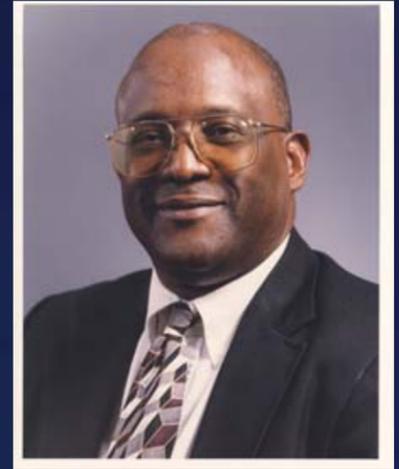


Minnesota

Current Developments

Oct/Nov/Dec 2007
www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov



William Hunt
State Conservationist

NRCS Employee Home from Iraq

Jim Smith

Returns to Owatonna
after Two years overseas

in the Minnesota
National Guard

Story Page 2

**DRY FIRE HYDRANTS
FIRE PROTECTION FOR RURAL
RESIDENTS**

See Page 10



Remarks from the State Conservationist

It's hard to believe that we have gone through 12 months on our 2007 calendar. The time has gone by very quickly and during this time frame we accomplished a great deal. With a strong, talented workforce like ours, I believe the best approach is to trust, empower and support your employees .

The same holds true for our customers, constituents and our partners.

One of the keys of the NRCS' Strategic Plan is to expand our horizons. Effective outreach will be a major factor to our success in this area, partially as it relates to partnerships. Also, we want to make conservation easier so that more conservation gets done. Additionally, we need to do all we can to get more people working with us. I believe we have to hold true to our mission of Helping People, Help the Land through our commitment to outreach.

I wish you and your family a happy holiday season and a wonderful new year!

WILLIAM HUNT

State Conservationist

CONSERVATION COUNTS

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Jim Smith returns from Iraq.

My name is Jim Smith and I recently returned from Iraq after being away for almost two years. I was with the group of 2,600 Minnesota National Guard soldiers that were activated for duty in Iraq in October 2005 and shipped to Camp Shelby, Mississippi for six months of training. During our stay at Camp Shelby we noted the devastation Hurricane Katrina left on Camp Shelby such as uprooted trees and heavily damaged buildings, which made training and living conditions very challenging. When our training ended we were on our way to Iraq to discover new challenges. The hot weather and the new living conditions made the first thirty days in Iraq the most difficult. Temperatures during the summer reached the 130 degree mark; I never imagined the sun could be so intense. At times the Sun was so bright we had to wear sunglasses to see and to protect our eyes. From April till December it never rained in Iraq and caused the sand to turn into powder from heavy vehicle traffic. We found sand everywhere including places

we least expected it. When the wind picked up it created sand storms that resulted in black outs that lasted for several days. I was stationed 90 miles south of Baghdad at a forward operating base called CSC Scania where I spent the majority of my time. We didn't live in the lap of luxury, but the base has most of the basic essentials required for survival. We received lots of mail from friends and family for which we are grateful. After being stationed at CSC Scania for 16 months it was time for us to rotate out and another unit took over our duties. It is such a great feeling to be back in Minnesota and after taking a few months off, I returned to work in Owatonna. Looking back it is hard to imagine I was away for so long. In closing, I want to send out a special thank you to everybody who sent me cards and care packages throughout the last two years. I am truly appreciative and I look forward to going back to work and visiting with all my co-workers.



Jim Smith, NRCS/ National Guard Serviceman

Rain Garden Standard By Sonia Maassel Jacobsen

Rain gardens are becoming widely accepted as a conservation practice to reduce pollutants, flow rates, and volumes from developed areas. A rain garden captures runoff and allows it to infiltrate, removing many nutrients that could impair downstream waters. We have been asked by our conservation partners to develop a standard for them. A rain garden is a specific type of a bioretention practice so the standard will be broad enough to cover a variety of bioretention basin concepts. A group of experts including Gregg Thompson, Anoka SWCD, Shawn Tracy, Anoka SWCD, Peter Young, Washington SWCD and Al Kean, Chief Engineer, BWSR are assisting with development of the interim FOTG standard called "Bioretention Basin". Sonia Maassel Jacobsen, NRCS Hydraulic Engineer is leading the effort.



Rain Gardens at the University of Minnesota St. Paul Campus



If you would like to have input to a draft version of the standard contact Sonia Maassel Jacobsen at: Sonia.jacobsen@mn.usda.gov

HISPANIC HERITAGE AND DISABILITY MONTH EVENT OCTOBER 25, 2007

On October 25, 2007, the first ever dual celebration for Hispanic Heritage Month and Disability Month was held at the Minnesota NRCS State Office in downtown St. Paul. Cutrina Moreland, Special Programs Coordinator with MN NRCS served as chair and moderator of the event.



Cutrina Moreland, Special Programs Coordinator

Hispanic Heritage Month is observed between September 15 – October 15th and Disability Month is observed during the month of October. Ann English, Assistant State Conservationist for Operations, provided opening remarks for the event. English reminded employees that "events such as this give employees an opportunity to branch out and learn." Additionally, English said people with disabilities have



Ann English, Assistant State Conservationist for Operations

abilities to share and it's important that we give them the opportunity to shine.

The speakers for the Hispanic Heritage/Disability event included two NRCS state office employees. Tessa Garcia, Administrative Coordinator and Dori Chouinard, Mail Clerk, both employees shared their personal stories regarding disabilities.

Tessa Garcia shared her experience of raising a child with developmental disabilities. After hearing her story the listener was better able to understand what is involved when a family member has developmental disability challenges.



Tessa Garcia, Administrative Coordinator

Tessa described in detail what her family went through and how these challenges brought her family together as a unit. "Her child's needs do not define her family, rather they made her family stronger" said Garcia.

Dori Chouinard described her childhood experiences growing up in a hearing world without the ability to perceive sound. Dori's interpreter used American Sign Language to relay Dori's message to the audience. We learned about the challenges Dori faced growing up as a hearing impaired child and how she learned English, speech, and American Sign Language. At the age of twelve Dori enrolled in the Fairbault Deaf School where she mastered the art of communication. Near the end of Dori's presentation she taught those in attendance basic American Sign Language signs.

"Her child's needs do not define her family, rather they made her family strong" said Garcia.

Cutrina Moreland closed the event with the viewing of a DVD regarding Mexican history; then in a spirited contest she posed questions to the audience. Winners of the quiz questions received prizes for their efforts! A scrumptious pot-luck dinner was served following the program.

Questions regarding this observation should be directed to Cutrina Moreland. Cutrina can be reached via phone at 651-602-7882 or by e-mail at: cutrina.moreland@mn.usda.gov



Cory Drummond, MN NRCS Civil Rights Chair and Dori Chouinard, Mail Clerk

The Story of Grassland Protection in Minnesota By Ginger Kopp, State Staff Forester With contributions from Michelle Legatt and Tom Steger

The Grassland Reserve Program has been highly successful in MN, particularly in Area 5. Goodhue County District Conservationist, Thomas Steger, met with a new NRCS client, Mr. Lowell Schafer, who had not previously participated in any USDA programs. Steger discussed the program responsibilities and benefits with him and a few days later, Steger, and NRCS Grazing Specialist (retired) Howard Moechnig walked over the farms with Mr. Schafer. They reviewed the management system and noted a few opportunities for improvement. (The improvements were later funded via an EQIP contract.) A GRP application was submitted and later approved.

