



Minnesota

Current Developments

October/November/December

2008



*Donated Leave Program!
Banette Krizsky
GIS Specialist
See Page 8*



Remarks from the State Conservationist

It's hard to believe we have reached the month of December and 2008 is almost over. As State Conservationist, I appreciate your ongoing efforts to make conservation easier, to prepare NRCS to meet future challenges, and to put conservation on the ground (the real measure of our success!).

NRCS, initiated a massive effort to review 100 per cent of Open Obligations in a very short time frame. Thanks to all of you and the great field, area, state office staff we are on course to completing our Open Obligation review assignment ahead of schedule! I realize this audit effort has required sacrifice from our employees, their families, and our partners. Continue the good work efforts and I hope that you are able to spend some needed time with your friends and family during the holiday season.

If, as Charles Dickens said so eloquently, this is the time of year "when abundance rejoices," may you and yours know true goodness, true joy and true peace as you celebrate the happiest of holidays.

Thank you!

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist

CONSERVATION COUNTS

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MORE THAN 2 MILLION ACRES ARE NOW ENROLLED IN USDA'S WETLAND RESERVE PROGRAM

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

On October 29, 2008, NRCS Area 4 served as a host of a National Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) event in Carver County, Minnesota. The event was held at a 73.2 acre parcel of land owned by Donald and Barbara Wagener with an adjoining 6.3 acre site owned by Ronald and Miriam Hilke. This event was planned to celebrate the enrollment of 2,000,000 acres of land that has been enrolled into the WRP.

Nationally, NRCS held two WRP events, namely, one in Pennsylvania and this event in Carver County. The event site is located just west of Lake Waconia, a popular recreational lake in the Twin Cities area. By restoring this site back to its natural condition, many environmental benefits including improved water quality, enhanced water storage, increased wildlife habitat and open space preservation will be realized.

The site is currently being managed as a sod farm with a few acres of corn and soybeans. Farming is made possible by the presence of a large pump which pulls water from the site and discharges it into the tile line which then drains into Lake Waconia. It is anticipated that the easement will close sometime in 2009 with restoration beginning in the fall of 2009 or the spring of 2010.

William Hunt, State Conservationist served as the moderator for the WRP program and Tim Koehler, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs served as the WRP event chair. Koehler had assistance from several Area 4, State Office employees and staff from Carver SWCD. Close to 150 people attended the event on a cool, crisp Minnesota autumn day.



L-R William Hunt State Conservationist and Arlen Lancaster, NRCS Chief



L-R Barbara Wagener, Don Wagener, Arlen Landcaster NRCS Chief, Miriam Hilke and Ronald Hilke.

Several local, state and federal dignitaries provided comments during the program. A common theme existed throughout the presentations; the importance of working together to achieve a common purpose. NRCS Chief, Arlen Lancaster gave the keynote address and announced that landowners have enrolled more than 2 million acres in USDA's WRP, a significant contribution toward exceeding a national goal of increasing the Nation's wetlands. Since August 1, 2008 Minnesota NRCS has enrolled 9,776 new acres into WRP. This helped the Federal government's 3-year goal of increasing the number and size of America's wetlands.

Lancaster reminded the audience that partnerships at the local level with the Soil and Water Conservation District and NRCS are key.

Minnesota is one of the leading states in the country in Federal Farm Bill WRP participation. Currently we have over 600 landowners enrolled on nearly 75,000 acres across the state. Partnerships in the state are key and have helped make WRP an overwhelming success. Willing landowners, non-profits (e.g. Ducks unlimited,³

Minnesota Waterfowl Association, Pheasants Forever and the Nature Conservancy, etc) and agencies have worked together to provide a multitude of economic and environmental benefits through WRP.

One of our most significant partners is the Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR) who has partnered with NRCS utilizing Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Program to leverage federal and state dollars and technical resources to get much bigger bang for the buck.

It took 18 years to reach the milestone achievement of 2,000,000 acres. Minnesota's remarkable commitment to wetlands played a role in making this result happen!

Questions pertaining to this event should be directed to Tim Koehler, ASTC-FO. Tim can be reached at (651)-602-7857.

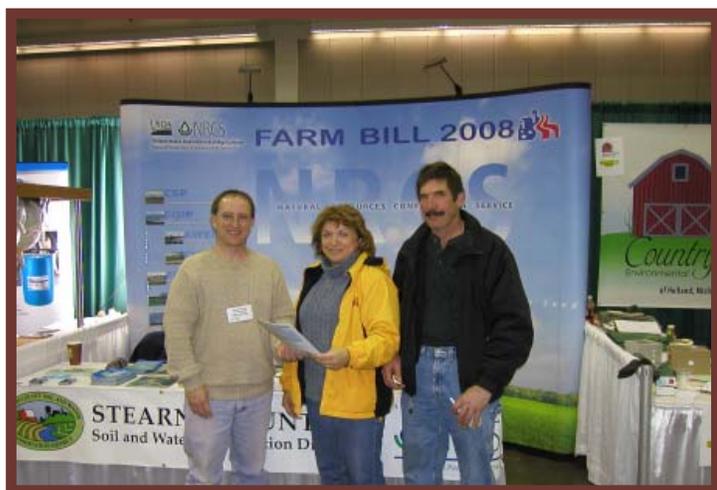
Waite Park Field Office exhibits at the 2008 Midwest Dairy Expo

