



Iowa Current Developments



December 2009, Iowa Current Developments
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
210 Walnut Street, Room 693, Des Moines, IA 50309

What's Inside

Page 2

- Barriers Report - Operations

Page 3

- Ottumwa Rain Garden

Page 4-5

- Stimulus/Recovery Funds
- Mitchell County in Pink

Page 6

- CDI Annual Conference
- Dealing with Office Threats

Page 7

- Information About Strokes
- Nat'l Civil Rights Review

Page 8

- Buitenwerf: Serve Others

Page 9

- Sexual Harassment Quiz

Page 10

- Sexual Harassment Answers

Page 11

- Personnel Changes

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

A Message from the: State Conservationist



Rich Sims,
State Conservationist

The first quarter of the new fiscal year is almost over. Contracts and conservation plans are being finished, modified or just starting. Farmer agribusiness meetings will be held for the next three months and several of them will be sponsored by our core partners.

There are many opportunities that will present themselves to us during this fiscal year. Now is the best time to expand your conservation knowledge. Here are a few things to consider:

- With our new organic initiative of 2009, you could review case studies, learn from an organic producer, or attend local organic farmer meetings.
- The Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) identifies core practices. You could research the core practices that do the best job to control, avoid and trap nutrients in your county.
- I recently attended a Science to Solutions workshop to expand my knowledge on nutrient control. With the cellulosic industry growing, you could research which plants produce high amounts of residue and still protect the soil surface.
- You could contact a precision agriculture specialist and learn how conservation implementation could work in harmony with precision agriculture.

There will be many opportunities this winter to expand your conservation knowledge. I encourage you to go ahead and take the work time to share your new knowledge with others in the office.

Happy Holidays!

Unlocking Efficiency: Progress Report Three— Operations Update

The top six priorities on the Operation staff's business plan this year address barriers to efficiency. Here is an update from Assistant State Conservationist for Operations Paul Sweeney which includes his list of top three priorities and a collection of completed barrier updates:

Outlook Limiting Attachment File Sizes

Outlook prevents field staff from sending maps to out of state landowners, which is important to shorten response times and make things more efficient.

Solution: OCIO controls e-mail file size limit, which we currently can't change. But you can change the pdf file size by changing the dpi setting and adjusting the file size in ArcMap. Instructions will be sent via email on how to modify user preferences to help address this issue.

New Producer Issues with Toolkit

When adding a new producer in Toolkit, SCIMS State and County should default to your home county.

Solution: Unfortunately this is a national database and we have no control or opportunity to change this.

Technical Service Provider (TSP) List

Many producers are wasting time finding and working with TSPs that really aren't qualified to get the job done. At the state level, it would help to have someone develop a TSP list that includes people that actually do the services they are shown to provide on the list.

Solution: The TSP list is maintained by National Headquarters, as TSPs work in many states across the U.S., so we cannot create a separate list for Iowa use. NRCS staff needs to assist producers in identifying the skills that TSPs have and can perform for them. If the producer goes to the criteria portion of the TSP web page, they can look at the resume of the TSP to determine if they have the appropriate qualifications, such as an Engineering license to design waste

Unlocking Efficiency



storage facilities. A demonstration of how this works is available by the State TSP Coordinator. This could be done as an agenda item at an upcoming meeting.

New Conservation Planning Tool

We have seen an electronic pen that can be used with ESRI software that would make conservation planning much simpler and I think we should investigate the possibility of getting these tools out to field offices for planning purposes.

Solution: Soils staff and NRCS State Office staff are currently testing this tool. Iowa NRCS may incorporate this tool if testing goes well.

PRS Reports

When we run a PRS report and try to print it there are always a lot of pages. We have to spend time saving it to a new Excel file and sorting it before printing it. We suggest creating a printable Excel document that is formatted better for printing.

Solution: We addressed this problem by making the Iowa Performance Dashboard available to all managers. It is located on the Iowa NRCS SharePoint.

Getting E-mail Alerts from ProTracts

ProTracts should have some utility to send e-mail alerts to the designated conservationist when something is due or over due. We have many open contracts, and simply can't afford the time to review each individual file.

Solution: See the IDEA reports on the my.NRCS home page. These reports can keep you up to date on these times.

Capturing Stormwater Runoff: Ottumwa Staff Helps Elementary, City Complete Rain Garden

Submitted by Lya Hatton,
Civil Engineer, Ottumwa

Wapello County SWCD employees, NRCS staff, volunteers, and fifth graders from Ottumwa's Wildwood Elementary School placed plugs of native plants and grasses into a 184' x 10' rain garden on the grounds of Bethany Baptist Church on Nov. 3.

