

# Iowa Current Developments

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

Winter 2008

## Acting Iowa State Conservationist Al Garner



### What's inside....

Area 3 Helps Co-worker.....	Page 2
ISU Recognizes NRCS Soil Conservationist.....	Page 2
Statewide Celebration of Native American Heritage.....	Pages 3& 4
Elkader "Loses" 67 Years of Experience.....	Page 5
Jackson District CDI Winner..	Page 5
Personnel Actions.....	Page 6
2008 Golf Tournament.....	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.

State Conservationist Rick Van Klaveren retired at the end of December after 3 1/2 years in Iowa. An experienced agricultural and civil engineer, Van Klaveren listed among his accomplishments developing and implementing the National Engineering Design Center for NRCS and serving both as a Regional Conservation Engineer and Regional Conservationist.

Van Klaveren is joining his family in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Until a new State Conservationist is named, Al Garner, Assistant State Conservationist for programs in Mississippi, has been named Acting State Conservationist.

Garner began his career with the agency in 1980 as a soil conservationist. He has served as a soil conservationist, district conservationist and resource conservationist in various locations in Mississippi before being selected as an assistant state conservationist in 1998. His responsibilities have included both operations and program management.

A native of Mississippi, Garner grew up on a family cotton-soybean farm in north Mississippi. He graduated from Mississippi State University with a degree in Forestry in 1977 and he worked for two years for the state of Mississippi before accepting a job with NRCS.

Garner and his wife Sharen have two married children – Sam and his wife who live in Connecticut and Amy and her husband who live in Arkansas. Al and Sharen are expecting their first grandchild in May.

Garner writes:

I am excited to have the opportunity to work in Iowa. Iowa has a long reputation of being a leader in the field of conservation. Although some of the resource concerns may be new to me, I know the staff and partners are very similar to Mississippi. We all have the same objective of providing the best technical assistance in the world to private landowners and producers no matter what part of the country we may work. We all accomplish these objectives through a voluntary, incentive based and locally-led process. I look forward to meeting you and working with the staff and partners over the coming weeks to help NRCS meet our mission of helping people help the land.

## Area 3 Helps Co-Worker

Employees and family members from throughout Iowa NRCS Area 3 joined to assist the Doug Bahl family of Dubuque the three-day weekend of November 10. Bahl is an NRCS nutrient management specialist in the Manchester Field Office whom also has a tree farm. Volunteers helped the family harvest over 1,000 Christmas trees for wholesale customers and over 3,000 pounds of greens.

Twenty-three people from NRCS, SWCD, FSA, IDALS and DNR offices showed up to assist in the work bringing chain saws, gloves and a willingness to work.

Bahl was recently diagnosed with Acute Myelodysplastic Syndrome, a form of leukemia. He has since undergone a number of procedures including chemotherapy and transplants of bone marrow and stem cells.

He returned home December 29 and the news is very positive.

To keep up with Doug Bahl's progress, visit: [www.caringbridge.org/visit/doug-bahl/](http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/doug-bahl/).



NRCS Area 3 employees, partners, family and friends assisted the Doug Bahl family with a harvest at their tree farm. Volunteers included: Shaun Holcomb, Ben Holcomb, Dave Mellick, Shaffer Ridgeway, Mark Schmidt, Keith Krause, Al Ehley,

## Calendar for Conservation

The Linn Soil and Water Conservation District teamed up with The Freshwater Society, KCRG TV9, The Cedar Rapids Gazette and the Cedar-Amateur Astronomer's Club to print and sell a calendar packed with pictures and useful information. Called the Iowa Weatherguide Environment Calendar, it is designed to help farmers, astronomers, conservationists and recreational meteorologists know more about weather and it's interaction with nature.

District Conservationist John Bruene says the calendar has sold well and proven popular throughout Iowa. 100% of all funds raised will support professional natural resource protection and water quality improvements in Iowa.

Copies should still be available. For more information about the calendar, contact the Linn SWCS office at 319-377-5960 or go on the web at <http://www.iowaweatherguide.org/>

Ruth Ehley, Teresa Steffens, Linda Schmitt, Rhonda Aylsworth, Karen, Matt and TJ Rawson, Kendra Orbin, Ryan Bradley, Rick Cordes, Colleen Seifken, Scott Seifken, Jeff Tisi, Dave Gibney, Mike Freiburger and Jerry Muff.



**Soil Conservationist Nicky Williams, of Allison, was recognized December 2007 as Iowa State University's Young Alum of the Month. Williams, a 2005 graduate of ISU, is from Leon. (For more information see: [www.career.ag.iastate.edu/alum/archive.html](http://www.career.ag.iastate.edu/alum/archive.html))**

## Ankeny Office Mentors Students

"Disability Mentoring Day: Career Development for the 21st Century," was observed October 17 in the Ankeny Field Office by District Conservationist Paul Miller and two Des Moines High School students with disabilities. The three spent the morning reading maps, and viewing prairie plants, wetland structures, urban conservation practice installations, and conservation practices to prevent soil erosion on farmland.

