

# Iowa Current Developments

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 210 Walnut St., Room 693, Des Moines, IA 50309 Spring 2006

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."

Over the last decade or so, NRCS work has gone beyond our traditional role of working with landowners to preserving soil, air and water quality. We now find ourselves taking on the additional missions of promoting energy conservation and helping our clients and partners develop alternative energy sources.

To promote energy conservation, NRCS offers help and incentives through a number of programs including the Conservation Security Program and web-based tools. This year's CSP promotes conservation practices and also has an energy component that rewards farmers for converting to renewable energy fuels such as soy-diesel and ethanol.

The new online "energy estimator" tools help producers make energy-efficient conservation practice decisions. They range from a simple "three-click" estimator to more detailed tools that may require service center assistance.

Electrical power, produced by biomass products and wind energy, is a hot topic since President Bush mentioned them in his State of the Union Address. A number of Iowa NRCS affiliated Resource Conservation and Development councils are already working on alternative energy sources. For example, Southern Iowa and Prairie Partners RC&Ds are developing wind energy alternatives. Iowa Lakes and Northeast Iowa RC&Ds are promoting solar energy use. Prairie Winds RC&D is assisting develop a biovillage demonstrating renewable fuels, green architecture and sustainable development at exit 182 on Interstate 35.

One RC&D is recognized as a national leader for its involvement in alternative fuels. After the State of the Union Address, ABC-TV's World News Tonight went to Chariton Valley RC&D to feature switchgrass as a locally-grown and harvested renewable fuel resource. This council has worked on switchgrass as an alternative fuel source for more than a decade.

I have always felt that conservation work has been both challenging and rewarding. This additional conservation mission of energy conservation and development provides new ways to "Help People Help the Land."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Van Klaveren". The signature is fluid and cursive.

# Iowa Current Developments

## Soil Scientists Assist Homeland Security

Soil scientists are at the forefront of national disaster planning. This unlikely group is helping the nation be better prepared in the event it becomes necessary to dispose of large numbers of animals killed as a result of natural disaster, disease or terrorist attack.

Given the task by Homeland Security through a national headquarters bulletin, NRCS soil scientists are examining soil survey data for land areas where large numbers of animals can safely be buried without danger to the environment or human population.

State Soil Scientist Mike Sucik says all 17 of Iowa's NRCS soil scientists are involved in the project. He adds, "I expect it will require one or two staff-years of time to complete."



Five of the Iowa soil scientists working on the Homeland Security Project are Richard Lensch, Dan Pulido, Ryan Dermody, Doug Oelmann and Leland Camp.

## New Employees Attend Orientation Training



Steve Brinkman, Nutrient Management Specialist, looks through a dumpy level as part of the hands on training at new employee orientation. The dumpy level is one of five pieces of surveying equipment they examined.



Tangela Luhmann, a Soil Conservation Technician from Clarion, and Rubyana Grimmus, a Soil Conservationist from Adel, look on as Resource Soil Scientist Rick Bednarek demonstrates the use of a soil quality test kit.



Twenty-five new NRCS employees attended "Orientation for New Employees" training Feb. 6-10 in Nebraska City, Neb. The all-Iowa class gave students an overview of the agency's history, mission and customers. They learned the conservation planning process and examined a number of conservation practices.

Attending were: (Row One) Instructor James Johnson, Betty Romero, Valorie Johnson, Tangela Luhmann and Steve

Brinkman. (Row Two) Rubyana Grimmus, Meghan Walter, Julie McMichael, Christina Cibula, Peggy Wohlgemuth, Peggy Rash Daniels, Joanne Bruce, Melissa Johnson and Mary Roberts. (Row Three) Joshua Sieren, Jacob Groth, Jack Bucklin, Andrew Focht, Jesse Wegner, Lynn Kliver, Randal Welshhons, and Connie Zittritsch. (Row Four) David Gundlach, Hani Nguyen, David Carter and Instructor Jim Lansford.

