



USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 210 Walnut St., Rm. 693, Des Moines, IA 50309 Spring 2007

**From the Office of  
Iowa State Conservationist  
Rick Van Klaveren**



**What's inside....**

Webster County Water Improves	Page 2
Petersen Gets Lifetime Award	Page 3
SUV Gets Buried in Service Center	Page 3
Ugly Gardener Profiled	Page 4
NE Iowa RC&D Splits \$500,000 Wellness Grant	Page 5
Former Governor Visits NRCS	Page 5

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

In early April, a team of 15 people from the State Office spent four days conducting a Quality Review in Area 5. Our purpose was simple. We examined the issues and concerns people have in that area. We listed those concerns as questions and developed answers which would improve people's work lives and make them and the area more effective and efficient.

Hopefully these improvements discussed in Area 5 can benefit the entire state.

This was not a program review. Our teams examined seven areas of concern including training, quality assurance reviews, watershed planning, conservation planning authority, multi-county staffing, conservation systems after CRP and fuel source development.

We learned a great deal from these meetings, discussions and reviews. There were many excellent suggestions and proposals for improving efficiency and effectiveness. For example, one group suggested developing a statewide database of watershed inspection activities. Another recommended amendments, drawings and engineering tables-referred to in the web based step tables and statements of work-be hot linked for easy reference. The training team suggested the state reinstitute a Leadership Development Program for GS-11s and 12s and that each area should conduct management training for new and future district conservationists.

Area 5 was a great host. Field staffs told me they appreciated the opportunity to discuss problems and concerns and simply talk to State Office staff, which, they felt were listening. What we learned from Area 5 will help us address many issues as we move forward. Area 5's efforts will help make us all better at what we do. I thank Bruce Trautman and his entire team for their work, dedication and candid assistance.

## Iowa Current Developments

### District Protecting Popular Iowa Lake

Webster County Soil and Water Conservation District staff is helping to protect one of Iowa's most popular state recreation sites. Brushy Creek State Recreation Area draws more than 500,000 visitors each year. The 57,000-acre Brushy Creek Watershed drains into Brushy Lake, the area's centerpiece.

A few years ago, officials were concerned. Water quality within the 690-acre lake was good, but it was deteriorating. Iowa DNR officials said increased levels of phosphorus and nitrates were troubling. Being proactive, the Iowa DNR began working with the Webster County District to help protect the quality of the water entering Brushy Lake.

T. J. Lynn was named Webster County's Watershed Project Coordinator for Brushy Creek. Since July 2005, Lynn and his NRCS co-workers and partners

have been working to improve water quality within the watershed. They have persuaded landowners to build buffer strips, restore small wetlands and install other conservation practices that reduce soil erosion within the watershed. But they have also worked toward getting a wetland installed on the northern tip of the watershed.

This summer, construction begins on a wetland installation project on the northern tip of the drainage area that will greatly improve water quality within the watershed. The Iowa Department of Transportation will pay for most of the project's \$780,000 land acquisition and wetlands construction costs.

Lynn notes the Webster County Conservation Board, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited and Whitetails Unlimited also were key project partners.

### Geologist Joins Staff

Angela L. Bowman has joined the State Office Engineering Staff in Des Moines as a Geologist, effective February 12, 2007.

Bowman previously provided technical support services to the Los Alamos National Laboratory Environmental Restoration Division. Originally from Des Moines,



**New Geologist  
Angela Bowman**

Bowman received her B.S. in Geology from the University of Iowa. As a result of A-76 competitive outsourcing, Bowman is one of seven new NRCS geologists hired nationally.

### On the Web: New Soils Site and Email

A new soil science website is now available that allows access to high resolution, soil-related images. The website was developed and is being maintained by North Carolina State University.

The URL for the website is <http://soil-science.info/photos/>.

Staff and partners can access their NRCS Outlook email, contacts and calendars from outside their offices by directing their web browsers to: <https://webmail-central.one.usda.gov/exchange/>. To log in simply enter: `agcentral\yourfirstname.yourlastname` followed by your password.



