

Iowa Current Developments

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From the Office of Iowa State Conservationist Rick Van Klaveren



What's inside.....

Partners Improve Viking Lake Watershed	Page 2
Butler County in the News	Page 3
Absentee Landowner Outreach	Page 3
Iowa ACES at Work	Page 4
Solar Pump Produces	Page 4
Gaga for Gourds	Page 5
Personnel Actions	Page 6

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

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

The 2007 budget remains very tight. It is looking a little better now, but budget challenges remain.

Sometime between now and February 15 we expect to hear more from Congress on our finances for the rest of the year. We will probably operate under a continuing resolution the balance of this fiscal year, but the question is, will it be the FY06 allocation or the proposed Senate or House mark?

In the meantime, conservation work continues. If this year's budget challenge has taught us anything, it is that we need to continue to work as smart as we can. We must continue to leverage funding opportunities and work with partners to do our jobs.

A very good example of this cooperation of labor and funding aimed a specific goal can be found in the Viking Lake Watershed in Montgomery County in Southwestern Iowa. This 2200-acre watershed drains into one of Iowa's most popular state parks. This watershed had challenges. The nearby cattle feedlot, overloaded septic systems and soil erosion all contributed to very poor water quality in the watershed that ended up preventing some swimmers from using the park's lake. Now, after two and a half years of work and a half million dollars from many sources, NRCS, the district, and seven other partners have nearly completed work that will transform this watershed and park into a showcase of cooperative conservation.

Congratulations to the staffs at the Red Oak Field and Red Oak Engineering Offices, and to all the partnership employees at every level for your work on Viking Lake and for reminding us what can be accomplished through partnerships and teamwork.

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

Iowa Current Developments

Partners Improve Watershed

It was well known that the very popular Viking Lake State Park in Montgomery County had water quality issues. The park's 147-acre lake had high enough bacterial levels at times last summer that the Iowa Department of Natural Resources advised against swimming in it. Water quality was bad and getting worse. Blue-green algae were blooming and waterways within the watershed were on the impaired list.

Local conservation leaders knew something had to be done and done quickly. Work began in 2004 to turn things around, through the teamwork of many partners that included the DNR, the Iowa Department of Transportation, Page One Rural Water District of Clarinda, Montgomery Soil and Water Conservation District, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's Division of Soil Conservation, and NRCS.

Looking at the entire 2200-acre watershed around Viking Lake, the partners did a comprehensive watershed analysis to complete a work plan

and received grants from a number of different sources to fix a number of different problems.

All told, about \$420,000 was spent on conservation practices within the watershed.

Now that much of the work is done, partners are looking forward to seeing the benefits of their work this summer. Thanks to the new structures' sediment control, the DNR expects the water in Viking Lake to be very clear this spring. Experts predict bacteria concerns will become a distant memory. Anglers will enjoy 17 new fishing ponds that are a result of new erosion control structures. Park goers will be able to explore five new miles of hiking trails originally made to move equipment from one construction site to the next. As a result of all of the completed conservation work, sediment entering Viking Lake is predicted to drop from 5,000 tons per year to 150 tons. That means swimmers, boaters and campers can expect excellent water quality in Viking Lake.

That's an environmental improvement that can bring a smile to any park visitor's or conservationist's face.



Touring one of the 22 new structures designed to improve water quality within the watershed surrounding Viking Lake State Park are Gary Poen, DNR park ranger; Brian Holmes, NRCS engineer; Galen Hartman, Montgomery County NRCS soil conservation technician; Bob Waters, IDALS regional watershed coordinator for western Iowa; Tom Burkhiser,

Montgomery County NRCS district conservationist; Denise Miller, East Pottawattamie County NRCS soil conservation technician; Terry Gleaves, East Pottawattamie County NRCS soil conservation technician; Daniel Case, IDALS environmental specialist project coordinator; and Dave Burmeister, East Pottawattamie County district buffers specialist.

Iowa is Home to National NRCS Office

A four person NRCS office located in Des Moines has a big impact on conservation across the United States. The national Earth Team Volunteer and Landcare Publications office provides information and manages the volunteers that many local offices use to further conservation work.

The Earth Team group works to increase the use of volunteers in conservation. In 2005, nearly 35,000 Earth Team Volunteers donated almost one million hours of their time to conservation practices. The total value of the volunteer time was over \$16 million.

The publications section keeps inventory and processes orders from across the nation for NRCS publications, forms and exhibits for agency and general public use.

Districts may place orders by calling 1-888-LANDCARE, or by visiting <http://landcare.nrcs.usda.gov>.



