NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

Minnesota

Current Developments

Jan/Feb/Mar 2008

Helping South Africa

See Page 12

Remarks from the State Conservationist

A new conservation campaign, "Conservation: Our Purpose, Our Passion" was recently launched at the National Association of Conservation Districts meeting in Reno, Nevada. This campaign is designed to tell the NRCS story through the conservation successes of landowners and field employees. Numerous campaign materials are available from the LANDCARE office in Des Moines, Iowa.

- Nomadic exhibits and table top displays.
- Banner stands which feature customers, employees, partners and NRCS:
- Additional materials – such as a new recruitment brochure and "Who we are" publication will be distributed in the near future. If you are interested in obtaining materials from LANDCARE, please call 1-888-LANDCARE or e-mail landcare@usda.gov

March 18, 2008 marked the passing of former Soil Conservation Service (SCS) Chief, Norm Berg. Norm had roots in Minnesota having grown upon a farm in Pine County. Norm worked tirelessly in the field of soil and water conservation having developed policies and programs to help farmers and landowners and others protect the land they love for the future.

Norm began his career in government with USDA's SCS. He served in many leadership positions in SCS until he became Chief from 1979-1982. Berg continued sharing his passion for enhancing working farm and ranchland by working with the American Farmland Trust and the Soil and Water Conservation Society.

Norm will be missed however, we as employees can continue to move forward and further the legacy of which Norm loved so dearly, "Helping People Help the Land."

Thank you!

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist

CONSERVATION COUNTS

Inside this Issue of Current Developements

Page	In This Issue
2	*William Hunt's Remarks*
3	*Pheasants Forever celebrated it's 25th Anniversary, One Millionth Acre in Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program*
4	*Tillage Conference held in Redwood County, MN. MIKE APPEL SAYS THANKS & GOODBYE*
5	*Practicing SAFE Conservation, Farm Bill Assistance Partnership*
6 -7	*NEW NATIONAL CAMPAIGN*
8-9	*Wadena SWCD Forest Stewardship Program, Bee Symposium*
10 -11	*February is National Black History Month*
12 -13	*A trip to South Africa, Thanks Jim for your service*
14 -15	*John Rife, of Sebeka, Inducted into National Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Hall of Fame*
16	*Grazing Tour to be held in Big Stone County, Historic Conservation Photos, Power from the Prairie*
17-28	*Area Reports*
	Next Issue of Current Developments Due June 13, 2008

Cutting Oats on Contour Strip July 21, 1948

Elmer Gertler (on tractor) and Orville Burt cutting oats on a contour strip between alfalfa strips. Gertler is on a John Deere tractor.

Photographer: W.H. Lathrop

Pheasants Forever celebrated its 25th Anniversary in St. Paul, Minnesota

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

The River Centre in St. Paul, Minnesota was the place to be January 18-20, 2008. You don't have to be a hunter to appreciate the benefit provided by Pheasants Forever (PF). This Minnesota headquartered organization developed more than five million acres across the continent, improving habitat and providing ideal conditions for soil, water and habitat.

This three-day gathering brought together 29,000 people from all over the United States. Seminars, workshops and clinics on bird dog training, wild game cooking, upland hunting, and habitat restoration were held at the Fest. MN NRCS exhibited at PF and several NRCS employees as well as earth team volunteers assisted with booth staffing. NRCS provided technical information handouts and visitors to the booth had the opportunity to spin a wooden wheel and answer pheasant habitat questions.

This three-day gathering brought together 29,000 people from all over the United States.

A specially designated Habitat Hall was a special exhibit feature at the PF. The diversity of the exhibit included seminars and one-on-one habitat advice; the habitat hall was the place to go to increase conservation awareness. Employee representatives from Minnesota DNR, Iowa DNR, NRCS, FSA and PF Farm Bill Biologists were on hand to provide these specialized technical services. This experience provided a wonderful opportunity for farmers and landowners to learn about conservation practices that can be readily implemented on their very own property.

The Help Room biologists are fluent in Federal conservation programs managed by the USDA NRCS/FSA. The MN DNR provided computers and an arc view program, which enabled the planners to show landowners and operators, aerial photos of the property in which they were interested!

A special thank you to the NRCS employees and earth team volunteers that assisted with the MN NRCS booth and Help Desk Area.
Ann English, Brian Christensen , Cutrina Moreland, Derrick Johnson, Ginger Kopp, Gloria Larson, Jeff Hellerman, Jim Axell, John Nicholson, John Zinn, Kasey Taylor, Katundra Shears, Mark Hayek, Mark Oja, Mike Appel, Tim Koehler, Paul Flynn, Randy Schmiesing, Lance Smith, Susan Ploetz and William Hunt.

For additional information about Pheasants Forever, please check out the following website: www.pheasantsforever.org/

One Millionth Acre in Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

Acting Agriculture Secretary Chuck Conner announced on January 17, 2008 that USDA has enrolled the one millionth acre in its nationwide Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The one millionth acre is in Minnesota; the first CREP acre was enrolled in Maryland in 1997.

"Enrolling the one millionth acre is an important milestone in the history of USDA's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program," said Conner. "By collaborating with agricultural producers, state agencies and many other partners through this highly effective program, USDA is improving water quality, wildlife habitat, soil productivity and air quality throughout the country and for the next generation."

TILLAGE CONFERENCE HELD IN REDWOOD COUNTY, MINNESOTA

Mark Rose, Resource Conservationist, Marshall Area Office worked at the MN NRCS booth at the tillage conference.

A Tillage Conference was held January 30-31, 2008 at the Jackpot Casino in Morton, Minnesota. The title of the conference was "A Systems Approach." Breakout sessions were held and participants had the opportunity to learn more about nutrients from all sources, tillage effects below the surface and how to fine tune agronomics.

The conference also featured a tradeshow. Minnesota NRCS staff from area 5 had a booth at the Tillage conference and utilized employees from Area 5 to staff the booth. A special thank you to Michael Nienaber, Sandy Jerzak, Mark Rose, Burt Hendrickson, Jerry Purdin and April Sullivan for their assistance with the NRCS booth. For additional information regarding the Tillage Conference, please contact Mike Nienaber at (507)-537-0541.

ASSISTANT STATE CONSERVATIONIST

MIKE APPEL SAYS GOODBYE AND THANKS!

I wanted to say thank you to all of you that I had the opportunity to either meet or work with these past 32 years. I don't know where the time has gone. This is something I have looked forward to and now that I have reached this milestone I find myself wondering. I have been very blessed to work with so many engaging and wonderful people these past years. You are like family to me and it will be hard to give that up. This has been a wonderful ride and I will miss the fellowship. I'm moving on because there are projects to do and the fish are biting somewhere.

Mike Appel helps out at Farm Fest

Practicing SAFE Conservation

by: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

Acting Agriculture Secretary Chuck Conner said January 19, 2008 the USDA has approved conservation projects on more than a quarter-million acres in 18 states under a new partnership within the Conservation Reserve Program. Conner made the announcement during a news conference at Pheasants Forever "Pheasant Fest" exhibiting held in Saint Paul River Centre in St. Paul, MN.

