

NOPBNRCSE



"The Alabama Link"

April 2010

NEWSLETTER

From the President's Desk:

It is with great pleasure that I greet you in yet another addition of our organization's newsletter. As we enter into the spring season, it is important that we remember to promote good sound planting practices. By this I mean, we should actively encourage our clientele to follow sound conservation practices as they plan to reap a bountiful harvest in the coming months. We should also take time to engage ourselves in every conference, membership, and youth activity opportunity. We too, should expect above average yields and reap bountiful in the future. However, just as with planting we will reap according to how we plan, prepare and cultivate that which we have planted.

Our organization makes all of the aforementioned opportunities possible. I would like to take a minute to reiterate some of the obligations and opportunities that we have as affiliates of NOPBNRCSE. Participation in our scholarship campaign is always solicited among members and non-members of this organization. All contributions large and small are welcomed. The **Les Hillard/Sebastian Thomas Scholarship** is a very real way to contribute to the organization and the future of agriculture as a whole. The scholarship is awarded annually to a deserving student that will pursue studies in agriculture. For additional details on this please, feel free to email, Craig.B.Johnson@al.usda.gov.

In this day and time we are learning daily the importance of communication, awareness, and efficiency. There is no better way to promote the three than to gather ourselves together with those with similar backgrounds, interest, and tasks at hand. Active participation in our annual conferences and networking events allow you the opportunity to share ideas with your colleagues and other stakeholders. Your input matters and, in fact, is the

sole reason we exist. Our livelihood and continued existence is predicated on you, so please take advantage of these opportunities as they become available.

Organizational membership offers many privileges, some of which are; committee appointment opportunities, voting rights, and privy to national council positions. These all provide the avenue to support issues that impact you directly. I encourage you all, if you're not already, to become *active* members in this and any other organization that is in place to help move our agency forward.

With that said, we are preparing for our annual NOPBNRCSE Annual Meeting. Currently, I do not know the location, but the tentative dates are **August 5-6**. I will communicate additional information to you as it becomes available. It is my hope that all of you will be in attendance, so mark your calendars now. 

As always, I thank you for the work that you do to help move this organization forward. If I may be of assistance to you, as your chapter president, please know that I am available.

Kind regards,

Craig E. Johnson

"It is not length of life, but depth of life." ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson


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MEETING

2010 JOINT TRAINING CONFERENCE Kansas City, Missouri March 14-19, 2010

As my plane landed on March 19, 2010, I thought well, its back to reality. The past week, as I remembered it, had been refreshing to both my mind and spirit. The 2010 Joint Professional Employee Organizations and Special Emphasis Program Managers Training Conference had been an experience of a lifetime. Many have called the conference a historic event, being the first of its kind. The theme for the conference was *"Partners Retooling for the Future to Accomplish Unity and Diversity."* The sessions were filled with distinguished keynote speakers. We were graced with the presence of persons such as Dave White (NRCS Deputy Chief), Roland Martin (CNN Analyst), and former Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy. There was a wealth of knowledge readily available to all that were in attendance. Networking opportunities, which are a major part of upward mobility today, were made available through the various luncheons, round table discussions, and general meet and greet sessions.

Conference attendance was a huge step in making NRCS a model agency. As NRCS employees, we bring a diverse mix of experiences, skills and abilities to the table. As diversity increases in our society, this gives our agency capable individuals to better understand the needs of our client base. It is important that we all learn to embrace the varying cultures and backgrounds of the people we serve and for the varying differences in culture and background within our agency (employee to employee relations **and** employer to employee relations); thus creating a more positive working environment. This will in turn foster better employee clientele relations and will further produce better service to our respective communities.

We have to all remember that no one preselects who they want to be or what type of background they want to come from as it relates to race, sex, and ethical background. We all, however; are charged with treating all people with the same dignity and respect that we would deem appropriate for ourselves. This is often referred to as the "Golden Rule."

One charge from our conference coordinators was to get out of our comfort zone and learn something about someone else's culture and to get to know others that do not look like us. This was a

challenge, but proved very beneficial; the overflow will come as we take this charge into our daily lives, at home, in the workplace and in our communities.

Submitted by:
Craig Johnson, President
Alabama Chapter NOPBNRCSE

"All life is interrelated, whatever affects one directly; affects another indirectly." ~ MLK

FEATURE EMPLOYEE



JOE LEWIS NORRIS
Geography Specialist (GIS), Auburn, AL

Joe Norris was born and raised in Jamaica, New York, and attended and graduated from August Martin High School in Jamaica, NY.

Joe has five siblings, one brother and four sisters, Mom and Dad are natives of Tallapoosa County, Alabama.

Joe spent nine and a half years in the U.S. Army, of which included one tour of duty in the Persian Gulf War.

Joe has an Associate Degree in Science from Southern Union Community College, Opelika, AL; a Bachelor of Arts in Geography and a Master of Arts in Community Planning and Development from Auburn University. He is currently applying for a Doctoral Degree at the Technical University of Colorado. His current position with NRCS is a Geography (GIS) Specialist MO-15, Auburn Alabama Soil Survey Staff.

He is married to Tsui V. Holland Norris and a proud father of three children: a son and two daughters.

Joe enjoys people and the great outdoors.

Submitted by:
Herbert L. Ross
State Resource Inventory Coordinator

THE LES HILLIARD/SEBASTIAN THOMAS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Les Hilliard/Sebastian Thomas Scholarship Program is designed to provide a one-time monetary payment to students pursuing a degree in agriculture, nature resources, and related sciences.