The people that make up the four person team at the national Earth Team Volunteer and Landcare Publications office are Bonnie Allely, volunteer liaison; Michele Eginore, national Earth Team volunteer coordinator; Venessa Alvarado, office assistant; and Alan Benge, program assistant. They are standing in front of one of the many LANDCARE displays districts can order from them.

Butler County in the News

District Conservationist Lawrence Green is proud of the conservation work the landowners and staff are putting in place in Butler County. So proud, in fact, that Green invited Jean Caspers-Simmet, a writer for farm publication AgriNews, to write a story on conservation in Butler County. Caspers-Simmet agreed and joined him at the father/son Lee and Russ Meyer farm near Aplington.

The Meyers have a long tradition of working with Green and the Butler Soil and Water Conservation District staff on conservation projects. For example, there are over three miles of terraces and one mile of stream bank buffers installed on their property. They have 36 acres of well head protection in place along with three wetland restorations and two ponds.

Green and the Meyers showed

Caspers-Simmet their latest conservation project which involves building a concrete manure settling basin, a 500 foot filter strip, and a filter channel with level spreaders that empties into a wetland. The project was designed by Civil Engineering Technician Jeff Lutz and Soil Conservation Technician Michael Luebbers, and built by the Meyers.

Green said all the work meets project specifications.

Russ Meyer said, "I'm feeling very good about it. It's worked well."

Caspers-Simmet's Butler County conservation story appeared January 16. Green is happy because now the readers of AgriNews have a better understanding of the conservation practices that are installed in Butler County. On the web: <http://webstar.postbulletin.com/agrinews/293023679447840.bsp>.

Iowa NRCS Prints Conservation Atlas

The latest brochure produced by Iowa NRCS is the "Iowa NRCS Conservation Atlas." This 16-page booklet includes tables, maps, and feature stories about our Farm Bill programs, plus maps showing the status of PL-566 and PL-534 projects in the state. Limited copies of the atlas will be mailed to each field office in the coming weeks. As always, this brochure is on the Iowa NRCS website at: www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/news/brochures/publications.html.

For more information about the atlas, contact Jason Johnson at 515-323-2701.

RC&D Reaches Out to Absentee Landowners

Conservationists have an ongoing challenge to find absentee landowners and help them address resource concerns on their Iowa farms. When landowners are contacted, they often find the language surrounding conservation confusing and too technical.

M & M Divide Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) in Carroll is trying to fix that problem. They received two large grants that allow them to find names and addresses of absentee landowners, contact them and develop tools to help those landowners better address resource concerns on their land.

One of the outreach tools developed that anyone can use is the website www.absenteelandowners.org. M & M Divide RC&D Coordinator Rick Tafoya says, "The website uses easily readable language to empower absentee landowners to become more engaged in what happens on their land." Tafoya says it is also a great resource for use by NRCS and partner staff.



Jean Caspers-Simmet, a reporter with the Rochester, MN, based AgriNews stands in front of a new manure settling basin with Butler County District Conservationist Lawrence Green and farmers Russ and Lee Meyer. Green invited Caspers-Simmet to see an

example of conservation practices put in place on Butler County farms. The Meyers say the settling basin improves water quality and makes it easier to clean up manure produced on their cattle feedlot.

ACES Employees are Assets to Iowa NRCS



Monona County ACES employee Clarence Phipps stands in front of a converted pivot irrigation system. Phipps is involved in an EQIP conversion program where farmers convert their high pressure irrigation systems to low pressure.

Clarence Phipps, working under the Agricultural Conservation Enrollees/Seniors (ACES) Project in Monona County, is one of 28 enrollees working in field offices around Iowa. The program allows NRCS to obtain the services of experienced workers age 40 and over on a temporary basis through an agreement with the National Older Worker Career Center (NOWCC). The NOWCC is a non-profit organization that recruits the enrollees and handles the administrative recruiting, hiring, and paying of ACES participants.

A lifetime of living and farming in Monona County has given Phipps a working knowledge of the land and the respect of many residents. He also carries a Certified Crop Advisor accreditation and has managed a local co-op in the past.

Although he has worked intermittently for the Monona Soil & Water Conservation District during the past five years, this program allows the Monona County SWCD the opportunity to keep him employed and remain an asset to the staff.

One of Phipps' primary duties involves the Environmental Quality

Incentives Program (EQIP) Ground and Surface Water Conservation (GSWC) Program. In Monona County, Phipps works with producers to convert pivot irrigation systems from high to low pressure to conserve water. The district has relied on Phipps to get the cost-share program started and to help staff and producers understand the various types of systems and their conversion components.

