

Iowa Current Developments

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From the Office of Iowa State Conservationist Rick Van Klaveren



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

Iowa NRCS had a great 2005. We managed to exceed our goals, from applied comprehensive nutrient management plans to restored wetlands. We led the nation in Conservation Security Program (CSP) contracts and awarded more than \$20 million in Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) contracts--for the second year in a row. We were able to put a lot of conservation on the ground and we ended the year in a strong financial position that allowed us to fund many training, travel and equipment needs. It was an exceptional year.

This year is shaping up to be more challenging. Iowa NRCS is doing okay with this fiscal year's budget, but we need to be conservative in our spending. We've been warned by National Headquarters not to fill positions and conduct only essential operations. We are running with budget advisories with only some firm numbers. We've already taken a one percent congressionally mandated budget rescission.

Other areas of concern are out of NRCS control. The Office of Management and Budget has not resolved the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) figures for 2006. Because these figures have not been resolved and the 2006 CSP sign up has not started we don't know Iowa's share of the overall agency's budget.

What does all of this budget talk mean to Iowa NRCS? I'm predicting not too much. Iowa has always been a national conservation leader and I expect the situation to be resolved favorably. We can pay for all personnel costs. Support costs such as travel, training, equipment, supplies and services costs will be reduced, but people's pay will not.

This fiscal situation will not be fixed all at once. I expect all of these different budget issues to be resolved piecemeal over the next few months.

At Iowa NRCS we are talking proactive measures, so that regardless of the cuts and budget decisions others make, our people will be protected and our very important conservation work will continue.

Here's to a very productive New Year!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Van Klaveren". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Iowa NRCS Website Update

The following are website updates of particular importance to NRCS staff and our partners:

Energy—With the high prices of fertilizer and diesel fuel, everyone is looking to save energy costs. On the Iowa NRCS website are a number of online “energy estimator” tools to help producers make energy-efficient conservation practice decisions. A series of such tools is available on this web site starting with the [simple three click estimator](http://ecat.sc.egov.usda.gov/) (<http://ecat.sc.egov.usda.gov/>).

Energy savings can be significant. Nationally, doubling the amount of no-till acreage could save farmers and ranchers an additional 217 million gallons of diesel fuel per year valued at \$480 million. Doubling the use of manure-based nitrogen for crop production could save agriculture up to 100 billion cubic feet of natural gas valued at \$1.2 billion or about 2 percent of total national residential natural gas use.

EQIP—The State Technical Committee has addressed the use of EQIP funds for the coming year (<http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/stateeqip.html>). County EQIP web information for 2006 has been updated as well (<http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/stateeqipmap.html>).

Quality Assurance—Quality Assurance Process Steps for Iowa NRCS, IDALS-DSC, and Conservation District Employees including Iowa procedures for long term contract modifications for WRP, EWRP, and EWP-FPE and process steps for easement programs long term contract modifications are now on the web (<http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/>).

District Conservationist Serves in Iraq

Greg Townley, a major with the Army Reserve and a District Conservationist in Malcom, was activated July 16 to begin training for a one-year tour of duty in Iraq. He flew to Camp Buehring, Kuwait on Oct. 5 to complete additional training with the remainder of his unit, which came from Germany. He flew into



Major Greg Townley, Malcom District Conservationist, in Iraq, on Army Reserve active duty for one year.

Balad, Iraq, Oct. 16 and spent a few days with his unit (3rd Corps Support Command) before flying to Camp Taqaddam (TQ) Oct. 19. His unit provides logistics support to all of Iraq, but he serves as a Liaison Officer to the 2nd Marine Logistics Group to improve logistical support to troops in western Iraq. Camp TQ is located west of Baghdad.

Greg reports his work has been going well. He enjoys being involved with chapel activities and especially with a small group Bible study. The weather is nice at TQ at this time of year (45 to 75 degrees F). The worst thing is being away from family.

He wants to thank everyone back home who has provided much support to him and the rest of his family.

