

Iowa Current Developments

Completed EWP work on Time Check Levee along the Cedar River in Cedar Rapids.



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

What's Inside

Page 2

- Rapid Carbon Assessment Sampling Begins in Iowa
- Monk on the Radio

Page 3

- Humboldt Wins A2 Feds, Farmers and Friends Feed Families Contest

Page 4

- Outdoor Classroom Becomes Reality Thanks to Bruun
- New ISU Pub Touts Tallgrass Prairie

Page 5

- Jung Named Alum of Month
- IDALS Announces Field Reps

Page 6

- Sucik Volunteers at *Dig It!*
- Diversity Day 2010

Page 7

- Organic Conference in Ames
- Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Market Planner
- Iowa NRCS Golf Tourney

Page 8

- 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*

Where is the cover, or is it duck for cover?

The first week of October Jeanie and I visited one of the nation's national parks. We decided to take the county road system toward South Dakota. The fall days were fantastic – fields were being harvested, but recreational tillage was rampant and, unfortunately, this was a scene not uncommon across the state.

Short-term management decisions are giving the conservation stewards of the state a black eye.

Now, some of you are thinking, "Why have negative comments on actions by the minority? Concentrate on the actions of the majority of conservation farmers."

Rules and Regulations are made for the small percentage of people who choose to think for short-term return, and not for long-term gains.

What can we do? The next time you see a producer in the store, at a school event, or at a community meeting who is performing recreational tillage, ask them, "why?"

The worst thing they can say is, "Mind your own business." The best outcome is planting a seed to create another conservation steward.

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

Helping People Help the Land
www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Rapid Carbon Assessment Sampling: Project Begins in Iowa

by Dan Pulido, Soil Scientist, Atlantic

The USDA-NRCS Soil Survey Division has initiated a nationwide program to inventory soil carbon stocks for soils of the U.S. affected by soil properties, agricultural management, ecosystems, and land uses. This Carbon data will be used for evaluating the effects of conservation practices on soil carbon and for global carbon accounting.

With the burning of fossil fuels, cutting down of rain forests, and development of land for farms, cities and roads, carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels have increased in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, traps heat in the atmosphere. Thus, these human activities are likely causes for raised global surface temperatures of 1.3°F which have occurred over the last 100 years (source: U.S. EPA).

Much research is being conducted on ways to lower CO₂ levels. Soils provide a large potential sink to store carbon.

Currently, there are more than 27,000 pedons

with measured soil carbon in the National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS) characterization database. There is also additional data from university laboratories that is being added to the NCSS database.

This data will be used to create a national soil carbon inventory from existing soil maps. However, soil carbon is a dynamic property so many of these pedons carbon levels could have changed with time. This project will focus on sampling and determination of soil carbon levels, so current up-to-date levels can be determined. This should provide a baseline inventory of soil carbon stocks for the U.S.



NRCS Soil Scientists (left to right) Richard Lensch, John Hammerly, and Dan Pulido of the Atlantic MLRA Soil Survey office collect carbon samples in a forested area in Sarpy County, Neb. The Atlantic soil survey office is responsible for carbon sampling in southwest Iowa, eastern Nebraska, northwestern Missouri, and southwestern Minnesota.

Monica Monk: Living the Country Life® Radio Spot



Beginning the week of Nov. 15, Iowa NRCS Easement Programs Coordinator Monica Monk can be heard on a nationally syndicated radio show through Living the Country Life® Radio.

Monk will discuss all aspects of the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), including eligibility requirements, the application process, and the benefits of wetlands.

The program airs on 19 Iowa radio stations, including stations in Atlantic, Creston, Fairfield, Harlan, Marshalltown, Muscatine, Newton, Oskaloosa and Spencer.

For a complete list of stations or to listen to Monk's interview online, visit: www.livingthecountrylife.com/radio/.



KNOW YOUR FARMER KNOW YOUR FOOD



Feds, Farmers and Friends Feed Families: Humboldt Wins Contest

The Humboldt Field Office, in partnership with Prairie Partners Resource Conservation and Development, won the Area 2 Feds, Farmers and Friends Feed Families food drive contest by collecting 885 items, which weighed 940 pounds.

Feds, Farmers and Families Feed Families ran through Aug. 31, with every field office collecting items to be donated to a local food bank. The program is designed to help food banks across the nation that are struggling through tough economic times.

The Kossuth County Field Office in Algona also did very well in the food drive, collecting 795 items weighing in at 840 pounds.

