



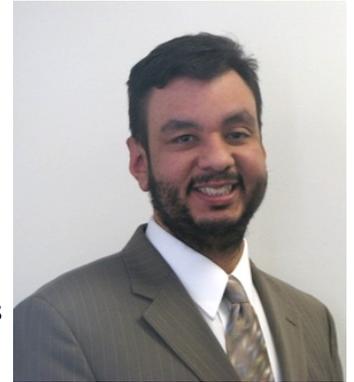
Maine NRCS Conservation News

USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

March 2010

A Few Words from the State Conservationist

We are now five months into Fiscal Year 2010. All of the Local Work Group Meetings have been held, many sign up periods have ended, and we are getting ready to obligate FY 2010 dollars so that we can get conservation on the ground. We are very fortunate that the recent winter storms did not reach most of Maine's landscape in the form of snow, and if this pattern continues we may be able to get out into the field earlier than usual. I know that you're all anxious to get out there and do what you love to do...using your expertise to help producers conserve their natural resources. I look forward to hearing about and seeing some of the successes that are as a result of 2008 Farm Bill funding.



— Juan Hernandez

This Year Marks the 75th Anniversary of NRCS!

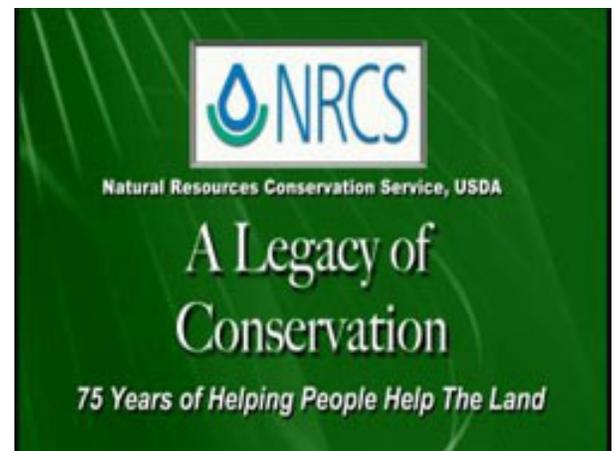
In 1933, the Soil Erosion Service, predecessor to the Soil Conservation Service and NRCS, began working with farmers in the Coon Creek watershed of southwestern Wisconsin to transform the square, eroding fields into what one sees today—a conservation showplace of contouring, stripcropping, terracing, and wise land use that benefits the soil, air, water, as well as the plant, animal, and human life of the whole watershed.

The carpeting of the land with soil conservation works nationwide was hastened with the passage of the Soil Conservation Act on

April 27, 1935. The enactment testified to a continuing federal commitment to soil conservation and was the culmination of the efforts of the agency's first chief, Hugh Hammond Bennett.

The following principles are NRCS's heritage and still guide its work:

- Assess the resources on the land, the conservation problems and opportunities.
- Draw on various sciences and disciplines and integrate all of their contributions into a plan for the whole property.
- Work closely with land users so that the plans for conservation mesh with their objectives.
- Through implementing conservation on individual properties, contribute to the overall quality of the life in the watershed or region.



Under Secretary of Agriculture Harris Sherman Visits Maine and New Hampshire



Under Secretary Harris Sherman (left) addresses the audience as State Conservationist Juan Hernandez looks on.

Harris Sherman, Under Secretary of Agriculture, and Jennifer Yezak, USDA Director of Legislative Affairs, visited Maine and New Hampshire on January 25-26. On January 26 they met with NRCS team members from Maine and New Hampshire, as well as partners and farmers. At a gathering of about 30 people at the Wentworth By the Sea Hotel in New Castle, NH, Under Secretary Sherman heard of the work being done in Maine and New Hampshire and the challenges faced by the NRCS, our partners, and farmers.



Steve Hobart, Past President of MACD, speaks on behalf of MACD.



DC Dave Garcelon makes his presentation on Maine's EQIP and WHIP programs.

Following an introduction of Maine and Maine agriculture by State Conservationist Juan Hernandez, Dave Garcelon, District Conservationist in Machias, briefed the Under Secretary on Maine's EQIP and WHIP projects, in particular projects on blueberry land, forestry projects, and fish passage/culvert projects. Ron Desrosiers, RC&D Coordinator at Time and Tide RC&D in Augusta, spoke about the RC&D Program in Maine, focusing on energy conservation.



