NRCS

Minnesota

Current Developments

July/August/September 2008

USDA Loans soils for SMITHSONIAN DIG IT! Exhibition

See Page 7

Remarks from the State Conservationist

Minnesota NRCS has had another banner year for conservation. None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the teamwork you exhibited! A special thank you to our NRCS employees and conservation partnership who have worked together on Helping People Help the Land.

Over the next few months you will receive additional information about the 2008 Farm Bill. We will do our best to make sure that you are made aware of Farm Bill updates in a timely fashion. As a MN NRCS employee you have a huge role to play in the delivery of the Farm Bill. I appreciate your continued cooperation and support in getting the word out about this Farm Bill to others.

Together, we can and will continue to make a difference in our Minnesota landscape. After all, NRCS is all about Helping People Help the Land.

Thank you!

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist

CONSERVATION COUNTS

Inside this Issue of Current Developements

Page	Articles
2	*William Hunt's Remarks*
3-4	*GRAZING EVENT A SUCCESS*
5	*USDA LOANS DESIGNATED SOIL FOR EACH STATE AND TERRITORY TO SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION FOR DIG IT! EXHIBITION*
6	*Exhibiting at Events*
7	*SONIA MAASSEL JACOBSEN, P.E. recognized as an (ASABE) Fellow*
8	*Women's Equality Day, 2008*
9	*Kim Steffen named Minnesota Soil Scientist of the Year!*
10-11	*Tips on Email Etiquette*
12	*Minnesota's STATE SOIL*
13	*21st Anniversary Celebration - Native American Fish & Wildlife Society*
14	*Minnesota Invasive Species Conference, The Untold Story*
15	*Conservation Planning Course 2008*
16	*Scott Watershed Management Organization Tour*
17-18	*Embracing the Diversity of the Pacific Northwest: Culture, Conservation, and Community*
19	*15 Years Making a Difference in Conservation*
20	*Living Snow Fence MOU Reaffirmed*
21-36	*Area Reports*
	Next Issue of Current Developments December 11, 2008

GRAZING EVENT A SUCCESS

By: Jamie Thomazin, Distric Conservationist, Marshall

Even with thunder, high winds and a downpour; 67 landowners, agribusiness professionals and agency staff gathered in a farm shed for the Southwest Minnesota Grazing Workshop and Tour held June 11 in Lyon County at the Scot and Debbie Thooft farm near Lynd. Just as the morning presentations concluded, the skies cleared to allow everyone to enjoy the afternoon plans for a pasture field tour. Participants also enjoyed a barbecued beef lunch funded by the Southwest Minnesota Cattlemen's Association.

The Thoof farm in Lyon County served as the site for the June 11, 2008 Grazing Workshop.

The Thooft livestock operation includes a prescribed rotational grazing system. Their rotational plan leads to even grazing throughout the pasture instead of selective grazing only on portions of it, which would happen if cattle were allowed to choose the best grass. The results are favorable for the environment since the grass cover on the pasture remains healthy. It is also profitable for the cattle operation because it helps in getting the best possible utilization of pasture grass.

The first speaker of the day, NRCS Grazing Specialist Lance Smith, explained opportunities that could be available through prescribed grazing plans developed in partnerships between pasture owners and conservation agencies. Smith's program was followed by a presentation from Ryan Walker of the University of Minnesota about extending the grazing season into drier months of the summer and fall, which is one of the benefits of a rotational system. After lunch, participants enjoyed the 90-minute field tour of the Thooft grazing system. The wrap-up portion of the program included a review of ways landowners can obtain funding assistance for environmentally friendly grazing plans. These could include federal conservation programs, state conservation programs, and agricultural best management practices low interest loans.

Lance Smith, Grazing Specialist demonstrates the use of the grazing stick

Livestock producers that have been practicing rotational grazing in the area were on hand to share their experiences with those attending. Many various discussions were shared on the fencing and timing of moving the livestock. Attendees were generous in their appreciation of the opportunity to gather and learn from the speakers and their peers. After the event there were several producers that have contacted their NRCS offices to discuss their operation and how to begin implementing rotational grazing.

Sponsors of the grazing tour included the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Southwest Minnesota Grazing Lands Initiative. Funding support was provided by the Southwest Minnesota Cattleman's Association, Lyon County Water Plan, Coteau des Prairie Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D), and the Minnesota Association of Resource and Development Councils.

GrazeFest 2008

By: John Zinn, State Grazing Specialist

Nearly 100 people were in attendance for the 2008 GrazeFest which was held near Verndale Minnesota on August 1 and 2. The Middendorf and Solberg families hosted the event on August 1. The Middendorfs milk 170 cows using center pivot irrigated pasture which boosts production on their sandy soils. They have constructed a swing parlor which improves their labor efficiency.

The Solberg dairy farm is located close by and has the same sandy soils but does not have irrigation. As a result they have stocked their farm less heavily and have developed another enterprise on their farm, a pastured poultry egg production business. Besides adding organic matter to the farm, the chickens devour grasshoppers that reduce the pasture yields and the Solberg's report that they are able to net approximately $10 per bird per year. They are slowly improving their farm by outwintering livestock to add organic matter to the sandy site but the farm was in a run down condition when they purchased it, having been in row crop production for a number of years. They have also constructed a swing parlor to improve the labor efficiency of their dairy operation.

The keynote speaker for the afternoon events was Joel McNair, the publisher of "Graze" magazine. He said that the graziers who were once on the fringes of production agriculture, were now poised to become part of the mainstream of agriculture as a result of higher prices for fuel, machinery, fertilizer, and all crop inputs.

The "eggmobile" is a portable laying house.

Cows being turned out on a strip grazed pasture during the beef tour.

He saw an upswing in all forms of sustainable agriculture as a result of increased energy costs.

Paul Flynn gave a short talk on the EQIP program and financial assistance available to producers to install fencing, watering systems, heavy use area protection, and pasture seeding.

Dennis Johnson from the University of Minnesota Morris discussed costs and benefits of pasture irrigation and concluded that under present conditions, pasture irrigation resulted in higher returns for the group studied.

The evening session was held at England Prairie which is a miniature village of 1920s-40s era buildings and site of an annual "Pioneer Days" with exhibits of vintage farm machinery and live demos of threshing and small engines. In the evening, a roundtable discussion including Mary Jo Forbord, Mark Hayek, Howard Moechnig and John Zinn was held covering the topic of "Hot Button Issues in Grazing" Some of the topics identified were, grass finishing of animals on pasture, weed control, seeding concerns, watering systems, and the Bovine TB problem in Northwest Minnesota.

Portable fencing being set up for strip grazing.

On August 2, two all day bus tours were conducted, one centering around dairy farms and the other touring beef enterprises. Both tours were well attended and the beef tour in particular had a full bus plus a caravan of private vehicles.

GrazeFest has been an event sponsored by NRCS, and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, for the last four years and the attendance grows each year that it has been held.

USDA LOANS DESIGNATED SOIL FOR EACH STATE AND TERRITORY TO SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION FOR DIG IT! EXHIBITION By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

On July 17, 2008, Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer announced that USDA has loaned 54 designated state and territory soil samples to the Smithsonian Institution for a new soils exhibition that opens July 19 at the National Museum of Natural History, 10th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W.

The 5,000-square foot exhibition is called "Dig It! The Secrets of Soil." In addition to the soil samples, "Dig It!" also includes interactive displays, hands-on models and videos. The exhibition will be featured at the natural history museum for nearly two years.

"This exhibition reminds us of the importance and benefits of healthy and productive soils," Schafer said. "Soils are a vital resource; they are the foundation of life. We should protect them and do what we can to increase public awareness about their significance."

The designated state soil samples—or monoliths—are part of a gallery of monoliths representing all the states, the District of Columbia, the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands. An extensive map created by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) will offer visitors the "big picture" by allowing them to learn more about soils around the world.

