

Iowa Current Developments

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 693 Federal Bldg., Des Moines, IA 50309

June 2005

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



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The new Conservation Security Program is successful in Iowa because NRCS employee dedication and commitment. At least 40,000 farmers in six Iowa watersheds have been invited to participate in the first national sign up of CSP. This includes producers in two Iowa watersheds first included in the 2004 CSP pilot sign-up program.

One-half of all Iowa counties are involved in those watersheds. We've held CSP workshops, we've talked about the three levels or tiers of participation, we've gone over practices and agreements with producers and we've processed applications.

In the meantime, CSP has generated a tremendous workload on top of what we had been doing to put conservation on the ground. Deadlines loom. Districts have struggled to keep up. Some are in danger of being buried by the workload. "Neighbors," in the form of fellow NRCS employees, have come to help. Many have left their home counties to go on detail to help other offices tackle the CSP workload. For example, Area 5, which has no CSP watersheds this year, has sent seven employees to help districts in Area 3. The state office has sent at least six people and other areas have shift staff to help. Every possible person has been helping CSP watershed counties augmented their staffs to get the work done.

CSP has been a tough challenge, but Iowa employees are rising to the occasion and meeting the requirements.

The work is tough, but the times are exciting. CSP is a whole new direction in the history of USDA conservation programs. While conservation incentive programs and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers date back to the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s, CSP represents the first time agricultural producers are being paid in recognition of their ongoing stewardship. With CSP we are not paying producers to fix a problem, but rather we are rewarding them to maintain and further enhance their conservation commitments.

CSP is truly rewarding the best and motivating the rest. CSP works as a conservation program only because of NRCS outstanding employee dedication and commitment. For that I am grateful.

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

Earth Day 2005



Fremont County District Conservationist Kristie McKinley leads Fremont-Mills High School students in a native grass plant identification exercise. The students were shown a number of native plants and then they were broken into teams to identify plants marked with flags as part of Earth Day activities.



Jim Frederick, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, watches children from Mrs. Tallman's 4th grade class at St. Cecilia Catholic School in Ames, practice making storm drain stencils during Earth Day activities in Ames.

Students Help Preserve Loess Hills

Thurman, IA--High school students in Fremont County learned the uniqueness of the Loess Hills and assisted in native prairie restoration at an Earth Day event April 22 at the Bob and Colleen Geiger farm north of Thurman, Iowa. Fremont County Soil and Water Conservation District and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) hosted the activities.

The approximately 40 students split into small groups for the morning educational session, learning the history of the Loess Hills, identifying native grasses, working on a prairie restoration science project and measuring acres with a global positioning system (GPS). Students spent the afternoon clearing away invasive cedar trees on the Geiger's native prairie.

District Conservationist Kristie McKinley said of the students' and the Geiger's efforts, "The native prairie is being restored and rare prairie plants and animals are being saved from extinction."



NRCS Iowa State Conservationist Richard Van Klaveren, NRCS Central Region Assistant Chief Merlin Bartz, SWCS Environmental Education Committee member Linda Maylone, NRCS District Conservationist Doug Johnson, SWCS Environmental Education Committee members Nancy Panther, Deb Wieskamp and Helen

Atkinson pose after the USDA – NRCS Earth Team Regional Volunteer Award was presented to them on Earth Day during a ceremony in Des Moines. The Regional Volunteer Award recognizes one volunteer or group of volunteers for helping accomplish the NRCS' mission.

Earth Day 2005



Harlan High School Students (front row, left to right) Lynzie Rounds, Bre Friend, Jason Schmitz, and Jorge Lopez pose with NRCS Soil Conservationist Renae Ford, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician Joni Schwery, (back row, left to right) NRCS Central Region Assistant Chief Merlin Bartz, Harlan High School Chemistry Teacher Bernard Hermanson, Upper Mosquito Creek Advisory Board Chairperson Jack Wendt, NRCS Iowa State Conservationist Richard Van Klaveren, NRCS Harlan

District Conservationist Jim Sharp and NRCS Area Four Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations Jeff Zimprich pose after receiving the fiscal year 2004 NRCS Chief's Field Award for the Central Region Friday. The Chief's Field Award recognizes one NRCS office located at the field level in each region for its utilization of volunteer resources, accomplishments due to volunteer assistance, and for furthering the mission of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.