The Rest of the Story

While this was going on, one of Mr. Schafer's employees observed the process told his uncles, who also run a beef herd, what was happening and suggested that they contact the Field Office about the GRP. Moechnig and Steger met with John and Joseph Kocur along with their nephew, Andy Jenson, to review their operation. Some minor management suggestions were made and an application for the GRP was completed and approved.

Both of the contracts reflect the steep sites and fragile soils commonly found in the county. They also reflect sound management practices already in place and further enhanced with the development of grazing plans and EQIP contracts. Annual reviews of the sites show the vegetation to be lush and well managed and the beef herds thriving under the enhanced managed grazing system.

Rock County is another example of using GRP to improve grazing lands and water quality. Rock County is unique by having an Ihlen-Rock Outcrop Association of loess covered bedrock. This land is very sensitive to ground water contamination due to the fractures in the bedrock foundation. These fractures act as direct conduits to subsurface aquifers. Through the efforts of the Rock County Field Office, eight cow-calf operations have enrolled over 900 acres into the GRP. By enrolling these pastures the land is protected from conversion to row crop production and fertilizer and pesticide applications.

Area 5 Achievements

These examples represent the achievement Area 5 has had with the GRP. To date, this Area has obligated 56 contracts protecting 6,073 acres of grassland. This year two counties, Big Stone and Jackson, had their first contracts approved making 10 of 14 counties having at least one GRP contract approved in this area. Murray County has the highest number of approved contracts with 22.

Noteworthy Achievements

Area 5 is not the only area with notable GRP accomplishments. Clay County in Area 2 has 3,570 acres in GRP the most of any county in MN; and this is just on 7 contracts! Wilkin County, also in Area 2, has the second highest acres enrolled with 2,774 and the second highest count in number of approved contracts with 19. Also, Wabasha County in Area 7 had its first 2 approved contracts this year.

The State Story

Each year since 2003 Minnesota is allocated about \$300,000 annually for GRP. Each year the whole allocation is obligated in just 2 weeks. Slippage is almost \$0 since returned funds are re-obligated into a waiting list of applications. Currently, 23 counties have a total of 107 approved contracts protecting 15,245 acres. The estimated total cost is almost \$3,320,000. That's a story that should be told and we can be proud of.

The Grassland Reserve Program has been highly successful in Minnesota, particularly in Area 5.



Conservation Time Line

September 19, 1933 – Soil Erosion Service is created as a temporary agency in the Department of the Interior to demonstrate practical conservation methods to farmers.

March 11, 1934 – A fierce windstorm from the Great Plains sweeps fine soil particles across as far away as Washington, D.C. Congress decides action must be taken immediately to reduce erosion.

April 27, 1935 – The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) is established in the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help private landowners carry out soil conservation practices.

February 27, 1937 – President Franklin D. Roosevelt urges governors to enact conservation district law that will allow landowners to organize conservation districts.

1938 – The first conservation district; Burns-Homer-Pleasant (townships in Winona County), was organized.

December 22, 1944 – Flood Control Act of 1944 authorizes 11 flood prevention projects and the Emergency Watershed Protection Program to help protect lives and property following natural disasters.

July 25, 1946 – National Association of Conservation Districts was founded in Chicago, Illinois.

August 1954 – The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act is enacted to help communities protect, improve, and develop watersheds.

September 27, 1962 – The Resource Conservation and Development Program is created to advance community development and environmental protection in multi-county areas.

December 23, 1985 – The 1985 Farm Bill requires landowners to carry out their conservation plans to receive USDA conservation program benefits.

October 20, 1994 – Soil Conservation Service changes its name to the Natural Resources Conservation Service to reflect its efforts to conserve natural resources.

2008 DIGITAL PHOTO CONTEST

The 2008 Digital Photo Contest themes for calendar year 2008 will again center around the NRCS Strategic Plan for 2005-2010. The Strategic Plan sets the direction for NRCS and describes our conservation priorities and goals. This plan will guide NRCS in implementing key overarching strategies, managing agency business lines, meeting customer needs, and developing and strengthening capacity to achieve our mission goals.

The photo contest is open to NRCS employees in Minnesota. Employees are encouraged to try to include pictures of people in the submission of photos. Please keep in mind high-quality pictures are desired for this contest. Remember to submit your best photo each month if you plan to participate in the photo contest. Pictures are to be taken in accordance with the designated monthly photo theme(s). See the list of the photo themes below:

PHOTO THEMES -2008

- January – Helping People Help the Land
- February – Working Farms and Ranch Lands
- March – Conservation Planning and Technical Consultation
- April – Employees Making a Difference
- May – Cooperative Conservation with our Conservation Partners
- June – Clean Water
- July – Wetlands
- August – Conservation Partnership
- September – Renewable Energy
- October – Conservation Implementation on our Minnesota Landscape
- November – Productive Lands – Healthy Environment
- December – RC&D Making Things Happen in Minnesota.

ACTING SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE, CHUCK CONNOR VISITS MINNESOTA!

Acting Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Connor visits Minnesota!

On Thursday, November 8, Acting Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Connor met with USDA Rural Development (RD), Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) employees. Secretary Connor spoke briefly with the employees who gathered at the 4th floor conference in the Farm Credit Building where he shared insight pertaining to the 2007 Farm Bill (S 2302). The Secretary also pointed out that Minnesota is a leader on the energy issue and that we should expect some energy results in the new farm bill.

After Secretary Connor's speech, a photo op took place with USDA RD, FSA and NRCS employees. At the conclusion of the photo session Secretary Connor proceeded to the Minnesota Agro Growth Conference in downtown St. Paul where he served as the keynote speaker!



NRCS employees from the State office and Area 4 office gathered for a group picture with Mr. William Hunt, MN NRCS State Conservationist and Acting Agriculture Secretary Chuck Connors.

Youth Energy Summit

by Randy Nelson, Prairie Country RC&D

The pilot Youth Energy Summit (YES) presented by the Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center (PWELC) and the Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) provided students throughout southwest and west central Minnesota with knowledge and enthusiasm to put renewable energy and conservation into the future of this region. Nearly 100 students and 20 coaches attended the two-day event held September 20th and 21st at the PWELC in Spicer, MN. Schools and communities represented at the Summit include Bird Island-Olivia-Lake Lillian, Canby, Dawson-Boyd, Milan, Montivideo, Morris, New Century Charter School in Hutchinson, New London-Spicer, Paynesville, Redwood Valley, and Willmar. Students learned about the issues and opportunities related to energy through workshops, a resource fair, and a community Kick-Off event. Dave Pederson, executive director of PWELC said, "YES was conceived as a means to engage the power of youth in truly making a difference in their community, and in the world, through energy conservation and community-based energy project. If renewable energy is the future, why not let those with the most at stake help set the course?"

Through a "co-opetition," cooperative teamwork with a competitive edge, the student teams were challenged to implement renewable energy and energy projects in their communities. The teams' goals are to achieve the greatest positive social, economic, and environmental gains through their projects. Workshop sessions included Renewable Energy, Energy Conservation,

CONSERVATION CONNECTIONS

Celebration of American Indian Heritage Month by Julie MacSwain

Dave Wise, MN NRCS Tribal Liaison, planned and organized a celebration of American Indian Heritage Month that took place in the MN State Office on Tuesday, November 28, 2007. The celebration included inter-tribal speakers, Maggie Harp, Natural Resources Director for the Lower Sioux Tribal Community and Bruce Savage, an American Indian agriculture producer with the Fond du Lac Community. Tim Koehler, Assistant State Conservationist, Programs, remarked on behalf of William Hunt, State Conservationist. Mr. Koehler said, "NRCS has learned about the tribal culture through the implementation of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The commitment is there for assisting American Indians for their reservation concerns and conservation implementation."



