



Natural Resources Conservation Service
375 Jackson Street, Suite 600
St. Paul, MN 55101-1854

December 15, 2003

MINNESOTA BULLETIN 260-4-3

SUBJECT: INF – CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Purpose. To distribute the October – December 2003 issue of Current Developments.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2004.

STATE CONSERVATIONIST'S MESSAGE

As State Conservationist for NRCS in the great state of Minnesota, I can look back at 2003 with a great deal of pride and satisfaction. In particular, I would like to thank each and every one of you for the excellent team work spirit you have exhibited this past year. Looking back into time, I can cite several positive examples in which working together made a difference.

- Area and State Office staffs continue to work closely with field office employees throughout Minnesota. This is important as we need to make sure the field office employees are equipped with the right information and tools to perform their jobs. Your time and efforts are appreciated.
- The EQIP Program rollout improved by leaps and bounds. It was good to see more Minnesota counties participating. I am convinced the partnership with MASWCD and the SWCD's in Minnesota made the difference. Additionally, the spirit of cooperation and leadership exhibited by NRCS Area, field and State Office staff helped make EQIP a success. Thank you for your extra efforts and I certainly look forward to another successful EQIP program year in 2004.
- Our Minnesota NRCS web site became Section 508 compliant during FY-2003. This is important and the web site is now accessible to people with disabilities.

As we approach the end of the year, I would like to personally extend to each of you a happy Holiday Season. It is important that during this time of the year we spend time with our family and friends. I look forward to working with our Minnesota NRCS team in 2004. Happy New Year!

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist

DIST: AE

**Passing of Greg Payne
Contributed by the State Office Water Resources Staff**



The NRCS community received sad and shocking news that Greg Payne, Economist on the Water Resources Staff in St. Paul, passed away on November 23, 2003. Greg will be greatly missed both professionally and as a friend. We will remember Greg as always having a smile and a good word for all. He was 33 years old. The following are excerpts from his obituary published in *The Fact*, a Clute, Texas newspaper near his home town of Brazoria:

Greg was born on August 6, 1970 in Brazoria County, Texas. He graduated from Columbia High School in West Columbia, Texas, in 1988. Following high school, he attended Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas. In 1992 he received his Bachelor of Science degree in agricultural economics and Bachelor of Business Administration Degree in human resource management. In 1997, he received his Master of Science degree in agricultural economics from Prairie View A&M University in Prairie View, Texas. At the time of this death, Greg was working on his doctoral degree in human resource development at the University of Illinois at Champaign -Urbana.

Prior to coming to NRCS in 2002, Greg worked for the USDA Economic Research Service. He has taught on the university level at Tarleton State University and Prairie View A&M University. Greg also had worked for Texas A&M University Research and Extension Center as a student entomologist.

Greg was presently a member of Progressive Baptist Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. Those left to mourn his passing include his mother, Alta Woodard; brother, Terry Payne; sister, Pamela Mock, and a host of aunts, uncles, cousins and friends. Funeral services for Greg were held Saturday, November 29 at Great St. Paul Church in Brazoria, Texas. Greg was laid to rest in Peaceful Rest Cemetery in Brazoria.

Jottings from Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

Greetings from the NRCS State Office in St. Paul.

The Minnesota Annual Report for FY 2003 has been posted on the MN NRCS web site. To locate the report simply go to <http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov>

CLICK in on NEWS located at the top of the Web page. This is the location where you will find 4 PDF files with the Annual Report.

**Cultural Resources: Revised State Level Agreement – New Field Office Procedures
Contributed by Patrick McLoughlin, State Office**

The State Level Agreement between the Minnesota NRCS and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has been revised. The new agreement allows all undertakings to be reviewed by the Minnesota Cultural Resources Specialist. Until now, the Minnesota SHPO was reviewing all projects considered undertakings. The new procedure, implementing internal review by the Cultural Resources Specialist will streamline the consultation process and allow for more flexibility and ultimately a timelier course of action for getting conservation practices installed. You can check out the new agreement, the new Cultural Resource Review request form (MN-CPA-048) and the new Field Office Procedures at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/> in Section II (C. Cultural Resources Information) of the eFOTG. Any questions or comments regarding the new procedure should be directed to patrick.mcloughlin@mn.usda.gov.

