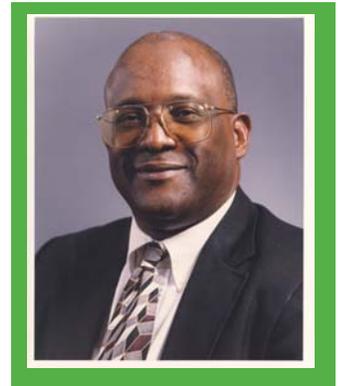


Minnesota NRCS

*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."
~Lyndon Baines Johnson*

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Minnesota NRCS made great strides in conservation application during FY 2005. Much of our success was due in part to your strong ability to work with the conservation partners throughout this great state of Minnesota.

With a positive can-do attitude, MN NRCS will continue to make great strides in getting conservation on the land. Together, we can and will accomplish a great deal.

As you continue to communicate the good what NRCS does in Minnesota, remember our new motto: **NRCS, Helping People Help the Land.** An integral part of the agency identity is the agency motto. Our motto does an excellent job of articulating what it is NRCS does.

William Hunt
State Conservationist

Mid-MN Mississippi River RC&D Council making things happen by Patrick Gehling

In 2005, the Mid-MN Mississippi River RC&D cleared two major hurdles for becoming a fully funded RC&D area in Minnesota.

1. Applied for and received IRS 501 (c) (3) status for federal tax exemption
2. Submitted an Application for Authorization, Area Plan, and an Annual Plan to USDA.

Additionally, the RC&D recently provided funding to Foley schools for an Environmental Learning Center. The Foley school needed assistance in developing their Environmental Learning Center including assistance to develop a wetland restoration project. The Project was completed in the fall of 2005, with the exception of the seeding, which will be done in the spring of 2006. The wetland complements an adjoining native grass planting, tree planting and walking trail.

Glacial Ridge Project is holding it's 3rd annual Earth Day celebration on Friday, April 21, 2006

The time frame for the event is from 9:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at Glacial Ridge near Mentor, Minnesota. Participants will learn about Prescribed burns, Waterfowl I.D., Wetlands, Web of life, Water Experiments, Prairie Wildlife and a tour will take place.

NRCS, West Polk SWCD, USFWS, The Nature Conservancy and Ducks Unlimited will be sponsoring the event. Contact Greg Bengtson at NRCS in Crookston if you have questions. Call Greg at (218)-281-2809 ext. 4

Meth Awareness Training in Area 4

Realizing the importance of educating and informing NRCS employees of issues that are impacting their community, Timothy Wilson, ASTC-FO Brooklyn Center, invited Terry Olson of Brooklyn Center, a local policeman to serve as a guest speaker.



Methamphetamine is at epidemic proportions throughout our State and Nation. Meth is an illegal stimulant drug that causes users to be awake longer and lose weight.

People that are on meth have a difficult time of standing still and exhibit incredibly nervous behavior. The increase of illegal use of meth in society has caused many local police departments to refocus their law enforcement efforts.

**In Memoriam
Richard Nelson
Mayor, City of Warren**

Richard Nelson, 47, Mayor of the City of Warren passed away on January 19, 2006.

“Mayor Dick” has been a tireless advocate for NRCS water resources programs both locally and at the national level.

Locally his efforts resulted in approval and funding of the Snake River Watershed Project in record time. That project will provide flood protection for the city of Warren and surrounding areas. The flood diversion channel has been named the **Richard P. Nelson Floodway** in his honor.

In 2003 Dick was named the National Watershed Coalition’s “Person of the Year” which recognized his efforts on the national level.

Pictured from the left are Bruce Julian, NRCS, Washington DC, Richard Nelson, and Ron Adrian, Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District Watershed



The late Mayor Nelson recognized Bill Hunt, NRCS State Conservationist, and the entire NRCS staff for their effort in implementing the Snake River Flood Control Project.

Jim Smith, MN NRCS employee serving in Iraq

Jim Smith, Soil Conservation Technician located at the Owatonna F0, has been called up for active duty in the U.S. Army stationed in Iraq. This is Jim’s second overseas tour of duty in the last four years as part of the War on Terrorism.



Jim has been with the agency since August of 2002. Prior to coming to NRCS, he was a district technician with the Rice County Soil and Water Conservation District. Last April, Jim was instrumental in working with local USDA officials to host Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Johanns, and MN Governor, Tim Pawlenty, for a special Earth Day/CREP signing ceremony on a farm near Owatonna. During the event, Jim was one of the adult leaders that assisted local 5th grade students plant conservation trees on site with both the Secretary and the Governor.

Hunting is one of Jim’s hobbies and when time allows, he joins co-workers in the office for pheasant hunts. Jim and his wife Carissa are proud parents of a new baby, Lainey who is under a year old and growing like a weed. They make their home in Steele County.