Maggie Harp shared her working experiences with both Resource Conservation and Development and NRCS. Recently, the Lower Sioux received a \$1,000.00 grant that will be used for community gardening projects. The Lower Sioux is also working on a maple syrup project with the

Bureau of Indian Affairs. Ms. Harp was pleased to announce that she is working to finalize the 2008 EQIP application for the Lower Sioux that will focus on organic funding.

At the conclusion of Ms. Harp's presentation the group participated in a food

break! Dave Wise shared several Native American foods with the group including wild rice, beef jerky, cranberries, and corn bread. Following the food break, the group reassembled to close the American Heritage Month Program.



Mr. Savage shared his experience as a producer near the Fond du Lac Indian Reservation where he grows heirloom vegetables such as beans, potatoes, and squash. Much of the produce Mr. Savage raises is sold at the Duluth Farmers Market and he reminded the audience that Native Americans who market agriculture products encounter hurdles in the traditional marketplace. However, he is hopeful his website will eliminate some of these challenging barriers.

Mr. Savage's true passion is making maple syrup and he thoroughly enjoys the process of getting the syrup from the tree to the consumer's kitchen table. His passion for maple syrup has led to maple syrup family vacations. During these vacations both he and his family increased their knowledge of maple syrup traditions and they make every effort to implement these newly learned strategies.

For more information regarding this event, please contact David Wise via email at: dave.wise@mn.usda.gov

Homegrown Energy Economics, and Team Building. Students connected with 20 exhibitors representing a wide variety of businesses and organizations at the resource fair, who they can turn to as they implement energy projects in their communities. Participating teams will work on their community energy projects through Earth Day 2008 with the guidance of their coaches and PWELC staff.

"I'm excited that the opportunity to make a difference and help the environment was presented," wrote one student on her Summit evaluation form. "Our generation can change the future, and you are giving us the knowledge, skills and opportunities to help us do just that."

Prairie Country RC&D staff assisted with the implementation of the Youth Energy Summit. For more information about the Youth Energy Summit please visit www.prairiewoodselc.org

RC&D's are making a difference in Minnesota. For more information about RC&D, please check out the MN NRCS webpage to learn more about the accomplishments that are being made by RC&D's in Minnesota.

<http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/rcd/index.html>

Count Your Garden

Count your garden by the flowers, never by the leaves that fall;
Count your days by golden hours, don't remember clouds at all.
Count your nights by stars, no shadows, Count your years with smiles, not tears,
Count your blessings, not your troubles.
Count your age by friends, not years.

-Author Unknown

Community Career Exploration 2007

by Mark Dybdal, District Conservationist, Alexandria Field Office

On November 20, 2007 Rich Geving and Rick Berscheid participated in the 13th Annual Career Day. Approximately 650 juniors from Alexandria, Brandon, Evansville, Glenwood, Osakis, and Parkers Prairie high schools participated in the event. The students had different breakout sessions to attend and speakers to listen to. Local Businesses sat up booths and spoke to students one



Rich Geving, NRCS employee from the Alexandria Field Office shared his passion for NRCS with the students at Career Day.

on one to inform them what there options were after high school. Rich and Rick manned the NRCS booth and informed students how they could get involved with the NRCS by becoming an earth team volunteer or through internships. Many students interested in the Natural Resources field stopped by the booth and received brochures and fact sheets, along with having the chance to speak to an NRCS employee.

Regional FFA Soil Judging Contest

by Mark Dybdal, District Conservationist, Alexandria Field Office

On October 3rd the Alexandria Field Office hosted the Regional FFA Soil Judging Contest. The event was attended by several FFA organizations with judging teams. District Conservationist – Mark Dybdal and Soil Conservationist – Rick Berscheid worked with Cliff Orgard, Ag. Adviser from Jefferson High School in Alexandria, on preparations in planning the event. The site location was on the farm of Joe Zwieg in south central Douglas County in the Waukon/Flom soils association.

Soil pit locations were selected with the aid of Area Soil Scientist - Jeff Hellerich. Hellerich and Dybdal worked together to describe the soils in the pit for the contest. It was a great day for the event and the young adults did an excellent job of getting their hands dirty in an effort to identify the soils characteristics and capabilities.



2008 North Central RC&D Conference to be held in Minnesota!

The Minnesota Association of RC&D Councils will be hosting the 2008 North Central RC&D Conference. The conference is scheduled for March 9-11, 2008. It will take place at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in Rochester, Minnesota. <http://www.radisson.com/rochestermn>

The theme for the conference is "Recharging RC&Ds through Renewable Energy". Program highlights include break out sessions on renewable energy opportunities as well as RC&D Council and Coordinator training courses. Registration and program information will be coming out very soon so save the date and stay tuned!

There are up to 25 trade show spaces available. Any RC&Ds or partners interested in having exhibit space can contact the Pembina Trail RC&D office at (218) 253-2646 Ext. 4 for more information.

What is the Census of Agriculture?

The Census of Agriculture, taken every five years, is a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. The Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures and many other areas. For America's farmers and ranchers, the Census of Agriculture is their voice, their future and their responsibility.

Why is the Census of Agriculture important?

The Census provides the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every county in the nation. Through the Census, producers can show the nation the value and importance of agriculture and they can help influence decisions that will shape the future of American agriculture for years to come. By responding to the Census, producers are helping themselves, their communities and all of U.S. agriculture.

Who uses Census of Agriculture data?

Census data is used by all those who serve farmers and rural communities – federal, state and local governments, agribusinesses, trade associations and many others. For instance, companies and cooperatives use the information to determine the locations of facilities that will serve agricultural producers. Community planners use the information to target needed services to rural residents. USDA uses the information to ensure that local service centers are staffed at appropriate levels. Legislators use the information when shaping farm policies and programs. And, of course, farmers and ranchers can use Census data to help make informed decisions about the future of their own operations.

How is the Census conducted?

Report forms for the 2007 Census of Agriculture will be mailed to farm and ranch operators on December 28, 2007 to collect data for the 2007 calendar year. Completed forms are due by February 4, 2008. Producers can return their forms by mail or, for the first time, they have the option of filling out the Census online via a secure web site.

2007 OUTSTANDING CONSERVATIONISTS:

The Carver County Outstanding Conservationists are Ron and Rich Olson. Rich began to implement conservation practices on their farm in the 1970's. Since that time, their farm acreage has grown, and so has the need for more conservation on their land. Conservation practices are now spread over their 1,850 acre cash crop farming operation. They have installed many conservation practices on their land including: water and sediment control basins, grade stabilization structures, and stream bank stabilization projects. Another grade stabilization project is planned for 2008.

The Dakota County Outstanding Conservationists are the Ray and Ken Taylor families. Ray and Ken Taylor families grow corn, soybeans, hay, and raise hogs in Sciota Township. The Taylor's were the first landowners in Minnesota to permanently protect their farmland through the USDA Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program and Dakota County Farmland and Natural Areas Protection Program. The Taylor's permanently protected 308 acres from development and mining through these programs and established over 65 acres of native prairie and wooded buffers along the Cannon River and its tributaries to protect water quality and improve wildlife habitat. Additionally, with assistance from the SWCD, the Taylor's have worked to eliminate all erosion on their farm by installing grassed waterways and using no-till and minimum-till residue management on cropped acres. Furthermore, all of the hog manure produced on their farm is applied according to a manure management plan and knife-injected to reduce odor.