The City of Ottumwa constructed the rain garden earlier in the fall to capture stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces, such as rooftops, driveways and parking lots.

The city built a berm and a 7 to 9-inch ponding area where the rain gathers and percolates on the Bethany Baptist Church property.

Jennifer Steffen, a Wapello SWCD employee, says the rain garden

will capture runoff from 27,000 square feet of impervious surface in the area.

NRCS Civil Engineer Lya Hatton says the project will help improve water quality in the area. The creek's watershed is 1,048 acres and drains 633 acres of ag land and 415 urban acres. Due to large amounts of silt Kettle Creek delivers to the oxbow, the church, city and Wapello SWCD are working on this project.

"Bethany Baptist Church is in a bend of the Kettle Creek, which originates 1.5 miles south of Ottumwa and travels north and east through the city," says Hatton. "It empties into an oxbow lake in Ottumwa park."

Students from Wildwood Elementary divided into groups to place plugs of native grasses in the soil layers. They used broomstick handles to set and stake the 1-2 inch wide and 4-6 inch tall plugs (small plants).



NRCS Civil Engineer (Ottumwa) Lya Hatton helps fifth graders from Wildwood Elementary plant plugs in a large rain garden on church grounds.

Rain gardens are constructed with layers of a specified soil mix (native/natural soils), washed concrete sand and a foot of washed rock and subdrain.

"Overall, this project should help to slow down stormwater runoff that comes through the church's roof and parking lot in addition to the roofs of four houses," says Hatton.

This project was funded through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program.



Fifth graders from Ottumwa's Wildwood Elementary plant plugs in a long, narrow rain garden, with assistance from Wapello SWCD and NRCS staff.

Stimulus Funds: Contracts Signed, Construction Getting Underway

Red Oak, Iowa—Work began in November to construct tile outlet terrace systems and water and sediment control basins in the Hacklebarney Watershed through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009.

USDA selected Hacklebarney Watershed earlier this year to receive \$161,000 to improve water quality, decrease soil erosion, and improve fish and wildlife habitat through the ARRA. Hacklebarney Watershed covers 44,250 acres in eastern Montgomery and western Adams counties.

Montgomery County District Conservationist Tom Burkhiser says seven landowners signed on to implement soil conserving practices on their farms through the ARRA of 2009. Practices include nearly 40,000 feet of terraces, 28,000 feet of underground outlets and eight water and sediment control basins.

Burkhiser says ARRA funding is helping to continue the progress on the Hacklebarney Watershed Project Plan, originally authorized in 1984 through the NRCS-administered P.L.-566 Watershed Program.

“Soils in this watershed are susceptible to erosion, particularly on steeper slopes,” he says. “Practices such as terraces reduce sheet and rill erosion and prevent gully development. Terracing, combined with no-till, reduces sediment pollution of lakes and streams.”



Bill Hughes with Empire Construction moves and shapes soil to construct terraces in the Hacklebarney Watershed Nov. 13, east of Red Oak in Montgomery County. The landowner is receiving Recovery Act funds to install 5,200 feet of terraces.

Empire Construction, based out of Red Oak, was one of the contractors hired to build the conservation practices. Owner Jeremy Clark says the recovery funds are good for business. “It is good to see some of that money going to southwest Iowa businesses,” he said, “and it is always nice to have it spent on conservation work.”



Felipe Urquiza (left) stands with Louisa County District Conservationist Drew DeLang. DeLang has worked with Urquiza throughout the easement process.

Wapello, Iowa—Following the June 2008 floods when a levee broke along the Iowa River sending torrents of water out of its banks, Felipe Urquiza of Wapello knew floodwaters would always threaten his home and 13-acre farm that sit in the Iowa River floodplain in Louisa County.

With his home damaged beyond repair and cropland inundated by floodwaters, Urquiza decided to voluntarily retire his flood-prone cropland and enter it into a per-

See **Stimulus** page 5...

Stimulus cont...

manent easement. The land will be restored to deep-rooted permanent cover of wildlife habitat in 2010, and be allowed to flood naturally.

Urquiza is one of 35 Iowa landowners to enroll in the USDA's Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program's floodplain easement option through funding by the ARRA of 2009. This allows the NRCS to acquire the land and fund the conservation restoration work. Urquiza and the other landowners in the program retain several rights to the property, including control of public access, and undeveloped recreational use such as hunting.

