

The Link

The National Organization of Professional Black Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees

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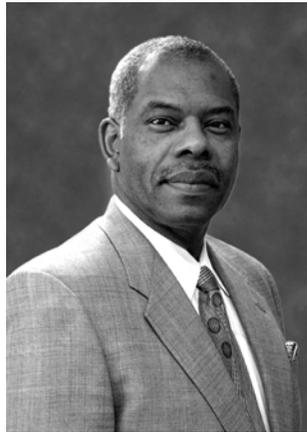
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The President's Message



Charles R. Adams

Greetings:

The Executive Board of the National Organization of Professional Black Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees extends a warm welcome to the new Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Chief Arlen Lancaster has been invited to our December 2006 Annual Conference. This employee conference will serve a dual purpose for the new chief.

He will be able to visit with many present and retired Soil Conservation Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service employees.

Furthermore, Chief Lancaster will gain first-hand knowledge of the first class, quality training this year's conference will offer. I am excited about the agenda and encourage member, prospective members and others interested in our conference to register early.

See you in Indianapolis, Indiana December 4-8, 2006.

*Charles R. Adams,
President*

Welcome !

2006 Annual Training Conference...

Plans are complete for the 2006 Annual Training Conference to be held December 4-8, 2006 at Westin Indianapolis in Indianapolis, Indiana.

We expect record-breaking attendance, so plan now to join us!

Information is contained in this issue of *The Link*.



Arlen L. Lancaster

Arlen Lancaster Named Chief of Natural Resources Conservation Service

Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns selected Arlen Lancaster as Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in August 2006. As Chief, Lancaster directs the work of 12,000 employees and manages a budget totaling nearly \$3.2 billion.

Lancaster succeeds Bruce Knight, who now serves as Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. Lancaster becomes the 13th Chief as well as the first Asian-American Chief of the agency. Pearlie Reed was the agency's only African-American Chief. Reed served as Chief from March 1, 1998 through May 4, 2002.

Lancaster served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Congressional Relations at USDA since April 2005. Prior to his joining USDA, Lancaster served in various senior staff positions in Congress. Since 1999, he worked for Senator Mike Crapo, as a Senior Policy Advisor and as the Staff Director for the Senate Subcommittee on Forestry, Conservation, and Rural Revitalization. He played a key role in crafting the conservation title of the 2002 Farm Bill. He also worked for Senator Robert Bennett from 1998 to 1999.

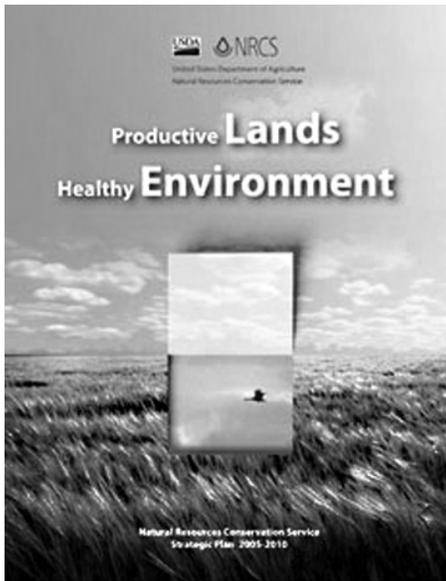
As Chief of NRCS, Lancaster leads the primary federal agency that works directly with private landowners to help them conserve, maintain and improve their natural resources. NRCS emphasizes voluntary, science-based conservation; technical assistance; partnerships; incentive-based programs and cooperative problem solving at the community level.

Lancaster is a graduate of the University of Utah with a Bachelor of Science. He is also an avid fly fisherman and outdoor enthusiast. He and his wife Staci live in Virginia.

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be?

—Marianne Williamson



NRCS Strategic Plan

NRCS Unveils New Strategic Plan

Natural Resources Conservation Service's new strategic plan outlines the long-term goals, objectives and strategies to achieve effective results for productive lands and a healthy environment.

This strategic plan outlines the agency's vision of productive lands and a healthy environment. It describes agency activities that will contribute to sustaining natural resources in the coming decades. This plan provides measurable objectives associated with each goal and outcome.

NRCS remains committed to high quality, productive soils; clean and abundant water; and healthy plant and animal communities through its Foundation Goals. However, it also introduced emerging natural resource concerns in the form of Venture Goals for air quality, an adequate energy supply, and working farms and ranch lands. NRCS plans to expand its role in these areas under the new plan.