The third place office was Worth County in Northwood, which collected 457 items that weighed 365 pounds.



Staff members in the Humboldt Field Office took first place in this year's Feds, Farmers and Friends Feed Families food drive for local food banks.



The Algona Field Office in Kossuth County finished a close second in this year's Feds, Farmers and Friends Feed Families food drive.

Outdoor Classroom: Vision Becomes Reality

Construction on “The Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom” at Titan Hill Elementary School in Council Bluffs is nearly complete



Tracy Bruun,
State Secretary,
West Pott. SWCD

thanks to an idea from Tracy Bruun, State Secretary with IDALS-DSC in Council Bluffs, who approached the Lewis Central Community Schools.

The project converts a long, narrow strip of green space behind Titan Hill, formerly used as an overflow playground, to an open-air classroom with a variety of study areas. Bruun says Lewis Central High School students designed much of the outdoor classroom area.

Construction took place Oct. 16, 18 and 19 with volunteer students and teachers from Lewis Central High School and North High School in Omaha.

According to Bruun, students worked to construct an entrance/arbor, climbing structure, a music/performance area, and a gathering space. Volunteers also cleaned up the existing path and planted plants.

Bruun says student volunteers were taking part in a program called *3 Days of Service*, sponsored

by the University of Nebraska-Omaha. “The University organized food and provided insurance and T-shirts for all of the participants,” says Bruun.

Bruun took the outdoor classroom idea to a Titan Hill teacher a few years ago, and the school district has been on board since April 2009.

The Titan Hill group worked with Dimensions Educational Research Foundation and the Arbor Day Foundation. The result is an outdoor classroom divided into 11 areas. There are garden, water, sand and building areas, with areas for music and movement, for climbing, crawling and digging, for gathering, for nature art and even for “messy materials.”

Bruun says the idea is to provide students a chance to get involved with nature, investigate and plan projects and write about what they are studying.

Bruun says the West Pottawatomie SWCD has agreed to provide native plants and cost-share a soil/root viewer up to \$1,000.



Volunteers work on the outdoor classroom earlier this month.

New Pub Touts: Tallgrass Prairie

A new publication, *Incorporating Prairies into Multifunctional Landscapes*, touts the benefits of the endangered tallgrass prairie ecosystem to Iowa landowners.

The publication was written by Meghann Jarchow, a Ph.D. candidate in the ISU Department of Agronomy, and her advisor, Matt Liebman, ISU’s Henry A. Wallace Endowed Chair of Sustainable Agriculture. Both are members of a research team supported by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

The research team is developing multi-year cropping systems for Iowa that integrate annuals and perennials. Their work also is motivated by a concern to evaluate both the productivity and environmental impacts of cropping systems.

The publication looks at ways that prairies can be incorporated into farms, how they affect nearby crops, and resources to establish your own prairie. Jarchow, whose background is in plant ecology, provided many of the full-color photographs in the publication.

For a copy, visit the ISU Extension Online Store at: www.extension.iastate.edu/store/.

ISU Ag & Life Sciences Young Alum of the Month: Jay Jung

Jay Jung, district conservationist in the Knoxville Field Office, was named "Young Alum of the Month" for October 2010 by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Iowa State University.

Jung is featured on ISU's website at www.career.ag.iastate.edu/alum/.

When asked what he likes most about his job, Jung says, "My job is unique because I get to help make people's conservation goals become reality on their land every day. I have gotten to

see some of the most beautiful places this state has to offer and places that most other people will never see. My job can be challenging yet very rewarding when you see a project that you helped plan come to life."

Jung recently spoke at a media event at Lake Red Rock (Oct. 6) on how residue management, particularly no-till, from the watershed's row crop farmers can help reduce the amount of sediment that runs off into the lake. The event was featured on KCCI-TV in Des Moines.

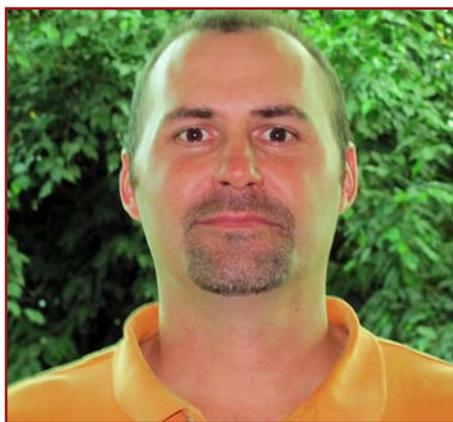


IDALS-Division of Soil Conservation: Sitzmann, Dittman New Field Reps

Vince Sitzmann and Brandon Dittman recently began tenures as Field Services Representatives for the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's Division of Soil Conservation (IDALS-DSC). They replace Paul Valin and Cathie Graves, who retired earlier this year.

