

The Effective District Conservationist Training

Kick-off Net Conference

May 6, 2009

1:00 – 3:00 PM Eastern

Phone Number 888-323-9892

For Participants: URL: <https://www.mymeetings.com/nc/join/>

Conference number: PW3309487

Audience passcode: 800842

The Effective District Conservationist Training

WELCOME

- Judy Doerner, STC Vermont
Executive Team Sponsor
Net Conference Facilitator

Introductions

- Leonard Jordan, Regional Assistant Chief
- The Effective District Conservationist Training Team:
 - Pat Clark, SAO, ME, VT, NH
 - Dennis DeWeese, ASTC, NY
 - Dan Dostie, SRC, PA
 - Rick Ellsmore, ASTC, NH
 - Pauline Paré, ASTC, ME
 - Marilyn Stephenson, ASTC, NY
- NEDS Advisor: Andre Alix

Introductions

State Conservationist Panel:

Terry Cosby, STC, Ohio

Mary Combs, STC, North Carolina

Kevin Brown, STC, Tennessee

State Conservationist Panel

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QUESTIONS

Judy Doerner, Facilitator

Introductions

District Conservationist Panel:

Wayne Munroe, DC, Scarborough, Maine

John Whitney, DC, East Aurora, New York

Karen McCalister, DC, Troy, Ohio

District Conservationist Panel

Wayne Munroe, DC
Scarborough, Maine

The Effective District Conservationist Panel May 06, 2009

Wayne P. Munroe District Conservationist & BEPM

- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- 306 US Route 1, Suite A1
- Scarborough, ME 04074-9774
- Phone: (207) 883-0159 ext. 101 ; Fax: (207) 883-1139
- Email: Wayne.Munroe@me.usda.gov

Background:

- B.S. Natural Resource Management, University of Maine Orono, 1981

SCS New Hire 1983:

- **Soil Conservationist, Tavares, Florida Lake SWCD, 1983 – 1986 Area Three (GS 05/07/09)**
- Targeted Training Location with a Leadership DC
- Use resources efficiently i.e. Area Staff, Training Plan,
- Outreach Public Speaking, Goals Orientated Production Environment
- Management challenge, acting DC in Satellite office
- Results, Get Noticed

First DC Experience:

District Conservationist, Martin County SWCD Stuart, Florida,
Area Four, 1986 – 1987 (GS-09):

- Relations Building: Customers, Peers, Partners
- Technical & Management Skills refinement,
- State Office Pilot GIS SS,
- SWCD Political Dynamics internal & external
- Adopt a SWCD Supervisor as a informal Mentor , SWCD & NRCS network building

Merit Promotion, DC Hope Valley, Rhode Island:

District Conservationist Kent & Washington Counties, Southern RI SWCD, 1988 – 1990 (GS-11):

- Rhode Island SCS State Operations , Three Field Offices , All Employees State Conservationist's Staff
- Partnership Melting Pot
- Flagship Assignment with Partners Statewide, Custom IWM all 28 Turf Farms
- Statewide Technology Transfer with Cost Share Contracts WC4 irrigation System Conversions
- GIS University of Rhode Island, early adopter digital resource data layers
- NE Leadership Development Program 1989 -1990

Merit Promotion Supervisory DC, Westbrook, ME:

DC Cumberland County SWCD, Diverse SWCD, July 1990 – Present:

- Diverse Land Use and NRCS Programs
- Navigation Plan (pace, leadership and notice)
- Complexity, Leadership & Vision (seeing beyond immediacy of the moment and day)
- Carnegie Success Secret.....
- Build Board Relations (conservation plans, technical advisors, nominate awards, photography, public & partner relations, regulatory guidance)
- Customer Satisfaction and Take Time to Acknowledge Your Success and Staff Around You

DC Cumberland County SWCD, Diverse SWCD, July 1990 –
Present:

Agency Culture Cross Roads:

- Change Agents: Letting Go, Transition, Renewal
- New Programs, Technology, Tools, Software
- Balance Career with Agency Mission and Community
- Work Harder and Smarter , One Minute Manager, Stress Management
- Change Your Thinking
- How You deal with Adversity is Under a Microscope
- Leaders Adapt & Do The Right Thing