Treating Others With Dignity and Respect
By Julie MacSwain, Civil Rights Chair

I have enjoyed the opportunity to serve as the Civil Rights committee chair over the last 3 fiscal years. During this time frame I have learned a lot and have had the fortune of working with committee members who have wanted to work together on issues that impact all of us *Civil Rights*.

Treating others with dignity and respect is something that should mean a lot to each of us as private citizens, family members and certainly as employees of NRCS. Each and every day we have the opportunity to treat others with dignity and respect. When we do not use the opportunity, people we have had contact with may end up having hurt feelings and as a result, the relationship we have with them may become damaged.

No matter how busy we are at the office, it is important that we remember to treat everyone with dignity and respect. Schedules are busy, deadlines for various programs and projects surround each and every one of us; however, we need to be privy to the fact we need to do the right thing when dealing with people.

Perhaps you need to think of it this way. How would I feel if someone was not treating me with dignity and respect? Just because some has not treated you with dignity and respect does not give you the right to follow suit and behave the same way back to the person. As my father, the late Byron Berg used to say to me as a child, never lower yourself to being mean-spirited and rude to others. Instead, take the high ground and be warm and friendly to all that you meet and work with. Dad's advice has been a good guide and something that I remember each and every day. Thanks.

Going Banana's for RC&D
Submitted by WesMin RC&D



WesMin RC&D Council has been working to raise \$566,000 to purchase Smokey Timbers Camp, a former Girl Scout camp near Alexandria to save it for environmental learning and camping for all youth groups in the WesMin area. Volunteers and “Friends of Smokey Timbers” have been instrumental in assisting WesMin RC&D. To date, \$231,000 has been raised through fundraisers, cash donations, and pledges.

Several months ago, supporters felt that more awareness and news media coverage was needed over a several state area in order to reach women who may have at one time camped at Smokey Timbers and would contribute donations for the project. The answer was to do something spectacular that would draw news media attention and raise awareness of the fundraising effort of WesMin RC&D.

Thus, the “Banana Split” Guinness Book of World Records event was born. The event was held in Alexandria on Saturday, September 27 at 4:00 pm at the Douglas County Fairgrounds. What was involved?? In order to break the world record, a banana split 4.625 miles in length would have to be built. That took approximately 37,000 bananas and over 108,000 scoops of ice cream (1700+ gallons) Over 300 volunteers helped put the event together. It was very impressive, and thus because of its size and the Guinness Book attempt it truly did receive wonderful news media coverage.

Sheila Faber, Program Specialist for WesMin RC&D and Dean Schmidt, RC&D Coordinator, report doing over 24 radio, newspaper and TV interviews before and after the event. At least 3 TV stations filmed the event and interviewed Sheila and others before, during and after the event, including KSAX (Alexandria), WCCO (Twin Cities) and Fox News (UPN 29).

Was the event a success? To steal a byline from the Echo Press “Shy of a Record, but Still Appealing”, no the record was not set, due to weather related problems. But the event was a huge success for getting the word out about the need for donations to save the camp, and how WesMin RC&D acting as a non-profit sponsor & fundraiser, was working to save Smokey Timbers. Sheila reports that after the event, contributions and pledges came rolling in due to the increased awareness brought on by the “Banana Split Event” Sheila also reports that two \$10,000 pledges came from a woman in Canada who heard about Smokey Timbers Youth Camp strictly from this event.



The Canby Project
Submitted by Bret Coleman, State Office



Stone Hill Regional Park

As part of its outreach efforts, Minnesota’s Natural Resources Conservation Service has signed an agreement with Lac qui Parle – Yellow Bank Watershed District to provide technical and financial assistances for adding outdoor facilities to the Stone Hill Park in order to provide better access to people with disabilities. Construction is anticipated for the spring of 2004. The Canby Creek Watershed is located in western Yellow Medicine County with a small portion of the watershed located in Lincoln County in west-central Minnesota. The watershed has a drainage area of 32 square miles and is a tributary of the Minnesota River Basin. Stone Hill Regional Park is located on the shore of Del Clark Lake which was created by the construction of Canby Creek Structure R-1. Access for people with disabilities was identified as a need as part of the Structure R-1 Recreational Facilities Work Plan. This project will consist of three major components:

- A designated parking area consisting of three van-accessible parking lanes for people with disabilities.
- Installation of a floating fishing pier on Del Clark Lake. The pier is made available through an agreement with Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.
- Installation of concrete pathways between the parking area, restrooms, fishing pier, and a concrete picnic pad.



