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Heart to Heart ... with Hardisty

It's hard to believe it's already February and close to the middle of our fiscal year. As I reflect back on the first half of the year and think forward to the second half, there are some key issues I'd like to mention.



On January 9, 2012 Department of Agriculture Secretary Vilsack announced the potential closing of 259 USDA Offices around the country. On the list was the NRCS Soil Survey project office located in Plymouth. The Soil Survey Project office is co-located with the NRCS field office. The proposed closing of the Soil Survey Project office will in no way impact the NRCS field office located in Marshall County or our agency's services to the farmers and landowners in the area. Soil Survey Project offices are part of the National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS)-- a nationwide partnership of Federal, regional, State, and local agencies and institutions working together to cooperatively investigate, inventory, document, classify, and interpret soils and to disseminate, publish, and promote the use of information about the soils of the United States and its trust territories. The work of the Plymouth Soil Survey office will be integrated into other soil survey offices.



This year's Farm Bill sign-up is going well and I owe this, in no small part, to my field office staff. You are doing an excellent job in your planning efforts. During the 2012 IASWCD Annual Conference, Chief White recognized Indiana as a leader in the soil health initiative, stating that we have more cover crops in Indiana than the rest of the country combined. **Great job Indiana!** I encourage you to continue your conservation planning efforts with special emphasis placed on promoting a conservation cropping system and getting the word out about soil health.



Chief White encouraged us all by stating that the agency is in "good shape" financially for the remainder of the fiscal year. While we are unsure what fiscal year 2013 holds for us financially, we should continue our conservation planning efforts and help propel Indiana to one of the top conservation states within the agency.

Jane E. Hardisty

***** Employee Spotlight *****

Lynette Harmon, District Conservationist—Elkhart County

Q: Lynette, as one of our newest District Conservationist, we'd like to get to know you better. Tell us about your background.

As a SCEP student, I was stationed in both Centreville and Saginaw, MI and was later recruited during my third year in college to do an internship in St Cloud, Minnesota. After earning a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agricultural Economics from Alcorn State University in Mississippi, I was offered a full-time position as a Soil Conservationist in Farmington, Minnesota. I worked there for nearly one year and was transferred to Preston, Minnesota prior to accepting my first District Conservationist position in Flint, Michigan.

Now I'm here, serving as the District Conservationist for Elkhart County, Indiana. It's a great place and I aim to assist as many landowners and farmers as I can achieve their conservation goals. I can also say that I am proud to be a part of the NRCS family in Indiana.

Q: How did you become interested in conservation?

Agriculture is something that has always been a part of my upbringing and my surroundings. I grew up on a small farm located in Ebenezer, MS, where I enjoyed waking up to the sound of the birds chirping. As a child, I enjoyed seeing livestock grazing, and being able to fish in clean water; pursuing a career as a conservationist with NRCS was a natural fit for me. My career so far, has been nothing short of rewarding. I enjoy the fact that we're able assist farmers in making a constructive change in their landscape footprint and can revisit the farm in another decade to find that the same practice we (NRCS) helped implement is still working. This is the reason I enjoy what I do as a Conservationist.

Q: Who has had the most influence on your career?

To be honest, my husband Derrick has been the most influential. He serves as a great mentor and has been exceedingly supportive of the various moves we've made within the agency. It helps me to have someone who understands what my daily role is on the job. We

find ourselves discussing the job even in our sleep...it sounds crazy, but it's true.

Q: Do you have any hobbies or special interests you'd like to share?

I enjoy spending time with my family. My husband, Derrick Harmon, shares a similar career- he currently serves as the District Conservationist for Coldwater, MI. Together we are blessed to have two beautiful sons, Jesse and Devin, who inspire us as parents to achieve even the seemingly unattainable goals in life.

Over the past couple of months, Derrick and I have been working to establish a farm operation back home in Mississippi. In a partnership effort with my father-in-law, we are hoping to plant 180 acres of corn and soybeans this year. Our goal is to apply the same techniques that we recommend to other farmers as NRCS representatives.

Derrick and I also have high hopes for starting a non-profit organization to extend an opportunity to individuals who have dropped out of high school. Our goal is to persuade these individuals to obtain their GED, and encourage the individuals to pursue advanced education.

Q: Do you have any personal or professional goals for 2012?

For me, growing professionally primarily means having the ability to identify my weaknesses and understand what I fear most. At this stage in my career, I know what these things are; my goal is to do more of those tasks that I find most challenging. With this approach, I hope to strengthen my weaknesses and grow more as an individual and as a professional.



Hoosier Happenings

KUDOS to...