Miller talked with the students about his college classes, career and daily job duties.

Both students expressed an interest in pursuing a career in conservation.

Sponsored by the American Association of Persons with Disabilities, Job Mentoring Day is designed to match interests and abilities of students to local employers. It is held each year during October, which is Disability Awareness

## Celebrating American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month

November is American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month. American Indian Special Emphasis Program Manager for Iowa, Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen,

encouraged all NRCS offices to hold an American Indian luncheon feast the week of November 27. Many offices participated serving traditional American Indian foods

including wild game, turkey, berries and fish and offered programs on Indian history and culture.



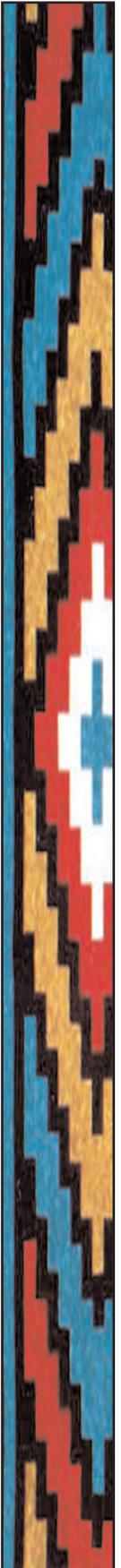
1. DNR Biologist Joshua Gansen grills while District Conservationist Denis Schulte looks on. Fort Dodge staff enjoyed a Native American feast of garlic grilled salmon, grilled duck, squash, wild rice soup, cranberries and pumpkin bake.



2. Blackhawk County Indian Heritage Feast participants included Emily Luttrell-Narigon, Soil Conservation Aide; Leslie Grundy, Secretary; Shaffer Ridgeway, District Conservationist, and Elaine Hammer, Soil Conservation Technician.



3. The Anamosa Service Center had a potluck style feast which included deer jerky, wild rabbit, wild rice, corn, pheasant, and berries. Participants included Joanne Hawkins, Mark McWilliams, John Leichtman, Trevor Martensen, Steve Swinconos and Ron Andreesen.



## Celebrating American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month

4. The Malcom Field Office Native American Feast included pheasant casserole, fried deer steak, deer sausage, cooked pumpkin, wild rice chowder and wild rice with deer meat. Participating were Jeremy Saugstad, Tina Cibula, Mike Tinkle, Meleia Shelman, Marv Waechter, Jane McCulley, Carol Brown, Teresa Simonton, Jean Oswood. Taking the picture was District Conservationist Greg Townley.



5. State Outreach Coordinator and American Indian/Alaska Native Emphasis Program Manager Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen, on the far right, joins State Office Employees Association (SOEA) board members for an American Indian Feast celebration. The feast featured many Native dishes and a presentation on American Indian history and culture. Joining Meyer-Dideriksen are Jason Johnson, Carolyn Christian, SOEA President Jill Clothier, Sandra Jensen and Mark McCurdy.



6. Prairie Partners RC&D teamed with the Humboldt and Algona Field Offices to have an American Indian Heritage Month feast and outing. After a meal that featured elk stew, smoked fish, and baked Indian pudding, the 12 participants toured the Humboldt County Historical Association to learn more about the American Indian culture. Visiting the museum were Helen Haverly, Carolyn Marshall, Connie Zitritsch, tour guide Pat Baker, Terri Christensen, Amanda Davis, and Doug Adams. Pat Baker is a local historian that showed the group their American Indian exhibits and talked about local history of the American Indian.



The design to the left is adapted from a Spanish Textile quilt made by Michelle Watts and is used with permission. See: [www.jmichellewatts.com](http://www.jmichellewatts.com)

## Iowa Job Sheets Updated

Check out the Iowa NRCS website, as content is always being added and updated. One of the most recent updates is the addition and revision of eight Iowa Job Sheets, including Conservation Crop Rotations, Contour Buffer Strips, Contouring, Field Borders, Food Plots for Wildlife, Residue and Tillage Management, Stripcropping and Strip-Till. You can download these job sheets at [www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/news/brochures/publications.html](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/news/brochures/publications.html).

The Iowa NRCS Human Resources web page has also changed. There is now more information that is easier to find. In particular, employees can more easily than ever access topics such as benefits, pay, leave and performance. The new URL for this page: [www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/HR.html](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/HR.html).

The Public Affairs Staff continues to cover Iowa NRCS successes from across the state in our "Conservation Showcase" at [www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/news/successstories/showcase.html](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/news/successstories/showcase.html). Please contact the Public Affairs Staff if you know of a conservation success story that needs to be told. Contact Laura Greiner, Dick Tremain or Jason Johnson at 515-284-4262 with that information.



The Strip-Till job sheet is one of eight job sheets that have been updated.



Elkader field office staffers Dwight Stapher and Rocky Thein recently retired with a combined 67 years of conservation experience.

