



# Minnesota NRCS

*WILLIAM HUNT,  
STATE CONSERVATIONIST*



*"Conservation is ethically sound. It is rooted in our love of the land, our respect for the rights of others, our devotion to the rule of law."*

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Conservation is about cooperation with your neighbors-with people from your community-with people who live with you on the landscapes that you all share-that you all depend on for a living. It's about respect for each other and about the dignity and equality as you work together toward some common goals.

The great conservationist Aldo Leopold, even before he coined the term "land ethic," wrote in the 1930's of the need for cooperative conservation on America's farms. As our NRCS Chief put it recently, cooperative conservation is all about helping people help the land. Those who depend upon the land to make their living have a vested interest in a sound, sustainable stewardship. NRCS is here to encourage and enable others to conserve natural resources on private working lands.

I have certainly enjoyed the accomplishments that we did together as the MN NRCS team. Have a wonderful holiday season!

*William Hunt*  
State Conservationist



### Gardening with Water Quality in Mind by Julie MacSwain

Rain gardens are an attractive, healthy, and functional alternative to traditional gardens. Rain gardens help reduce nutrient and sediment runoff into our lakes, streams, and the storm water system which providing wildlife habitat and a beautiful, low maintenance landscape.

The City of Eagle Lake recognized the unique aspects of creating rain gardens and decided to implement them within one of the City parks. Two rain gardens were constructed with the first rain garden being 3,000 square feet in size and second being 4,000 square feet in size. The rain gardens provide the opportunity to assist in erosion control and improve the water quality of the drainage area that is adjacent to the park's pond. Water quality is crucial for the pond because it is one of the most enjoyed aspects of the park with aerator fountains and recreational fishing. With the assistance of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the pond is stocked.

Additionally, local conservation partners from the Blue Earth County SWCD and Three Rivers RC&D worked with the City of Eagle Lake project. As with many conservation projects, partnering makes results more likely to occur on the landscape.

The rain gardens have also provided an educational opportunity for all ages to learn and view unique plant species such as Prairie Brown, Big Blue Stem, and Indian Paintbrush which add to the beauty of the park.

### Hispanic Heritage Month

Hispanic Heritage Month was celebrated September 16-October 16, 2005 throughout the United States. The theme for the 2005 observance was "Hispanic Americans: Strong and Colorful Threads in the American Fabric." On Wednesday, October 12, employees from USDA-RD, FSA and NRCS gathered in the 1st floor conference room to enjoy Hispanic food items and hear a presentation from members of Centro Campesino. The presenters gave an update on "Centro Campesino and Migrant Workers in Minnesota."



*Jesus Torres,  
Youth  
Director  
for Centro  
Campesino*

For more information about the Hispanic Employment Program in Minnesota, please contact Tessa Garcia at [tessa.garcia@mn.usda.gov](mailto:tessa.garcia@mn.usda.gov)



### Joe Goplen, Retired Construction Inspector Named Earth Team Volunteer of the Year in 2005!

Joe Goplen, retired NRCS Construction Inspector and current volunteer, volunteered over 80 hours between July 25 through August 17, 2005 for the Ledebuhr Dam project in Houston County. Joe's volunteering consisted of providing valuable construction inspection and material testing as well as training to NRCS personnel. The project required many difficult decisions be made as a result of the contractor's operation and materials brought on site. Joe assisted the project engineer in enforcing the job specifications to insure the dam was constructed according to NRCS standards and specifications and the completed project would meet the requirements of the MN Dam Safety Permit.

Joe is an avid golfer and the area NRCS employees who had worked with Joe presented him with a golf bag which had the agency and his name embroidered on it. Area 7 NRCS employees, Amy Dessner, Willis Goll and Rob Romocki presented this special token of appreciation to Joe.

Joe's volunteering effort was recognized by Joe being named the 2005 Earth Team Volunteer of the year for MN NRCS.



Joe Goplen opens up his token appreciation while Amy Dessner observes Joe!



Mark your calendar now for the 2006 Minnesota State Fair.

The 2006 dates are August 24- September 4, 2006.

The great Minnesota get-together is 12 days of fun ending Labor Day with an opportunity to work in the NRCS State Fair Booth!