Sitzmann, most recently an Environmental Specialist Senior in the Water Resources Bureau, has worked for IDALS-DSC since 1998. He will cover a 32-county area in southeast Iowa.

"With his current and previous work experience, Vince will be an asset to the Field Services Bureau, Division and Department," says Jim Gillespie, Field Services Bureau Chief.



Vince Sitzmann

Dittman comes from the Iowa Soybean Association (ISA), where he served as a Watershed Technician Assistance Manager in the North Raccoon River Watershed.

He is not a stranger to IDALS-DSC, however. Dittman worked for three years prior to his ISA stint as an Environmental Specialist for IDALS-DSC in the Polk SWCD



Brandon Dittman

where he worked on the Camp Creek Watershed.

Dittman was also a GIS Specialist for the Iowa DNR and spent four years as a Teaching Assistant/Research Associate for Iowa State University.

Dittman will cover 31 counties in western Iowa.

Dig It!: State Soil Scientist Mike Sucik Volunteers Opening Weekend

Iowa NRCS State Soil Scientist Mike Sucik volunteered opening weekend of the *Dig It! The Secrets of Soil* exhibit at The Durham Museum in Omaha.

Created by the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, *Dig It!* opened Oct. 2 and will be on display until Dec. 26.

Dig It! transports you to the world of fungi, bacteria, worms and countless other organisms. Discover the amazing connections between soils and everyday life and think about this hidden world in a whole new way.

Visit durhammuseum.org for a full listing of activities, museum hours, and admission.



Iowa NRCS State Soil Scientist Mike Sucik (left) volunteered at the *Dig It!* exhibit in Omaha the first weekend in October.

IA SWCS Scholarships: Orgs Visiting Dig It!

The Iowa Chapter of the of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) is offering \$100 scholarships to youth organizations that visit the *Dig It!* display.

According to Iowa SWCS Membership Secretary Alan Lange, this could include 4-H groups, FFA Chapters, Envirothon teams, or even church groups.

Lange says 10 scholarships are available. If you have questions, e-mail the Iowa SWCS chapter at iaswcs@iaswcs.org.

Diversity Day: Volunteering Across Borders

Three speakers with vastly different experiences overseas spoke to a live group at the Neal Smith Federal Building in Des Moines and hundreds of other USDA employees across the state via the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) on Sept. 21 for Diversity Day 2010, "Giving Back - Volunteering Across Borders."

Speakers included Dr. Alan Kossow, a vascular surgeon from Des Moines, who has volunteered his time often in Third World countries, including a recent trip to Haiti as part of a medical response team.

Other speakers included USDA Rural Development Public Information Coordinator Darin Leach, who talked about his emotional experience participating in an eight-day medical agricultural mission to Guatemala.

Ray Lehn, an Iowa DNR District Forester, spoke about his one-year assignment on the USDA Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan.

Contact Aquanda Jones in Fort Dodge for a DVD or VHS tape of this year's Joint USDA Diversity Day.

Organic Conference: Nov. 21-22 in Ames

The nation caught a glimpse of Iowa organic farming when President Barack Obama visited Morgan Hoenig and MogoOrganic last April as part of his Main Street Tour. Now, participants at the 10th Annual Iowa Organic Conference will learn even more about MogoOrganic and organic production on Nov. 21-22 as Hoenig, other producers and experts from across the country speak at the Iowa State University conference at the Scheman Building on the ISU campus in Ames.

The conference agenda includes information on vegetable, fruit and livestock production and related topics – soil and water quality, crop insurance, diversifying marketing opportunities, government programs, the new pasture rule and transitioning issues. A pre-conference social on Sunday, Nov. 21, is planned for exhibitors and sponsors, but anyone can purchase a ticket to attend.

Register online at www.ucs.iastate.edu/mnet/organic10/home.html. The cost of the conference is \$105 on or before Nov. 1 and \$125 after Nov. 1. Non-vendors must purchase a \$15 ticket for the Sunday reception. For additional conference information, visit www.ucs.iastate.edu/mnet/organic10/home.html.