Iowa's Second Super Supervisor

Bruce Trautman, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, Area 5, was awarded the Association for Persons with Disabilities in Agriculture (APDA) Super Supervisor Award on Oct. 26, in a Washington, D. C., ceremony. He was recognized for recruiting and arranging accommodations for disabled employees.



Dale Moore, Agriculture Secretary Johann's Chief of Staff, presents Bruce Trautman, Asst. State Conservationist (FO), Area 5, a Super Supervisor plaque awarded to him in Washington, D. C. October 26 for his work on behalf of the disabled.

The APDA gives its Super Supervisor Award each year during National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEA) to one or more USDA supervisors who have made special and noteworthy efforts to support an employee with a disability or support disability issues.

In 2004 Dale Bruce, Information Technology Specialist at the state office, received the Super Supervisor Award.



Iowans attending the six week Conservation Boot Camp in West Virginia were (front row) Betty Romero, Spirit Lake, Julie Watkins, Toledo, Nicky Webb, Lemars, (back row) Valorie Johnson, Rock Rapids, Karla Horihan, Leon and instructor Jeff Zimprich, Assistant State Conservationist (FO) Area 4. The five Iowa students attended the six week conservation boot camp in Shepherdstown, WV, during October, November, and December. Zimprich, along with Urban Resource Conservationist Wayne Petersen and Assistant State Conservation Engineer Jeff Porter, are on the national instruction staff.

New Employees Attend Boot Camp

Conservation Boot Camp is a six-week training program providing new technical employees with the conservation planning, application, and operations management skills needed for today's work force. This program covers approximately 20 broad subject areas. A combination of classroom and field exercises are conducted. During the program, students have the opportunity to learn from and interact with agency leaders.

Karla Horihan, a soil conservationist from Leon, said her experience was "interesting and we learned a lot." One of their challenges was to learn everything about a farm and encompass everything into a farm conservation plan. She said it was overwhelming, but the instructors broke it down and they were able to complete the assignment. "Overall," she said, "it was a good experience."

The conservation boot camp is required of all new 400 (Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences) and 800 (Engineer and Architecture) series field based personnel.



At Conservation Boot Camp Julie Watkins, Soil Technician from Toledo, checks soil color as part of a wetland determination exercise.

Martin Luther King Day

On January 16, 2006, we will celebrate a national holiday commemorating the life and achievements of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. See how much you know about Dr. King and the civil rights movement. The answers listed are below:

1. What year was Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated?
 - a. 1960
 - b. 1963
 - c. 1968
 - d. 1973
 2. Where did Rosa Parks become famous?
 - a. At a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina
 - b. At a high school in Little Rock, Arkansas
 - c. On a bus in Montgomery, Alabama
 - d. On a march in Selma, Alabama
 3. Which president signed the first major civil rights act of this century?
 - a. John F. Kennedy
 - b. Lyndon B. Johnson
 - c. Richard M. Nixon
 - d. Ronald Reagan
 4. Which president signed the law creating the Martin Luther King holiday?
 - a. John F. Kennedy
 - b. Lyndon B. Johnson
 - c. Richard M. Nixon
 - d. Ronald Reagan
 5. Where did King deliver his "I Have a Dream" speech?
 - a. At Ebenezer Baptist Church
 - b. In front of the Atlanta City Hall
 - c. At the Lincoln Memorial
 - d. At the Nobel Prize ceremony
 6. What foreign figure has King been compared to?
 - a. Charles de Gaulle
 - b. Mohandas Gandhi
 - c. Albert Nobel
 - d. Nelson Mandela
1. c 2. c 3. b 4. d 5. c 6. b

Iowa Current Developments

Area Program Specialists



New Area Program Specialists have been added to each of the five area offices. These GS-11 positions were created to assist field offices with program support, protracts payments, program rules and regulations and technology support. They will do training in field offices and support field offices with programs and problem solving. The new Area Program Specialists chosen to provide field office training and problem solving support are (L to R) Kristy York, Area 4, Troy Deutmeyer, Area 3, Chris Harris-Hull, Area 5, Joe Smith, Area 1, and Stephanie Hill, Area 2. They are pictured with Larry Beeler, Assistant State Conservationist-Programs.