Smithsonian Museum

USDA-NRCS, USDA's lead agency for soil conservation, constructed the monoliths with assistance from many partners, including the Soil Science Society of America and the National Association of Conservation Districts. USDA first exhibited most of the monoliths at a centennial celebration of the soil survey on the National Mall in 1999.

A monolith or soil profile, usually about six feet deep, shows the soil's natural layers. Its extraction from a soils pit is the first step in a lengthy process in creating a monolith, which is mounted and preserved. A soil monolith usually measures 48 by 8 inches.

The exhibition also explains how a soil is named. Each state has a designated soil that is represented by a soil series with special significance to a particular area. Of that number, 20 states have recognized their representative state soil through official legislation.

Soils that share similar origins, as well as chemical and physical properties, are grouped and labeled as a soil series. Soil scientists usually name a soil series after a town or landmark in or near the area where the soil was first recognized. Representative soils also have been selected for Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam.

On the exhibition's opening day, USDA-NRCS staff demonstrated soil in its beauty and complexity at several stations. Visitors will be able to make miniature soil profiles at one station and see how water travels through different types of soils at another.

Following its showing at the natural history museum, "Dig It!" is expected to travel to 10 museums across the country through 2013 under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service.

At an event at USDA headquarters on July 18, USDA honored 70 federal employees, mostly from USDA, Department of Interior and the Smithsonian Institution who assisted with the exhibition's development. Through the use of its knowledgeable and skilled soils staff around the nation, USDA donated its technical expertise in soils to assist the museum in developing the exhibition.

NRCS employees possess extensive knowledge of the nation's soils. The agency's soil scientists conduct soil surveys nationwide. Those surveys are now available on the Internet. With a click of a mouse, anyone can access abundant soils information at http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov.

Additional information about "Dig It! The Secrets of Soil" can be found at http://forces.si.edu/soils. Information about USDA-NRCS's Soil Survey Program nationwide can be found at http://soils.usda.gov. Information about the "Dig It! tour can be found at http://www.sites.si.edu.

2008 Exhibiting at Events

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

Each year, MN NRCS exhibits at several events throughout Minnesota. Exhibiting provides NRCS an avenue in which outreach can be accomplished. In 2008 alone, MN NRCS exhibited at: Agri-Women, Farm Bureau, Red River Valley Basin Commission, North Central RC&D Association Conference, and Minnesota Organic conference, MOSES, Farm Fest and the Minnesota State Fair.

These outreach activities are ways in which NRCS can share our story of Helping People Help the Land, with others! Staffing an exhibit takes the work of several people. The two events MN NRCS works on that takes the largest number of volunteers and planning is, Farm Fest and the Minnesota State Fair booth. Farm Fest typically utilizes 10-12 employees from Area 5, Area 6 and the State office. The tradition of having a booth at Farm Fest has become an important NRCS tradition. Each year the booth has several former customers stop by to check in with what's going on with NRCS. For many of the individuals, their first encounter with NRCS was at Farm Fest. Materials from LANDCARE and PR items designed by MN NRCS public affairs are utilized in the booth. A special thank you too William Hunt, State Conservationist, Gary Watson, Assistant State Conservationist-Field Operations, (ASTC-FO), Marshall, MN and Sandy Jerzak, Area Administrative Coordinator for their active role in planning details pertaining to Farm Fest.

State Fair Booth

State Fair Booth

The State Fair, on the other hand involves greater complexity in planning and the execution of details. The State Fair runs a total of 12 days each year. MN NRCS's booth in the Empire Commons Building includes 3 different shifts for NRCS employees and/or volunteers to work. 9:00 a.m. – 1 p.m. 1 p.m. – 5 p.m. and 5 p.m. – 9 p.m. The 2008 booth theme centered around the national campaign of "Conservation Our Purpose, Our Passion. Additionally, 2 interactive displays were included in this year's booth. A wooden spinning wheel and a soils & geology interactive display. These displays kept the booth workers busy with interacting with our fair booth guests over the 4 hour period. Interactions with fair guests provided the foundation for conservation conversations. The Empire Commons Building has foot traffic of around 75,000 people/day. This equates to over 900,000 people may see our NRCS booth during the 12 days of the Fair.

State Fair Booth

For additional information regarding exhibiting for events in Minnesota, please contact Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist at (651)-602-7859.

SONIA MAASSEL JACOBSEN, P.E. recognized as American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers an (ASABE) Fellow

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

The American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers (ASABE) has named twelve individuals of extraordinary accomplishment to it 2008 class of ASABE Fellows. The twelve were inducted at a ceremony on July 1, during the 2008 ASABE Annual International Meeting, being held in Providence, Rhode Island.

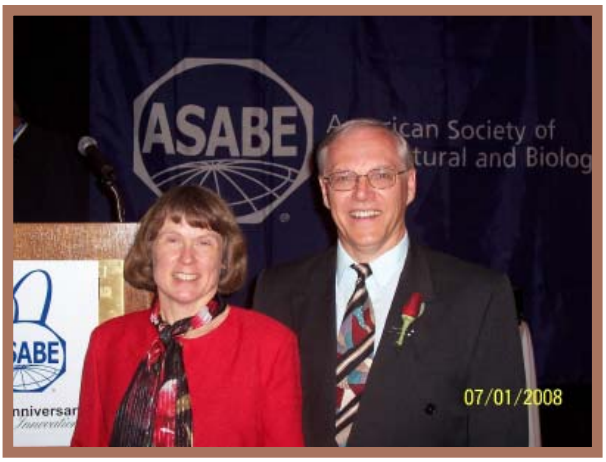
Sonia, next to a banner stand decribing Her and (ASABE) Fellow Robert Graves accomplishments

To be considered, an individual must demonstrate unusual professional distinction, with outstanding qualifications and experience in the field of agricultural engineering. Twenty years' membership in ASABE is also required. Only about two percent of the active members of ASABE have achieved the grade of Fellow.

SONIA MAASSEL JACOBSEN, P.E. Hydraulic engineer, USDA-NRCS, St. Paul, Minnesota, Sonia Jacobsen has been recognized as an ASABE Fellow in recognition of her expertise and outstanding contributions in the emerging field of wetland hydrology and water resources engineering.

Jacobsen is currently responsible for projects relating to water in Minnesota, which include wetland hydrology, steambank stabilization, irrigation, drainage and more. As the state technical specialist in this area, she provides technical assistance and policy guidance to NRCS engineers and cooperating partner agencies.

Jacobsen has collaborated with federal and stage agencies and universities nationwide to devise and publish procedures that examine the impact of drainage activities on wetlands. She has served on the Minnesota Board of AELSLAGID (oversees licensure of engineers, architects, land surveyors, etc.), and is currently serving as an ABET volunteer in the evaluation of collegiate engineering programs.



Sonia, and husband Eric

A 29-year member of ASABE, Jacobson has served on the Board of Trustees, provided leadership to Soil and Water division and Education committees, and is currently serving as chair of the Membership Development Council and Minnesota section. She received the PEI Professional Engineer of the Year Award from ASABE, and is one of 238 women engineers who were recognized in the American Society of Civil Engineers' book entitled Changing Our World: True Stories of Women Engineers.

ASABE is a scientific and educational organization dedicated to the advancement of engineering applicable to agricultural, food, and biological systems. Founded in 1907 and headquartered in St Joseph, Michigan, ASABE comprises 9,000 members representing more than 100 countries. ASABE members serve in industry, academia, and public service and are uniquely qualified to determine and develop more efficient and environmentally sensitive methods of cultivating food, fiber, and timber for an ever-increasing world population. For further information, contact ASABE, 2950 Niles Rd, St Joseph, Michigan, 49085; 269-429-0300; hq@asabe.org; www.asabe.org/.

Women's Equality Day, 2008

A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America

With vision and determination, American women have helped build our great Nation. On Women's Equality Day, we remember the dedication of women who overcame many obstacles in order to secure the right to vote.