Tracy Anderson, Agricultural Conservation Enrollee/Seniors employee and TJ Lynn, Brushy Creek Watershed coordinator, conduct a grid survey on the future site

of an expanded wetland. This wetland will improve water quality to a Webster County lake that gets a half-million visitors each year.

## Iowa Current Developments

### Wayne Petersen Given Life Time Achievement Award

Wayne Petersen, Urban Conservationist from Iowa City, was recently given a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Fourth Annual Iowa Storm Water Conference at the Adventureland Inn in Altoona. The special Iowa Storm Water Partnership award, presented by the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities' Pat Sauer, recognized Petersen for providing leadership and technical assistance in protecting and improving Iowa's water quality.



Wayne Petersen

140 storm water managers, engineers, landscape designers and conservationists were on hand for the ceremony. Petersen was commended for spearheading numerous statewide projects that have improved water quality and for promoting Low Impact Development (LID) in Iowa.

Homes and offices using LID are designed to keep storm water runoff in place. Designers divert runoff from impervious surfaces such as parking lots and roofs to bioretention areas like rain gardens and bioswales. Once considered a "wild idea," LID is now being implemented throughout the state.

An Iowa State University graduate, Petersen has spent his 31-year career with NRCS.



### Spirit Lake Staff Recognized

The Dickinson Soil and Water Conservation Commissioners and Staff were recently recognized by the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities for their efforts to protect storm water runoff from polluting the Iowa Great Lakes. Representing over 500 municipalities in Iowa, IAMU recognized the district's leadership in storm water manage-

ment and their promotion of Low Impact Development. Joining in the award celebration were (Back Row) Orville Berg, Scott Mitchell, John Myhre, Curt Smith, Tim Moran, (Center) Steve Anderson, Earl Muilenberg, Carroll Oskvig, (Front Row) Phyllis Nielsen, Maxine Butler, Betty Romero, Chris Hoffman, and Mark Ingwersen.

### SUV Buried in Allison Service Center

Allison Field Office Staff came to work February 26 to find a Dodge Durango buried in their service center. Two nights before the driver blew through a stop sign, drove into town and plowed their vehicle into the Service Center at 50 miles per hour.

The accident scattered file cabinets, files and computer equipment. It damaged the heating system and freezing temperatures forced the water to be turned off. Employees Lawrence Green, Hillary Owen, Michael Luebbers, Carolyn Dirksen and Gary Mathes quickly adapted. Coats, hats and gloves became regular office attire.

The estimated \$25,000 in damage should be repaired this spring.

### Displays Available

Iowa NRCS staff can check out displays for district use from either the national LANDCARE office or the Iowa NRCS State Office free of charge.

LANDCARE has 30 displays and exhibits available for use at educational programs and other events. The Iowa NRCS State Office has 18 displays available. NRCS employees may reserve an exhibit through LANDCARE (1-888-LANDCARE). For Iowa displays, contact Joanne Bruce at the Iowa State Office at 515-284-4353.

To see what is available nationally go on line to <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/exhibits/>. For displays created for Iowa use see <http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/Displays/displays.html>.

## Iowa Current Developments

### State Secretary Passionate for No-Till

Adams County District Conservationist Rick Sprague jokes that his district's state secretary, Sheila O'Riley, is so passionate about no-till that she promotes the soil saving concept around the clock. Sprague will quickly add that his humor is not too far from the truth. He sees O'Riley constantly talking up no-till to farmers during working hours and to gardeners in her off hours.



Adams County State Secretary Sheila O'Riley, in the persona of the Ugly Gardener, demonstrates no-till gardening to a local class. If left to grow, this wood floor demonstration garden will produce a crop.

As a master gardener, O'Riley knows gardening. From her experience working with conservationists promoting no-till to farmers, she also knows people have trouble accepting change. That includes going from the usual practice of garden tilling to no-till gardening.

O'Riley says, "No-till is unusual. It's different. It's trashy and unattractive and to some it looks ugly."

Enter the Ugly Gardener.

