



March 2012

The Caribbean

Volume 1, Issue 5



Dry Hydrant Project Inaugurated in Atlántico RC&D Area



Newly constructed dry hydrant demonstrated by local fire department in Cibao, Camuy, PR.

The Atlántico Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc. (RC&D) received a USDA Forest Service Grant to develop a Dry Hydrant Demonstration Project. The project's goals are to increase the efficiency and safety of local fire stations in suppressing fire emergencies and to increase public awareness of dry hydrants within the Atlántico area's rural communities. The project will benefit rural communities where regular or adequate hydrants are not available.

El Atlántico RC&D established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Escuela Vocacional Agrícola Soller, "Héctor Cordero," to

install the dry hydrants in the three rural communities of Cibao, Piletas and Guajataca located in the municipalities of Camuy, Lares and San Sebastián, respectively. As a result of this project, the 8,656 residents of these communities will now have a safe place to live, as well as a conservation tool to protect forests, wildlife, pastureland, cropland and properties.

According to NRCS Conservation Practice Standard 432, a dry hydrant is a non-pressurized permanent pipe assembly system placed in a water source to permit the withdrawal of water by suction. NRCS Civil Engineer, Rolando Collazo, designed the hydrants and José L. Rivera, NRCS Resource Conservationist, provided technical assistance for practice application. Agronomist Abraham Rosa, Agricultural Machinery Professor, supervised his Agricultural Machinery students in installing the dry hydrants.

On February 03, 2012, the Dry Hydrant project was completed. Atlántico RC&D invited representatives from federal, state, and local govern-

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Caribbean Area Civil Rights Committee Members Promote NRCS Careers at Job Fair



NRCS Caribbean Area Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) members, Carlos Morganti (Agronomist & CRAC Advisor) and Lydia E. Collazo (Civil Engineer & Federal Women's and LGBT Special Emphasis Program Manager) promote NRCS careers at the PR College of Engineers & Land Surveyors (CIAPR) Job Fair. Engineer Collazo has been an active member of the CIAPR for 20 yrs.

Saturday, February 25, 2012, NRCS Agronomist, Carlos Morganti, and NRCS Engineer, Lydia Collazo, participated in the **College of Engineers and Land Surveyor of Puerto Rico (CIAPR) First Job Fair**. Representatives from more than 40 private sector industries, as well as state and federal government agencies, offered a variety of job opportunities on Puerto Rico and off-island to the over 480 professionals who attended the fair.

Over 164 fair attendees visited the NRCS booth – providing their names, addresses and phone numbers – and at least 35 resumes were collected. Agro. Morganti and Eng. Collazo distributed information to job fair participants describing how to search and apply for federal jobs online at: www.USAJOBS.gov. More importantly, they used the opportunity to emphasize NRCS' main purpose, "**Conserving our Natural Resources!**" They stressed the neces-

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Director's Corner

We had a wonderful program sign-up this fiscal year and I am extremely happy that we did it together! Many thanks to all who, in one

way or another, made the FY 2012 program obligation a successful one. Once again, NRCS Caribbean employees rose to the occasion and helped the team meet an important task.

We are half way through the fiscal year. In the next few months we will be dealing with summer construction, on-the-ground conservation, practice certification, and eventually, making payments to our contract holders. There is no doubt that we will be busy as we enjoy our beautiful summer.

Folks, we are half way there and we are going to make it. Thanks again for everything you do, for everything you help accomplish.

Yours in Conservation,

Edwin Almodóvar, Director
USDA-NRCS Caribbean Area



March is Women's History Month!

As part of our Women's History Month Celebration, the NRCS-CB Leadership Team thanked the FWPM and State Office female employees for their excellent work and commitment at a March 22, 2012 gathering. (L-R: FWPM Eng. Lydia Collazo, Contract Spec. Oriel Vélez, HR Mgr. Elizabeth Hernández, Budget Analyst Wally Torres, Admin. Asst. Nilda Gon-

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Dry Hydrant Project Inaugurated in Atlántico RC&D Area



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ments, rural communities, non-profit and non-government organizations as well as the general public to participate in the inauguration of the dry hydrants. The Fire Department demonstrated dry hydrant use for inauguration participants, including representatives from the USDA Forest Service, El Atlántico RC&D Council, the PR Education Department, the Vocational Agriculture Program, the Camuy Agricultural Association, and USDA-NRCS. For details, please contact Javier Medina, NRCS District Conservationist, or José L. Rivera, NRCS Resource Conservationist, at 787-817-2743.