The struggle for women's rights is a story of strong women willing to take the lead and pave the way toward equal voting rights for all American citizens. In 1848, a group of determined women came together in Seneca Falls, New York, to proclaim that "all men and women are created equal," and demand suffrage. On August 26, 1920, their voices were finally heard, and the 19th Amendment to the Constitution guaranteed women the right to vote.

As we look back on the journey to women gaining suffrage, we remember the sacrifices of people like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. More than 160 years after the Seneca Falls Convention, we celebrate the spirit, leadership, and hard work of those pioneering women. We also recognize the women who continue in this tradition by acting as role models in their communities, helping raise the next generation of Americans, leading in their professions, and serving in the Armed Forces protecting our country. These women are continuing on the path set by those who came before them, so that all Americans can realize the great promise of our Nation.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 26, 2008, as Women's Equality Day. I call upon the people of the United States to celebrate the achievements of women and observe this day with appropriate programs and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand thistwenty-second day of August, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

GEORGE W. BUSH

"Do not follow where the path may lead.
Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail"

Harold R. McAlindon

Kim Steffen named Minnesota Soil Scientist of the Year!

By: Michael Whited, Soil Scientist

Jorja DuFresne and Al Giencke of the Minnesota Association of Professional Soil Scientists (MAPSS) presented the Soil Scientist of the Year award to Kim Steffen for his efforts and successes on the Web Soil Survey project, customized soil interpretations for Minnesota, and past service to MAPPS and to the professional practice of soil science.

In addition to the plaque from MAPSS, Kim was presented with certificates from both the Minnesota House of Representatives and the Minnesota Senate recognizing his accomplishments with Formal Resolutions.

Established in 1973, the Minnesota Association of Professional Soil Scientists (MAPSS) is the only organization representing the professional interests of soil scientists in Minnesota. MAPSS promotes the understanding and wise use of Minnesota's soil resources.

Way to go Kim!

Al Giencke presents Kim with award at MAPSS Winter Meeting

Historic Photos

Contour farming, Cutting grain on a contour strip.
Photographer: W.H.Lathrop
Winona, MN July 27, 1944

Cutting grain on a contour strip. Mr. Sehram moved to this farm a year ago last fall and decided to do away with the "new Fangled" way of farming. He plowed up one solid field but is now putting it back into strips.
Photographer: W.H.Lathrop
Winona, MN July 27, 1944

Tips on Email Etiquette

Email has quickly become a large part of the world of communication, but people communicate in their email messages the same way they do in a message boards and chat rooms: less formally and sometimes too aggressive.

Consider this:

- Try to keep the email brief (preferably to one screen) so that readers do not have to scroll.
- Return emails in the same day you would place a call.
- Use capitalization and punctuation in the same way that you would in any other document.
- Be sure to write an appropriate and specific subject in the subject line so that the recipient knows what to expect. For example: "INCA Conference" instead of "meeting."

Before clicking the "send" button on your email, ask yourself:

1. To whom am I sending my email?

It is always important to know who will receive your email, including the number of people you have on the mailing list. It helps you think about the tone of your writing.

For example, while you still want to follow the traditional rules of writing, emails that you send to your employer may be more formal and brief than to a colleague or a classmate. You will need to decide whether you need to use a person's title or if writing the first name is appropriate.

Emails are public documents that can be forwarded around the world in an instant, despite the fact that you may send an email to someone privately. Only include those statements in email that you can openly defend (or would be comfortable seeing in the newspaper) should your message be circulated or shown to other parties.

2. Sending attachments

Sending attachments is a normal practice when you are submitting documents for review or exchanging information in the workplace. Consider this before attaching a document:

- Title the document that you are attaching in a way that is easy for the recipient to find once he or she down loads it to his or her files.
- Make sure that you do not send overly large attachments unless you are confident your recipient's internet connection and email client can handle them.

Tips on Email Etiquette

3. How long should my email be?

In general, the email should be approximately one page printed or the length of your computer screen before scrolling. Organizations seeking to reduce their paper costs will use email as their primary source of communication. Longer emails generally consist of:
Information, memos, convention information, newsletters, and policy changes.

Required response
Because your reader is most likely going to read the first few lines of your document thoroughly and brose through the rest, if you need to have him or her respond by a certain time with certain information, that should be stated.

For example: "Please let me know by Wednesday whether you are attending the meeting."

4. Am I flaming someone? (And what does "flaming" mean?)

Flaming is a term for venting emotion online or sending inflammatory emails. Flames are unproductive to all parties involved.

What you say cannot be taken back. Misinterpretations happen very easily in neutral emails because there is a lack of nonverbal expression to cue the recipient about your motives and intentions. You can imagine how much misinterpretation can occur when you are expressing frustration and/or anger.

Things to consider before venting in an email:
- Would I say this to this person's face?
- Am I putting the receiver an awkward position?
- How would I feel if I got this email message?

Usually, by the time you consider the above questions you will be calm enough to write your message with a different approach. Catching someone by surprise in a flaming message is a quick way to alienate your reader mainly because they will react with anger or embarrassment.

5. When should I not send an email?

There are many subjects that are too sensitive to discuss over email mainly because misinterpretation could have serious consequences. Some topics that should generally be resolved outside of email are:

- Disciplinary action
- Actions of a personal nature
- Concerns about fellow classmates/workmates
- Complaints

MINNESOTA'S STATE SOIL

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

Why designate a State Soil?

A State Soil is a symbol to increase the public's understanding and appreciation of Minnesota's rich resources. Further it will enhance the public's awareness of the need to protect and preserve these resources to maintain our highly productive agricultural and forest industries and recreational opportunities.

How was a State Soil Selected?

For the very reasons state above, the Minnesota Association of Professional Soil Scientists (MAPSS) decided that having the State of Minnesota designate a State Soil would be a worthwhile project. Members nominated several candidates, and the Lester series was selected by ballot early in 1987.

Why was Lester Selected?

In a sense, Lester is similar to the population of Minnesota. It is a product of diverse backgrounds yet it has developed into a very productive entity. It formed the vegetative zone called savannah. This zone marks the boundary between the extensive tall grass prairie to the west and deciduous forest to the east. The savannah contains plans that occur in both the prairie and the forest. Also, Lester formed in loamy glacial till which is the dominant glacial sediment in Minnesota.

The moderately thick black or dark surface layer of Lester reflects the influence of the prairie, whereas the clay enriched subsoil reflects the influence of the forest. Lester occupies thousands of acres in south-central Minnesota. It is highly productive soil. It is loamy, well drained, well supplied with plant nutrients, and has a high water-holding capacity. Thus, it is well suited for many uses such as farming, growing trees, wildlife habitat, and urbanization.

The official location of Lester is in Wright County, Minnesota.

21st Anniversary Celebration - Native American Fish & Wildlife Society

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

The 2008 Great Lakes Regional Conference was held in Walker, Minnesota September 14-18, 2008 at the Northern Lights Casino and Hotel. This conference was the 21st Anniversary celebration and the 2nd time in 20 years that the conference was held in Minnesota. A total of 200 participants attended the conference, making the 2008 conference the biggest ever!

Kellt Applegate, Wildlife Biologist for the Mille Lacs Band presented at the conference with Shannon Bengtson, DC, Milaca

This year, the Indian Nations Conservation Alliance (INCA) joined together with the Native and American Fish & Wildlife Society. For the last 3 years, INCA has worked closely with USDA agencies and tribes in holding a Minnesota outreach meeting. This conference effort brought together tribes and agencies from 3 states including Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. As a result, more conservation topics could be discussed with a broader audience.

William Hunt, State Conservationist participated in the INCA breakout sessions by sharing comments about the new Farm Bill and its Impacts on Indian Country for USDA Agencies along with a presentation on Tribal Youth Development and Employee programs-USDA Panel.

Hunt stated he was proud of the accomplishments NRCS has done in Indian country. $6 million dollars was allocated for beginning and limited producers. In FY 2008, $500,000 was set aside for Indians, with $80,000 dollars being allocated.