The projects unveiled are the first to be approved under a new Conserve Reserve Program (CRP) practiced called SAFE, which stands for State Acres for wildlife Enhancement. When the USDA announced this program last year, it set the SAFE enrollment goal at 500,000 acres. This announcement approves 45 projects for up to 259,776 of these acres as wildlife habitat for threatened, endangered and other high-priority species. SAFE, like other continuous CRP practices, targets smaller parcels of the most environmentally sensitive land to achieve it's maximum environmental benefit. For more information, check out FSA's website at: www.fsa.usda.gov

CONSERVATION CONNECTIONS

Acting Agriculture Secretary Chuck Conner Speaks at "Pheasant Fest" held in Saint Paul.

Farm Bill Assistance Partnership

The Farm Bill Assistance Partnership, a consortium of Minnesota conservation organizations and government agencies, announced during Pheasant Fest, that the collective effort of many impacted 80,000 acres of habit in Minnesota's farmland region during 2007. Made up of individual Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), the Minnesota DNR, Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources and Pheasants Forever, the partnership focused on hiring staff to accelerate habitat restoration and management through Federal Farm Bill conservation programs like the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Staff hired through the partnership work with farmers to offer conservation options, which is the current focus of the partnership. The continuous sign-up practices of CRP includes buffer strips, wetland restorations, and block grassland habitats. Last year, forty SWCDs participated, resulting in a total of 16,238 contacts with Minnesota private landowners.

NEW NATIONAL CAMPAIGN
CONSERVATION ……
Our Purpose! Our Passion!

NRCS launched a national campaign on February 12, 2008 at the annual meeting of the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) in Reno, Nevada.

The Target Audiences for this campaign includes:

- **All employees**
- **Landowners**
- **Partners**
- **Stakeholders**

Our Purpose
Internal Audiences:

- **Reinforce and reignite** the passion NRCS employees have for their work.
- **Internalize** the concepts of the Strategic Plan within NRCS

External Audiences:

- **Raise awareness** that we're an agency that helps producers achieve their goals; that we believe in cooperative conservation; and that private lands conservation doesn't happen without landowners and partners.
- **Show how we help people help the land** through service, partnership, and technical excellence.
- **Show how cooperative conservation works** through watershed and market-based approaches.
- **Reassure** partners and landowners that our partnerships have been key to past successes and are essential to future conservation solutions.
- **Strengthen** landowners' conservation ethic and increase landowner participation in NRCS programs and services.
- Encourage other landowners to experience the rewards of conservation – **to write their own legacy of conservation** upon the land.

Messages and Concepts
Employees

You have a critical role in helping people help the land. Our customers need you and value what you do

for them. Recognize how your daily work benefits the Nation, how your work leads to productive lands and a healthy environment.
You will continue to be essential to NRCS as we build a strong future and leave a lasting legacy.

Landowners

What you do with your land matters to your family, your business, your community. Your stewardship is part of your legacy. Your conservation efforts improve the quality of life for all Americans by maintaining productive lands in harmony with a quality environment.

We're here to help you help the land. We'll work with you to help you achieve your conservation goals. We'll help you achieve a sustainable operation, both environmentally and economically. We have a 70-plus years of experience of providing science-based, time-tested technical assistance. When you get assistance from NRCS, you're getting the very best.

We value our partnerships with landowners. NRCS and landowners build conservation solutions together.

Partners

You play a key role in helping people help the land. Cooperative conservation is how we do business. Your conservation efforts improve the quality of life for all Americans by helping producers maintain productive lands and a quality environment.

We value our partnerships.

We need you; we build conservation solutions together.

Stakeholders

A voluntary, incentive-based approach continues to be the most effective method of achieving sound natural resource management on private lands.

NRCS provides **science-based, time-tested conservation solutions.**

Local leadership and **local action** form the foundation for effective and innovative land stewardship.

Investment in voluntary conservation is yielding productive lands and a healthy environment.

Wadena SWCD Forest Stewardship Program

By: Anne Oldakowski, SWCD Forestry Technician

The goals of the Wadena Soil & Water Conservation District's forest stewardship program are to assist landowners with forest management, to increase numbers of new forest stewardship plans, and then encourage implementation of the plans.

Assistance is provided at no cost to landowners of 20 acres or more in Wadena County, as funding for the program comes from the DNR Forest Stewardship Program and Clean Water Legacy Grant funds. The forester on staff meets with the landowner, talks with them about their long-term goals, completes an inventory of their property, and prepares a detailed Forest Stewardship plan that meets their needs and goals while assessing the health, capability, and care of the property.

In FY07, the SWCD received a Clean Water Legacy grant for $45,000 to devote full-time staff to stewardship planning and another $70,800 to provide a 50% cost share program for landowners to implement forest stewardship projects. To date, 24 landowners have spent or encumbered almost $26,000 in cost share funds for bud capping, pruning, and planting projects.

In FY07, in an effort to work more cooperatively with other organizations, the SWCD worked with the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) and St. Cloud State University's Spatial Analysis Research Center (SCSU) on a pilot forestry project.

The first step was to find out what digital natural resource data was available for four of fifteen townships in the county. The SCSU students gathered this data and bundled it into usable binders for county and township planners. The SWCD then created a landowner survey to determine what technical and financial needs landowners have. Postcard surveys were mailed to landowners in the 4 townships with a 20% return rate. Surveys were tallied by the SCSU students with these results:

- Majority of landowners own more than 20 acres
- Mainly as a home or cabin site, but also for recreation and wildlife viewing
- 68 landowners interested in a forest stewardship plan, owning 8-440 acres
- They prefer information in publications, on internet sites, and through field tours
- Want more follow-up from foresters, more information on programs, and more technical assistance

In FY08, the SWCD again collaborated with MFRC in an educational effort to increase the knowledge that landowners have about forestry in Wadena County and how they can keep their forest land as healthy and productive as possible.

One project was a "Five Years Later" Forest Stewardship Field Day in September 2007 at the Durwin & Lori Tomperi property near Menahga. The Tomperi's Forest Stewardship Plan was written in 2001, with a tour held in 2002 to view their implementation projects. Participants in 2002 wanted to visit the site five years later to see progress.

Pictured clockwise are photos from the field day: Omega Hardwoods, Inc. pallet factory, red pine thinning, aspen shearing, and water impoundment.

Over sixty participants visited seven field sites such as hybrid poplar performance, an open water impoundment for wildlife and aesthetics (EQIP funded), aspen shearing for wildlife habitat, black ash and native pine stand thinning for timber improvement, pine plantation pruning for disease prevention, and a tour of Omega Hardwoods, Inc. pallet factory.

Bee Symposium

By: Julie Lindner Soil Conservationist

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."

