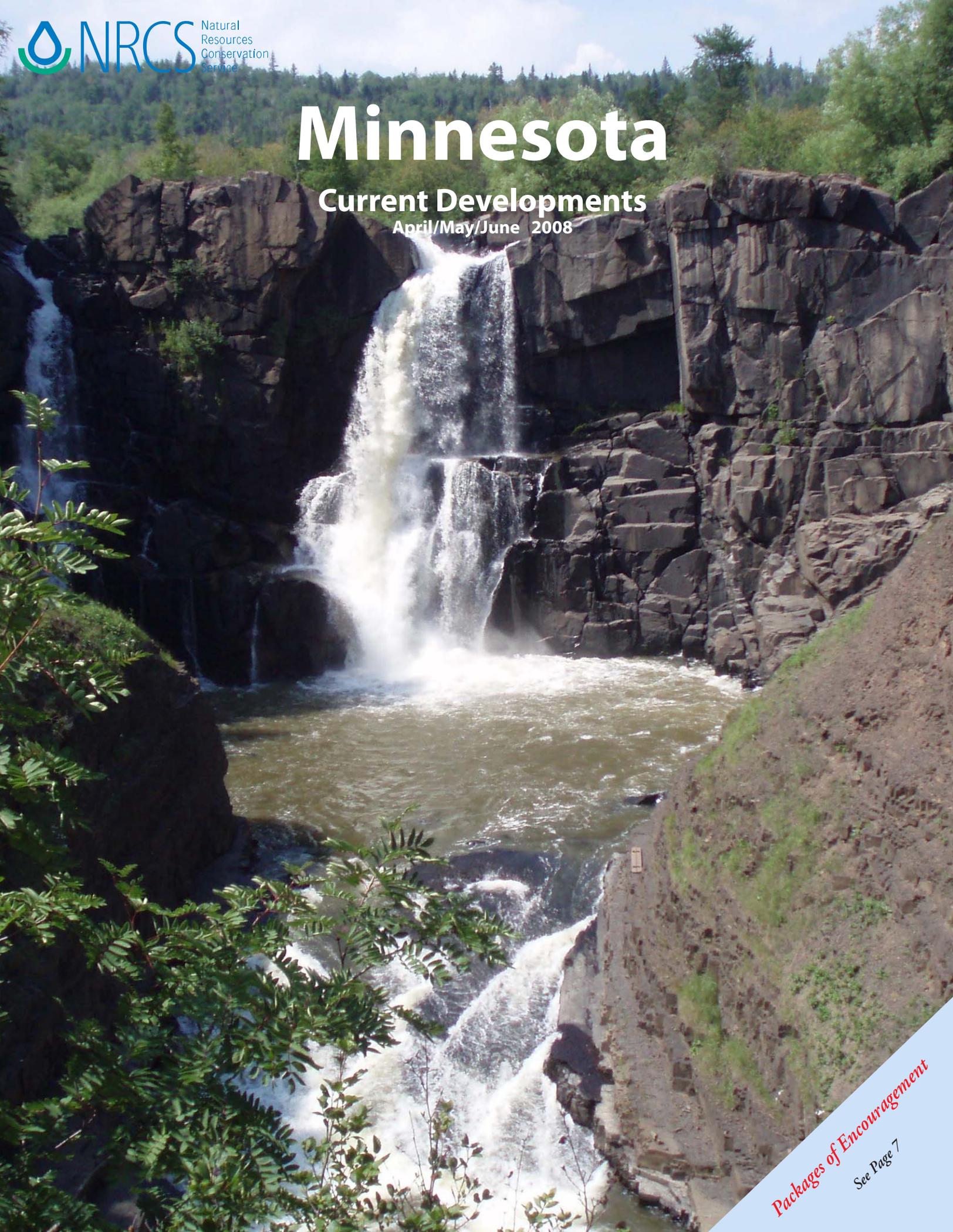


# Minnesota

## Current Developments

April/May/June 2008



*Packages of Encouragement*  
See Page 7



## Remarks from the State Conservationist

NRCS is a unique federal agency. We're federal but locally led. Our delivery system, our unique partnership with Soil and Water Conservation districts, and structure allows us to have a presence in nearly every county in every state. That's unique. Not many federal agencies can say that.

Every NRCS employee in the state, area, field and project offices play a critical role in NRCS' mission of Helping People Help the Land. Working together with our partners, we make conservation happen.

Whether you are the NRCS employee who holds the rod and takes the reading to design the grassed waterway, or you're one who helps purchase the rod. Whether you're the landowner or one of many NRCS' partners, in the end, you are part of our goal of putting quality conservation on the ground based on sound resource management system planning assistance.

NRCS helps private landowners by delivering the latest technical information, notifying them of programs and practices, and by making conservation plans and cost-share dollars accessible. Our customers need that assistance. They need you. And they value what you do for them.

I hope that as an NRCS employee who makes a difference, you feel and know your services are valued and valueable. The tasks you do each day on the job-from the small ones to the big-help NRCS accomplish exactly what we are charged to do.

You have a critical role in Helping People Help the Land. I salute you and your commitment to that role. Keep up the good work!

Thank you!

WILLIAM HUNT  
State Conservationist

# CONSERVATION COUNTS

Inside this Issue of Current Developments

Page	Articles
2	<i>WILLIAM HUNT'S REMARKS</i>
3-4	<i>LAKE WINNIBIGOSHISH SHORELINE STABILIZATION PROJECT</i>
5	<i>MINNESOTA CITY CONSERVATION PARTNER EVENT</i>
6	<i>TEN PUBLIC AGENCIES JOIN FORCES IN ORGANIC MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING</i>
7	<i>PACKAGES OF ENCOURAGEMENT</i>
8	<i>75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COON CREEK DEMONSTRATION PROJECT</i>
9-10	<i>2008 EARTH DAY EVENT, PRAIRIE STUDENTS REVEAL NATURE PROJECT TO U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE.</i>
11	<i>TIPS ON MAINTAINING AN EFFECTIVE NETWORK</i>
12	<i>JAMES R. AYRES, SAYS GOODBYE AND THANKS!</i>
13	<i>2008 MINNESOTA BUFFALO ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE</i>
14	<i>BIG STONE COUNTY GRAZING TOUR A SUCCESS</i>
15-16	<i>CONSERVATION CONNECTIONS, SAVING LIVES BY PLANTING TREES</i>
17	<i>A STRANGE CULT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA - SOIL SCIENTISTS</i>
18	<i>CRP WETLANDS UTILIZED FOR EDUCATION</i>
19	<i>10TH ANNUAL WOMEN'S AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE</i>
20	<i>DID YOU KNOW?</i>
21-22	<i>OUTREACH TO IMMIGRANT AND MINORITY PRODUCERS</i>
23	<i>WORKING AGRICULTURAL LANDS PROVIDE WILDLIFE HABITAT</i>
24	<i>CIVIL SERVANTS OF THE YEAR!</i>
25	<i>JOHN XIONG ACCEPTS THE ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER PROGRAM MANAGER POSITION, GRANDMA'S MARATHON FINISHERS!</i>
25-40	<i>AREA REPORTS</i>
	<i>NEXT ISSUE OF CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS SEPTEMBER 12, 2008</i>

# Lake Winnibigoshish Shoreline Stabilization Project

By: Ginger Kopp, State Staff Forester

Mike Oja, District Conservationist, Grand Rapids

It takes both engineering and vegetation to mitigate wave energy, and reduce wind and water erosion on severely eroded lakeshore banks. The joining of engineering and vegetation is called bioengineering. One of the first bioengineered projects in Minnesota occurred on Lake Winnibigoshish.

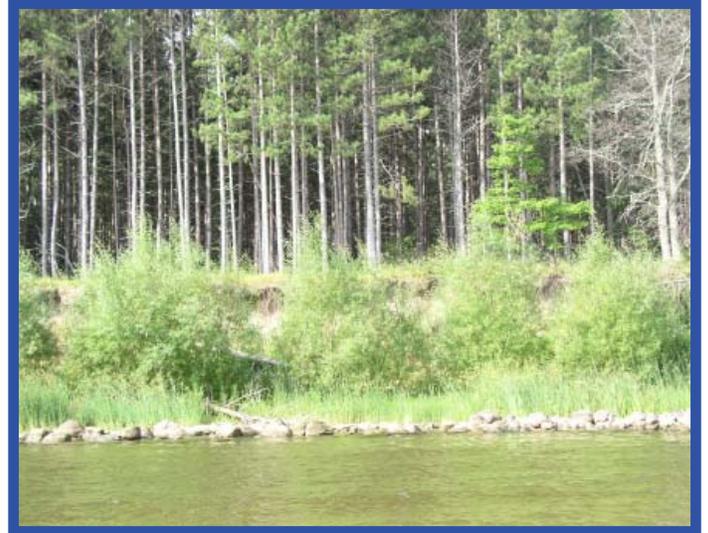
Lake Winnibigoshish (Lake "Winnie" to its inhabitants) is a man-made reservoir created after the Army Corp of Engineers installed a timber dam in 1881, replaced by a concrete dam in 1899, near where the lake outlets at the Mississippi River. The dam controls runoff from a drainage area of 1,442 square miles. Lake Winnie is 67,000 acres in size and has 141 miles of shoreline. Since its creation, unfortunate consequences from the dam can be seen on the lakeshore. When strong winds blow across the lake, large waves crash against the sandy banks destabilizing the shoreline, destroying vegetation and creating unstable vertical walls.

On parts of the southwestern shore of Lake Winnie, an area under USFS - Chippewa National Forest ownership, severe bank erosion occurred due to high winds, aggressive waves, and nearly vertical sandy banks. In 1997 the USFS installed a boulder rip-rap with a cobble fill in front of the eroding banks. This design reduced the wave energy and scouring by sands attacking the unstable banks. However, from the steep vertical banks, wind and runoff continued to eat away at the steeply sloped banks. In 1997, a shoreline restoration project team consisting of Mike Oja, District Conservationist, Grand Rapids and Willie Pehling (ret.), Soil Conservation Technician, NRCS Walker; Al Waller (ret.) of Itasca SWCD and Chantel Cook, Nancy Salminen and Millie Baird of USFS, took on the task of stabilizing this section of Lake Winnie.