By: Steven Sellnow, District Conservationist, Waite Park

The NRCS Waite Park field office and Stearns County SWCD were one of many exhibitors at the 2008 Midwest Dairy Expo held December 9 – 10 at the St. Cloud Civic Center. The theme of this year's event was "Bringing the Industry Together" and if the turnout is an indicator, the event achieved its goal with nearly 1,500 participants over the two days. Along with the



Theresa and Dave Kolb – Stearns County CSP participants, visit with Mark Lefebvre from Stearns County SWCD at the Midwest Dairy Expo



Grant Pearson – Stearns County SWCD, talks with Donna and Tom Gregory, 2008 Outstanding Conservation Cooperators in Stearns County at the NRCS booth at the 2008 Midwest Dairy Expo

trade show, the Expo offered participants a variety of educational breakout sessions to help them improve their operations. Events like this provide an excellent opportunity for field office staff to network with producers and others in the industry.

MINNESOTA NRCS Farm Bill Communication Plan

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist



Goal:

Inform Minnesota's key audiences about the NRCS conservation programs in the 2008 Farm Bill, what's different from the 2002 Farm Bill, what conservation gains can be made through NRCS conservation programs.

Key messages:

- NRCS conservation programs offer many opportunities for private landowners and the conservation of natural resources.
- An application for conservation program assistance is a request for a conservation plan.
- NRCS conservation programs continue to provide ways to assist limited resource farmers, Socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers apply conservation practices.
- NRCS conservation programs are not just for farmers and ranchers. All Minnesotans benefit from clean water, clear air, productive soil, and healthy wildlife.
- NRCS conservation programs present more dollars, more opportunities, and more flexibility to help local Soil and Water Conservation Districts address local resource concerns. Local stakeholder involvement is critical to the successful implementation of EQIP and other conservation programs.

Key Audiences:

- o Landowners, farmers, ranchers
- o Limited resource, Socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers
- o Partner groups
- o Media
- o Urban residents
- o Wildlife managers/recreation users

Several tactics will be implemented to make this Farm Bill Communication's plan a reality.

1. Series of news releases
2. Series of program fact sheets—to be developed by the National Office and if necessary, the fact sheets can be tailored for use in Minnesota.
3. NRCS Conservation Programs brochure—to be developed and printed by the National Office.
4. Farm Bill conservation programs display –currently available from LANDCARE.
5. Power point presentations-A short and long version have already been posted on the MN NRCS website.
6. Programs webpages—To be updated in the near future when more program information is available.
7. Interviews with the Media
8. Speaking Engagements regarding the 2008 Farm Bill.

Coming soon! The 2009 NRCS Calendar



January - Helping People Help the Land
by Mike Oja



Minnesota

Helping People Help the Land
www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov



July - Wetlands
by Burton Hendrickson



February - Working Farms and Ranch Lands
by Kathy Fillmore

2009

January 2009						
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August - Conservation Partnership
by Robert Joachim



March - Conservation Planning and Technical Consultation
by Sue Glende

February 2009						
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September - Renewable Energy
by Gregory Tennant



April - Employees Making a Difference
by Michael Hemmann

March 2009						
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October - Conservation Implementation
by Donna-Marie Klapperich



May - Cooperative Conservation with our Conservation Partners
by Brian Christiansen

April 2009						
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November - Productive Lands - Healthy Environment
by Kevin Gietzen



June - Clean Water
by Thomas Steger

May 2009						
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December - RC&D Making Things Happen in Minnesota
by Paul Sandstrom

June 2009						
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Digital Photo Contest Themes for 2009

January – Conservation Partnership

February – Energy Conservation

March – Renewable Energy

April – Clean Water

May – High Quality and Productive Soils

June –Wetlands

July – Conservation Implementation

August – Water Conservation

September – NRCS employees

October – Woodlands

November – Helping People Help the Land

December – Conservation Planning

BANETTE KRITZKY, GIS SPECIALIST, Named Recipient of The Polaris Leadership Award For 2008

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

The Minnesota GIS/LIS Consortium has recently selected Banette Kritzky, GIS Specialist from MN Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to be the recipient of the Polaris Leadership Award for 2008. The award is given by peers in the GIS community for leadership and significant contributions to the Minnesota GIS/LIS Consortium and the statewide GIS community.



Banette Kritzky, Geographical Information Specialist (GIS), MN NRCS State Office

Minnesota. Members include GIS users in local, state and federal government agencies; business and industry; and educational institutions.

Banette Kritzky has continuously and tirelessly contributed toward the betterment of the GIS community through service, coordination and education. She has increased the awareness and the value of GIS to the state Department of Agriculture and the Minnesota Department of Transportation where she led efforts to provide service and increase communication within those agencies. At the same time, she became a leading force for increasing communication across state agencies. She continues this supportive and collaborative work at the NRCS – providing leadership across the state of Minnesota and the nation. At the Minnesota GIS/LIS Consortium she has provided service as the Secretary, Chair-elect, Chair, Spring Workshop Chair, Scholarship Chair, Data Base Chair, and Policy Manual Chair. Her leadership of the Scholarship Committee has led to a better program, with a student competition and a growing endowment fund. On top of all this, she has been the GIS instructor at Anoka Ramsey Community College for the past six years, where she educates and trains up and coming GIS professionals.