Dr. Erwin Klaas, Chair of the Story county Soil and Water Conservation District, Merlin Bartz, NRCS Regional Assistant Chief, Ames Mayor Ted Tedesco, and Wayne Brincks, Ag Representative for Congressman Steve King, join a fourth grade class in toasting to clean water and wetlands at an Earth Day Celebration held at the Ada Hayden Heritage Park in Ames April 22.

Iowa Current Developments



Lynn Betts Retires

Des Moines, IA--The next time you read a conservation article in a farm publication, you will likely see a photo taken by Lynn Betts. His shots of conservation-blanketed landscapes are used across the nation by federal and state agencies, private conservation groups and other ag publishers.

Lynn, who worked for NRCS for nearly 37 years, retired Wednesday, May 3. He began his career in the summer of 1968, working as a soil conservationist intern.

When he joined the state office staff in Des Moines in 1971, he was the first Information Specialist in Iowa. "There weren't very many of us around the country then," he said. "Only a handful of states had public affairs specialists."

He continued as Iowa's PAS until 2002 when he joined the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Management Institute as a communications specialist. He became a Special Assistant to the State Conservationist in Iowa in 2004.

He and his wife Candy live in Johnston, Iowa, and have two grown children, Jennifer (husband, Tim and infant son, Conner) and Nathan.



Interest in the Women Land and Legacy Program is expanding outside of Iowa. Sharyn Alvarez, National NRCS Federal Women's Program Manager, (second from left) attended the Lyon county meeting to see the program in action. Joining her were Dick Tremain,

Iowa's Federal Women's Program Manager, Keith Edwards, Lyon County District Conservationist, Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen, State Outreach Coordinator and Astor Boozer, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations.

Women Land and Legacy Grows

Williamsburg, IA--The USDA State Outreach Council started an outreach project in 2004 that will continue well into the future. The "Women, Land and Legacy: Building Your Farm's Future Today" (WLL) outreach project follows a very grassroots process that empowers local farm women and allows them to truly have a voice.

WLL creates a new way of providing program and service information to customers. Women across the state that have been involved in WLL are saying they really appreciate finally having the opportunity to

have a voice, tell their story and actually have someone listen.

The goal of WLL is to develop and nurture networks of women so that they have local resources and support, other women that they can connect with to learn about agriculture and conservation.

Starting with Howard, Lyon, Marshall, Wapello, and Cass, each of the pilot counties have gone through the first phase of the project. Fifteen additional Iowa counties have expressed an interest in getting involved with this outreach effort.

Conservation Day Proclaimed

On April 27, 2005, Governor Tom Vilsack issued a resolution proclaiming "Conservation Day" in honor of the 70th anniversary of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

In the proclamation, the Governor stated, "Now is the time

to recognize the contributions of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and its partners, to increase awareness among Iowa citizens of the importance of natural resources, and to encourage diligent stewardship of those resources."

Employees in the News

Biggs Receives National Award

Angela Biggs, a soil conservationist with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Independence, received a national Outstanding Special Emphasis Program Manager award from NRCS Chief Bruce Knight and



Andrew Johnson, Jr., Civil Rights Division Director, at a civil rights meeting held in Reno, NV.

Biggs, who serves as Iowa's NRCS Asian American/Pacific Islander Program Manager, was recognized for her outreach work with the Hmong community and projects that encourage the participation of Asian Pacific Islanders in NRCS-sponsored programs and activities.

Biggs has served as a special emphasis program manager since she joined NRCS in 2002 and recently moved to Hazelton after working three years in Warren County, Iowa.

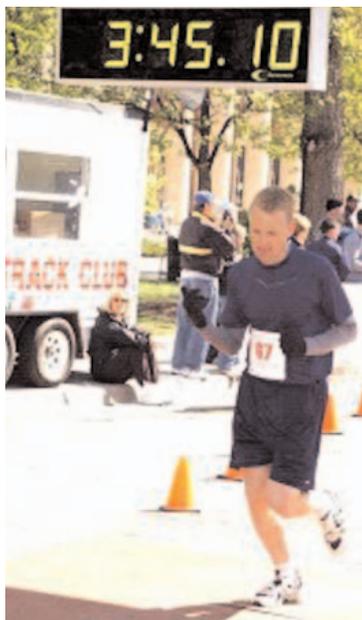
Angela, the daughter of Joel Biggs, Clayton County Emergency Management Coordinator, and Anita Cruz of Pago Bay, Guam, spent time growing up in St. Louis, Guam and Iowa.

