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UTAH EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEER RECOGNIZED DURING NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

A.J. Martinez, a retired BLM natural resources specialist, is being recognized as an outstanding Earth Team volunteer during National Volunteer Week, being celebrated April 23-29. Working out of the state office, A.J. has donated more than 140 hours per month over the past year. He has assisted State Conservationist Sylvia Gillen as executive director of the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development, which group Gillen chairs.



He also serves as co-chair of the Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative, an effort carried out by five regional action teams supported by a number of Utah conservation partners. This group has helped raise and leverage enough money to apply rangeland restoration practices on more than 160,000 acres in Utah. In a recent VIP tour to Washington, DC, A.J. and the group noted this is the first time a watershed restoration initiative has been carried out at this scale by a statewide partnership, at least in the West. The accompanying photo shows A.J. (left) visiting with NRCS Watershed Coordinator Norm Evenstad.

Generally, individuals volunteer for a cause that is important to them. In this case, A.J. has worked many years professionally to achieve a statewide watershed restoration focus. "This is the most important long-term venture I have been involved in and it has been a very satisfying experience for me to help get people together and accomplish such valuable work," said Martinez.

State Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator Gayla Pressett is encouraging each NRCS office to make their job easier by involving Earth Team volunteers in the conservation work of the partnership. A.J. indicates they could use lots of volunteers to assist the regional action teams. For more information about Earth Team, contact Gayla Pressett at (435) 637-0041 x15, or visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/volunteers/>

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