Supervisory DC, Scarborough, ME, 2003 – Present:

Career Paradigm, Look Two Steps Ahead:

- Cooperative Conservation Flagships
- Scarborough Marsh Wetlands Restoration, 2002 – 2008, FA & TA
- Work Outside of Your Comfort Zone and Within Your Skill Level
- Leverage Career Building Opportunities
- National Committees, Chief Pearlie Reeds Forum, Agency Navigation
- Civil Rights Committee, SEPM Duty, Adhoc Teams with State Leadership, State, Regional and National Details
- Award Yourself! Milestones of Success! Time to Reflect!

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District Conservationist Panel

John Whitney, DC
East Aurora, New York

The “Effective” District Conservationist

Theme – “Then & Now”

- John Whitney, District Conservationist
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
50 Commerce Way
East Aurora, New York 14052
(716) 652-8480 / (716) 474-4387 cell
john.whitney@ny.usda.gov

Background

- Family Farm – Belmont, New York
- Cornell University – 1978-1982, B.S.
- SCS “WAE” Summer Work – 1979
 - Allegany County, New York
- SCS Student Trainee – 1980 & 1981
 - Columbia County & Schoharie County, New York
- Full-time, Soil Conservationist – 1982
 - Livingston County & Ontario County
- District Conservationist – 1986-present
 - Erie County, New York (Buffalo area)

“Then & Now”

- Pre-Name Change
- Pre-Computers but Early Adopter
- Early on – mostly white, male colleagues (& clients)
- “ACP” and Conservation Planning (including “State Law Plans”)
- FSA Compliance Plans / HEL / Swampbuster
- Pre-Farm Bill Program Dollars with NRCS Contract Management

Paradigms and Pendulums

- Field-based and field focused training
- OJT with a little classroom backup
- Computers as tools
- Paper case files and Rolodex card racks
- SWCDs were considered the delivery mechanism (and authority) for providing federal assistance (*along with ASCS ACP dollars and contracts*)

Paradigms and Pendulums (cont.)

- SCS/NRCS staff often had farm background (no longer true)
- Soil Conservation Technicians
- Areas / Teams / Area Conservationists/ Team Leaders
- Planning – 10 to 15 farms per year
- Annual practices vs. Long Term Agreements (LTA)/Long Term Contracts (LTC)

Paradigms and Pendulums (cont.)

- Workload
- Field Office Staffing / SWCD Staff
- Specialists / Generalists
- Empowerment / Line & Staff Leadership
- Delegation of Authority / Administrative “Control”
- NRCS / SWCD Divergence / Convergence

“Generational Issues”

- Focus on work life/ Focus on family and private life
- Retirement system (CSRS / FERS)
- Training style preferences
- Supervisory style preferences
- Leadership (“Leadership Development Program”) – localized and multi-level vs. top down

Generational Issues Cont.

- Boomer (45-66) / Gen X (26-48)
- Job security
- Planned tenure (lifelong career)
- Comfort with technology
- Independence / Authority

Personal Challenges

- Paperwork Tolerance Level
- Saying “No”
- Doing it All Myself / Asking for Help
- Expecting People to Look for What Needs to Be Done
- Competency Expectations
- “But I Haven’t Been Trained on That”

Keys to Effectiveness

- Public service focus
- Client focus
- “Farmer friendly” bias
- Use the right tool(s) at the right time
- “Jack (or Jill) of All Trades”
- Standards as “guidelines” vs. “the law”
- Master Juggler (but willing to toss the ball to colleagues)
- Embrace and master the efficient and effective technologies
- Earth Team Volunteers!

Keys to Effectiveness

- Accept the inevitable changes
- Adopt and adapt
- Keep a eye out for opportunities
- Be willing to share them
- Keep the Mission in mind
- Maintain your passion and enthusiasm

District Conservationist Panel

Karen McCalister, DC

Troy, Ohio

District Conservationist
Karen McCalister
Miami County, Ohio

Background

Passion

I love working with our natural resources and putting conservation on the land.