When we do the best that we can, we never know what miracle is wrought in our life, or in the life of another!

-Helen Keller

A DAY OF HONORING OUR VETERANS

AND GIVING THANKS BY JULIE MACSWAIN, PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

Dave Wise, NRCS Tribal Liaison, invited me to a day long ceremony at FDLTCC near Cloquet, MN that concluded with a thanksgiving fest on the evening of Nov 15th. The event kicked off with an early morning pipe ceremony that was held at the Lester “Jack” Briggs Memorial Site, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College (FDLTCC) where Mr. Briggs served as FDLTCC’s first Tribal President.

The pipe ceremony included FDLTCC faculty and students, and members of the community from Cloquet. The tribal pipe ceremony set the stage for the day-long event honoring our veterans and giving thanks for our many blessings. Just prior to the conclusion of the pipe ceremony participants were given the opportunity to give thanks in public.

Before the noon hour struck Dr. Don Day, FDLTCC President, welcomed all participants to the event. He reminded the audience of the importance of this event with the following comment, “A day to reflect for things we should give thanks to-family, friends and the environment.”

Jodi Kiminski, Veteran Education Coordinator, at FDLTCC reminded those in attendance that her office was there to assist veterans. A safe-haven for those who gave so much; Ms. Kiminski encouraged participants to inform others about the services provided by the Veteran’s Education Office.

The Fond du Lac area women’s Hand Drum Singers presented several musical pieces for the event. The musical renditions were sung in the Fond du Lac native tongue of

Ojibwe. Historically speaking, only men were allowed to participate in tribal ceremonies; the presence of women drummers is a new tradition at FDLTCC. The drumming talent displayed by the women is well received within the Fond du Lac tribal community.

The FDLTCC Drum Group also performed several musical arrangements for the day’s event. The male drumming group consisted of current FDLTCC students and recent FDLTCC college graduates as well as citizens from the community of Cloquet. The Drum Group sang songs in English as well as their native Ojibwe language. Listening to a drum ceremony makes one quickly realize how important these ceremonies are to Native Americans and that it is imperative these traditions



continue to be handed down from generation-to-generation.

Jeff Hall with the Department of Veteran Services gave a presentation on “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).” This particular presentation provided those in attendance a better understanding of the disorder and ways in which to respond favorably to individuals diagnosed with PTSD.

Connie Bengston, a registered nurse with the Department of Veteran’s Affairs, presented a program update on “Operation Iraqi Freedom Operation/Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) Program. This

“A day to reflect for things we should give thanks to-family, friends and the environment.” Dr. Don Day, Fond du lac Tribal and Community College President



Dave Wise, MN NRCS Tribal Liaison



This event brought together people from the greater Cloquet community as well as from the Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College.

program was implemented to provide case management and

advocacy services to all veterans who served in combat since November 11, 1998 and who are transitioning into civilian life. For more information about this program, please contact Ms. Bengston at (612) 467-1514.

The Day of Honoring our veterans and giving thanks concluded with a feast and is an annual event that brings people together to enjoy the festivities and to give thanks. Those in attendance included students from FDLTCC and Cloquet community members.

Please extend a special thank you to Dave Wise, NRCS Tribal Liaison, for the time and consideration he gave planning the FDLTCC event. For more information about the event, contact David Wise, MN NRCS Tribal Liaison, in Cloquet, MN at (218) 879-0863.

WesMin DRY FIRE HYDRANTS

FIRE PROTECTION FOR RURAL RESIDENTS

By John W. Dermody

Rural residents can now have the same fire protection

Because rural property owners seldom have the luxury of having pressurized water systems and a fire hydrant nearby, dry hydrants can provide an increased level of protection that pressurized hydrants give to urban property owners. A trench is generally dug at a predetermined depth below water level to the location where the hydrant head is to be positioned. Then the system is assembled above ground and lowered into the trench. The strainer is positioned in the water.

The heart of the rural hydrant system is the head assembly and external strainer assembly. Those elements allow the firefighters to connect their suction hose to the hydrant system and pump water. The strainer is the intake device, which is affixed to the end of the pipe and is positioned at an optional location in the water source. In most cases, departments try to find locations near all-weather highway. Thus, they can get water quickly without fear of getting bogged down. The dry hydrants also serve as a savings to city water systems by not having to drain thousands of extra gallons at increased cost for pumping. They allow untreated water to be utilized, also at less expenditure to the cities.

City, individual more than covers cost

There are numerous examples of insurance savings to both communities and individuals, as well. According to an industry website, a rural community of approximately 2,000 families experienced a community-wide increase in cash flow after 13 dry hydrant installations, with a reclassification from a Class 9 to a Class 7. The local department had simply been lacking in one very important area—a rural water supply. The difference in the classifications meant a 40 percent savings on homeowner's premiums. This savings, community-wide, was estimated to be approximately \$200,000 a year. The material cost and labor expense for the installation of these 13 dry fire hydrant systems was less than \$20,000.

In one individual's case, he constructed his own dry hydrant near a one-acre pond on his property and dropped from a Class 9 to a Class 6. There had been no pressurized water supply within three miles of his home. The homeowner had paid nearly \$1,100 for insurance coverage, but it dropped to \$434 by installation of the hydrant on his property. The cost for installation of \$700 was barely above the one-year savings.



Pictured is the Audubon Fire Department placing a 6 inch PVC pipe into position on a lake where it will then be buried.



Dry Fire Hydrants:

WesMin continues to work with rural fire departments in our 14 county area to plan, design, survey, and construct dry fire hydrants for rural fire protection. Dry hydrants are 6 inch PVC pipes that are placed into lakes so fire departments can quickly draw water from them year long. This year 7 dry hydrants were completed with several more ready for construction. WesMin worked with the Minnesota Association of RC&Ds, which has received a DNR Fire Wise grant to cover 50% of the fire departments' cost of constructing a dry hydrant.

AREA 1 REPORT

GLEN KAJEWSKI, ASTC(FO)
THIEF RIVER FALLS, MN

“THE STORY OF OLD CROSSING”

Grant funding was received from the Minnesota Sesquicentennial Commission and work is underway to develop a manual on “The Story of Old Crossing: The Treaty of 1863”. The Manual will contain discussion notes left by the Secretary of Indian Affairs? to the 1863 Treaty, which will be followed by contemporary short writings that will cover topics of interest relative to the Treaty, its participants, historical events, and a vision for tomorrow.

Persons who would like to submit a short essay or writing piece for the Manual are urged to contact University of Minnesota, Crookston (UMC) and “The Story of Old Crossing” Committee. The Manual will be edited by a professional academic faculty members and editors.

The Manual will be launched on August 23-24, 2008 at Old Crossing Treaty Park, located along the Red Lake River between Crookston and Red Lake Falls. As part of the launch a Readers’ Theater will also be performed August 23-24, 2008 at Old Crossing. Persons wishing

to write or read for the “Story of Old Crossing” are urged to contact Virgil Benoit via e-mail at virgil.benoit@und.nodak.edu.

“The Story of Old Crossing: The Treaty of 1863”, is an official Minnesota Sesquicentennial Legacy Project and is financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota through its MN Sesquicentennial Commission Grants Program.