The engineered part of the project, the boulder rip-rap and cobble fill took the brunt of the wave action. Once the wave forces were moderated, vegetation, the biology part of the project, could now be planted to further stabilize the vertical banks. First, mature trees along the vertical banks were cut down to keep them from tipping over continuing bank destabilization. It is "commonly known" that trees and shrubs stabilize a riverbank or lake shore. However, flooding, strong currents and forceful waves can overcome inherent soil strength and undermine the roots that hold bank erosion in check. The sandy soils around the banks of Lake Winnie are vulnerable to wind and water erosion without vegetation to hold them in place. Hence a bioengineer design is needed where boulders and cobbles are used to mitigate wave energy while vegetation keeps windblown soil and runoff water from further eroding the banks.

Mature trees on top of the vertical banks were cut down to alleviate the gravitational weight of the trunks. Then live stakes of four species of native willows and a dogwood were planted between the cobble fill and the toe of the bank. This was not an easy task. An iron bar was used to form 3 inch diameter holes three feet deep spaced 8 to 10 feet apart into the soil substrate, and the 4-foot live stakes quickly planted before the holes filled in.

Native willow species used were black, sandbar, Streamco and Bebbs and came from local sources; the dogwood was redosier.



**Bioengineering with boulders, cobbles and vegetation reduces wave energy and stabilizes eroding shores of Lake Winnie.**



**The willows on the left side of the photo show how they protect the steep banks from eroding compared with the right side of this photo where no willows were planted.**

Streamco willow came from the old Grand Rapids Field Evaluation Planting (FEP). The other willows and the dogwood were harvested in Cass and Itasca Counties. Although the dogwood stakes failed, the willows thrived. The larger black willows in particular have done their job in reducing sloughing of the sandy soil. The shrub willows added wildlife value, created a mid-canopy to the beach woodland, and softened the look of the rip-rap. In 1998 and 1999 the USFS planted bare-root white cedar and tamarack seedlings from DNR for added biodiversity and wildlife value. The stabilized "rock beach" created by the cobble fill allowed bullrush to naturally settle in further anchoring the project area and adding low canopy layer to the woodland beach.



**July 1997 Sandbar willow live stakes planted in the toe slope behind the cobble fill and in front of the vertical banks.**

The success of the bioengineered project relied on an important concept; rock or vegetation alone will not stabilize severely eroding banks where wind and water erosion occurs from both lake and land. The project leaders also learned that when using live stakes, fascines or waddles the best time to harvest and install these devices is pre-bud (break) in the spring. Good planning is essential for correct timing because the window to harvest in the spring may be as short as two weeks.

This type of bioengineering is widely accepted and practiced today most notably on Leech Lake. Whenever strong winds, forceful waves, runoff and soil erosion combine to wreak havoc on shorelines and compromise water quality, the right combination of rocks and vegetation can be an effective and attractive way to improve these resource concerns.



**July 2005 Bullrush naturally moved into the cobble fill between the rock riprap and the willow plantings creating a soft edge.**



**April 2008 Eleven year old black willow stakes have grown to heights up to 30 feet. The shoreline behind the willows has seen considerably less erosion.**

# Minnesota City Conservation Partner event

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

As part of the NRCS national campaign entitled "Conservation, Our Purpose, Our Passion," Minnesota NRCS held a Conservation Partner event in Minnesota City on Wednesday, June 19, 2008. The event brought together conservation partners who had contributed to the successful completion of the Garvin Brook emergency stabilization project that had been constructed and which saved a number of homes within the city. This project was completed due to the heavy rainfall that was received on August 19, 2007. The rain tore apart the side bank of Garvin Brook and threatened the loss of 11 homes.

Sue Glende, District Conservationist from the Lewiston, MN field office served as the moderator for the event. About 45 local, state and federal agencies attended the short program which explained how they as a partner were involved in this Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) effort. None of the work that was accomplished at Garvin Brook could have taken place without the combined effort of the conservation partnership.



William Hunt, State Conservationist for MN NRCS said that this event was a way of having NRCS recognize others for the work that was accomplished in Minnesota City. "It's amazing how much you can get done if you don't worry about who gets the credit!" The results here occurred because of team work. Hunt indicated he was proud of what NRCS and our private, state and other federal partners accomplished in such a short period of time.

Minnesota City Mayor, Don O'Neil said "NRCS responded in just a few days of the August 19th rain event and provided the city with results they need to fix the situation." Minnesota City residents appreciated the help that NRCS did for the city said O'Neil.

## **William Hunt Minnesota State Conservationist and Jerry Martell, mayor of Hokah.**

944 cubic yards of rock, 9,894 cubic yards of sand, 3,904 cubic yards of earth fill, 12,865 tons of rock riprap and 10,212 square yards of woven mesh lining. Three-quarters of the money for this project came from the NRCS' EWP and the balance of the funding came from the MN Board of Soil and Water Resources.

Rudy Spitzer, Winona SWCD board chair expressed his appreciation for the conservation partners working together. It all comes together when we do what you can to work with others said Spitzer.

Following the Minnesota City partner event, the Minnesota NRCS leadership team participated in a conservation tour of Winona and Houston County, MN. A grazing operation at the Art Thicke farm and more EWP projects in Hokah, MN were viewed.

The stabilization project at Garvin Brook in Minnesota City utilized 1,500 square feet of turf reinforcement, 4,520 cubic yards of common excavation,



**Back row: Rudie Spitzer, Mark Kunz, State representative Steve Drazkowski, John Jaschke, John Brach, Doug Christianson, Daryl Buck, Elizabeth Oolman, and Scott Johnson**

**Front row: Mary Kels, John Nicholson, Mayor Don O'Neil, Tim Terril, and William Hunt**

# Ten public agencies join forces in Organic Memorandum of Understanding

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

A group of state and federal agencies their commitment to Minnesota's organic agricultural industry on May 28, 2008 with the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in St. Paul. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) joined nine other state and federal agencies and the University of Minnesota in pledging support of this expanding industry.

In the MOU, agency heads agreed to share organic information and resources; encourage and support organic research, demonstrations, and field days to showcase production practices, conservation measures and economic performance.



**John Beckwith USDA/NRCS signs agreement**

In 2003, five Minnesota agencies formed the first state-level organic MOU in the nation. Today's ceremony renews the commitment and doubles the number of signatories. Additional, state, federal and tribal agencies and publicly-funded institutions of higher learning can join the partnership at any time by submitting a joining statement to the Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture.

MDA Commissioner Gene Hugoson said Minnesota has been a leader in the organic industry and the signing of the MOU will increase the impact of each agency's organic programs and foster innovative partnerships in future efforts.

Organic agriculture is an important and growing part of Minnesota's farm and food economy. The partners that signed this MOU want to work together in order to help Minnesota farmer, Minnesota-based business enterprises, and Minnesota consumers make the most of the opportunities presented by this rapidly growing sector."

The Minnesota Organic MOU signatories are: Gene Hugoson, MDA; Mark Holstein, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; Brad Moore, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency; Perry Aasness, USDA Farm Service Agency (MN); William Hunt, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (MN); Craig Rice USDA Risk Management Agency (MN); Steve Wenzel, USDA Rural Development (MN); Bev Durgan University of Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station and University of Minnesota Extension; and Al Levine, University of Minnesota College of Agricultural, Food and Natural Resources.



**MOU partners from left to right, back row: Al Levine, UofM CFANS; Gene Hugoson, MDA; John Beckwith USDA/NRCS; Mike Schmidt, UofM Extension; Perry Aasness, FSA; Mark Holsten, DNR. Front row: Steve Wenzel, USDA Rural Development; Duane Voy, USDA Risk Management Agency and Brad Moore, PCA.**

# Packages of Encouragement

By: Area 5 Marshall

Area 5 recently added another soldier to the "Packages" campaign, namely, Sergeant Scott Rohloff. Scott is the nephew of Mr. Rich Giles, Water Quality Specialist, in the Redwood Falls Field Office. The Packages of Encouragement campaign isn't about Area 5 or our employees, rather it's about taking the time to care for folks that we know who are serving abroad in places like Iraq.

Additional Packages of Encouragement will be sent to Corporal Wagner and Sergeant Rohloff by mid May, just in time for Memorial Day. To commemorate this event Mr. Paul Bridgland constructed a shadow box for the NRCS area office in Marshall, MN. The box contains a United States Flag that was flown over Baghdad as well as other service memorabilia. The items were sent to the area office by Technical Sergeant Cindy Wittnebel. Cindy is the daughter-in-law of Terry Wittnebel with the Lac Qui Parle SWCD and a recent "Packages" soldier recipient.



A shadow box for the NRCS area office in Marshall

## SGT. SCOTT ROHLOFF

**Date Arrived in Iraq:**  
**Job Duty: Communications**  
**Unit: 2nd SBCT, 25th ID**  
**B1-141N BN #6260**

Scott is the nephew of Rich Giles, NRCS Water Quality Specialist  
Redwood Falls FO

**Hometown: Liberal, Kansas**  
**Family: Fiancée - Melanie**

**Suggested Items: Crayons, Pencils, Coloring Books, School Supplies.**

**Scott's Address: SGT. Rohloff, Scott,**  
**2nd SBCT, 25th ID**  
**B1-141N BN #6260**  
**APO AE 09378**



# 75th Anniversary of the Coon Creek Demonstration Project

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

The Coon Creek Watershed Project is the first large scale erosion control demonstration project in the nation. A celebration of this milestone achievement was held at the American Legion in Coon Valley, WI on April 25, 2008. Area, state and Federal law makers and conservation officials came together to pay special tribute to the farm families who adopted conservation farming methods.

The Coon Valley area was selected in 1933 to establish a pattern of land use now found throughout the Midwest. Conservation practices established at that time focused on tree planting, fencing of woodlands, pasture seeding, and fertilization. What started in Coon Valley over 75 years ago did make a difference!



The Program celebration shared the passion people have for the Coon Creek Demonstration Project. Although it rained during the demonstration the attendees' enthusiasm and passion was not diminished for the program. If anything, the rain demonstrated the conservation practices applied in the past, still work and continue to make a difference in Coon Valley, Wisconsin.

