

# Iowa Current Developments

September 2012



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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**TUNE IN!** **THE DUST BOWL: KEN BURNS DOCUMENTARY**  
November 18/19, 7 to 9 p.m. CST on PBS



## A Message from the: **State Conservationist**



### **It's Been Great!**

I've had the honor and privilege to serve as Iowa's Acting State Conservationist since Rich Sims left in July for his new position as the Regional Conservationist for the Northeast. I've truly enjoyed representing our state with partners, USDA officials and other members of the public. Even though it's only been three months, it's been long enough for me to realize how fortunate we are in Iowa. From the vantage point of the State Conservationist's chair, I could fully appreciate the teamwork demonstrated by all Iowa employees and within the conservation partnership.

Here are a few of my observations:

- » Everyone pulled together when striving towards our fiscal year 2012 goals. Once again, Iowa is a key producer of conservation for our Nation.
- » Field staff have stepped up to the plate as we gear up for our transition to CDSI. Staff are taking on extra responsibility to make sure our files and systems will be ready to go when we start using this promising new tool.
- » In a big year of transitions, state, area and two-county management unit teams are beginning to solidify under new leadership across the state. This effort included many employees taking on acting roles.
- » We swiftly responded to the urgent needs of our customers severely effected by this year's drought.

Thank you for these efforts and the many other steps you take to move conservation forward. And join me in welcoming our new State Conservationist Jay Mar, who starts Oct. 7.

Jon Hubbert  
Acting State Conservationist

## **Iowa Current Developments**

**Current Developments is a product of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Des Moines, Iowa, published bimonthly by the Iowa NRCS Public Affairs Staff in cooperation with NRCS and partner agency employees from across the state.**

### **Current Developments Stories and Photos**

*Please submit your Current Developments story ideas and photos to State Public Affairs Specialist Laura Crowell at [laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov](mailto:laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov).*

*Past issues can be found at [www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/currentdevelopments.html](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/currentdevelopments.html).*



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**United States Department of Agriculture**  
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## Area 2 All Employee Meeting: Meskwaki Nation Pow Wow



*The Meskwaki Pow Wow is a celebration of gathering and goodwill.*

Area 2 employees were immersed in the Native American Culture for an entire day on Aug. 9, at the Meskwaki Pow Wow in the Meskwaki Settlement in Tama. The Meskwaki Nation is not a "reservation." This land has been purchased and is owned by the Meskwaki. The residential portion of the reservation is called the "Settlement." The casino is just a portion of the Nation.

Our morning meeting was in one of the Meskwaki Casino's beautiful conference rooms, with approximately 93 NRCS, DSC, and District Employees attending. As one of the agenda items, Larry Jones, DC, Hillary Olsen, SC, and Kelly Schott, Meskwaki Natural Resources Program Coordinator, talked about the streambank stabilization project that had been completed in the Settlement that prevents flooding of the Pow Wow grounds and some of the challenges that were overcome. The Meskwaki Nation is a govern-

ment unto itself and has unique and very specific traditions and requirements. These traditions are highly prized and respected by the Nation and it is important that NRCS work within these parameters or there will be no agreement. Ms. Schott also explained that the Nation owns approximately 7000 acres of which about 1700 acres is crop producing. If those acres are in any USDA programs that is between the producer and USDA. The Nation is not a part of that transaction.

One of the most significant part of the day was the opportunity we had to attend the Pow Wow. Prior to our meeting several "informational" e-mails were distributed to the Area employees explaining the protocol and the importance of respect that is a priority of the Pow Wow. Pow Wow's are typical to many Native American Nations, however it seems that Pow Wow's are not typically the same. Some Pow Wow's are contests and are

actually judged and there are winners in the different categories. The Meskwaki Pow Wow wasn't a competition, but more a celebration of gathering and goodwill. Portions of the Pow Wow's are prayerful. Honoring the blessing and bounty from the earth to the Nation. One of the most meaningful portions of the Pow Wow was the extreme respect and honor to the Meskwaki Nation's men and women that serve in the U.S. military. There is a sincere allegiance, reverence and loyalty to the United States that is strongly felt in their "Victory Dance" and presentation of the flags.

The other dances were "Friendship Dance", Meskwaki Dance, "Harvest or Bean Dance", "Swan Dance", Buffalo Head Dance, "Pipe Dance", "Shield Dance", Shawnee Dance, "Rabbit Dance" and "Victory Dance." The regalia was beautiful, every age was represented—the children were encouraged to learn and participate in the dances. The dances were all performed to the "drum and singers" in the center of the Pow Wow ring.

During the last dance of the day the audience was invited to dance with the Nation members. It was an amazing day!