Stay tuned for additional information in 2006. Please contact Julie MacSwain, State Public Affairs Specialist for additional information on volunteering at the MN NRCS State Fair booth!



## OCT/NOV/DEC 2005 CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS



### Swift County SWCD Water Festival by Lynetta V. Cleveland, Soil Conservationist, Willmar Field Office

On Friday, September 23 the first ever Swift County water festival was held at Ambush Park Outdoor Learning Center in Benson. Ambush Park Outdoor Learning Center was developed in conjunction with Prairie Country RC&D. The event was sponsored by the Swift County SWCD, Chippewa River Watershed Project and Prairie Country RC&D. Several donations from local organizations and businesses helped fund the event. The purpose of this event was to give fifth and sixth grade students from area schools an understanding of how a watershed works. A total of 250 students from Kerhoven-Murdock-Sunburg (KMS), Benson and Hancock schools attended.

The theme for the day “A Watershed is Like a Funnel” was demonstrated through sixteen learning stations which were forestry, prairie, streamflow table, wetlands, water quality, ground water, fisheries, soils, macro invertebrates, glaciers, rural water, enviroscares, lake game, incredible journey, water, and recycling. The instructors were from a variety of organizations such as DNR and NRCS. One highlight of the day was a local celebrity Ryan Vipond of KSAX

from Alexandria. Students stood in line anxious to get an autograph for Mr. Vipond.

The lessons at each of these stations were aimed at giving students greater understanding of how different environmental factors contribute to the quality of water within a watershed. Students also learned how their actions such as littering and not turning the water off while brushing their teeth contribute to the condition of a watershed. The lessons were given in several formats from power point presentations to interactive games and hands-on activities. The students as well as the teachers from various classes were very excited about the days' events and it was obvious that they really enjoyed the day by the smiles on their faces. At the end of the day each teacher was asked to fill out an evaluation form of the days' events, most responses to the questions on the evaluation were positive. Overall, the water festival was a great success; the students enjoyed the activities and were able to leave at the end of the day with increases knowledge of how important it is to care for a watershed. Hopefully this will be an annual event which will continue to impact the lives of many students in the future.

Now Showing..  
on the Minnesota NRCS  
Webpage!

The Minnesota NRCS Web page  
at [www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov) has a few new  
resources available to you.

Please check out the webpage to see  
what new information has been  
posted!



Web Soil Survey event held in Dodge County, Minnesota by Julie MacSwain

A Dodge County Web Soil Survey Ceremony was held on November 28, at Diggers Bar and Grill in Kasson, Minnesota. This event was a first time celebration of the release of the updated Dodge County Soil Survey via the web. The event was made possible by the support and leadership of John Nicholson, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations in Rochester. Deanna Anderson, Mark Kanable, John Nicholson and Peter Hartman served on the planning committee for the event.

The launch of the Web Soil Survey will bring information on soil properties and soil usage to everyone with access to a computer. People without computer access will be able to acquire the soil survey information from any NRCS field office or by going to the local library.

Kim Steffen, Soil Specialist in the NRCS State Office provided a live demonstration of the Web Soil Survey to those in attendance at the event. Kim's presentation showed the three easy-to use features of the Web Soil Survey. Define, View, and Explore are the three steps that a person using the Web Soil Survey has to go through to obtain information on the Web Soil Survey. When viewers visit the Web Soil Survey, they are asked to "Define" a geographic area of interest by selecting the state, county or address button. The viewer can then zoom in to define their area of interest. Once a location has been defined and a soil map is created, the viewer has the choice to print the map and related information or save it to their hard drive.

Additionally, the view also can "Explore" the designated location for specific soils data giving the viewer important information on soil suitability in relationship to usage. This type of flexibility provides an opportunity to build a customized report that addresses the viewer's individual needs.

For additional information about the Dodge County Soil Survey, please contact, Mark Kanable, District Conservationist at (507)-374-6364.

## OCT/NOV/DEC 2005 CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

A Web Soil Survey Ceremonial document was signed on November 28, 2005 to commemorate the unveiling of the Web Soil Survey in Dodge County, Minnesota.



Congressman Gil Gutknecht (left) posed for a picture with John Nicholson, ASTC-FO Rochester and the Dodge Center FO staff.