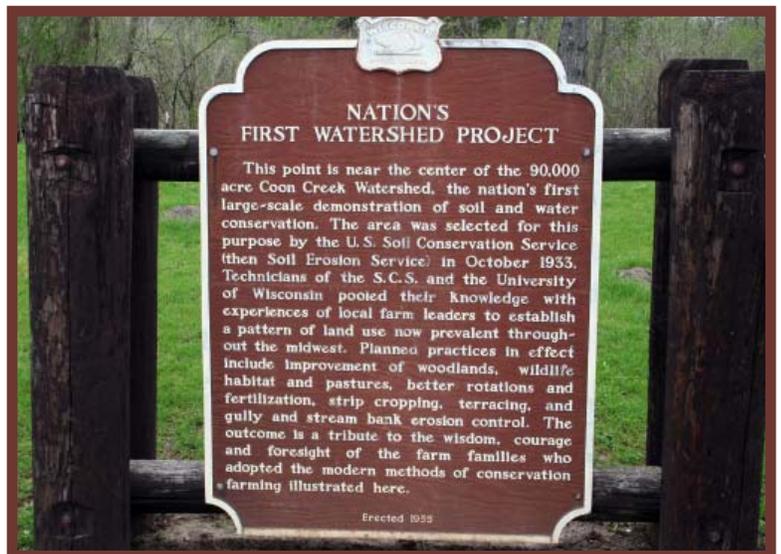
Arlen Lancaster, the 13th Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provided the keynote address at the event. The Chief noted that "together we were achieving healthy land results." Chief Lancaster further stated that in every state, producers are voluntarily making conservation happen. It is here in Coon Valley where the giants of conservation started the well-known conservation movement. People such as HH Bennett and Aldo Leopold changed the course of American history, by the actions and results that occurred in this community.

Numerous partners made the Coon Creek watershed conservation effort a success, including the University of Wisconsin, Soil Erosion Service, SCS, NRCS, Land Grant Universities, just to name a few. These groups worked hand in hand with the local farmers and made conservation happen! Mel Cohee crafted the Coon Creek Watershed project idea, good conservation equals good economics!

Landowners today have complex decisions to make during some rather dynamic times. A debt of gratitude is owed to the early landowners of Coon Creek as the Chief reminded us "Conservation on the ground is a true measure of our success. Partnerships with others expanded NRCS's ability to provide technical assistance.

William Hunt, State Conservationist, also served as a presenter. Mr. Hunt said the rain we had for this celebration was fitting. Old lessons from the past were re-learned and it was proven that the Watershed approach discussed 75 years ago does work. Hunt said the real heroes in this pilot watershed are the local landowners in Coon Valley. The conservation practices that were installed are still working and the locally led approach made a difference in getting results accomplished on the landscape.

Sam Skemp, Vernon County District Conservationist, shared his experience with the August, 2007 rain event. Vernon County experienced 10-15 inches of rain within a 16 hour period. Skemp became involved locally in the assessment of damage that occurred in his county and drove home how very important all of the work he did for NRCS. Skemp said "we need to keep doing the good that we have been doing." The conservation application that we achieved in the past has made a difference.



The event's festivities concluded by the Gazebo where students from the local Coon Valley Elementary School sang habitat songs and participated in a ceremonial tree planting ceremony with NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster and WI NRCS State Conservationist, Pat Leavenworth.



The Waite Park NRCS, SWCD and JPA employees celebrated the 38th Anniversary of Earth Day on Tuesday April 22. The celebration started with an afternoon staff retreat where employees learned the great history of Stearns SWCD from Manager Dennis Fuchs. Healthy snacks were provided courtesy of Mark Lefebvre, SWCD wellness coordinator. This got everyone geared up for the main event of the day which was participating in the Adopt-A-Highway Program sponsored by the MN Department of Transportation. The Stearns County staff has committed to biannually cleaning up a 2 mile stretch of road along CSAH 8 and Stearns County Road 148 near Marty, MN for a minimum of 2 years. This is a great activity to recruit Earth Team Volunteers and to get together with co-workers outside of work.



## Prairie students reveal nature project to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Prairie Elementary School in Worthington was having troubles establishing vegetative cover on a nine acre desilting basin located on their property. The desilting basin handles runoff from the school, parking lots, playgrounds and open areas totaling over 60 acres. Erosion was occurring on numerous locations including the outlet channels and along the slopes of the basin. The desilting basin outlets into Okabena Lake, a major attraction of the city of Worthington.

Working with Nobles SWCD, Pheasants Forever and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service we obtained funding and technical assistance to convert the area to a combination of native prairie, tree plantings, and a shallow wildlife pond. The channels will be stabilized using cedar logs and native vegetation. The site will serve as a water filtering system for runoff from the school and as an outdoor learning area for the students. A butterfly garden will be established next to the school as part of the project.



An aerial view of the project

## Prairie students reveal nature project to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Students in Judy Heitkamp’s fourth-grade class at Prairie elementary excitedly showed off a tiny flower Monday afternoon that was emerging from seeds planted just one week ago.

The flowers there are six different varieties – will eventually be planted in a soon-to-be developed butterfly garden in front of the windows of the school library. The project was made possible with funding from the Partners for Fish and Wildlife, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Nobles County Soil and Water Conservation District.

On Monday, Robyn Thorson, regional director for USFWS, was in Worthington to see the project firsthand. Thorson, who oversees USFWS efforts in eight states in the Upper Midwest, said the work taking place at Prairie elementary is significant. In addition to the butterfly garden, nine acres of the school property will be developed into restored prairie and a small pond. The work will have a positive impact on water quality, as it will help filter runoff before it gets into Lake Okabena.



“We’re excited about this,” Thorson said. “Prairie restoration is part of the heritage of this region.” That the work is taking place at Prairie Elementary is even more important. “We get excited ... when we can help young people get connected with the natural world,” Thorson said. Education was a major component in funding the prairie restoration project and butterfly garden.



“I really have to compliment the school, NRCS and the SWCD, and with the USFWS, we bring the expertise, but for the community and school to care about this, it’s huge,” she said.

Plants started inside Heitkamp’s classroom include gold yarrow, butterfly weed, black-eyed Susan, prairie blazing star, wild bergamot, marshmallow milkweed and New England aster. Eventually, some of the plants will be transplanted into the prairie wetland on the north side of the school. They will be joined there by plants being reared inside the greenhouse at Worthington high School.

In addition to showing Thorson where the butterfly garden will be established, fourth-graders Katie Rogers, Selena Carranza, Noah DeYonge and Alexi Luft helped plant a tree in recognition of both Earth Day, which is today, and Arbor Day, which is celebrated on Friday.

*This article is printed with permission from Julie Buntjer, reporter with the Worthington Daily Globe.*

## Tips on Maintaining an Effective Network

Networking involves interactions among people in an effort to build rapport and trust. You need to invest your time in order to gain benefits from a network. Remember, the heart of networking is awareness, communication, and mutual benefits.

1. Network with everyone all of the time.
2. Don't neglect your existing networks.
3. Seek out the most useful contacts.
4. Join professional associations, civic groups, or other local groups and devote time and energy to them.
5. Make sure the group is the right organization for you.
6. Follow up, follow up, follow up!
7. Develop or distribute informational pamphlets that you think will be of interest.
8. Get on newsletter distribution lists.
9. Create your own newsletter.
10. Keep in touch by e-mail and other methods. Don't just contact people when you need something.
11. Share information with others in your network. Consider exchanging reports, announcements, brochures, books, tapes, or videos with others in your network.
12. Offer your services, attend, co-sponsor, and sponsor conferences, workshops, seminars, lectures, field days, and annual meetings.
13. Present papers or give presentations to traditional and non-traditional customers.
14. Read local, as well as national and international newspapers, and journals. Many key individuals are discovered and then contacted through local publications.
15. Develop joint training opportunities or projects.
16. Keep your message focused and upbeat.
17. Say "thank you"! An e-mail message works, but a hand-written note of thanks is more effective.

ASSISTANT STATE CONSERVATIONIST

# JAMES R. AYRES, SAYS GOODBYE AND THANKS!

*When a new employee begins their career with NRCS, looking ahead and thinking about retirement seems like such a long, long trip. Once you get to the other end of that trip, however, looking back on it seems like such a short, sweet ride. The two greatest things about the ride are being able to help private landowners put conservation on the land and doing it with the assistance of a diverse group of co-workers that, over time, become your very own NRCS family. It is with mixed feelings that I say goodbye to a job and career that I have lived and loved for over 30 years, and to my many co-workers that I will sorely miss. After all, it has been the people, all of you that are reading this now, that have helped make the ride so sweet! Thank you for your patience, your support and most importantly, your friendship.*

*As I look forward to and move on to new endeavors, fishing, hunting, wine making and maybe some local politics, I take a storehouse of fond memories with me. Thank you for helping create those memories and for shaping and sharing my sweet ride!*

James R. Ayres, ASTC(FO)  
Fergus Falls, MN



Jim attended the WesMin RC&D Meeting on Weds., April 9th. Jim and Lyle Hovland, WesMin RC&D President Celebrate Jim's retirement!



A surprise cake at the meeting in honor of Jim Ayres' retirement. Jim had his cake and ate it too! Congratulations Jim!

# 2008 Minnesota Buffalo Association Annual Conference

Things are looking up for the bison industry. In fact one can say the industry is doing too good as demand is threatening to overtake supply. The bison industry has come a long way since the collapse years of the early 2000's. A determined cohesive group of producers and bison enthusiasts get together once a year for the Minnesota Buffalo Association's Annual Conference to discuss, among other things, bison production. The 2008 Minnesota Buffalo Association Annual Conference was held in Walker at the Northern Lights Casino and Hotel Event Center on Friday April 4th and Saturday April 5th (hosted by Dave and Pam Johnson of Nevis).

I was contacted last fall to be the keynote speaker prior to the Saturday luncheon. Not knowing what I was getting myself into made me take a closer look at an industry that was known for its struggles just a few years ago. I found myself pleasantly surprised to learn the industry is thriving.



**Mark Hayek NW Regional Grazing Specialist describing watering systems in the afternoon breakout sessions**

parian Areas). Bison producers were eager to learn about grazing systems, how to install them, how to manage them, and where to go to receive additional assistance. Also, the audience had their pasture and grazing questions answered as John and I presented our material. Learning was not a one way street as John put it, "We (Mark and I) are here to learn as much as you (the audience) since bison seem to have their own unique needs and circumstances."