DONATED LEAVE PROGRAM

By: Banette Kritzky Geographical Information Specialist (GIS)

First, I cannot even begin to show or tell you the gratitude I feel for those of you who have donated portions of your vacation leave to keep me in pay status for over a year now. And many of you have probably donated more than once or twice. Your generosity has allowed me to keep all of my benefits AND continue to keep up with my mortgage payments. So, all I can think of is to say Thank You, Thank You, Thank You.

I have suffered from Meniere's syndrome for many years, and up until October, 2007, the meds I took kept the dizzies to a minimum. Then out of nowhere, the meds just stopped working – no warning, they just stopped, so occurrences of vertigo and disequilibrium took over – very awful stuff.

I spent 4 months going to the National Dizzy and Balance Clinic for testing and therapy. The therapy helped my balance issues for a while, but we reached a point where therapy did not help at all, and started to slip backwards.

The bottom line is that I'm extremely limited in what I'm able to do. I can do some driving – side streets at slow speeds and close distances, but cannot do daily nor for very long. So I have to be very careful when I schedule doctor or therapy appointments, or when I need to pick up some groceries or medicines (all at my local SuperTarget – a half mile from my home using side streets). The movement of the scenery going past stirs up the dizzies.

Reading has always been a passion of mine however, I now have challenges with reading. The movement of my eyes going back and forth, as well as any head movement, stirs up the dizziness and nausea. I'd like to try one of the large print books at some point, but it's too soon yet; but I try to remain positive that some day this will be possible. Other "complications" I deal with daily (either due to a compromised immune system from the medications I must take or my brain in overdrive trying to deal with all of these issues), include Rheumatoid Arthritis, Fibromyalgia, blepharospasms, several bouts of arthritic gout, a couple of serious bouts of flu (I cannot take the flu shot due to egg allergy), taking antibiotics when undergoing any dental treatment, not able to be in group settings, carry on a conversation for very long, and memory issues.

On a different note, my most favorite holiday movie is White Christmas. And how appropriate that this movie came on while I was working on this document as it made me think of our young men and women overseas who put themselves in harm's way to protect us. It helps to remind me that while my life has changed and is definitely not how I thought I'd spend my retirement years, that movie definitely put things into perspective for me. While I deal with my medical issues, I still have a lot to be thankful for – the generosity of those of you who have helped me financially with your generous annual leave donations for over a year now, a wonderful and loving family, and supportive friends.

Again, your donations have been a life saver for me, kept my stress levels from going through the roof, and has allowed me to focus on my health rather than worrying about losing my health benefits, my home, etc.

I wish you all the most wonderful Holiday Season, and the best of health to you and your loved ones! And to those of you who have donated, I just cannot express my thanks enough times. I continue to send up a prayer of thanks to watch over and keep you and yours safe and healthy!

But wait a minute . . .

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Duluth Community Garden Program

By: Mike Walczynski, Resource Soil Scientist

Laurentian RC&D has partnered with the Duluth Community Garden Program to provide strategic planning for an adequate water supply to be available at all of its garden sites. Working with Laurentian RC&D, NRCS Area 3 Resource Soil Scientist, Mike Walczynski, completed three test borings and identified a site at the Cook Home Garden with potential for a irrigation well. A cost estimate was generated and Laurentian RC&D assisted the Community Garden's Executive Director with applying for a grant to Minnesota Power.

The grant request was funded at \$2000. The program manages approximately 200 garden plots located among 17 sites across the City of Duluth and serves many low income and minority gardeners.

Laurentian will continue to assist this project by seeking donations of needed materials, equipment, and providing strategic planning.



Resource Soil Scientist
Mike Walczynski

**Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much!**

-Helen Keller

LIQUID MANURE, SOIL MACRO PORES AND TILE DRAINAGE

By: Area 6

This past August Jennifer Cavanaugh, Gary Hahn and Doug Miller attended a field day at the Waseca Experiment Station. Demonstrated was how porous soil can be under certain conditions and how soil macropores impact preferential flow into drain tile. Frank Gibbs, an NRCS Resource Soil Scientist from Northeast Ohio, came to demonstrate his “smoke machine” to show just how porous soil can be! Essentially, the smoke travels through the tile line, to the soil



macropores and out to the surface. The demonstration shows how liquid manure, knifed in, when too low in solids, can move through soil macropores into the tile lines. Frank has years of experience growing up on the family’s dairy farm and as working for NRCS in a region of Ohio where tile drainage of the soil is prevalent.

The Buckeye soil scientist made an impression to the demonstration attendees which included professionals from federal, state and local agencies. To read more about what Frank has done, just Google: Frank Gibbs, Soil Macropores, Liquid Manure, Drain Tile. A number of technical papers on this subject will come up.

Field days provide excellent hands-on learning opportunities

The Optimist Creed

Promise Yourself-

To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind.

To talk health, happiness and prosperity to every person you meet.

To make all your friends feel that there is something in them.

To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true.

To think only of the best, to work only for the best, and to expect only the best.

To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.

To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future.

To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile.

To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others.

To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.