Kim Steffen is seen presenting the Web Soil Survey at the Dodge County event, Deanna Anderson, MLRA Soil Survey Coordinator observes.



Aerial seeding accomplished in Elgin, Minnesota  
by Julie MacSwain

When most people think of seeding a field on a farm, a certain picture comes to mind. For example, a tractor and a seeder filled with seeds to be planted on a field which has been prepared for planting. However, recently history was made in southeastern Minnesota. Andy Hart conducted an aerial seeding on his farm. A helicopter flew into the farm from the northwest and landed between two trucks located on a pasture hill top.

Several people joined in on the aerial seeding project. Andy Hart, the farmer was joined by Scott Churchill, the helicopter driver! Six bags of rye seed was placed on both sides of the helicopter. The Helicopter proceeded to fly over the field areas and began the seeding process. The helicopter spewed rye seeds over fields filled with a corn crop.

The aerial seeding is part of an experiment planned for 430 acres in the Zumbro and White watersheds to see if rye will actually grow into standing corn, sweet corn and soybeans. "The goal of the seeding is to allow the cattle to graze the rye after the corn, sweet corn or soybeans are harvested and again before the row crops are planted in the spring," said Andy Hart.

Claron Krogness, Resource Conservationist with NRCS in the Rochester Field office said, "If this experiment of planting rye works in Elgin, Minnesota. Many other farmers throughout Minnesota may find this worth the try. For additional information about this aerial seeding project, please contact, Claron Krogness via e-mail at: [claron.krogness@mn.usda.gov](mailto:claron.krogness@mn.usda.gov).



*Rye is growing in the corn field!*



*Aerial seeding takes place with the use of a helicopter!*



Girls Conference on Non-Traditional Careers  
Meghan Lene, Waite Park

On Friday, November 4, 2005, Meghan Lene gave a presentation to 6th, 7th, and 8th grade girls at the Girls Conference on Non-Traditional Careers about her position with NRCS as a Soil Conservationist. The purpose of this conference was to introduce girls to non-traditional careers for women. The girls were able to select four different career choices that were of interest and listen to a speaker from that profession.

Meghan spoke to several groups of students and she described what she does as a Soil Conservationist, why she chose this as a career, and why she likes it. Meghan also provided guidance on experience/education needed for this type of career as well as activities that they can get involved with right now that will expose them to the environmental field.



DIGITAL PHOTO CONTEST  
FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2006



A NRCS sponsored Digital Photo Contest is going to be held again in 2006. Pictures are to be taken in accordance with the designated monthly photo theme(s). The photo contest is open to NRCS employees in Minnesota. **Only submit your one best photo each month if you plan to participate in the photo contest.**

PHOTO THEMES - JANUARY – DECEMBER  
2006

- January – Winter Wonderland/Living Snowfences
- February – Frozen Water/February Thaw
- March – Rural Industry/Rural Farmsteads
- April – Spring has Arrived
- May – Outdoor Conservation Education
- June – Scenic Landscapes/Backyard Conservation
- July – Native Grasses/Woodland Flowers
- August – Wildlife Ponds/Wildlife Plants
- September – Pesty Plants
- October – Buckthorn – Dead or Alive/Woodland Conservation
- November – Treasures of November
- December – Shutterbug's Favorite

Submit your digital photo along with a brief summary to Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist. Julie can be reached via e-mail at: [julie.macswain@mn.usda.gov](mailto:julie.macswain@mn.usda.gov). Monthly award winners will be recognized with a suitable non-monetary spot award.

*Happy picture taking!*



## Snake River PL-566 Flood Control Project by Dave Jones, Area 1 Engineer

The work on the Snake River Flood Control Project is progressing well. The project consists of two main parts: an off-channel storage structure and a diversion and floodway system. The purpose of the project is to protect the City of Warren from floods up to the 100 year flood event.

The off-channel storage structure portion of the project has been completed and was in operation in time for the spring thaw in 2005. The majority of the work was completed in the fall of 2004. The off channel storage area has a foot print of about 550 acres with a flood pool storage capability of about 6800 acre-feet. The earth embankment is close to 4.5 miles long with the highest fill section being approximately 22.5 feet high. More than 1.3 million cubic yards of earth fill was required to construct the embankment. Spring 2005 saw about 1400 ac-ft of water stored in the OCS. During the month of June the area saw heavy rains which brought the pool area back up around 1400 ac-ft.