# Iowa Current Developments

## State Conservationist for Field Operations Area 2 Named

A district conservationist from Wisconsin has been named as Assistant State Conservationist (Field Office) for Area 2. Woodrich starts her new assignment April 3. She is originally from Wausau, Wisconsin, where she grew up on a Christmas tree farm.



Karen Woodrich

Woodrich holds a soil science degree from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and worked for an environmental engi-

neering firm before joining NRCS.

In Wisconsin, her assignments included Wisconsin Rapids, Portage and Shawano. She became a district conservationist and served in both Merrill and Dodgeville.

Married for ten years to her husband, Chi, Woodrich is an avid NASCAR fan and also enjoys gardening, softball, volleyball, camping and spending time with family and friends. Chi is an auctioneer and salesman.

The couple are looking forward to moving to Iowa.

## Let's Go Fishing

Soil Conservationist Mike Praska loves to fish. He enjoys fishing so much that 2006 is the second consecutive year that Mike and his friends have invited the people of Mitchell and Howard counties to join them on the ice and compete for trophies and other prizes.



Mike Praska

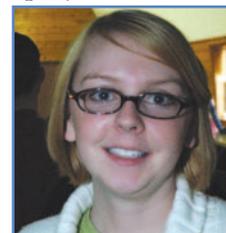
Praska heads up the Elma Sportsmen's Club committee that hosts the annual Ice Fishing Tournament held each February on Lake Hendricks in Riceville.

The community strongly supports the ice fishing tournament. Businesses have donated many prizes and, each year, at least 100 participants have braved cold weather to try their luck.

Praska says their goal is to keep the spirit of ice fishing alive in northern Iowa. He adds, "It's just something to do that's a little different and we are looking forward to next year."

## Iowa Engineers Involved in Hurricane Relief Work

Two Iowa engineers are making plans to travel to New Orleans to help with Emergency Watershed Protection work. Meghan Walter of the Williamsburg Iowa River Corridor Project Office and Ronda Hathcock of Fort Dodge, will spend up to one month assisting NRCS Louisiana with hurricane related projects.



Meghan Walter  
Fort Dodge



Ronda Hathcock  
Williamsburg



Area 2 staff meet Karen Woodrich (center), their incoming state conservationist for field operations (AFO). The staff met Woodrich on a recent trip to the Fort Dodge area office. Pictured front row kneeling are: Doug Baker, Area Engineer; Denis Schulte, Acting AFO; and Josh Gansen, DNR Private Lands Biologist. Middle Row: Dave Rohlf, Ag Engineer; Dan Selky,

Wetland Specialist; Woodrich; Teresa Sue Snyder Thomas, Area Resource Conservationist; and Becky Scott, Administrative Management Assistant. Back row: Civil Engineering Technicians Larry Trauger, Denny Barrick, and Steve Clink; Ronda Hathcock, Ag Engineer; and Stephanie Hill, Program Specialist.

# Iowa Current Developments

## Black History Month Observed

Thirty people listened to James Freeman, a member of the one of the most famous doo-wop groups of the 1950s, "The Five Satins," speak to staff members at the state office. Freeman was a member of The Five Satins when they recorded the original hit version of "In the Still of the Night," which is still popular today. He discussed his musical life with NRCS

staff members as part of a Black History Month program held February 15. Freeman, now a pest control business owner in Norwalk, is a noted civic leader and has been featured on the Iowa Public Television Program, "Living in Iowa."



James Freeman

## Promoting Porous Pavement



Linda Appelgate, Iowa Heartland RC&D Coordinator, examines the porous asphalt parking lot her council helped install at a continuing care retirement community in Des Moines last fall.

Built as an urban "best management practice," the porous asphalt allows rain to move through the asphalt and into an infiltration storage bed of uniformly graded limestone. From there, the storm water infiltrates slowly into the groundwater below. This action prevents sending stormwater, with all of its pollutants, straight into a storm drain and into lake or stream.