## Elkader Field Office "Loses" 67 Years of Experience

Two men from the Elkader Field Office retired this fall with 67 years of conservation experience between them. Soil Conservation Technician (SCT) Dwight Stapher joined the Soil Conservation Service in 1974. He served farmers in three counties in northeastern Iowa: Chickasaw, Fayette and Clayton.

State Technician Rocky Thein started his conservation work in 1973 as a young man "right off the farm" and spent his entire conservation career in Clayton County.

Both men were honored with an open house in Elkader on December 14.

"These two men played a vitally important role in the conservation efforts in Clayton County," said District Conservationist Dave Gibney. "It is no secret that they will be missed by the landowners, contractors and the district staff. Losing them will require our office to make an adjustment to say the least."

Stapher, and his wife Kristy, moved to southeastern South Dakota while Thein is back at the Elkader Field Office as a volunteer getting used to retired life.

## Jackson County District Watershed Winner

The Farmer's Creek Watershed Project is the winner of the Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) 2006 Outstanding Watershed Project Award. As a winning district, the Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District in Maquoketa received a \$1,500 check.

The award was presented at CDI's annual business meeting held in November 2007.

Michelle Turner is the Farmer's Creek Watershed Coordinator and Lori Harris is the Jackson County District Conservationist.

In a first for Iowa, 847 mussels grown in Wisconsin by the US Fish and Wildlife service were tagged and seeded into Farmer's Creek to help improve water quality. On the Iowa DNR's impaired waterways list, over 60 individual projects were completed in the Farmer's Creek Watershed the last three years including building sediment control and grade stabilization structures and installing grassed waterways.



Area 2 Resource Conservationist Teresa Sue Snyder-Thomas demonstrates a solar powered pump to participants at the Iowa State University Learning Farm Field Day held in August near Otho. The event was used to showcase the latest findings in conservation research.

# Personnel Actions

Name	Title	Grade	Eff Date	Action	Duty Location
Owen, Hillary A	Soil Consvst	07	10/12/07	Resignation	Boone
Rachut, Elizabeth M	Soil Consv Tech	06	10/14/07	Conv to Career-Cond	Osage
Stewart, Jennifer L	Soil Consvst	07	10/14/07	Conv to Career-Cond	Oskaloosa
Bradley, Chris	Soil Consv Tech	07	10/28/07	Promotion	Wapello
Cooper, James T	Res Consvst	12	10/28/07	LWOP	RC&D Ames
Krull, Jeanne L	Soil Consv Tech	06	10/31/07	Retirement	Thompson
Ayen, James E	Soil Consvst	13	11/2/07	Retirement	State Office
Dupraz, Valorie R.	Soil Consv Tech	07	11/11/07	Reassignment	South Dakota
Heather, Kelly A.	Soil Consvst	07	11/11/07	Reassignment	Minnesota
Mall, Jerome M.	Civil Engrg Tech	07	11/11/07	Reassignment	Nebraska
Focht, Andrew M	Soil Consv Tech	06	11/25/07	Promotion	Red Oak
Lange, Alan D	Soil Consvst	07	11/25/07	Promotion	Winterset
Nguyen, Hani T.	Soil Consvst	07	11/25/07	Reassignment	Michigan
Pruitt, Kelvin J.	Soil Consvst	07	11/25/07	Reassignment	Carroll
Shafer, Rick Lynn	Soil Consvst	09	11/25/07	Reassignment	Indianola
Steffen, Melissa A.	Civil Engrg Tech	07	11/25/07	Reassignment	Nebraska
Horihan, Karla M	Soil Consvst	07	12/9/07	Reassignment	Creston
Trautman, Bruce W	Supvy Soil Con	13	12/9/07	Reassignment	Fairfield
Barrick, Dennis M	Civil Engrg Tech	08	12/31/07	Retirement	Ankeny
Van Klaveren, R W	State Consvst	15	12/31/07	Retirement	State Office
Hand, Debra R	Vchr Examnr	07	1/2/08	LWOP	State Office
Stapher, Dwight L	Soil Consv Tech	07	1/2/08	Retirement	Elkader
Brand, David E	Soil Consvst	11	1/3/08	Retirement	Audubon
Walker, Margaret L	Off Asst	07	1/3/08	Retirement	Sioux City
Osborn, Michelle D	Soil Consv Tech	06	1/4/08	Resignation	Primghar
O'Connell, Cindy	State DSC Sec		11/08	Resignation	Muscatine
Pickens, Aaron	SWCD Emp		12/07	Resignation	Williamsburg
Boulward, Daryl	State DSC Techn		1/08	Hired	Burlington
Bahr, Adam	SWCD Emp		12/07	Hired	Oskaloosa
Campbell, Felicia	SWCD Emp		12/07	Hired	Bloomfield
Pace, Gene	SWCD Emp		11/07	Hired	Centerville
Pintar, Theresa	SWCD Emp		10/07	Hired	Burlington



State Soil Scientist Mike Sucik drives from the tee at the 2007 NRCS Golf Outing.

**2008 NRCS Golf Outing will be held Friday, August 22. Area 5 is hosting the event at Pleasant Valley Golf Course in Iowa City. Details to follow.**