

Iowa Current Developments



USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 210 Walnut St., Rm. 693, Des Moines, IA 50309 January 2009

From the Office of
Iowa State Conservationist
Rich Sims



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"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.

Boone and Greene Counties have joined to become the most recent shared management unit (SMU) in the state. There are now 13 SMUs in Iowa. Early findings show when fully staffed, shared management units improve field office efficiencies and serve customers more effectively. They have a positive impact on our external and internal audiences and allow us to put more conservation on the ground.

This is a good change for Iowa NRCS. It can also be a good opportunity for advancing individual NRCS careers. In the very near future we will be advertising several Resource Conservationist positions. If you want to follow a technical career path, I encourage you to apply for these positions as they become available.

The job of Resource Conservationists is an important one. People in the positions will find they have many career advancement opportunities at the area, state and national level. I hope you will consider this path for your NRCS career.

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

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Congressman Steve King recently met with employees during a visit to the state office to talk with State Conservationist Rich Sims. Pictured are Mark McCurdy, Dan Selky, Mike Webster, King, Randy

Robb and Sims. King is a member of the US House Committee on Agriculture and the Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Rural Development and Research.

New Geologist Named

Joe Thompson recently joined the Iowa NRCS state office engineering team as a geologist. He will work with Kathy Woida on geologic drilling investigations for the proper placement of watershed dams and other structures.

He replaces Angela Bowman, who left NRCS to join her family's business.

Thompson is a Nebraska native and holds bachelors and masters degrees in geology. He did consulting, Superfund work and taught in the geology department at Iowa State before coming to NRCS.

He and his wife, Shawn, have a 5-year-old daughter and baby on the way.



Geologist Joe Thompson



Chase and Hunter Gehrke hold copies of The Sportsman's Guide and Paddler's Guide while their mother, Tina Elwood-Gehrke, and Iowa Valley RC&D Coordinator Chris Taliga, look on. Iowa Valley RC&D recently published the

guides, which are designed to attract tourists to recreational opportunities in the Iowa River Corridor. Elwood-Gehrke is an RC&D board member and avid outdoors person.

Grundy County Personnel Play Santa Claus

Grundy County Service Center personnel donated money and purchased gifts for two needy families this holiday season. The effort was part of Operation Threshold, a regional outreach program for needy families.

Participating were Amy Hinder, Jim Everts, Holly DeLange, Robert Mier, Don Davidson, Rex Wangler, Sandy Hoversten, Ruth Beiner, Denise Freeseaman and Mary Oldenburger.

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Engineers Achieve “Professional” Status

Two Iowa NRCS engineers recently achieved the designation of Professional Engineer (PE). Mark Garrison, environmental engineer in the state office and Sarah Anderson, agricultural engineer in the Fairfield area office, received notification of their achievement by the Iowa State Board of Licensure.

Allen Gehring, state conservation engineer, said it is difficult to achieve the PE designation. He added successful candidates show they have the necessary skills, experience, engineering knowledge, and persistence to become a professional engineer.

Iowa law stipulates PEs must possess a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering, pass an eight

hour Fundamentals of Engineering exam, complete four years of qualifying engineering experience and pass another eight hour Principles and Practice of Engineering exam.

“Most NRCS Engineering positions do not require individuals to become professionally licensed, but it is highly encouraged. A professional license increases the credibility of the individual. It shows we are conforming to the private sector’s standards of professional-



Mark Garrison

ism and our employees take their engineering work and profession very seriously,” said Gehring.

With the additions of Anderson and Garrison, 61 percent of the 23 Iowa NRCS engineers are now licensed professionals.

Garrison has been with NRCS four years. He plans and designs waste management systems. Anderson has been with NRCS seven years. She supports the conservation engineering activities of area five.



Sarah Anderson



A Douds 4th grade class holds backyard conservation booklets given to them by Soil Conservationist Brandy Franklin (right) of

the Keosauqua office. Franklin taught the students about conservation practices and the benefits they provide. Plans are underway

for a setting up a no-till garden or a native grass seeding at the school.

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Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month Around the State



On Oct. 29, 2008, the Grundy County USDA office held a Hispanic potluck in recognition of Hispanic Heritage month. Participants include: Holly DeLange, Don Davidson, Sandy Hoversten and Robert Mier, former Iowa NRCS Hispanic program manager.



Grundy Center employees brought a dish to share to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. Celebrants include: Jim Everts, Denise Freeseaman, Ruth Beiner, Amy Hinders, Mary Oldenburger and Rex Wangler.



Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month in Epworth were: (left from back to front) Joan Meyer, Kathy Kramer, Kelley Taylor, (right from back to front) Amelia Freiburger, Ron McCarthy, Theresa Weiss, Adriana Foxen, Cindy McDermott and (Standing in back) Dixie Schuster.



The Red Oak service center celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month by enjoying dishes of Mexican food in their service center. Participating were: Mark Palmquist, Gary Smith, Brian Holmes, Tom Burkhiser, Andrew Focht, Corrine Jenkins and Warren Schuler in the upper left corner.

Iowa Current Developments

Detective Team Deduces Bone from Extinct Bear

State Construction Engineer Lee White was conducting a final construction inspection on a newly built dam when farmer Joe Walker held up a two-foot long bone and asked, "What's this?" White said he didn't know, but he knew who might.

With the farmer's permission, White took the bone to Iowa NRCS Archeologist Richard Rogers for identification. Rogers, who holds a PhD in archeology and studied animal bone identification, recognized the bone as a left tibia (shin bone) from an extinct short-faced bear (*Arctodus simus*). Geologist Kathy Woida compared dam site core sediments with sediments found with the bone and determined the bone came from an ice age deposit.

A University of Kansas paleontologist confirmed the identification.

"The puzzle pieces were all consistent," said Rogers. "Our team is positive this find is a shin bone from an extinct bear which may have stood 14 feet high on its hind legs. Fossil finds like this one are quite rare and this is the only specimen of its kind found in Iowa."

The bone is now back in Cass County with Walker.



Mark Lindflott, Richard Rogers and Jennifer Anderson-Cruz display the shin bone of an extinct

short-faced bear found at a dam construction site in Cass County.



Rick Sprague, Tom Hurford, Sheila O'Riley and Julie and Rick Shafer stand next to switchgrass during a prairie field day held this fall on the Shafers' farm near Prescott. Participants were able to walk a 40-acre restored prairie, look at prairie plant seeds and examine the Shafers' 100-year-old seed cleaning machine.

Iowa Current Developments

Area 3 Celebrates Pink Day to Raise Breast Cancer Awareness

Beth Rachut asked everyone in Area 3 to wear pink October 16 to honor Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Many people did.

Rachut is a soil conservation technician in Osage. She said she worked in Minnesota with a technician, Chris Papenfuss, who contracted breast cancer. Rachut said her Minnesota co-workers started "Pink Day" to honor her friend and promote breast cancer awareness.

After moving to Iowa, Rachut decided she wanted to continue the tradition and expand it. "This time I invited my new Area 3 co-workers to participate. I'm very pleased they did," said Rachut.

Chris Taliga, Iowa Federal Women's Program Manager, says she likes the Pink Day idea and is looking at expanding it state-wide.

Papenfuss is now a soil conservation technician in La Crosse, Wisconsin. She and Rachut recently joined 11,000 others at a Race for the Cure event in Madison, Wis.



Cresco field office Pink Day participants were: back row – Patty Munkel, Gwen Mahr, Winkie Reis,

Shannon Hurd and Kris Koth. Front row – Shereen Barr and Ardella Felper.



New Hampton Service Center Pink Day participants were: back row – Lindsay Homan, Linda Zubrod, Julie Offerman and Lois

Shattuck. Front row – Mary Jane Leach, Connie Straw, Denice Winter, Lillie Hines and Carol Boos.

Iowa Current Developments

Area 3 Celebrates Pink Day to Raise Breast Cancer Awareness



Osage Service Center Pink Day participants were: back row — Dan Bratrud, Sandie Adams, Jill Olson, Charlie

Heiderscheit, Dave Smalley and Mike Praska. Front Row — Beth Rachut, Michelle Stevenson and Michelle Uthe.



Manchester Pink Day participants were: front row — Marilyn Beaudine, Cathy Grief, Kathy Rahe and Shir-

ley Manternach. Back Row — Linda Curtis, Pat Helmrichs, Kent Kluever, Jill Roberg and Tammy Eibey.



Waukon's Pink Day participants included: back row — John Hausman, Barb Hanson, Lynn Ellefson, Tom Duvel and

Chad Giles. Front row — LuAnn Rolling, Steve Scholtes and Pat Monroe.