Carter G. Woodson and the Origins of Muliticulturalism

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

February is National Black History Month, and the 2008 theme is **Carter G. Woodson and the Origins of Multiculturalism.** This is a time for all of the Natural Resources Conservation Service employees to reflect on the accomplishment and contributions that African-Americans have made to our Nation, our workforce in the United States, and throughout the world. Black History Month is more than just a celebration honoring the achievements of African-Americans. It is the understanding of African-American culture, customs, heritage, and how we use those traits to enhance the conservation of natural resources.

During February, I encourage you to take some time to learn more about African-American culture and history. Attend celebrations and other events in your communities, read books and articles, etc.

Black History Program

A Black History event was held in St. Paul for USDA employees on February 19, 2008 that was planned by Curtina Moreland, MN NRCS Multicultural Emphasis Program Manager. Employees from the State Office and from areas Four, Five, Six and Seven attended the event.

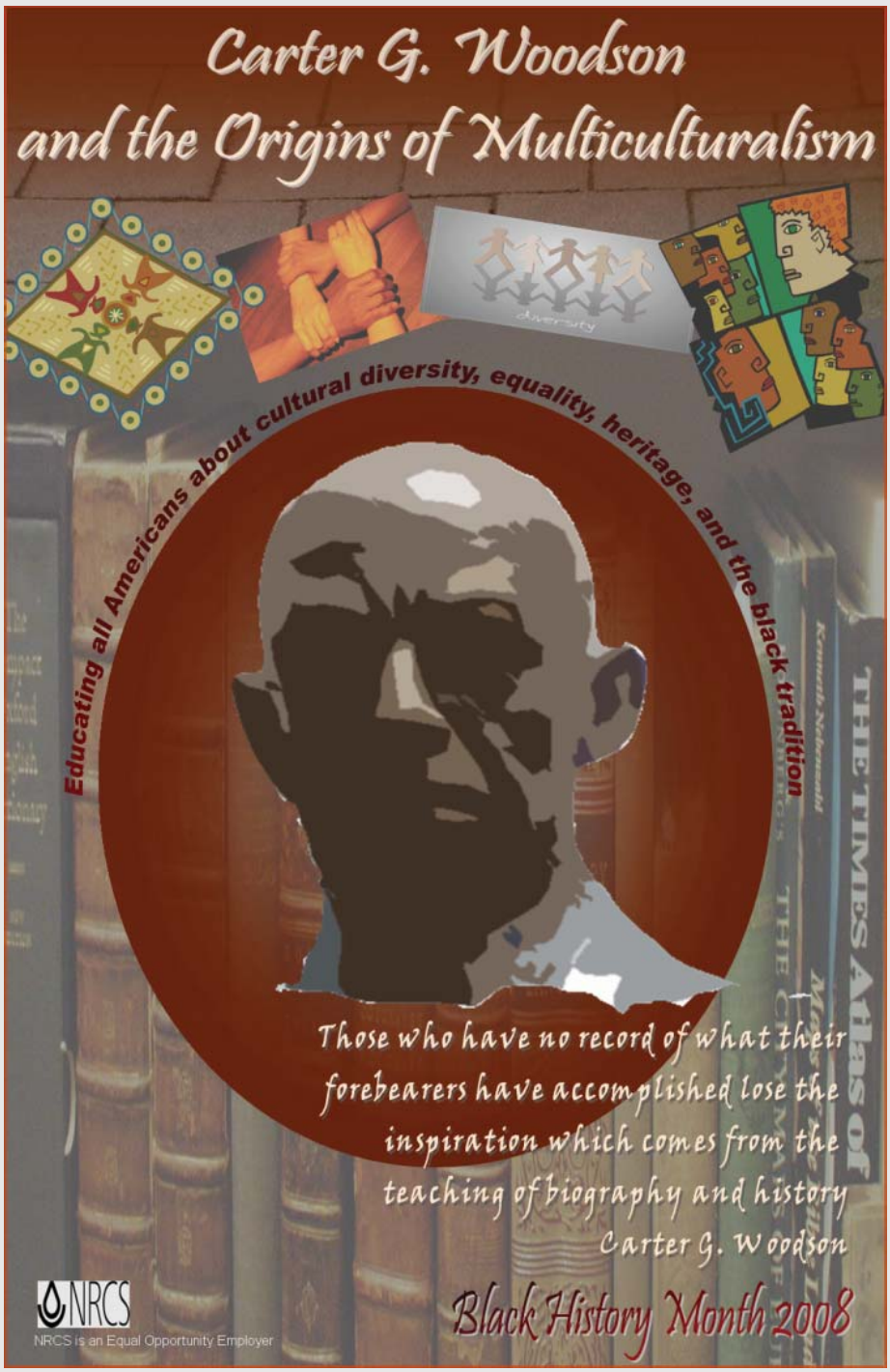
The program included remarks from USDA representatives, William Hunt, State Conservationist (STC), and Adam Czech, Rural Development employee who represented Steve Wenzel, RD State Director. Since 1995, Hunt supported the planning of these special emphasis events. Hunt said “these type of events help employees to learn how to appreciate one another; break down barriers that may exist between people. All of us can learn from history that has taken place”.

(Above) Dr. Earl Miller, Jr. was the first featured speaker, Dr. Miller, spoke about the sharing of the timeline of African American History. Dr. Miller noted that between the years of 1619-1863, slavery was present in the United States and that during that period in history black people didn’t have rights. During this period African-Americans “locus of life” was religion.

(Left) Mr. Lester Collins, Executive Director of the Council on Black Minnesotans, shared his concern for blacks in Minnesota. At an early age he developed concern for equal access to both rights and privileges as a member of society; now Mr.

Collins represents a group that proposes and monitors legislation. Recently he worked tirelessly on the topic of Sickle Cell Anemia, which is the most common inherited blood disorder in the United States and is estimated to occur in 1 in 500 African-Americans. Mr. William Hunt, STC, provided the concluding remarks; following his presentation black history event participants adjourned for a sampling of food items.

We offer a special thank you to the following NRCS individuals who made this event possible: *Cutrina Moreland, Lakelle Pritchett, Leah Duzy, Joni Franklin, Derrick, Harmon, Lisa Buckner, Ann English, Kasey Taylor, Tom Jackson, Cory Drummond, Tim Wilson, Gloria Larson, Germil Lewis, Katundra Spears and Mr. and Mrs. William Hunt.*



National Black History Poster

The signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Bill by the late President Lyndon Baines Johnson opened up the doors of opportunity for black people and ended the period of segregation that was present from 1863 to 1964. Due to the Civil Rights Bill black people have enjoyed 44 years of freedom.