Minnesota NRCS Female Engineers are recognized by Julie MacSwain

March is Women's History Month, and it follows closely behind Engineers' Week which was Feb. 20-24. On February 21st a reception was held at the National Press Club to herald the release of a publication called "Changing Our World: True Stories of Women Engineers." Featured in this publication are two NRCS-Minnesota Engineers, Amy Dessner and Sonia Maassel Jacobsen. Amy is featured for her involvement in building a concrete canoe while a student at the Univ. of Wisconsin. Sonia is featured for the assistance she provided as a USDA engineer in Nicaragua after Hurricane Mitch devastated Central America. This publication was prepared to encourage young women to consider careers in engineering. It can be ordered through the American Society of Civil Engineers. It can be viewed on line at www.engineeringwomen.org.

Minnesota's Great get-together will occur August 24, 2006 - September 4, 2006. Minnesota NRCS's theme will center around Backyard Conservation. Plans are to include a farm display from the Glencoe Field Office which will be used to interact with the fair guests.

Stay tuned for additional Fair information. Your continued support in volunteering to help staff the Fair display is both encouraged and appreciated!

Thanks!

Julie MacSwain

A School's New Life by Patrick McLoughlin Cultural Resources Specialist

In 1873, Mother Mary Ignatius Hayes, a Franciscan nun, established St. Anthony's Academy, a boarding school for girls in Morrison County, offering French-language education to daughters of French-Canadian settlers. The school prospered until it became embroiled in a local Catholic Church controversy which ended in it being destroyed by arsonists in 1889. The school was rebuilt in 1911 by the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. The institution, now known as Our Lady of the Angels Academy, quickly recovered its place in the center of Belle Prairie social and educational life and was the largest school in the community until its closure in 1969. The Academy is an example of the role that Catholic nuns have played in education in America. Nuns - particularly Franciscan nuns - built the country's largest private school and nonprofit hospital system, and are credited with founding some 800 hospitals and 10,000 parochial schools, colleges, and universities. At its peak in the 1950s, the Catholic parochial school system enrolled 11 percent of the country's students. The Academy is now expected to return to public service as affordable housing. Our Lady of the Angels Academy was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 28, 2005.

If you have questions about Cultural Resources in Minnesota, please contact, Patrick McLoughlin Cultural Resources Specialist in St Paul, at the NRCS State Office. Patrick can be reached via e-mail at: patrick.mcloughlin@mn.usda.gov or by phone at: (651) -602-7907.

**Initial Allocations from WRP Have Been Made
by Julie MacSwain, State Public Affairs Specialist**

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial support to help landowners.

WRP initial allocations have been made to 42 Minnesota landowners in 10 counties in Western Minnesota. State Conservationist William Hunt, has made these initial funding decisions and has transmitted Intent to Continue letters to these producers. If they then agree NRCS will order appraisals and make an offer to purchase an easement and obligate these funds.

WRP compensates landowners with an easement payment for their willingness to restore wetlands and associated uplands. NRCS also provides the funds to restore the sites back to their naturally occurring condition. This condition is focused on migratory species, including, but not limited to, songbirds, shorebirds, ducks and geese.

For more information about WRP in Minnesota, contact Tim Koehler, Assistant State Conservationist for Farm Bill Programs: Phone: (651)-602-7857 or via e-mail at: tim.koehler@mn.usda.gov or visit the Minnesota NRCS website at: www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov

County	Number	Acres	Approximate Dollars
Becker	5	549	\$950,000
Big Stone	2	425	\$750,000
Clay	6	1425	\$2,000,000
Grant	1	149	\$300,000
Lincoln	1	87	\$180,000
Mahnomen	4	3487	\$3,620,000
Norman	4	919	\$1,200,000
Polk	2	184	\$200,000
Pope	3	272	\$500,000
Stevens	14	2041	\$4,000,000
Total	42	9538	\$13,700,000



WRP restoration dike with outlet structure.

FY 2006 Safety and Health Committee



L-R Tammy Eggerstrom and Cutrina Moreland are serving as Co-Chair of the Safety and Health Committee.

Tim Koehler named Conservation Professional for 2006 by Ducks Unlimited

by Julie MacSwain

Ducks Unlimited recognized Tim Koehler at the Minnesota Duck's Unlimited annual state convention on February 11th. Ducks Unlimited works to improve Minnesota's wetland and waterfowl resources. Koehler was one of four people recognized. Koehler was named the Conservation Professional for 2006.

DU began the awards program in 2000 to recognize key individuals, organizations and others in Minnesota who contribute to DU's goals to fulfill the habitat needs of North America's waterfowl.

With a background in forestry, **Koehler** may not seem the type of individual who would make great contributions to waterfowl and wetlands. However, Koehler's efforts as Assistant State Conservationist and State manager of the Wetlands Reserve Program are more than deserving of recognition by Ducks



Unlimited for the conservation professional award.

"Through Tim's leadership of WRP, NRCS has acquired 484 WRP easements amounting to more than 60,000 acres of wetlands and grasslands," said Bob Usgaard, DU regional biologist. "While some states were slow to see the full potential of WRP, Tim's proactive attitude, desire to grow the program, and willingness to create partnerships has turned Minnesota into one of the top states in WRP acres and funding received."