Looking from the bath house towards the fishing point, summer 2002.



Looking from the fishing point towards the beach and bath house, summer 2002.

Bird Use of Conservation Buffers in Southwestern Minnesota
Contributed by Michael Appel, ASTC (FO), Marshall

The following is taken from a study done by student investigator, Nicole Davros, Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

The conversion of North American grasslands to primarily agricultural purposes has resulted in their designation as one of the continent's most endangered ecosystems. Losses have been especially pronounced in the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Region which includes portions of Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota and South-Central Manitoba. Today only about 1.2% of the original 25 million acres of native tallgrass prairie remains in Minnesota and Iowa. Associated with this loss of habitat has been a decline in grassland-dependent wildlife. In fact, grassland birds have shown steeper and more consistent population declines than any other group of birds in North America. Though the exact causes of these declines are unknown, the loss of breeding habitat is suspected to be a major factor.

The USDA has actively promoted the establishment of conservation buffers along waterways in agricultural fields. These buffers include grassy, herbaceous and/or woody plantings designed to reduce soil erosion and prevent sediments and contaminants from entering waterways. While the primary purpose of these buffers has been to improve water quality, they may also offer wildlife benefits.

The report states that it would not have been possible to do this study without the numerous landowners and operators who gave permission to work on their lands and to Paul Flynn, Mark Oja, Mike Appel and Ann English for their logistical support and to Joel Poppe, Phillis Brey, Michelle Legatt, Steven Woltjer, Dan Dols and Gregory Tennant at the NRCS Service Centers who provided valuable assistance. Thanks also went to many from other agencies

Quote and Photo Tips
By Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs specialist

Quote: Step back and take a look at yourself. Would you want someone to have your attitude? Are you generally happy, optimistic and enthusiastic about life? Or are you generally frustrated, pessimistic and bored with life? It is true that attitudes are contagious. Think about that one person you know who can walk into a room and make everybody smile and celebrate their arrival. Now think of the person that comes in and gets blank stares because people know that they are going to bring the mood of the room down. Which person are you? If you are feeling bored and frustrated with your life, take a second to think about why you might be feeling this way. Is it your career, your relationships, yourself, etc? Perhaps it is time to think about your purpose and your values and beliefs and begin restructuring your life. Wouldn't it be great to have an attitude that everyone can admire.

Photo Tips: Here are some easy tips to help ensure that you and your digital camera are ready for expected and unexpected photo opportunities.

1. Keep your camera close by every day. While it seems obvious that you can't get the picture if you don't have a camera, many people forget to have the camera handy. Make your camera as regular a companion as your watch or wallet.

2. Ensure that the camera battery is fully charged. Digital cameras consume a lot of power and unfortunately some digital camera batteries are notoriously short-lived. Make it a habit to charge the battery often and try to remember to have spare batteries with you.
3. In photography, practice makes perfect or certainly *closer to perfect* pictures. Don't wait for special moments. Take pictures every day to become familiar with your camera and experiment with creative ways to use it.

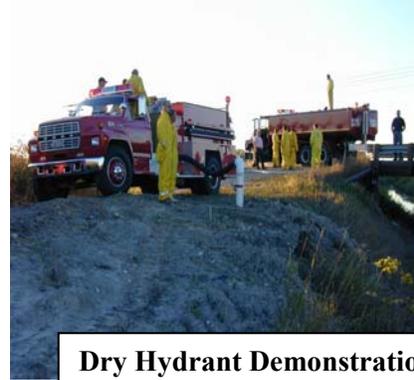
Other Submitted Photos



Newly organized Coteau Des Prairie RC&D presenting funds to the SWROC Manure Compost Project. Steve Woltjer is Acting Coordinator



Seed Collecting – Ginger Kopp, Olga Jonas, Mark Oja and Pat McLoughlin



Dry Hydrant Demonstration Sept. 15th - Prairie Country RC&D

Federal Women's Program Report
By Sandy Jerzak, FWP Manager

Season Greetings everyone.