NRCS Helps Hurricane Victims

In late August 2005, a NRCS bulletin requesting volunteers to assist the Federal Emergency Management Administration with hurricane disaster relief efforts was sent nationwide.

Dick Tremain, a Public Affairs



Specialist at the state office, asked permission to go. In late October FEMA contacted him to travel to Florida to help Hurricane Wilma victims. Assigned to Marathon, FL, he spent 30 days helping disaster survivors get assistance to get their lives back in order.

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Michelle Bales, a Contracting Officer in charge of the state office's Management Services Staff, responded to a request for contract specialist volunteers to travel to hard hit Mississippi and write Emergency



Watershed Protection contracts for debris removal from waterways. Working out of the Hattiesburg area office, Bales spent three weeks in

Watershed Protection contracts for debris removal from waterways. Working out of the Hattiesburg area office, Bales spent three weeks in

October developing and writing project agreements and awarding contracts for debris removal to prevent future flooding.

Asst. State Conservationist (FO) Area 2 Retires

Jim Frederick, Assistant State Conservationist (FO) Area 2, retired on Jan. 3 after nearly 34 years of service.

He started his conservation career as a technician in 1971 working as a State Technician in Clayton County.

He also worked as a Federal Technician in Winneshiek County from 1972-1973 and Story County until 1979.

While working at Story County, Jim participated in Upward Mobility and earned his bachelor's degree in Agronomy at Iowa State.

He also served as a District Conservationist in Sac and Lucas counties for 9 years. Jim was the RC&D Coordinator in Postville before becoming the Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations in Fort Dodge.

Jim and his wife Jan have their retirement home in Sac City where they are actively involved with their grandchildren.



Notable Quote from Hugh Hammond Bennett, first chief of the Soil Conservation Service:

"...soil conservation is not just an incidental bit of the mechanics of farming; it only becomes part and parcel of the whole business of making a living from the land, and is the only way by which we may have permanently productive land for a permanent agriculture to support a permanent nation."

RC &D Involves Community in Hurricane Relief Effort



Interstate Resource Conservation and Development, a nonprofit group sponsored by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), delivers a donated bus full of school supplies to a school district in the hurricane-wrecked Mississippi coast. With community backing, the RC&D "Operation Pack the Bus" sent the bus, full of books, computers, and 3000 boxes of donated items, to two small Mississippi towns hit hard by Hurricane Katrina. The school district will use the bus as a temporary library or classroom. Interstate RC&D serves Muscatine and Scott Counties in Iowa, and Henry, Mercer and Rock Island Counties in Illinois.

Survey Participation Increases Data Reliability

NRCS employees are urged to encourage producers to respond to USDA's December and January surveys. Crop yields, livestock inventories, and grain stored estimates are determined using data from these surveys. Only farmers can provide data to produce reliable, accurate statistics. Individual data are strictly confidential. These estimates are available to every-

one at the same time at no cost. Growers have a voice with policy makers and financial organizations as these estimates affect decisions on State and Federal farm policies and programs; affect research and support for agriculture, extension agents and universities; and are used by producer associations for ag-friendly legislation or to debate unfavorable legislation.

NRCS Changes Wetland Reserve Program Appraisal Process

The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently implemented important changes to the appraisal process used by several conservation programs offered by the agency, including the popular Wetlands Reserve Program. These programs involve the federal government purchasing easements on private lands.

The appraisal process changes will likely increase the time it takes to complete an appraisal, increase the information required by the applicant and decrease the easement price offer in many cases, said Marty Adkins, Iowa NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Water Resources.

In the past, NRCS hired professionals to appraise only the value of the specific land offered for easement program enrollment, following professional appraiser industry standards. The NRCS must now follow the industry standard criteria for federal land acquisition, which requires the appraiser to look at some additional things.

"As a result, an appraiser will now perform a 'whole property' appraisal to reach a before and after easement value," said Adkins.

The appraiser will look at all similar and adjoining land to the offered easement area on which the applicant has an ownership interest. "In many cases, this means the appraisal will include more land than just the specific property being offered for the easement," said Adkins. Monetary offers to participants will be based on the difference in the appraised value of the whole property after the easement is in place, compared to the value of the whole property before the easement is given.