Sponsored by AFRAN and the Red Lake County Historical Society
Phone: 218-253-2270 or 253-2833
E-mail: virgil.benoit@und.nodak.edu
Or annhealy@gvtel.com
L’ Association des Francais du Nord
P.O. Box 101
Red Lake Falls, MN 56750

AFRAN ~
Association of the French of the North
A Minnesota 2008 Sesquicentennial official event will be held at Old Crossing State Park

AWARDS

Dan Haig, CSP Soil Conservationist, was recognized for his leading role in the Thief River Falls FO Civil Rights Review with a long sleeved denim shirt.

Matt Baltes, GIS Specialist, was recognized for the input and development of a GIS-based MN-CONS Tree and shrub planting form with a polo shirt.

Krystal Story, SCT, Josh Bork, SC, and Larry Voltz, DC, were recognized for their efforts in hosting the 2007 GRC&D Grazing tour with a NRCS baseball cap. Their efforts were instrumental in the success of the tour.

Elizabeth Zaveral, Earth Team Volunteer, was recognized for her time spent this summer scanning slides with an ETV tote bag.

RODNEY B. HESCHKE, AREA RESOURCE SOIL SCIENTIST RETIRES

Rodney B. Heschke, Area Resource Soil Scientist of the Thief River Falls Area Office, is throwing his hat into the retirement ring after 33 ½ years of service on December 21st, 2007. (The shortest day of the year of course)

Rod began his career with the Soil Conservation Service on June 17th, 1974, after graduating from the University of Minnesota with a B.S. in Soil Science. Rod spent his first year in the Thief River Falls AO, but moved to the Sauk Centre office to work on the Stearns County Soil Survey from 1976-1977. He then returned to Thief River Falls in 1978 as the Project Leader for the Pennington County Soil Survey. In 1982 he was named the Area Soil Scientist, and then the Area Resource Soil Scientist – Supervisory position in 1987.

One week a year Heschke, an avid curler, donates his time to teach high school kids the sport of curling. Rod has been a member of the Thief River Falls curling club for 29 years. He has coached girl’s 5th-8th grade basketball as well.

Here is how Rod answered some questions we presented:

What have you enjoyed most about working for the Agency over the last 33 1/2 years? “The completion of soil surveys in NW Minnesota. Helping people understand soils, dah. Even Odegaard and Sovoda would have to agree that they learned something about soils.”

Please describe a few of your most memorable events during your career. “Getting chased out of the woods by a cow moose, getting dive-bombed by sandhill cranes, running over a fawn, and driving through a patch of lady slippers with the 4 wheeler. Also getting to go on a soil survey detail to New Mexico, Soil Science Institute in Gainesville, and the National Soil Correlation Conference in Lincoln.”

Please tell us something about yourself that most may not know inside the agency. (favorite foods or fetish) “Asparagus has to have alot of cheese on it, no liver & onions, and no Hollandaise sauce, other than that I’m not that picky, OBVIOUSLY! I guess my fetish would be CABELA’s.”

Any words of wisdom to the newbie’s in the agency? “The “what if” questions rarely happen; but get the “why” questions answered.”

Rod Heschke has played an integral part of NRCS Soil Science in Northwest MN. His knowledge and years of expertise will not leave unnoticed, nor will his character or unique disposition.



Rodney B. Heschke - 1980



Rodney B. Heschke - 2007

PERSONNEL

Adam Woltjer, Soil Conservation Technician – McIntosh, and his wife Kelly started off their new family with a set of twins born on September 28, 2007. William and Aden weighed in at 6 lbs 6 oz and 6 lbs. Congratulations to Adam and Kelly.

Congratulations to Justin Carlson, Soil Conservation Technician – on a recent promotion.

Congratulations to Alicia Larnus, Soil Conservation Technician – Park Rapids FO, on being converted from the federal career intern program to a career conditional appointment.

Rod Heschke, Area Resource Soil Scientist, announced his retirement after 33 ½ years of service to SCS/NRCS. Rod began his service to the agency in June of 1974 and worked on a number of soil surveys before becoming the Area Soil Scientist in 1982. We wish Rod many years of enjoyment in his retirement years.

Travis Doeden is the newest member to the Area 1 NRCS Team. Travis started in the Ada FO as a Soil Conservation Technician on December 9, 2007. Travis is a graduate of the University of Minnesota Crookston and was recently working in Nebraska with the Game and Parks Commission.

Jon Beyer, Soil Conservation Technician – Warren, recently accepted a position with the USFWS in Green River, Wyoming as a Wildlife Refuge Specialist. Jon begins his new job January 7, 2007.

Teena Parker has resigned from her position as the Soil Conservation Technician in the Hallock FO to be closer to family.

AREA 2 REPORT

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

LANDOWNER USES WRP TO CREATE WATERFOWL SANCTUARY

A landowner's decision not to hunt waterfowl on his Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) acres has created a waterfowl oasis in the center of a rural agricultural community. In 2003, Phil Brink enrolled a quarter section of land in Traverse County into WRP. At the time of enrollment, there were some concerns about the benefits this site would provide to waterfowl. The site has very little elevation change from one end of the field to the other. Another concern was this site was surrounded by cropland with very few wetlands and grasslands in the surrounding landscape.

The decision was made to construct a 6500 foot earthen embankment and excavate several borrow areas to create a 51.5 acre wetland pool. After construction was completed, the wetland basin filled up with storm runoff and almost immediately the ducks, geese, and shorebirds appeared. Mr. Brink made a decision not to hunt waterfowl on his property. He liked the idea of having a resting place for birds where they would not be disturbed and Mr. Brink knew that the birds would remain in the area and utilize his wetland as a roosting pond.

Since the time of his decision, waterfowl have been abundant on this site in the spring and fall, especially during the migration season. A variety of birds can regularly be seen, where



only a few years ago it was a corn or soybean field. Neighboring landowners have noticed the benefits and aesthetics provided by Brink's WRP and a group of nearby landowners have offered more than 500 acres for enrollment into WRP. The success of this project has emphasized the importance of wildlife habitat and the benefits it can provide not only to waterfowl, but for other wildlife too.

WHITE EARTH EROSION PROJECT

By Ed Musielewicz, District Conservationist, Detroit Lakes Field Office

These photos are of a grade stabilization project the NRCS/SWCD recently completed on White Earth Lake. A severe gully was cutting across lake lots and causing safety and water quality concerns. Contractors installed 150-ft. of pipe to outlet storm flows and filled the gully to form a waterway. Cooperators on this project included The White Earth Tribal Council, White Earth Natural Resources Department, USDA-NRCS offices in Detroit Lakes and Ice Cracking Lake and Becker SWCD. For more information about this project, please contact Ed Musielewicz at the Detroit Lakes NRCS office. Ed can be reached by phone at (218)-847-9392.



Doug McArthur, White Earth Tribal Wildlife Manager is standing by the gully at White Earth, prior to construction activities. (left)

The (right) picture showcases the completion of a grade stabilization project at White lake.



PERSONNEL

Julie Reberg was selected for the District Conservationist position in Breckenridge.

Todd Braun was selected for the Soil Conservation Technician position in Baxter/Walker.

Jennifer Tischer (formerly Hansen) was married on December 1, 2007. Congratulations, Jenny!