The diversion and floodway portion of the project is currently under construction. One mile of floodway was constructed in 2001 and 2002 and another mile was constructed in 2003. The final 2.2 miles was finished this summer. The total floodway length was about 4.2 miles and the total excavated quantity was over 900,000 cubic yards.

The last placement of concrete for the diversion structure was on November 30th. The diversion structure is 182 feet long, 26 feet high, and has a 10 foot deep cutoff wall. It is also constructed to allow fish passage through the structure. A total of 1,236 cubic yards of concrete was placed and over 400,000 pounds of steel reinforcement was used to construct the diversion.

The remaining work consists of backfill for the concrete structure as well as placing some riprap for protection upstream and downstream of the

structure. There is also some earthwork to be finished along with the final seeding and mulching. It is expected that all work on the floodway and diversion portion of the project will be completed next summer.



Forming the final wall placement



Outlet Structure – Off Channel Storage



*"Soil erosion is as old as agriculture. It began when the first heavy rain struck the first furrow turned by a crude implement of tillage in the hands of prehistoric man. It has been going on ever since, wherever man's culture of the earth has bared the soil to rain and wind"*

— Hugh H. Bennett and W.C. Lowdermilk, circa 1930's

**AREA 1  
GLEN KAJEWSKI, ASTC(FO),  
THIEF RIVER FALLS, MN**

**MERLIN  
BARTZ, NRCS REGIONAL ASSISTANT CHIEF VIS-  
ITS GLACIAL RIDGE PROJECT**

Merlin Bartz, NRCS Regional Assistant Chief for the Central Region recently made a visit to the nation's largest tall-grass prairie restoration in the United States. Area 1 just happens to be the location of the nation's precious jewel. Merlin was given a tour by the Glacial Ridge Staff and Glen Kajewski, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations in Thief River Falls. Tours such as this allow the staff and the tour participants to show people about the huge benefits that wetland restorations such as the one at Glacial Ridge have done for both the environment and the surrounding community.

If you are ever thinking of taking a trip to north west Minnesota, stopping by at Glacial Ridge Project is definitely something you should consider in your trip itinerary!

For additional information about the Glacial Ridge Project, please contact Greg Bengtson at the Glacial Ridge Project office located in Crookston.

**OCT/NOV/DEC 2005  
CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS**



Merlin Bartz (right hand side) takes a tour of Glacial Ridge with Glacial Ridge Project staff.



Technology is put to good use at Glacial Ridge



Wetland Restorations have been an integral component to Glacial Ridge Project!



**AREA 1**  
**GLEN KAJEWSKI, ASTC(FO),**  
**THIEF RIVER FALLS, MN**

**Personnel:**

**Promotion:**

Jessica Tiedemann, SCT – Warren, promotion effective 12/25/05. Congratulations.

**Hires:**

Welcome to Alicia Laturus , SCT - Park Rapids FO. Alicia started her new duties on 11/13/2005. Alicia was formerly an employee of the Hubbard County SWCD.

Nicol Bennett, SCT moved from the Roseau FO to the Thief River Falls FO effective 10/17/2005.

Jeff Rypka, Civil Engineer – Thief River Falls AO, recently accepted a position with NRCS in Alaska. Jeff is tentatively scheduled to report to duty in Kenai on 2/5/06.

**Retirements:**

John Schmidt, Pembina Trail RC&D Coordinator - Red Lake Falls, is retiring from duty effective 1/2/06. John has 40+ years of government service under his belt!

Duane Steinbrink, SCT - Crookston FO, is retiring from duty effective 1/3/06.

Best of luck to John and Duane – their years of experience and knowledge will be greatly missed in Area 1.

**Congratulations:**

Amanda Jepson, SCT - Ada, married Kary on November 25, 2005 in Ada. Amanda's new married name is Amanda Peterson. Congratulations to Amanda and Kary.