Education

- Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources Management from The Ohio State University
- Master of Business Administration from The University of Dayton (I took a two year Leave Without Pay from federal service in order to obtain this degree.)

Federal Service Summary

- Coop Student with USDA/Forest Service
- Permanent Full time from 1985 – 1988; Hoosier National Forest, Indiana
- LWOP
- Permanent Full time from 1990 – 1994; Wayne National Forest, Ohio
- 1994 – present District Conservationist; Miami County, Ohio

DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE District Conservationist Position

- **Growing Years**
 - Learning and doing the job at the same time, because I did not come up through the SCS ranks
 - Making the switch from public land mgmt to private land mgmt. Very exciting and an eye opening experience.
 - I was like a sponge. Asked a lot of questions, went to a lot of training, went out in the field as often as I could. Enjoyed farm visits
 - In Ohio, the districts are very strong, so I learned a lot through the district staff
 - Agency Name Change
 - CAMPS, FOCS, Arc GIS, Toolkit, Protracts
 - TQM
 - Customer Service Training
 - CTA and conservation planning through ACP and LTA with FSA holding the funds
- **Adolescent Years**
 - Program and contract administration through EQIP, FIP, WHIP, WRP, CSP, FRPP, and NRCS holding the funds
 - Questioning the system
 - Explain to me.....Why are we doing this?
 - PRS, Goals, Workload Analysis
 - Balance between technical skills and computer skills
 - Know the contract and program rules well enough to be dangerous
 - Know and understand what the objectives of the landwoner and the resource concerns

DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE District Conservationist Position

- **Adult Years**

- **Read**
- **Find the answer to your questions and then ask the question to confirm your understanding or misunderstanding**
- **Work on your listening skills and do not assume**
- **Be a delegator. You do not need to be an expert about everything, yet you need to have some understanding of what you're delegating and its impact**
- **Hard to focus because there is so much to be done and there are so many distractions, priorities, and crises**

- **Retirement**

- **Since the Audit, there are days where it doesn't seem like it will come soon enough**
- **Other days, I am so fortunate to have a job where I can meet one-on-one with private landowners and offer conservation options and incentives, with the hopes that it is something that will work within their land objectives and the agency's objectives (even if it is by the glow of a computer screen)**

- **Balancing work and home**

- **Constant balancing act in managing the pressures between home and work**

EXPERIENCES AS A District Conservationist

- Challenging, rewarding, and frustrating
- Love – Hate relationship
- It is important to remain positive, yet there are days where it is impossible
- Balancing act between technical skills and computer/contract administration
- Struggling with time management and establishing priorities
- In my opinion, you can not be a “perfectionist” and do this job
- Slowly learning that being flexible is not always a “good thing”
- I am looking forward to trying new positions in new areas regardless of whether it comes with a promotion or not

District Conservationist Panel

QUESTIONS

Judy Doerner, Facilitator

Overview of The Effective District Conservationist Training Curriculum

- Dennis DeWeese, ASTC-Operations, New York
- Rick Ellsmore, ASTC-Operations, New Hampshire

The Effective District Conservationist

Overview of Curriculum

- **Dennis DeWeese, ASTC-O, New York,**
dennis.deweese@ny.usda.gov
- **Rick Ellsmore, ASTC-O, New Hampshire**
- Rick.ellsmore@nh.usda.gov

The Effective District Conservationist

- Genesis
 - Front-Line Officers
 - Boot Camp- focusing on Technical Training
 - What about Managing an Office?
 - O&E Study

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- Core Group established in the East Region in 2007 to develop Curriculum

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- Distant Learning
 - Knowledge Based

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- Classroom Learning
 - Building Competency
 - Business Plan and use of Agency Business Tools
 - Partnerships