Thank you to **Amanda Kautz and **Debbie Knepp** for assisting Prairie Wind Farms in submitting a Conservation Innovation Grant pre-proposal. Amanda Kautz and Debbie Knepp from the South Bend office both provided outstanding support. The entire office has been extremely helpful in all aspects of conservation implementation and educational efforts going on at my farm in St. Joseph County for a number of years. I greatly appreciate the help I receive every year from the NRCS and especially these employees. You couldn't ask for a better staff.—Submitted by **Charlotte Wolfe, Prairie Wind Farms**

Kudos to **Dan Rosswurm for receiving the “District 1 Volunteer Instructor of the Year” award presented by the Board of Directors and Members of the Indiana Hunters Education Association. - Submitted by **Kimberly Neumann, Northeast Area Conservationist.**

CHIEF WHITE ADDRESSES INDIANA CONSERVATIONISTS

Getting to talk to chief Dave White on a conference call is an achievement. This year, Indiana NRCSers got a rare chance to hear *and* meet him in person during the 69th annual conference of the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.



The NRCS leader spoke with attendees of the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts not about individual conservation programs, but instead led them through a visual and audible conservation tour of the country.

“Here in Indiana, there is more usage of cover crops than the rest of the nation combined,” he said, commending Indiana NRCS.

White mentioned that even though there are conservation practices throughout the nation already in use, there are areas that still can be improved to make a better environment. He stated that Indiana will be used as a model for some of these efforts nationwide.

After Chief White’s keynote speech, he spent several hours getting to know his Indiana NRCS staff. White spoke with NRCS staff candidly about topics ranging from technical issues to budgets. Many thanks to Chief White and his staff for allowing Indiana to experience this unique opportunity!

THOMPSON RECEIVES DISTINGUISHED HONOR

Purdue University College of Agriculture bestows the honor and title of Distinguished Agricultural Alumnus in recognition of outstanding accomplishments and significant contributions to their professions and to society.

The award began in 1992, and is bestowed upon mid-career individuals with a record of outstanding achievements, and potential for future professional growth, and service to his/her profession and to society.

This year, Harold Thompson, former NRCS employee, was honored with the Distinguished Agricultural Alumni Award, Thompson’s career spanned nearly 40 years with NRCS. He provided technical assistance to producers in soil and water conservation systems, mostly in southwest Indiana, and served on the Indiana NRCS Leadership Team in assistant state conservationist positions. He became known for his ability to coordinate NRCS resources with other state and local agencies to complete successful conservation projects. Thompson has served in leadership roles during his 42-year membership in the Hoosier Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society. He received a bachelor’s degree in agricultural education from Purdue in 1971. Congratulations, Harold, on this outstanding achievement!



NEW SOIL HEALTH POCKET GUIDE AVAILABLE



NRCS Staff and Conservation Partners now have another soil health resource to help get the word out. The “Soil Health Snapshot” is a pocket sized card that provides a brief overview of soil health and also includes the benefits of soil health and recommended practices.

Soil Health publications can be found on the Indiana NRCS website at: www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/news/ or on the Indiana NRCS SharePoint site at: <https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/central/in/soil/default.aspx>. Contact Kris Vance at: kris.vance@in.usda.gov for more information.

**** SPECIAL EMPHASIS ****

Black History Month

This month we focus on recalling and celebrating a unique part of our American history and the roles of African American figures in shaping what our country is today. History teaches us that every culture and every society endures good and bad, and it is essential that we continue to learn from our past. The national theme for 2012 is Black Women in American Culture and History.



Photo courtesy of DoDEA

From slavery abolitionists like Harriett Tubman to civil rights activists like Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—even students like the Little Rock Nine who showed unimaginable courage—we have much to learn from the lives of these past and present leaders. They leave quite a mark on the pages of our history books.

During this month, it is important that we seek to learn more about historical Black figures who show us the great contributions they made during an era when many people thought Blacks had nothing to offer. Quite the contrary, the African American community has given us some of our greatest writers, inventors, athletes, philosophers, musicians, and spiritual and community leaders during those dark times in our history.

I encourage you to visit one of the following Web sites to find links to online resources about Black history.

- <http://search.eb.com/blackhistory/>
- <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history-month>
- <http://www.africanamericanhistorymonth.gov/>

For more information about Black History Month, please contact Daniel Phillips, Special Emphasis Program Manager at: daniel.phillips@in.usda.gov

Partnership Links

- IN Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Bi-Weekly Updates:** www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/index.html
- IN Conservation Partnership:** www.iaswcd.org/icp/index.html
- IN Dept. of Environmental Management:** www.in.gov/idem
- IN Dept. of Natural Resources:** www.in.gov/dnr
- IN State Dept. of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation:** <http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>
- Purdue University:** www.purdue.edu
- USDA Farm Service Agency:** www.fsa.usda.gov

Hoosier Happenings (cont.)