TOP LEFT: Completed dry hydrant. LEFT & BOTTOM: Escuela Vocacional Agrícola Soller, "Héctor Cordero," students construct the protective base for the dry hydrant.



El Yunque National Forest Featured on US Mint Quarter



Imagine going to the grocery store and getting an El Yunque National Forest quarter as your change! That might happen because the U.S. Mint recently released the *El Yunque National Forest* quarter. The coin features the endangered Puerto Rican parrot and the coqui tree frog amongst tropical vegetation.

In 2010, the U.S. Mint began issuing a series of quarters featuring national forests and other sites highlighting 'America the Beautiful.' All quarters have a portrait of President George Washington on the front, "heads," side of the coin and the national forest image on the reverse, "tails," side.

The forests were picked from the agency's 155 national forests based on their natural beauty and/or historic significance. Perhaps during your next shopping trip you will receive an El Yunque quarter in change. For details, visit the U.S. Mint website at www.usmint.gov/mint_programs/atb/?local=Yunque.

Earth Team Volunteers Find Success in Puerto Rico

Each year the Caribbean Area NRCS hosts Earth Team student volunteers. In the summer of 2011, six students worked to complete their bachelor's degree requirements from the University of Puerto Rico School of Agricultural Science. State Volunteer Coordinator Hilton Miró asked the students to share their experience.

José J. Cabrera is a Ponce native living in Juana Diaz. His interest in agriculture and horticulture began when working for landscapers in his neighborhood. That experience led him to seek a bachelor's degree in agronomy with a horticulture minor. José volunteered 180 hours at the Juana Diaz Field Office. He helped agency staff design and apply conservation practices like contour farming, farm delineation and infiltration ditches. He also used GIS to establish boundaries and engineering points, and used instruments to conduct surveys and topographic evaluations. José's ideal job is to help farmers improve production while protecting the environment.



José Cabrera

Raquel Sánchez-González is a Lares native. She studies agronomy and will

graduate in May 2012 with a B.S. in agricultural science and an agricultural education certificate, and plans to earn a master's degree in agriculture. Raquel spent six weeks as an NRCS volunteer in the San Sebastian Field Office. She said, "I'm learning conservation practices to help farmers better protect our natural resources for better farm management. This is a great experience for me! Not only am I gaining professional experience, but I am getting a better understanding of the part I can play in conserving natural resources as I help others."



Raquel Sánchez-González

Braulio González Rodríguez, from Caguas, worked towards a B.S. in agronomy and soil science. (He graduated in December 2011.) He enjoyed his time with NRCS and his experience has motivated him to continue his graduate studies. Braulio wrote, "This summer was my first experience working for NRCS as a volunteer in the Caguas Field Office. During my time with NRCS, I learned many different management practices to conserve natural resources. All the



Braulio González Rodríguez

knowledge I have gained from this experience will help me in my future career."

Miguel Rexach-Martínez is an undergraduate student from San German. He is finishing a degree in agricultural science with a mechanical agriculture technology major. His focus is agronomy and engineering, and his goal is to join NRCS as a soil conservationist to apply his engineering knowledge to help improve agriculture and the land. "As an Earth Team volunteer in the Mayagüez Field Office, I have seen and learned much about conservation practices and the different ways they can be applied to help the land," he said. "I put into practice concepts learned in class and also in the field. Thanks to these three weeks of experience, I improved my knowledge in areas I never worked before."



Miguel Rexach-Martínez

Leonardo D. Marrero Marrero is a Bayamón native living in Corozal. He is in his fourth year of undergraduate studies in agronomy with a concentration in soil science. He plans to graduate in May 2012, continue working, and pursue

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Meet the Arecibo Field Office



Arecibo Field Office Staff (L-R): Wilmarie Ruiz, Linnette Rosado, Javier Medina, Sonia Burgos, Luis Soto, Manuel Amador (Earth Team volunteer), and Rafael Sierra.

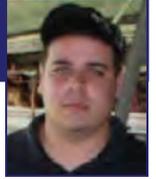
The NRCS Arecibo Field Office serves the people of the Atlantic (Camuy, Hatillo and Arecibo) and Norte (Barceloneta, Florida, Ciales, Morovis, Manatí, Vega Baja and Vega Alta) Districts from the USDA Service Center in Arecibo, Puerto Rico.