I attended the Special Emphasis Program Manager training “Ha! Ha! to Ah! Ha!” at Fort Snelling on October 30th. On November 3rd, I participated in the National Civil Rights Appraisal Review. Both left me thinking, as Federal Women’s Program Manager I need to do more communicating with the other Special Emphasis Program Managers. I have invited the SEPM’s to the Federal Women’s Program Committee Meeting in January to discuss efforts in recruitment, retention and advancement opportunities for our present and future workforce. It may appear that Minnesota NRCS employment status of women is good. However, the women numbers really have not changed for several years.

I will have a copy of the tape from the Leader in You series entitled *Power Tools for Women – Plugging into the Essential Skills for Work and Life* with Joni Daniels. This program was broadcast on December 10th via satellite and was sponsored by the NRCS Social Sciences

Institute and the NRCS National Employee Development Center. If you wish to check out this video, please let me know. To obtain the materials for this program access this website: http://www.ssi.nrcs.usda.gov/publications/4_Misc/MI005_PowerTools.pdf

Tour of South Zumbro Watersheds Project Submitted by Sonia Jacobsen, State Office

Rochester was the host city for the first Annual Conference of the Minnesota Association of flood Plain Managers November 19 – 21, 2003. NRCS co-hosted a tour of the Rochester flood



control projects on November 19th with the City of Rochester and the Corps of Engineers. Area Engineer Rob Romocki provided commentary for the NRCS portions of the work including structure sites WR6 and BR1. On November 20th, Rob made a presentation to the assembled audience on the overall NRCS project and its impacts on the community. Hydraulic Engineer Sonia Maassel Jacobsen presented information on NRCS programs and their role in flood control.

Treatment of Milkhouse Wastewater Using a Lime Flocculation System Contributed by Steve Becker, Area Engineer, St. Peter



Pictured: Steve Becker (Area Engineer), Denis Pettigrew (Premier Tech), Steve Hoffman & Kerry Hoffman (Producers), Greg Tennant (District Conservationist), Gilles Michaud (Premier Tech)

A small automated chemical batch reactor, the FCT system, was installed to treat milkhouse wastewater on a 65 cow dairy farm near New Ulm. The system was developed jointly by Premier Tech Environment, Quebec, and the University of Guelph, Ontario. NRCS coordinated the installation with EQIP funds, and arranged follow-up testing with the Brown-Nicollet-Cottonwood Water Quality Board.

Milkhouse wastewater is produced as a result of cleaning and sanitizing the milkers, pipeline and bulk tank. It has an unacceptable concentration of suspended solids, total phosphorous and BOD. Wastewater disposal is frustrating for producers who can not cash flow a manure storage pond. Some producers confront the inconvenience of storing wastewater in a concrete tank and applying it to the field about every 4 weeks through the winter. Treatment with a vegetated filter strip is suspect under frozen soil conditions. Septic drain field treatment is rendered ineffective by the milk fat, which reduces infiltration, and detergent which kills bacteria. With limited

treatment alternatives, the milkhouse wastewater problem has nudged some producers into early retirement or abandonment of their operation.

The FCT system provides a viable and cost effective alternative in keeping producers compliant with feedlot regulations. The FCT system is based on the coagulation and flocculation of solid particles and dissolved materials from the water by the action of hydrated lime. Wastewater is collected in a sump well in the milkhouse floor, then batched into a 175 gallon fiberglass tank (4'x4'x7'). The automated tank, or batch reactor, doses hydrated lime (3 cups), ferric sulfate and a polymer into solution with a recirculation pump. The suspended solids and dissolved materials precipitate to the bottom in a sludge layer. The sludge is discharged to the barn cleaner and the water is discharged to a 10'x 60' drain field. The total installation cost of the FCT system is about \$19,000.



Washwater Treatment Results –
Precipitation of Milk and
Detergent



Washwater Treatment Unit –
Premier Tech Environment,
Quebec Canada

AREA 1

Glen Kajewski, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations

In October, the East Polk SWCD hosted their annual 7th Grade Tour at Rydell's National Wildlife Refuge. About 100 students attended and learned about Soils, Engineering, Wetlands, Wildlife, Forestry, Hazardous Waste, and about a Wildlife Refuge.