Statewide, private landowners voluntarily placed nearly 4,000 acres into the EWP program using ARRA funds.



Landowner Felipe Urquiza says this hayfield is the most flood-prone area of his land. It will be restored to native grasses and trees.

Those functions include conserving and improving fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, floodwater retention, groundwater recharge, and open space; reducing long-

term federal disaster assistance; and safeguarding lives and property from floods and erosion.

Mitchell County Service Center: **Pink for Breast Cancer Awareness**



The Mitchell County Service Center in Osage observed Breast Cancer Awareness Month with everyone wearing "Pink" on Thursday, Oct. 22. All field offices in Area 3 were encouraged to wear pink on Oct. 22. This is the 2nd year in a row that they have done this.

CDI Annual Conference in Ames: Practices Make Perfect



A handful of Iowa NRCS staff attended the 63rd Annual Iowa Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners Conference in Ames, Dec. 2-3. This year's theme was, "Practices Make Perfect." At left, Stan Buman of Agren, Inc. shows Black Hawk County District Conservationist Shaffer Ridgeway



their display. At right, Page County District Conservationist Kevin McCall (left) and Guthrie County Soil Conservationist Jason Hart work the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) - Iowa Chapter booth. McCall is the President of the Iowa SWCS Chapter.

Photos courtesy of Mike Sucik

What to Do: When they Threaten You

If someone threatens to harm your employees, your office building, or you, call 911.

That's the message from Iowa NRCS State Administrative Officer Roberta Moltzen. If a customer or other office visitor threatens you or someone in the office, you do not need to ask for permission to call 911. "If an employee feels that there is a credible threat, they should call 911. There should be no stigma against doing that," says Moltzen.

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) Special Agent Craig Hangsleben advises all federal employees, "Even if it's a customer who has a reputation as a complainer, or is 'cranky,' if that person poses a threat or says something threatening, call 911," says Hang-

sleben. "You don't know if something happened in that person's life that day that put them over the edge, or if they forgot their medication, or stopped by the local bar for too long. Do not assume they are harmless."

After calling 911, employees should notify their supervisor and the State Administrative Officer who must notify OIG any time there is a threat of violence to an employee or facility.

Call Chris Knudsen, Iowa NRCS Human Resources Officer, if you have specific questions.

Blood Clots/Stroke: Info Worth Knowing

A stroke or “brain attack” occurs when a blood clot blocks an artery (a blood vessel that carries blood from the heart to the body) or a blood vessel (a tube through which the blood moves through the body) breaks, interrupting blood flow to an area of the brain. When either of these things happen, brain cells begin to die and brain damage occurs.

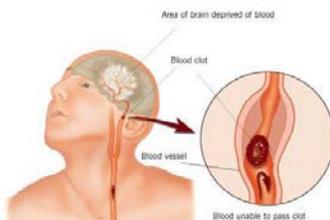
When brain cells die during a stroke, abilities controlled by that area of the brain are lost. These abilities include speech, movement and memory. How a stroke patient is affected depends on where the stroke occurs in the brain and how much the brain is damaged.

For example, someone who has a small stroke may experience only minor problems such as weakness of an arm or leg. People who have larger strokes may be paralyzed on one side or lose their ability to speak. Some people recover completely from strokes, but more than 2/3 of survivors will have some type of disability.

Stroke is the third leading cause of death in America and a leading cause of adult disability. Up to 80 percent of strokes are preventable; you can prevent a stroke!

Recognizing A Stroke: Remember STR

Sometimes symptoms of a stroke are difficult to identify. Unfortunately, the lack of awareness spells disaster. The stroke victim may



suffer severe brain damage when people nearby fail to recognize the symptoms of a stroke.

Now doctors say a bystander can recognize a stroke by asking three simple questions:

S *Ask the individual to SMILE.

T *Ask the person to TALK and SPEAK A SIMPLE SENTENCE (Coherently) (i.e. It is sunny out today.)

R *Ask him or her to RAISE BOTH ARMS.

If he or she has trouble with ANY ONE of these tasks, call 911 immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.

New Sign of a Stroke – Stick out Your Tongue.

Another “sign” of a stroke is this: Ask the person to “stick” out his tongue. If the tongue is “crooked,” or if it goes to one side or the other, that is also an indication of a stroke.

National Civil Rights Review: Iowa NRCS Excels

A National Civil Rights Compliance Review was conducted within Iowa NRCS, Sept.14-18.