NRCS wants to continue to work closely with Indians in Minnesota. Hunt reminded the conference participants that as State Outreach Council chair he wants to receive feedback. Feedback is important for making changes in delivering conservation programs.

The White Earth Indian Reservation recently became a Tribal Conservation District. A tribal conservation district provides a tribal entity that can focus on learning about and working with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). USDA needs the tribal conservation district's local leadership to help guide them in bringing the needed programs to the reservation.

The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe employee, Kelly Applegate gave a presentation with Shannon Bengtson, District Conservationist, Mille Lacs regarding Tribal Success Stories between the Mille Lacs Band and the NRCS Field Office.

Applegate highlighted an Abandoned pasture project, Japanese Knotwood and the Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Project. Applegate's last power point slide summed up his Tribal Success with "Partnering Puts Conservation on the land."

For more information regarding this conference in Walker, Minnesota, please contact Julie MacSwain at (651)-602-7859.

Minnesota Invasive Species Conference

The first-ever researched-based forum on terrestrial and aquatic invasive species will be held on October 26-28, 2008 in Duluth, Minnesota. The conference is designed to strengthen awareness of invasive species issues, as well as promoting prevention and management activities. The conference will unite research, natural resource, and education professionals to:

- Learn and develop ways to combat invasive species problems;
- Coordinate support of research and raise public awareness;
- Advance the state of scientific knowledge in prevention, early detection and rapid response, control and management, and restoration, and;
- Promote new and cutting-edge research and biotechnology by the area's top experts.

Buckthorn

Pre-conference workshops for the general public and professionals will be held Sunday October 26 for nominal fees. The conference is a collaborative effort by the Minnesota Invasive Species Advisory council (MISAC) and is co-chaired by the Minnesota Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society and the University of Minnesota Sea Grant Program. Check out the Minnesota SWCS website if you are interested in learning more about this conference. Go to: www.minnesotaswcs.org

The Untold Story

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

Over the past several months I have received several outstanding conservation success stories. These stories have been placed in our Quarterly newsletter, Current Developments. The contributions that have been received have added a great deal to the content of what we have rolled out for you. To this end, we would like to thank you for the extra effort you are expending in sharing the good news.

Truly, the stories that you have shared continue to convey NRCS's mission of Helping People Help the Land.

Conservation Planning Course 2008

By: Robin Martinek, State Agronomist

Conservation planning is the basis for everything our agency is and does. Working with landowners, "Helping People Help the Land" is our key mission. In July, 26 NRCS, SWCD and DU employees spent a week at our Minnesota conservation Planning Course training in Redwood Falls.

These employees had the opportunity to interact with state and area specialists to learn how to "put the pieces together", and how the concept of conservation planning is a part of their every-day jobs.

Mark Oja, state biologist, discusses wildlife habitat and stream evaluation procedures with students.

The students learned about inventorying a farm and looking for all of the resource concerns (soil, water, air, plants, animals and human considerations) on all land uses including cropland, pasture and hay land, headquarters and riparian areas. They learned inventory procedures and tools used to do these inventories, and how this can be done in conjunction with program work and other daily field office activities.

Pat McLoughlin, Archeologist, discusses how to evaluate a site for evidence of artifacts and cultural resources.

The students had much of the training out in the field on the Jeff Potter family farm, and as a part of the class they divided into groups and completed a plan on one of the tracts on this farm. At the end of the week each group made a presentation of their plan to the entire class, including the results of their inventory and any recommendations they would make.

The class had very positive comments about what they learned in this class, seeing that planning is a part of the work they do every day and that the area and state specialists are willing to come to the field to train and to answer questions. We are all sure that this will have a positive effect on assistance being provided to landowners and on protecting our valuable natural resources.

Students use a sieve to look for evidence of artifacts on a planning site.

Students learn procedures to evaluate pastures with Allisa Wendland and group leader Ken Luttner.

Scott Watershed Management Organization Tour

By: Diane Hrabe, Communications Specialist, Scott SWCD

Some of the latest innovative projects and conservation practices within Scott County were the focus of the 2008 Scott Watershed Management Organization (WMO) and Scott Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) tour held Monday, July 28, 2008. This event drew almost 30 participants

The tour began with a presentation at the Scott County Government Center by Paul Kramer, Vice President of Malting Operations, Rahr Malting Company in Shakopee. He spoke of his company's cooperative effort with the Mdewakanton Sioux Community in forming Koda Energy, a combined heat and power plant located near the malting company that will generate enough electricity to supply the energy needs of both partners and produce enough additional electricity to power more than 14,000 homes a year. The project, which should be completed by the end of the year, will use locally grown energy crops such as switch grass and other agricultural byproducts, converting them into heat and energy.

This innovative project has additional benefits too, providing habitat for wildlife and reducing soil erosion and surface and groundwater pollution. To fuel its boilers, Koda Energy will require up to 180,000 tons of biofuels, annually pumping $6.4 million into the local agricultural economy. The new company could potentially provide a market for more than 10,000 acres of grass biomass production in a 50-mile radius of the plant. "Global warming is the 21st century's major energy and environmental issue," Kramer noted. "Koda Energy's biomass-to-energy project will cut CO2 emissions by more than 190,000 tons per year."

Innovative "green roof" on the Mdewakanton Sioux Community's wastewater treatment plant

The group made three stops within the county. They saw the innovative "green roof" on the Mdewakanton Sioux Community's wastewater treatment plant, the largest such project in Minnesota. Resembling a rooftop garden, the project has a 30- to 40-year life cycle, lower maintenance costs and increased energy savings. It also helps with storm water management, wildlife habitat and urban air quality. With six inches of soil, 14 varieties of native plants and nine types of sedums were planted two years ago. Irrigation is also part of the upkeep, using recycled water from the wastewater treatment plant. A number of ongoing studies are being done, comparing irrigation regimes, soil moisture, temperature comparisons and pollinator census. A second slightly larger green roof is being installed on the community's new ice rink as well. The Scott WMO has recently approved funding for a green roof on the Savage Environmental Learning Center.

The Jordan Mill Pond was the second stop on the tour, showing the shore land restoration and three stream bank stabilization projects. Native vegetation was planted to protect the shoreline, creating a buffer for filtering runoff that entered the water, managing other environmental problems, providing wildlife habitat and restoring the shoreline's structure and function. The delegation viewed gabions (rock-filled wire baskets) that were used to protect the banks of the Mill Ponds inlet streams, reducing sediment and keeping the channel open and free from obstructions. Improvements were also made around the culverts in the Jordan Mill Pond project where rock was added to create a stilling basin that dissipates energy where storm water flows had been causing erosion downstream.

Jay and Laureen Picha's property was the final stop of the tour, showing the dramatic effects of strengthening their stream bank with gabions and cedar tree revetment that reshaped the unstable bank and helped with water flow.

EMBRACING THE DIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST: CULTURE, CONSERVATION, AND COMMUNITY

By: Winnie Chen, Wetland Biologist, Brooklyn Center

The Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO) and the American Indian Alaskan Native Employee Association (AIANEA) held its second joint annual meeting August 11-15, 2008, in the Spokane Valley of Washington. This year's theme for the conference was "Embracing the Diversity of the Pacific Northwest: Culture, Conservation, and Community." About 200 members came together to share new ideas, find new opportunities, improve their skills, and network with others. Minnesota was represented at the conference by: Ann English, Dave Wise, Leland Debe, his wife from the Fond a Lac Tribe and Winnie Chen.

AIANEA opening prayer

Chief Lancaster giving opening remarks

The conference started on Monday morning with the Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM) Training conducted by the APIO and AIANEA National SEPM advisors, Angela Biggs, from Vermont and Carol Crouch, from Oklahoma. Monday concluded by welcoming the Elders in the courtyard of the hotel. The circle brought many people together and an opportunity to be a part of the AIANEA cultural presentation.