Karen Mueller and John Schmidt assisted the local SWCD's with the water festival at Rydell National Wildlife Refuge. Karen and Red Lake Falls DC, Cari Rebeschke, also presented the Incredible Water Cycle Journey to fifth graders from Red Lake County.

Waubun Fire Department Receives Grant - Giziibii RC&D assisted the Waubun Fire Department to successfully apply for a \$117,216 grant from the 2003 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program administered by the U. S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This grant will help to replace an obsolete and malfunctioning 1974 tanker truck. Through direct and mutual aid agreements, the Waubun Fire Department serves a 108 square mile region. Communities served include Waubun, Naytahwaush,

Mahnomen, White Earth, Ogema, Elbow Lake, Tulaby Lake, Twin Valley, Callaway, all of rural Mahnomen County and part of rural Becker and Norman Counties. The population of this service region is 7,230.

Northland Livestock Symposium - The first Northland Livestock Symposium that was held in September of 2002 was an educational tour of progressive farms showcasing vegetation, solar water sources, fencing, rotational grazing, manure management and brush control. A second similar tour was held in September of 2003. Landowners from northwest Minnesota benefited from the tour and the resource materials that were handed out. Over 45 producers attended each tour. Giziibii RC&D partnered with Pembina Trail RC&D, U of M Extension and Lake of the Woods SWCD to complete this project. This very successful project was recognized for its excellence by the Minnesota Association of RC&D and was presented with the Minnesota Association of RC&D's Outstanding Organization of the Year Award in 2003.

One new Red River Set-Aside contract was approved in Pennington County.

Pennington SWCD staff assisted with the Red Lake Education Day in Oklee.

The Pennington conservation team has been busy planning grazing systems, designing side water inlets and developing tree plans for EQIP and CCRP.

Dave & Penny Lewis were selected as the Clearwater SWCD Conservation Cooperators of the year, also as Area 1 Cooperators of the year. Their list of accomplishments for the past 30 years is extensive. The Lewis' bought the family farm in 1969 and began to establish many conservation practices, as well as plantings for seed and hay. They raise asparagus but focus on their forestry interests. The Lewis' have planted conservation cover crops, planted many acres of trees, harvested timber to create openings and have managed for conifer stands within hardwood forests. They have established Canada goose flocks, created and restored 23 wetlands and wildlife ponds, established upland nesting habitat and established numerous trails. Lewis' utilized state and federal conservation programs to assist with implementing practices and to set aside land for habitat. David volunteers with NRCS, USFWS, DNR and the SWCD.

The National Civil Rights Team visited Bemidji during the week of November 3rd. Team members interviewed staff from the Bemidji NRCS / SWCD office, Beltrami SWCD Supervisors, the Red Lake Indian Reservation DNR Office, the Giziibii RC&D office and the Giziibii RC&D Council.

The Bemidji Field Office continues to work with the Red Lake Indian Reservation DNR Office to implement their EQIP contracts. The '99 Contract (primary practice is well sealing) will be completed in November. The '00 contract should also be completed and was developed to begin the implementation of the restoration of red and white pine on the Reservation.

Pembina Trail RC&D is assisting the Red Lake River Corridor Enhancement joint-powers board apply for an LCMR proposal to fund recreational opportunities and preserve natural resources along the 200-mile Red lake River.

AREA 2

James Ayres, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations

PERSONNEL:

Congratulations and welcome to Jeff Hellermann, who was selected for and will be assuming his new duties as District Conservationist in the Morris Field Office, beginning December 29th.

The Wheaton County SWCD reports numerous changes in staff personnel with Administrative Coordinator, Sharon Johnson, retiring in December with Jackie Baumann, an SDSU graduate, hired to fill her position. Good luck with retirement, Sharon, and welcome to Jackie as she starts her new job!

Also, Wheaton District Manager, Sara Flieder, was married to Tim Gronfeld on November 29th. Congratulations to the newly weds!

Bob Usgaard, the Ducks Unlimited Wetland Specialist previously housed in the Alexandria FO, is now residing in and working out of the “new” Fergus Falls Area Office. This is greatly helping the WRP efforts and coordination of the wetland restoration projects. Welcome aboard, Bob!

CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES:

As usual with a very dry fall, many drainage requests were again processed and approximately one dozen new wetland violations were identified with 4 violations being discovered in Grant County alone. After 18 years of “Swampbuster” on the books, some people still don’t get it.