Kathy Fillmore, DC – Thief River Falls FO, gave birth to a baby boy on November 29, 2005. Luke Thomas weighed in at 9 lbs 5.5 oz. Congratulations to Kathy and her husband Todd on the new addition to their family.

**Awards:**

Various non-monetary awards were awarded to the Pembina Trail RC&D, Giziibii RC&D, Glacial Ridge PO, TR Falls FO, Ada FO, Bagley FO, Park Rapids FO, Mahnomen FO/White Earth, Warren FO, Hallock FO, Baudette FO, McIntosh FO and the Bemidji FO for their continued support of the Earth Team Volunteer program in Area 1. For the past 4 years, Area 1 has had an increase in hours reported from year to year. A job well done to Team Northwest!

Matt Baltes, GIS Specialist – Thief River Falls AO, received a NRCS coffee mug for his recognition of National GIS Day by holding a GIS Day event November 16, 2005 in the Thief River Falls AO.



## AREA 2

**JAMES R. AYRES, ASTC(FO),  
FERGUS FALLS, MN**

### Farm tour held in Wadena County

On September 24, 2005, District Conservationist Dave Aldeen led a tour to a couple of non-traditional farming operations in Wadena County. This tour was organized and sponsored by Common Ground, Quantum Connections, and the Minnesota International Center.

The tour participants included men and women who came from the Africa countries of Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Lesotho, Nigeria, Senegal, and Zimbabwe. The credentials of the African visitors ranged from radio, newspaper, and television journalists, attorneys, and representatives of their respective country's Foreign Ministries.

The tour started at the Village Emporium in Wadena. Aldeen took the group to the first stop which was to Jeff Nardello's farm who is in process of transitioning from traditional farming to an organic operation consisting crop and livestock production. The tour participants were surprised at the use of chemicals as to the Africans, chemicals were considered poisons.

The next tour stop was to Fred Cox's farm, where Fred's operation was converting from cash crop production to a permanent grazing system. Fred had recently purchased 4 smaller draft horses with intent of using hay mower and other haying equipment that could be adapted to "Horse Power" in the true sense and lessen his dependence on fossil fuels and expensive farm machinery. Both Mr. Cox and Mr. Nardello have made use the EQIP program to assist them in working toward their farming goals. Both Fred and Jeff had a couple of donkeys used for controlling noxious weeds and as livestock guardians in their pastures. Later in the evening, the tour participants spoke at an open forum of which they exchanged ideas.

## OCT/NOV/DEC 2005 CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Dave Aldeen would encourage any employee to take opportunity to interact with people from different countries and cultural backgrounds, what you may learn will amaze you.

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## AREA 3 B. KEVIN DAW, ASTC(FO) DULUTH, MN

### MINNESOTA INTER-TRIBAL CONSERVATION WORKSHOP

Shannon Bengtson, District Conservationist from the Mille Lacs Field Office has been working hard since October, 2004 to improve her technical assistance to the local Mille Lacs Band. Shannon worked with Kevin Daw, Assistant State Conservationist-Field Operations, Duluth, and David Wise, Tribal Liaison for NRCS to pull off a Minnesota first, "Minnesota Inter-Tribal Conservation Workshop- A Consultation with NRCS."

On November 2, close to 60 employees and tribal members from Minnesota attended this session. Participants learned more about USDA-NRCS farm programs such as the Conservation Security Program, The Farm Bill, Plant Materials Program, Rain Gardens and Technical Service Providers. This government to government session set the stage for future dialogue between NRCS and tribes.



William Hunt, State Conservationist for Minnesota NRCS said, "NRCS is here to reach out to the tribes in Minnesota and is open to receiving feedback as to how we are doing. Government to government relations is important." Curt Kalk, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Commissioner of Natural Resources welcomed the participants to the Grand Casino and was honored to be part of this session.

A highlight of the event was the signing of a Cultural Resources Tribal Protocol. The Agreement outlines the process by which the NRCS will consult with the Band regarding cultural resources when NRCS plans to install practices within Mille Lacs Band reservation boundaries. The agreement also recognizes the sovereignty of the Mille Lacs Band and respects the government to government relationship between NRCS and the tribe.



L-R Patrick McLoughlin, William Hunt, Elisse Aune and Curt Kalk.