Since 2001, Minnesota NRCS has consistently received close to \$14 million of WRP funding each year and has developed partnerships with DU, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources, The Nature Conservancy, the Board of Water and Soil Resources and others to convert those funds into restored wetland and grassland acres.

The new year of 2006 has brought new leadership for the NRCS Safety and Health Committee. Tammy Eggerstrom and Cutrina Moreland are serving in this dual-capacity. Laurie Otte served nine years as the Safety and Health Chairperson. NRCS employees have greatly benefited from the activities that have been generated from the Safety and Health Committee. All Minnesota NRCS employees are represented on this committee and have the opportunity to share with others what will truly benefit the health and welfare of our MN NRCS employees.

A special thank you to Laurie Otte for her many years of serving in this leadership capacity as well as for the excellent safety and health training results that occurred during this period of time!

2005 Marketing Excellence Awards

Minnesota NRCS rolled out in 2005 its first ever, Marketing Excellence Awards. A total of five offices were recognized for their outstanding efforts on marketing the good things that NRCS does in Minnesota. During the February 2006 Leadership meeting, Mr. Hunt awarded the 2005 Minnesota Excellence Awards. The following offices were named as recipients:

- Glacial Ridge Project Office, Area 1**
- Marshall Area Office, Area 5**
- Rochester Area Office, Area 7**
- Lewiston Field Office, Area 7**
- Owatonna Field Office, Area 7**

Congratulations to these offices for the excellent job in communicating . Questions regarding the Marketing Award should be directed to John Nicholson, ASTC-FO Rochester who is serving as the 2006 Marketing Committee Chair.

National Black History Month Observance Celebrating Community: A Tribute to Black Fraternal Social and Civic Institutions by Julie MacSwain, State Public Affairs Specialist

NRCS in cooperation with FSA and RD held a Black History event on February 21, in St. Paul. This year's Theme was "Celebrating Community: A Tribute to black Fraternal Social and Civic Institutions.

William Hunt, State Conservationist reminded the audience "Diversity is what makes USDA stronger." Programs such as the Black History event bring people together to learn. The participants were challenged to learn as much as possible from the event. For the last 11 years that Mr. Hunt has served as State Conservationist, observances for all underrepresented groups have been held for employees to attend.

Dr. Samuel Thornton, a Special Assistant to the Deputy Chief of Management for USDA-NRCS in Washington, DC served as the program's keynote speaker.



Dr. Thornton, a leader and pioneer at heart, inherited his strong effectiveness of communication and education from the unpredictable outcomes of Raymond, Mississippi. Dr. Thornton has dedicated his life to helping others while expanding the vision of possibilities to both children and adults with his peaceful and uplifting spirit. He has earned several university degrees over the course of his lifetime.

"We are living in a dynamic time," said Dr. Thornton. "Make certain that people know what they have gone through. A clear sense of the past is important." Dr. Thornton reminded the audience several times during his presentation that we have "unfinished business".

"Leadership begins with each of us. When we work together to make dreams reality, then we will finish the business."

For more information about February Black History Month, please contact George Montgomery, District Conservationist, Stillwater Field Office. George can be reached via e-mail at: george.montgomery@mn.usda.gov



Cutrina Moreland, Special Programs Coordinator and George Montgomery, District Conservationist, Stillwater FO

CSP Community Informational Meetings by Robin Martinek, State Agronomist



“Get ready ahead of time” and “know your options and opportunities” were the themes of a series of CSP informational meetings held in February for producers in Stearns, Benton, Mille Lacs, Sherburne and Wright Counties. A total of 94 producers attended these meetings.

The meetings were sponsored by NRCS, MASWCD, and the Mid-MN Mississippi River RC&D area. There is not currently a CSP sign up in any of the watersheds in this area of the state, however, the focus was on the future. A self assessment book was handed out to those in attendance, and the program eligibility criteria was explained by John Crellin, Area Resource Conservationist and the NRCS staff in each county. “Even if producers don’t get into the CSP, this was a chance to talk to them about good conservation practices”, said John.

Chuck Uphoff, 2005 CSP participant, also spoke to the groups and he commented that he definitely thought the CSP was a win-win for producers. His comment was that management changes you may have to make in your operation to qualify for this program are worth the time and effort.

The Spring Dead Animal Collection by Julie MacSwain, State Public Affairs Specialist

The Spring Dead Animal Collection will take place between March 15-April 15, 2006 in Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake and Roseau Counties. This project has been made possible with the assistance from the Pembina Trail Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Association, a nonprofit organization. Local sponsors on this spring dead animal collection includes: Board of Commissioners, SWCD and a Member-At-large from the seven counties.

Environmental concerns and the potential spread of disease are the two main factors for offering this voluntary program to agricultural producers in this region. The base fee is \$93.00 for the first 4,000 pounds and \$2.50 for each 100 pounds there after. Some counties offer a cost share incentive payment for part of the expense and some counties may have a cap on the amount they will spend. Folks participating in this Spring Dead Animal Collection program are encouraged to get together with their neighbors to save on costs.

