

Iowa Current Developments



August 2010, Iowa Current Developments
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
210 Walnut Street, Room 693, Des Moines, IA 50309

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"Iowa Natural Resources Conservation Service: Excellence in helping people conserve and improve our natural resources, communities and environment."

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A Message from the: State Conservationist



Rich Sims,
State Conservationist

"Out of Sight Out of Mind"

How many times have you heard this saying? For me several times, but the results of being out of sight out of mind does not have unfavorable consequences for us, the community, the State or for our natural resources.

There is one item that has been out of sight to many farmers for years and it has now surfaced with a new vigor – water flowing in subsurface drainage tile.

You may think, "That is no big deal – water has been flowing in these tile lines forever." But the big deal is there are nitrates in the water, and no one can see it. We have accumulating science-based information that this issue is very real, and a big deal.

Our recent *Conservation Effects Assessment Program* of the Upper Mississippi River Basin states shows conservation practices have been reducing soil erosion, but not to the same degree in reducing nitrates in water. In fact, the conservation practices applied have reduced nitrates by only 18 percent. That is not good enough for our state. These are the same nitrates that have EPA guidelines, and have adversely affected the waters of the Mississippi all the way to the Gulf of Mexico.

NRCS staff, DSC staff, technical service providers and certified crop advisors have written hundreds of nutrient management plans to reduce the application of nitrogen, and what has been the result of writing all these plans? It is easy to not follow a nutrient plan when the cost of nitrogen is low because there is the expectation that this is the year for high yields.

As a technical agency, along with other professionals, we need to do a better job showing the importance of following a nutrient management plan and it is up to the producer to voluntarily implement the plan. We have too much to lose in our communities and state if we do not pay attention to following a nutrient management plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Sims". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Clint Miller: Carroll DC Provides Flood Assistance in Ames



Carroll County District Conservationist Clint Miller assisted in flood relief in his hometown of Ames in mid-August, representing the Red Cross.

Miller says, "I spent five of the most chaotic and rewarding days of my life working for the Red



Cross. My duties continually changed as the event progressed. I worked as the Story County Disaster Action Team Captain, Emergency Operations Center Liaison, Shelter Manager, Mass Care Manager, and Damage Assessment Coordinator, sometimes doing several at once."

Photos submitted by Clint Miller

Iowa Conservation Team: A Hit Again for RAGBRAI Riders

For the eighth consecutive year the Iowa Conservation Team provided free water, bananas, conservation-themed postcards, and educational displays to cyclists in need of a break along the RAGBRAI route, July 25-30.

The Iowa Conservation Team partnership includes the Iowa Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society, IDALS-Division of Soil Conservation, Iowa NRCS and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

The team typically sets up their tent site in a rural location, often in a landowner's front yard. This

year the route went across northern Iowa, beginning in Sioux City and ending in Dubuque.

The conservation partners handed out 80 40-pound boxes of bananas, and sent out nearly 6,000 postcards for riders from all across the world.

This year's displays included The Iowa Learning Farm's Conservation Station, a stream table and



Volunteers take time out for a picture at the Iowa Conservation Team tent on Thursday, July 29, in southeast Buchanan County.

Dig It! The Secrets of Soil display advertising the exhibit at Omaha's Durham Museum Oct. 2 - Dec. 26.

A2 Contest For: Feds, Farmers and Friends Feed Families

Area 2 employees are competing to see which office can collect the most food items and the highest total pounds of food through the Feds, Farmers and Friends Feed Families program, which runs through Aug. 31. The contest is sponsored by the Area 2 Quality Steering Team.

Becky Scott, AMA in Fort Dodge, says she has been impressed with the work of Bob Moser, Prairie Partners RC&D Coordinator in Humboldt. "Bob has distributed donation boxes to every elevator in the county," she said. "He is also contacting the local community garden group, asking for their excess produce." Moser also sent a news release to the local newspaper and church bulletin.

Scott says the Algona Field Office has a little red wagon and donation box set up in their entry way which is piled high with donations.



The Grundy Center Field Office planted a community garden this year, according to State Secretary Denise Freese. "The staff planted, weeded, and harvested a lot of produce and all of it has been given to our local Operation Threshold," she says. Above is one day's picking of radishes.