March  
is National  
Women's  
History Month

The Federal Women's Program is celebrating National Women's History Month. The purpose of studying women's history is not to idealize women, but rather share the stories of women's achievements and present an expanded view of the complexity and contradiction of living a full and purposeful life. The knowledge of women's history provides a more expansive vision of what a woman can do. This perspective can encourage girls and women to think larger and bolder and can give boys and men a fuller understanding of the female experience.

## New Exhibit Displays



There are two new displays available for use by field offices: a table top Downing board Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) display pictured on the left and an 8 by 10 foot NRCS image pop-up shown on the right. The EQIP display has extra side panels that allow districts to



tailor their message to practices used in their county and is available to check out from each area office. The NRCS image display is available to check out from the state office. For more information go to the Iowa NRCS website ([www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov)) or call your area office.

# Iowa Current Developments

## Townley Update

Greg Townley, Poweshiek County District Conservationist, is on active duty in Iraq as a member of the Army Reserve. Called up to active duty last year, Major Townley is serving as a liaison officer with a Marine logistical unit just west of Baghdad.

Townley provides a link between the two services so they understand each other.

As a logistician, Townley is involved in getting needed supplies to the troops as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Townley reports that living conditions are really good as far as he is concerned. He has moved from a plywood structure with five other officers to a building that has a shower in it.

He expects to return to Iowa and NRCS in October 2006.



Greg Townley

Bruce Trautman, Area Five Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, is arranging a NRCS/Soil and Water Conservation Society Spring CleanUp, Fix Up and BBQ Day on the Townley farm for April 15 starting at 9 a.m. The fix up day will help Greg, his wife Janet and their children complete home and farm repairs left undone while Greg is deployed.

There is a possibility that Greg's wife, Janet, also an Army Reservist, will be called to active duty in May and deployed away from Iowa.

If you would like to help, please contact Suzette Betts at 641-472-8411 or email her at [suzette.betts@ia.usda.gov](mailto:suzette.betts@ia.usda.gov).

The Townley farm is located at: 7430 South 68th Avenue West, Prairie City, IA 50228.

Greg's Iraq address is:  
Major Greg Townley  
1MLG (FWD) (G-3)  
Unit 42175  
FPO AP 96426-2175

## Mark Jensen NRCS National Engineer of the Year



Mark Jensen, State Conservation Engineer, was recognized as NRCS National Engineer of the Year in a National Society of Professional Engineers luncheon in Washington, DC. Jensen's award was presented by Dave Thackeray, Director of Conservation Engineering Division NRCS National Office, and Larry Clark, Deputy Chief for Science and Technology.

## IWINR Annual Conference Held

Three Iowa NRCS employees, Christine Chafa, Storm Lake, Kelly Heather, Carroll, and Cindy Gatlin, Winterset, attended the 18th Annual Iowa Women In Natural Resources Conference held February 9-10, 2006 at the Springbrook Education Center in Guthrie Center. The theme was Natural Resources: Past, Present and Future.

Women of all ages and from all walks of life who are interested in Natural Resources attended the conference.

## Switchgrass to Burn

The Ottumwa Generating Station is now mixing switchgrass with coal as part of a renewable fuels effort that has focused national attention on this project. The current two month test burn will use 25,000 tons of switchgrass to replace coal for electrical generation.

This test burn is one more step in a decades long Chariton Valley RC&D effort to use biomass to generate electricity.



Judith Brayton, Administrative Assistant, and Dora Guffey, Coordinator of the Chariton Valley RC&D, stand next to a pile of switchgrass. Brayton is a retired SCS/NRCS employee who now works for the Chariton Valley RC&D.