For additional information about this program, please contact Karen Mueller at Pembina Trail RC&D. Karen can be contacted at (218)-253-264 Ext. 103 or via e-mail at: Karen.mueller@mn.usda.gov

**William Hunt, State Conservationist
recognized in Oklahoma**

by Julie MacSwain, State Public Affairs Specialist

**William Hunt named recipient of Agriculture
Heritage Award in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma**

William Hunt, State Conservationist, was recently awarded the Agriculture Heritage Award at the 2006 Minority Youth in Agriculture “Cultivating Youth Development” Conference in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The conference was hosted by the Retired Educators for Youth Agricultural Programs and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. Sam Combs III President, REYAP and Terry L. Peach, Secretary of Agriculture, Oklahoma presented Hunt with a plaque



The Award recognized Hunt for his proven leadership and intuitive insight in serving the agricultural community. REYAP promotes a vision that African-Americans and other culturally diverse youth will live the American dream as they become informed about and inspired by opportunities in the field of agriculture.

William Hunt has served as the State Conservationist since 1995. During this time he has received several awards for his leadership and passion for diversifying Minnesota NRCS's workforce. Through Hunt's leadership, he has dramatically increased the number of minority employees to include women and people with disabilities. Hunt received his Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Economics from Langston University in Oklahoma.

**Area 5 NRCS & SWCD Employees making a
difference with soliders**

by Cal Dunblazer

Area 5 NRCS and SWCD Employees are again collecting items to be sent to soldiers overseas. Since the return of the Marshall Unit of the MN National Guard from Iraq we have not had a unit that we were supporting. Thank you all for your generous donations that you provided for the soldiers serving abroad. I am as proud of the support you have shown as I am of the soldiers who serve.

We have a new candidate to support. 1st Lieutenant Daniel A. Davis arrived in Kuwait in October 2005 in preparation for deployment to Iraq. It is anticipated that LT Davis will be sent to Iraq soon. LT Davis serves with Company “A”, 2nd Battalion, 128th Infantry of the Wisconsin Army National Guard from Ft. Atkinson WI. Prior to their Kuwait deployment the unit assisted with Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts in Mississippi. Daniel Davis is Sandy Jerzak's brother.

This is an excellent opportunity to serve the soldiers who are overseas. **Thank you** in advance for your help!

FY 2005 MN NRCS CIVIL RIGHTS AWARDS WINNERS

Shannon Bengtson, District Conservationist, and Mark Kulig, District Conservationist, are each awarded a MN NRCS Civil Rights Individual Award for FY 2005.

Shannon Bengtson conceived, planned, organized and conducted a highly successful MN Intertribal Conservation Workshop. She organized a planning committee of NRCS and tribal leaders from the Mille Lacs Band. The workshop, held October 2005, included seven Band of Ojibwa, Upper and Lower Sioux Communities and over 30 NRCS employees in attendance.

Mark Kulig has served as the Chair of the Area 7 Civil Rights Committee and as a representative on the state Civil Rights Committee. Mark successfully led the All Cultural Appreciation Day July 2005 with team partners in Owatonna. Mark has worked to make his summer staff feel at home and get involved with community activities.

Group/Team MN NRCS Civil Rights Award FY 2005

Southwest Women's Day Committee was the awarded the MN NRCS Civil Rights Group/Team for Award FY 2005. Since 2002 this Committee has held workshops and events for women landowners to learn about conservation programs, natural resources and meet agency staff in a comfortable atmosphere. Past workshops include "From Buffers to Butterflies," "Grasses, Groves & Government Pros ~ Clearing the Underbrush from Government Programs," "Where Does Your Water Flow ~ Funneling Resources for a Healthy Watershed," and "What's Blowing in the Wind? Soil and Energy." Annually 70-90 women attend the sessions.

Project partners and award winners are:

Marcia Heiling, Redwood SWCD
Shelly Lewis, Murray SWCD
Mavis Kruisselbrink, Pipestone SWCD
Cheryl Mathias, Cottonwood SWCD
Terry Dybsetter, Lincoln SWCD
Pauline Van Overbeke, Lincoln SWCD
Merle Behrens, Lyon SWCD
Lou Ann Nagel, Yellow Medicine SWCD
Sandra Jerzak, USDA NRCS

Congratulations to these employees and partners!

Invasive Plant Species Management Agronomy Technical Note #16 by Robin Martinek, State Agronomist

Minnesota NRCS has recently released a new Technical Note on Invasive Plant Species Management. The purpose of this Technical Note is to identify invasive species and noxious weeds in Minnesota, provide general information for controlling or managing these harmful plants, and options to prevent new infestations from establishing.

Invasive species and noxious weeds are separate categories of harmful plants. While both can adversely impact native ecosystems and farmland, invasive species tend to spread aggressively resulting in reduced diversity while noxious weeds do their harm not only by population density but also cause harm through poisons, allelopathy, thorns, alternative hosts to insects or diseases and unpalatability to livestock.