Student Trainees: Successful Summer

Fourteen student trainees helped Iowa NRCS offices across the state for about 10 weeks this summer.

Several students were from the Midwest, while others came from as far away as New York and Alabama, says Human Resources Specialist Tricia Mootz.

She says members of this year's class are pursuing degrees in engineering, soil science, forestry, and ag-related sciences.

"These students represent the future for NRCS," says Mootz.

"The student trainee program is a successful recruitment program for Iowa NRCS. We have many employees in the state right now who participated in this program."



Learning about the historic Loess Hills, Student Trainee Darius Martin (left) talks to Plymouth County District Conservationist Jim Lahn about the unique soils, and plant and animal species in the area.

Mootz says the program is also a great way for college students to learn more about Iowa, and provides a sneak peak of what a career with NRCS is like.

ASTC - Operations: Illinois' Hubbert Starts in October



Iowa NRCS State Conservationist Rich Sims recently named Jon Hubbert as Assistant State Conservationist for Operations, to begin Oct. 25.

Hubbert has spent the past five years as Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations for Illinois NRCS. Before that, he was a district conservationist for 17 years in Illinois.

"Jon will be a great addition to our leadership team," said Sims. "He has a wide variety of working experiences in Illinois and with details to NHQ."

USDA Video: Iowa ARRA Projects to be Featured Nationally

USDA videographer David Kosling spent three days in Iowa, Aug. 17-19, shooting video of urban conservation, flood damaged agricultural land, and projects completed and constructed through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).

Kosling visited a couple locations throughout central Iowa on his first day. He took footage of urban conservation practices, such as rain gardens, rain barrels, and native turf at the home of Polk County District Conservationist Paul Miller and met with a GIS Specialist from the City of Johnston about their parking lot bioswale at City Hall.

On his second day, Kosling videotaped and interviewed NRCS staff, partners, and landowners at two ARRA projects in the East Fork of the Grand River Watershed in Ringgold County. From there, he worked with Lucas County District Conservationist Jeff Matthias to showcase locations along the Whitebreast Creek floodplain where ARRA projects will help take flood-prone cropland and place it in native vegetation through the Emergency Watershed Protection - Floodplain Easement Program.

Look for this video to be part of future USDA video news releases and national feature stories.



USDA Videographer David Kosling shoots video of Union County District Conservationist Paul Goldsmith and landowner Ron Creveling on Aug. 18 just south of Ellston.



A new Recovery Act sign was recently installed along P64 south of Ellston in Ringgold County to highlight the new flood control structure on Ron Creveling's farm. The new structure, seen in the distance, will obviously help reduce flooding, but it will also be fenced off and used as a source for drinking water for livestock.

Iowa State Fair: Ag Secretary Visits USDA Booth

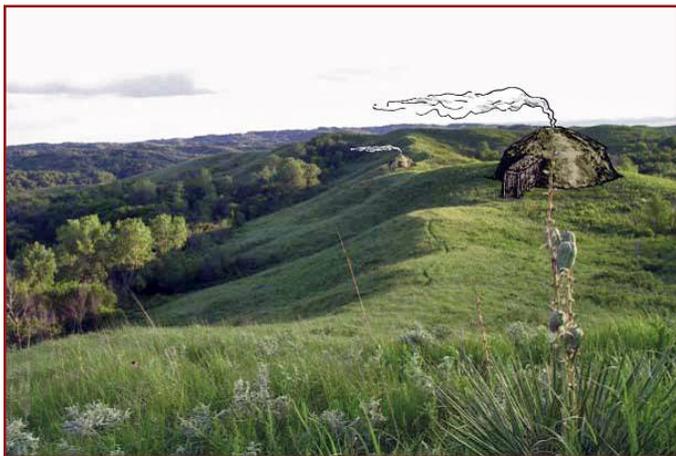


USDA Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack (3rd from right) visited the Iowa State Fair and the USDA Booth in the Ag Building on Tuesday, Aug. 17. Iowa NRCS State Conservationist Rich Sims (2nd from right) joined Vilsack and other USDA employees. The theme

for this year's USDA Booth was "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food." It included a spinning wheel where participants were asked agricultural theme-related questions, and received a prize for participating.

