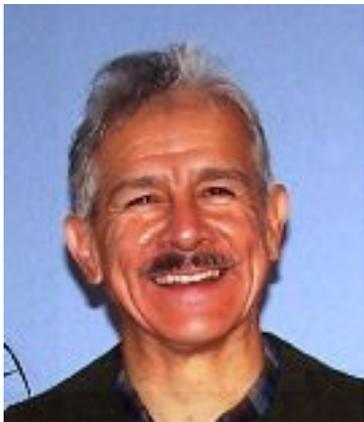


Colorado Retirees Join the Earth Team

Submitted by Kristi Gay, RC&D Coordinator, Colorado

Three retired NRCS veterans are volunteering to provide equipment, grass seed, and expertise as part of a cellulosic biofuels study in the Flagler, Colorado area located a couple hours east of Denver. Wendell Hassell, Ken Lair, and Don Hajar will also insure that experimental plots are installed properly for the project research.

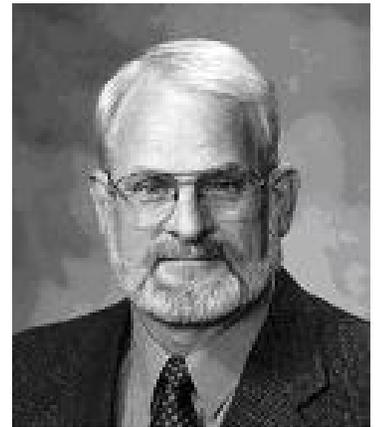
Colorado RC&D Coordinator, Kristi Gay was the catalyst for the project, getting together the three whom she'd known for over 20 years. "We have



Don Hajar

maintained our friendships over the years through our mutual association with the Colorado Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society and Colorado Section of the Society for Range Management. All three were quick to show interest after only a few phone calls and e-mails," said Gay. "We were interested in helping with a project based on an idea that developed from discussions with local landowners and volunteer members of the Flagler Conservation District Board."

Actually, the study is part of a larger project spearheaded by Dr. Ron Follett with the Agricultural Research Service in Fort Collins, Colorado. The Flagler Chapter of the Future Farmers of America has also volunteered to be involved with the study.



Ken Lair

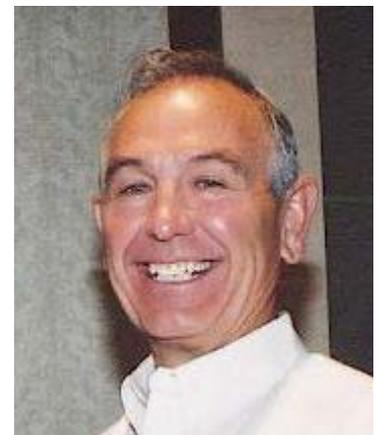
Local farmers are interested in a 'grow your own' fuel source that could diversify common non-irrigated crop rotations of wheat/fallow and wheat/millet/fallow. They are also interested in the opportunity to plant low water use crops that would be economically feasible and would benefit from limited irrigation. Shrinking



photo submitted by Kristi Gay

water tables are a concern in the Colorado eastern plains region of the Ogallala Aquifer. Finding highly productive and economically feasible alternative crops would help stabilize the local economy as acres for high water use crops such as corn, are being reduced due to tightening water supplies.

Landowners, Dan Mills, Doug Klann, and the Town of Flagler, Colorado, cooperated by allowing the three Earth Team volunteers to plant



Wendell Hassell

four species of tall grasses on replicated plots on their land to study the long-term potential productivity for cellulosic biofuels in the eastern plains region. Each set of plots amounts to about an acre of cropland donated per participant.

With the current interest in biofuels, it is anticipated that this project and a companion biodiesel study might stimulate new jobs for some of the approximately 600 residents of the rural Town of Flagler.

Wisconsin Volunteers Reach Out to High School FFA Students

Submitted by Barb Jansen, Volunteer Coordinator, Wisconsin

An NRCS Earth Team volunteer program exhibit attracted over 2,500 high school students in attendance at the Life/Work Expo held in Madison, Wisconsin. The expo is a career fair held in conjunction with the annual State FFA Convention. The FFA recognizes the importance of building leadership skills, citizenship, cooperation, and community service. The organization helps their members prepare for careers and leadership roles in agriculture.

The Earth Team compliments the career fair by providing the participants with information about careers in NRCS and how they can gain valuable experience by volunteering for the agency through the Earth Team. By volunteering, NRCS can provide a great opportunity for many of the students interested in agricultural and natural resources careers.