According to Biggs, "My work as a Special Emphasis Program Manager is proof of our agency's commitment to providing equal opportunity to producers. I enjoy working with people of all backgrounds and helping promote NRCS to groups of people that have not traditionally been our customers."



In a presentation called "Dirt Made My Lunch", Greg Townley, District Conservationist in Poweshiek County, explains to grade school students the importance of soil to growing the food they eat. Townley's talk was part of Montezuma Elementary School's Ag Day designed to teach students in grades K-6 about the value of agriculture.

Engineer on the Run



On May 1, 2005, Justin Bonnema, Agricultural Engineer in the Sioux City Area Office, ran the Lincoln Marathon in Lincoln, Nebraska. He placed 309th out of 905 marathon finishers and his time was 3 hours and 44 minutes 10 seconds.

Margaret Walker, Area One Administrative Management Assistant, says, "We are all very proud of Justin."

Justin will be participating in another marathon later in the year.

Personnel Actions

Name	Title	Grade	Action	Eff Date	Location
Biggs,Angela L	Soil Consvst	9	Reassignment	2/6/05	Area 3 FO INDEPENDENCE
Braun,Renee M	District Conservationist	11	Reassignment	2/20/05	Area 1 FO CHEROKEE
Chafa,Christine	Soil Consvst	7	Promotion	2/6/05	Area 1 FO STORM LAKE
Dittmer,Weston J	Soil Consvst	9	Promotion	2/20/05	Area 1 FO CARROLL
Dustin,James D	Civil Engrg Techncn	9	Promotion	3/6/05	Engineering Staff DES MOINES
Erdmann, A. V.	Soil Consvst	9	Promotion	5/1/05	Area 5 FO DONNELLSON
Fehseke,Mark E	Soil Consvst	12	Promotion	2/6/05	Area 4 FO CORYDON 3
Hand,Debra R	Vchr Examnr	7	Conv to Career-Cond Apt	1/9/05	Management Staff Des Moines
Henderson,M. P	Soil Consvst	9	Reassignment	2/6/05	Area 4 FO LOGAN
Hermel,Debra L	Soil Consvst	9	Reassignment	2/6/05	Area 2 FO MASON CITY
Hillers,Brian R	District Conservationist	12	Promotion	3/20/05	Area 2 FO HAMPTON
Koster,Pamela S	Fnancl Mgmt Speclst	11	Promotion	1/9/05	Management Staff Des Moines
Kuhn,Kevin P	District Conservationist	12	Promotion	5/1/05	Area 4 FO GREENFIELD
Mathis,Todd J	District Conservationist	9	Reassignment	1/23/05	Area 5 FO DONNELLSON
Mensing,Tim A	Agrl Engr	9	Promotion	1/9/05	Area 4 AO ENGINEERING OFFICE
Miller,Clinton A	Soil Consvst	9	Promotion	4/17/05	Area 4 FO OSCEOLA
Moltzen,R. A	Forstr	12	Change to Lower Grade	2/20/05	DES MOINES
Mullins, Kristi J.	Secretary	5	Career Cond Apt	2/1/05	Area 1 RC&D Sergeant Bluff
Pulido,Daniel J	Soil Scntst	11	Promotion	4/3/05	Area 1 SSO STORM LAKE
Schulte,Denis R	District Conservationist	11	Promotion	4/17/05	Area 2 FO FORT DODGE
Taliga,Christine	RC&D Coordinator	12	Promotion	2/6/05	Area 5 RC&D WILLIAMSBURG

Out and About



Polk County District Conservationist Paul Miller pets a trumpeter swan held by a county conservation officer just before the swan was released to the wild. Looking on is NRCS

Biologist Mark Linflott. The swan release was part of a dedication at the Chichaqua Wildlife Area in northeastern Polk County.



Gregg Hadish, GIS Specialist at the state office, was joined at work by his 9-year old son Paul for Shadow Day. Paul helped his father make a variety of maps, but Paul's favorite part of the day was spent at the wall of vending machines in

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