National Disability Awareness Month

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

A National Disability Month event took place at the NRCS State Office on October 14. Cutrina Moreland, Special Programs Coordinator, Disability Employment Program Manager served as the event organizer. Lakelle Pritchett, Area 4 Agriculture Engineer served as the moderator.

Opening comments were provided by William Hunt, State Conservationist. Hunt said the National Disability month state office event was a way of NRCS taking the time to acknowledge and show appreciation for the contributions that have been made by people with disabilities. Hunt shared President Bush's National Disability month proclamation. "Greater freedoms exist because of being inclusive of freedom initiatives" said Hunt.

Additional information regarding disabilities can be found at www.disabilityinfo.gov

Steve Wenzel, State Executive Director for Rural Development said William Hunt is an excellent leader that acknowledges diversity and people with disabilities. As a result, USDA employees in Minnesota have a better understanding of diversity issues. Wenzel said RDs' efforts have helped people with disabilities by helping people become active in main stream America.

Marie Keller, Regional Manager for Deaf and hard Hearing Services served as one of the speakers for the event. Keller said hearing loss is with people on a day in and day out basis. The use of assistive technologies can help break down communication barriers and in some cases, eliminate or minimize the barriers.

Keller cited a few statistics to better provide the audience with an understanding of deafness in today's society.

- * 1 in 5 Americans have a disability
- * 1 in 10 Minnesotans has hearing loss
- * Aging workforce will have more hearing challenges. 1 out of 3 (age 65) and up.

Margo Imdicke, Accessibility Specialist, Minnesota State Council on Disabilities served as the last program speaker. Imdicke focused her topic of discussion on disability awareness. Imdicke said 1 in 5 people have disabilities, physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more life activities.

The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) became law in 1990 and is the cornerstone of laws protecting the civil rights of people with disabilities. ADA is just one of several federal and state laws in place to protect the rights of people with disabilities. Citizens of the United States are fortunate that pioneers of the disability movement worked tirelessly to ensure these rights. It is therefore our obligation to take responsibility when enjoying these rights.

The Minnesota State Council on Disability advances the rights of Minnesotans with disabilities. For more information check out the website: www.disability.state.mn.us

Questions regarding the National Disability month event should be directed to Cutrina Moreland. Cutrina can be reached at (651)-602-7882.

Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration

By: Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist

Another successful Special Emphasis month celebration was held on October 8, 2008 at the NRCS State Office in down-town St. Paul. Leslie Diaz, Soil Conservationist from the Rochester Field Office served as the event's moderator. Diaz recently moved to Minnesota from Puerto Rico.

William Hunt, State Conservationist for MN NRCS shared opening remarks. Hunt said that events such as Hispanic Heritage Month are ways in NRCS can celebrate our diversity. Recently MN NRCS sent two NRCS employees to Puerto Rico to assist in the recruitment of Hispanic Students. Manuel Matos, Area Soil Scientist from Thief River Falls and Omar Vega, Geographic Information Specialist and HEPM served on the recruitment team. Hunt expressed his appreciation for the role Matos and Vega played in recruiting NRCS employees for Minnesota!



**Kim Steffen, Michael Vasquez,
Tom Neuenfeldt**

Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin served as the Keynote speaker for the Hispanic Heritage month celebration. Marroquin is a Guatemalan citizen, born in 1967. He earned his degree in agronomy from the Central National School of Agriculture and conducted studies in agronomy at the Universidad de San Carlos in Guatemala. Haslett-Marroquin graduated from Augsburg College in 1992. He is currently employed by Main Street project of Minneapolis as the founder and Director of the rural Enterprise Center.

All of the work that is done by Haslett-Marroquin takes place in rural Minnesota. He focuses in on several issues including: poverty, social, political, environmental issues, civic partnerships, education and sustainable development. The Main Street project works in rural communities and tries to give voices of hope and inspirations.

This has resulted in the Project focusing in on Key projects for Farming Enterprises.

- Community gardens
- Market gardener
- Small Scale CSA Farming
- Small Scale Livestock
- Infrastructure Development

Haslett-Marroquin has developed working relationships with the NRCS State Outreach Coordinator, Debra Walchuk. It was through connections with Debra that he became familiar with NRCS, it's programs and technical assistance opportunities.

Haslett-Marroquin has determined that there are numerous barriers to Latino Farmers in Minnesota, including:

- * Lack of access to credit
- * Legal Status
- * Discrimination
- * Access to information
- * Access to training
- * Lack of access to land
- * Lack of access to small farm equipment, sufficient knowledge in fixing, repair and maintenance.



Laurie Otte helps serve treats

The program concluded with William Hunt sharing his closing remarks. The event attendees participated in a Hispanic food sampling following the program.

American Indian Heritage Month

By: Dave Wise, AI SEPM

In honor of American Indian Heritage Month, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College invited people to attend the 15th annual Giving Thanks and Honoring Veterans Feast on Thursday, November 20, 2008, on the FDLTCC campus. The event was sponsored by student life organizations on campus and began at 4:00 p.m. in the amphitheater with a traditional opening ceremony and presentation of colors by the Fond du Lac Reservation Veterans' Honor Guard. Bryan Jon Maciewski, a faculty member and veteran, was the featured speaker. Welcome addresses from Fond du Lac Reservation Chairwoman Karen Diver, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College President Larry Anderson. The evening concluded with a traveling song by the college drum group. The feast was open to the public and was free to everyone.