The NRCS estimates the appraisal period will lengthen from about four weeks to six weeks, because of the increased research required to complete the entire appraisal. "The appraisers will basically be completing two separate appraisals to come up with a monetary figure, instead of one," said Adkins. "This is going to take more time."

The new system will probably result in lower easement offers because it now subtracts the "after" value from the "before" value, said Adkins. In addition, all offers will be subject to geographic caps based on the land values for each county recorded in the 2002 Census of Agriculture. The 2002 Census is the most recent survey to include county level data.

Because the new system includes two appraisals, NRCS costs will likely increase as well, said Adkins. This is another important reason for participants to fully understand the potential implications of the new appraisal system.

Personnel Actions

Name	Title	Grade	Action	Eff Date	Dept
Anderson,Aaron K	Soil Conservationist	09	Promotion	9/4/05	Area 2 FO HAMPTON
Bednarek Jr, R J	Soil Scientist	12	Reassignment	10/16/05	Area 4 AO ATLANTIC
Beeler,Larry W	Asst State Conservst (Programs)	13	Promotion	10/2/05	State Office
Bradley, Chris	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Reassignment	12/11/05	Area 5 FO WAPELLO
Broders,Kimberly	Secy	08	Promotion	10/2/05	State Office
Bruce,Joanne E	Secretary (OA)	06	Career-Cond Appt	10/16/05	WETLAND RESTORATION TEAM
Clothier,Jill A	Secretary (OA)	06	Career-Cond Appt	10/11/05	Technical Services Staff
Dettmann,Detra D	RC&D Coordinator	12	Career-Cond Appt	9/18/05	Area 5 RC&D FAIRFIELD
Deutmeyer,Troy A	Area Program Speclst	11	Promotion	10/30/05	Area 3 AO WEST UNION
Dittmer,Weston J	Soil Conservationist	09	Conv to Career-Cond Appt	11/27/05	Area 4 FO LOGAN
Dixon,Joseph W	Soil Conservationist	07	Career-Cond Appt	10/10/05	Area 5 FO MUSCATINE
Dubendorf,J L	Natrl Resource Speclst		Name Chg from Grethen	9/4/05	GIS STAFF
Fischer,Jaia L	District Conservationist	09	Promotion	11/13/05	Area 1 FO EMMETSBURG
Focht,Andrew M	Soil Conserv Techncn	04	Conv to Career-Cond Appt	9/18/05	Area 4 FO CORNING
Freed,Marvin L	District Conservationist	11	Promotion	9/4/05	Area 4 FO MALVERN
Freilinger Mohs, A.	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Reassignment	10/16/05	Area 3 FO DECORAH
Gertsma,James M	Soil Scientist	12	Reassign	10/16/05	Area 1 AO SIOUX CITY
Grimmius, R L	Soil Conservationist	09	Promotion	11/27/05	Area 2 FO ADEL
Gross,Brian T	District Conservationist	12	Promotion	9/4/05	Area 4 FO SIDNEY
Groth,Jacob C	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Promotion	12/11/05	Area 3 FO WAVERLY
Hardeman,Carol	Soil Conserv Techncn	06	Promotion	10/30/05	Area 5 FO OSKALOOSA
Hart,Jason M	Soil Conservationist	09	Promotion	10/16/05	Area 2 FO GUTHRIE CENTER
Haspels,Sheila S	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Promotion	9/4/05	Area 1 FO ROCK RAPIDS
Hogge,Christopher	District Conservationist	09	Reassignment	9/4/05	Area 1 FO STORM LAKE
Holcomb,Shaun D	Soil Conservationist	09	Promotion	11/13/05	Area 3 FO MARION
Hopp,Russell A	Civil Engrg Techncn	08	Reassignment	10/30/05	Area 1 FO SIBLEY