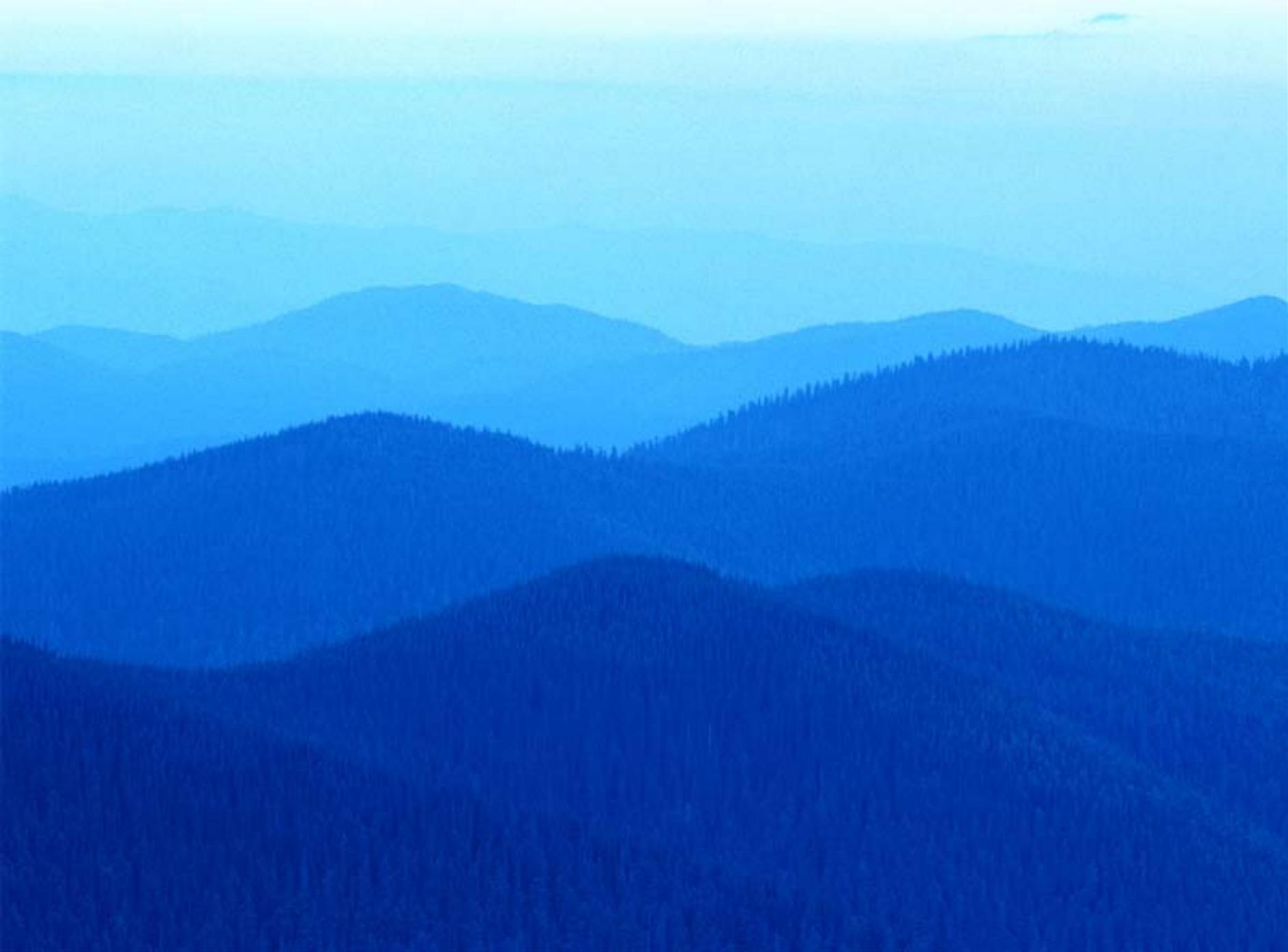
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Pilot Course

Interaction with State Leadership and
Supervisor are critical

Soak it in!

Good Luck!



Tour of the Web site and How to Access the Learning Units

Pauline Paré, ASTC for Operations, Maine

<http://www.me.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/>

<http://www.me.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/EffectiveDC/Introduction.html>

Connection to Operations Management Training Curriculum

Overview of the Five Management Functions

- Pauline Pare, ASTC, ME

Operations Management

The Five Functions of Management

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What is Operations Management?