FY2012 EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEER CHALLENGE

Thanks to the efforts of our staff and partners, Indiana's NRCS Earth Team Volunteer program went above and beyond expectations in fiscal year 2011. Forty-four offices in the state utilize approximately 2,100 volunteers and logged in close to 25,000 hours of time. Compared to the rest of the nation, Indiana's Earth Team program ranked third in the number of volunteers utilized and fifth in the number of hours reported.

The challenge is out to make Indiana the best Earth Team program in the nation in fiscal year 2012! The Indiana Earth Team Volunteer program challenges each of the eighty-seven offices in Indiana to sign up at least twenty-five volunteers and for each of those volunteers to put in a minimum of 20 hours for fiscal year 2012. If our offices can accomplish this goal, we will utilize 2,175 volunteers and log in approximately 43,500 hours!

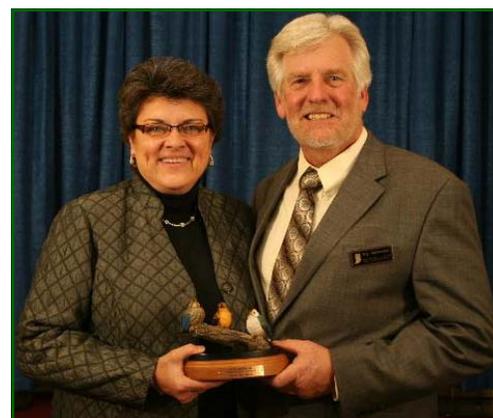
If you have questions about how to volunteer or what opportunities are available in your area, please contact your local field office and talk to the District Conservationist.

HARDISTY RECEIVES IASWCD PRESIDENT'S AWARD

The Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Board President Ray McCormick honored NRCS State Conservationist Jane Hardisty with the prestigious President's Award at the IASWCD Conference January 11th.

The President's Award is given annually to an individual or individuals who have served as important advisors to the IASWCD president during his or her term of office.

"Jane's significant contributions to Indiana's Conservation Partnership will have a lasting impact on our states resource legacy," says McCormick.



Ray McCormick, right, presents Indiana State Conservationist Jane Hardisty, left with the IASWCD President's Award

Picture and article courtesy of IASWCD

Personnel Update

REASSIGNMENTS

Randall Dickson reassigned to Soil Conservationist in Rensselaer CIT effective 12-18-11
Kris Vance reassigned to Public Affairs Specialist at State Office effective 1-1-12
Deanna Robison converted from SCEP position to Soil Conservationist in Versailles FO effective 1-1-12
J. Mark Cambron reassigned to District Conservationist in Evansville FO effective 1-15-12
Neil Deckard reassigned to Area Easement Specialist in Northwest Area Office effective 2-12-12

SELECTIONS FROM VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Lynette Horton-Harmon selected for the DC in Goshen FO effective 12-18-11
Peter Bednarski selected for the Eng Tech in Greencastle CIT effective 12-18-11
Ronald Roth selected for the Eng Tech in Albion CIT effective 1-1-12

RETIREMENTS

Charles White, Eng Tech in Princeton CIT retired effective 12-2-11
Nancy Manion, Office Asst in Winamac FO retired effective 12-31-11
Henry Wallis, DC in Danville FO retired effective 12-31-11

FEATURED WEBSITE—NATIONAL NRCS EXHIBITS SITE

Looking for an exhibit for your next field day or event? Make sure you check out the National NRCS Exhibits website! This site has exhibits ranging from Pollinators, Recruitment and the Web Soil Survey to Energy, Soils and Earth Team and lots more in between! Check out the site today!

<https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/directory/exhibits/Pictures%20of%20Exhibits/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

Need assistance in ordering your exhibit? Contact Kris Vance at: kris.vance@in.usda.gov

Mark Your Calendar

FEBRUARY

21: Indiana Conservation Partnership Meeting
Area Conservationist Meeting
22: Leadership Team Meeting
27: Livestock and Grain Forum
28: Northwest Area Meeting
29: Southwest Area Meeting

MARCH

6: Northeast Area Meeting
Dearborn County Home Grown Workshop
Leadership Development Program Orientation
7: Fulton-Marshall Winter Cover Crop Follow-up
13: SAC/FAC Meeting
Indiana State Technical Committee Meeting

MARCH continued

13: Tri State Conservation Farming Expo
14: Southeast Area Meeting
15: Mentor/Protégé Training
21: Leadership Team Meeting
22: IFAC Meeting
28: Northwest Area Meeting
Southwest Area Meeting

APRIL

3: Northeast Area Meeting



Helping People Help the Land