This Technical Note is located in Section IB of the Electronic Field Office Technical Guide under reference lists. Planning policy for invasive species has also been added to the National Planning Procedures Handbook, as a Minnesota amendment. Ginger Kopp, State Forester and Robin Martinek, State Agronomist authored this document. If you have additional questions pertaining to this Note, please contact either Ginger or Robin in the NRCS state office.

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

Ron Adrian recognized for Snake River Project by Julie MacSwain, State Public Affairs Spe

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, Public Law 83-566, was passed in 1954. The primary purpose of the act was to reduce damages to our water and related land resources that resulted from flooding, erosion, and sedimentation. Since its passage, as national priorities changed, the program was amended to include a wide variety of purpose and objectives. Today, almost any water related issue may be addressed through the program.

Ron Adrian, retired district engineer for the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed was recently recognized for his role as contract administrator for the PL-566 Snake River watershed flood control project. A citation was presented at a recent open house which was sponsored by the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Watershed Board. Adrian was honored for the 32 years of service for his watershed district.



L-R Ron Adrian is presented with a plaque by Glen Kajewski, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, Thief River Falls.

Personnel:

Welcome to *Matt Waterworth*, recent graduate from the U of M - Crookston. Matt is currently working in the Warren FO and will be headed to work in the Albert Lea office in late May.

Congratulations to:

Shawnn Balstad, DC, Grand Forks, ND has been selected for the Pembina Trail RC&D coordinator position. Shawnn will start in her new position on April 30.

Jessica Tiedemann, SCT, Warren, MN will change locations and be our 'new' Soil Conservation Technician, in Crookston starting on April 30 as well.

Shelly Micke, SCT-Bagley and *Christine Spaeth*, SCT-Mahnomen and *Leanne Langeberg*, SCT-Red Lake on their recent promotions.

Adam Woltjer, SCT-McIntosh and *Krystal Story*, SCT-Bemidji on their conversion to career conditional employees from the Federal Career Intern Program.

Joan Ranney, Misc. Assistant (OA), Giziibii RC&D, Bemidji has begun her new duties working for the Forest Service in Cass Lake. We'll miss Joan and her many talents.

Awards-

The winner for the 2005 Bismarck National Plant Materials Center Award is Allan Gustafson, Area Resource Conservationist, Area 1. Allan was recognized for his consistent promotion of the Plant Materials Program throughout his career and annually providing assistance to the Bismarck Plant Materials Center, the Minnesota State Office, Area 1 staff, and numerous landowners. Congratulations AI on this well deserved award and thank you to Dwight Tober, PMC Specialist, for submitting AI for this award.

**AREA 2
JAMES R. AYRES, ASTC(FO),
FERGUS FALLS, MN**

Freezin' for a Reason' by Julie MacSwain, State Public Affairs Specialist

“Freezin’ for a Reason” which is now an annual event for WesMin RC&D is a way for the RC&D to raise money and awareness for RC&D projects in the WesMin RC&D area. WesMin has recruited people to plunge into Lake Miltona.

A minimum of \$50 had to be raised to participate in the plunge. WesMin gave polar plunge awards for the oldest, youngest, person who raised the most money, best costume, etc. The person who raised the most money this year was Jerry Haggemiller, Douglas SWCD at an amount of \$2,011, the oldest was a County Commissioner in her late 70’s, and best costume went to Jennifer Brever who dressed up as the “Nutrition Avenger”

Other events included in WesMin’s Freezin’ for a Reason winter festival (besides the Polar plunge) included a medallion hunt, spaghetti dinner/silent auction, old fashioned curling and 5 & 10K cross country ski run. If you are interested in learning more about Freezin for a Reason, please contact WesMin RC&D Coordinator, Dean Schmidt in Alexandria, Minnesota. Dean can be reached at (218)-763-3191 Extension 5.

Dean Schmidt, RC&D Coordinator took the plunge!



Personnel:

Michael Steinhauer, converted to career conditional appointment from a FCIP position as a SCT, in Breckenridge.

Troy Baumgart, reassigned from SCT, Glenwood, to SCT, Perham.

Awards

Robert Honeman, Robert Koltes, and Brent Gulbrandson each received non-monetary awards for quality assurance assistance provided to the Stevens County Field Office.

Cheryl Isder received a non-monetary award for performing the 2006 WHIP signup in the Perham Field Office during January 2006.

Troy Baumgart received a non-monetary award for being instrumental in establishing the GIS/ GPS mapping system within the USDA Service Center in Glenwood.

William Marken received a non-monetary award for making high quality maps for Crow Wing County.

Jennifer Hansen received a non-monetary award for assisting with the scanning of Becker County slides along with some State Office slides, and also the scanning of some State Office photos.

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

Pine County Soil Survey Update

By Mary Kay Anderson, Pine County District Manager and Jerome Gorton, Soil Survey Project Leader

A long-awaited soil survey commenced in Pine County last fall. For many years, the Pine County Soil & Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service wanted to see a soil survey get underway. Due to the full support of the Pine County Board of Commissioners, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources, the project was approved.