Our team of Javier Medina (District Conservationist), José 'Lino' Rivera (Resource Conservationist), Sonia

Burgos and Rafael Sierra (Soil Conservationists), Linnette Rosado (Soil Conservation Technician), Benjamin Torres (Soil Conservation Aid) and Luis A. Soto (Engineer Technician) have vast specialized experience. We can provide expert assistance in placing conservation practices and planning resource management systems. Our staff work with landowners in specialized program areas including pastureland, cropland, wildlife, energy, business management, engineering and environmental sciences. We are here to assist you with all your conservation needs!

We are co-located with the Farm Service Agency in the Arecibo Service Center to provide a one-stop center for all your program and farm loan needs. Call us at (787) 817-2473 or 2434, or stop by the office on the 2nd floor of the Caribbean Annex Cinemas Building, 1562 Miramar Avenue, Suite 202, Arecibo, Puerto Rico.

Earth Team Volunteers Find Success in Puerto Rico



Leonardo D. Marrero-

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graduate studies. Leonardo volunteered in the Corozal Field Office for five weeks. He applied knowledge from his college courses and learned new and better ways to conserve the environment and help others. "I've been involved in the conservation planning process to assist farmers with their erosion control and water quality concerns. The Corozal Field Office NRCS family taught me that we can be very efficient if we use our knowledge in helping our people and our planet Earth," he said.

Jorge L. De Jesús Rosado is a technical mechanical agriculture major graduating soon. NRCS allowed him to work with many conservation tools, such as survey instruments and computer programs like ArcGIS, AutoCAD and Toolkit. He wants to graduate, get a job applying his conservation skills and then pursue a master's degree. "I'm an Earth Team volunteer at the Utuado Field Office. I worked at least 30 hours a week for seven weeks this summer. This experience will help me grow professionally and personally. I had been exposed to outdoor work where I learned to become familiar with many of the conservation programs and practices that NRCS provides. I have been involved with conservation maps, reading and analyzing conservation documents as well as working with customers," Jorge said.



Jorge L. De Jesús Rosado

For details on the NRCS Earth Team volunteer program, please contact Hilton Miró at 787-766-5206 x126 or Hilton.miro@pr.usda.gov.

Organic 101: Allowed & Prohibited Substances



Organic standards allow natural materials in organic farming while keeping out man-made ones. The National List of Allowed and

Prohibited Substances specifies exceptions to this basic rule.

Prohibited Substances specifies exceptions to this basic rule. The National Organic Standards Board (Board) advises the National Organic Program (NOP) on which materials should be allowed or prohibited. Board members are dedicated volunteers appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture. They are organic growers, handlers, retailers, environmentalists, scientists, USDA-approved certifying agents and consumer advocates.

Board members must use specific criteria when voting, including the need for the material and its impacts on human health and the environment. In some cases, the Board may vote to allow non-organic types of a substance if it isn't available in organic

form on a scale large enough to support organic agriculture. Some man-made substances are exceptions to the basic rule and are allowed to be used in organic agriculture. For example, pheromones are an effective, non-toxic way to "confuse" insects that may infest organic crops, especially fruit. Also, vaccines for animals are important tools to prevent infectious disease, especially since antibiotics are prohibited in organic livestock.

The National List also allows some processing aids, like baking soda. Baking soda lightens (or leavens) dough for organic pancakes, baked goods, and other products. On the other hand, some substances like strychnine and arsenic are examples of natural toxic substances prohibited in organic production.

Adding or removing allowed substances is an open process with direct input from the organic community. The process steps are:

1. An individual or organization submits a formal petition to add, remove, or change the listing for a substance.
2. A Board sub-committee reviews the peti-

tion. They gather scientific information about the substance and identify any negative impacts to human health or the environment.

3. The sub-committee publishes a proposed recommendation for the substance and requests public comments before a public meeting, usually held twice per year.
4. During the meeting, the Board discusses the public comments about the petition and then votes in a public forum. All meetings are open to the public.
5. The NOP reviews Board's recommendation. The NOP can reject the proposal to add a substance to the National List, but can't add a substance that hasn't been recommended by the Board.
6. If the NOP agrees with the Board's recommendation, it starts rule-making to add the substance to the National List.