Jensen,George A	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Promotion	12/11/05	Area 4 FO WINTERSET
Jensen,Sindra A	Contr Speclst	09	Reassignment	10/2/05	Management Staff
Johnson,Melissa	Soil Conservationist	09	Promotion	11/27/05	Area 4 FO CLARINDA
Kluver,Lynn R	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Promotion	10/30/05	Area 2 FO THOMPSON
Koenig,Kelly L	Soil Conserv Techncn	07	Promotion	10/30/05	Area 4 FO LOGAN
Kraus,Gina C	Agrl Engr	09	Conv to Career-Cond Appt	9/18/05	Area 5 AO ENGINEERING OFFICE
La Van,Mark R	Soil Scientist	12	Reassignment	10/16/05	Area 5 AO FAIRFIELD
Leazer,Steven H	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Promotion	8/21/05	Area 5 FO TIPTON
Lousias,Christine	Soil Conservationist	07	Reassignment	11/13/05	Area 2 FO CLARION
Luebbers,Michael L	Soil Conserv Techncn	07	Promotion	12/11/05	Area 3 FO ALLISON
Luz,Teresa A	Secretary (OA)	06	Career-Cond Appt	10/16/05	ECOLOGICAL SCIENCES STAFF
Matthias,Jeffrey W	District Conservationist	11	Promotion	11/13/05	Area 4 FO CHARITON
Matz,Jonathan R	Soil Conservationist	07	Career-Cond Appt	10/2/05	Area 2 FO ALGONA
McMichael,Julie M	Soil Scientist		Name Chg from McLaughlin	9/18/05	Area 1SSO STORM LAKE
Mensching,Marvin	Resource Conservst	12	Reassignment	10/2/05	Area 2 FO ANKENY
Mootz,Tricia A	Human Resources Speclst		Name Chg from Dunfee	12/11/05	Management Staff
Nguyen,Hani T	Soil Conservationist	07	Career Intern	10/2/05	Area 5 FO FAIRFIELD
Oelmann,Douglas	Soil Scientist	12	Reassignment	8/21/05	Technical Services Staff
Overton,Russell D	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Promotion	11/13/05	Area 3 FO MANCHESTER
Peitz,Eric R	Soil Conserv Techncn	04	Conv to Career-Cond Appt	9/4/05	Area 5 FO FAIRFIELD
Phillips,James M	Geographic Inf Sys Speclst	09	Promotion	9/18/05	GIS STAFF
Rachut,Elizabeth M	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Reassignment	12/11/05	Area 3 FO NEW HAMPTON
Rash Daniels,P L	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Conv to Career-Cond Appt	11/13/05	Area 2 FO HAMPTON
Shilling,Nathan J	Civil Engrg Techncn	07	Promotion	9/4/05	Area 5 AO ENGINEERING OFFICE
Sporrer,Jeffrey R	Soil Conservationist	09	Promotion	11/27/05	Area 4 FO ATLANTIC
Timmerman,K L	Soil Conservationist		Name Chg from Morrison	10/30/05	Area 5 FO WASHINGTON
Viles,Jeremy C	Soil Conservationist	09	Conv to Career-Cond Appt	12/11/05	Area 2 FO FORT DODGE
Vobora,Robert J	Soil Scientist	12	Reassignment	10/16/05	Area 3 AO WEST UNION
Walsh,James D	Soil Conserv Techncn	07	Promotion	9/4/05	Area 4 FO CRESTON
Warson,Brian E	Soil Conserv Techncn	07	Promotion	9/4/05	Area 5 FO DONNELLSON
Watkins,Julie K	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Promotion	11/13/05	Area 3 FO TOLEDO
Wells,Linda M	Secy	07	Promotion	10/2/05	Management Staff
Weston,Anne R	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Promotion	10/16/05	Area 1 FO ROCKWELL CITY
White,Deborah L	Admv Offer	13	Promotion	9/18/05	Management Staff
York,Kristy A	Area Program Speclst	11	Promotion	11/13/05	Area 4 AO ATLANTIC
Younk,Allan W	Soil Scientist	12	Reassignment	8/21/05	Technical Services Staff
Zaiger,Lucas M	Soil Conserv Techncn 0	7	Promotion	12/11/05	Area 4 FO HARLAN