On Tuesday the AIANEA Drum Group opened the general session by leading us in honoring the flag. Gus Hughbanks, Washington State Conservationist welcomed the participants. Chief Lancaster gave remarks at the opening session. He asked us to share our talents by being mobile, have the willingness to change, and not to limit ourselves by not taking the opportunity to change. Chief Lancaster had an encouraging speech about what changes we can do for the agency, if we are willing to take opportunities and challenges that come with mobility. Senator Chris Mar spoke at the general session about leadership roles and how we can become leaders. Mary Varner, Mayor of Spokane welcomed the USDA-NRCS Organizations to the state of Washington. At noon, we began our workshops. The evening concluded with live performances presented by both cultures. The audiences listened intently while the drums were played. APIO participated by showing us their culture through signing and dancing.

Group photo at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge

The conference on Wednesday began with all day tours of Spokane.
The AIANEA members toured some historical sites. Their first stop was at the Spokane House, built in the 1800's, it was used as a trading post for fur. David Thompson established several trading posts along the confluence of the Spokane Rivers. Tribes traded fur which helped establish settlement in the area. The second stop was at the Spokane

Tribal Hatchery, where they were able to tour a constructed hatchery as a partial mitigation for the loss of salmon, steelhead, and habitat caused by hydroelectric power development on the Columbia River. The hatchery does research on rerelease of fish species back into the wild. Lunch was at the Tribe's Two River Casino. After lunch the journey then continued to Fort Spokane. Native tribes used the area to gather fish, until the military fort was built. After the fort closed the building was used as an Indian boarding school, many of the Native American children didn't like the public education and would often runaway from the schools. The fort later became a tuberculosis hospital.

The APIO members participate in a tour on the opposite side of the city. The tour took us on a short journey through Palouse landscape. On the way we stopped to visit a NRCS cooperator and see his use of no-till. We traveled through the Scabland portion of the county with a stop to Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, a preserve and sanctuary for wildlife. On way back to the city we toured an orchard and vegetable farm in Green Bluff. We learned about the farmer's organic farming operation.

Tour A at the Fish Hatchery

Ann English and Terry J. Cosby, STC from OH

Thursday morning conference participants received mentoring lessons from several state conservationists and leaders from Washington DC. It was an opportunity to receive guidance and wisdom to help each individual make the next career step. The day ended with an awards lunch and break out sessions for the rest of the afternoon.

Friday was the last day of the conference. Dana York, Associate Chief talked about NRCS five year investment plan. Other speakers on Friday were Patty Lawrence, Director of the Strategic & Performance Planning Division and Greg Johnson, Air Quality & Atmospheric Change Team Leader. Closing remarks made by Gus Hughbanks, Kent Matsutani, and Millie Titla were both business and comical. The day was brought to an end when Kent allowed Millie to put a pie in his face.

The conference brought together two different cultures through shared similarities. It was a great opportunity for the groups to converge through shared commonalities of conservation, community, and culture.

Pictures with Kulturan Chamoru Performers

15 Years Making a Difference in Conservation

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

The National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees (NOPHNRCSE) held its 15th Annual Training Conference in Madison, Wisconsin July 7-11, 2008 and the conference theme was "15 Years of Making a Difference in Conservation."

Manual Matos, Area Resource Soil Scientist, Area 1 and Omar Vega, GIS Specialist, Area 4

The roll-out of this conference built upon the success that occurred when Minnesota NRCS served as the host of the 2007 conference. The 2008 sessions offered by NOPHNRCSE were attended by more than 170 employees.

The conference program frame work included: general sessions, concurrent sessions and conservation tours. This years' meeting showcased some new program sessions, in particular, "Speed Mentoring". This session provided employees with the opportunity to meet leaders from top NRCS positions. The leaders shared their experiences with the employees and took the time to answer employees' questions. All the discussions took place at a round-shaped table and a total of five rotations occurred during the speed mentoring exchanges. The leaders remained at the tables as the employees moved from table to table to the leader of their choice.

A new program called, "A day in the Life" is the portrayal of a typical work day, which was shared by three NRCS employees in a video presentation. Following the viewing of the video, the employees shared how their job related to the Senior Executive Service job competencies. Ms. Rosa Reyes, DC, Florida; Manual Matos, Area Soil Scientist, Minnesota and Mr. Denni Hazel, Ag Engineer, Wisconsin were the featured employees.

NOPHNRCSE group visited the Aldo Leopold Center

Mr. Hunt, State Conservationist reviews a student's resume at the State Conservationist Breakfast.

As with most conferences, the opportunity to network with old friends and efforts to meet new acquaintances was available at the conference. Hallway conversations, coffee breaks, lunch, dinner, a live auction and the Awards banquet and luncheon laid the networking groundwork.

Mr. Carlos Suarez, FL STC the outgoing NOPH NRCSE President shared his closing remarks at the Annual NOPHNRCSE Presidential Banquet. Carlos personally thanked Mr. William Hunt, MN NRCS State Conservationist, for the strong level of support he gave Carlos during his term as NOPHNRCSE President.

Living Snow Fence MOU Reaffirmed

By: Ginger Kopp, State Staff Forester

The NRCS along with partners the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT), Farm Service Agency (FSA), and the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) reaffirmed their commitment on September 5th, 2008, to the Living Snow Fence Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU). This historic agreement, which has been in place since 1997, allows the sharing of financial and technical assistance to landowners who agree to establish living snow fences on eligible land adjacent to state and federal roadways.

Living snow fences are rows of trees or shrubs, or standing corn rows or a field of tall stiff-stemmed grasses planted in such a way as to trap blowing snow keeping it from drifting onto federal and state roadways. Through ground-breaking research in understanding the science behind blowing and drifting snow, a snow fence design program was developed at the University of Minnesota which includes living snow fences as well as structural snow fences.

L-R Perry Aasness, FSA; Thomas Sorel, Mn/DOT, William Hunt, NRCS and LeAnn Buck, MASWCD sign copies of the Living Snow Fence MOU on September 5, 2008. Photo by Dan Gullickson, Mn/DOT.

New to the MOU this year is the ability of Mn/DOT to piggyback on NRCS's conservation programs. While the joining of the FSA's CRP and the Mn/DOT cost-share program has been a huge success over the past few years; many willing landowners were not eligible because their fields did not have the required crop history. In the new MOU, establishing living snow fences can be cost-shared through NRCS's conservation programs such as EQIP or WHIP, and Mn/DOT will piggyback their cost-share program at the same rate as the CRP. While NRCS's programs do not match the rental rates of FSA's; landowners can still get 100% cost-share for establishing living snow fences plus the inconvenience and lost efficiency payments from Mn/DOT's cost-share program. This should result in even more life-saving living snow fences along Minnesota's roadways.

Mn/DOT has created a new Geographical Information Systems (GIS) tool to assist in prioritizing the placement or marketing of living snow fences. The Mn/DOT Snow Track GIS Project layer is currently available for use by FSA and NRCS employees. This tool rates the worst sections of state and federal highways in terms of crashes due to snow and ice. Counties have been clipped for ease of use. Marketing programs could be developed for specific areas where snow and ice cause high rates of damage to drivers and property.

In fiscal year 2009, the partners of the MOU will be offering training sessions on designing living snow fences, using the snow fence design program, navigating the Snow Track GIS project and calculating the various cost-share components for landowners. If you would like to host of one of these training sessions, contact Ginger Kopp, State Staff Forester, (651) 602-7909.

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

Soil Scientist Reunion in Northwestern MN

By: Manuel Matos, Thief River Falls

On August 8th, a group of former Soil Conservation Service employees gathered in Thief River Falls to share stories and history of the soil survey in northwestern MN. The reunion started with lunch accompanied by a delicious carrot cake. Glen Kajewski, Assistant State Conservationist, Area1, welcomed the participants. Several presentations were presented. Don Barron, retired Soil Survey Project Leader talked about the mapping days in Kittson County 40 years ago. He also spoke about the salinity problem in the County and how they mapped the saline areas with the technology at the time. Mr. Barron explained how they used a contracted airplane to fly the areas affected during the crop season and correlated crop response with salinity problems. Following Mr. Barron, Dave Potts, MLRA Soil Survey Leader, talked about the updated process of Kittson County and also the continued salinity survey to map the acres affected using new technology. It was really interesting to hear the soil survey stories from Don Barron and Dave Potts and how they came across similar issues during the surveys.