A trip to South Africa

By: Brad Harberts, Soil Engineering Technician
Worthington field office

Brad Harberts went along with the Southwestern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran church. He was invited by Pastor Mark Yackel-Juleen because of his agricultural and soil conservation experience. The South Eastern Dioceses of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa are companion synods, and Pastor Yackel-Juleen and Pastor Rebecca Sullivan were approached by Pastor Bheki Mathe from South Africa to come to South Africa with farmers, and those with expertise who could look at the land owned by the church and help them figure out how to use the land owned by the church to feed their people. The people are fighting Aids and Tuberculosis and the medications are not as effective without proper nutrition. Pastor Mathe and others form South Africa need help encouraging the people to use the land effectively.

Photos taken by: Dale Holmes

After Apartheid, the church was given thousands of acres of land as part of the settlement process, and they are trying to make the land benefit the most number of people. In South Africa animal husbandry is an issue that needs to be addressed. The animals are free range, therefore, cattle and goats eat what is in a garden before it can get harvested for human consumption. Brad worked with the team that went from Shetek conference to set goals with the South African people that were attainable by the people, and could also be done as teaching mechanisms for more people, and other ways of generating a nutritional base.

Community garden

South Africa is only fifteen years passed the Apartheid, and already the people are hungry for new information, for the blessings of freedom and they are anxious to get to work. Currently the unemployment is at 70-80%. Still the people find ways to carve out a meager living for themselves, and their families. Many of the men travel to Johannesburg to find work, or go to the coal finds; gold miles or lumber/timber fields.

The women who remain at home work hard carrying water, planting gardens and tending to the livestock to feed their children, grand children, and in many cases nieces and nephews. Many, many people have died from Aids and Tuberculosis, and still many remain, suffering and dying. Those who care for the sick and dying remain hopeful and encouraged by their faith and the hope that others across the world will reach out

to help them.

The things many of us take for granted such as electricity and running hot and cold water are things that these people only dream of. There are daily planned powered outages because the infrastructure has not kept up with the demand for electricity. Caring adults do what they can to help those children who are heads of households. Yes, children are left to raise younger siblings after parents and grandparents die.

> "children are left to raise younger siblings after parents and grandparents die."

The stories of the children at a funeral of a grand parent who come to their pastors asking what they do now that there are no adults left for them to turn to, tear at the hearts of those living there, and those of us who get to meet the children first hand. Many of these children find food at the dump when grocery stores take out dated products to dispose of them. Still others are cared for by the hard working women who through ingenuity and determination find the resources necessary to be the stable adult for more children every day.

The people have great need, and their faith, their ability to forgive, and their enthusiasm is a testament to them as a people and a nation. The Zulu resiliency will forge ahead, carving out a home in the fact of poverty and a life of pride and love for family in the face of unimaginable odds.

Thanks Jim for your service

Here is a photo taken by Mark Kanable of the U.S. flag brought back to the area by U.S. Army SGT James Smith (SCT, Owatonna FO) from his recent tour in Iraq. This very flag was actually flown over Convoy Support Center Scania, Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom IV, April 3, 2007.

The flag is mounted on a new flag stand, and along with a 'Certificate of Authenticity, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1-125 Field Artillery Strike', is located in the area office conference room for all of us to enjoy when the conference room is in use.

Thanks Jim for your service and bringing back to us this flag.

John T. Nicholson

John Rife, of Sebeka, Inducted into National Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Hall of Fame

On February 25, 2008, John Rife of Sebeka MN, was honored at the National Association of RC&D's Leadership Forum as a 2007 winner of the National Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Hall of Fame award. Only three people in the United States were selected to be inducted into the Hall of Fame this year, so this is a prestigious award. John Rife is considered to be the founding father of the RC&D program – not only in Minnesota, but perhaps the nation. Mr. Rife is the only surviving member of the original RC&D Committee that was assembled in 1963 in Minnesota to develop what was at that time a new pilot program that would lead to one of the first RC&D Councils – West Central RC&D (which later would become WesMin RC&D & Prairie Country RC&D).

Some History:
John returned from service in the Navy in World War II in August of 1945. As a farmer and a conservationist who believed in conserving our nation's beautiful resources, believing in local leadership in cooperation with state and federal government, he started up the Wadena (Minnesota) SWCD in 1958 and served as chairman for many years. He became recognized in his 12 years there as one of the state's leaders in conservation.

Joan Freeman with John rife and his wife Helen

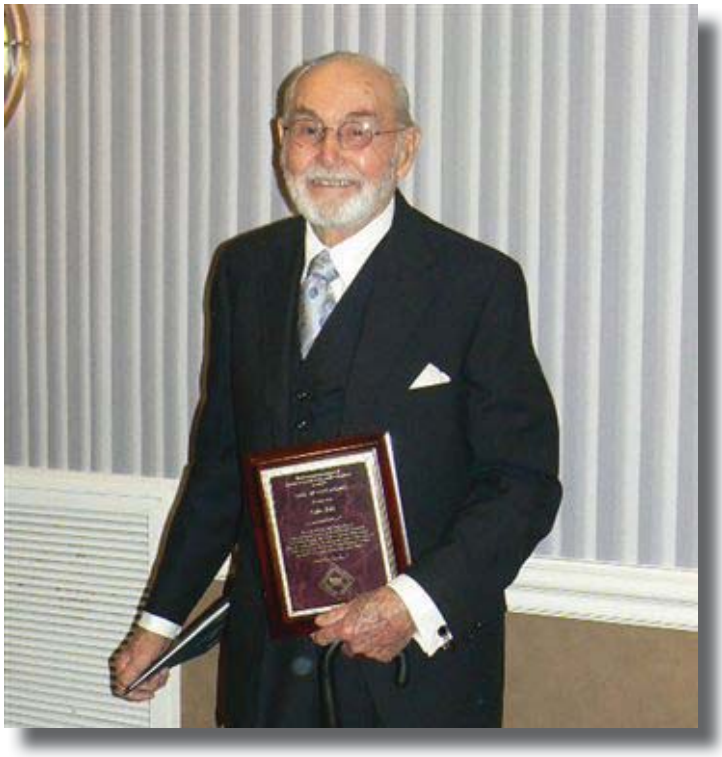
John Rife is considered to be one of RC&D's "Founding Fathers". Mr. Rife had strong friendships and political connections with the Kennedy Administration: Secretary of Agriculture, Orville Freeman; then Senator Hubert Humphrey; Senator Eugene McCarthy; Walter Mondale, and others in 1963 and 1964. (Also known as "The Minnesota Connection!") Mr. Rife made many personal phone calls and wrote many letters directly to these individuals to insure that his area would not only have one of the first RC&D applications approved, but would also be led by citizens at the local level.