Results show Iowa NRCS is in compliance with 13 of the 16 elements reviewed, which is a reflection of the great Civil Rights and outreach efforts and accomplishments taking place statewide. The official review report shows Iowa NRCS is receiving 17 commendable items, 4 recommended action items and 3 required actions.

The offices reviewed included: Iowa State Office; field offices in Atlantic, Iowa Falls, Ottumwa, Rockwell City, Waterloo, and Webster City; and the RC&Ds at Pathfinder’s and Southern Iowa.

Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) members and several Leadership Team members were also interviewed. We appreciate the time committed by these staff members before and during the review process.

The tremendous Civil Rights and outreach work taking place in each office across the state became apparent during the national review. Thank you to each office and employee for your part in helping Iowa NRCS do so well!

Buitenwerf Encourages NRCS Employees to: **Serve Others**

by Tammy Buitenwerf,
Soil Conservationist, Elkader

Everyone has a passion for something, right? For some it may be restoring wetlands, educating landowners, or following the local sports teams. My passion for serving others started in my early teens when I took my first international missions trip. Many years, service projects and trips later my passion continues to develop.

I have seen people in need and have chosen to act on what Big Weld says in *Robots* (the animated movie), "see a need, fill a need." It's a simple but profound statement in my eyes. It can be simple things like stopping to visit an elderly widow, shoveling snow for the neighbor, organizing meals for a new mom, or starting a composting system at the local school. Or it can be something more involved, like volunteering weekly at the food shelf, tutoring a student, or spending your family vacation in a third-world country teaching children or educating adults in your vocation.

Locally and internationally, folks in need can be found and our Iowa NRCS workforce and partners have the ability to see the need and fill it.

What are you passionate about? How can you use your passion and your talents to serve others?

In recent years, NRCS employees have stepped up to the plate to serve the greater NRCS family in times of need. While (Nutrient

Management Specialist/RC&D Coordinator) Doug Bahl struggled through leukemia, a group of employees spent a few Saturdays working on his family Christmas tree farm – helping with harvest, you might say.

When Greg Townley was leading his battalion overseas, a group of employees showed up at their Prairie City farm to lend a hand. Serving in those capacities is no surprise to those who consider NRCS a family. Others have taught conservation workshops, hosted women landowner meetings, and volunteered in a variety of other outreach activities. Those people are certainly using their gifts and talents to serve others.

Do you suppose that we can serve beyond that? Without a doubt, I believe we can.

In a day and age when finances may be short, the weather might beg us to stay inside, and keeping up with our family keeps us plenty busy, do you feel a beckoning to do more? It's easy to justify the normal routine – early mornings, work throughout the day, kids activities, chores, and hit the sack.

Be encouraged to start with something simple. Are you passionate about gardening? Consider invit-



Bethany Buitenwerf, daughter of Iowa NRCS Soil Conservationist Tammy Buitenwerf, poses for a picture with Naraa Batbayar, a Mongolian student attending Upper Iowa University. The Buitenwerf family invited Batbayar to their home for Thanksgiving, part of Upper Iowa's Friendship Family Program that matches local families with international students. "There are four Mongolian students that we connect with on a monthly basis," says Tammy Buitenwerf. "We invite them over for holidays, game nights and shopping trips."

ing a handful of neighborhood kids over and plant a few flowers. Do you know what it's like to be the new person in town? Befriend an international student from a local university. Do you despise those days when you hardly have time to get supper, before something else requires your attention? Think of that single mother down the street and offer to provide a meal for her family. Each of the above mentioned ideas can be done with limited time, on a limited budget and with children. What can you do to serve others?

Be prepared to be blessed beyond measure as you choose to, or continue to, serve.

Sexual Harassment: QUIZ

NRCS and partner employees receive periodic sexual harassment training through employee meetings and required online training. However, confusion regarding this civil rights issue continues. The Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) developed the following quiz to assist employees and partners to

better understand sexual harassment issues and requirements. Additionally, a sexual harassment fact sheet can be found on the Iowa NRCS Civil Rights web page at <http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/civilrights.html>.

The Quiz

1. Sexual harassment can include actions between persons of the same sex?
 - True
 - False
2. Sexual harassment can include an employee sexually harassing a supervisor?
 - True
 - False
3. A sexual harassment victim must confront the harasser as a first step or they lose their right to file a complaint?
 - True
 - False
4. Sexual harassment violates:
 - Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
 - Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
 - NRCS Anti-Harassment Policy
5. If you have repeatedly overheard "inappropriate jokes" while sitting in your office cubicle, you have been subjected to sexual harassment?
 - True
 - False
6. Any employee aware of existing sexual harassment, even though they are not the victim, has the responsibility to report that sexual harassment to a management official?
 - True
 - False
7. If an employee informs you about a potential sexual harassment issue they are experiencing, you should encourage them to file a complaint?
 - True
 - False
8. When a sexual harassment complaint is investigated, intent is considered when determining if the action truly is sexual harassment.
 - True
 - False

Answers on the next page.