Tony Carroll, farmer, speaks about farming in Maine.



RC&D Coordinator Ron Desrosiers informs the Under Secretary about energy conservation efforts in Maine.

Steve Hobart, Past President of the Maine Association of Conservation Districts and Chair of the Piscataquis County SWCD, and Tony Carroll, also a Past President of MACD and Chair of the York County SWCD, both made the trip to NH to represent Maine and provide information to the Under Secretary. Steve Hobart spoke on behalf of MACD, and Tony Carroll spoke from a farmers point of view.

Following the meeting, Hernandez, Under Secretary Sherman, and Yezak traveled to Portland where they attended a forestry meeting.

Positive feedback was received from the Under Secretary on his two day trip to northern New England.

NRCS and FSA Meet with Passamaquoddy Tribal Governors/CSP Contract Signed

NRCS State Conservationist Juan Hernandez, FSA State Executive Director Don Todd, and appropriate staffs took a day and traveled to Downeast Maine

(Washington County) to visit the two Governors of the Passamaquoddy Tribe. The meetings were multi-purpose, including: the new USDA leadership to meet the Tribal leadership and vice versa, talk about the Tribe's conservation needs, and how USDA can help meet those

needs, and to sign a Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contract for their blueberry land.

Richard Doyle, Governor of Pleasant Point, and William Nicholas, Governor of Indian Township, appreciated the efforts of both agencies and look forward to future meetings at which they can talk in more detail about programs available to them. The Passamaquoddy Tribe are not strangers to the NRCS programs, however. From 1997 to 2008, the Tribe has had 11 contracts totaling more than \$1 million, of which more than \$943,000 was funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, \$90,000 through the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, and \$55,000 through the Healthy Forests Reserve Program.

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More than \$800,000 have been applied to date. The Tribal leadership are interested in learning more about the 2008 Farm Bill and how it can help change their infrastructure.

Following the meetings, the two Governors signed a CSP contract for 1,709 acres of blueberry cropland owned by the Tribe and operated by the Northeastern Blueberry Company

(NEBCO). The total contract is for more than \$209,000, which will be paid over a five-year period. The blueberries are harvested from blueberry fields located on tribal lands in Township 19MD, Centerville, Columbia Falls, and Columbia.

The new CSP Program is a voluntary conservation program that encourages agricultural and forestry producers to maintain existing conservation activities and adopt additional ones on their operations.

Hernandez and Todd are also meeting with the leaders of the other three Maine Tribes—Penobscot, MicMac and Maliseet Tribes.



Tribal Governor William Nicholas (center) signs the CSP contract as Juan Hernandez and Washington County District Conservationist David Garcelon look on.



(L to R): Don Todd, FSA; Tribal Governor Richard Doyle; and Juan Hernandez, NRCS.

Embracing Unity and Diversity Day A Success

Three sessions were recently held simultaneously in Maine, each one focusing on different special emphasis groups, around the topic of “Embracing Unity and Diversity”. Planned by the Maine Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) and Maine’s Civil Rights Committee, verbal feedback on the sessions indicate that they were very successful.

The locations and planners of the three sessions were:

- Presque Isle—Dave Tingley, Disabled/Veteran SEPM, and Autumn Birt, Asian American/Pacific Islander SEPM.
- Bangor—Bianca Soto Gomez, Hispanic SEPM, and Seth Jones, American Indian/Alaska Native SEPM.
- Lewiston—Wayne Munroe, Black SEPM, and Leslie Nelson, Federal Women’s Program Manager.

The sessions were held jointly with the Farm Service Agency. “Having this joint event shows not only our commitment to civil rights, but to our agencies working together”, said State Conservationist Juan Hernandez. “It is extremely important to recognize the diversity of all of our customers and to deliver our programs in the most equitable and fair manner. It is our upmost responsibility and is one of the reasons that we are here today.”

“We have made significant progress in reaching out to our customers, but we can do much more in that arena,” said Hernandez. “I encourage each one of you to continue your dedication, hard work, and enthusiasm in order to reach this goal.”

Here are some of the photos from the sessions showing the diverse speakers and food samples that NRCS and FSA employees enjoyed.