Leopold Center: Fruit and Vegetable Planner

The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Iowa State's Institute for Transportation have teamed up to create the web-based Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Market Planner. The application, and a link to a user's guide, is at: www.intrans.iastate.edu/marketplanner/.

The Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Market Planner shows rates of demand for 80 different crops. Users can target specific regions, consumers by age group, different time frames and product mixes – from fresh off-the-farm produce to demand for canned, dried or frozen products. All results are shown in retail weight, which takes into account spoilage and processing losses that occur after a crop leaves the farm.

Users of the tool select crops and a central location (such as a farm or business) for the target market,

choosing from all incorporated communities in Iowa. They also determine the driving distance from this location to include in the target market, with or without areas in adjoining states.

The tool calculates a rate of demand for each crop the farmer selects, based on food availability data reported each year by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, and U.S. Census data for consumers in the target market. Target market demand can be compared with state-level production (or supply) of a crop to see where the greatest opportunities exist for farmers.

An early version of the tool, the Iowa Produce Market Potential Calculator created in late 2005, included only 37 crops, county-level data for supply and demand, and no regions outside Iowa.

River Valley: NRCS Tears Up Adel Course

The annual Iowa NRCS Golf Tournament took place Aug. 27 at River Valley Golf Course in Adel. Dana Holland and Rick Trine took first place for the second consecutive year.

It was a beautiful, sunny day with only a slight breeze, which didn't seem to bother the winners, who shot a 6-under par 66 on the 18-hole course.

Lynn Betts and Marc Mahler finished two strokes back with a 4-under par 68. Randy Robb and

Dave White took third place with a 3-under par 69, while Jason Johnson and Jim Phillips shot a 2-under par 70 for fourth overall.

Jim Allen and Curt Donahue won the second flight; Rich and Jean Sims captured the third flight; and Dale Seidl and Rick Robson won the fourth flight.

Next year, the tournament will be hosted by Brian Tumey and Bob Moser at Spring Valley Golf Course in rural Livermore. An official date will be out early 2011.

Changes In: NRCS Personnel

In order of Effective Date

Name	Title	Effective Date	Nature of Action	Location
Boersma, Justin	Soil Conservationist	8/15/10	Promotion	Anamosa
Collins, Ross	Student Trainee Soil Cons.	8/27/2010	Resignation	Knoxville
Brennecke, Deanna	Farm Bill Office Assistant	8/29/2010	Transfer	Leon
Bronson, Jessica	Resource Conservationist	8/29/2010	Promotion	Northwood
Switzer, Scott	Soil Conservationist	9/1/2010	Retirement	New Hampton
Moltzen, Roberta	State Administrative Officer	9/3/2010	Retirement	Des Moines
Myers, Courtney	Soil Conservationist	9/12/2010	Part-Time Position	Epworth
Niceswanger, Justin	Purchasing Agent	9/12/2010	Promotion	Des Moines
Seago, Jeffrey	Soil Conservationist	9/12/2010	Career Intern Program Appt.	Winterset
Delperdang, Mark	Soil Conservation Tech.	9/26/2010	Career Intern Program Appt.	Wapello
Giombi, Holly	Soil Conservationist	9/26/2010	Career Intern Program Appt.	Leon
Knight, Matthew	Soil Conservationist	9/26/2010	Career Intern Program Appt.	Sigourney
Schulte, Denis	District Conservationist	9/26/2010	Promotion	Fort Dodge
Wordlaw, Randall	Soil Conservationist	9/26/2010	Career Intern Program Appt.	Red Oak
Barkley, Kevin	Civil Engineering Tech.	10/10/2010	Promotion	Sac City
Casper, Michael	Contracting Officer	10/10/2010	Transfer from Air Force	Des Moines
Holcomb, Shaun	Soil Conservationist	10/10/2010	Temporary Promotion (Detail)	Malcom
Galer, Rochelle	Soil Conservationist	10/15/2010	Resignation	Independence
Hubbert, Jon	ASTC-Operations	10/24/2010	Reassignment from Illinois	Des Moines

Changes In: IDALS-DSC Personnel

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Location
Sitzmann, Vince	Field Services Representative	Transfer	Des Moines
Dittman, Brandon	Field Services Representative	New Hire	Des Moines
Mason, Wayne	Soil Conservation Technician	Died Oct. 5, 2010	Bloomfield

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.