The Giving Thanks Feast started 15 years ago as an effort to create greater awareness of the American Indian tradition of giving thanks for a productive harvest. The popular event at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College draws several hundred people each year. The evening feast had a traditional menu consisting of turkey, wild rice, vegetable, mashed potatoes, fry bread, cranberries, dessert and beverages. The festivities featured traditional music by the college drum group.

Additional Giving Thanks and Honoring Veterans Feast activities this year was at 7:00 a.m. sunrise ceremony at the Jack's Path Memorial on campus, and a noon celebration with comments from student leaders, the Oskhii Giizhik Singers women's hand drum group at 12:45 p.m. Guest speaker Jodi Kiminski, Veterans' Education Coordinator, at 1:15 p.m. in the amphitheater.

People interested in the Giving Thanks Feast were invited to come for any portion of the event. No registration or admission fees were required.

Miigwech (Thank you).

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE SELECTS NATIVE AMERICAN PAINTING FOR 2008 AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH POSTER

The Natural Resources Conservation Service chose a painting by Kathy Sturch, from Durant, Okla., and a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, for the NRCS 2008 American Indian Heritage Month Poster.

The painting, "Touch the Earth," recalls the passion the Choctaw people have for creation and their kinship with the earth.

American Indian Heritage Month



Touch the Earth

Conservation...Our Passion...Our Heritage

The Choctaw people passionately love the earth. The ancient ones walked barefoot, sat and lay on the ground because it was good to touch the earth. The old Choctaw believed the Great Spirit created the earth and all the creatures that drink from her bounties and listen to her whispers. The Choctaw's passion and kinship with all creatures of the earth, sky and water continues today. The earth nourishes and provides for man. Man must care for the earth and do it no harm. If the earth dies, man dies.

NRCS is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
Helping People Help the Land

NOVEMBER 2008



"The Choctaw people passionately love the earth. The ancient ones walked bare-foot, sat and lay on the ground because it was good to touch the earth. The old Choctaw believed the Great Spirit created the earth and all the creatures that drink from her bounties and listen to her whispers. The Choctaw's passion and kinship with all creatures of the earth, sky and water continues today. The earth nourishes and provides for man. Man must care for the earth and do it now harm. If the earth dies, man dies," Sturch said about the story behind the artwork.

Sixteen thousand copies of the poster will be distributed to all NRCS offices nationwide. Distribution of the poster is part of the month-long event, held each November, to educate the public about the heritage, history, art and traditions of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

The painting will be unveiled at the National Association of Conservation Districts conference Aug. 22 in Hot Springs.

AREA 1

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

New Tribal Liaisons for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

I would like to take a moment to introduce myself. My name is Adam Woltjer and I am currently the newest member to join the staff at the Mahnomen Field Office. As of September 15th 2008 I have been working as the Tribal Liaison between the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the White Earth Indian Reservation, Natural Resources Department (NRD).

I was born and raised in Northwest Minnesota where I attended Elementary and High School at Norman County East in Twin Valley. After graduation I moved on to the University of Minnesota, Crookston where I graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Natural Resources Management. Since then I have been able to further my experiences by working in Virginia, Idaho and the Twin Cities metro area before settling back home and becoming employed by the NRCS. I currently reside in Mahnomen with my wife and twin one year old sons.

Although I am new to the position I am not new to the agency. In August of 2003 I started working at the Ada Field Office as a part-time Biological Aid (WAE) where I was able to get my feet wet about the agency and what we had to offer to our producers and landowners. After becoming familiar with the Ada Field Office I was hired full time as a Soil Conservation Technician at the McIntosh Field Office. There I was able to become familiar with all the programs that the NRCS has to offer and assist with getting high quality conservation established on the land. These two previous experiences have prepared me for my new task ahead of serving the NRCS and the White Earth NRD as a Tribal Liaison. I look forward to the new experiences and challenges that this position will bring!



Adam Woltjer, Tribal Liaison between the (NRCS) and the White Earth Indian Reservation, Natural Resources Department (NRD).



Hello, my name is Patty Burns; I am the new Soil Conservationist/Tribal Liaison for the (NRCS) and Red Lake Indian Reservation Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

I graduated from the University of Minnesota with a Bachelor of Science degree in Soil Science, and from Vermilion Community College with an Associate in Applied Science in Water Resources. I began my career in 1986; and has included soil mapping for the University of Minnesota and Natural Resource Conservation Service in Lake of the Woods, Clearwater, Red Lake and Koochiching Counties. Throughout my years involved with the soil survey I have walked, rode, traversed or bushwhacked across at least 250,000 acres. It has been a very unique experience and I have seen a lot of beautiful country side along with many interesting places. I have also been involved in the private sector as a site evaluator, designer and inspector of on-site sewage treatment systems.

Left: Patty Burns, Soil Conservationist/Tribal Liaison.

I began my new position with the NRCS on September 15th 2008, and I am very excited to work with the Red Lake DNR. I am looking forward to the diversity that

AREA 1

this position has to offer, and to have the chance to apply conservation measures to the land. I live in the Blackduck area with my husband Scott and three boys Luke, Eli and Noah; where we enjoy the outdoors on our forty acres we own on Rabideau Lake. We spend much of our free time running between the boy's different school activities and sporting events.