Monona County District Conservationist Kathy Schneider is extremely pleased with both Clarence Phipps and ACES. Schneider says, "The ACES Project provides us with the much needed assistance to put more conservation on the ground. Clarence is an asset to the office, bringing years of wisdom to the position and is a pleasant contribution to the office staff."



Solar Pump Produces

Iowa Lakes RC&D Coordinator Jeff Kestel and farmer Del Roskens inspect a solar powered water pumping demonstration site. Used as a tool for managed grazing, the system provides water for cattle where electricity is unavailable. The Iowa Lakes RC&D council helped install five demo sites in their region. Even on the cold, snowy January day that this photo was taken, the men found the solar powered pump working well.

NRCS and DNR Team on Lake Project

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources credits work completed by the Garner field office staff for helping make the Crystal Lake renovation happen in Hancock County.

Before any dredging could take place, the watershed around state-owned Crystal Lake needed to be improved so excessive runoff from farm fields wouldn't wash into the lake and create even more sediment. After installing soil erosion measures within the watershed, the 268-acre Crystal Lake State Park is now undergoing a \$3 million dredging to deepen the lake and to improve water quality.



Garner Field Office staff gather for a group picture in the Crystal Lake Watershed. They are David Knoll, environmental specialist; Lucas Miller, soil conservation technician; Jason Moore, district conservationist; Ruth Ehley, soil conservationist; and Darla Reding, state secretary. The Iowa DNR credits watershed soil erosion work done by the Hancock Field office for making possible a \$3 million dredging operation in Crystal Lake.

NRCS Focuses on Black History and Heritage

January and February are important months for celebrating the contributions of Blacks in American life and history. In January we celebrate the birth and life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with a national holiday. February is Black History Month which has been recognized since 1926 as an initiative to bring national attention to the contributions of black people throughout American history.



Shaffer Ridgeway

As black emphasis program manager for Iowa NRCS, Shaffer Ridgeway helps Iowa NRCS to keep a year round focus on the issues of inclusion and equality. Ridgeway is the Black Hawk County District Conservationist.

The Black Emphasis Program is designed to provide focus on issues such as employment, promotion, training and career enhancement for black employees and applicants in NRCS.

Where Are They Now?

DeWitt native Roger Hansen began his career with NRCS as a student trainee in 1968. He served as a soil conservationist in Maquoketa and Waukon and he was a district conservationist in both Albia and then Centerville. Hansen moved to Colorado in 1975 where he served as an area conservationist and then was selected for the NRCS Graduate Study Program at Harvard University.



Roger Hansen

For the past 12 years Hansen has served as the NRCS Missouri state conservationist.

Roger and his wife, Connie, have a grown son and daughter.

Kids Go Gaga for Gourds

Humboldt County District Conservationist Allison Orr (center) and Area 2 Administrative Management Assistant Becky Scott are surrounded by happy kids who just finished making gourd birdhouses. Using locally grown gourds, the Humboldt staff and local partners helped 80 students build bird houses in November. This project is part of a series of conservation programs local volunteers provide for elementary children on their "early out" days.



(Instructions for making your own gourd birdhouse can be found at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov under Backyard.)



Pancakes, Anyone?

Each Wednesday morning SCS/NRCS retirees meet informally for breakfast at the IHOP Restaurant south of Merle Hay Mall in Des Moines. Attending January 17 were: (standing) Don C. Peterson, environmental engineer, 40 years of service; Dennis Miller, agricultural economist, 31 years; Volney Smith, assistant state conservation engineer, 38 years; Don Frevert, state

construction engineer, 38 years; Dewey Bondurant, state conservation engineer, 34 years; (seated) Deane S. Glen, planning engineer, 30 years; Roger Link, water quality specialist, 38 years; Marge Miller, secretary to the state conservationist, 38 years; Joe Ausan, assistant planning staff leader, 33 years; and Don Ummel, state administrative officer, 35 years.