(center left to right) Barb Jansen, Volunteer Coordinator and (Right Center) Betty Stibbe, State Volunteer Coordinator with FFA members.

Earth Team Volunteers “FIRE-Up” for Summer

Submitted by Ed Griffith, Southwest Idaho Resource Conservation and Development Intern, Bill Moore, SWIRC&D Coordinator and Bonnie Long, State Volunteer Coordinator, Idaho

Earth Team volunteers in the Field Inquiry Research Experience (F.I.R.E. Up) program are working with Idaho landowners to help them understand the fire hazards and fire safety opportunities on their property. In the wide open spaces of Idaho, fire protection and fire safety are topics of constant concern, so the volunteers gather the fire hazard location and hazard data on hand held personal digital assistance devices and then the information is loaded into the RedZone software on a lap-top computer and supplied to local fire departments. This GIS based information is also used to develop the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) fire hazard ranking sheets that are distributed to the affected home owners to provide guidance on potential corrective measures.

The Southwest Idaho RC&D (SWIRC&D) is the lead sponsor for the three-week, summer F.I.R.E. Up course where students learn to use GPS, radio, digital camera, and software such as Fire-Mon and RedZone.



F.I.R.E. UP Team, 2008

After a week of training, students are taken into the field to gather necessary data to complete tasks assigned by SWIRC&D and the BLM. Students are equipped to work in small independent teams and teachers work with and track the whole class with the use of the technology provided. The data gathered is used in the third week to produce GIS products in the form of reports that include information on access, topography, vegetation, hazard, construction type, utilities, fire protection, and the calculated fire hazard. The reports are used by the BLM and the local community to improve the fire protection of the community.

The Student Showcase is the culminating event where students present their GIS projects to parents, family members, BLM, Meridian School District, the local community, and Northwest Nazarene University personnel.

F.I.R.E. Up is a program valued by the community as well as helping to educate the public.

Artist and Agricultural Engineer Use Talents to Recruit Next Generation of Conservationists

Submitted by Kathy Respass, State Volunteer Coordinator, Mississippi

“I enjoy the Earth Team volunteer program because it gives me the opportunity to help recruit the next generation of conservationists,” says Mississippi NRCS State Water Management Engineer, Area 4, Area Engineer, and Earth Team volunteer Paul Rodrigue. This sentiment is shared by his wife Pat Rodrigue as well. Both are using their talents and abilities to familiarize young people, their teachers, and parents with the world of soil and water conservation on private lands.

Because Pat has the opportunity to be around thousands of young people at the numerous conservation field days with her nature art, she has a wonderful opportunity to use her talent to introduce students and teachers to the world of nature through an artist’s eyes. She uses the medium of art to



Pat and Paul Rodrigue

demonstrate how to draw animals and to show others how to identify tracks, leaves, and fossils. When asked why she enjoys being an Earth Team volunteer Pat said, “It’s inspiring being around the younger generation.”

Although Paul Rodrigue wears two NRCS hats, he continues to use annual leave to volunteer his services as a water quality monitor and to conduct water quality study stations at conservation field days. Paul has been an Earth Team volunteer since 1995 when he began volunteering to work with water quality monitoring. And although Pat and Paul Rodrigue have made several moves over the past years, they’ve never let that keep them from their work as Earth Team volunteers.

It is an enduring legacy that Paul and Pat are building by sharing their time and talents with others to help inspire the next generation of conservationists!

Ten Volunteer Management Tips

Submitted by Pat Hoeffken, FY07 National Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator Award Winner

1. Do a volunteer needs assessment.
2. Prepare a list of volunteer jobs with instructions.
3. Advertise for the volunteer through United Way, schools, retirement centers, etc. The more specific and qualifying you make your advertisement, the more suitable the volunteer will be.
4. Have enough work organized for your volunteer. Don’t waste his/her time.
5. Be willing to turn away a volunteer who is unsuitable for your office.
6. Make the volunteer feel welcome and a part of their environment.
7. Expect the volunteers to fulfill their obligations just as you fulfill your obligations to volunteers.
8. Do all application paperwork before a volunteer starts working.
9. Ask the volunteer to be ‘on call’ to accept/decline other volunteer jobs as they become available, such as clerical work, field day assistance, etc.
10. Don’t give all of the plum jobs to the volunteer. Save some for your staff!