AWARDS

Terri Hodgkin received an individual time off award for assisting the WesMin RC&D office when they did not have a Miscellaneous Assistant. (April to September 2007)

Jeff Hellerich received a 3 in 1 Coat for promptly handling all of the requested technical soil services requests from the field offices. He completed all the salinity reviews, Ag.Waste borings, wetland appeals, and other technical soil survey requests. (June through September 2007)

Julie Reberg received a 3 in 1 Coat for being the Acting District Conservationist in Breckenridge. (August through September 2007)

Performance awards were received by the following Area II personnel for their work in FY 2007:

- Mark Dybdal, Rick Berscheid, Rich Geving, Ed Musielewicz, Jeff Lepp, Terry Zapzalka, Darlene Drayna, Bruce Becker, Rick Schossow, Steve Lutes, Robert Honeman, Lenore Marken, Eric Soupir, Robert Koltes, Julie Reberg, Mark Hayek, Stan Musielewicz, James Fritz, Sharon Lean, Troy Baumgart, Dean Schmidt, Terri Hodgkin, Steve Linow, James Gerding, William Marken, Jennifer Tischer, Mary Jane Reetz, Jeff Norby, Craig Bower, Shannon Rasinski, Jeff Hellermann, James Pendroy, Ivan Reinke, Andrea Horsman, Kevin Gietzen, Drew Mosburg, Melissa Behrens, Nancy Alexander, Randy Schmiesing, Russell Kleinschmidt, Keith Kloubec, Steve Girard

OTHER NEWS

Andrea Horsman, SCT, attended the three week long Conservation Boot Camp in Oklahoma City. The main goal of her training was to become familiar with the comprehensive conservation planning process. This was completed through classroom and field training.

The Wheaton FO has experienced an increased interest in wetland mitigation. A mitigation plan has been completed for 6 wetlands and two more plans are under development. Several other producers have also expressed interest in wetland mitigation.

The saline soils enrollment under continuous CRP continues to be popular in Traverse County. Over 130 acres were checked this year with a majority of these acres qualifying for enrollment. Under this program, producers can enroll qualifying acres into CRP through 10 year contracts. Cost share assistance is available for establishment of salt tolerant vegetation that will provide wildlife habitat and water quality benefits.

AREA 3 REPORT

KEVIN DAW, ASTC(FO)
DULUTH, MN

PLANT MATERIALS PROGRAM AT FOND DU LAC TRIBAL AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

By Julie MacSwain

A long-term agreement was recently reached between the Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College and the University of Minnesota Natural Resources Center in Cloquet, MN. The plant research agreement provides for plots developed in cooperation with the two higher learning institutions. The Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College will develop culturally significant plants on the campus as well as finalizing a greenhouse. The various plant studies, environmental science curricula (forestry ecology/plant sciences) will utilize these demonstration projects as well as the Plant Materials Center to improve the health and vitality of the community.

“The PMC [Plant Materials Program] has been an icebreaker for initiating technical assistance with the tribes. The PMC has been a catalyst, a very natural fit for NRCS start with tribal folks,” said David Wise, NRCS Tribal Liaison at the Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College in Cloquet, Minnesota.

The importance of re-establishing plants in a native environment is at the heart of the tribal people and it impacts the health of the community physically and mentally.



Center for Excellence
Plant Materials Center

BEE SYMPOSIUM

By Julie Linder

On December 8, 2008 the Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College Environmental Science Club held a free Bee Symposium. Among the club members working on the symposium, were five NRCS-WAE employees from the Center of Excellence. The format included speaker presentations followed by a discussion period. Speakers included: Gary Reuter, Scientist from the University of Minnesota Bee

Lab and John Skalko, Professional Bee Keeper. The symposium

featured information on domesticated and wild bees as well as a raffle for bee items. A honey bee box, wild bee box and a butterfly hatchery were donated by local crafters. The symposium also featured the Minnesota premiere of the documentary, “Pollen Nation” by Singeli Agnew and Joshua Fisher. Approximately 75 people

attended the symposium which included a free lunch with food donated by local hunters and Sustainable Farm Association members. Free daycare was provided by Club members and as a result whole families were able to attend the symposium. The Environmental Science Club plans to hold events during Earth Week and would like to expand on the pollinator theme. Special thanks for a great event go to WAE employees: Lisa Curtis, Matt Goseyun, Ileana Henry, Deb Richards and Don Robnik. The Environmental Science Club would like to thank NRCS for publications and other assistance provided, and for allowing the Director of the Center, Julie Lindner to help with the event. The

symposium was considered a great success, despite sub-zero temperatures! Some of the comments included: “Great event, would love to see this done annually” and “Well organized and presented, wish there could be more workshops like this.”



PERSONNEL

Jeffrey Kroll, Soil Scientist, Virginia SSO, was selected for the Arrowhead Soil Survey Project Leader position, Virginia, MN, effective September 30, 2007. Our hearty congratulations, Jeff!

Julie Lindner, Soil Conservation Technician, Hinckley FO, was selected for the Resource Analyst position at the Center of Excellence, Cloquet, MN, effective October 29, 2007. Julie will report directly to the State Office. Congratulations, Julie!

Karen Closson is our new Accounting Technician effective October 29, 2007. Welcome aboard, Karen!

AWARDS

Kimberly Peterson, WAE, Milaca FO, for diligently and efficiently reorganizing producer files, etc. We appreciate your extra efforts, Kim!

Promotion:

Jessica Weis, Soil Scientist, Duluth SSO. Well deserved, Jessica!

Retirement:

Steven Kluess, Laurentian RC&D Coordinator, retired November 1, 2007. We wish Steve the very best in his retirement years!

On a personal note....:

Best wishes to Jason and Leah Sickmann on the birth of Parker Daniel born October 12, 2007. Parker joins sister Alison and brother Logan.

AREA 4 REPORT



TIMOTHY WILSON, ASTC(FO)
BROOKLYN CENTER, MN

TOUR AT AN AGRICULTURAL WASTE FACILITY AND THE SITE OF A MANURE DIGESTER

By Steven L. Sellnow

Stearns County, MN- Minnesota State Conservationist William Hunt and Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations Timothy Wilson toured an agricultural waste facility and the site of a manure digester Friday, September 14, 2007. William Hunt participated in layout of the waste storage pond utilizing the Robotic Total Station to locate the four pond corners at the Atkinson Acres farm in Freeport. In the afternoon the group visited Jerry and Linda Jennissen's farm to tour an EQIP funded Anaerobic Manure Digester System for Mid-Sized Dairy Farms, a pilot project in cooperation with the Minnesota Project and other partners.

The Trimble Robotic Total Station is also used for preliminary surveys of other conservation practices. One technician can use the Robotic Total Station to independently complete a topographic survey versus the two or three staff normally required. The Robot also decreases the amount of time of the initial survey due to the efficiency of the equipment. The Robotic Total Station follows a prism on the survey rod as the technician walks the survey area and records information in a data collector. The survey information in the data collector can be downloaded into AutoCAD for alternative analysis and preliminary engineering work.

FLU SHOT CLINIC

By Mark Lefebvre, Nutrient Management Specialist, Stearns SWCD

On November 13, 2007, the Waite Park Service Center held a Flu Shot Clinic so employees and family members could receive the influenza vaccine or nasal spray right at the workplace. A total of 23 people from the Stearns County SWCD, NRCS, FSA, and Rural Development took advantage of the clinic. Surveys done by the health care industry indicate that people are more likely to get vaccinated for influenza if they can get the shot at their place of work. More people getting vaccinated means less people getting sick from the flu, therefore, less days of work missed.

The clinic was set up through the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota FluStop Program. A nurse from Blue Cross and Blue Shield's vendor list, Homeland Health Specialist, Inc. came to the office to administer the shot. In about 30 minutes, the nurse gave the shot to everyone interested in getting vaccinated.