John also worked to complete the first RC&D project in the nation – the "Crow Wing River Canoe Trail". In an effort to always advertise successes, this project was dedicated by the Governor as the first completed RC&D project in the nation at a ceremony planned by John and the Council on June 17, 1964. Governor Rolvaag canoed the 70 mile trail with 8 developed campsites and was presented with a paddle by John as shown in the news article in the submitted materials. Original brochures of the event are still on file in the WesMin office. The canoe trail project and John were also recognized at the 18th annual National Soil and Water Conservation convention held in Kansas City Missouri on Feb 12th, 1964 where Orville Freeman was presented with a trail brochure by John Rife, as shown in a news article in the submitted materials. This project is still functioning today, providing recreational opportunities to residents and thousands of tourists, and creating business for at least three canoe outfitters. In the spirit of John Rife and telling our RC&D story, this project was rededicated at a ceremony and canoe trip with State and

John Rife,

Cont.....

Federal legislators, RC&D council members, Nedda Simon representing the North Central Region and NARC&DC, and agency heads and citizens at WesMin's 40th Anniversary in 2004 held in Wadena. John Rife participated in this event and the unveiling of the sign rededicating the canoe trail, and was awarded the "Visionary Leader Award" by WesMin RC&D.



John rife with Hall of Fame award at leadership meeting

What is notable is that in completing the Crow Wing River Canoe Trail Project, John did not wait for Federal funding. When he found out that it might take a while to get funding approved or it might not even materialize, he moved out and completed the project by cooperating with local citizens, State agencies, local groups, County government, etc. and got much of the project completed through donated services, labor, and property. Canoe landings were donated by local property owners and the County; sportsmen's clubs agreed to maintain them; scouts assisted with maintenance; and, counties and townships agreed to build accesses to the sites. Today, those riverfront sites would be impossible to buy without a huge price tag - if you could even buy them at all. They are now protected and available for all to use for recreation and nature watching. People cooperated because of the locally led effort spearheaded by John Rife and the value to the community as a whole. This was the basis for the formation of our locally led Councils and establishing them as nonprofits. This is a model for many of our RC&D projects today, partnerships and donated services, materials, and funds from grants, donations, and contributions from other partners.

There are other examples of the completion of very difficult projects requiring much cooperation between agencies and groups that John spearheaded. During his tenure on the RC&D council, over 300 projects were adopted. Many of these projects are still working today – from canoe trails, to horse trails, to wildlife impoundments, to stream bank erosion prevention, to low income housing. The list goes on…

Today there are 375 RC&D Councils in the United States. RC&D Councils are a unique local and federal partnership. The RC&D Councils are 501(c)3 nonprofit corporations that provide local leadership and set priorities to plan and implement natural resource and economic development projects in their multi-county areas to improve the quality of life in their areas. The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical and financial assistance, with sponsors obtaining additional funding from a variety of other sources. The greatest strength of the RC&D program is in local people working together to solve local issues- land conservation, environmental enhancement, water quality, rural economic development, recreation, community safety, and other locally identified needs.

Submitted by:
WesMin RC&D
900 Robert Street, Suite 104
Alexandria MN 56308

Grazing Tour to be held in Big Stone County

By: Krecia Leddy, District Conservationist

Mark the date! Big Stone County will host a grazing tour on Tuesday, June 17th, 2008. The tour will showcase producers who have participated in grazing management through the EQIP cost-share program, and grassland management on public land. A noon luncheon will be served at the Rick Wilkening farmsite near Correll. Speakers for the event will include: Ryon Walker, U of M Beef Team; Mark Streich, Livestock Production Specialist with Land O'Lakes Purina Feeds; J.B. Bright, USFWS Wildlife Refuge Specialist, Lance Smith, NRCS Area Grazing Specialist, and Krecia Leddy, District Conservationist. The event is being sponsored through a grant from Prairie Country RC&D, GLCI, and the Working Lands Initiative. If you are interested in attending, please contact the Ortonville NRCS Office so we may get your name on our mailing list (320) 839-6149 ext. 3.

Historic Conservation Photos

J.E. Curtis farm. Collins contour furrowing machine in action. Winona, MN. August 1939

Espelund farm, A rock and brush dam. Willows under the rock are expected to sprout. Nerstrand, MN. June 1939

Edwin Solum farm. Gideon on tower taking picture. Spring Grove, MN. June 1939

Appel Estato home. Streambank cutting under shed and endangering farmhouse. A part of the shed has already been carried away. Thielman, MN. November 1936

Power from the Prairie

Pembina Trail RC&D and Giziibii RC&D are working together to provide technical assistance for the installation of a small-scale biomass gasifier at the Northern Excellence Seed, LLC grass seed cleaning facility located in Williams, MN. Working through Giziibii RC&D, the project partners successfully submitted an application to NRCS for a Conservation Innovation Grant. The grant will be used to fund a gasifier that burns grass screenings, converting biomass to valuable energy. The project will also collect and analyze economic data to determine a value for growing perennial grass residues for energy conversion through gasification.

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

Common Buckthorn Control on Tribal Land

By: Dustin Jasken, Soil Conservationist/Tribal Liaison

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Mahnomen County is cooperating with the White Earth Nation, located in NW MN, in an attempt to contain and eradicate Common Buckthorn (Rhamnus cathartica) on tribal lands. Common Buckthorn is an invasive species that poses a major threat to forest regeneration and wildlife habitat along a tallgrass prairie / deciduous forest transitional area stemming north and south on White Earth Reservation. The intent of this project is to remove all living Buckthorn material, including mature plants, which produce a bountiful crop of berries. These berries carry a natural laxative that can very easily turn hungry birds into seed dispersers! The berries regularly go to seed and the new growth is very shade tolerant, allowing the Buckthorn to out compete native vegetation.

This project is being administered by the White Earth Natural Resources Department (WENRD), with guidance from the Tribal Forestry Program, Tribal Pesticides Program, and Tribal Agricultural Program. NRCS is providing technical assistance and financial incentives through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) – Invasive Plant Species Pest Management Practice, where White Earth will receive a one time financial incentive to remove Common Buckthorn on 74.5 acres of tribal land. Site specific efforts will begin in the fall of 2008 with an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach, utilizing mechanical, manual, and precision applied chemical techniques. White Earth will conduct

The photo shows a mature Buckthorn tree capable of producing a high yield of berries. Will probably be the first one cut down this fall!

these initial efforts as a pilot project, and upon completion the results will be assessed for feasibility of future Common Buckthorn control on adjacent tribal lands.

Private Woodland Management Project

Giziibii RC&D has been awarded $6,300 from Blandin Foundation for the Woodland Project. Northwest Minnesota Foundation has already contributed $25,000 for this project with another $6,200 coming from other sources.

This project is designed to place more private woodlands into effective management programs providing long term value for this important natural resource. It is focused on identifying and educating the private woodland owners about the benefits of good timber management and what programs are available to them. Landowners will be encouraged to implement their management plans though existing cost share programs and other opportunities such as the Minnesota Sustainable Forestry Incentive Act.

Project serves a nine county region with ten Soil & Water Conservation Districts involved. Other partners include Pembina Trail RC&D, Potlatch, Norbord, Cass Forest Products and the Minnesota Forest Resource Partnership.