# Personnel Actions

Name	Title	Grade	Action	Eff Date	Dept
Adams,Douglas J	Soil Conserv Techncn	06	Promotion	12/25/05	Area 2 FO HUMBOLDT
Birks,Cristine A	Soil Conserv Techncn	07	Promotion	1/22/06	Area 2 FO NEVADA
Brommel,David P	Soil Conservst	12	Reassignment	1/8/06	Technical Services Staff
Corey,Patrick W	Soil Conservst	05	Conv to Career-Cond Appt	1/8/06	Area 4 FO MT AYR
Dubendorf,Jennifer	Natrl Resource Speclst	11	Promotion	12/25/05	GIS STAFF
Gubbels,Julia A	Soil Conserv Techncn	07	Promotion	12/25/05	Area 1 FO CHEROKEE
Harris Hull,Kristina	Soil Conservst	11	Promotion	1/8/06	Area 5 AO FAIRFIELD
Heather,Kelly A	Soil Conservst	07	Conv to Career-Cond Appt	1/8/06	Area 1 FO CARROL
Hempy,Craig G	Soil Conservst	11	Promotion	12/25/05	Area 5 FO MALCOM
Hill,Stephanie R	Soil Conservst	11	Promotion	1/8/06	Area 2 AO FORT DODGE
Hoefler,Julie R	Soil Conserv Techncn	06	Promotion	1/22/06	Area 3 FO EPWORTH
Hogge,Christopher	Soil Conservst	11	Promotion	12/25/05	Area 1 FO STORM LAKE
Lange,Alan D	Soil Conserv Techncn	06	Promotion	2/5/06	Area 2 FO BOONE
Miller,Clinton A	Soil Conservst	09	Reassignment	2/5/06	Area 3 FO TOLEDO
Miller,Lucas J	Soil Conserv Techncn	07	Promotion	12/25/05	Area 2 FO GARNER
Moltzen,Roberta A	Forstr	12	Reassignment	1/8/06	ECOLOGICAL SCIENCES STAFF
Murphy,Christina	Civil Engr	11	Promotion	12/25/05	Natural Resource Plng Staff,
NICHOLSON,Renae	Soil Conservst	11	Name Chg from Ford	12/25/05	Area 4 FO HARLAN
Niedermayer,Lisa	Soil Conservst	07	Reassignment	1/22/06	Area 4 FO WINTERSET
Connor,Thomas J	Res Conservst	12	Change in Title	1/4/06	Technical Services Staff
Roberts,Mary A	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Promotion	12/25/05	Area 1 FO STORM LAKE
Ruopp,Douglas C	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Promotion	12/25/05	Area 2 FO NEWTON
Schlader,Stacy L	Soil Conservst	05	Reassignment	2/5/06	Area 5 FO ALBIA
Smith,Joe	Soil Conservst	09	Promotion	1/8/06	Area 1 AO SIOUX CITY
Steele,Jason E	Soil Conservst	11	Promotion	12/25/05	Area 5 SSO WASHINGTON
Straka,Alexis A	Agrl Engr	07	Conv to Career Intern	1/22/06	Area 1 AO SIOUX CITY ENGINEER
Watson, Donald	Soil Scntst	07	Career Intern Appt	1/8/06	Area 1SSO STORM LAKE
Wegner,Jesse B	Soil Conservst	07	Conv to Career-Cond Appt	12/25/05	Area 2 FO BOONE
Welshhons,Randal	Soil Conserv Techncn	05	Promotion	1/22/06	Area 5 FO KNOXVILLE



Twenty-one new supervisors recently completed three days of training in February titled: "Supervising in Iowa 101." The course taught new district conservationists, resource soil scientists and others a wide range of subjects from financial management and administrative services to how to develop professional working relationships and handle human resource issues. Attending were: Row 1--Jaia Fischer, Katundra Shears, Shiloh Bradley, Teresa Reed and Michelle Bales. Row 2--Shaeffer Ridgeway, Jeff Matthias, Lori Harris, Marvin Freed, Brenda Tenold-Moretz, Lori Derringer and Dan Pulido. Row 3--Richard Lensch, Nick Morrell, Brian Hillers, Chris Hogge, Craig Hempy, Larry Jones, Ryan Dermody, Leland Camp and T. J. Mathis.