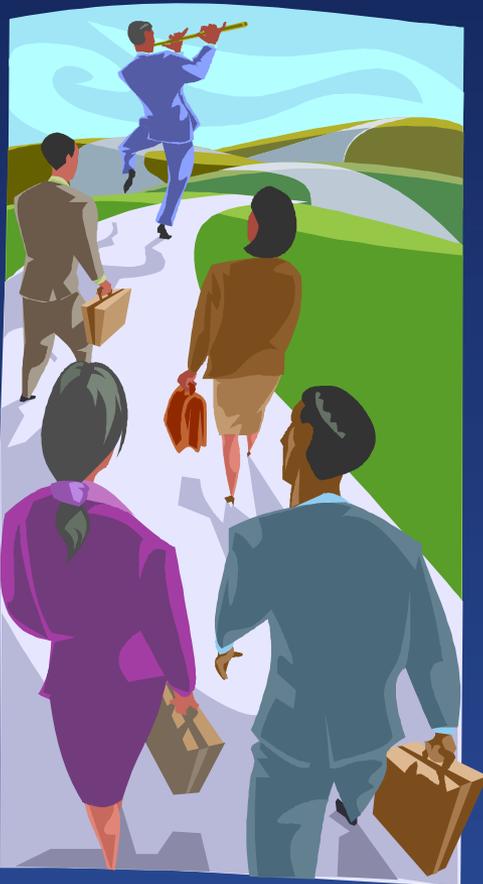
- Ensures business operations are efficient and effective
- Involves ongoing activities of managers to achieve agency mission, vision and goals.

What are the Five Functions of Management?

Overview of 5 Functions



Leadership



Develop leadership competencies to assure your success and the success of your employees

Leaders are responsible to orchestrate all the main factors to achieve goals and objectives of their unit.

Planning



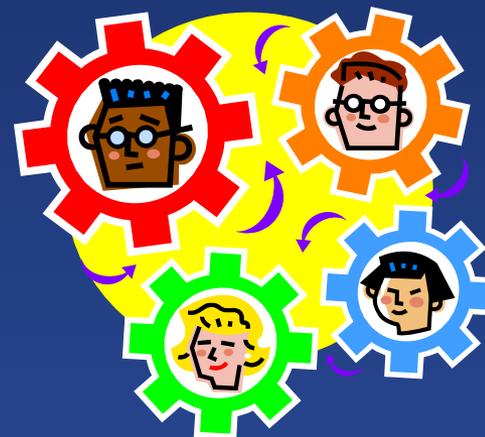
Decision making function of management

- Collecting info to develop alternatives, analyze and evaluate the information (resource assessments)
- Deciding when, where and how to take action and project results (Business Plan)
- Defining goals and how to achieve the goals
- Developing various plans to integrate and coordinate activities and schedule tasks



Staffing

Ensure units are staffed with trained and skilled employees who have access to needed resources to do their jobs.



Right People in
Right Places doing
Right Things

Organizing



- Establishing a formal structure through which the agency's authorities and mission are carried out.
 - NRCS is a line and staff organization
 - Line Officers
 - Chief -> Regional Assistant Chief -> State Conservationist -> Area Conservationist or Team Leader or ASTC for Operations/FO Operations -> DC
 - Staff positions – provide specialized technical or administrative support to line officers
- Established structure to facilitate delivery of technical and financial assistance – through conservation districts and other partners – to clients at the local level
- Organize for success – what tasks need to be done, who will do them, how will they be grouped, who reports to whom, who is making the final decisions,...

Directing



- Using available resources to accomplish priority objectives established during planning process
 - Making things happen...
 - Assuring success...

Directing

- Monitoring performance against goals, standards and plans
 - Getting things back on track if there are significant issues
- Supervising
 - Measuring results of employee performance
- Deciding how to address unmet goals and objectives and the need for corrective actions

Evaluating

- Conduct oversight and evaluation continuously to ensure an appropriate amount of accountability and results.
 - Review of work, random check of work by employees
 - Spot checks
 - Reviews
 - Audits



The Five Functions

Consider tracking your work in the next month and list your day to day work tasks by function.