Gail Griffin the Executive Director of the Minnesota Buffalo Association was very enthusiastic and impressed with the preparation and the attention to detail NRCS puts into their presentations. Dale Ringsdorf raises bison in Becker County (and will host the 2009 annual conference in Detroit Lakes and commented on how tailored the presenters were in relating to bison operations. Well, Dale, I can certainly say that John and I weren't the only ones who, by the end of the conference, walked away impressed and grateful for what we learned. Thanks for the invitation and hospitality to the Minnesota Buffalo Association and its members. I hope NRCS can be a part of your conference next year!

The title of my keynote address was: Perspectives on Conservation, Bison Production, and Globalization: A View into the Future. As I made my way through the presentation that morning I began to realize bison producers wanted to not only hear more about what the future holds for their industry, but also conservation issues relating to bison production.

After Saturday's luncheon John Zinn and I put on 3 concurrent 1 hour breakout sessions: Planning a Grazing System for Bison, Forage Selection for Bison Producers, and Managing Sensitive Areas (Wetlands, Woodlands, and Ri-



**John Zinn MN State Grazing Specialist describing how to plan a grazing system for bison.**

# Big Stone County Grazing Tour A Success

By: Krecia Leddy, District Conservationist

The first ever Big Stone County Grazing Tour planned by the Ortonville NRCS was held on Tuesday, June 17th. Sunny warm weather contributed to a great turnout of 75 participants. The tour attracted producers from Big Stone, Traverse, LacQuiParle, Chippewa, McCloud, Pope, Yellow Medicine, Swift, and Lyon Counties in Minnesota. In addition, agency representatives from Minnesota NRCS, South Dakota NRCS, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Minnesota DNR, and Prairie Country RC&D Council participated in the tour.

Participants spent the morning portion of the tour visiting with producers and agency personnel. The first stop on the tour was north of Odessa with Craig Anderson and Justin Bakeberg in a pasture along the Stony Run Creek. Craig discussed his objectives for enrolling in the Grassland Reserve Program with NRCS and Justin shared his plan for cross-fencing and water developments through the EQIP

program. The next stop was at the Hillman Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) along US HWY 12 where J.B. Bright, Wildlife Refuge Specialist with USFWS, discussed plant identification and plants unique response to management whether it be grazing, prescribed burning, or haying. He discussed that producers have the option of working with USFWS to either hay or graze WPA's and that he works with them to set up a management strategy. Many different native grasses and forbs were marked for participants to identify. Participants were given a Plant ID Book and given an opportunity to identify over 25 plants marked. The tour then made a stop to view Mark Rethke's grazing system east of Odessa. Mark recently installed a 6 pasture rotational grazing system and dugout ponds for grazing. The final morning stop was at the Rick Wilkening farmsite near Correll. Rick installed his rotational grazing system in 2005 which consisted of cross-fencing, a pond, and a pipeline and tank watering system. Rick

has seen a great improvement in the utilization of his grass and was able to increase his carrying capacity. He is in the process of fencing a WPA to have additional forage to graze.

The noon meal was hosted at the Rick Wilkening farmsite and the Midwest Cattleman's Association grilled burgers. The afternoon session was an educational session which included Ryon Walker, Beef Cow/Calf Specialist, with the University of Minnesota Beef Team and he spoke on "Preparing Your Calves for Market". He included tips for backgrounding your calves, and how to extend your grazing season by stockpiling forage and leaving windrows of forage for further grazing into the fall and winter. Mark Streich, Livestock Production Specialist with Land 'O Lakes/Purina Feeds spoke on "Pasture Fly Control". He demonstrated some useful products that can help decrease the amount of flies in your cow herd and improve herd health. Lance Smith, Grazing Specialist with NRCS, demonstrated pipeline fittings and proper size of a pipeline and showed how to use the pasture sticks which were handed out to each participant. The pasture sticks can be a tool to determine when to rotate your cattle based on a height assessment of the grass. The day concluded with Dave Gamez and Dwain Christophersen from the Gallagher Fencing Company giving a fencing clinic. They explained the benefits of high tensile electric fence and provided participants an opportunity to see a segment of fence that was installed. Participants also got an opportunity to tie electric fence.

The Big Stone Grazing Tour received financial support from the Big Stone County Pheasants Forever Chapter, and a grant through the Prairie Country RC&D, MN Association of RC&D Councils and the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative.



# CONSERVATION

# CONNECTIONS

DALBO COUPLE AGREES TO PLANT FIRST LIVING SNOW FENCE IN REGION, HOPING TO MAKE HIGHWAY 47 A LITTLE SAFER IN THE WINTER.

## SAVING LIVES BY PLANTING TREES

Permission

by Tesha M. Christensen

STAR Assistant Editor

Highway 47 north of Dalbo will get a little safer next winter.

This spring, Beverly and Roger Larsen will plant 2,020 shrubs and trees to create a living snow fence.

It is the first such fence in Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) District 3, which stretches over 13 counties from Isanti County to Brainerd.

The Larsens hope the fence will cut down on how much snow drifts across the open fields and covers the highway near their home. They believe the road will become safer because of the fence. Roger also figures he'll have fewer people to help out of the ditch when the snow fence is there.

"After you get to a certain age, you appreciate trees a little more than when you're 30 and trying to plant every acre," noted Roger.

"I think we need to do things like this to protect the environment and keep nature with us," said Beverly, a retired Ogilvie sixth-grade teacher.

"Along the highway it should help with safety.

"I hope we can do more."

Living fences cut down on crashes

The living fence will encompass 14.2 acres. It will stretch 175 feet from 401st/County Road 16 north to County Road 4.

First there will be two rows of shrubs spaced four feet apart. After a gap of 20 feet, there will be a row of Norway Spruce trees. Between the trees and the shrubs will be native plants such as Indian Grass, Big

Bluestem, Western Wheatgrass, Prairie Cordgrass, Switchgrass and Yellow Coneflower.

Redosier Dogwood shrubs are expected to reach eight feet when fully grown, the Highbush Cranberry 10 feet.

While the Larsens are expected to plant the shrubs and trees, they will have help from the Isanti Soil and Water Conservation District.

The couple will pay for the plants, and then be reimbursed.

The land upon which the snow fence sits still belongs to the Larsens, who will be responsible for maintaining the fence. Towards that end, they will receive rental payments each year.



One will come from MnDOT and the other from the USDA FSA Conservation Reserve Program each year during the 15 years of the agreement. This rate is based on the soil type, and averages about \$44 an acre in Isanti County.

There are 29 living snow fences in the state covering 10 miles. Most are located along state highways in the southwest, although there are two along Interstate 35 in northern Chisago County. The first was planted in 2002.

“It does make a huge difference,” noted Pat Wallin of MnDOT. There are hundreds of accidents each year along Interstate 94, many attributed to blowing wind and bad weather conditions. When reviewing crash data, she discovered that in the area with the snow fence, there had been no crashes for two years.

#### Conservationists at heart:

The Larsens moved from Freeborn County to three miles north of Dalbo to be dairy farmers in 1972. They sold the herd, stopped planting crops, and then built an energy-efficient berm home in the woods in 1996. An interest in repairing an existing native grass waterway brought Roger into the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Service Center last year. Roger discussed his options with Mary Monte, District Conservationist for Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

After traipsing over their fields last spring, Monte suggested the Larsens consider a snow fence.

In the past, the Larsens have planted trees, practiced conservation tillage, tried ridge till (which didn't work well on their land) and chisel plowed. Instead of growing grass and mowing in front of their home, Beverly nurtures a wild flower garden.

Yet neither would label themselves conservationists.

#### Result of partnership:

The Larsens' snow fence is the combined result of several agencies, including MnDOT, Isanti County Soil and Water Conservation District, United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Representatives from all agencies were on hand when the paperwork was signed on Tuesday, March 18, 2008.

“This is an example of partnerships that can work together for the common good,” noted Minnesota Farm Service Agency State Executive Director Perry Aasness.

The living snow fence will “save time and money and lives,” according to FSA Program Specialist Greg Anderson.

Turning to the Larsens he added, “We hope that what you did will inspire others to do the same.”

“We're hoping other people will do it,” agreed Beverly.



# A STRANGE CULT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

By: T. H. Cooper

The number of followers in this cult is usually 10 to 20 at any one meetings, but there may be anywhere from 24 to 40 followers. One of the strange things about this sect, and this alone makes it very unique, is that there are apparently members throughout the United States. As a whole, its members seem to be of at least average intelligence and are not striking in appearance. Their mode of dress, while sometimes quite shabby, is very ordinary. They do carry about their persons some very strange objects. Perhaps these are their fetishes! These objects are: knives, bottles containing acid or water, small magnifying lenses, instruments for looking up and down slopes, and other unique paraphernalia.



The high priest points to the altar.

The general appearance of the rites they perform suggest some pagan worship. One might happen onto a group in a pasture or field or forest, sometimes in remote vastness or near towns. The rites are nearly unbelievable when first observed. It seems that a hole in the ground, varying in diameter from a few inches to a few feet and in depth again from a few inches to a few feet, forms a kind of altar. Very often, a cut in a road bank is also used. At the beginning of the rites, one of the worshipers who seems to be the high priest clears away the altar, sometimes pointing to certain locations on the altar. After a short period, the group divides into 3 or 4 groups to move in closer for worship. Samples from the altar, or as it is called by some "The profile" are collected in boxes to be further worshiped when they can no longer get close to the altar. In some cases, the profile is preserved for future worship and they are then called monoliths.

The worshipers fall upon the objects and literally tear them to pieces. They take bits of earth from the holy body they collected at the altar and crush them with their hands. They pinch it and match it with colored objects from their holy book. Often they go back to the altar to prod it with knives or to measure it with tapes. After this part of the rite has been completed, they begin to mumble a strange incomprehensible language. Some say they understand each other, but this seems unlikely to the casual observer.

At times, disagreement breaks out among the ranks of the worshipers. Usually the leader is called in to settle these disputes. Often strange geometric terms are used like weak, angular, blocky, and strong prisms. This is sometimes used right before the algebra is discussed of A, Bt, AC, CK, etc.

Near the end of the ritual, the leader often says something that resembles "mollic epipedon." This particular incantation seems to have some particular reverent significance as the lesser members always gape upon him with awe when those words are used.