### Personnel News

**Shannon Bengtson**, District Conservationist (DC), promotion, effective October 16, 2005. Congratulations Shannon!

**Kristy Baross**, GIS Specialist, promotion, effective October 30, 2005. Congratulations Kristy!

**Scott Kittleson** is the new DC at the Aitkin Field Office (effective 11/14/05) and **Jason Sickman** is our new Area Resource Conservationist (effective 12/12/05). Welcome aboard, Scott and Jason!

**Shannon Johnson**, Soil Scientist (effective 10/17/05), and **Jessica Weis**, Soil Scientist (effective 10/31/05), joined our Sandstone Soil Survey Office. Welcome aboard, Shannon and Jessica! **Mary Krueger** is a new WAE at our Milaca Field Office (effective 11/3/05) and **Jennifer Mold** is a new wAE at our Hinckley Field Office (effective 11/9/05). Welcome aboard, Mary and Jennifer!

### Awards

**Steven Kluess**, RC&D Coordinator, Duluth, received a **Quality Step Increase**.

The following employees received an **Extra Effort Award**: **Thomas Gervais**, Soil Conservation Technician, Duluth; **Julie Lindner**, Soil Conservation Technician, Hinckley; and **Lawrence Nelson**, RC&D Coordinator, Mora.

The following Soil Scientists at the Virginia Soil Survey Office received a **Time Off Award**: **Jeffrey Kroll**, **Gerald McCormick**, and **Michael Rokus**.

**Non-monetary awards** were presented to **Kristy Baross**, GIS Specialist, Duluth; **James Dusek**, Area Engineer, Duluth; **Shannon Bengtson**, DC, Milaca, and **David Wise**, Soil Conservationist, Center of Excellence, Cloquet.



**AREA 4**  
**TIMOTHY A. WILSON, ASTC(FO)**  
**BROOKLYN CENTER, MN**

Stearns county conservation makes partnering together worth the time and effort

People, programs and partnering are the three P's that make conservation in Stearns County, a success. It doesn't take a long time for an employee from either the SWCD or NRCS to figure out, Stearns County has a way of making things happen. Much of their success is due in part to the fact the customer that comes through the door is their "A Number One" priority." "When those customers come to the Service Center they are here for one thing, assistance! They really are not interested in whom your employer is or who signs your paycheck. The one thing they are interested in is service; they will remember if they got the service they needed, not necessarily which agency gave it to them. Here in Waite Park the conservation team motto is: "The Customer is the company, their needs come first," says Steven Sellnow, District Conservationist.

I think there's many lessons that can be learned by watching the folks in the local conservation office in action. By working together, more is accomplished not only for the customer but for the good of the whole county. The Waite Park FO recently completed processing applications for the 2005 CSP and EQIP Signup in Stearns County. The workload stress on field office and area office staff detailed was tremendous. Working together as a team the Field Office was able to successfully process all CSP and EQIP applications by the end of signup as well as administering other on-going program activities. "Camaflogging Agency affiliation and emphasizing service and the customer first works well in the Waite Park Service Center" says Sellnow.

**NRCS Staff in Stearns County, Minnesota**

*Back row George Mohrhauser, Dave Acheson, Lee Zabinski, Mike Hemmann, Isadore Thielen, Steve Sellnow  
Seated Sara Sewell, Riley Maanum, Emily Wolf*



**SWCD**

*Back row Greg Berg, Linus Meyer, Wayne Cymbaluk, Dennis Fuchs, Brad Wenz, Lori Persson  
Front row Joan Huckle, Grant Pearson, Dale Walz, Vince Manderfeld*

**Personnel:**

Joseph Storlien was hired as a Soil Conservation Aid at Waite Park effective November 27, 2005.

Candance Weber was hired as a Soil Conservation Aid at Waite Park effective November 27, 2005.



AREA 5

MICHAEL D. APPEL, ASTC(FO)  
MARSHALL, MN

OCT/NOV/DEC 2005  
CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

### Environmental Fair Making a Difference in Southwest Minnesota

The 2005 Environmental Fair was held at the Lyon County Fairgrounds in Marshall, Minnesota on September 20-21, 2005. This event relies heavily upon the donations of business and organizations for their support. Big Stone, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Lac Qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock Swift and Yellow Medicine SWCD's, Coteau des Prairie RC&D and several other conservation partners made this event possible.