Picture 1: From left to right, Clarion Neseth, Malvern Jacobson, Doug Weber, Ward Aas, & Don Barron. Discussing a soil boring in Kittson County.

From left to right, Maxine Aas, Joan Jacobson, Pauline Aubol, Chet Aubol, Ward Aas,Don Barron, John Polley, Darol(Red) Melby and Ralph Rundell

The reunion provided the opportunity to present new technologies used in soil survey, for example, the use of GPS, GIS and the internet tool, Web Soil Survey, to access official soil survey data and maps. A web soil survey session was conducted creating soil survey maps, reports, and a manuscript of Kittson County. It was a good chance to show the former soil scientists how soil surveys are published by NRCS today. This created a good discussion of all the benefits and features of this new tool. Ralph Rundel former Soil Conservation Technician commented, "Web Soil Survey would be really good when you're doing conservation to have soil information needed right at your finger tips". Tom Jackson, MLRA Soil Survey Leader emphasized how this new tool helps NRCS keep the most current official Soil Survey data up to date and how we don't have to wait years to have the survey updates. The group was very impressed.

Malvern Jacobson, Tom Jackson, Ward Aas and Stephen Suhs.

Al Gustafson, Area Resource Conservationist, wrapped up the afternoon with a presentation of archived photos of them in the field collecting data, during field reviews, and presented pictures of soil profiles taken by Chet Aubol 40 years ago. We also used the opportunity to thank the group for the hard work and dedication conducting soil surveys in northwestern MN.

Participants:
Don and Gladys Barron (former Soil Survey Project Leader, Area Soil Scientist and later Area Conservationist)
Malvern and Joan Jacobson (former Soil Survey Project Leader)
Ward and Maxine Aas (former Soil Scientist)
Steve and Judy Suhs (former Soil Scientist)
Rod Heschke (former Area Resource Soil Scientist and Soil Survey Project Leader)
Ralph Rundell (former Soil Conservation Technician)
John Polley (former DC in Warren and later Professor for University of MN, Crookston)
Chet and Pauline Aubol (former Civil Engineering Technician)
Darol Melby (former DC and RC&D coordinator)
Tom Jackson (MLRA Soil Survey Leader)
Al Gustafson (Area Resource Conservationist, Area1)
Glen Kajewski (Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, Area 1)
Manuel Matos (Area Resource Soil Scientist, Area 1)

Historic Conservation Photos

7-1-1948 - Stacking Hay
Stacking Hay on Wiger farm. Mr. Wiger's two boys assisting with operations.
Norman County, MN 4 mile NW of Ulen, MN

Photographer: E.L. Henrikson

Personnel

Manuel Matos, was hired as the Area 1 Resource Soil Scientist effective July 7, 2008. Manuel formerly worked for ND NRCS as a MLRA staff member in Fargo. Welcome to NW MN Manuel.

Kevin Gietzen, returned to Area 1 from the Detroit Lakes FO. Kevin accepted a Soil Conservation Technician in the Warren FO. Welcome Back Kevin.

Luther Newton, District Conservationist, Red Lake Falls FO, was promoted June, 22, 2008. Congratulations Luther.

Joe Van Huelle, Agricultural Engineer, Thief River Falls AO, accepted a position with WI NRCS effective August 31, 2008. He will be missed.

Patty Burns was selected as the Red Lake Tribal Liaison effective Sept. 15, 2008. Patty has worked for NRCS as a Soil Scientist on the Koochiching soil survey and as a MAES Soil Scientist assisting with a number of soil surveys in northwest MN. Welcome Patty.

Adam Woltjer, Soil Conservation Technician, McIntosh FO, was selected for the White Earth Tribal Liaison position and began his new duties on Sept 15, 2008. Congratulations Adam.

COLLEEN OESTREICH, ASTC(FO)
FERGUS FALLS, MN

Wildlife Expo

By: Russell Kleinschmidt, District Conservationist Wadena

The 3rd Annual Conservation and Wildlife Expo was held August 23rd-24th at the Wadena County Fairgrounds. The event is hosted by the Wadena SWCD and strives to promote district programs and natural resource conservation education especially among our youth. This year there were 37 vendors and approximately 1000 attendees with a large percentage being children. The event wouldn't be as successful without the 20-30 volunteers each day putting in many hours of service. This year's events included a MN Zoo presentation with live animals, bird house building demonstration, native grass seeding and buckthorn control presentations, an all day family fun center with lots of games and activities for children, "Enviroshow" with Tricia and the Toonies, trap and 3D archery shoot, kids archery shooting, Turn in Poacher's (TIP) Wall of Shame, lead tackle exchange for non-toxic tackle, dog agility and obedience training, photo contest, and many more. The vendor products ranged from outdoor gear, home products, prize giveaways, informational booths, meat processing, firearms safety and permit to carry, food, clothes, natural resource agency booths, and more. There was also a raffle with prizes ranging from firearms, knives, fishing tackle, gift certificates from various local merchants, Roundup Ready Corn, ground blind, spotting scope, and more. In house the Wadena Farm Service Center had 4 booths; FSA, NRCS, SWCD, and the National Agroforestry Center's Working Trees for Wildlife display. Next year's events will likely rival past year's and will be advertised as in the past so expect to see another e-mail and brochure distributed to all field offices.

Tricia and the Toonies "Enviroshow" teaching kids about the environment and recycling

Taking aim at balloons and a deer silhouette in the background during the kids archery shoot.

Archery shooters scoring targets and retrieving their arrows during the 3D archery competition

Historic Photo

Oct 10, 1945
Leveling spoil bank on Ruepke Bros. farm. (Twin Valley Work Group)
Ada, MN 4 miles NE of Ada

Photo by E.L. Henrickson

Personnel

Dan Pazdernik began his soil conservationist duties at the Detroit Lakes Field Office.

Amanda Smith was reassigned to the Moorhead Field Office.

Andrea Horsman, Wheaton, received a promotion.

Randy Schmiesing, Morris, received a promotion.

Awards

Darlene Drayna received a Pen & Key Chain for serving as the Area 2 Safety and Health Representative.

Stanley Musielewicz received a Flashlight for serving as the Area 2 Representative on the Employee Development Committee.

Steve Lutes received a Pen & Key Chain for serving as the Area 2 Representative on the Civil Rights Committee.

Robert Koltes received a Pen & Key Chain for serving as the Area 2 Volunteer Coordinator.

Stanley Musielewicz received a Pen & Key Chain for serving as the Area 2 Representative on the Federal Women's Program.

Robert Honeman received a spot award for serving in the capacity of the acting Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations for Area 2.

Eric Soupir received a spot award for developing a simple and comprehensive Pipeline Design spreadsheet program.

William Marken received a barn jacket for going above his assigned duties in assisting the field offices.

Andrea Horsman received a 3 in 1 coat for assisting the Breckenridge Field Office.

KEVIN DAW, ASTC(FO)
DULUTH, MN

Grazing Workshop, a Success!

By: Deb Hermel, District Conservationist, North Branch

A grazing workshop was held on August 19th, 2008 to reach landowners that manage a few acres and a few horses. As these acreages north of the metro area increase, the range of management capabilities varies greatly. Chisago and Isanti NRCS and SWCD and Onanegozie RC&D combined their resources and offered a workshop to address management concerns, offer forage recommendations, and provide general information on rotational grazing and pasture quality. John Zinn, State Grazing Specialist, Deb Hermel, Chisago Co. District Conservationist, and other NRCS, SWCD, and RC&D staff provided the training, information, and materials. The workshop was held at a well managed horse farm that used EQIP to initially set up the rotational grazing system. Because the farm is located in the Anoka Sand Plains, it was an ideal location to demonstrate that good management can produce optimum forage production in the poorest soils. Both cool season and warm season grasses were utilized in the paddock rotation as well as high a tensile fence and pipeline system. Twenty-one landowners participated in the workshop and excellent questions were asked and a good discussion of what worked and what did not work was led by the host landowner. The group then walked through the pasture to identify grasses in both the warm and cool season grass paddocks and to discuss best management practices. It was an excellent learning experience for all the participants and an excellent cooperation event between NRCS, SWCD, and RC&D.