Sexual Harassment: QUIZ

The Answers

1. True. Based on the Supreme Court of the United States decision, *Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services, Inc., et al.*, No. 96 – 568. Argued December 3, 1997 – Decided March 4, 1998, in which a District Court held that Oncale, a male, had no Title VII cause of action for harassment by male coworkers. The Fifth Circuit affirmed that decision. However, the Supreme Court's Decision states, "There is no justification in Title VII's language or the Court's precedents for a categorical rule barring a claim of discrimination "because of ... sex" merely because the plaintiff and the defendant (or the person charged with acting on behalf of the defendant) are of the same sex."
2. True. Sexual harassment has the potential to be committed by any employee, a supervisor, a contractor, or other partner agency employee that has an MOU or agreement with NRCS. Sexual harassment complaints are not restricted to a supervisor committing sexual harassment against an employee.
3. False. A sexual harassment victim can choose to inform an NRCS official or even file a formal complaint to the NRCS Civil Rights Division without first confronting the alleged harasser. However, since the definition of sexual harassment includes repeated and unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, explicitly informing the alleged harasser to stop is helpful when a sexual harassment investigation takes place. This assists in determining that the alleged harasser is aware that the activity is unwelcome and needs to cease.
4. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
5. True. Sexual harassment includes 'hostile work environment'. If any employee is offended by what they repeatedly hear or see in their work environment that is of a sexual nature, even if not directed toward them, it could be considered sexual harassment.
6. True, for all employees whether in management or not. The Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch (each NRCS employee has a copy of this) requires any employee that witnesses or is aware of any violation of any law (ie: sexual harassment violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964), is required to report it to an appropriate office (ie: National, State, Area) or official (anyone perceived to be in a leadership position). During a sexual harassment investigation, it is very likely that a determination will be made as to whether management was aware of the act or not.
7. False. Whether a sexual harassment complaint or other Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint, every employee should refrain from encouraging or discouraging an employee to file a complaint. Every employee does have the responsibility to inform the potential complainant of where to find official information regarding the process to file a complaint. An employee should direct the potential complainant NRCS' Anti-Harassment Policy or GM230, Part 401. It is appropriate for an employee to encourage the potential complainant to talk to an appropriate NRCS official. Per item 6 above, any employee that becomes aware of a sexual harassment activity is required to report it. Therefore, you cannot guarantee that you will be able to keep whatever they tell you confidential.
8. False. Intent does not matter. If an employee is offended by repeated verbal or physical action of a sexual nature, it is harassment even if the harasser did not intend to offend anyone.

Changes In: NRCS Personnel

In order of Effective Date

Name	Title	Effective Date	Nature of Action	Location
Hollingsworth, Jeremy	Soil Conservation Tech.	10/11/2009	Promotion	Fairfield
Schlader, Stacy	Soil Conservationist	10/11/2009	Promotion	Centerville
Milliren, Julia	Soil Conservation Tech.	10/19/2009	Career Intern Appt.	Osage
Bradley, Kindra	Soil Conservation Tech.	10/25/2009	Career Intern Appt.	Burlington
Lange, Alan	Soil Conservationist	10/25/2009	Promotion	Mt. Ayr
Miller, Clinton	District Conservationist	10/25/2009	Promotion	Carroll
Pearson, Elizabeth	Soil Conservationist	10/25/2009	Name Change from Swanberg	Waverly Soils
Adams, Sam	Resource Conservationist	11/8/2009	Conv. to Career Cond. Appt.	Albia
Sprague, Richard	Soil Conservationist	11/8/2009	Reassignment	Creston
Parizek, Chris	Soil Conservationist	11/20/2009	Resignation	Sergeant Bluff
Romero, Betty	Soil Conservation Tech.	11/22/2009	Promotion	Spirit Lake
Bahl, Douglas	Resource Conservationist	12/19/2009	Retirement	Maquoketa RC&D
Myers, Courtney	Soil Conservationist	12/19/2009	Resignation	Maquoketa

Changes In: IDALS-DSC Personnel

Name	Title	Effective Date	Nature of Action	Location
Moore, Shelly	State Secretary	12/18/2009	Resignation	Muscatine

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.