A soil survey is extremely beneficial to Pine County. By using a soil survey, we will be able to determine soil type as it pertains to land use for development and recreation, as well as for other activities such as forestry, agriculture, septic systems, excavation, construction, and tourism. The soil survey will be used as a tool to better protect our natural resources. By using this soil survey, we hope to better guide landowners in their land use decisions. The project will take approximately 12 years to complete.

The soil survey is progressing on schedule. We are tentatively planning to have a First Acre Ceremony in early May.

Many “thanks” go out to all of the individuals who supported the project proposal and made it a reality: Bob Korth, District Conservationist, NRCS, Hinckley; the Pine County Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors; the Natural Resources Conservation Service; the Pine County Board of Commissioners and Coordinator; the Pine County Water Management Plan Task Force; the Board of Water and Soil Resources; and the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources.



My name is Jessica Weis. I grew up on a hobby

farm in Marshfield, WI. I graduated from the University of WI-River Falls in December 2004 with a B.S. degree in Broad Area Agriculture with emphasis in Animal Science and Conservation. Upon graduation, I started working for NRCS as a soil scientist in Ironwood, MI. I’m very excited to be here and look forward to meeting and talking with many of you.

My name is Shannon Johnson and I am a 2005 graduate of the University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point, where I received a B.S. in Soil and Land Management. I was President of the SWCS chapter and of Women in Natural Resources, and was active in soil judging, receiving 8th place individually at the national NACTA competition in April. Summer of 2004 I spent progressive soil surveying as an intern with the NRCS outside Fairbanks, Alaska. This summer my great adventure was the birth of my daughter, McKenna- my first. I look forward to many new adventures with the NRCS.



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

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

Personnel:

Debra Hermel is our new DC at the North Branch Field Office (effective January 23, 2006) and **Jessica Olson** is our new Area Office Agricultural Engineer (effective March 6, 2006). Welcome aboard, Deb and Jessica!

Thomas Gervais, Soil Conservation Technician, **promotion**, effective February 21, 2006. Congratulations, Tom!

Awards

Robert Korth, DC, Hinckley FO, received an **Extra Effort Award** for serving as Acting DC for the North Branch FO.

Non-monetary awards were presented to **Ben Ellefson**, Civil Engineering Technician, Duluth, **Michael Walczynski**, Area Resource Soil Scientist, Duluth and **Martin Rosek**, Soil Scientist, Center of Excellence, Cloquet.

The following employees received **Length of Service Awards**: **Marvin Kunkel**, Civil Engineering Technician, **10 years** of federal service; **Michael Walczynski**, Area Resource Soil Scientist, **20 years** of federal service; and **Marc Diers**, MLRA Soil Survey Coordinator, **30 years** of federal service!

Environmental Learning Center at Foley School: The Foley Public School needed help to develop their Environmental Learning Center (ELC), including assistance to develop a wetland restoration project at the ELC. The restoration removed construction debris that was used to fill the area in many years ago.

At their February 2005 Council meeting a motion was made to provide financial support from the NRCS Contribution Agreement money. Project was completed in the fall of 2005, with the exception of the seeding, which will be done in the spring of 2006. The wetland compliments an adjoining native grass planting, tree planting, and walking trail.



*Dr Fred Nolan, Superintendent
Eunice Cross, School Board Chairperson
Earl (Butch) Bukowski, Mid-MN Mississippi
River RC&D Council Member*

For additional information about the Environmental Learning Center Project, please contact Pat Gehling District Conservationist in Foley, MN. Pat can be reached via phone at 320-968-5300 or via e-mail at: pat.gehling@mn.usda.gov



**Post Secondary Agricultural
Student Organization Competition**

by **Jaime Schaunaman, Soil Conservationist, Waite
Park, MN**

On January 31 and February 1, 2006, technical college students from Mankato, Willmar, and Worthington had the opportunity to participate in the Post Secondary Agricultural Student Organization competitions. The event was held at the Kelly Inn in St. Cloud. **Meghan Lene**, Soil Conservationist; and **Jaime Schaunaman**, Soil Conservationist, from the Waite Park Field Office volunteered to oversee the NRCS recruiting booth that was initiated by **Shannon Bengtson**, District Conservationist, Milaca. During the two days, they talked to interested students about career opportunities with NRCS.

Awards:

Non-monetary awards were awarded to the following NRCS employees in Waite Park for their assistance in hosting the first CSP Signing Ceremony in the Sauk Watershed: **Steve Sellnow, George Mohrhauser, Mike Hemmann, Riley Maanum, Meghan Lene, Emily Wolf, and Lee Zabinski**. Non-monetary awards were also awarded to the following Stearns SWCD employees for their assistance in the CSP Signing Ceremony: **Lori Persson, Dale Walz, Grant Peterson, Linus Meyer, Dennis Fuchs, Brad Wenz**.

Michael Vasquez, Brooklyn Center received a non-monetary award for his participation in submitting a poster for Hispanic Heritage Month.

George Mohrhauser, Waite Park received a non-monetary award for his efforts in helping Area 4 have the largest increase of Earth Team hours in the state. **Steve Sellnow**, Waite Park received an award for the most Earth Team hours contributed for Area 4. **Pat Gehling**, Foley received an award for the most reported number of Earth Team volunteers for Area 4.