The Board spends hours discussing the range of views on each substance under review. The public comment process is an important part in making sure that all sides are fully considered. This citizen's advisory

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St. Croix Livestock Farmers Help Demonstrate Solar Electric Fence



NRCS-CB staff Rudy O'Reilly (left) and Edwin Más (right) look on as NRCS ENTSC Agronomist Steve Woodruff (center) shows farmers Romeo Bergan (2nd from left) and Eddie Schuster (2nd from right) how the solar panel powers the electric fence.

St. Croix livestock farmers Romeo Bergan and Eddie Schuster have a new grazing management tool in their arsenal—a solar electric fence. Caribbean Area (CB) NRCS Plant Materials Specialist, Edwin Más, with help from Steve Woodruff, NRCS East National Technology Service Center agronomist, are working with St. Croix District Conservationist, Rudy G. O'Reilly, Jr., Bergan and Schuster to demonstrate the use of solar electric fencing in the Caribbean.

A small, portable solar panel can power the portable electric fence netting up to 2 miles! This fencing system is used to confine small ruminants (sheep and goats) in small livestock paddocks.

The overall goal is to show local farmers how temporary solar electric fencing works and how it can be used as a tool to improve their grazing operations. Hopefully, some farmers will be interested in solar/electric for more intensive grazing options on their farms.

"Improving forage utilization and manure distribution provides environmental and economic benefits," said Woodruff. "Forage benefits by reducing overgrazing. Water infiltration improves because roots are allowed to grow longer and deeper. Improved distribution of manure nutrients improves nutrient cycling over the entire pasture. Temporary electric fencing options allow farmers the flexibility to adjust their pasture size to better serve their needs while doing it in a cost effective way."

For details, contact NRCS-CB Plant Materials Specialist, Edwin Más, at 787-831-3416/ 3421 x.106 or Edwin.mas@pr.usda.gov.



TOP: Schuster observes his livestock's reactions to the solar electric fence. LEFT: Schuster, Woodruff & Más test fence voltage.

Caribbean Area CRAC Members Promote NRCS Careers at Job Fair



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sity of protecting our land and water resources during engineering work in their discussions with the engineers and surveyors.

Agro. Morganti provides NRCS career information to job seekers.

Eng. Angel González, CIAPR President, thanked all the agencies present for participating in the First Job Fair. He cited the many professional engineers in Puerto Rico who have lost their jobs due to the current economic uncertainty. The massive participation of young, middle-aged and experienced professionals seeking jobs was proof of this need. For more information, please contact Lydia Collazo at 787-743-2743 x.112 or Lydia.collazo@pr.usda.gov.

Helping People Help the Land...

USDA-NRCS Caribbean Area

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Activities & Events

- 8th Annual St. Thomas Pro-Enviro Fair, April 13, 2012, 9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m., Antilles School MCM Center
- St. Croix Earth Day EcoFair, April 17-18, 2012, 9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m., St. George Village Botanical Gardens
- Director's Advisory & Improvement Team Meeting, April 18, 2012, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
- St. John Earth Day Fair, April 20, 2012, 9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m., Cruz Bay Park
- Civil Rights Advisory Committee Meeting, April 24, 2012, 10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m., Utuado Field Office Conference Room
- ENTSC Common Bees & Best Bee Plants of the East Webinar, April 25, 2012, 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.
- USDA How to Deal with Workplace Bullying Webinar, April 25, 2012, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
- ENTSC Introduction to Adaptive Nutrient Management Webinar, May 3, 2012, 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.
- ENTSC Implementing NRCS Practice Standard 'Feed Management' (592) Webinar, May 9, 2012, 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.
- NOAA Caribbean Collaboration Initiative Meeting, May 15-16, 2012, University of the Virgin Islands St. Thomas Campus
- St. Croix Reef Jam, May 27, 2012, 1:00 —10:00 p.m., Rhythm's at Rainbow Beach
- ENTSC Sensor-based Irrigation Water Management—Scheduling Webinar, May 30, 2012, 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.
- Banana Festival, June 1-3, 2012, Plaza de la Revolución, Lares, PR
- Sugar Cane Festival, June 1-3, 2012, Hatillo, PR

Organic 101: Allowed & Prohibited Substances

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board represents all key sectors of the organic community. Their recommendations provide the NOP with invaluable insight into which substances should be allowed or prohibited in organic agriculture. They invite the public to join in this process to shape the future of organic agriculture.

Reprinted from the USDA Organic 101 blog series that explores different parts of USDA's organic regulations. For details about USDA Organic, visit: www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/nop.

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