Thanks for your efforts during the Audit, as a new Congress and a new Administration begin, making decisions about their respective priorities, NRCS will be in a position to stand behind not only it's conservation but its financial management.

NON MONETARY AWARDS

Nico Bennett and **Dan Haig** received NRCS soft sided brief cases for their efforts in contracting and practice application. Due to their team approach, the Thief River Falls FO was able to secure over \$970,000 in EQIP and \$90,000 in WHIP. They met short deadlines for converting EQIP contracts to WHIP and chased down signatures and other documentation.

A number of employees received a NRCS picture frame for their efforts in harvesting hackberry seed for the Plant Materials Center. The team approach accomplished the task in $\frac{3}{4}$ of a days time. **AL Gustafson, Greg Bengtson, Luther Newton, Dan Haig, Nico Bennett, Clayton Schmitz, Travis Doeden, Gwen Kappes, Thane Espe, Kevin Gietzen, Randy Huelskamp, Jessica Tiedemann, Luke Klawitter, Krystal Story, Patty Burns.**

Various employees were recognized with a variety of items for contributions during the 2008 CSP signup. **Kathy Fillmore, Nico Bennett, Dan Haig, Jessica Tiedemann, Krystal Story, Thane Espe, Debbie Rynda, Al Gustafson, Debe Walchuk, Shawnn Balstad, Larry Voltz.**

Dusty Jasken received a NRCS polo shirt for presenting NRCS cost share opportunities at a local Forest Management Workshop.

PERSONNEL

Mark Hayek, Grazing Specialist, transferred to the TRF AO from the Detroit Lakes FO. Welcome Back to Area 1 Mark.

Ryan Haspel accepted a SCT position in the Breckenridge FO effective Nov 9, 2008. Good Luck Ryan in Area 2.

Katie Engelmann accepted the McIntosh SCT position and began work on Oct 13, 2008. Katie is a University of MN - Crookston graduate and was hired under the Federal Career Internship Program. Welcome to NRCS Katie.

Brooke Schneider was selected for the SCT position in the Bagley FO and began her new duties on Oct 13, 2008. Brooke transferred from the St. Peter FO where she'd been working as an intermittent employee. Welcome to Area 1 Brooke.

PROMOTIONS

Congratulations to **Eric Anderson**, Wetland Biologist, and **Donna Christianson**, Accounting Technician, on recent promotions.

AREA 2

COLLEEN OESTREICH, ASTC(FO)
FERGUS FALLS, MN

Thanks to all of you and the great field, area, state and other project office staff for going the extra mile in helping out with the audit! Our success is due in part to your extra-efforts.

Thanks!

AREA 3

KEVIN DAW, ASTC(FO)
DULUTH, MN

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

PERSONNEL

Erin Degerstedt, Soil Conservation Technician, was reassigned from the Virginia FO to the Duluth FO effective October 27, 2008. Welcome to Duluth, Erin!

Herman Bartsch, is our new Soil Conservation Technician at the Cambridge FO effective November 10, 2008. Welcome aboard, Herman!

Mark Surface, Civil Engineering Technician, Grand Rapids FO, resigned effective October 3, 2008. Kriste Ericsson's, Soil Conservation Technician, last day with NRCS was October 27. Best wishes to Mark and Kriste in their future endeavors!

James Lahn, Area Resource Conservationist, returned to his previous DC position in Iowa. Best wishes to Jim!

Thomas Gervais, Soil Conservation Technician, Duluth FO, was selected for the Grazing Specialist position effective December 8, 2008. Welcome to the Area Office, Tom!

Length of Service

Marjorie Sella – 20 years of service
Michael Oja – 25 years of service

Your dedication is appreciated!

Promotion

Erin Degerstedt, Soil Conservation Technician, Duluth FO

Candi Fuller, Soil Conservation Technician, Aitkin FO

Bill Hutson, Soil Conservation Technician, Milaca FO. Our hearty congratulations!

Non-monetary Awards

Debra Hermel - For serving as Acting District Conservationist for the Cambridge FO.

Karen Closson, Jason Sickmann, James Lahn – For completion of deobligation review summary.

On a personal note...

Two bundles of joy....

Congratulations are extended to:

Candi Fuller, Soil Conservation Technician, Aitkin FO, and her husband on the birth of their daughter Arenda Emily born October 22.

Kyle Asplund, Soil Conservation Technician, Grand Rapids FO, and his wife on the birth of their son Lucas Russell born November 25.

Audit

The two most important words in the English language is,

“Thank You.”

AREA 4

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

MINNESOTA VALLEY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

By: Keith Trudell, Soil Conservation Technician, Glencoe/Waconia

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (MVNWR) had a Grand Opening Ceremony on Sunday, October 19, 2008, from 11 am to 3 pm. The general public was invited to participate in some outdoor activities and demonstrations. Approximately 100 people were in attendance.

The NRCS was involved with a wetland restoration project in the MVNWR. Approximately 320 acres of land just south of the City of Carver in Carver County was acquired by the MN Valley Trust for inclusion into the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). Two water control structures were installed to manage water levels and serve as crossings for a public use trail that connects the City of Carver to the newly constructed Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center.