Personnel

Josh Bork, was selected for the District Conservationist position at our Cambridge Field Office effective June 9, 2008. Welcome to Area 3, Josh!

Kim Peterson, WAE, Milaca FO, resigned June 25, 2008. Good luck to Kim in her future endeavors!

Roger Risley, is now Area 3's MLRA Soil Survey Coordinator effective August 4, 2008. Congratulations, Roger!

James Lahn, is our new Area Resources Conservationist effective September 2, 2008. Welcome aboard, Jim!

The following employees were selected for Soil Conservation Technician positions: **Kyle Asplund,** Grand Rapids FO; **Candi Fuller,** Aitkin FO; **Bill Hutson,** Milaca FO; **Jennifer Hahn,** North Branch FO; **Mike Yrjo,** Hinckley FO; and **Roger Marks,** Virginia FO. Congratulations!

Mark Surface was selected for the Civil Engineering Technician position at the Grand Rapids FO. Congratulations!

Promotion

Congratulations to **Dana Raines,** RC&D Coordinator, on his recent promotion.

Retirement

Marc Diers, MLRA Soil Survey Coordinator, retired July 2, 2008. We wish Marc the very best during his retirement years!

Non-monetary Awards

James Hahn - For his participation in the NRCS Leadership Team meeting. He offered new ideas addressing Minnesota issues.

Marvin Kunkel and **Ben Ellefson** - For conducting an excellent Surveying II training session.

On a personal note…

Three bundles of joy….

Congratulations are extended to:

Marvin Kunkel, Civil Engineering Technician, Mora FO, and his wife on the birth of their son, **Jeremy David,** born July 5th !

Jennifer Hahn, Soil Conservation Technician, North Branch FO, and hubby on the birth of their daughter, **Sequora**, born June 18 !

Thomas Gervais, Soil Conservation Technician, Duluth FO, and his wife on the birth of their son, **Laine Lonny,** born July 21 !

TIMOTHY WILSON, ASTC(FO)
BROOKLYN CENTER, MN

Anaerobic Manure Digester Field Day

By: Jaime Schaunaman, Soil Conservationist, Waite Park

An Anaerobic Manure Digester Field Day was held on June 27, 2008, at the Jerry and Linda Jennissen Farm (Jer-Lindy Farms) near Brooten, Minnesota in Stearns County. The field day was held so interested producers, public, and agency people could learn about this cutting edge technology happening in rural Stearns County.

The field day tour started in Padua, Minnesota with registration and a brief overview of the Jennissen operation and the methane digester process. Participants then boarded tour busses and were taken to the Jer-Lindy Farms. There they were split into smaller groups and toured five different stations to see the processes first hand. The tour took about 45 minutes to complete and buses were going back and forth from the farm to Padua all day. The day was judged a complete success with over 300 people attending the tour and learning about this progressive farming technology.

Michael Hemmann, CET Waite Park, is discussing the construction of the manure pit with field day participants.

Participants boarded the buses in Padua, MN and were driven the 3 miles to the Jennissen farm to complete the tour.

Until recently, anaerobic digester technology has proven economically feasible and profitable on farms with at least 300 cows. However, the overwhelming majority of Minnesota dairy farms fall below that minimum cow threshold. The goal of this project was to test cutting edge technology that could prove to be profitable for an average sized Minnesota dairy farm. Jer-Lindy Farms was selected for the methane digester plot project site for various reasons, but mainly because they are an average sized dairy farm and are innovative, environmentally conscience producers. Their dairy operation originated in 1979 and they are currently milking 160 cows with 130 replacement heifers, and farm 200 acres of corn and alfalfa to feed their dairy.

Jerry and Linda Jennissen were available all day for participants to talk with and answer any questions about the digester and their operation.

Manure from the dairy cows is processed through an anaerobic digester, destroying over 95 percent of the bacteria and pathogens in the manure which reduces the odor. The methane generated in process is collected and burned through a genset and the electricity produced is used on farm with the excess being sent back to the grid. The digested effluent is then processed through a solids separator with the recycled solids being used for bedding in the free stall barn and the remaining liquid is stored in an earthen lagoon. The liquid, which still contains all of the nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, is then applied to their crop land as fertilizer.

The generator produces electricity that is used on farm and sent back into the Stearns Electric grid.

The solids remaining after the digesting process are used as bedding in the free stall barn.

Awards

Omar Vega, GIS Specialist, Brooklyn Center received a Polo Shirt for assistance provided in training area employees on the new travel program GovTrip.

Joseph Storlien, Earth Team Volunteer, Waite Park received the Dennis M. Thayer Leadership Award from St. Cloud State University. Joe has served on the board of directors for the Friends of the Sauk River, been an Earth Team Volunteer for NRCS, and has been active in the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

Lower Sauk River Water Festival

By: Jaime Schaunaman, Soil Conservationist, Waite Park

The Lower Sauk River Water Festival was held on Wednesday September 17th in St. Joseph, MN. About 350 area 4th graders from 5 different elementary schools spent the day traveling around the city park and learning about all aspects of water through educational games and demonstrations. Natural Resource professionals from a variety of different agencies and organizations spent the day presenting their water related topics to numerous groups of students in 25 minute intervals. Among the presenters was Jaime Schaunaman, NRCS Soil Conservationist, and Mark Lefebvre, SWCD Nutrient Management Specialist, both from the Waite Park field office.

Mark Lefebvre and Jaime Schaunaman conduct the Conservation Jeopardy game which one student said "was the funniest game he has ever played"!

Mark Lefebvre and Jaime Schaunaman talked about the water cycle, demonstrated the 'Rainfall Simulator', and played 'Conservation Jeopardy'. Discussing the water cycle and demonstrating the rainfall simulator; which is a model designed to simulate rainfall on 5 different types of land treatment (bare soil, mulch till, no-till, filter strip and permanent vegetation) paved the way for a competitive Conservation Jeopardy game. The 4 categories of Conservation Jeopardy were Water Cycle, Water Quality, Soils and Best Management Practices. The groups were split up into 2 teams and had to work together to answer the questions correctly. The winning teams were awarded NRCS bookmarks, however, there were no losers as everyone learned a lot, had fun and went home with their very own water cycle poster!

Personnel

Jerry Struthers, Soil Conservation Technician, Buffalo retired on June 18, 2008.

Emily Javens was hired by the Scott SWCD as District Engineer effective April14, 2008. She will oversee construction projects.

Jodi Worm, Secretary/Communication Specialist, Scott SWCD resigned July 11, 2008, after 11 years to move with her family to Indiana.

Diane Hrabe, Secretary/Communication Specialist, Scott SWCD was hired effective June 30, 2008. She will be in charge of outreach and education programs.

Nathan Blankers, Soil Conservationist (SC), Waite Park transferred to Ivanhoe effective August 31, 2008.

Derrick Harmon, SC, Jordan transferred to Caledonia, MN effective August 31, 2008.

Lynette Horton-Harmon, SC, Farmington transferred to Preston, MN effective August 31, 2008.

GARY WATSON, ASTC-FO
MARSHALL, MN

Cultural Event held in Big Stone County

By: Krecia Leddy, District Conservationist, Ortonville

This past summer Big Stone County NRCS helped plan one of the Cultural Appreciation Events supported by Minnesota NRCS and the Minnesota NRCS Civil Rights Committee. The event took place at the Big Stone Hutterian Brethren Colony near Graceville, Minnesota on July 10, 2008.