Each of these functions is crucial to an effective manager.



Journaling for Professional Development

- Pauline Pare, ASTC, ME

Professional Journaling

The Effective District Conservationist East Region

Pauline Paré, NRCS Maine
May 6, 2009

Objectives

- Introduce you to professional journaling
- You will be able to list ways that journals may be used
- Identify potential benefits of journaling
- Journaling - you decide how to make it work for you

Using a Journal

- Powerful personal development tool
- Problem solving tool
 - Way to think through complex decisions until you find clarity
 - Consider problem from various perspectives
 - Explore various options
- Some use as a record of life events
- Record projects and tasks successfully completed
 - what worked?
- Explore new directions or challenges



Using a Journal

- Set goals (career goals, personal goals, project goals...)
- Document professional development
- Experiment with ideas
- Clarify ideas, thoughts, perceptions, beliefs



Using a Journal

- Note observations of mentors, leaders and others
 - How they made decisions and results you observed
 - How they solved a problem, actions taken

Using a Journal

- Explore your workplace values
- Write a personal mission statement
- Explore your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT)
- Write about your reactions to success and failures

Using a Journal

- Write down reflections on books or articles or presentations
- Keep a list of accomplishments
- Cathartic writing
 - Writing when struggling with something
- Dialogue with self (your own inner village people)

Using a Journal

- Reflect on experiences
- Articulate connections between what you know and what you are learning

Benefits of Journaling

- Increased awareness
- Sharper focus
- Creative problem-solving
- Broader perspective
- Active thinking
- Empowers brainstorming
- Deeper level of analysis
- Stronger sense of self
- Improved communication skills
- Generation of new ideas
- Clears the mind
- Life-changing potential
- Builds self-confidence
- Development of action plans
- Brings clarity of thought
- Greater honesty
- Integration of ideas and perspectives

http://www.quintcareers.com/journaling_benefits.html

Journaling

- Normally private
 - Unless agreed otherwise
- You decide who to share with
 - Consider sharing your journal or parts of your journal with your mentor

Where to start

- Paper & pen or electronic journal
- What do you write in it?
 - Anything and everything you want
 - How you solved a particular problem (creating a knowledge base of problems and solutions)
 - Tracking accomplishments, issues,... for performance evaluations
 - Some carry with them everywhere - recording meeting notes, action items, phone numbers, learning from meeting or event,... Some keep at home
 - You decide the level of detail
 - Consider use of key words to put at top of page to help with searching

Questions to consider as you move forward

- What are my professional learning goals?
- What areas do I need to further develop to make me effective?
- Since I became a DC, what have been my biggest challenges? What do I need help with?
- What have I accomplished this week? Month?
- What have I learned from this mistake?

Objectives

- Introduced you to professional journaling
- Talked about how journals may be used
- Reviewed potential benefits of journaling
- Invited you to consider Journaling and to explore and decide how to make it work for you

Any questions? Need for more information?

Invitation to Journal

Take some time to journal every day to
capture your experiences and learning

Have fun! Be REAL with yourself.



Course Expectations

- Marilyn Stephenson, ASTC-Field Operations,
New York

Course Point of Contact

Pat Clark, SAO, Maine, New Hampshire and
Vermont

Phone: 207-990-9567

Email: pat.clark@me.usda.gov

The Effective District Conservationist

Contact Information

For Technical Concerns: Pauline Paré at 207 990-9554
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(dennis.deweese@ny.usda.gov); Dan Dostie at 717 237-2256
(dan.dostie@pa.usda.gov); Rick Ellsmore at 603 868-9931 x105
(rick.ellsmore@nh.usda.gov); or Marilyn Stephenson at 518 431-1110 x102
(marilyn.stephenson@ny.usda.gov).

For Administrative Concerns: Pat Clark at 207 990-9567
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Questions ???

Conclude Net Conference at 3 PM

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