NRCS activities will be guided by three overarching strategies—the watershed approach, a market-based approach and cooperative conservation—as the agency works to achieve the six goals.

One of the plan's Management Initiatives, on Page 68, calls for ensuring civil rights within the agency. The Management Goals are:

- **Equal Employment Opportunity.** Establish an equal opportunity standard for excellence through a highly skilled workforce that is diverse at all levels and ensures a commitment of equal access to NRCS programs and services.
- **Fair and Equitable Service Delivery.** It stresses the agency's commitment to delivery of service to all.

Each of these management goals has several action items.

Called "Productive Lands—Healthy Environment," the strategic plan can be found on the national NRCS Web site at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/strategicplan/>. Hard copies are available at 1-888-LANDCARE.



Larry Clark

NRCS Highest Ranking African-American to Retire

Larry Clark, Deputy Chief for Science and Technology for NRCS, is retiring, effective January 3, 2007.

Clark, a Charter and Life Time member, has been an avid supporter of The Organization for many years. He also has received several top honors including The Professional Achievement Award, a Presidential Meritorious Rank Award and the George Washington Carver Public Service Hall of Fame Award.

He has served in his current position since January 1999. Previously, he served as Deputy Chief for Programs from 1996-1998. He was State Conservationist for Ohio from 1994 to 1996. He served on the U.S./South African Binational Commission and U.S./Ghana Consultative Committee on Agricultural and Rural Development.

Clark grew up on his family's farm in Scotland Neck, North Carolina. He began his professional career as a student trainee in Morgantown, West Virginia and held numerous positions with NRCS in Columbus, Ohio; Indianapolis, Indiana; Portland, Oregon; Phoenix, Arizona; and Raleigh, North Carolina.

He earned a master's degree in Public Administration at the J.F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and a second one in Regional Planning from the University of North Carolina. He holds a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics from North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro, North Carolina.

There are no secrets to success: Don't waste time looking for them. Success is the result of perfection, hard work, learning from failure, loyalty to those for whom you work, and persistence.

—Colin Powell, Former U.S. Secretary of State, 1989



Bennie Clark, Jr.

NRCS Names New National Black Emphasis Program Manager

Submitted by Historian Bennie Clark, Jr.

Bennie Clark, Jr., Soil Data Quality Specialist in Indiana, is the agency's new National Black Emphasis Program Manager (NBEPM).

As the National Black Emphasis Program Manager, his responsibilities include:

- Evaluating the impact of personnel management policies and practices on Blacks in the areas of recruitment, selection, placement, promotion, training, counseling, and career development;
- Providing input on employment issues affecting Blacks in the agency's affirmative employment program and Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program plans;
- Representing NRCS on BEP issues when dealing with the USDA and special interest groups;
- Coordinating the development of the national BEP annual business plan;
- Participating in NRCS' equal opportunity program appraisals and serving as a contact for providing input in appraisals or reviews conducted by the USDA, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).



Clark brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to his position as the national BEPM. He served 10 years on NRCS civil rights committees in Iowa and Indiana; five years on the Human Relation Committee for the city of Council Bluff, Iowa; two years as vice chair and five years as Black Emphasis Program Manager for NRCS in Indiana.

"To be successful as a NBEPM, you must have a passion for service to the people you are serving and you must be able to unite supervisors and NRCS leaders at all levels of the agency behind the national Black Emphasis Program vision," Clark said.

As the NBEPM, Clark recruits actively for the agency. For instance, Clark and other Organization members Sylvia Rainford, Legislative and Public Affairs Division, National Headquarters; and Larry Holmes, Outreach Division, National Headquarters; recruited at the 6th Annual Thurgood Marshall Leadership Institute and Recruitment Conference in New York City Oct. 20-23, 2006.



Clark, Rainford and Holmes spoke to more than 200 students and accepted resumes from 34 of them. More than 600 students from the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund's (TMSF) member school attended the conference. TMSF, a national organization, awards scholarships to students from its 47 member schools in 22 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Clark's goals for the program include training for state Black Emphasis Program managers and the publication of an annual report. Clark will sponsor Black Emphasis Program training for 40 state Black Emphasis Program managers in conjunction with the The Organization's 14th annual training conference in Indianapolis. He also plans to publish the first annual Black Emphasis Program Manager's report highlighting the accomplishments of state BEPMs.