The 2009 scholarship winners are:



Tramaine Creighton from Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Alabama.



Chantz T. Birch from Alabama A&M University, Normal, Alabama.

In Chantz's Own Words:

What is a picture of a successful minority in the field of agricultural science--forestry to be specific? Not to be boastful, but I feel that it is me. My name is Chantz T. Birch, a native of College Park, GA, where I attended Benjamin Banneker High School. Some of my interests are various sports – football, baseball, golf, tennis and rifle team, which is what partly, drew me to Alabama A&M University. My other interest is being in the “Great Outdoors”. This became a love for me while visiting my grandparents and other family in Alabama every summer as a kid.

Now, I just have a great love for the outdoors and enjoying nature and what opportunities it has to offer.

My love for natural settings was confirmed while visiting Alabama A&M University in 2007 on High School Senior Day. During this visit, I took the opportunity to speak with Mr. Timothy Jones, US Forest Service Representative (Alabama A&M), in the gym. He informed me about forestry – its curriculum, activities, and environment at the prestigious university. So, from that point, I was very interested, not only speaking in terms of attending Alabama A&M, but that the school and the forestry program offered me federal funding that went towards my tuition. That was three years ago and now I can confidently say I am an academic honoree and have had a lifetime of experiences of forestry – and I haven't even graduated yet.

The tenure I have served at Alabama A&M, thus far, has afforded me an opportunity to work with the US Forest Service in Mississippi, where I also participated in a timber detail in Oklahoma. In addition to that internship, I also worked in Virginia this past summer as an apprentice-wildland fire fighter. As a successful minority in forestry, one must assume leadership. My pursuit of this excellence has placed me in the coveted position of Alabama A&M University's Student Forestry Club President, as a junior. This position gives me the chance to make decisions and implement new ideas for our ever-increasing student body.

Aside from this interest in forestry practices and principles, I have been able to give my all on the gridiron – playing football. One achievement, I am proud to speak of is that my team; Alabama A&M's Fighting Bulldogs, were the 2009 SWAC Eastern Division Champs. It gave me great honor to be in service with my fellow teammates and pursue victory after victory, and to be encouraged in defeat. My tenacity on the football field and in the classroom has paid great dividends for me here at Alabama A&M University.

To answer the introductory question, a successful minority in agricultural science is one who is diligent, has leadership skills and tenacity to strive for a certain goal. Along with that, they leave an indelible trail for others to follow or to observe and look for ways to create another successful pathway. In forestry I like to say, when you climb the mountain of success, you may stumble over the trees in your way, but don't let them hinder you. In closing, I want to thank this outstanding scholarship committee for selecting me as a recipient for this award and know that I am very appreciative of it.

THE LES HILLIARD/SEBASTIAN THOMAS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (continued)

Donations for the Les Hilliard/Sebastian Thomas Scholarship are always welcomed and accepted. Anyone wishing to make a donation should contact:

**Shirley Hall-Cole, Chairperson
Les Hilliard/Sebastian Thomas
Scholarship Program**

MEMBERSHIP

The Alabama Chapter is extending an invitation for you to become a member of our State Chapter of the NOPBNRCSE.

Remember – membership is open to all persons.

You must be a member of the National Organization to become a member of the State Chapter. National dues are \$45 and State dues are \$35.

Membership applications are available online under the Alabama Chapter's web site or you may contact:

**Herbert Ross
Chairman, Membership Committee
USDA-NRCS, Auburn, AL**

RETIREES

Two Alabama Chapter Members Retired in 2009

Winford C. Andrews, District Conservationist in Eutaw FO serving Greene County, and Elijah Moore, District Conservationist in Alexander City FO serving Tallapoosa and Coosa Counties, entered the retired ranks in December 2009.

Winford Andrews retired with more than 40 years of federal service. Winford Andrews was the first Black person promoted to District Conservationist in Alabama. A native of Fowls Town, Georgia, Andrews graduated from Ft. Valley State College. He started with SCS as a soil scientist. He was later reclassified as a conservationist. Andrews worked in Cherokee and Greene Counties before transferring in March 1975 to Lamar County, becoming Alabama's first Black District Conservationist. Winford resides in Forkland, Alabama.

Elijah Moore retired with over 38 years of federal service. Elijah Moore was the second Black SCS employee to be promoted to District Conservationist in the state of Alabama in 1976. Moore, a native of Sunflower, Alabama, graduated from Alabama A&M University in 1973. Moore started work as a student trainee in Barbour County, AL. His fulltime career started as a conservationist in Randolph County. Additionally he worked in Greene County until he was selected as District Conservationist in Cleburne County in 1976. Moore transferred to Tallapoosa/Coosa Counties in 1993 where he served until his retirement. Moore resides in Oxford, AL, and is enjoying time as a fulltime Big PaPa.



WINFORD C. ANDREWS



ELIJAH MORE

Congratulations to these two outstanding employees and exceptional individuals. Thank You for your dedicated service.

**Submitted by:
Lawrence McGhee
MLRA (15-4) Soil Survey Leader
Auburn, AL**

NEWSLETTER INFO

If anyone has an article(s) of interest and would like it put in the next newsletter, please send to Sarah Walker at the Alabama NRCS State Office.

**NEWSLETTER TEAM
Sarah Walker
Deloris Jones, Retiree
Winford Andrews, Retiree**

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