The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) manager of the Rapids Lake Unit acknowledged all of the agencies, that were involved in the project. He stressed that it would not have happened without NRCS! The ribbon was cut and the Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center was officially opened to the public for tours, activities and demonstrations.



Completed Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center



North Site finished concrete cable block water control structure

My duties at the ceremony included public outreach and answering questions about the WRP project located on the MVNWR and NRCS in general. Questions ranged from the project hiking/biking trails to the water control structures to NRCS programs and even general information as to what my job or other NRCS positions entail. I answered all of the questions asked of me as well as circulated publications during the event. Our Living Landscapes in Minnesota publication was a big hit and I distributed out 40 copies to interested landowners!

AREA 4

All of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees that I met expressed their appreciation that I showed up to lend a hand and positively represent Minnesota NRCS employees. It is definitely reassuring, knowing that we have such outstanding partners in other federal and state agencies in Minnesota all working towards the same general goal of conservation.

The MVNWR is a beautiful “green patch” amidst the sprawling development of the Twin Cities and all of its suburbs. The MVNWR is located within the urban and suburban areas of Minneapolis and St. Paul. It is a green belt of large marsh areas bordered by office buildings, highways, residential areas, and grain terminals. The refuge is comprised of fourteen linear units totaling approximately 14,000 acres, spanning 99 miles of the Minnesota River.



South Site finished concrete cable block water control structure

Audit

The two most important words in the English language is,

“Thank You.”

PERSONNEL

Derrick Johnson, District Conservationist, Waconia transferred to Risk Management Agency, Kansas City effective September 27, 2008.

Loren Clarke, Soil Conservation Technician, Farmington was converted from a WAE employee to full-time on October 12, 2008.

Cindy Hoffmann, Soil Conservation Technician, Waconia was hired on October 12, 2008. She had worked for the Forest Service as a Biological Technician.

Andrea Horsman, Soil Conservation Technician transferred from Wheaton to Buffalo effective November 9, 2008.

Omar Vega, GIS Specialist moved to Seattle, Washington effective December 7, 2008. He has accepted a position with the Army Corp of Engineers which he starts December 21, 2008.

AREA 4

LAKE HENRY FIRE DEPARTMENT INSTALLS FILL STATION

By: Dennis Fuchs Stearns County SWCD Administrator

The Lake Henry Fire and Rescue Department (LHFRD) installed a second rural water source (fill station) this summer. The fill station taps into an existing irrigation system. Last summer, LHFRD installed a dry hydrant at another location. A dry hydrant pipe system is permanently installed in existing lakes, ponds and streams that provide a suction supply of water to a fire department tank truck. In rural areas, a lack of water mains and pressurized fire hydrants can sometimes impair a fire department's ability to do its job quickly and efficiently. The success of a fire department's operation hinges on the distance a truck must travel to fill up and return to the fire. In many cases, these fill-up points are often long distances from the fire and the firefighters are



LHFRD filling their pumper truck with the new fill station (L-R) Kenny Ley and Kurt Frieler.

unable to maintain an uninterrupted water source at the scene. The new fill station allows a 2000 gallon tanker to be filled in a little over two minutes.

This fill station is unique because it uses an existing irrigation well. The fill station was installed in Spring Hill Township, on 320th Avenue, on the Melvin and Linda Feldewerd farm.

The Mid-Minnesota Mississippi River Res-

ource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) received a Department of Natural Resources Community Firewise Program grant



LHFD pumper-truck, dry hydrant, and volunteers (L-R) Pat Welle, Bob Schmitt, Randy Nelson, Dennis Fuchs, Kenny Ley, Paul Orbeck (Spring Hill Township), Bob Pelzer (Assistant Chief), Melvin Feldewerd (land owner), Corey Feldewerd (land owner), Kurt Frieler (Chief), Joey Pelzer, Jamie Brick, Curt Feldewerd (land owner), Gerald Lieser & Ronnie Bertram (Spring Hill Township).

to offset the costs of installing the fill station. Additional support was provided by the following people and organizations; LHFRD, Feldewerd, Ron Olmsheid trucking, Stearns Electric Association; Dennis Fuchs, Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District (Stearns County SWCD); and Randy Nelson, Prairie Country RC&D.

Kurt Frieler, LHFRD fire chief said, "The project was a success because of the dedicated volunteers, landowners and organizations providing extraordinary support." If your local fire department is interested in installing a dry hydrant or fill station, please give call Dennis Fuchs, Stearns County SWCD administrator, at 320-251-7800 extension 132.