**JAN/FEB/MAR/ 2006
CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS**

Non-monetary awards were awarded to the following employees for their efforts in providing training to student trainees: **John Crellin, Craig Peterson, Pete Weikle, George Montgomery, Ed Musielewicz, Jim Onstad, Stan Wendland, Michelle Wohlers**.

Non-monetary awards were awarded to the following employees for their efforts in assisting in implementation of CSP in the Sauk Watershed: **John Crellin**, Brooklyn Center; **Ed Musielewicz**, Elk River; **April Hill**, Waconia; **George Montgomery**, Stillwater; and **Andy Porupsky**, Jordan.

Martin Goettl, Brooklyn Center received a non-monetary award for his efforts in providing toolkit training and assistance to the field offices.

Robin Stevenson, Brooklyn Center received a non-monetary award for her efforts in providing clear administrative assistance to the field offices on completing travel vouchers and processing timesheets in a timely manner.

Gina Hugo, Sherburne SWCD received a non-monetary award for her efforts in the development of a CSP brochure for five CSP Information Briefing Meetings held in Areas 3 and 4.

Personnel:

Jaime Schaunaman, Soil Conservationist transferred from Preston to Waite Park effective January 22, 2006.

Martin Goettl, Brooklyn Center and his wife, Katie, recently welcomed the arrival of their second child. Katie gave birth to a baby boy on February 28th. Brody Cameron weighed in at 7 lbs 7 oz and was 21 inches long. Congratulations to Martin, Katie and big sister, Brenna on the new addition to their family!

AREA 5
MICHAEL D. APPEL, ASTC(FO)
MARSHALL, MN

Wintertime Blues...Blah!!

by Michael D. Appel, ASTC(FO) in Area 5

Winter is a time when days are short and nights are long. Work tapers off and you have time to plan your strategy for the upcoming spring, right? Wrong! When you have been around more than 30 years in this agency you can wax philosophically and do the “remember when...”

Remember when our main work was conservation planning and signing up a handful of producers for cost-share under the old Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP), some even included tile drainage as a stand alone practice. In busier counties, you might have the Water Bank Program and an RC&D Program as well. We were overworked and underpaid, so we thought. Winters were spent doing house calls, conservation planning and lining up construction work for the next year. Winter was a slow season.

Now let us move forward to the present. Winter starts in November sometime, I believe, that is unless you have a mild winter and the construction season is stretched into December and tiling continues into January some years. Some farmers are turning in bills in December with hopes you process their paperwork before the end of December so they don't have to claim the income in the next calendar year. The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is announced for 2006. You need to contact all 2005 contract holders to determine in which year they want to be paid. The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) is announced with a sign-up starting in January. Some counties are still trying to get their CSP paid by the first of February. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREPII) sign-up is underway and in some counties you are helping

promote wetland restorations, native grass seedings and filter strips. March is barely here and a General Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) sign-up is announced and you work with the Farm Services Agency and the Soil and Water Conservation District to promote this sign-up. Did I forget to mention that all employees need to be brought up to speed in their training with Toolkit, PRS, Protracts, RUSLEII, ArcGIS, First Aid/CPR, ATV, and Computer Security, etc. Farmers are still bringing in bills and wanting payment for something done in October. Then when you think you have everything under control they announce that all drainage requests will require a certified wetland determination – but wait, maybe not. EQIP then announces an energy incentive and a completion incentive which may require you to modify some contracts. Hold on, our area was given additional dollars for EQIP; you may have to write more contracts, contact farmers and obligate the funds. You are frantic, did you miss something, and have I done all the things my Area Office required like getting my PRS items reported.

Gee ... isn't winter fun!

Personnel:

We welcomed **Nathan Stewart**, Ag Engineer, to the Marshall Area Staff on January 9, 2006. He graduated from SDSU in December and was our student trainee last summer/fall in the Montevideo FO.

Gwen Kappes started as the District Conservationist in Clarkfield on March 6, 2006. Gwen was working as a Soil Conservationist in Park River, ND. We welcome Gwen to Area 5.

Jay and Angie Murphy are the proud parents of a baby girl named Macy Joan that arrived on February 15, 2006. Jay is the SCT in Luverne, MN.

Winter Grazing Workshop

by Julie MacSwain, State Public Affairs Specialist

A Winter Grazing Workshop was held in Saint James, on March 15, 2006. This workshop was attended by local agricultural producers and agency personnel who had an interest in grazing animals on pastureland.

Close to 40 people participated in this morning workshop. Amy Stratton, Three Rivers RC&D Coordinator served as moderator for the event. Greg Tennant, District Conservationist from the Sleepy Eye Field Office gave an overview of EQIP and how producers might be able to obtain cost-sharing for grazing systems. Lance Smith, NRCS Grazing Specialist, Marshall Area Office provided detailed technical information on Pre-scribing Grazing Systems, Fencing, Watering Systems and how to winter livestock.