Personnel Actions

Name	Title	Grade	Action	Eff Date	Dept
Ahrndt, Laurie C	Soil Conservst Techncn	07	Name Chg from Humpal	10/1/06	Area 5 FO Davenport
Barr, Shereen M	Soil Conservst Techncn	06	Name Chg from Ries	10/1/06	Area 3 FO Cresco
Breuer Lauterbach, T.	Secy	06	Reassignment	10/1/06	Management Staff
Christian, Carolyn E	Secy (OA)	06	Reassignment	10/1/06	Ecological Sciences Staff
Foster, Clifford J	Soil Conservst Techncn	07	Reassignment	10/1/06	Area 3 FO Toledo
Izer, L Ruth	Soil Conservst	11	Reassignment	10/1/06	Area 5 FO Iowa City
Monk, Monica M.	Resource Conservst	12	Transfer	10/1/06	Wetland Restoration Team
Osborn, Michelle D	Soil Conservst Techncn	06	Name Chg from Zimmerman	10/1/06	Area 1 FO Primghar
Praska, Michael A	Soil Conservst	09	Promotion	10/1/06	Area 3 FO Cresco
Steffen, Melissa A	Civil Engr Techncn	07	Conv to Career-Cond Appt	10/1/06	Area 1 AO Sioux City Engineering
Cordes, Richard J	Soil Conservst	12	Retirement	10/3/06	Area 3 AO West Union
Carrington, Donald	Soil Conservst	12	Reassignment	10/15/06	Ecological Sciences Staff
Cox, Sheila K	Res Conservst	13	Promotion	10/15/06	Area 1 AO Sioux City
Swizdor, John V	Purchsg Agt	07	Career-Cond Appt	10/15/06	Management Staff
Weston, Anne R	Soil Conserv Techncn	06	Promotion	10/15/06	Area 1 FO Rockwell City
Atherton, Bruce C	Agri Engr	12	Reassignment	10/29/06	Area 2 FO Ankeny
Boozer, Demitrice G	Spec Asst	13	LWOP	10/29/06	Des Moines
Bradley, Christopher	Soil Conservst Techncn	06	Promotion	10/29/06	Area 5 FO Wapello
Lange, Alan D	Soil Conservst	05	Reassignment	10/29/06	Area 4 FO Winterset
Mitchell, Julie K	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Name Chg from Watkins	10/29/06	Area 3 FO Toledo
Lee, Thomas C	Purchsg Agt	08	Resignation	11/11/06	Management Staff
Bucklin, John M	Soil Conservst Techncn	05	Promotion	11/12/06	Area 2 FO Guthrie Center
Conley, Robert E	Soil Conservst	09	Promotion	11/12/06	Area 5 FO Williamsburg
Fischer, Jaia L	Soil Conservst	11	Promotion	11/12/06	Area 1 FO Emmetsburg
McNaughton, Shane	Soil Conservst	09	Promotion	11/12/06	Area 4 FO Osceola
Overton, Russell	Soil Conservst Techncn	06	Promotion	11/12/06	Area 3 FO Manchester
Parizek, Chris A	Soil Conservst	09	Promotion	11/12/06	Area 1 FO Sergeant Bluff
Timmerman, K L	Soil Conservst	09	Promotion	11/12/06	Area 3 FO Maquoketa
Tumey, Brian M	Soil Conservst	09	Promotion	11/12/06	Area 1 FO Storm Lake
Townley, Gregory A	Soil Conservst	11	Return to Duty	11/13/06	Area 5 FO Malcom
Sandquist, Abraham	Soil Conservst	09	Resignation	11/17/06	Area 2 FO Newton
Gehring, Allen L	Civil Engr	12	Reassignment	11/26/06	Technical Services Staff
Hempy, Craig G	Soil Conservst	09	Reassignment	11/26/06	Area 2 FO Nevada
Ford, Charles A	Soil Conservst	09	Retirement	12/23/06	Area 4 FO Creston
Schaefer, Nicholas R	Civil Engr	07	Change in Title	12/24/06	Area 5 Williamsburg
Hartman, Galen D	Soil Conservst Techncn	07	Retirement	12/31/06	Area 4 FO Red Oak
Loebach, Marilyn J	Soil Conservst Techncn	07	Retirement	12/31/06	Area 1 FO Estherville
Finley, Richard D	Soil Conservst	11	Retirement	1/3/07	Area 1 FO Rockwell City
Petersen, Ronald L	Civil Engr	12	Retirement	1/3/07	Area 4 AO Engineering Office
Swanson, Linda S	Off Asst	06	Retirement	1/6/07	Area 5 AO Fairfield



Drill Team Measures Up
State Geologist Kathy Woida uses a tape to measure the depth of the water table on a potential dam site. Woida and Drill Rig Operator Jamie Johnson use the drill rig for foundation, soil survey, and deep archeological investigation.

Coordinator Speaks Up
Storm Lake Water Quality Coordinator Kimberly Proctor talks with WHO Radio Morning Farm Anchor Bob Quinn after appearing on The Big Show which is heard statewide. Proctor, an employee of the Buena Vista Soil and Water Conservation District, discussed the extensive Alta/Storm Lake storm water renovations with Quinn.