Over 50 participants from NRCS, FSA, RC&D, Rural Development, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts attended the event. Clarence Hofer, President of the Colony, led the tour for the participants. He explained the Hutterian historical significance and religious movement to the United States for religious freedom. The participants learned about the Hutterian way of life, including housing, schooling for the children, and the role of men and women in the colony. The colony is a self-sustaining community. The Hutterite Colony presently grows corn, soybeans, and vegetables which they sell at the local Farmer's Market and on-site at the colony. They also raise turkeys, and swine, and a handful of chickens for egg production. Specialized products they also market include: honey and wine. The Ortonville NRCS Field Office has worked with the colony through EQIP for a manure and animal composting facility, nutrient and pest management, and a CNMP. Participants felt the tour was a worthwhile event.

Historic Photo

Farm Pasture Renovation, Pasture inspection-Crowd at Joe Johnson farm pasture renovation.

7/22/1947 Photographer: E.H. Waldeen

Personnel

Newest member to the Area 5 team is **Nathan Blankers,** Soil Conservationist, that transferred from Willmar to Ivanhoe effective September 1, 2008. Welcome Nathan.

Four field offices were able to utilize some While Actually Employeed (WAE) assistance this summer. Thank you for helping the NRCS team this summer.
Diane Doom – Marshall field office
Mark Yrjo – Redwood Falls field office – has returned to college
Rachel Christiansen – Pipestone field office – has returned to college
Ellen Cameron - Ortonville field office – has returned to college

Steve Woljter accepted a District Conservationist position in Colorado and his last day in MN is September 19, 2008. Best wishes in Colorado.

Cheryl Isder was married to Curt Heard on August 9, 2008. Congratulations to the newly wed couple.

Recognition

Monetary

Several field offices received a cash award that had less than the state percentage of late rate by a certain date.

Non-monetary

Michelle Legatt – watch - for assisting in getting the late rate below the state percentage.
Vonnie Nilges – 3-1 coat - for her assistance to the program specialist with late rate
Steve Wotjer – 3-1 coat – for his contribution and years of service to Area 5 and MN NRCS.
Sandra Jerzak – 3-1 – year end of purchasing equipment for area/field offices
Cory Drummond – 3-1 coat – for his work on the Civil Rights Committee.

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

Minnesota Association of RC&Ds Summer Meeting

By: Dean Schmidt, RC&D Coordinator
WesMin RC&D

The Summer MARC&D meeting took place August 27-28th at the Holiday inn in Willmar. Prairie Country RC&D served as the host for the summer meeting. After a great lunch, a bus tour began starting with three sites in Benson.

First, Chippewa Valley Ethanol Company was toured. CVEC is currently gasifying wood chips to replace natural gas normally used to make corn ethanol. This lowers the costs of operating and uses renewable fuel to make ethanol, which is what the plant wants to do because it makes sense to reduce the use of fossil fuels when making ethanol from farm grown corn crops. CVEC is also currently working on a demonstration project to utilize corn cobs as another source of biomass for their biomass gasification system and energy needs. Manager Bill Lee stated "We would rather pay our farmers and Coop members for their biomass, such as corn cobs, and keep those energy dollars in our community than to buy gas or oil or fossil fuels from other states or countries".

Outstanding Youth Involvement:
Park Rapids Area Schools Wind Energy Project (Giziibii RC&D). Carol Berg, accepts the award on behalf of Park Rapids Area Schools from MARC&D President, George Swentik (L to R) Darlene Kukuczka, Marla Watje, and Ron Purcell accept the award from George Swentik

Outstanding Organization:
Waseca SWCD (Three Rivers RC&D) – for bookkeeping assistance and cooperative assistance to Three Rivers RC&D.

The second stop was Fibrominn, where turkey litter, which is mostly wood chips, and other

Outstanding staff Member award:
JoAnn Nelson: Onanegozie RC&D – for 22 years of NRCS administrative assistance to the RC&D program and assistance with many Onanogozie RC&D projects.

biomass are burned and converted to steam, which then powers a turbine to make electricity for 40,000 homes. Group tours were also held of this facility to see how the turkey litter and biomass were burned to make energy.

The next stop was Ambush Park in Benson to learn about Prairie Country's involvement in outdoor classrooms there, and a presentation was given by Kylene Olson about the Chippewa River Watershed Project. Prairie Country RC&D helped to establish this and three other Watershed Projects who operate through grants and contributions to monitor the rivers and assist other groups with Best Management Practices to improve Water quality. Prairie country plays a key role in coordinating the groups that work together and as a fiscal agent for grants and operations.

Next Dublin Dairy was visited, one of the largest dairies in the state at 5200 cows. The tour group watched the milk cows revolve in a carousel while being milked. The dairy reuses its manure for bedding, and has a large lagoon and runoff basins to protect the environment.

NRCS Special Award:
Jim Hall, past MARC&D President was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation, in recognition of outstanding assistance to the RC&D program.
Ann English, Assistant State Conservationist, presents the award on behalf of State Conservationist, William Hunt

An awards banquet was then held at Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center near Willmar.

Special President's Award:
Prairie Country RC&D for outstanding assistance to MARC&D in acting as a fiscal agent for the North Central RC&D conference

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

Erosion damage to road constructed in fall of 1946. No seedlings of cuts had been made, which made this erosion damage possible.

June 25, 1947 Photographer: Einar L. Henrikson

JOHN NICOLSON, ASTC(FO)
ROCHESTER, MN

2008 Fabulous FISH Food Drive

The results are in – WAY TO GO FARIBAULT, you guys donated a fantastic amount of food! Congratulations, you are the winners of the lunch prepared by John Nicholson and the FISH committee, plus you are the new keepers of the Fabulous FISH Trophy.

Congratulations to all the Service Centers that participated. It turned out to be a great way to help your communities and it looks like you had a little fun along the way. Austin took it to the next level with a "food pep rally" to get the troops pumped and even had some donation matching challenges within the Service Center. It sure seemed to have worked for them and it sounds like they had a good time doing it.

Seven Service Centers raised over $1,000 and a ton of food – literally! That comes to over 7,000 meals. Thanks everybody, it was a really nice thing to do to help out our Southeast Minnesota neighbors.

Service Center	Total Pounds Collected	Total Money Collected	Service Center Total Pounds	PoundsCollected Per Capita
Faribault	2075.0		2,075.00	98.81
Austin	353.8	$379.00	1,111.80	69.49
Lewiston	4.0	$190.00	384.00	29.54
Rochester AO	62.5	$201.00	464.50	29.03
Dodge Center	69.0	$70.00	209.00	23.22
Albert Lea	78.0	$65.00	208.00	13.00
Preston		$128.00	256.00	12.80
TOTAL	**2,642.3**	**$1033.00**	**4,708.30**	**42.42**

CONGRATULATIONS FARIBAULT SERVICE CENTER
Winners of the 2008 Fabulous FISH Food Drive

CONSERVATION TOUR JULY 30

By: Noel Frank, District Conservationist Owatonna

Jim Smith, Steele County NRCS Conservation Technician along with Eric Gulbransen, SWCD Technician explains a project including 13 water and sediment control basins as one of the stops on the tour. The tour was attended by 36 people including local politicians and county commissioners. Other stops on the tour included a livestock waste system, grassed waterway, farmstead and field windbreaks, notill and conservation easements restored to wetlands and prairie. The SWCD served BBQ. Beef dinner after the tour.

PERSONNEL

Patrick Schaefers, was selected for the District Conservationist in Wabasha effective 08/31/2008. Pat is transferring to MN from Algona, IA.

Derrick Harmon, Soil Conservationist in Jordan was reassigned to Caledonia Field Office effective 08/31/2008.

Lynette Horton-Harmon, Soil Conservationist in Farmington was reassigned to Preston Field Office effective 08/31/2008.

Colin Williams, was selected for the Soil Conservationist Technician position in the Goodhue Field office. Colin spent the last 10 years working in the Lewiston field office.

Contributions for the next issue of Current Developments are due: December 11, 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!