Several Organization Members Received Top Honors

Organization members Sylvia Rainford and Cara Clark received the 2006 USDA Group Honor Awards during a recent ceremony in Washington, D.C. USDA's most prestigious award recognize the outstanding services and contributions of USDA employees toward fulfilling the Departments missions and goals.

Rainford was a member of the NRCS Energy Estimator team, led by Stefanie Aschmann of Portland, Oregon. The team received its award for designing three web-based energy estimators for tillage, nitrogen fertilizer and irrigation to help producers save energy and money. Rainford, a Public Affairs Specialist on the Legislative and Public Affairs Staff in Washington, D.C., chairs the Communications Committee.

Cara Clark of Illinois received her award from Secretary Mike Johanns as team leader of a multi-agency Accessibility Team in that state. She was honored as part of a USDA Rural Development group. She and her other team members received the award for outstanding accomplishments in working together to make USDA Service Center buildings accessible to current and future clients.

Correspondence Secretary Drenda Williams received an Outstanding Performance award in Fiscal Year 2006 for "demonstrating outstanding support to field offices, area offices and the state conservationist's staff in accomplishing Missouri's strategic goals." Williams is a Natural Resource Specialist for NRCS in Missouri.

Midwest Regional Representative Keith Williams received a cash award for assisting with Conservation Security Program efforts in Lawrence County, Missouri. Lawrence County had the highest CSP workload in the state. Williams is a Resource Conservationist.



Dastina Johnson

NRCS in Idaho Selects First African-American Public Affairs Specialist

Communications Committee member Dastina Johnson was recently promoted to State Public Affairs Specialist (PAS) for NRCS in Idaho in October 2006. Johnson is one of the youngest State PAS in NRCS to date and the third African-American State PAS. She joins Petra Barnes of Colorado and Lois Jackson of Kentucky. A fourth African-American—Jasper Parker of Oklahoma—has served as acting PAS in his state for several years.

Johnson joined NRCS in July 2004 as a Career Intern Public Affairs Specialist in Virginia. For two years, she trained under Patricia Paul, Virginia's PAS, and received numerous awards for outreach efforts with small farmers, communications assistance to the state's RC&Ds, and her creative ideas to highlight NRCS' involvement in the Virginia State Fair.

Johnson graduated with honors from Virginia Commonwealth University with a bachelor's of science in Mass Communications. Before joining NRCS, she worked as an Associate Producer and Assignment Editor with NBC 12 in Richmond. In the past three years, she helped shape the direction of the Richmond Black Media Professionals, a chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists.

Congratulations, Dastina!

Helped are those who create anything at all, for they shall relive the thrill of their own conception and realize a partnership in the creation of the Universe that keeps them responsible and cheerful.

—Alice Walker, *Temple of my Familiar*, 1989



Dealing Effectively With Harassment

*Submitted by Sharyn Alvarez,
National Federal Women's Program Manager*

If you are a manager/supervisor:

Think ahead. Your goal is to prevent sexual harassment and stop the inappropriate behavior before it becomes a complaint. You should use your power fairly, for business purposes and not for personal gain. Below are several tips you should follow:

- Understand and commit to the agency's sexual harassment policy;
- Ensure that your employees understand the policy and are aware of their roles and rights;
- Provide AND support sexual harassment training;
- Be prepared to adequately respond to challenges;
- Your power should be used fairly and only for business purposes and;
- Ensure that your behavior is beyond reproach.



If you are an employee:

If you are mocked, teased, bullied or harassed, speak up. Confront the person and tell them you don't appreciate their behavior and you want it to stop. If it does not, talk to your supervisor. If that doesn't work, talk to your next level in the chain of command. You don't have to put up with this behavior.

If you witness it, speak up. No one should have to work in an environment of harassment. If you witness bullying, mocking, harassment sexual or non-sexual, speak up. Don't stand by and let the offensive behavior go unchallenged. Simply say it's not funny to laugh at, make fun of, or tease someone and you don't appreciate it.

When you are away from the office:

Remember, harassment incidents are not limited to the employee's office or primary work locations. At conferences and planning meetings, the workplace might be a hotel or resort. A restaurant can be the workplace for lunch or dinner meetings. When a supervisor, manager and employees attend a party or backyard barbecue, an employee's home may become the workplace.