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Personnel Changes

Name	Official Title	Grade	Eff Date	Nature of Action	Area	Duty Station
Beck, David W	Supvy Soil Consvst	13	10/12/08	Reassignment	A3	West Union
Corey, Patrick W	Soil Consvst	09	10/12/08	Promotion	A1	Carroll
Hanson, Rebecca R	Soil Consv Technn	06	10/12/08	Reassignment	A2	Northwood
Lawson, Robert D	Dist Consvst	11	10/12/08	Promotion	A4	Harlan
Light, Erin	Student Trainee (Law)	05	10/12/08	Excepted Appt NTE		Des Moines
Lousias, Christine	Soil Consvst	09	10/12/08	Promotion	A5	Donnellson
Matz, Jonathan R	Soil Consvst	09	10/12/08	Promotion	A5	Burlington
Meyers, Brian L	Civil Engr	12	10/12/08	Promotion	A1	Sioux City
Stewart, Jennifer L	Soil Consvst	09	10/12/08	Promotion	A5	Fairfield
Tumey, Brian M	Resource Consvst	11	10/12/08	Promotion	A2	Algona
Viles, Jeremy C	Resource Consvst	11	10/12/08	Promotion	A1	Rockwell City
Byers, Ann M	Resource Consvst	11	10/26/08	Promotion	A1	Sibley
Freed, Marvin L	Soil Consvst	09	10/26/08	Reassignment	A4	Sidney
Ham, Sarah M	Soil Consvst	09	10/26/08	Name Chg from Sarah M. Zimmerman		
McMichael, Julie M	Res Soil Scntst	11	10/26/08	Promotion	A4	Chariton
Smith, Joe T	Soil Consvst	11	10/26/08	Reassignment	A3	West Union
Conley, Robert E			11/9/08	Reassigned to NRCS in Missouri from Williamsburg FO		
Gerlich, Ryan L			11/9/08	Reassigned to NRCS in Wisconsin from Ankeny		
Gould, Thomas D			11/9/08	Reassigned to NRCS in Alaska from LeMars		
Holcombe, Kevin	Engrg Tech (Civil)	08	11/9/08	Promotion	A4	Atlantic Engrg
Lahn, James A	Soil Consvst	12	11/9/08	Reassignment	A1	Back to Lemars
Straka, Alexis A			11/9/08	Reassigned to NRCS in Wisconsin from Sioux City AO		
Dermody, Ryan P	Soil Scntst	12	11/23/08	Promotion	A3	Waverly Soils
Gehring, Allen L	Civil Engr	13	11/23/08	Promotion	S.O.	Des Moines
Pulido, Daniel J	Soil Scntst	12	11/23/08	Promotion	A4	Atlantic Soils
Rohrer, Deanna M	Soil Consvst	09	11/23/08	Promotion	A2	Boone
Johnson, Duane F			12/6/08	Reassigned to Corps of Engrs in Illinois from Atlantic Engrg		
Finley, Jered A	Soil Consvst	12	12/7/08	Promotion	A3	West Union
Focht, Andrew M	Soil Consv Technn	07	12/7/08	Promotion	A4	Red Oak
Foreman, Laurel H	Hydrlgst	12	12/7/08	Name Chg from Laurel Foreman		Des Moines
Thompson, Joseph	Geologist	11	12/7/08	Career-Cond Appt S.O.		Des Moines
Carper, Ronald E	Engrg Tech (Civil)	09	12/20/08	Retirement	A4	Audubon
Skerritt, John K	Natrl Resource Speclst	11	12/20/08	Retirement	S.O.	Des Moines
Wall, Michelle M	Vchr Examnr	06	12/21/08	Reassignment	S.O.	Des Moines
Hilger, Dennis W	Resource Consvst	12	1/2/09	Retirement	A4	Creston RC&D
Johnson, Warren D	Resource Consvst	12	1/3/09	Retirement	A3	Maquoketa RC&D
Schmitt, Linda M	Off Asst	07	1/3/09	Retirement	A3	West Union

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation

Changes in Field Offices as of December 31, 2008

New Employee: Jana Coughlin – Secretary in Cass SWCD – November 3, 2008

Retired: Mike Eisele – Soil Technician from Monona SWCD – December 2008

Transfer: Matt Lechtenberg from Mahaska SWCD to DSC/Water Resources Bureau – November 2008

Daryl Boulware from Des Moines SWCD to Lee SWCD – November 2008

Scholarships Available

The Iowa Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society is offering three \$500 scholarships. The scholarships provide financial aid to students who are interested in furthering their education and careers in

a soil conservation/natural resource related field through course work, special study or seminars.

Eligibility requirements include:

- be a resident of Iowa.
- be a high school graduate or

GED equivalent.

- be enrolled for fall classes. (scholarship is awarded in the fall)

For more information go to: <http://www.iaswcs.org/scholarships.html>.