After the profile is treated, spat upon, groped, crushed, cussed and discussed, the high priest may question the lesser members as to what "It" isn't. There seems to be a mystery in that they often know what "It" isn't but not what "It" is.

It might be mentioned that, as in all religious groups, there are usually one or two non-believers. They usually stand around telling jokes at the most inappropriate times, sometimes openly heckling the worshipers and sometimes picking up bits of plants and looking at them with an air of boredom. Often these followers in future months are the only repeaters that can be seen at the services. Apparently the others have taken their religion elsewhere.

# CRP WETLANDS UTILIZED FOR EDUCATION

By: Randy Schmiesing

Karl and Linda Retzlaff have found a great deal of satisfaction in preserving the natural beauty of their land in Stevens County, Minnesota. The Retzlaff's, who have a CRP contract, have found some new ways to continue to use their parcel and share their enjoyment with others!



Recently, Karl and Linda completed a large CRP wetland restoration which has now filled with water from snowmelt and spring rains. This timely moisture has allowed this wetland to be used as an outdoor environmental education class. Karl said "the children are having a great time seeing the swimming ducks, frogs and other species of wildlife in the wetland as they are leaning in this outdoor classroom." The Retzlaff family is continually managing their wetlands to control weeds and provide buffers to help control water quality and reduce erosion. Over the last few years, they have added to or maintained their windbreaks, left an area for a food plot as well as have planned buffers along lakes and ditches

Sharing their environmental and historical knowledge with others is something the Retzlaffs also take a lot of pride in. Karl and Linda have helped develop the 40-plus acre Scandia Woods Environmental Learning Lab (SWELL) on their land. SWELL teaches hundreds of area students each year about conservation, the environment and the history of the area.



The Retzlaffs lease the land SWELL sits on to the Morris Area and Cyrus school districts. Students from Morris Area Elementary, Cyrus Math Science and Technology, St Mary's and Hancock Elementary come to SWELL on a regular basis throughout the school year. This special area features 4 different biomes where students can learn about the aquatic, wetlands, prairie, and woods communities, all within the 40 acres. Students also learn about the history of the area, taking advantage of the fact that the area has several remnants, such as dugouts, from the first settlements in Stevens County.

The lab features nature trails with informational signs and printed trail guides, as well as a classroom overlooking a lake and wetland area on the Retzlaffs' property. The classroom is primitive, but is equipped with spotting scopes, binoculars, an entomology case, chalk boards, an herbarium, numerous books and other learning tools. Also part of SWELL, up the trail from the classroom, is a log cabin, moved from its original location 7 miles away. In recent years, the Retzlaffs and other volunteers have worked hard to rebuild and restore the cabin, chinking it and equipping it with period furnishings.



SWELL has a staff person (Ranee Hokanson), funded through the local water plan, who teaches students during various visits and organized environmental days throughout the year. SWELL also relies on volunteers to help with these environmental and historical lessons. Linda, who is an elementary teacher, has helped create several curricula for use at SWELL.

# 10TH ANNUAL WOMEN'S AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

By: Debe Walchuk, State Outreach Coordinator

The 10th Annual Women's Agricultural Leadership Conference was held Tuesday, April 8, 2008 at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Chaska, MN. The theme of the conference was "Agriculture 2008-Celebrating the Power of 10". This was the tenth annual conference. The conference was coordinated by members of the District 11 Agri-Women. Major sponsors of the conference were AgStar Financial Services and Minnesota Soybean Research & Promotion Council. The focus of the annual conference is on integral roles women play in agriculture. Approximately 125-150 people attended the conference.



**Conferences offered a choice of eleven breakout sessions.**

Your State Outreach Coordinator represented NRCS by serving on the conference planning committee, and conducted a breakout session at the conference titled: "Today's Opportunities: Assistance for Women Farmers through USDA-NRCS". The younger people pursuing agricultural business enterprises and careers networked with women already established in agriculture and learned about EQIP, CSP, WRP, WHIP, technical assistance, RC&D, Soil Survey, PMC, cultural resource protection, and Earth Team opportunities, and the emphasis NRCS places on ensuring equal

opportunities for women and the value to them of participating with the local work group processes and assuming leadership positions on the conservation-related boards and technical committees.

Questions and feedback received from the audience revealed that some participants were not aware of NRCS. Others were aware of NRCS but did not have a working knowledge of the products and services we offer in addition to the available technical assistance and conservation programs. For example, a member of the planning committee that attended the NRCS breakout session discussed her use of soil maps in her precision farming operation but did not know that the soil maps were a product of NRCS.



**Beginning a day of networking and learning.**



**District 11 Agri-women leader, Doris Mold, Ag Consultant, Ag Economist, farm co-owner/operator, and Chair of the USDA Advisory Committee on Ag Statistics.**

## HISTORIC CONSERVATION PHOTO



1947 -Joe Johnson farm pasture renovation. (District Tour)

*Photographer: E. Waldeen*

## DID YOU KNOW?

MINNESOTA HAS 11 FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBES IN MINNESOTA

THE OJIBWA BANDS OF MINNESOTA ARE:

GRAND PORTAGE  
BOIS FORTE  
FOND DU LAC  
MILLE LACS  
LEECH LAKE  
SANDY LAKE  
WHITE EARTH  
RED LAKE

SANDY LAKE IS SOMETIMES INCLUDED WITH MILLE LACS, BUT THEY ARE SEEKING THEIR OWN FEDERAL RECOGNITION.

THE DAKOTA ARE:

UPPER SIOUX  
LOWER SIOUX  
PRAIRIE ISLAND  
SHAKOPEE MDEWAKANTON

## 3RD MINORITY AND IMMIGRANT FARMING CONFERENCE

By: Debe Walchuck

On March 7th and 8th, NRCS participated in the 3rd Minority and Immigrant Farming Conference, held at the Black Bear Crossings, Como Lakeside Pavilion, St. Paul, at which the success and viability of small and beginning minority and immigrant farmers was promoted, and their special needs and interests were addressed.



NRCS was invited by the Minnesota Food Association and the Association for the Advancement of Hmong Women in Minnesota to partner with them on this year's conference, along with Heifer Project International, MN Dept. of Agriculture-MN Grown, Midtown Farmers' Market, National Agricultural Statistics Service, National Immigrant Farming Initiative, Farm Service Agency, University of MN Extension,

Renewing the Countryside, Land Stewardship Project, MN Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and AgStar. This partnership made it possible for many producers with limited financial resources to attend the two-day conference free of charge. Farmers, and representatives from each of the sponsors served on the conference planning committee.

Many of the conference attendees had limited proficiency of the English language so translation services were provided in six languages to meet the needs of the many of the Hmong, Laotian, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Burmese, Somali an, Ethiopian and Latino attendees. Approximately 90 farmers and 40 service providers to the farmers attended the conference. Did you know that immigrant farmers make up nearly half of the vendors at community farmers' markets? These are the producers the conference gathered together in an environment that offered a unique opportunity to effectively communicate, build rapport and establish trusting relationships.



“Translation services were provided in six languages to meet the needs of the many of the Hmong, Laotian, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Burmese, Somali an, Ethiopian and Latino attendees”

On Day 1, Bill Hunt, State Conservationist, and dignitaries of the other sponsoring agencies welcomed the conference participants. Pete Weikle, Area Resource Soil Scientist, Brooklyn Center, gave a presentation on differences in soil types and where information about soils can be found in order to gain an understanding of soil productivity.



The participants were encouraged to consider soil characteristics and productivity when selecting parcels of land for production of specific crops and for negotiating lease agreements and land purchases.



Many questions from the audience were generated by Pete's presentation which afforded the opportunity for Pete, Tim Wilson and John Nicholson, ASTC's (FO); and John Xiong, Cartographer, to address the group. Questions and answers covered the spectrum from how to obtain soil nutrient test results to career opportunities with NRCS.

On Day 2, the conference participants toured the equipment sheds on an organic vegetable farm and viewed approximately 20 small tractors with attached implements to learn their purpose and suitability for different needs.



Participants closely studied the NRCS exhibit images of the low tech, low cost irrigation practices featured on the exhibit and talked amongst each other about the image of a honey wagon and its role in nutrient management.



For more information about this conference please contact Debe Walchuk, State Outreach Coordinator. Debe can be reached at (218)-751-1942 or via email at: [debra.walchuk@mn.usda.gov](mailto:debra.walchuk@mn.usda.gov)

# WORKING AGRICULTURAL LANDS PROVIDE WILDLIFE HABITAT

By: Dennis Fuchs, Stearns SWCD administrator

The Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) sponsored a "Wildlife Habitat Management on Working Agricultural Lands" field day on Wednesday, June 25, 2008 from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. The field day was hosted by Chuck and Deb Uphoff, whose dairy farm is located near New Munich, MN. Chuck and Deb have implemented numerous best management practices on their farm. Currently, they are participating in the Conservation Security Program that rewards excellent farmers for their stewardship of natural resources.



**Chuck and Deb Uphoff, New Munich, MN, are standing by their MN Milk Producers Association's "5 Star" Environmental Quality Assurance sign. The voluntary program assists and recognizes dairy producers that achieve environmental excellence, including wildlife habitat quality and diversity.**

administrator, says "The benefits to wildlife habitat could be dramatic with the appropriate polices and incentives for farmers." Chuck added, "These working lands wildlife habitat provisions will become increasingly important with added pressure to bring additional acres into production."

All programs and services are available without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status.

Questions can be directed to Dennis J. Fuchs, administrator of the Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District at (320) 251-7800, extension 3.

Working lands include cropland and grazing land in production. Chuck said, "We all know the wildlife benefits of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program, and other easement-type programs. The goal of this field day is to increase the public's awareness of wildlife habitat enhancements in working lands programs, such as the Conservation Security Program." With the recent passage of the The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 otherwise known as the "farm bill", the Conservation Security Program is now called the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Over \$1 billion has been authorized for the CSP allowing the addition of millions of more acres. Dennis Fuchs, Stearns SWCD

## CIVIL SERVANTS OF THE YEAR!

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

The 31st Annual Civil Servant of the Year Awards Program took place on Friday, May 9, 2008 at the Hilton Hotel in Bloomington, Minnesota. This year, MN NRCS had 4 employees recognized at the Civil Servant of the Year Program; Contessa Garcia, Administrative Coordinator, St. Paul, MN; Willis Goll, Agricultural Engineer, Rochester, MN; Marvin Kunkel, Civil Engineering Technician, Mora, MN; and Thomas Neuenfeldt, Soil Data Quality Specialist, St. Paul, MN.