Managers, supervisors and employees need to be aware that wherever we go with each other, we need to continue to support and uphold the sexual harassment policies of our agency.

When offenders try to justify their behavior:

When people who harass, bully or mock others try to justify their offensive behavior, be prepared to respond. There are people who will never behave professionally. You don't have to put up with it.

You may hear comments of reverse discrimination, how touchy everyone is, or remarks of how sensitive people are these days. The question is what will you say? Will you remain silent, or will you take this opportunity to state calmly, logically but firmly that the harassing comment and behavior will not be tolerated.

You can say that freedom and freedom of speech were never intended to give one person the right to hurt another. When we accepted the offer to work for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), we did so voluntarily. When you accept a position, you agree to do the assigned work and follow the agency's rules. One of those rules is that discrimination and sexual harassment will not be condoned.

NRCS hires employees to perform various tasks. We are administrative, technical, professional, and clerical, we are volunteers, we are students, contractors and customers and we are of all grade levels. None of us were hired to be abused.

For more information

Contact your state Federal Women's Program Manager or Sharyn C. Alvarez, National Federal Women's Program Manager at 301-504-2338.

Bibliography

Deblieux, Mike, "Stopping Sexual Harassment Before It Starts, America Media Publishing.

USDA-NRCS, "Preventing Sexual Harassment, A Self-Study Guide"





John W. Boyd, Jr.

John W. Boyd, Jr. National Black Farmers Association

Racial discrimination is a personal and national concern of John W. Boyd, Jr. Boyd owns a 300-acre poultry farm in Virginia that he almost lost due to his inability to receive USDA programs and services from 1986-1997. As a result of the challenges Boyd and other Black farm families faced, he founded the National Black Farmers Association (NBFA) in 1995. His organization provides outreach and assistance to 80,000 Black farm families nationally and internationally.

Boyd headed a campaign on the plight of Black farmers that targeted the U.S. House of Representatives. Eventually, his campaign resulted in Black farmers who faced discrimination from 1981-1997 having a legal standing to bring forth civil rights violations before a federal court. The results of the investigations and the tolling of the statute of limitations culminated in the largest civil rights class action settlement in U.S. history. Nearly 90,000 black farm families sought compensation.

In November 2003, Boyd rode his covered wagon and his mules, *Struggle and 40 Acres*, over 280 miles to Washington D.C. to protest the lack of payments to Black farmers. His numerous protests—from Washington D.C. to the United Nations in New York City—have gained national attention over the years. He was even named an ABC News Person of the Week.

He has traveled internationally to secure trade agreements for Black farmers. He has visited several countries in Africa as well as Brazil and China. Mr. Boyd negotiated a \$20 million trade agreement with President Fidel Castro of Cuba.

Boyd has become a national civil rights advocate over the years. He also ran for political office. As a candidate for the United States House of Representatives' Fifth District in Virginia, he garnered nearly 40 percent of the vote in that race. In addition, Virginia Governor Tom Kaine named him as Chairman of his Agriculture Transition Team in 2006.

In 2001, Boyd formed the John Boyd Agricultural & Technology Institute at Saint Paul's College in Virginia to help educate black farmers and introduce them to the Internet.

Boyd has an impressive and extensive list of accomplishments. For example, he is listed in *Who's Who Among African Americans*, *Who's Who in America* and *Ebony Magazine's 100 Most Influential Black Men in America*. Boyd has been interviewed numerous times for national media, including television, newspapers and magazines.

Editor Note: John Boyd will be the speaker for General Session VII from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2006.



Naomi Tutu

Naomi Tutu is the speaker for General Session IV, from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2006

Naomi Tutu

The belief that there is still much to do to eradicate the legacy of three centuries of racial oppression is what spurs Naomi Tutu to continue to speak out about the situations in South Africa. Tutu founded and chaired the Tutu Foundation, which from 1985 until 1990, helped South African refugees in African countries. The Foundation awarded scholarships to refugees to help them learn skills that would make them self-supporting while in exile and prepare them for constructive roles in a free South Africa.

Tutu, born in Krugersdorp, South Africa, is the third daughter of South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his wife Nomalizo. She holds a bachelor's degree in Economics and French from Berea College in Berea, Kentucky, and a master's degree in International Economic Development from the Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Economic Development at the University of Kentucky. In addition, she was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Universal Orthodox College of Ogun State, Nigeria in 1985.