Source: Giziibii RC&D News

Dry Hydrant

The Minnesota State Association of RC&D has extended this grant through 2008. Dry hydrants are non-pressurized hydrants to be used in rural areas for quick access to water all year round. Giziibii RC&D has installed four out of the 11 dry hydrants that they currently have funding four. There are two additional locations within the Giziibii RC&D area that have expressed interest in having a dry hydrant installed.

Source: Giziibii RC&D News

Personnel

Alicia Laturnus, Soil Conservation Technician – Park Rapids FO, and her husband Paul welcomed a bouncing baby boy to their family on Wednesday, March 12, 2008. The baby, named Carver Andrew, weighed in at 8 lbs 1 oz. Congratulations to Alicia and Paul.

Danny Weber, District Conservationist – Mahnomen, is making a move from Area 1 to Area 3. Danny was selected at the District Conservationist for the Duluth Field office and began his new duties on March 17, 2008. Best wishes to Danny in his new location.

Michele (Shelly) Micke, Soil Conservation Technician – Bagley FO, recently resigned from NRCS. Shelly accepted a position with Carlton County and will be working with wetlands.

AREA 2 REPORT

JAMES AYRES, ASTC(FO)
FERGUS FALLS, MN

Rick Berscheid Receives Outstanding Service Award

By: Ed Musielewicz, District Conservationist, Detroit Lakes Field Office

Rick Berscheid, NRCS Soil Conservationist for the Alexandria Field Office, was recognized with an Outstanding Service Award at the WesMin RC& D annual meeting, February 13, 2008, held at the Long Prairie Country Club, in Long Prairie, MN. Rick provided extra efforts and outstanding assistance to the RC&D Coordinator with planning, surveying, designing and construction checkouts of dry fire hydrants for area fire departments in the WesMin Area. In 2007, due to loss of staff and a heavy workload of pending dry fire hydrants for WesMin, extra assistance was requested from the Area Conservationist to help with dry fire hydrant requests. Rick Berscheid was asked to assist the RC&D Coordinator and spent a significant amount of time and extra effort working with the fire departments - assisting with DNR permitting, engineering surveys, and, design and final construction check outs of the projects. 8 dry hydrants were completed with his assistance in 2007, with 5 more designed and/or surveyed for 2008. Considering that since 1999, only 5 other hydrants have been completed through WesMin in the intervening years – this was quite an achievement. The area fire departments have expressed to the RC&D Coordinator that Rick did a great job of communicating with them. To show how far "beyond the call of duty" Rick went, he spent at least 2 Saturdays on his own time with construction check outs of hydrants. One in particular, was the opening day of pheasant season. Rick, an avid hunter, surely went beyond the call of duty, volunteering unpaid time on the pheasant opener - something all hunters will understand and appreciate. The WesMin RC&D Council is extremely grateful for Rick's contributions.

Rick Berscheid (center), Soil Conservationist in the Alexandria Field Office, receives an Outstanding Service Award from WesMin RC&D President, Lyle Hovland (right). Also pictured is WesMin RC&D Coordinator, Dean Schmidt (left).

Awards

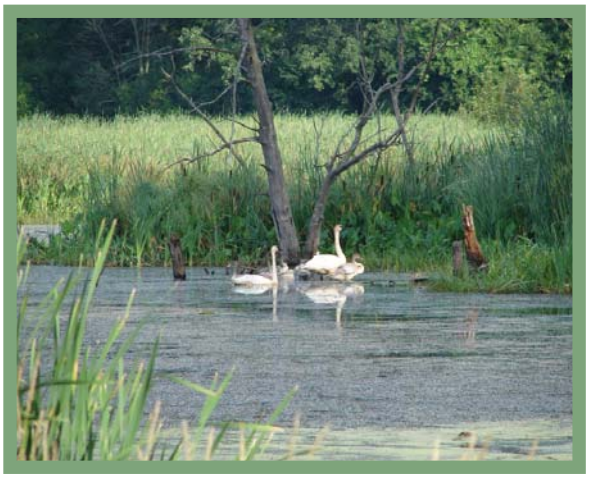
Richard Berscheid received a 3 in 1 Coat for his work detail to the RC&D office working on Dry Hydrants.

Steve Girard received a barn jacket for his extra effort in support of the Long Prairie Field Office during the recent EQIP signup and with implementation of prior year prescribed grazing pipeline components.

KEVIN DAW, ASTC(FO)
DULUTH, MN

CONSERVATION COOPERATION

Cooperative conservation is extremely vital to the conservation success in Chisago County. Recently, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) partnered together to work with two landowners wishing to restore a large wetland encompassing approximately 30 acres of their adjoining property. The landowners originally approached SWCD inquiring about the desire to develop wetland habitat. The four agencies met on-site with the landowners to discuss the resource concerns and ways of making a restoration project successful. Through correspondence and expertise from the different agencies, a plan was developed to successfully meet the landowners' objectives with funding provided by the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Through a contribution agreement, the SWCD and Joint Powers Engineering staff surveyed and designed the project. They also provided construction inspection and checkout. A dam was installed with cable concrete mats for erosion protection and a variable pipe weir to adjust pool depth. The project was funded through EQIP and USFWS funds focusing on wetland projects in the county. DNR provided technical assistance and aided the landowners with planting the native grasses.



Trumpeter swans and their cygnets have made the wetland their home.

Mitch Cabek (IMPACK6), Nicole Sternquist (IMPACK6), Deb Hermel (NRCS), meet to inspect installation.

Since implementation, a pair of trumpeter swans has made this wetland their permanent home. This pair will migrate south and come back each year when the ice melts to produce their offspring and live for the summer. Because of the work done on this wetland, it is certain permanent water will remain for the swan habitat, as well as for other wetland wildlife.

Also bordering this wetland is 21.4 acres of native grasses and 2.0 acres of trees established from a corn/soybean rotation on 20% slope through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Approximately 15 tons of soil per acre per year are saved from converting this highly erodible field from row crops to CRP.

AREA 3 REPORT

This is just one of the many cooperative conservation projects in the county. The working relationship between the conservation agencies in Chisago County proves to be a valuable asset in getting successful conservation accomplished.

Historic Photo

Johnson farm, As the farmer follows the contour in cultivating his strip of corn, He raises the cultivator points as He crosses a waterway left in sod.

June 1938

Personnel

Paul Sandstrom, District Conservationist (DC), Duluth FO, was selected for the Laurentian RC&D Coordinator position effective January 7, 2008. Our hearty congratulations, Paul!

Daniel Weber, DC, Mahnomen Field Office, was selected for the DC position at the Duluth Field Office. Welcome aboard, Dan!

Mary Monte, DC, Cambridge Field Office, was selected for the DC position at the Elk River Field Office. We wish you the very best, Mary!

Michael Yrjo was selected for the WAE position at the Hinckley Field Office effective January 7, 2008. Congrats, Mike!

Mohammed Iddrisu is the new DNR Forrester working at the Onanegozie RC&D office in Mora. Glad to have you, Mohammed!