Presque Isle

Kevin Curtin from the USDA TARGET Center spoke on Ergonomics and Assistive Technology. →



← Employees had a food sampling and a video on Technology and Disabilities.

Chunzeng Wang, Asst. Professor of Earth and Environmental Science spoke on Chinese Economic Growth and the Demand of Mineral and Energy Resources. →



← Carl Perry from Time and Tide RC&D in Augusta talked about the Patriot Guard Riders, of which he is a member.

“Understanding Asia: Achieving Cross-Cultural Success” was the topic of Suzanne Fox’s presentation. She is from Fox Intercultural Consulting Services. →



Embracing Unity and Diversity Day A Success (photos continued)

Bangor

Angel Martinez Loredo, a Consultant with EmbracingDiversity.com, spoke on "From Aztecs to Chicanos to Hispanics to Latinos: What's in a name?" →



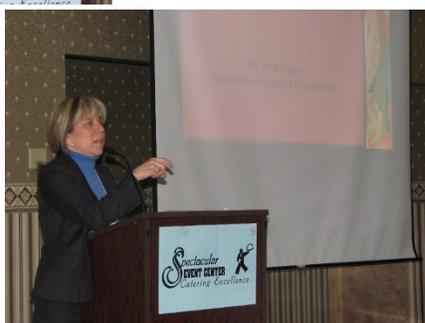
Juan Santiago Rave of This-tles Restaurant talked about the Essence of Argentine Tango, followed by a Tango demonstration, joined by his wife, Carolina. ←

Employees enjoy a food sampling of Hispanic and Native American food. →



Maria Girourd, Director of Cultural and Historic Preservation for the Penobscot Indian Nation, spoke on the History of Language in the Penobscot Community. ←

Dr. Ann Rojas talked about "Hispanic Mental Health in USA" and "Early Intervention: Good Parents, Great Kids, Better Community". She is a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist at Penobscot Community Health Care. →



Lewiston



(L to R): Coleen Churchill, Chair of the State Civil Rights Committee; Kim Bradford, NRCS Sociologist from NC, who spoke on Black History

Month, Small Scale Farm Producer, and Delivery and Demographics; Leslie Nelson, Federal Women's Program Manager; Oscar Mokeme, Maine African Culture Museum, who performed traditional culture music, dance and mask performance; drummer during the dance; Wayne Munroe, Black SEPM; and Myron Beasley, Professor at Bates College, who spoke on Fanm Se Poto Mitan: Women, Food, and Society.

Employees enjoy food sampling. →



Dance and Mask Performance ←

"Cultivating Community and Immigrant Farm Producer Outreach Strategies" was the topic of Amy Carington's presentation. She is from the New American Sustainable Agriculture Project. →



MFS Stewardship Forester Training Held—by Sally Butler, Forester

Sally Butler, NRCS Forester, and Andy Shultz, Maine Forest Service (MFS) Landowner Outreach Forester, provided training on the Forest Management Conservation Activity Plan, or CAP-FMP Technical Criteria, to 68 consulting foresters and 9 MFS District Foresters in late January. The consulting foresters had previously been trained in the MFS Forest Stewardship Program. The training included steps for completing the NRCS Environmental Evaluation, or

ME-CPA-52, a Record of Decisions and Cover Page for CAP-FMPs, as well as the procedure for landowners to use if they select the MFS as their Technical Service Provider.



NRCS and MFS have previously cooperated in joint training for consulting foresters on the 2008 Farm Bill programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. Maine NRCS also has an active contribution agreement with MFS to outreach to landowners and consulting foresters on USDA programs and assist with implementation of forestry conservation practices on the ground.

Macd Winter Meeting Held/Conservation Awards Presented

The Annual Winter Meeting of the Maine Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) was held at Hollywood Slots in Bangor in early December 2009. The two-day meeting supported an atmosphere for Soil and Water Conservation Districts to gather and share information regarding the health of Maine's economy, funding sources, NRCS programs, Department of Environmental Protection programs, and plans for Maine's "green" future.

At the Awards Luncheon many supervisors and employees were recognized for their years of service. In addition, the Lazy W. Farm of Industry was awarded the 2009 Conservation Farm of the Year, and the China Regional Lake Alliance was awarded the 2009 Conservation Organization of the Year.