Upon completing her master's, Tutu served as a Consulting Associate for Equator Advisory Services Ltd., a private consulting firm in sub-Saharan Africa. She also sought educational and professional opportunities for black women as a consultant in South Africa. Since then, Tutu has taught courses on development, gender, and education in Africa at the Universities of Hartford and Connecticut and Brevard College in North Carolina. Tutu also has worked at the University of Cape Town where she was a Program Coordinator at the African Gender Institute. She was in charge of programs on race and gender and the gender-based violence in education.

From 1999-2002, Tutu served as Program Coordinator for the Race Relations Institute at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. The Institute focuses on the problem of racism in the global community. At the beginning of 2003, Tutu began working as Associate Director of the newly formed Office of International Programs at Tennessee State University, also in Nashville. She has received numerous awards and honors from different organizations such as the California State Legislature, the Kentucky State Branches of the NAACP, the Boston City Council, Outstanding Youth Women of America, and Who's Who of Africans in America.



*University of North Carolina,
at Chapel Hill*

Walter Jackson is the keynote speaker for the Second Annual Plater Campbell/Jacqueline Sutton Luncheon from noon to 1:15 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 5.

Walter A. Jackson

Walter A. Jackson is President and Chief Executive Officer of The Serengeti Group, Inc. in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. After becoming one of the earliest African-American graduates of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1967, he served with distinction in the United States Army, and was awarded the Army Commendation Medal for service in Vietnam. Upon his discharge from the Army, he returned to his home state of North Carolina and began his career as a newspaper reporter. During the next three decades, he served in a number of positions of increasing responsibility in both the public and private sectors in several cities around the country, including Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Atlanta, Georgia; Charlotte, North Carolina; Cleveland, Ohio and Salt Lake City, Utah.

As President of The Serengeti Group, Inc. since 1998, Jackson has been engaged in public speaking, providing employee training services, business consulting, writing and other activities oriented to improving organizational effectiveness. The long list of businesses and institutions that have used his services include Travel Centers of America, Medical Mutual Insurance of Ohio, BP Oil Company, and the School of Public Health at Morgan State University in Maryland. In addition to holding a bachelor's degree in Journalism from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Jackson earned a master's degree in Public Administration at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, and has done further graduate and continuing education studies at Duke, Michigan State and Georgia State universities. He is the father of one son, Attorney Marcus A. Jackson of Greensboro, North Carolina.

“We chose to act, and we rose together.”

—Barack Obama, U.S. Senator, Illinois



Tuskegee University to Hold Conference on Black Thought and Sustainability

A conference entitled “Black Environmental Thought: Land, Power and Sustainability” will be held May 22-24, 2007 at the Kellogg Conference Center, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Alabama.

The conference is designed to develop more concrete thinking and identification with Black ecological thought and its application to African American farming and sustainable agriculture. The goal is to move innovation in Black sustainable agriculture forward and to contribute to the overall diversity of thought in sustainable agriculture.

Please visit <http://www.blackenvirotthought.org> for additional details about the conference.

Conference sponsors are Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE), Southern Region; the Federation of Southern Cooperatives; the AfroEco Group; Tuskegee University; Fort Valley State University; and the University of Georgia.

For more information, please contact Jill S. Auburn,
SARE Director/NPL - Sustainable Agriculture
Economic and Community Systems Unit
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service,
at 202-720-5384 or e-mail her at jauburn@csrees.usda.gov

Conference Highlights



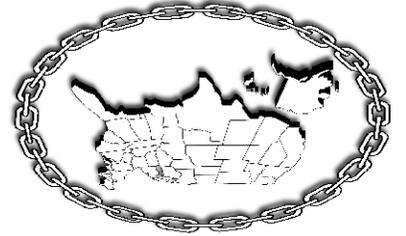
New Member Orientation To Be Held at Annual Training Conference

The Organization will hold a new member orientation for NRCS employees with up to 3 years of employment during the 14th Annual Training Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana in December 2006. The orientation will be held from 3:00 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. Monday, Dec. 4, 2006.

A new employee networking session with state conservationists will be held from 7:00 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2006.

The National Organization of Professional Black Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees

The Link



Sylvia Rainford, Editor
P.O. Box 6055
Falls Church, VA 22040