AWARDS

Winnie Chen, Wetland Biologist, Brooklyn Center; John Crellin, Area Resource Conservationist, Brooklyn Center; Craig Peterson, Area Engineer, Brooklyn Center; Steve Sellnow, District Conservationist (DC), Waite Park; and Michael Vasquez, Agricultural Engineer, Brooklyn Center received a non-monetary award for the assistance provided to state office in providing training to Minnesota employees.

Jerry Anderson, Soil Conservation Technician (SCT), Elk River received a non-monetary award for assistance provided on EQIP Contracts and Status Reviews.

Nathan Blankers, Soil Conservationist (SC), Waite Park and Joni Franklin, SC, Waite Park received a non-monetary award for assistance provided on tillage certification.

Jaime Schaunaman, SC, Waite Park received a non-monetary award for processing 110 Conservation Security Program Contract payments during FY-2007.

George Mohrhauser, SCT, Waite Park and Lee Zabinski, SCT, Waite Park received a non-monetary award for assistance they provided during two sessions of Conservation Application Training.

Michael Hemmann, SCT, Waite Park and Lakelle Pritchett, Agricultural Engineer, Brooklyn Center received a non-monetary award for arranging an agricultural waste facility tour and providing Robotic Total Station Training to Mr. Hunt.

Derrick Harmon, SC, Jordan; Lynette Horton-Harmon, SC, Farmington; and Matt Schaar, SCT, Farmington received a non-monetary award for assisting with moving excess furniture to CASU and moving files from Stillwater to Farmington.

Kevin Senander, Accounting

Technician, Brooklyn Center and Stan Wendland, Area Program Specialist, Brooklyn Center received a non-monetary award for their effort in getting the area Late Rate down.

Pete Weikle, Area Resource Soil Scientist, Brooklyn Center received a non-monetary award for providing one-on-one training to student interns.

Mike Stuefen, Cartographic Technician, Brooklyn Center received a non-monetary award for assistance he has provided to the area staff during FY-2007.

Michelle Wohlers, DC, Farmington received a non-monetary award for assistance provided in setting up conservation tours for The National Organization of Professional Hispanic Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees (NOPHNRCS).

Robin Stevenson, Area Administrative Coordinator, Brooklyn Center received a non-monetary award for assisting HR in prepar-

PERSONNEL

George Montgomery, District Conservationist, Elk River transferred to Risk Management Agency, St. Paul effective November 11, 2007.

Loren Clarke, Soil Conservation Technician (WAE), Farmington was hired on November 11, 2007. Loren previously worked as a WAE in Worthington, MN. He also worked for Nobles SWCD and FSA.

Ryan Holzer, Soil Conservation Technician (WAE), Jordan was hired on November 11, 2007. Ryan was hired by the Scott SWCD as a Resource Conservation Technician in September 2007.

Darren Carlson, Soil Conservation Technician (WAE) was transferred from Jordan to Farmington effective November 25, 2007. Darren also worked for Scott SWCD before he transferred to Dakota SWCD October 22, 2007.

Karl Hammers, Resource Conservationist, Wright SWCD has resigned from the SWCD effective November 23, 2007. Karl has taken a position with the South Carolina DNR.

ing Area 4 employees OPF's for shipping.

Congratulations to the Scott SWCD! They received the 2007 Conservation District of the Year Award at the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Annual Convention. The award recognizes the SWCD's leadership for significant achievement beyond base capacity.

Pete Beckius, District Manager, Scott SWCD received the 2007 Conservation District Employee of the Year Award at the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Annual Convention. Pete has been with the Scott SWCD since 1978, serving as the District Manager for the past 17 years. Pete's nearly 30 years of hard work in building the capacity of the SWCD, creating partnerships with other organizations, and establishing respect and confidence in the organization has paid off substantially in recent years, particularly 2007.

AREA 5 REPORT

**MICHAEL APPEL, ASTC(FO)
MARSHALL, MN**

CARE PACKAGE TO SOLDIER SERVING IN IRAQ

We received a Christmas card from Cindy Wittnebel stationed in Iraq. We will have the items displayed as we are honored to have received a flag that was flown in Iraq. We all should be proud of our contribution to these folks. Our encouragement package project does make a difference in these soldiers lives.

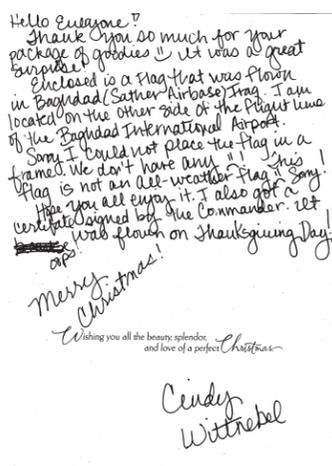
Sandy Jerzak

Cindy's letter below reads,

"Hello Everyone! Thank you so much for your package of goodies. It was a great surprise! Enclosed is a flag that was flown in Baghdad International Airport. Sorry I could not place the flag in a frame. We don't have any! This flag is not an all-weather flag, sorry! Hope you all enjoy it. I also got a certificate signed by the Commander it was flown on Thanksgiving Day!

Merry Christmas!

Cindy Wittnebel"



Hello Everyone!
Thank you so much for your package of goodies. It was a great surprise!
Enclosed is a flag that was flown in Baghdad (Sather Airbase) Iraq. I am located on the other side of the flight line of the Baghdad International Airport.
Sorry I could not place the flag in a frame. We don't have any! This flag is not an all-weather flag, sorry!
Hope you all enjoy it. I also got a certificate signed by the Commander. It was flown on Thanksgiving Day!
Merry Christmas!
Wishing you all the beauty, splendor, and love of a perfect Christmas.
Cindy Wittnebel



PERSONNEL

I have the pleasure of announcing the hire of Kelly Heather as the new DC in Redwood Falls. Kelly, a Nebraska native, mostly recently was the Soil Conservationist in Carroll, IA. We welcome Kelly to the Area 5 family.

We also have filled the SCT vacancy in Benson with Rick Gronseth who was the Swift SWCD technician. Rick brings several years of district experience to the team. We welcome Rick who started December 10th.

WORDS FROM MIKE APPEL

Performance Appraisals were wrapped up in October and the area as a whole made most of our performance goals which I was very pleased. Due to my pending retirement, I have tried to visit every field office and attend every Soil and Water Conservation District board meeting by the end of December. I didn't realize that between other commitments that this can be a daunting task. I wish to take this opportunity to personally thank all of you that I have worked or got to know these past 32 years. I have relied on several of you for help, advice and inspiration during those years. I hope to stay in touch. It has been a real fulfilling and pleasant experience and would not have done it any different.

I will miss you all. Thanks.

RETIREMENT NEWS

In addition to Mike, we have two retirements in the same office. I don't believe we ever had this happen before. Jim Ridler, DC, and Joe Keller, CET, in the Montevideo field office will be retiring January 3, 2008. Joe Keller has 42 years and Jim has 39 years of experience. That knowledge will be sorely missed. We wish them both a long and happy retirement.