**Award winners: Willis Goll, Tessa Garcia, Marv Kunkel and Tom Neuenfeldt**

This recognition program offers an excellent opportunity for public recognition of Federal employees who have demonstrated outstanding performance on their job and/or within their community on a sustained basis.

**Tessa Garcia** is recognized for her expertise; working knowledge of Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) policies and procedures and execution of the agency's day-to-day administrative operations. She routinely leads by example motivating others towards achieving specific admin goals in support of USDA and NRCS Management Initiatives. She provided invaluable guidance and assistance to management, fellow employees and external customers while performing her primary duties or collateral duties as the Freedom of Information Act Officer, Leave Donor Program Coordinator, and previously as the Hispanics Special Emphasis

Program Manager. Tessa was instrumental in Minnesota's selection to host the 2007 National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees (NOPHNRCS) Annual Training Conference held in Bloomington, MN, and she also served as the Co-Chair of the Local Arrangements Committee for the actual conference.

**Willis Goll** provides quality engineering assistance to solve natural resource concerns for rural and urban citizens of southeast Minnesota. On Sunday morning August 19, 2007, Willis answered the call to action from local Rochester officials to immediately inspect the integrity of the seven (7) NRCS designed and constructed flood control structures protecting the city. This request following the devastating August rain that caused wide-spread flooding damage in 5 counties. The NRCS dams that Willis helped design and construct all performed as designed and saved lives in Rochester; but the call to action on Sunday morning was only the beginning. Since that time Mr. Goll has been an instrumental part of the NRCS engineering team that stabilized eroded banks from the storm and saved 20 homes and businesses in Minnesota City and the City of Hokah from tumbling down these same eroded banks into the river or the flood plain below. "NRCS is the only local, state or federal agency that delivered what they said they would after the storm," this according to the Mayor of Hokah where Willis served as the lead engineer for the Hokah efforts.

**Marv Kunkel** has served as the Civil Engineering Technician in Mora the past 12 years providing conservation engineering technical assistance to landowners in a 12 county area. He provides timely and economical designs of complex engineering water quality projects to farmers funded under the Farm Bill. Marv continues to improve professionally, including certification by the National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies. Marv provides excellent training to field office technicians. He was selected as instructor for a statewide conservation application training session of new employees. Marv serves as the engineering technician representative on the NRCS state GIS committee. Marv Kunkel is an outstanding member of the conservation team with his dedication to landowners, farmers, and co-workers on water and land stewardship.

**Tom Neuenfeldt's** dedication and willingness to apply his skills and give extra effort this last year were instrumental in maintaining a high quality soils program in Minnesota and throughout the Region 10 Major Land Resource Area. Projecting a positive and helpful attitude combined with outstanding technical and communication skills, Tom provided direction to others, stressed accountability, identified training needs, embraced new technologies, and provided timely oversight to several soil survey projects. He represents the NRCS and his profession in a highly complimentary manner in his contacts with all internal and external customers.

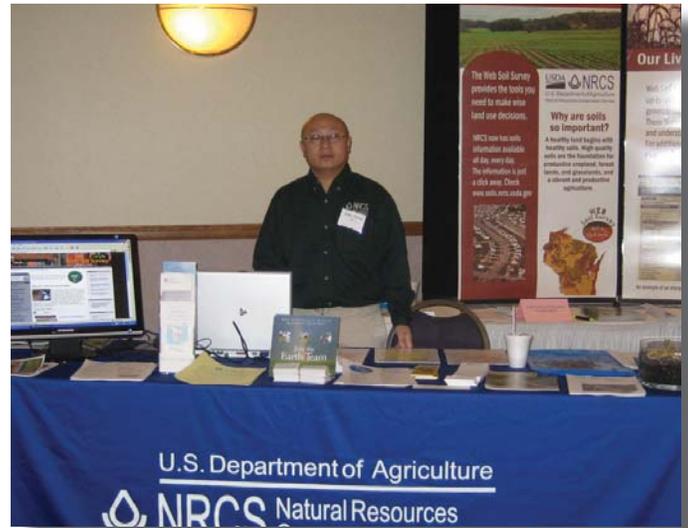
# John Xiong Accepts the Asian/Pacific Islander Program Manager Position

As a Hmong man of Asian descent and Geography major, I wasn't sure of my job opportunities. What would I be doing? I was majoring in a non-traditional field of study, not in education, business, human biology, or law. Is there work out there for me?

I never knew what the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) stood for until 2001 when I decided to volunteer with the (NRCS) in Madison, WI. After that, I was able to transfer to Minnesota. On March 3, 2008, I officially began my duties at the NRCS state office where I work and assist the Soils staff.

Experiences as the Asian Pacific Islander Program Manager  
I took on a collateral position as the Asian/Pacific Islander Program Manager, one of the Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM) for Wisconsin NRCS Civil Rights Committee under the leadership of Ms. Pat Leavenworth, WI State Conservationist.

When the collateral position of Asian/Pacific Islander Program Manager came up in Minnesota, I was prepared and assured of my qualifications. I knew that this was my chance to learn about the state of Minnesota and become involved in state NRCS mission. In May, I was happy to find out I was selected for the position. Shortly after that, I found myself assisting Cutrina Moreland, former API Program Manager, with the celebrating of the Asian Pacific Islander Month and ready for work. Now that I have more experience as an NRCS employee I am telling others about USDA-NRCS with my collateral duty.



**John Xiong**  
Asian/Pacific Islander Program Manager

## Grandma's Marathon Finishers!

By Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

The Grandma's Marathon was held in Duluth, Minnesota on Saturday, June 21. MN NRCS had 3 employees run the 26.2 mile run. Congratulations to Jim Jirik, Jason Sickmann and Bill Lorenzen. This year's field of 9,888 registered runners was the most ever registered. Out of this field of runners, 7,103 runners started and 6,759 runners that finished the race!

This year's cadre of runners, showcased runners from every state and 52 foreign countries.



L-R William Hunt, State Conservationist congratulates Bill Lorenzen, Biologist for finishing Grandma's Marathon in Duluth, Minnesota.

# AREA 1 REPORT

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

## 5th Annual Earth Day Event at Glacial Ridge

By: Greg Bengtson, NRCS Glacial Ridge Manager

The Glacial Ridge Project hosted its fifth annual Earth Day event. 200 students from Crookston and Red Lake Falls participated. There were six learning stations with hands on activities. The Minnesota Zoo's Zoomobile presented at the event and used live animals and audience participation to create an educational and entertaining environmental experience.

NRCS along with over 30 public and private partners are cooperating in the 28,000 acre Glacial Ridge Restoration Project – one of the Nation's largest wetland/tall grass prairie restoration projects – located in Minnesota's Northern Tall Grass Prairie Eco-region.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wetlands Reserve Program is the catalyst for the restoration efforts at Glacial Ridge.



**Judy Armstrong from the Minnesota Zoo with the students and a Bull Snake.**



**Students enjoying Earth Day!**

Several of the partners and volunteers assisted with making the 5th annual Earth Day event a success including Ducks Unlimited, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The West Polk Soil and Water Conservation District, The Nature Conservancy and NRCS.

I would like to thank the West Polk Soil and Water Conservation District for providing lunch for the presenters and The Nature Conservancy for sponsoring the Minnesota Zoomobile.

Earth Day is an ideal time to pause and reflect on the good work NRCS does to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

# AREA 1 REPORT

## HISTORIC CONSERVATION PHOTOS



1946 - Observational shelterbelt planting. Blue spruce, red cedar, Austrian pine. Roy Lhotka, Conservation Aid, holding rod.

*Photographer: Henry Wilson*



1946 - John E. Fogarty, owner of 25 acres marsh on which marsh management through level ditching was demonstrated, carries case of dynamite to be used in blasting ditch.

*Photographer: W. Anderson*

## PERSONNEL

Luke Klawitter, Soil Conservationist – Crookston FO, and wife Holly welcomed a baby boy to their family on Thursday, May 22, 2008. Baby William weighed in at 5 lbs 1 oz. Congratulations to Luke and Holly.

Dusty Jasken vacated the White Earth Tribal Liaison position to accept the District Conservationist position in the Mahnomen FO. Dusty started his new DC duties on 4/27/2008. Congratulations, Dusty.

Josh Bork, Soil Conservationist – Bemidji FO, was selected as the District Conservationist in Cambridge. Josh began his new duties on June 9, 2008. We wish you the best, Josh.

Colleen Oestreich, Giziibii RC&D Coordinator – Bemidji, was selected to lead Area 2 as the ASTC FO. Colleen reported to Fergus Falls on June 9, 2008. Best wishes, Colleen.

Justin Lindner, SCEP student, has reported to the Bagley FO for a summer of work. Justin is attending Bemidji State University and spent last summer working in the Foley FO. Welcome to Area 1, Justin.

## AREA 2 REPORT

**COLLEEN OESTREICH, ASTC(FO)  
FERGUS FALLS, MN**

### COLLEEN OESTREICH IS MAKING MINNESOTA NRCS HISTORY!

By: Lisa Buckner, FWPM

The Great State of Minnesota, under the leadership of State Conservationist William Hunt, continues to strive for excellence in leadership and diversity. Recently the first white Female Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (ASTC/FO) was selected. Colleen Oestreich is making Minnesota NRCS history!



**Colleen Oestreich**

Colleen has been working with USDA/Department of the Interior (DOI) for over 25 years. She began her career as a Soil Conservationist (SC) for the DOI in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. As a SC, Colleen worked on farm/pasture leases for Native Americans from the Lakota Tribe. She was an employee of the DOI for five years.

In 1987, Colleen began working for the Soil Conservation Service as a SC in Worthington, MN. She was a SC for just under 2 years before accepting a District Conservationist (DC) position in Redwood Falls, MN. She was a DC for approximately 3 years before taking on the role of Giziibii Resource Conservation & Development's Coordinator in 1993.

According to Colleen, training is essential. She says "It is up to the individual to pursue career development and self-growth. Employees need to be proactive and seek opportunities and training that strengthen their weaknesses".