Lazy W. Farms has been owned and operated by Ron and Betty Wing and their sons Ethan and Dana since 1954. Focusing



on the milking operation until the late 1990s, they had one of the largest dairy farms in Franklin County. After selling the dairy cows, they started raising replacement heifers, and have between 25 to 50 at any one time. They own 1,800 acres of land, most of it in woodland. However, 300 acres are open land, most of which is rented to other farmers. Many conservation practices have been carried out by the Wings in the past years, both in the field and the forest. Taking care of the land is important to Ron. "I try to leave the land better than it was before I started", he said.

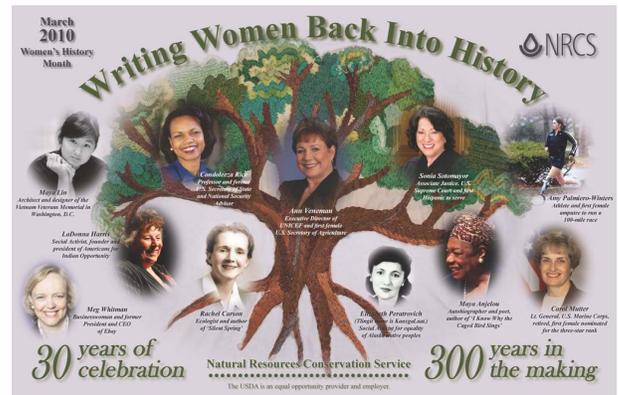


China Regional Lake Alliance has developed a long-term working relationship to bring their primary municipality (Town of China) and the Kennebec County SWCD into an effective three-way system to coordinate and use conservation technical expertise, municipal regulation and the watershed organization to address erosion/water quality issues affecting their region. The Alliance serves as an excellent "glue" to focus the work of these entities to get conservation implemented on the ground.

Women's History Month—by Leslie Nelson, Federal Women's Program Manager

March 2010 marks the 30th Anniversary of Women's History Month. The theme for this year's observance is "writing women black into history". According to the National Women's History Project (www.nwhp.org), in the early eighties the topic of women's history was limited to college curricula and less than 3% of the content in teacher training textbooks

mentioned the contributions of women. Although significant improvements have been made, Women's History Month is a good time to consider women's contributions to our past, to NRCS and to the agricultural community.



The Museum of African Culture—by Wayne Munroe, Black Special Emphasis Program Manager

The Museum of African Culture was founded by Oscar Mokeme (presenter at the Embrace Unity and Diversity Day in Lewiston) and Art Aleshire on August 8, 1998 in Portland, ME. It is the only institution in northern New England devoted exclusively to sub-Saharan African arts and culture. There are over 1,500 pieces in the collection of the Museum, ranging from large-scale, elaborately carved wooden masks to smaller scale figures, cast copper alloy (bronze) figures, textiles, utilitarian objects, ceramic, bone, ivory and composite objects.

The oldest mask in the collection dates back to 1600 AD. Many of the bronzes are 1,000 years old and the ivory flutes and clay vessels are up to 2,000 years old. These pieces are important as they pre-

serve the religious and cultural legacy of Africa that is fast disappearing in a globalized world.

The permanent exhibit features an extensive display of African masks. African masks have many different func-



tions. They are used for initiations, rites of passage, funerals, agricultural ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, harvest festivals, and veneration of the ancestors. They are used to enforce laws of the land and exemplify good moral behavior. In traditional Africa, masks are central and

essential to the spiritual and cultural life of this continent.

In addition to the Permanent Gallery, they have a Heritage Gallery with rotating exhibits featuring themes that include art from all over Sub-Saharan Africa. Their Contemporary Gallery has rotating exhibits as well, featuring art inspired by the African Diaspora, and home of the Black Artist Forum.

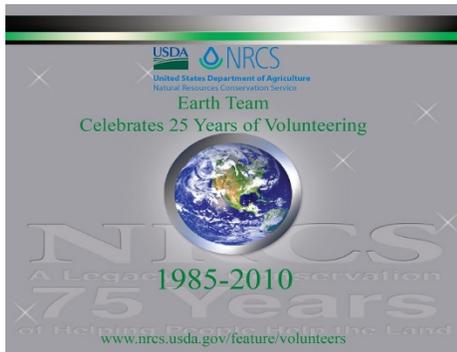
Museum of African Culture

13 Brown Street

Portland, ME

Information taken from the Museum's web site at www.museumafricanculture.org

This Year Marks the 25th Anniversary of the Earth Team Program!