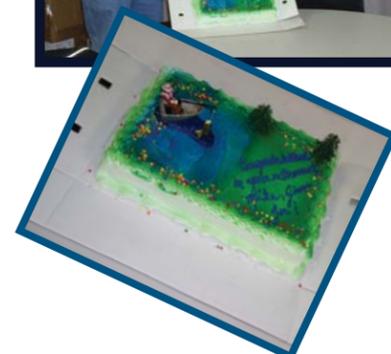
**Mike Appel, ASTC(FO)
Marshall, MN**



**Jim Ridler, DC
Montevideo, MN**



**Joe Keller, CET
Montevideo, MN**



AREA 6 REPORT

KASEY TAYLOR, ASTC(FO)
ST. PETER, MN

THE LIVING SOIL TUNNEL AND SOIL KIOSK By Doug Miller

*Successful Educational and Outreach
Displays Utilized in South Central Minnesota*



Willmar, Minnesota 6th grade Students examine a subsoil sample from Lester Loam, Minnesota's state soil.

monoliths. There are also photographs of landscape setting and land use of each soil and fun facts about soil developments and soil microorganisms. The third side of the kiosk has an electronic quiz for students. A light spins with the correct answer.

The Living Soil Tunnel is safe, mobile, and available to venues where school children would never be able to see a soil profile (as in urban areas). Venues to date include: County Fairs; school environmental days throughout Southern Minnesota; Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts annual meeting (2nd floor of a hotel during December!); and at the Nicollet County Traverse des Sioux Museum during the winter.

The soil tunnel was the dream of a local resident, Donald Ney. Mr. Ney envisioned school children being able to see the soil - not as "dirt", but as the key in the food web which sustains all living creatures. Mr. Ney also knew that most contemporary children do not have rural roots, or the opportunity to see the soil in its entirety. Unfortunately, Mr. Ney passed away before his dream came to fruition. But thanks to an active partnership, and interest from schools and local residents, Donald Ney's dream is realized, as over an estimated 5000 school children and adults have entered the subterranean world of Lester Loam, to learn about soil.

NRCS working cooperatively with Soil and Water Conservation Districts, local Clean Water Partnerships, and private entities, have developed an educational soil display that has is extremely popular with schools in Southern Minnesota.

The display consists of a walk through tunnel and a kiosk. The "Living Soil Tunnel" showcases organisms which live in the soil in colorful photographs. An informative audio tutorial explains the value of our soil resources, and the importance of microorganisms in "the cycle of nature". The soil kiosk displays Muskego Muck, and Lester Loam



Students enjoy the visual display of The Living Soil Tunnel. "Woody" the woodchuck has a message for visitors: "Conserve Our Soil Resources!"

DRY HYDRANTS

by Randy Nelson, Prairie Country RC&D

Prairie Country RC&D is continuing to assist rural fire departments with the planning and installation of dry hydrants. Forty-two dry hydrants were successfully installed and at least five more are planned for installation during 2008.

Funds for most of the projects were obtained through a statewide DNR Community Firewise Program Grant developed by Prairie County.

For more information about the Dry Hydrant Program, please contact the Prairie Country RC&D Office at (320) 235-3906.

OTHER NEWS

Acting Duties

Shantel Lozinski served as the acting DC in Glencoe from July 9, until Jon's arrival in October. Area 6 would like to thank Shantel for doing a fantastic job.

Ken Luttner served as acting ASTC(FO) from September 7 through October 23. Ken juggled many duties during this time all Area 6 employees appreciate his humor and guidance during this time.

PERSONNEL

Baby News!

Kasey and Myron Taylor are the proud parents of James Albert Taylor born on September 7, 2007.

Steve (DC in LeCenter) and Betsy Breaker are the proud parents of Alice Elizabeth Breaker born on October 15, 2007

Chris (SCT in LeCenter) and Amy Schmidt are the proud parents of Marissa Elizabeth Schmidt born on April 12, 2007.

With so many babies—don't drink the water!!

New Employee

Jon Sellnow, began serving as District Conservationist in Glencoe, on October 29, 2007 we are thrilled to welcome Jon to Area 6.

Departing Employees

Jamilah McCoy has accepted a position with NRCS in Arizona; she will begin her new duties on January 6, 2008. Good luck Jamilah on your new endeavors.

AWARDS

Mike Taylor received a 3 in 1 jacket for his time and contribution as the Civil Rights Representative for Area 6.

Lisa Buckner, Tom Peterson, Steve Smith, Brenda Tonn and Steve Breaker received travel mugs for their participation on the Area 6 training committee.

Randy Nelson and Bonnie Williams received soft sided brief cases for their dedication and tremendous contribution to the Area on safety and health issues.

Shawn Weick received a three – in -1 jacket for his development and deployment of the 2008 EQIP ranking tool.

Angela Paben received a Howard Miller Alarm Clock for her outstanding contributions to the Area 6 volunteer program.

Betsy Norland and Keith Trudell received 3-in-1 jackets for their successful implementation and delivery of the NRCS cost-share programs whereby conservation prescribed measures were installed and goals were met for all performance measures.

AREA 7 REPORT



**JOHN NICOLSON, ASTC(FO)
ROCHESTER, MN**

TWO CONSERVATION DRAINAGE SYSTEMS WERE INSTALLED IN DODGE COUNTY RECENTLY.

A Woodchip Bioreactor Monitoring System was installed on the Edward Smith property in Ellington Township. This system can be used to remove nitrates from drainage water. The bioreactor consists of a trench filled with woodchips through which the drainage water is allowed to flow. The basics behind this are for every acre of drained land 10 feet of woodchips may be able to remove 30% or more of the nitrates from the drainage water.

A Controlled Drainage Monitoring System was installed on the Robert and John Kruger property in Hayfield Township. This system uses control structures on drainage pipe to hold back the water to an adjustable level during the year. A controlled drainage has been shown to reduce drainage water volume and the amount of nitrate in drainage water by 25 to 40%. This system may also make more water available to crops.

These monitoring systems were a coordinated effort between these landowners, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Agri-Drain, Ag. Drainage Mgmt. Coalition, Zumbro Watershed Partnership, Dodge SWCD, NRCS Dodge Field Office.

PERSONNEL

Baby News!

Becky Hanson, Soil Conservation Technician in Rochester gave birth to a baby girl on October 9, 2007. Becky is currently on leave enjoying Merrin Rose and will return to work in January.

Staff News!

Angela White has been hired as an Intermittent employee in the Rochester Field Office to assist with the fall workload. She previously worked as an Outreach Coordinator with the Zumbro Watershed Partnership.

Jeffery Koster was selected as the Hiawatha Valley RC&D Coordinator effective November 11, 2007. Jeffery previously worked as a RC&D Coordinator in East Central Colorado. Welcome to Rochester Jeff!

Jonathan Sellnow, Soil Conservationist in Preston was selected as the District Conservationist in Glencoe effective October 29, 2007.

HOUSTON COUNTY'S MANY SUCCESS STORIES

Houston County is still recovering from the natural disaster that took place in August of this year. The conservation office has many success stories concerning conservation practices that were in place and provided significant protection during the storm event. Many landowners are very grateful with the assistance NRCS/Root River SWCD provided in treating resources concerns after the event as well. NRCS provided both financial and technical assistance to protect the homes of 7 residents and businesses in the City Hokah.

OTHER NEWS

In Freeborn County the Wayne Miller EQIP project corrected a severe erosion problem through the installation of an aluminum toe wall structure and stabilization of a waterway with rock rip rap. The erosion control project will result in better water quality and it will reduce soil loss. The soil in the Miller's pasture had been eroding through a natural waterway and with the heavy rains the problem continued to get worse. There will be a fence installed around the waterway so the Miller's will be able to graze his 30 Angus cows in his pasture.

Contributions for the next issue of Current Developments are due: March 14, 2008

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!