The 2005 Environmental Fair Committee consisted of: Merle Behrens, Lyon SWCD; Kay Clark, Cottonwood SWCD; Marcia Heiling, Redwood SWCD; Erin Penrose, Pipestone SWCD and Terry Wittnebel, Lac qui Parle SWCD. Presentations were given on a wide array of topics along with diverse presenters.

Presentations included: The Zoo Man, Minnesota Connection, Water Quality, Three Rivers, Whales, Trees 1-4, Soils 1-3, Recycling 1-2, Household Hazardous, Wetlands, Watersheds, Waterfowl and the Web of Life.

A total of 50 schools participated in the Environmental Fair resulting in over 2300 students participating in this Environmental Fair. For additional information regarding this educational opportunity please contact Sandy Jerzak in Area 5.



*Sandra Jerzak, Area Administrative Coordinator for Area 5 served as one of the presenters at the Environmental Fair!*

### Personnel:

Doug Dragseth, DC in Clarkfield accepted a promotion to DC in Towner, ND.

Nathan Stewart, SC in Montevideo graduated in Brookings with an Ag. Eng. Degree and will start training at the Marshall AO on January 8th.

We had two births this past month. On Nov. 18 a boy was born to The Randy Sheik family. Randy is the SCT in Ivanhoe. This is their first. On Nov. 22 the Jerry Purdin family welcomed a baby girl into the fold. Jerry, DC in Pipestone used this as an excuse to miss our DC/Tech meeting that day. We welcome the new additions.

Noelle Saeger, WAE, Extension to duty.

Sara Smith, Student Trainee, Letter of resignation.  
Travis Kestlelout, WAE, Terminate

Mark Rose is now Acting DC in Clarkfield and Mike Nienaber is Acting DC in Redwood Falls.



AREA 6  
KASEY L. REED,  
ASTC(FO)ST. PETER, MN

OCT/NOV/DEC 2005  
CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

## THE GREATER BLUE EARTH RIVER WATERSHED INITIATIVE

The 2003-2006 Watershed Initiative is an EPA funded project. The Greater Blue Earth River Basis is one of 20 watersheds that were chosen from approximately 176 watersheds across the nation. The project involves many partners such as the Greater Blue Earth Alliance, which consists of Counties and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD's). The project has also worked with the NRCS, DNR, Iowa Department of Agriculture, Land Stewardship Project, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

A total of \$432,000 was allotted for Conservation Project Cost Share. The county allocation was based on the amount of county acreage contained within the Greater Blue Earth watershed. This is for cost share assistance (75% grant-25% landowner) to install conservation practices. The funding has included a wide array of conservation practices. The local SWCD's administers this cost-share program.

A Buffer Strip Incentive was also developed for the Blue Earth River Watershed Initiative. \$42,000 has been slated for the Buffer Strip Incentive. This is an incentive, one-time only, payment to enter into a 15 year CRP contract. Additional information on the Buffer program should be made with either SWCD or NRCS field offices.



## Personnel News

Area 6 would like to welcome several new employees.

Kari Christnagel, Soil Conservation Technician, is a graduate of South Central Technical College with an Agribusiness Service and Management Degree. She completed internships with Agri-Growth, Inc. of Hollandale and Mid-County Co-op in Cologne, MN. She started her career as a CREP Outreach Technician then moved onto as the Maple River Watershed Clean Water Partnership Coordinator. She has worked closely with agencies such as NRCS, DNR, FSA and RC&D. She began duty on November 28, at the Mankato Field Office.

Chris Schmidt, Soil Conservation Technician, began working for NRCS in the LeCenter Field Office on November 28. Chris came to us from Waseca County where he worked for the SWCD for two years as a CREP II Coordinator, he also assisted with CRP. Chris worked in cooperation with the LeSueur County SWCD for 2 ½ years during the CREP I signup in the Minnesota River Watershed and is knowledgeable of NRCS programs and LeSueur County.

Demetria Adams, Biologist, will begin on December 12 in the St. Peter Area Office. Demetria is a graduate from Langston University. She comes to us from the United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation.