Wadena DC Dave Aldeen reports the Abandoned Ag. Waste Pit Closure Grant has been successfully used to close 11 pits in Wadena County and 16 pits in Becker County.

Workloads remain very high in Area II with Pope County reporting that 154 CCRP contracts were completed for fiscal year 2003. The fall construction season saw the Fergus Falls FO complete 1 Ag. Waste system, 32 Water and Sediment Control Basins and 6 wetland restorations. Not to be outdone this fall, DC Fritz at Long Prairie reports completing 2 Ag. Waste pits, 1 stream bank bioengineering project, 5 Water and Sediment Control projects and 1 water control structure. Bruce Becker reports 11 wetland restorations completed and over 90 acres of native grass seed planted on WRP easements this year.

For FY 2003, the Breckenridge Field Office NRCS/SWCD Conservation Crew report completing 102 conservation program contracts under WRP, GRP, EQIP, CRP and CCRP on 5,541 acres for a total of 2.7 million dollars in contract payments.

OTHER:

The Area Office moved to a new location on the northwest side of Fergus Falls and was fully functional around October 1st.

DC's Lepp and Zimmerman spent 10 days in Colorado chasing their elusive State elk herd. Elk herd – 62,002 Lepp and Zimmerman – NOTHING!

Rich Geving and Mark Dybdal utilized an NRCS career informational booth at the Alexandria Community Career Exploration Day and discussed various NRCS jobs with 120 High School Juniors from five area High Schools.

Steve Cole reports the 2004 “Ladies Ag. Night” promises to be bigger than ever. With former Minnesota Vikings head coach, Bud Grant, featured as guest speaker, his topic will be team motivation and his passion for the outdoors and the conservation of our natural resources.

AREA 3

B. Kevin Daw, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations

PEOPLE

RC&D Forester Steve Vongroven has taken over as manager of the General Andrews Nursery. We appreciate all Steve has done for the program statewide and wish him the best.

IT Specialist Jack Schill has returned to Korea to provide IT support for the military.

Mary Monte has been selected as the District Conservationist in Cambridge.



Photo of Charlene from the State Office Files

Michelle Wohlers and then Korey Werk served as Acting DC in Cambridge prior to Mary's selection. Korey will continue as Acting DC in Milaca.

Assistant STC Kevin Daw is doing a passable job as Acting ARC, but could be *sinking fast*.

Area Administrative Coordinator, Charlene Harms, is retiring after 32+ years of service in Area 3. Her reign will end on January 2nd.

Thanks Char for all you have done and everyone you have helped over the years.

CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

Locally led EQIP was a huge success throughout the area. Every producer who qualified was approved for funding. Projects have been pouring in for payment and DC's are busy planning for 2004.

The first private sector TSP project in Minnesota was completed in Itasca County. Forester Quintin Legler of Itasca Greenhouse provided technical assistance to complete 25 acres of Forest Site Preparation.

Steve Kluess, Laurentian RC&D Coordinator, conducted an Agro-Forestry 101 workshop for area producers.

Dave Wise is assisting the Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College with its development of a 4-year bachelor's program in sustainable development. They have requested NRCS input on educational requirements for federal employment in natural resources fields.

AREA 4

Timothy Wilson, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations

Stan Wendland reported – At the request of the University of Minnesota a tour of applied conservation practices was conducted in Scott SWCD for representatives of the Mekong River Basin management committee. Countries represented were: Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Their interest was in seeing the type of water management practices installed in upper watershed areas. They also wanted to hear how different levels of government (Districts, Counties and NRCS) cooperated to work with landowners in implementing these practices. Mr. Gieske from the Carver SWCD was also asked to participate in describing how the different roles of government cooperated to apply these practices.

Our tour was part of a larger tour covering several days and various locations along the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. Problems along these Rivers are somewhat similar to those in the Mekong River Basin.