Other News

Promotion
Kyle Asplund, Soil Conservation Technician, Aitkin FO. Well deserved, Kyle!

Non-monetary Award
Ben Ellefson for "providing assistance to those in need." Ben also won the '2007 State Office Safety Award' for his efforts.

David Wise for "serving as Acting Director of the Fond du Lac Tribal Community College, Center of Excellence."

Karen Closson for "reorganizing all contract payment files in the Area Office resulting in more efficient operations."

Gail Bong for "technical assistance in the summers of 2006 & 2007 to develop and test scanning and storage procedures for natural resources inventory information."

Your extra effort is very much appreciated!

TIMOTHY WILSON, ASTC(FO)
BROOKLYN CENTER, MN

The National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees 15th Annual Conference

By: Katundra Shears, District Conservationist, Jordan and Lakelle Pritchett, Agricultural Engineer, Brooklyn Center

"Bringing Conservation Back to the Bayou" was the theme for the 2007 National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees (NOPBNRCSE) 15th Annual Training Conference held December 10-14, 2007, in New Orleans, Louisiana. The NOPBNRCSE has always focused on enhancing the awareness and improving the level of education and professional development of Black employees within NRCS and to increase the participation of Blacks in agriculture, natural resources, and related fields.

In light of the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina that took lives of hundreds of coastal residents and left thousands homeless with unimaginable destruction, the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) training workshop was one of the major discussions at the conference. With talk of EWP and the contribution of NRCS in recovery efforts due to the hurricane, we were all ready to venture out

to tour these areas, which was a highlight for me considering I had the opportunity to be a part of the recovery efforts two years ago through the EWP Program, says Katundra. Two tours were arranged for attendees: Costal Wetlands Restoration at the Barataria Basin Landbridge Tour and Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) – Recovering from Hurricane Katrina Tour.

The Costal Wetlands Restoration Tour participants traveled from New Orleans through the communities of Jean Lafitte and Lafitte to the "end of the road," where they boarded a tour boat to visit seven costal wetlands restoration projects. These projects represented four project types commonly used across costal Louisiana: 1) beneficial use of dredged material for marsh creation,
2) dedicated dredging for marsh creation, 3) shoreline protection, and 4) hydrologic restoration. Five of these projects were funded by the Costal Wetlands Planning, Protection,

and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) Program. Tour guides addressed soil conditions, vegetation, fisheries, and engineering aspects of the projects, and participants gained an understanding of how individual CWPPRA projects, in conjunction with other projects, can be strategically sited to accomplish regional or basin-wide goals.

The Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) Tour stopped in areas of Louisiana and Mississippi that were heavily impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In New Orleans, the effects of the Industrial Canal Breach in lower 9th ward showed a vivid, yet accurate depiction of the lagging pace at which the recovery effects are taking place. Several volunteer programs are still on-going to provide assistance with the clean up and recovery acts in affected areas. In Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, several homes being rebuilt were elevated using stacked cement blocks 10 to 15 feet from the ground in order to comply with current building code requirements. In Gulfport and Bay St. Louis, some residents resided in "Katrina Cottages." Katrina Cottages are a more permanent living quarter than the FEMA trailers which were initially given to residents as a means of temporary quarters while the cities rebuild. The FEMA trailer deadline extension has been set for July 7, 2008, when the residents become responsible for finding housing.

Overall, the 15th Annual Training Conference of the National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees was a success once again. With visits from various individuals in our National Headquarters ranging from Dana York, Associate Chief of NRCS to Leonard Jordan, NRCS Deputy Chief of Strategic Planning and Accountability, the NOPBNRCSE answered its own challenge by providing NRCS employees with necessary training and professional development to assist them with performing their jobs with increased productivity and efficiency.

Contributions for the next issue of Current Developments are due: June 13, 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!

MICHAEL NIENABER, ACTING ASTC(FO)
MARSHALL, MN

Lower Sioux Community Maple Stand Rehabilitation Project

By: Mark Rose, Wetland Biologist

The Lower Sioux Community has a 40 acre stand of hard maples (sugar maple) that they would like to rehabilitate for the purpose of tapping the stand for syrup. This EQIP contract was approved for about $10,000 under the Forest Stand Improvement practice. Under the forest stand improvement practice, the invasive tree species will be taken out along with other trees to create areas of open canopy for the healthy mature maple trees and saplings to grow. The logging will be done with horses this year to protect the environmental sensitive area.

Deformed tree

Marking Trees

Tree Stand

In Dakota language, the maple trees are regarded as "Sugarbush". The Lower Sioux Community Elders would like to educate their youth in their cultural ways of mapling as well to learn about the flora and fauna in the forest. The long range plan for the Lower Sioux Community is to establish a mapling enterprise. The mapling project will be a good learning experience for the youth.

Undesireables

Other News

GRASS MANAGEMENT SEMINERS

By: Lance Smith, Grazing Specialist

On February 12, 2008, I was invited by Mr. Jerry Stevens of Express Ag to speak on Grass Management & Grazing Systems. The meeting was held at the Blue Mounds Banquet Center in Luverne, MN. Ms. Mary Halstvedt, Range and Pasture Specialist with Dow AgroSciences, spoke on Invasive Weed Management In Pasture. Approximately 60 producers and 5 NRCS personnel attended this function.

On February 13, 2008, I spoke at the Minnesota Cow/Calf Days in Pipestone, MN. The meeting was held at the American Legion and was organized by University of Minnesota Extension and the University of Minnesota Beef Center. My presentation was on The Art and Science of Grass Management with a follow up by Mr. Jerry Purdin, District Conservationist, on EQIP updates and Mr. Jeremy Larson, Civil Engineering Technician, with an overview of grazing systems that were applied in Pipestone County. University of Minnesota Beef Team members gave talks on Heifer Development and Calf Weaning Management while Minnesota Department of Agriculture speakers updated Bovine TB in Minnesota and Livestock Development-Siting and Permitting in Minnesota. Approximately 50 people were in attendance including producers, presenters, and sponsors.

SNOWLESS TUNDRA

Several employees took advantage of the snowless tundra to attend meetings and training to keep their certification current. The lack of the Farm Bill has a few people on edge of what is going to happen to NRCS if we go back to the 1949 Farm Bill. The land prices in the SW area have rocketed to all time high and CRP ground can not compete with the land rent that is being offered. This is really going to hurt our conservation and wildlife habitat efforts.

Upcomming Events

Area 5 will once again host the Wetland Delineation Course and Conservation Planning Course
in the Redwood Falls area. The Wetland Delineation course will be the week of June 16, 2008. The Conservation Planning Course will take place the week of July 28, 2008.

Area 5 has five offices with leases that expire in 2008. Laurie Otte and Sandy Jerzak are working with the FO's to complete the space needs worksheet and to have the ADP room in compliance with the new regulations. One office is looking at moving to a new location this fall.