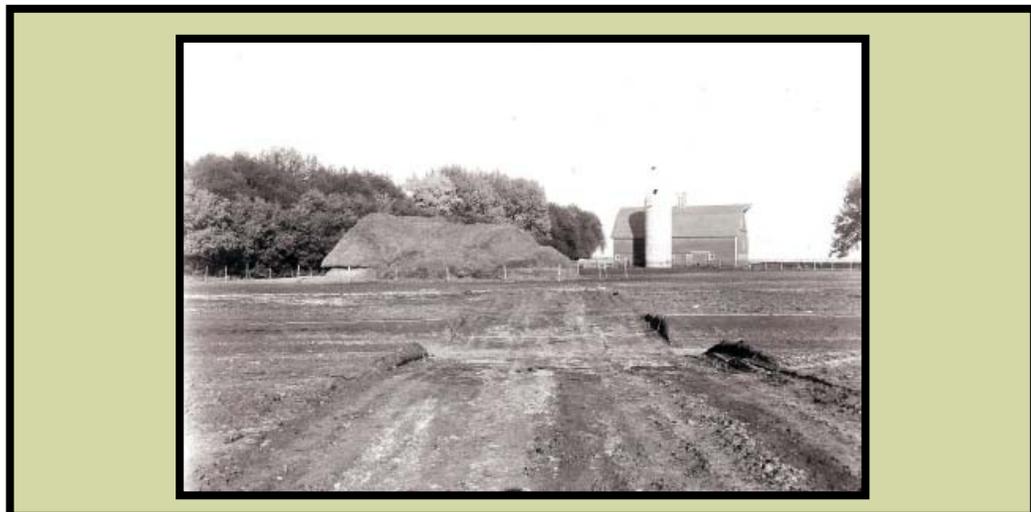
AREA 5

GARY WATSON, ASTC-FO
MARSHALL, MN

Thanks to all of you and the great field, area, state and other project office staff for going the extra mile in helping out with the audit! Our success is due in part to your extra-efforts.

Thanks!

Historic Photo



Country Farm, Ada Twin Valley MN.

AREA 6

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

OUTSTANDING COOPERATOR AWARD

By: Kari Christnagel

Making conservation a priority is evident at Heins Riverside Farms in Vernon Center, MN. Located in the heart of Blue Earth County, Heins Riverside Farms has worked cooperatively with the Blue Earth County NRCS, SWCD and Zone 10 JPO on numerous



This grade stabilization structure was built at the head of the ravine, and a grassed waterway was installed on adjacent property downstream in order to stabilize the channel and to address erosion concerns caused by the ravine.

projects over the last 5 years. Starting in 2003, they worked with NRCS staff on a grassed waterway and terrace project, followed by the installation of 5 water and sediment control basins and four stream barbs in the fall of 2005. In the spring of 2006, they spearheaded a project to install a grade stabilization structure and water and sediment basin on a farm they rent. On that same farm this past fall, two water and sediment basins were installed and one grade stabilization structure was installed on another farm they own. They are also scheduled to install four additional water and sediment basins in 2009.

these various conservation partners and programs, the installation of these structures might not have been possible. In addition, the technical assistance received by them from various field office and area office staff has been a great aid in the installation of erosion control practices on their farms.

All these structures have been made possible through cost share funding from the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Blue Earth County SWCD's State Cost Share Program, Maple River Clean Water Partnership and the Conservation Reserve Program. Without funding from

James Heins and Betsy Vanderhagen are the owners and operators of the farm and they have been very cooperative and progressive in their efforts to ensure that they take the best care of the land for their generation and future generations. They have been diligent in their efforts to improve the farms they own and operate.

AREA 6



Mr. Heins installed these stream barbs due to the large amount of riverbank erosion. These barbs were designed by Steve Becker, former Area Engineer and installed with cost share from the EQIP and Maple River Clean Water Partnership.

In reward for their diligence to conservation, they were awarded the Outstanding Cooperator Award by the Blue Earth SWCD and Area 6, making them a state finalist for the award in 2007. They are very educated and highly motivated land operators, with a great attitude toward land improvements and soil conservation.

We applaud their efforts, and look forward to our continued working relationship with them at the Mankato NRCS field office.

HISTORIC CONSERVATION PHOTO



Aerial view of the George Hass 220-acre farm near Winona, MN

6/20/1940 Photographer: MN NRCS/USDA

AREA 6

PERSONNEL

Corinne Brenke, Area Accounting Technician, received a promotion effective October 26, 2008

Keith Trudell, conversion to Career Appointment as a full time Soil Conservation Technician for the Glencoe Field Office effective October 26, 2008.

Betsy Norland, conversion to Career Appointment as a full time Soil Conservation Technician for the Fairmont Field Office effective October 26, 2008.

NEW EMPLOYEES

Jacob Stich, Soil is the new Soil Conservation Technician in Meeker County. He began with NRCS on December 7, 2008.

Todd Piepho is the new Soil Conservation Technician in the Waseca Field Office. He started on December 7, 2008.

NEW ADDITIONS

Kasey and Myron Taylor have a new addition to their family, Jonathan Anthony, was born on November 11, 2008 @ 10:09 am. He weighed 9 lbs and 13 ounces and was 20 ½ inches long. Big brother James is doing great too!

Carissa and Troy Spencer have a new addition to their family. Taylin Rae, she was born on August 27, 2008 @ 7:40 am. She weighed 8 lbs 5 ounces and was 21 inches long. Big sister Delaney is doing great with the new family dynamics.

We are proud to announce that all offices within Area 6 are handicap compliant.

Audit

The two most important words in the English language is,

“Thank You.”

AREA 7

JOHN NICOLSON, ASTC(FO)
ROCHESTER, MN

Thanks to all of you and the great field, area, state and other project office staff for going the extra mile in helping out with the audit! Our success is due in part to your extra-efforts.

Thanks!

Contributions for the next issue of Current Developments are due: March 13, 2009

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!