Submitted photo

Golden Hills RC&D: Two Loess Hills Sites Featured by Park Service



From the office of the State Archeologist, this is an artist's rendition of what earth lodges looked like on the Loess Hills landscape.

Two western Iowa Loess Hills historic sites are featured by the National Park Service (NPS) in their special August Archeology Month.

Golden Hills RC&D Coordinator Shirley Frederiksen submitted applications to have Kimball Village and The West Oak Forest Earth lodge highlighted in the NPS National Register of Historic Places Archeological Properties for 2010.

More information is available at www.nps.gov/nr/feature/archeology/.

Bear Creek Watershed: Making A Difference in Iowa, Minnesota

Courtesy of Minnesota NRCS

Heavy rains and high humidity did not hamper attendance at a Bear Creek Watershed event held at the Allen Patterson farm in Spring Grove, Minn., on Friday, Aug. 13. Approximately 30 local watershed residents and conservation partners attended.

The Bear Creek Watershed sits in southeast Minnesota and north-east Iowa. It was the recipient of President Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). This federal funding is making it possible for six new dams to be built in the Bear Creek Watershed.



State Conservationists Rich Sims of Iowa (right of hard hat) and Don Baloun (left) of Minnesota signed a check for \$204,000 to the Bear Creek Advisory Board on behalf of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

A brief program was held at the Patterson farm to provide the public with the status of the Bear Creek Watershed. Wilbur Stoen, chairman of Winneshiek County Commissioners in Iowa and Glen Kinneberg, Chairman, Root River SWCD served as the event moderators.



Todd Duncan, district conservationist for NRCS in Winneshiek County, points to the location of Site 26, where a road structure will be constructed east of Hesper near the Iowa-Minnesota border.

Gary Larson, district conservationist in Caledonia, Minn., says the Bear Creek Watershed effort started back in 1989. He says land users, farmers and units of government partnered together to make this watershed effort a reality. "Working with landowners has been a real joy," he said. "I thank all of the landowners in the Bear Creek Watershed for their conservation commitment."

In 2007 and 2008, the area received flood damage, and presidential declarations were made. To date, 13 out of 52 dams have been constructed in the Bear Creek Watershed. Positive benefits have been observed from this conservation construction.

"Land treatment in this watershed is important. ARRA projects are helping the rural economy," said Don Baloun, Minnesota NRCS State Conservationist. "The results of getting conservation applied to the land in the Bear Creek Watershed will continue. Much of this will occur because of the strong desire people have in the Watershed to work together."

Changes In: NRCS Personnel

In order of Effective Date

Name	Title	Effective Date	Nature of Action	Location
Forney, Lucas	Soil Conservation Tech.	7/4/2010	Career Intern Program Appt.	Malvern
Ruopp, Douglas	Soil Conservation Tech.	7/4/2010	Promotion	Newton
Scott, Rebecca	Area Management Asst.	7/4/2010	Promotion	Fort Dodge AO
McReynolds, Melinda	Soil Conservation Tech.	7/31/2010	Prelim. Disability Retirement	Marshalltown
Ansel, Jeremy	Soil Conservation Tech.	8/1/2010	Career Intern Program Appt.	Toledo
Clothier, Jill	Human Resources Asst.	8/1/2010	Reassignment	Des Moines SO
Henderson, Margaret	Area Management Asst.	8/1/2010	Promotion	Atlantic AO
Mellinger, Scott	Soil Conservation Tech.	8/1/2010	Reassignment	Washington
Niceswanger, Justin	Purchasing Agent	8/1/2010	Reassignment	Des Moines SO
Steffens, Teresa	Area Management Asst.	8/1/2010	Promotion	West Union AO
Wiley, Phoebe	Soil Conservation Tech.	8/1/2010	Reassignment	Fairfield
Leichtman, John	Soil Conservation Tech.	8/14/2010	Resignation	Anamosa

Changes In: IDALS-DSC Personnel

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Location
McCoy, Sean	Environmental Specialist	Transfer	Boone SWCD

Current Developments Stories and Photos

Please submit your Current Developments story ideas and photos to State Public Affairs Specialist Laura Greiner at laura.greiner@ia.usda.gov.

Current Developments is published six times per year. Past issues can be found at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/currentdevelopments.html.