Personnel

New Hires

We have another WAE, Lori Tordson, working in Ortonville with scanning slides for Area 5 field offices. Welcome aboard!

ETV

We have signed on two new earth team volunteers at the area office, Mike Appel and Lita Bullerman

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

Prairie Country RC&D Council

The National Scenic Byways Commission announces awards for the Scenic Byways Grant Program. The Glacial Ridge Trail Scenic Byway was awarded $87,020 in grant funds. The funds will be used to build and install interpretive kiosks and historic plaques along the byway; develop and install road signs identifying historic trail locations/crossing; and develop and install pictorial tables which will highlight geographic features of the byway. Prairie Country developed the grant proposal for the Glacial Ridge Trail Scenic Byway Committee.

The Glacial Ridge Trail Committee is currently working with the Antique Car Club to host a Minnesota Sesquicentennial Model T Ford roundtrip care run from Willmar to Alexandria. The event will be held in September, 2008 and with be sponsored by the Glacial Ridge Trail Scenic Byway Committee, Antique Care Club and the area Chambers of Commerce Organizations.

Marie Lynch is the new Soil Conservation Technician in the Nicollet and Sibley County field offices. Marie came to Minnesota from Oregon where she worked for NRCS on Snow Survey. A fun element of snow survey work involved being dropped off by helicopter or going to sites by horseback. Marie also has lived and worked in Montana. Marie really likes the snow and her favorite activities are cross country and downhill skiing. Pictured with Marie is her dog, Magico (pronounced mah-hee-co), which in Spanish means magic.

Justin Berg is the new WRP Specialist in Area 6. This is a joint NRCS/Ducks Unlimited partnership position. Justin grew up in Rolla, North Dakota (a stone's throw from the Canadian border). Justin enjoys hunting and team sports like hockey in which he plays center. I asked Justin what he enjoys most about working in St. Peter. He said: "He likes working in a multi-disciplinary office, where everybody has the same mindset of working towards a sustainable environment."

Lanette Dietrich is Minnesota's new Appeals Specialist. She is actually on the state office staff. This is a new position in Minnesota. This position will help the appeal process proceed in a timely, efficient manner. When asked about what she likes most about her new position Lanette answered: "The challenge of working with NAD, FSA, field office staff and clients to resolve disputes. Lanette added that she looks at NRCS policy and procedure along with the laws on which the policy is based, in order to defend or resolve 1985 Farm Bill disputes.

JOHN NICOLSON, ASTC(FO)
ROCHESTER, MN

2008 North Central RC&D Conference

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

The North Central RC&Ds met in Rochester, Minnesota March 9-11, 2008 at the Radisson. There were 125 people in attendance at the conference from the states of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The theme for the meeting was Recharging RC&Ds through Renewable Energy. Learning about this topic was accomplished by participating in general sessions, breakout sessions, and by taking tours.

George Swentik, Minnesota Association of Resource Conservation Development Councils President (MARC&D), said "RC&Ds are local people working together to solve local problems. RC&Ds know how to make things happen and in Minnesota numerous examples of this are evident state wide."

Matt Wohlman, a representative of Congressman Walz said that "RC&D is one of the nation's success stories and he felt confident Congress would fully fund RC&D in the near future." Wohlman acknowledged a few of the RC&D accomplishments, including: 3-Rivers RC&D's $800,000 EPA grant is providing important cost-share dollars to landowners in Minnesota who want to make a difference in Productive Conservation on Working Lands. The Hiawatha RC&D was involved in the Driftless Area Initiative, a four-state initiative that is making positive impacts in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

William Hunt, MN NRCS State Conservationist, provided remarks at the first general session. Mr. Hunt believes strongly in the accomplishments of RC&D and noted that RC&D leadership is paving the way for future RC&D successes. George Swenik, is an excellent example of that innovative leadership. Mr. Hunt expressed his appreciation for the 8 RC&Ds in Minnesota and for the two RC&D applicant areas.

Three Tours took place on Monday, March 10, 2008, at the RC&D Conference.

Tour 1: ALTERNATIVE ENERGY. Tour of the Faribault Energy Park with stops near Dodge Center at the McNeilus Wind Energy company wind farm and the Al Corn Clean Fuel Ethanol Plant near Claremont, MN.
Tour 2: WASTE TO USE. Tour of the Olmsted County Waste to Energy Center. The trip also included a tour of the historic Mayowood Mansion and a stop at Assissi Heights to tour the facility and discuss the new environmentally friendly additions.
Tour 3: SPELLUNKERS' SPECIAL. A trip to the Mystery Cave State Park for a cave tour and sinkhole topography discussion and a presentation on the Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center with stops at two local RC&D projects.

Colleen Oestreich, Giziibii RC&D, receives Award from Jerry Laffin, North Central RC&D Regional President.

The event concluded with the presentation of RC&D awards. Colleen Oestreich, Giziibii RC&D, was named the 2007 Outstanding RC&D Coordinator for the North Central Region of RC&Ds.

A special thank you to the Minnesota RC&D staff and council for pulling off an outstanding conference. Kudos to Shawnn Balstad, Pembina RC&D Coordinator, Lisa Buckner, Three Rivers RC&D Coordinator, Jeff Koster, Hiawatha RC&D Coordinator and Colleen Oestreich, Giziibii RC&D Coordinator.

Personnel

Eugene Kleven, Soil Conservation Technician in the Goodhue Field Office retired December 28, 2007. Good Luck Gene in your retirement!

Susan Glende, District Conservationist in Preston field office was selected as the District Conservationist in Lewiston field office effective March 3, 2008. Congratulations Sue!

Nathan Anderson, Area Engineer resigned effective March 4, 2008 to work in the private industry. Best Wishes Nate!

Tim Weibrod, Soil Conservation Technician in Caledonia Field office is a proud new dad. Tim's wife Angie gave birth to Elaina Grace on February 26, 2008. Elaina Grace weighed 81bs. 2 oz and everybody is doing fine. Congratulations Tim and Angie!

Leslie Diaz Alvarez, Soil Conservationist at the Rochester field office

Leslie Diaz Alvarez, Soil Conservationist at the Rochester field office entered on duty February 17, 2008. Below is some info on Leslie.

Hello, my name is Leslie Marie Diaz Alvarez. I'm from Junco, Puerto Rico. I'm 24 years old. I studied at the University of Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. I graduated in May, 2007 with honors. I have a bachelor's degree in Agronomy and Soils. Why did I study Agronomy? Because it is my passion. I like to work with different plants, exotic fruits, insects, and forestry. For me, our relationship with the environment and nature is very important.

I have a family. My husband Roberto is a registered nurse. I also have a 10 month old son Adiel Jirehd. They will be joining me soon in Rochester. My hobby is cooking. I like to make exotic foods, desserts, and baking bread. I also enjoy shopping for clothes, shoes, make-up, etc.

I am happy to be working for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. I want to do my best with my new job so that everyone will be proud of me.