We would like to congratulate Jason Sickmann, he has accepted the position as the Area Resource Conservationist in Duluth, he will begin December 12 in his new position. We wish Jason the Best of Luck!!



Personnel News

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Collateral Duty Change

Steve Breaker, District Conservationist, in LeCenter has accepted the offer to be the Earth Team Volunteer Representative for Area 6.

Lisa Buckner, District Conservationist, in Glencoe has accepted the offer to be the Federal Women's Program Manager for Area 6.

Awards

Jason Sickmann, non-monetary, for leading the state in Earth Team Volunteer hours 27,834 as well as having 100% participation from each field office.

Bonnie Williams, non-monetary, for leading the area in most hours reported as well as the most volunteers reported.

Doug Miller, non-monetary, photo contest winner  
Randy Nelson, non-monetary, in recognition of his contributions to further the Civil Rights Program in Minnesota.

John Dotolo, non-monetary, for excellent civil rights review.

Jason Sickmann, non-monetary, 10 years of service working on CSP.

Steve Breaker, non-monetary, for extra effort as area representative for PMC.

Jason Sickmann, non-monetary, for extra effort working multi counties.

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Gordon Barnes, non-monetary, 10 years of service

Jim Jirik, non-monetary, 20 years of service

Randy Nelson, non-monetary, 30 years of service

Mike Taylor, non-monetary, Nutrient Management Certification

Ken Luttner, non-monetary, Conservation Planning Certification

Clayton Schmidt, non-monetary, for extra effort working multi counties

Dale Johnson, non-monetary, for extra effort working with student trainees

Charles Schwartz, non-monetary, for extra effort

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**AREA 7**  
**JOHN NICHOLSON, ASTC-(FO)**  
**ROCHESTER, MN**

## OCT/NOV/DEC 2005 CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Land treatment programs like EQIP 2005 proved valuable by assisting landusers treat several resources concerns like the severe water erosion problem pictured below.



### Conservation Drainage Demonstrations: Improving Impaired Watershed

A drainage demonstration project was installed on the Chapman Farm operated by Ray and Donna Cerise. The project is funded in part by a NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant to MDA. The farm is located in Mower County just south of Grand Meadow. MDA sponsored a Field Day on October 21 so agency representatives could view the installation of various tile systems. The purpose of this project is to speed the development and adoption of conservation drainage practices in Minnesota. Widespread adoption of innovative drainage systems by producers would likely have a significant positive impact on improving impaired waters.



The Annual 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Education Field Day was a huge success in Houston County where over 300 students from local schools learned about Soil, Water, Wildlife, Forestry



along with a number of other natural resources at various stations. The photo shows Gary Larson, District Conservationist and Dave Walter, SWCD Technician teaching at the Soils station.

### PERSONNEL:



Derrick Harmon, Summer Soil Conservation Trainee headed back to Alcorn University in Mississippi after spending the summer at the Caledonia Field Office.



Jon Sellnow, soil conservationist, transferred to the Preston Field Office in October 2005. He is a graduate of North Park University in Chicago, Illinois with a BS in

Biology. Before transferring to Preston, Jon was stationed in Detroit Lakes.

Jamilah McCoy, soil conservationist in the Lewiston Field Office, hails from Richmond, CA and is a recent University of California-Davis graduate. Jamilah worked previously as a SCEP Soil Conservationist in the Austin Field Office and in the Dixon Field Office in California while in school.



Rick Berscheid, soil conservationist in the Albert Lea Field Office, is a native of Long Prairie, MN. He

graduated from Southwest MN State University in Marshall, MN with a BS in Agriculture, Industries and Marketing. He has interned with NRCS in Minnesota in Todd County and worked out of the Area Office in Marshall.

The next issue of **Current Developments** is due **March 17, 2006.**

**CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IS A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR NRCS EMPLOYEES IN MINNESOTA.**

Send your contributions for the next issue of **Current Developments** to:

Julie MacSwain via email to:

[julie.macswain@mn.usda.gov](mailto:julie.macswain@mn.usda.gov)

Your continued readership and interest in **Current Developments** is appreciated!

Happy New Year!

Julie