*-Submitted by Becky Scott, A2 AMA*

## Conservation Carpet Bombing: Allamakee Cover Crops Project

Allamakee County area producers were looking for an alternative to establishing cover crops after harvest. To help address this need, the Allamakee Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) initiated a program to aerial seed cover crops in August.

The SWCD partnered with Hall Robert's Son Inc., a seed company in Postville, and Klinkenborg Aerial Spraying in Parkersburg to seed cover crops into standing corn and soybeans with a plane in late August. Because growing cover crops need sufficient light to grow, the seeding was timed to coincide with soybean leaf drop and corn plant maturation. Producers that participated in this project had different goals and objectives for their cover crops and 4 different mixes were offered to meet their needs. The mixes used and the costs per acre are as follows:

- 2 bu winter rye/ac @ \$27.90/ac

for seed

- 2 bu oats and 5# tillage radish/ac @ \$33.25/ac for seed
- 15 lbs ryegrass and 2# tillage radish/ac @ \$21.00/ac for seed
- 45 lbs winter rye and 6 lbs red clover and 3 lbs tillage radish/ac @ \$31.50/ac for seed

The cost for the aerial application was \$15/ac with a 10-acre minimum.

The service was offered in Allamakee, Clayton and Winneshiek Counties with a total of 1,514 acres seeded into standing corn and soybeans from Aug. 22 - 27. Hall Robert's Son Inc. mixed the seed and delivered it to the Waukon, Decorah, and Monona airports where the seed was loaded on to the plane. Depending on the mix used, 35-100 acres could be seeded with each load and about 60 acres could be seeded per hour. The plane was equipped with a GPS navigation system,



flew 40-50 feet off the ground, and only flew when wind speeds were less than 10 miles per hour to ensure an accurate delivery of the seed.

Seed counts were completed in standing corn to alleviate concerns of the seed being caught in the corn canopy. Counts were completed on the 2 bu of winter rye mix and the oats and tillage radish mix. There were an average of 22.3 winter rye seeds per square foot and 20 oat seeds and 2.9 radish seeds per square foot.

Some seed was observed on the corn leaves, but most of it had fallen to the ground within a few days. The distribution of seed appeared to be very uniform across the fields that were checked.

The Allamakee SWCD would like to thank the Waukon, Decorah and Monona airports, Hall Robert's Son Inc, and Klinkenborg Aerial Spraying for their cooperation in this effort.

--Article and Photographs supplied by District Conservationist LuAnn Rolling.



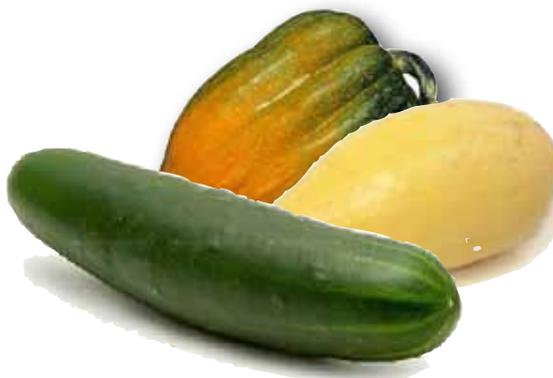
*This July the Iowa Chapter of the National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees hosted NRCS summer interns at Living History Farms. The morning tour included three working farm sites beginning in the 1700's to the year 1900's. Students learned how fields were cultivated and the Iowa farmer lifestyle. The afternoon tour included the 1875 town of Walnut Hill, which is a re-creation of the frontier community with craftsmen and merchants in various shops along the town's main street. Participants included: Heidi Dittmer, Corey Harris, Lynn Khuat, \*Stephanie Hill, Ava Haun, Bryce Gonzales, \*Lya Williams, Gabrielle Frerichs (not pictured) \*Jaia Fischer, BEPM (\* Iowa Chapter Members Present).*

## Farm Progress Show Seasonal High Tunnel: Feeding Families

The Boone County USDA Service Center grew vegetables this summer in a high tunnel demonstration project at the Farm Progress Show (held every two years in late August near Boone). The team included Soil Conservation Technicians Tom Gust and Steve Gilbert, District Conservationist Kevin Kordick, Resource Conservationist Jeremy Johannsen and Student Intern Ava Haun. The team planted the vegetables in June in a high tunnel structure and watered them with trickle tube irrigation throughout the hot, dry summer. Harvest began in late July and has continued twice a week. As of the end of September, they donated the nearly 450 pounds of produce to the Red Rock Community Action Center foodbank in Boone.

