners in the Drinking Water Supply Mgt. Areas for City of Luverne and Rock County Rural Water.

Swift County Field Office (Benson, MN)

The Swift County Field Office completed agreed to items for Handicapped Accessibility in March 2006 and is now in compliance. This information was forwarded to the state office.

Cory Drummond forwarded factoids during Black History and Women's History Months to field office staff.

Yellow Medicine Field Office (Clarkfield, MN):

The Yellow Medicine Field Office completed agreed to items for Handicapped Accessibility in March 2006 and is now in compliance. This information was forwarded to the state office.

ALL AREA V FIELD OFFICES COMPLETED USDA SERVICE CENTER ANALYSIS.

Area 6, Mike Taylor

Three Rivers RC&D – The Midwest Value Added Conference was held in Eau Claire, WI on January 27-28th. Three Rivers RC&D provided planning assistance and technical assistance at the event. The conference provides small producers, limited resource producers and local food producers an opportunity to explore profit-making ideas and improve their rural businesses.

Three Rivers RC&D also assisted with the Minnesota Organic Conference in St. Cloud, January 20-21, 2006. This conference provides organic or persons interested in organic production an opportunity to learn about production, records and much more.

A workshop was held March 15th at St. James on Grazing Management. This was targeted at local producers interested in grazing and grazing systems. Over 25 people were in attendance.

Three Rivers RC&D has made the decision to add two new board member positions. They are seeking persons who can compliment their current board members' skills and abilities and to bring added experience and diversity to the membership. These member at large positions are open to anyone residing in the Three Rivers RC&D Area. Already six nominations have been received.

The Glencoe Field Office, NRCS and McLeod County SWCD, participated in a 2 day Nature Field Day this month. There were approximately 320 students and 25 adults in attendance.

Sleepy Eye Field office - On Feb. 23 Greg Tennant gave a presentation at the local farm informational meeting held by FSA. Females were in attendance.

On March 15 Greg Tennant gave a presentation at the grazing workshop in St James. Females were in attendance.

St. Peter Area Office - Survey training: 1 white female & 1 black female

Side inlet training: 3 white females & 1 black female.

Steve Becker served on detail to Louisiana. He stayed in a rented house with 12 other guys in Mandeville, on the North side of Lake Ponchartrain. The Emergency Operations Center was in Madisonville, about 20 minutes West. Among other things, he completed damage survey reports on the drainage canals (ditches) in New Orleans and surrounding parishes. All of the canals are discharged into the ocean with pump stations.

Area 7, Christiane Roy

The Area 7 Engineers have worked on several large projects for an increasing number of female producers in the Area. They also hosted their annual technician workshop where minorities were represented. John Beck, Area Soil Scientist, gave a one day field training session to fifth graders in the Area. He also developed the soil testing station for the annual Envirothon hosted in Houston County. Mary Weis and Chris Papenfuss were present at the event and staffed the soil testing station for over a 100 student who attended.

Mower County has been working on improving handicapped accessibility of the service center. The only item that does not meet requirements in our new service center is raised lettering on the FSA and RD office signs (we had Braille strips installed for the NRCS/SWCD). John Nicholson planned to contact the State office about ordering new signs for all offices in the area that do not have raised lettering. The building owner was also contacted to get an estimate on automatic door openers for the outside doors. We have one client who uses a wheel chair and has difficulty opening doors.

Mower County employees have been busy promoting the EQIP program in the newsletter, newspapers, and word of mouth. Jackie Byam, SCT at the Austin Field Office will be sending a letter to all female, minorities, and beginning farmers next week announcing the December-January EQIP sign-up period. She also participated in the Cedar River Education District Caree from 9 school districts in SE Minnesota. Over 120 students attended one of Jackie's 4 power point presentations.

Winona County hosted a cultural potluck at the office in February. All the employees brought in a dish from their cultural background or from one their favorite foods from another culture. The event was quite successful.

Dave Copeland, DC from the Olmsted County Field Office forwarded multiple job opportunities to his white female and black male employees to help promote their careers within NRCS. He also agreed to make a recruitment trip to the UW-River Falls campus with Deanna Anderson.

Rick Berscheid in Albert Lea, was appointed as the FWP representative for Area 6. He also sent out a Women's History quiz and Jonathan Sellnow of Fillmore County was the lucky recipient of an NRCS logo shirt for his participation in the quiz and knowledge of woman history. Fair on the morning of March 21st. Jackie presented information on NRCS careers in conservation to a diverse group of students

CR issues and recommendations for Management

The consensus was to make two recommendations to management. The first is that MN ask to offer the Civil Rights Compliance in Program Delivery Course here for those employees who still need the course. The second recommendation was to ask management to consider purchasing a left footed gas pedal for a van at the Area 4 AO. This would make the vehicle useable by an employee with a disability.

Review Action Register and assignments

	ACTION	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	DUE DATE	Completion
1	CRC Website	Email CRC web site changes needed to Martin	All	4-Jul	
2	CRC website changes	work with Susan to updated web site	Goettl	4-Jul	
3	Self Study Guides	mail copy of all CR self study guides to CRC members	Nicholson/Roy	4-Jul	
4	Next agenda	all LEP Plan and CRC plan	Stratton	20-Jul	
5	Accessibility	invite Laurie Otte to give report	Lutes	20-Jul	
6	Mentor info	put on web site	Walker/Larson	20-Jul	
7	All Cultural Info	create final packet and email to all CRC	Goettl	7-Jul	
8	All Cultural attendees	send list of those attending to Amy and she will email to all CRC	All/Stratton	7-Jul	
9	All Cultural Info	print copies of All Cultural Info packets for each event	each person responsible for event	10-Jul	
10	All Cultural awards	get awards for All Cultural presenters with form 287	Stratton to Larson and Moreland	4-Jul	
11	Accessible Vehicle	talk to National PWD SEPM	Moreland	10-Aug	
12	Accessible Vehicle	talk to Steve Muyskens	Moreland	10-Aug	
13	Accessible Vehicle	talk to Federal Exec. Board	Moreland	10-Aug	
14	Recommendation to Mgmt	recommend 1) left foot gas pedal and 2) host Civil Rights in Program Delivery training again	Lutes/Stratton	20-Jul	

3:00 Adjourn

Steve made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Cory 2nd that motion.

Next Meeting Date – 4th Quarter – August 16, 2006