Colleen went on to say "I believe that having a diverse team makes a stronger team and having different perspectives creates a better system. When you have more ideas coming to the table, you are usually able to work out a solution."

Leadership opportunities are also important. Colleen held the position of Federal Women's Program Manager (FWPM) alternate for 3 years and the FWPM position for 3 years. She encourages people to do co-lateral assignments. She says "It helps remove you from your comfort zone and broaden your experience."

Colleen and her husband of 24 years have two grown daughters attending college. She grew up in Chippewa Falls, WI and attended University Wisconsin at River Falls. She enjoys dog training, quilting and reading. Colleen began her position on June 8, 2008.

Congratulations Colleen!

## AREA 2 REPORT

### HISTORIC PHOTO



Semi-portable type sawmill using steam power, with gang edger attached. Note size logs being sawed, number of men operating the machine, and sawdust blower attachment. Logs being sawed for farm forestry cooperators for construction of hoghouse.

Photo by W. H. Lauer, July 1941

### PERSONNEL

**Sheila Carleton** was hired as a Soil Conservation Aid (WAE) in the Baxter Field Office.

**Wayne Krump** was hired as a Soil Conservation Aid (WAE) in the Breckenridge Field Office.

**Colleen Oestreich** was promoted to the ASTC(FO) position in the Fergus Falls Area Office.

**Amanda Smith**, Student Trainee (Engrg) was reassigned from the Moorhead Field Office to the Fergus Falls Area Office.

### AWARDS

**James Ayres** received a spring field jacket for serving on the Equipment Needs Committee for many years.

**Troy Baumgart** received a barn jacket for his outstanding work during the 2008 WHIP signup at the Perham FO.

**Mark Hayek** received a 3 in 1 coat for presenting a diversity of grazing/conservation related topics at the Minnesota Buffalo Association's Annual Education Conference held in Walker, Minnesota.

**Lenore Marken** received a 3 in 1 coat for dealing with the many intricate swampbuster violations in Area II including the three recent CW violations on the David Stock Farms.

**William Marken** received a 3 in 1 coat for developing the tour packet and maps for the State Pheasant Forever Annual Tour held in Otter Tail County.

**Mary Jane Reetz** received a Calendar/Clock for serving on the Equipment Needs Committee for many years.

**Dean Schmidt** received a 3 in 1 coat for assisting the WesMin RC&D Council in settling

the Attorney General's judgments brought against them by **Gary Brevier** and **Natalie Heckert** under the Food for Folk project during the past 1.5 years.

**Jennifer Tischer** received a 3 in 1 coat for assisting with the Area II FSA slide scanning efforts and completing Cass County, Crow Wing County, and half of Wilkin and Douglas Counties by scanning over 40,000 total slides.

# AREA 3 REPORT

**KEVIN DAW, ASTC(FO)  
DULUTH, MN**

## SOIL QUALITY TEST KIT USES

The three main uses of the kit:

- 1) Complete assessment of soil quality (run all tests). Develop a plan to enhance soil quality and incorporate it into the conservation plan.
- 2) Informal assessment only looks at specific soil properties by running the corresponding tests and also serves as an educational tool.
- 3) Quick assessment looks at only one or two problem areas where a test is run and a management solution is developed.

Soil quality is the capacity of a specific kind of soil to function within natural or managed ecosystem boundaries to sustain plant and animal productivity, maintain or enhance water and air quality, and support human health and habitation.



**Duane Munsterteiger, landowner, watches Mike Walczynski, Area Resource Soil Scientist collect a sample from the plow pan layer for bulk density analysis.**

Studies have shown that conventional tillage operations will degrade soil quality. Conservation tillage will sustain and, at times, degrade soil quality. To aggrade soil quality, the recommendation is to have a long term rotation with perennial small grains, manure management, and cover crops. The benefits of an aggrading system are: improve carbon sequestration, less fertilizer needed, increase nutrients, less nitrate leaching potential, less phosphorous loss, and increased yields.

Steve Haar, District Conservationist, Kanabec County, requested the assistance of the Area Resource

Soils vary naturally in their capacity to function; therefore, quality is specific to each kind of soil. This concept encompasses two distinct but interconnected parts: inherent quality and dynamic quality.

Inherent quality refers to the soil properties that have developed by climate, topography, vegetation, parent material, and time. These properties define soil types and how they are identified in the field.

Dynamic quality refers to changing nature of soil properties resulting from human use and management.

So, the question: Is your soil quality degrading, aggrading, or sustaining its current condition?

## AREA 3 REPORT

Soil Scientist who utilized the Soil Quality Kit to help a landowner who thought he had a compaction problem and was worried about yields.



Steve Haar, DC, and Donna Walters-Nelson, SCT, utilize the Soil Quality Kit for a possible compaction area in a pasture.

## PERSONNEL

**Danielle Evans**, GIS Specialist, State Office, was reassigned to the Duluth Soil Survey Office effective April 14, 2008. Welcome to Area 3, Danielle!

**Josh Bork**, Bemidji FO, was selected for the District Conservationist's position at the Cambridge FO, effective June 9. Welcome aboard, Josh!

**Jason Sickmann**, Area Resource Conservationist, was reassigned to the Area Program Specialist position effective May 12, 2008.

## OTHER NEWS

### Promotion

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

### Non-monetary Award

Danielle Evans for conducting the Soils Geospatial Workshop in March 2008.

David Wise for his contributions to the PMC Tribal Assistance Products project.

Kristy Baross, Michael Walczynski, and Jason Sickmann, for organizing and presenting the Basic Photo Interpretations training in March 2008.

Your extra effort is very much appreciated!

### Retirement

Fred Kollmann, Area Program Specialist, retired May 1, 2008. We wish Fred the very best during his retirement years!

**Length of Service Award**  
Clinton Tuve - 30 years of service. Your dedication is appreciated!

# AREA 4 REPORT

**TIMOTHY WILSON, ASTC(FO)  
BROOKLYN CENTER, MN**

## AREA 4 ALL EMPLOYEE FIELD DAY

By: John Crellin, Area Resource Conservationist, Brooklyn Center

On May 28, Area 4 had an All Employee Field Day at the University of Minnesota Sand Plains Research Farm in Becker. The field day had approximately 50 NRCS and SWCD employees in attendance. The field day included a walking tour of the NRCS Plant Materials Off-Center Evaluation Site with Dwight Tober, Plant Materials Specialist from Bismarck, North Dakota. The group viewed most of the woody tree and shrub plantings and also a few grass species under evaluation.



**Dwight Tober during his walking tour of evaluation site**



**Dr. Graham during his presentation**

The group toured some recent research being conducted by University of Minnesota faculty at the Becker Research plot sites. Dr. Peter Graham, Professor of Soil Biology explained how some of his MnDot funded research is helping us better understand the prairie legume – Rhizobium interactions. Some of the findings translate into improved methods and timing of inoculation of species-specific Rhizobium to help prairie legumes provide all of the nitrogen needs for grass and forb seedlings along roadsides and other prairie settings.

Peter Bierman, University of Minnesota, who assists Carl Rosen’s research with potatoes and corn at the Becker site, explained best management practices relating to nitrogen and water use on potato and corn crops in the sand plain.

**Photo: Peter Bierman presentation**



# AREA 4 REPORT

## AREA 4 ALL EMPLOYEE FIELD DAY



**Gina Hugo's presentation at the Sherburne County Heritage Center**

Gina Hugo, District Technician, Sherburne SWCD guided us on a tour around the Sherburne County Heritage Center where she explained to us the involvement the SWCD and NRCS had in helping plan and install some of the prairie plantings and the pollinator garden around the Heritage Center.

Other hands-on training activities that day included a GPS exercise by Omar Vega, GIS Specialist, Brooklyn Center; site preparation and seeding methods demonstration by Bill Bronder, District Technical Manager, Sherburne SWCD; and in-field exercise reviewing the basics of slope determinations, crop residue measurements, and compliance status review procedures by John Crellin, Area Resource Conservationist, Brooklyn Center.

A good day was had by all who attended this field day event and the weather was gorgeous!



**Bill Bronder's presentation on site preparation and seeding methods**

## OTHER NEWS

Michelle Wohlers, District Conservationist (DC), Farmington received her 20 Year Service Award and Pin.

Lakelle Pritchett, Agricultural Engineer, Brooklyn Center received a memento and spot award for her participation in the recovery efforts on Hurricane Katrina projects in Louisiana.

Matt Schaar, Soil Conservation Technician (SCT), Farmington received a 3-1 Layer Winter Jacket for the assistance he has provided in training other field office staff.

## AREA 4 REPORT

### OTHER NEWS

Lynette Horton-Harmon, Soil Conservationist (SC), Farmington received a Clock Radio with CD Player for her efforts in pursuing earth team volunteers for the Farmington FO by contacting the regional extension office and local 4-H program coordinators in her pursuit of summer volunteers.

Loren Clarke, SCT (WAE), Farmington received a Pen and Key Chain Set for the assistance he has provided in cleaning up the backlog of determination data in Washington and Dakota Counties.

Mike Hemmann, Civil Engineer Technician, Waite Park received a Polo Shirt and NRCS Denim Hat for preparing and delivering a presentation on the use of LiDar for the planning and design of ag-waste systems and the use of the Trimble VRS system on April 14, 2008, at the Engineering Meeting.

Nathan Hylla, JPA Technician, Waite Park received a Howard Miller Alarm Clock for preparing and delivering a presentation on the use of LiDar for the planning and design of ag-waste systems and the use of the Trimble VRS system on April 14, 2008, at the Engineering Meeting.

Andy Porupsky, SCT, Jordan received a Clock Radio with CD Player for his leadership efforts to fill-in for DC at Jordan, when DC was not available.

Derrick Harmon, SC, Jordan received a Clock Radio with CD Player for his efforts in the 2008 EQIP sign-up. He signed up 23 producers which resulted in 18 contracts.

William Bronder, District Technical Manager, Sherburne SWCD received a Howard Miller Alarm Clock for his assistance in setting up field day and presentation at field day.

Gina Hugo, District Technician, Sherburne SWCD received a Clock Radio with CD Player for her assistance in setting up field day and presentation at field day.