Here's a breakdown:

- Cucumbers: 85 lbs.
- Tomatoes: 200 lbs.
- Peppers: 15 lbs.
- Jalapeno peppers: 1 lb.
- Acorn squash: 75 lbs.
- Summer squash: 38 lbs.
- Onions: 29 lbs.
- Green beans: 6 lbs.



## Doug O. Retires: 42 Years of Soils Service



Happy Retirement to Soil Scientist Doug Oelmann! His last day was September 21 after serving the agency for 42 years. At his State Office retirement coffee, he recalled using typewriters and carbons when first working on soil surveys in 1970!



## "This Close to a Farm Bill"

In a surprise visit, Chief Dave White stopped by the State Office on Sept. 14 and shared an update on the new Farm Bill.

## Proud Ally: Get a Sticker



Do you consider yourself an ally to LGBT persons? If you would like your LGBT colleagues and customers to know you are friendly and approachable, you can get a free "Proud Ally" sticker for display near your workplace! This small gesture would help your LGBT colleagues and customers feel more accepted. Call or email Laurel Foreman, LGBT Special Emphasis Program Manager at [laurel.foreman@ia.usda.gov](mailto:laurel.foreman@ia.usda.gov), 515-323-2291 for your free sticker today!

## Working Towards: Up Front Conservation Planning

During the last 20 years, our agency has gradually shifted from focusing on conservation planning to devoting the majority of our time to administering programs and contracts.

Nationally, the Conservation Delivery Streamlining Initiative (CDSI) is one strategy to help our agency return to its conservation planning roots. However, Iowa NRCS is launching its own efforts to provide staff more time and resources for conservation planning or "Up Front Conservation Planning."

The first step is identifying the barriers which prevent staff from devoting time to working with producers to write a conservation plan *before* selling conservation through our Farm Bill Programs.

The state will be working together at all levels to identify and remove, or at least minimize, these barriers so we can return to our roots and get back to planning first, programs second. This won't be an



overnight development, but a long-term strategy to improve the quality of service we provide to our producers, increase the effectiveness of our contracts to get conservation on the ground, and become more efficient with our time and resources.

Look for more updates in future issues of Current Developments.

## Soil Quality Lesson: At The National Hypoxia Meeting



USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Ann Mills gets a soil quality lesson courtesy of State Soil Scientist Rick Bednarek. The slake test and infiltration demonstration were part of the Iowa NRCS booth at the National Hypoxia Meeting event held at the BioCentury Farm near Ames. Both tests compare the performance of no-till and conventionally tilled soils. Also pictured, Jon Hubbert, acting state conservationist, Eric Hurley, nutrient management specialist, and Bruce Atheron, civil engineer.



State Soil Scientist Rick Bednarek discusses the soil health benefits of cover crops

## Under Cover: Taylor County Field Day

Three Taylor County farms were featured in an Aug. 21 cover crops field day. The event highlighted how cover crops can provide a cheaper, more fuel-efficient and soil-saving way to alleviate compaction – while providing numerous other benefits to the soil, water and the environment.

About 100 people attended the event, “Cover Crop Tour: Combating Compaction,” hosted by Paul Ackley and Kelly Tobin, both Practical Farmers of Iowa members who farm near Bedford.

On the first stop Tobin discussed methods of loosening the soil hardpan without tillage, primarily through use of cover crops. He has prior experience with deep ripping and will compare that to the use of cover crops.

At the second stop, Steve and Mike Stockwell shared how they have incorporated cover crops into corn and soybean production to break up the hardpan without tillage. The farm includes a cow herd.

During the last stop, NRCS State Soil Scientist Rick Bednarek explained how cover crops improve soil health in a soil pit at the Paul and Nancy Ackley farm. The pit was located where corn has followed soybeans with a wheat cover crop and a grazed forage cover crop mix. No additional phosphate or potash has been applied since 2010.



### Lights, camera, action!

Paul and Nancy Ackley were interviewed by a video crew as part of the new national soil health marketing campaign. Footage from their interview and the Taylor County cover crops field day will be used in a video news release, short YouTube videos and other video products that help promote the advantages of farming with systems to improve soil health.