Pat Hoeffken

Local Volunteer Collects Snow Survey Measurements

Submitted by Mike Raymond, District Conservationist, Idaho and Bonnie Long, State Volunteer Coordinator, Idaho

Vern Lolley of Weiser, Idaho, has combined his love of ATVs and snowmobiles to serve as an Earth Team volunteer performing snow survey readings and stream flow forecasting in the mountains of Washington and Adams counties in west-central Idaho. For more than 15 years Vern has recorded precipitation data and snow depth, density and water content at seven locations for the Earth Team.

Vern owns a 370 acre irrigated farm on the Weiser Flat where he raises corn, small grains, and alfalfa hay - as well as a small dry farm near Midvale, Idaho, which is in the Conservation Reserve Program. He also serves as President of Weiser Irrigation District and is Chairman of Weiser River Water District No. 67. He has been trained by NRCS to take the necessary measurements and has been through winter survival training. He keeps an eye on the condition of the snow courses, reports the need for repairs, and occasionally makes them himself. When snowpack levels are low, he accesses measurement sites using his ATV. Riding the ATV is part of the fun, but what he really enjoys is riding his snow mobile to the sites when the snow gets deeper. He truly brings excitement to the job, and with his knowledge of the area and its resources, he is a very dependable source of information for winter recreationists, water management agencies, emergency authorities and local water users.

Vern always has a story to tell about his adventures “tooling through the mountains” to the survey sites. His enthusiasm is truly palpable. He enjoys the challenge of getting into remote areas in the middle of winter and enlists the help of Earth Team Volunteers Chris Braden and Bruce Gochnour when they are available. Besides experiencing the thrill of riding and the satisfaction of providing a public service, they have seen a lot of wildlife including deer, elk, eagles, turkey, grouse, coyotes, and wolves.

Vern Lolley does a great job for the Earth Team in Idaho, and has absolutely no intention of leaving the volunteer program any time soon!



(right) Tom Yankey, District Conservationist, recognizes Vern Lolly (Left)

Earth Team Volunteers Improve Walking Trail

Submitted by, Colleen McCleary, State Volunteer Coordinator, Colorado

Earth Team volunteers spent two hours planting trees in Hugo, Colorado. Approximately 20 volunteers donated their time to help plant 30 Eastern Red Cedar trees along the Coulson Nature Trail. Everyone had a great time and the Conservation District brought pizza and soda for lunch.

The trees were purchased by the High Plains and Prairie Conservation District and supplies were donated by the East Central Colorado RC&D, Lacey's Hardware, Osbornes Supermarket, Hugo Volunteer Fire Department, Town of Hugo, Hugo Improvement Partnership and the NRCS.



Earth Team volunteers

Yenessa is looking for articles for the next issue of the VolunteerVoice. Deadline for article submission is November 15th. Remember to submit photos with captions and keep your articles to a maximum of 3/4 of a page. Questions? Contact her at:

yenessa.homewood@ia.usda.gov



The National Earth Team Office hosted a two day training session for volunteer coordinators in Des Moines, IA. Some of the topics included; National Volunteer Week, recruiting, overcoming myths about volunteers, and marketing the Earth Team, just to name a few. The meeting was a success!

Earth Team Assists RC&D With Home Repair Project

Submitted by Dastina Johnson, State Volunteer Coordinator, Delaware

Through the First State Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council Home Repair Project, groups of young people and adults have volunteered one summer week for the past 16 years to help those in need of emergency home repairs in Delaware. And this year was no different with nearly 70 Earth Team volunteers from churches in New York and New Jersey traveling hundreds of miles to replace damaged roofs and fix floors,



young and adult volunteers work to fix structurally unsound deck and build a new wheelchair ramp

windows, and doors in Sussex County, Delaware. The project, initiated in 1991, serves low-income homeowners in Kent, Sussex, and lower New Castle counties by assisting in the elimination of conditions that present an immediate safety and/or health risk.

Each of the 31 volunteers ages 14-18 was responsible for raising \$150 in donations to help defray travel and other costs. The volunteers and 14 adults arrived on a Sunday in July from Utica, New York, and Stewartville, New Jersey, to put in long hours that following Monday through Friday hammering thousands of nails to complete repairs on 10 emergency home sites.

Chaperone Bill Butler said he got hooked the first time he came and has since returned five times. Another chaperone on site initially started out as a youth worker. Many of the young volunteers have also made multiple trips throughout the years.

The Project works with volunteers from a variety of community groups. "The Emergency Home Repair project is a great way for young people to get involved in improving communities and making a real difference in people's lives," said First State Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council Coordinator Bill Bell. "It's one way for people facing difficult circumstances to know there are other folks who care."