The primary purpose of the Earth Team is to expand NRCS' services by using volunteer time, talent, and energy to help accomplish the NRCS mission.

Volunteering has always been a cornerstone of the soil and water conservation movement. It began with the organization of conservation districts in 1937. In recognition of the interest and skills many Americans have in conservation, Congress passed legislation in 1985 permitting the Soil Conservation Service, now NRCS, to use volunteers in its programs. This is how the Earth Team, the volunteer arm of the NRCS, was initiated.

The primary purpose of the Earth Team is to expand NRCS' services by using volunteer time, talent, and energy to help accomplish the NRCS mission. There has never been a better time for Earth Team volunteers. The energy, excitement, dedication and skills they bring to the job are vital to help NRCS and conservation districts respond to the needs of our customers.

National Volunteer Week is April 18-24.

Personnel Update

New Hires:

- Sarah Wiley, Agricultural Conservation Experienced Services (ACES) Employee, Scarborough Field Office, effective February 28, 2010.
- Vasco "Buster" Carter, GS-11 Resource Conservationist, State Office, effective March 28, 2010.

Resignation::

- Jose Prieto-Figueroa, Soil Conservationist, Houlton Field Office, effective February 28, 2010.

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Meet Lance Gorham



Lance Gorham came on board as the District Conservationist for the Lewiston/Oxford Zone on December 20, 2009.

Lance was formerly a Soil Conservationist in the Brattleboro Field Office in Windham County, Vermont. He served as the Black Emphasis Program Manager in Vermont and currently serves as a member of the National Appeals Cadre. He worked as a field biologist at the USGS National Wetlands Research Center in Lafayette, Louisiana for 12 years before joining NRCS in 2004. He has a B.S. in Forest Management, an M.S. in Biology, a Master of Studies in Environmental Law, a PhD in Environmental and Evolutionary Biology, and a Juris Doctor.

Welcome, Lance.

Dealing with Difficult People

All of us at one time or another have had to deal with disagreeable people both on and off the job. The results of how we interact with these people can range from total disruption and emotional outburst, to an easily shrugged off minor irritation. The following information provides tips on how to deal effectively with difficult people so that tension is diffused and smooth interaction is attained.

Who needs this information?

Everyone in the conservation partnership is capable of learning how to deal with difficult people. It is important to remember that, except for a small portion of the general population, people basically want to get along and want to avoid conflict. However, we are all capable of losing control. When people become difficult to deal with (i.e., extremely emotional or hostile), there is usually a reason. In these situations, we need to try to understand and address the reason or the situation may grow increasingly more hostile with future interactions.



How do you deal with difficult people?

When faced with a difficult person, try to find out WHAT is upsetting them and WHY. Only after someone identifies a cause can you start to try to address the problem. In some cases, you may only be able to help yourself or the other person understand the problem, but this may not necessarily resolve the conflict.

Some tips to diffuse hostility in a person are as follows:

- ⇒ Do not become emotional yourself.
- ⇒ Do not interrupt.
- ⇒ Allow the other person to speak until they are finished.
- ⇒ Try to understand what they are saying; give them feedback that shows you are trying to understand them (e.g., "It sounds like you are saying USDA has unreasonable rules. Have I correctly interpreted what you are saying?").
- ⇒ Never use an accusatory message (e.g., "YOU don't know what you're talking about.") Instead a better approach would be "My understanding of the situation is different. Let's see if we can find out why we have differing views."
- ⇒ If you are wrong, apologize and ask what you and he/she can do to right the wrong (e.g., "I apologize, how can WE fix this?").
- ⇒ If you disagree, do it professionally and unemotionally (e.g., I see what you are saying, but we are required to follow the laws/rules of Congress/USDA"). DON'T repeat the same phrase over again when they object. Instead, really try to explain the problem to them.



Information taken from the Social Science Institute's *People, Partnerships and Communities* Issue titled "Dealing with Difficult People", Issue 13.