### PERSONNEL

**Sangeetha Gummadi**, Student Trainee Soil Conservationist returned to duty at Elk River on May 25, 2008. In 2005, she joined the NRCS as a trainee and she was awarded a scholarship through the Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO). Sangeetha has interned in Brooklyn Center and Farmington. Sangeetha is looking forward to graduating in 2009 with a degree in Agricultural Education from the University of Minnesota.

**Bryan Sanoski**, Resource Conser-vationist started working for Wright SWCD effective April 1, 2008.

**Dan Nadeau**, Watershed Technician started working for the Crow River Organization of Water and the Wright SWCD effective April 28, 2008.

**Tiffany Babich**, Watershed Coordinator has been hired to work in the Elk River Watershed in Benton and Sherburne County. Tiffany comes to the District from Carver County Land and Water Management where she spent the last five years coordinating and conducting Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies. Prior to working for Carver County, Tiffany obtained a B.S. degree form St. Cloud State University in Ecology and Field Biology.

# AREA 5 REPORT

**GARY WATSON, ASTC-FO  
MARSHALL, MN**

## WORDS FROM GARY WATSON, (NEW) ASSISTANT STATE CONSERVATIONIST



For the past 33 years I worked for the Soil Conservation Service/Natural Resources Service. I earned a B.S. in Agronomy at the University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff, after graduating I began my career as a student trainee in Arkansas and worked as a Soil Conservationist, a District Conservationist, and a State Outreach Coordinator. Further, I served as the Black Emphasis Program Manager, State Civil Rights Advisory Committee member, and as a member of the National Civil Rights Committee, and as the Volunteer Coordinator for South Arkansas.

Aside from work I am a deacon in my church, I served as chairman of finance, trustee, and Sunday school superintendent among other duties. I coach two Boys and Girls Club basketball teams, I am an active member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, my wife, Sherry, and I have four adult children.

## **GOBLIRSCH DAIRY HELD AN OPEN HOUSE**

By: Kelly A. Heather District Conservationist

Goblirsch Dairy held an open house to allow those interested to view their new state of the art milking facility on Saturday June 14, 2008. Redwood County NRCS along with SWCD took the opportunity to display information on available programs and promote our involvement in the project. Through EQIP and the assistance of Brian Pfarr, Goblirsch Dairy earned cost-share to help defer the cost of the manure pit under the new barn as well as taking the opportunity to gain the benefits of nutrient management planning for manure produced by the new barn.

Kelly Heather, District Conservationist and Brian Pfarr Soil Conservation Technician were on hand to answer questions about all programs provided by the Redwood Service Center to the estimated 1500 visitors.

### **History -**

The Robotic Dairy was build in the year of 2005 on the original homestead of Joseph Goblirsch (Bernard's father) and his wife, Rose Frank. They raised nine children with diversified livestock. In 1965, Bernard, their oldest son, married Mary Clare Burdick. They raised nine children of their own on the same farm site and specialized in dairy. Their youngest son, Matt, remained on the farm to help. Nels and his wife, Shannon, returned to the family farm to dair after he completed his training in Precision Tool and Robotics. The new barn is 140- x 290' with slatted floors and manure pit below. It was built to house four robots. In 2007, Lely Robots were installed. The barn has 252 freestalls with water beds for cow comfort.

# AREA 5 REPORT

## OTHER NEWS

Area 5 will again be hosting the Wetland Delineation Course (REG IV) and the Conservation Planning Course this summer. We look forward to these training events. There is also Farm Fest this summer in Redwood County. The dates for this event are August 5th through 7th.

There was a Grazing Field Day near Lynd, MN on June 11th which was well attended and a success even though we had thunderstorms during the morning. This was sponsored by a number of SWCD's, GLCI, RC&D's, SW MN Cattleman's Association, and NRCS in SW Minnesota. There will be additional Grazing Field Day in Big Stone County on June 17th.

## PERSONNEL

Area 5 welcomes back Shantel Lozinski as she officially began her DC position in Montevideo on April 27, 2008. Area 5 trained Shantel during her time under the student career experience program. She was the soil conservationist at the Willmar field office.

Area 5 welcomes Gary Watson as Assistant State Conservation for Field Operations on May 27, 2008. From Arkansas, Gary ventured north to experience our MN weather which is according to him, chilly!

Diane Doom was hired as an intermittent employee to assist the Marshall FO in filing their wetland determinations according to township and section. Rachel Christiansen and Mark Yrjo are assisting the Pipestone and Redwood Fall field offices respectively this summer with their workload activities as WAE's.

## THANK YOU!

Area 5 thanked Josh Bork, SC, for filling in as acting DC in the Montevideo FO from Jan 7-March 28 with a non-monetary award.

Non-monetary awards were handed to Mark Rose for providing leadership assistance during the national office wetland review in Stevens and Swift counties, Joe Kristoff, extra effort in the support of informational/education activities this spring, Vonnie Nilges for extra effort and support with payments and protracts and Sandy Jerzak for monitoring the ever-changing FarmBill program hours allotments and providing assistance to acting ASTC(FO).

# AREA 6 REPORT

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

## PRODUCTIVE CONSERVATION IS MAKING PROGRESS IN MINNESOTA!

By: Joe Domeier, Program Manager

Productive Conservation on Working Lands is currently assisting in the establishment of perennial conservation crops across Minnesota. We have projects involving a wide variety of crops and in every area of the state. If you want to make conservation a profitable part of your farm, we can help! We still have nearly funding for establishing 500 acres of productive conservation crops in Minnesota. We can offer p to \$150 per acre as an establishment incentive to Minnesota EQIP eligible producers. For more information on which crops qualify for PCWL funding please contact us or visit our website listed below.



In order to assist the markets for PCWL crops, Three Rivers RC&D has also funded several studies. These studies are investigating a wide variety of issues important to the development of Productive Conservation in Minnesota.

These issues include:

- The propagation of Hazelnuts
- Adding value to biomass from the turf seed industry
- Adding agro-eco tourism to PCWL crop production
- Ecosystem services payments to PCWL producers
- Sustainable bio-energy crop production
- Assessing the biomass production in Minnesota Native prairie plantings.

The findings from these studies will be compiled with much more information into the PCWL Technical Handbook to be published and available for download from the Three Rivers RC&D website.

For more information and application material, please go to:

<http://www.threeriversrcd.org>

Follow the projects link and click on Productive Conservation on Working Lands.

For any questions about PCWL, please feel free to contact:

Joe Domeier

Program Manager,

Three Rivers Resource Conservation and Development

1160 South Victory Drive #4

Mankato, MN 56001

507-345-7418 ext.127

[joseph.domeier@rcdnet.net](mailto:joseph.domeier@rcdnet.net)

# AREA 6 REPORT

## PERSONNEL

**Mark Kulig** began as the Area Program Specialist on May 25, 2008

**Mark Pearson** received a promotion and is now the Area Engineer.

**Roderick Dukes** will be starting as a first year Soil Conservationist in the LeCenter Field Office on June 22, 2008.

## HISTORIC CONSERVATION PHOTO



1948 - The Nelson farm is planted largely to orchard with trees on sloping land on the contour. On the left slope the space between young trees is planted to grain and corn. Some of the level land is in grain, corn and truck crops. Houston County, MN; Geo. Nelson, Owner; La Crescent, MN

*Photographer: W.H. Lathrop*

# AREA 7 REPORT

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

## WABASHA COUNTY WEB SOIL SURVEY CEREMONY

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

A Web Soil Survey Ceremony took place at the Wabasha County Courthouse on May 6, 2008. The event provided the opportunity for the conservation partnership to showcase the results of the recently completed Wabasha County Soil Survey update. Peter Hartman, Project Soil Survey Leader spearheaded the effort in planning this ceremony.



**Mark Kulig, District Conservationist from the Wabasha Field Office discusses the Wabasha Soil Survey with Peter Hartman, Soil Scientist Project Leader.**

Mark Kulig, District Conservationist for the Wabasha Field Office thanked the Wabasha County Commissioners and local conservation partnership for their support of the soil survey. Kulig said the field work for the initial soil survey was completed in 1959. The first published soil survey was finished in 1965. The old soil survey had a huge focus in on cropland. This recent update expanded the opportunity to include more soil interpretations for the soil survey user.

In April, 2000, a soil survey update was approved. Support came from various conservation partners, including, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR), Wabasha County Commissioners and the Wabasha County Soil and Water Conservation District. An innovative approach was utilized in this soil survey update, including soil survey field work that was contracted out to private soil scientists. NRCS soil scientists took the leadership in making this soil survey update happen!

John Nicholson, Assistant State Conservationist-Field Operations, Rochester, MN said that the roll-out of this web based soil survey is a way to bring the soil technology up to the 21st Century technology. Wabasha county residents were acknowledged for recognizing the importance of soils in this day and age.

John Beck, Area Soil Scientist provided an online viewing of the Web Soil Survey. Beck's showcasing of the Web Soil Survey provided those in attendance at the event with a viewing of local Wabasha soil survey information, via the World Wide Web!

Greg Larson, State Soil Specialist with BWSR said the recent Southeast Minnesota soil survey updates have helped out the rest of the country. The advent of the digital source of information will be increasingly useful for future soil survey updates, not only in Minnesota but throughout the United States of America.

Back in 1997, Sherburne county, Minnesota was the only Minnesota county with a digital soil survey. Today in 2008, Wabasha county is the 83rd county to have a digital soil survey.

Peter Riester, Wabasha County Commissioner acknowledged his appreciation for the efforts of those who have been involved in the Wabasha Soil Survey update. The soils information is going to benefit the citizens of Wabasha county, Minnesota.

## AREA 7 REPORT

### PERSONNEL

**Aaron Peter** Hydraulic Engineer from Arkansas was selected as the Area Engineer in Rochester effective June 8, 2008.

**Colin Williams**, Soil Conservation Technician has been reassigned to the Goodhue Field Office as the Soil conservation Technician effective June 23, 2008.

**Susan Glende**, District Conservationist in Preston was selected as the District Conservationist for Lewsiton.

**Robert Joachim**, Soil Conservation Technician in Preston Field Office was selected as the District Conservationist in Preston.

**Mark Kulig**, DC in Wabasha was selected as the Program Specialist in St. Peter.

Contributions for the next issue of **Current Developments** are due: **September 12, 2008**

Send your articles to:

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

*Your contribution and continued readership of  
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