Gale Woods Farm, a new park within Hennepin counties Three Rivers Park District, is an educational farm that demonstrates and teaches about sustainable agriculture and land stewardship. The Park received a \$94,000 solid waste grant to develop composting program, implement a collection system to pick up horse waste, and use the facility as an opportunity to educate park visitors and local municipalities about the composting process. The primary collaborators in this project have been the Park District, the University of Minnesota Extension Service, Hennepin County Environmental Services and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Jim Onstad reports the Wetland Reserve Program acreage in Carver county is about to take a huge jump in the next few months. Three new easements totaling 275 acres will be enrolled into WRP. There are 3 landowners involved in this highly sensitive cropland which is located adjacent to the Minnesota River. These 3 landowners were approached in 2000 in applying for WRP and all three finally agreed to participate. The estimated easement value on these acres is approximately \$550,000! This acreage is alive with many varieties of game animals. It is also home to Bald Eagles and numerous native plants.

George Morris reports Franklin Township recently completed a riverbank stabilization project along the South Fork of the Crow River that had been threatening to wash away a township road. NRCS provided assistance through the Emergency Watershed Projection Program.

Brad Wozney (Wright SWCD) and his wife Becky (Anoka SWCD) welcomed their first baby into the world on October 14, 2003. The 7 lb 11 ounce baby girl was named Annika Jane. Congratulations to Brad and Becky on the addition to their family.

Steve Sellnow reports Stearns NRCS/SWCD hosted a CCA meeting on September 17, 2003 in Elrosa, MN. Presentations concentrated on nutrient and pest management (weed control) and TSP's. 80 CCA's attended.

Stearns NRCS/SWCD/Extension hosted a Field Day on soil compaction and manure management on August 28, 2003 at the John Illies Farm near Elrosa, MN. Over 120 people attended the event!

Melanie (Boike) Dickman participated in a Girl's Conference October 15, 2003 in St. Cloud. The conference was for 300 6-8th grade girls interested in learning about non-traditional careers for women. At the conference Melanie informed the girls about the education, pay scale, benefits, daily activities, and why she chose her career. She also showed the girls a laser and a road, GIS on a laptop, and a wildflower identifying book. She demonstrated how to work each object and had them try it out for themselves.

Melanie (Boike) Dickman participated in a career day in Holidingford which was held on October 29, 2003 at Holidingford High School. The conference was for 9-12th grades. The Stearns SWCD and NRCS had a booth setup during lunch where students could ask questions about conservation careers. Next, Melanie had a 35 minute period with 33 high schoolers. During the presentation she informed them on education, pay scale, benefits, daily activities, and why she chose her career. She put together three activities including figuring out how to use a laser and rod, identifying eight grasses with an identification book, and identifying animals that are endangered/threatened in Minnesota.

November 17, 2003 Melanie (Boike) Dickman participated in Ridgewater College Ag career night in Willmar. She was on a panel to answer questions for high school junior and seniors and college freshman. During the panel she answered questions like why she chose her career, her educational background, her college activities, and also offered advice to students for their future.

Pat Gehling reports Benton and Sherburne counties recently received word that they will be receiving an MPCA section 319 grant to improve water quality in the Elk River Watershed. One of the more unique components of the grant poultry manure at agronomic rates. Past experience has shown that many farmers are not able to spread poultry manure at agronomic rates for nitrogen, and most unable to spread based on phosphorus rates in sensitive areas with existing equipment. This spreader will be used to set up side-by side plots comparing landowner's normal application rates. Grant dollars will also be used for demonstration plots for other sources of manure and additional cash incentives for enrolling Riparian Buffers and Filter strips in CCRP

AREA 5

Michael Appel, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations

2003 SEASON GREETINGS From SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA

Fall construction came to an abrupt halt on November 21st with a significant snowfall in the area. Several offices had reported a very busy construction workload. The fall harvest was early due to dry conditions. Soybean yields were 5-8 bushels below average yet corn yields were surprisingly good.

Our staff in the field spent the month of September writing contracts for the \$2.4 millions dollars in the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), General Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) and the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP). A big thank you to NRCS and SWCD partners who assisted in getting the task done by September 30th.

V.I.P. visit

State Conservationist, Bill Hunt, was out in Area 5 in November visiting our newest District Conservationists. Four field offices were visited on November 19, 2003. Bill also addressed the MASWCD supervisors and employees the following day at their Quarterly Meeting.

Upper Sioux Request

The Upper Sioux Indian Community in Granite Falls has requested resource assistance in building a land and natural resource department. They would like NRCS to train one of their members in the natural resource arena.

Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D)

The Coteau Des Prairies RC&D has submitted their application to the Secretary of Agriculture. Steve Woltjer, Acting RC&D Coordinator, has informed us that the council has received their tax exempt status. The council also completed several projects and had excellent press coverage.

Remodeling Space

The Luverne and Marshall NRCS field offices/SWCD's underwent some remodeling changes at their present locations.

Activities

The 10th annual Area V Environmental Fair was held in Marshall on September 16 & 17. Approximately 2200 students from the SW area attended. Six NRCS employees were presenters in this annual project. The Area SWCD employees and supervisors plan the event.

The Lincoln County Easement technician had 35 CCRP contracts signed last month.

The Nobles County office reported 14 terrace/water & sediment control basin projects constructed this fall.

The Area Office is selling "retired" vehicles from the NRCS fleet in December.

NRCS Personnel

We hired two new District Conservationists in October.

Kurt Halfmann, is the DC in Luverne, Rock County. Kurt was the Soil Conservation Technician in Rock County since 1990. Kurt started his career in the Peace Corps, Forest Service and SCS/NRCS. Welcome to a new position Kurt.

Krecia Leddy, is the DC in Ortonville, Big Stone County. Krecia was the Range Conservationist in Watertown, SD. Krecia was on her new job for two weeks, took maternity leave and gave birth to a son, Korvin Roper weighing 7 lbs. 7 oz. Congratulations to our new DC and baby.

It is with regret that I have accepted the resignation of Sandra Diedrich, DC in Marshall. Sandra wishes to return to college in Brookings and pursue a career out of her home. We wish her the best of luck.

Conservation Partners Personnel

Mary Homan is the new part-time Education Coordinator for the Yellow Medicine SWCD in Clarkfield. Mary will still serve as director for the Lac Qui Parle-Yellow Bank 319 Watershed project.

Tammi Neubauer is the new District Clerk in Big Stone SWCD. She replaced Wanda Holker who had been clerk since 1990.

Mike Timmerman is the new District Technician for the Pipestone SWCD. Mike previously worked for the Slayton JPO engineering staff. The previous technician, Becky Fiekema, resigned to pursue another career.

Best wishes to everyone.

We recently learned that Chuck Rudi, retired SCT in Benson, passed away on November 25, 2003. He was the SCT in the Benson field office from 1970 – 1994.

AREA 6

Ann English, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations

Personnel

Jeff Hellermann, former DC for the Olivia Field Office would like to thank all Area 6 employees for 6 exciting years and he is looking forward to seeing you at future meeting and training sessions. He is also looking forward to the Morris Field Office and Area 2.

Conservation Activities

The LeCenter Field Office has been very busy with CCRP, EQIP and 1026 workload.

In Nicollet County Continuous CRP was the main program emphasis especially during the first half of this quarter. Eighteen of the 24 applications were accepted in the general CRP sign-up. All 5 EQIP applications were accepted and approved for funding.

One female landowner in Brown County put in a dam.

Brown County had 20 General CRP applications accepted. Continuous CRP is still going strong. Practices are mainly wetland restorations. They had three customers accepted into GRP. Two of these are females.

The Sleepy Eye Field Office had 8 EQIP applications accepted. One is with new technology. This is using a flocculator to treat the milk house waste water. The Brown, Nicollet and Cottonwood WQB will be conducting the testing. A field day is planned for next spring.

AREA 7

John Nicholson, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations

Contributed by Claron Krogness, Area 7

Area 7 sponsored a food drive competition with eight service centers participating in the drive. Over 5,050 pounds of food was collected from the area field offices, which was then donated to local food shelves. The Dodge Center field office won the top honors of the drive, collecting 2,713 pounds of food! Congratulations to all staff who participated in this very worthwhile endeavor. As a bonus to the winners, John Nicholson and Linda Hennen served a meal to the Dodge Center office staff.

Area 7 is proud to welcome a new soil conservationist trainee to the Lewiston field office. Yamika Stokes began her trainee position with us in October. A native of Virginia, Yamika has worked as a summer intern in the Chesapeake, Virginia NRCS field office. She says she has visited other parts of Minnesota and really appreciates the friendly helpful attitude of NRCS employees throughout the state. She says the only thing she hasn't quite mastered yet are the harsh winds and cold weather. Welcome to Area 7 and the State of Minnesota Yamika.