Before a speaking engagement O'Riley will don an unattractive wide brimmed hat and unsightly house coat. Then she will introduce herself to audiences as the "Ugly Gardener." O'Riley explains that

her friends gave her the ugly hat after she planted her first no-till garden. Instead of being tilled a 'pretty' black, O'Riley's garden looked trashy to some with its soil saving residue. Liking the harvest results and the soil savings, O'Riley took the gift hat and decided to become the Ugly Gardener. She soon started teaching and promoting no-till gardening to others.

As an Earth Team volunteer, O'Riley spends many off-work hours encouraging others to try no-till gardening. She is frequently interviewed by reporters about her "ugly gardens." O'Riley says, "Garden tilling opens up the soil to erosion and weed growth. Instead of tilling the ground, no-till gardeners plant garden seeds into layers of mulch. No-till gardens grow nearly weed free and require little maintenance and very little watering."

"And," O'Riley adds, "the results are delicious!"

For a soil saving no-till garden recipe you can use this spring, go to [www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov) and click on "backyard."



Sindra Jensen, State Office Contract Specialist, center, joins Adams County Earth Team volunteers Sheila O'Riley, State Secretary, Cynthia Dobrovolny, Soil Conservation Technician, Rick Sprague, District Conservationist, and John Klein, Soil Conservationist, at their recent backyard conservation conference. Earth Team officials say Adams County has more individual volunteers than any other in the state. It is also Iowa's

### Local Earth Team Hosts Backyard Conference

Adams County Earth Team Volunteers hosted 100 people at their sixth annual Backyard Conservation Conference March 31 in Corning. Attendees were able to choose from three of 17 breakout sessions and explore topics such as successfully raising tomatoes, installing rain gardens, container gardening, no-till gardening and taking a conservation farm tour.

Keynote speaker was The Butterfly Lady, Kathleen Ziemer. Ziemer showed participants how to attract, feed and care for butterflies.

The backyard conference is one of a number of activities the local Adams County Earth Team puts on for its community each year.

Local residents are learning about backyard conservation and joining the bandwagon. A tour of local neighborhoods shows many are installing backyard conservation practices. That makes State Secretary Sheila O'Riley very happy. O'Riley says, "When driving, visitors can see many of the

backyard conservation practices installed on city lawns and country lands throughout the county. That's good.

Our goal is to make Adams County the Earth Team Capitol of the US."

## Iowa Current Developments

### NE Iowa RC&D Secures \$500,000 Kellogg Grant

It was announced April 19 that the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative received a grant of \$500,000 from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to help communities embrace active living and healthy eating.

Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Coordinator Lora Friest and Program Management Assistant Teresa Steffens were instrumental in helping secure this grant.

The money will go to the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness

Initiative, which is co-led by the Northeast Iowa RC&D and Iowa State Extension.

This is one of nine projects nationwide selected as pilot sites by Kellogg. Each will work for two years to create a community action plan to develop community environments that support healthy children, youth, and families by making available and promoting the procurement and consumption of local healthy food. The plan will also create space and structure for physical activity and play.

"The Northeast Iowa Local Food and Fitness Initiative was chosen to join us in this effort because of its passionate leader-

ship, commitment to the community, and for the inroads it has already made in organizing around the issue of healthy communities," says Linda Jo Doctor, Kellogg Foundation Program Director in Health.

"It is inspiring to see hundreds of community members and organizations from a five county area of Northeast Iowa joining together to develop a regional plan for how to make Northeast Iowa one of the healthiest communities in the nation," said Friest.

The project has already begun with county planning meetings in each of the five counties.



State Conservationist Rick Van Klaveren presents an NRCS shirt to Gov. Robert Ray, thanking him for participating in recent video project completed by NRCS, IDALS-DSC and CDI. The 11-minute video, [Iowa's Conservation Legacy: Saving Ground Through Partnership and Ingenuity](#), features interviews with past conservation leaders including Gov. Ray as well as a roundtable discussion with today's conservation leaders. Districts may request a copy from their Area Office.



Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie was on hand for the presentation to the city of a conservation award from the Polk County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). The district named the Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department its 2006 Urban Steward Award winner. Mark Nemmers, Polk Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner, and Paul Miller, Natural Resources Conservation Service District Conservationist, presented the award to board members and staff at the Des Moines

Parks and Recreation Department at a recent city council meeting. Attending were: (Left to right), Miller, Susan Koenig-VandeHaar, Park Bd; Susan Noland, Park Bd; Teva Dawson, Park and Rec Department; Marian Gelb, Park Bd; Joe Galloway, Park Bd Pres; Mayor Cownie; Jane Clark, Polk SWCD Chair; Don Tripp, Park and Rec Department Director; Stephen Roe, Polk SWCD Vice Chair; Marlene Anderson, Park and Rec Department; and Nemmers.

# Personnel Actions

Name	Title	Grade	Personnel Action	Eff Date	Dept
Bowman, Angela	Geologist	11	Career-Cond Appt	2/12/07	State Office
Dixon, Joseph	Soil Consvst	07	Reassignment	3/18/07	Area 5 Muscatine FO
Abbott, Tracy L	CARTO Techncn	05	Reassignment	4/1/07	State Office
Ceolla, Dale J	Soil Scntst	12	Reassignment	4/1/07	State Office
Gust, Thomas L	CARTO Techncn	06	Reassignment	4/1/07	State Office
Manternach, Steven	Soil Consvst	12	Reassignment	4/1/07	State Office
Page, Cynthia O	Phys Sci Techncn	05	Reassignment	4/1/07	State Office
Wall, Michelle M	CARTO Techncn	06	Reassignment	4/1/07	State Office

## Iowa NRCS Continues to Help Louisiana Recover

Iowa NRCS personnel continue to help Louisiana recover from Hurricane Katrina. The following staff members have been detailed to Louisiana and have worked on Emergency Watershed Projects:

Name	Position	Office	Dates	Louisiana Projects
Dennis Barrick	Civil Eng Tech	Ankeny	4/16-5/11	Construction Inspection
Ronda Hathcock*	Engineer	Fort Dodge AO	3/5-3/30	Canal Drafting/Repair
Lee Fillian	Civil Eng Tech	Creston FO	2/19-3/16	Construction Inspection
Mark McWilliams	Soil Consv Techncn	Anamosa FO	3/12-4/16	Construction Inspection
John Leichtman*	Soil Consv Techncn	Anamosa FO	4/16-5/11	Construction Inspection
Ray Franna	Soil Consv Techncn	Osage FO	3/19-4/13 and 4/30-5/25	Construction Inspection
Laurie Arhrndt	Soil Consv Techncn	Davenport FO	3/19-4/13	Construction Inspection
David Tackett	Soil Consv Techncn	Clarinda FO	2/26-3/23	Construction Inspection
Debra Vonnahme	Soil Consv Techncn	Carroll FO	2/26-3/23	Construction Inspection
Jim Dustin	Civil Eng Tech	Des Moines SO	2/5-3/16	Canal Drafting/Repair
Ron Carper	Civil Eng Tech	Audubon FO	3/5-3/30	Canal Drafting/Repair
Mark Garrison*	Env Engr	Des Moines	3/5-3/30	Engineering/Drafting
Eric Peitz	Soil Consv	Fairfield	2/26-3/23	Construction Inspection
Dave Mellick	Civil Eng Tech	Ankeny FO	4/16-5/11	Construction Inspection
Jerry Mall	Civil Eng Tech	Fairfield AO	4/9-5/4	Construction Inspection

\*Served on detail to Louisiana during 2006

## District Conservationists Earn Forestry Awards

State Conservationist Rick Van Klaveren recently recognized a district conservationist in each of Iowa's five areas for their efficient management of forestland resources and support for forestry practices.

For their efforts, Jim Lahn, Gary Hillmer, Jerry Muff, Paul Goldsmith and Les Betts each received an NRCS certificate, a t-shirt from the Iowa Department of

Natural Resources, a Leatherman tool from the Forest Service and a pair of pruners from Trees Forever.

Iowa DNR District Foresters nominated their picks for the honor. Each Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations selected the winners.

Iowa NRCS Forester Roberta Moltzen said this will become an annual event.



State Conservationist Rick Van Klaveren congratulates Gary Hillmer of Iowa Falls for winning the Area 2 Forestry Award.