A highlight to the workshop was a panel of local farmers who had added grazing into their farming operation and shared their experiences with the workshop participants. The question and answer time was valuable as it allowed the audience to interact and network with the speakers. The end result, a more informed grazing audience and a passion to learn more about the topic.

Local farmers shared their knowledge of grazing expertise at the Winter Grazing Workshop!



NRCS provided funding through a cooperative agreement with MN Association of RC&D Councils for the grazing management sessions. Three Rivers RC&D was the project lead and brought the planning partners together. Watonwan County provided funding towards the refreshments. Those who helped plan and sponsor the event included:

- USDA NRCS
- Three Rivers RC&D
- MARC&D
- Watonwan County and SWCD

- Blue Earth River Basin Initiative
- Rural Advantage
- Brown SWCD
- Freeborn County
- Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance
- Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

Other partners who helped to “get the word out” included:

- MN Farmers Union
- SARE
- Blue Earth County
- Le Sueur County
- MN Cattlemans Association
- CARGO

Questions pertaining to this Grazing Workshop should be directed to Amy Stratton, RC&D Coordinator at (507) 345-7418 Extension #5.

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

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

Personnel:

New Employee

Paul Johnson, CET, will begin duty on May 1, 2006 in the St. Peter Field Office.

Ryan Braulick, DC in the Mankato Field Office began duty February 2006.

Carissa Spencer began duty as DC in the Fairmont Field Office January 2006.

Promotions:

**Michael Anderson
Corinne Brenke**

Area 7 Employees become Recertified

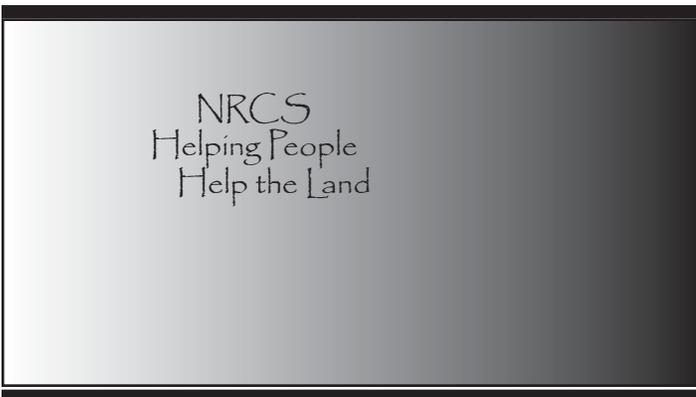
Area 7 is the first Area in Minnesota to have its District Conservationists re-certified in both conservation planning and certified nutrient management. Mr. Hunt was on hand to deliver the new NRCS hats to the Area 7 employees. Employees who achieved the re-certification received a hat!

Becoming a certified conservation planner and nutrient management specialist is important for NRCS to maintain our technical expertise with the clientele that we serve. A special congratulations and “hats on” to Area 7 for achieving this accomplishment! Way-to-go, Area 7!

NRCS employees received a cap for being a Certified Nutrient Management Specialist William Hunt, State Conservationist is in the front row!



NRCS employees received a cap for being Certified Conservation Planner in Area 7. William Hunt, State Conservationist is located in the front row.



Special Act of Service – CSP

Bob Joachim, Christiane Roy, Claron Krogness, Dan Gunderson, Dave Copeland, Donna Marie Klapperich, Gary Larson, Jeff King, John Beck, Lawrence Svien, Mark Kunz, Mike Muzzy, Myron Taylor, Paul Spartz and Sue Glende.

Special Act of Service; Engineering; Houston Co.

Amy Dessner, 2005 MN NRCS

Marketing Excellence Award FO

Lewiston
Owatonna

**2005 MN NRCS Marketing Excellence Award;
Area Office**

Rochester Area Office

**Outstanding Performance Appraisal Award
Winners**

Christine Papenfuss
Colin Williams
Deanna Anderson
Mark Knable
Mark Hulig
Peter Hartman
Tom Steger

MN Civil Rights Award

Mark Kulig

New Employees

Jewel McKenzie – RC&D Coordinator Hiawatha Valley RC&D

Other Employee Events

Chris Nelson, Civil Eng. Tech. Rochester AO, and his wife are expecting their first child in April.

Myron Taylor, Dist. Cons. Albert Lea, will be getting married to Kasey Reed, ASTC(FO) ST. Peter, on April

Jim Axell selected for Visual Information Specialist position

Jim Axell began his new role as Visual Information Specialist on Feb 6th. Jim will be playing a key role in the design and development of public affairs materials. Jim has worked in the Engineering Section of the NRCS State office as a Cad Manager for over a dozen years. Jim's experience, positive attitude and work ethic is a welcome addition to the public affairs staff.



USDA Secretary Mike Johanns visited the NRCS State Office on April 22, 2005. Jim Axell met the Secretary during his visit.

**The next issue of Current Developments
is due: June 16, 2006**

Send your articles to:

Julie MacSwain, State Public Affairs Specialist
julie.macswain@mn.usda.gov

*Your contribution and continued readership of
Current Developments is appreciated!*