## Changes In: NRCS Personnel

*In order of Effective Date*

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Marc Oylo	Soil Conserv Techncn	Promotion	7/1/12	Area 3 Decorah FO
Nichole Baxter	Soil Conservst	Promotion	7/1/12	Area 5 Oskaloosa FO
Thomas Burkhiser	District Conservst	Retirement	7/3/12	Area 4 Red Oak FO
Jamie Carpenter	ASTC(FO)	Promotion	7/15/12	Area 4 Atlantic AO
Laura Crowell	Public Aff Speclst	Name Change from Greiner	7/15/12	State Office, Des Moines
Robert Moser	Resource Conservst	Reassignment	7/15/12	Area 1 Pocahontas FO
Mark Lindflott	State Biologist	Retirement	7/28/12	State Office, Des Moines
Tom O'Connor	CSP Coordinator	Retirement	7/28/12	State Office, Des Moines
Aaron Anderson	District Conservst	Promotion	7/29/12	Area 3 West Union FO
David Brommel	CSP Coordinator	Reassignment	7/29/12	State Office, Des Moines
Helen Leavenworth	Soil Conservst	Reassignment	8/26/12	Area 2, Jefferson FO
Patricia Lowery	Soil Conserv Techncn	Retirement	8/31/12	Area 4 Chariton FO
Jaia Fischer	Soil Conservst	Resignation	9/21/12	Area 2, Newton FO
Doug Oelmann	Soil Scientist	Retirement	9/22/12	State Office, Des Moines
Amber Steele	Wetland Specialist	Convert to Term Appt	9/23/12	Area 2, Northwood FO
Derrick Klimesh	Wetland Specialist	Reassignment	9/23/12	Area 1, Storm Lake FO
Karla Focht	District Conservst	Promotion	9/23/12	Area 4, Oakland FO
Louis Moran	Wetland Specialist	Reassignment	9/23/12	Area 5, Fairfield FO
Matthew Frana	Wetland Specialist	Reassignment	9/23/12	Area 5, Muscatine FO
Ryan Ransom	Wetland Specialist	Reassignment	9/23/12	Area 1, Sioux City FO
Renae Nicholson	HEPM ***	New SEPM	10/1/12	Area 1, Sioux City AO
Shaun Holcomb	AI/ANEPM **	New SEPM	10/1/12	Area 3, Marion FO
Benjamin Kuennen	Wetland Specialist	Convert to Term Appt	10/7/12	Area 3, New Hampton FO
James Cronin	State Biologist	Promotion/ Reassignment	10/7/12	State Office, Des Moines
Jay Mar	State Conservst	Reassignment	10/7/12	State Office, Des Moines
Paul Goldsmith	EQIP Coordinator	Reassignment	10/7/12	State Office, Des Moines
Roy Campbell	Resource Conservst	Return to Duty	10/7/12	State Office, Des Moines

\*\* American Indian/Alaska Native Emphasis Program Manager

\*\*\* Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager

## Changes In: DSC Personnel

### *In order of Effective Date*

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Brianne Bjerke	Secretary	Transfer	7/20/2012	Winneshiek to Allamakee SWCD
Joy Koch	Secretary	Transfer	8/3/2012	Johnson to Delaware SWCD
Daniel Bratrud	Environmental Specialist	Left Employment	8/30/2012	Mitchell SWCD

#### **New Employee in Central Office:**

Jackie Suckow – Program Planner 1 –  
August 3, 2012  
Phone Number is 515-725-2853  
Email: Jackie.suckow@iowaagriculture.gov

#### **District Office Address Change:**

Union SWCD  
904 E Taylor St  
Creston IA 50801  
*(No longer using the PO Box)*

## Meet James Tappan: **Lover of Life**

James Tappan, NRCS Soil Conservationist in the Decorah Field Office, graduated with a degree in Conservation Management from Upper Iowa University in Fayette and started his career with NRCS November 2010.

According to his supervisor, District Conservationist Todd Duncan, James “just loves life.” He loves the outdoors and truly loves working with the farmers and landowners in Winneshiek County. And the landowners love working with him because of his calm, laid back personality!

He’s an active member of Pheasants Forever and the Soil and Water Conservation Society. He helps out those groups whenever he can.

He’s an avid bike rider with an entrepreneurial spirit...especially when it comes to goats (You should ask him about it, says Todd.)

James has greatly enjoyed some of the perks of his NRCS job, including shocking trout at the Decorah Fish Hatchery to measure and evaluate the overall success of the naturally reproducing trout in the Coldwater and Pine Creek Watersheds.

James is currently waiting for a heart transplant at the University of Iowa Hospital in Iowa City. He would like to thank everyone for their kind words, cards, stories and especially the generously donated leave which allows him to remain in full pay status.

His NRCS family helps him stay positive. You can keep the positive vibes going (and find out more about those goats) by sending him a card or note in care of Teresa Steffens at:  
West Union Area Office  
120 N Industrial Pkwy  
West Union, IA 52175-1612



*James measuring trout during a great day at work!*

James plans to be back as soon as he is able and can’t wait to pick up where he left off in Decorah and Winneshiek County.

*--Article provided by Teresa Steffens, Area 3 AMA*