



A Message from Gus

Have you been watching the water forecasting data? The snowpack for the year is below the designation of 'sparse'. We only have something like a quarter of our normal amount for this time of year. Of course, there is still some time to make up the shortfall, but the outlook isn't encouraging.

Low snowpack amounts mean less water available for all the uses we've come to expect. Late season irrigation might be impacted. Water for migrating fish might be low. Even domestic use might see a challenge.

Luckily, we have a good forecasting mechanism. The National Water and Climate Center in Portland uses snow measurements to make predictions for runoff and water availability. Scott Pattee is our guy on the ground for that center. Scott and several other folks gather existing snowpack data, and other information, from manual snow courses during the summer. These data are used in conjunction with SNOTEL (automated site) data to develop the forecasts. They give us an opportunity to make adjustments to our water expectations.

Recently I heard a farmer say that this was a 'typical el Nino' weather pattern - a mild, dry winter followed by a wet spring. Let's hope he is right about the wet spring. We can certainly use the moisture.

Upcoming Events

National Volunteer Week – April 17 – 23

Earth Day – April 22

National River Clean-up Week – May 14 – 22

National Wetlands Month - May



Spring Forward!!

April 3rd is Daylight Savings Time.

Don't forget to set your Clocks forward one hour!

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Welcome

Tony Ingersoll, RC&D Coordinator, North Olympic Peninsula RC&D, effective 01/23/05.

Michael Deering, Civil Engineer (Design Team), Spokane State Office, effective 02/06/05.

Lee McGill, Soil Conservation Technician, Montesano Field Office, effective 02/06/05.

Carri Gaines, Tribal Liaison, in the Taholah Field Office, effective 03/06/05.

Danny Larsen, reassigned and promoted from NRCS in California to the Soil Conservationist position in the Port Orchard Field Office, effective 04/17/05.

Congratulations

Jan Carlson, promoted to State Resource Inventory Coordinator, Spokane State Office, effective 01/09/05.

Chris Johnson, promoted and reassigned to District Conservationist in the Zillah Field Office, effective 01/09/05.

Kyle Stephens, Soil Scientist, Spokane Soil Survey Office, promoted, effective 01/09/05.

Rebecca Hofmann, Soil Scientist, Okanogan Soil Survey Office, promoted, effective 01/23/05.

Tim Riebe, Soil Scientist, Spokane Soil Survey Office, promoted, effective 01/23/05.

Laren Nalder, Soil Conservationist, Pasco Field Office, promoted, effective 02/06/05.

Goodbye and Best of Luck

Ed Oliver, District Conservationist, Spokane Field office, retired effective 01/02/05.

Art Greenberg, RC&D Coordinator, North Olympic Peninsula RC&D, retired effective 01/03/05.

Dave Guenther, District Conservationist, Zillah Field Office, retired effective 01/03/05.

Jim McClinton, State Resource Inventory Coordinator, Spokane State Office, retired effective 01/03/05.

Lou Jean Clark, Soil Conservationist, Chehalis Field Office, resigned effective 01/08/05.

Attention Retirees!!

We would like to hear how things have been since your retirement. Please send your letters to Georgia Sormun at the following address.

USDA - NRCS
316 W. Boone Ave., Ste 450
Spokane, WA 99201-2348

If you would like to receive your copy of Current Developments by email, please respond to the following address
georgia.sormun@wa.usda.gov

USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service
316 W. Boone Ave., Ste 450
Spokane, WA 99201-2348
Phone (509) 323-2912 or Fax (509) 323-2909

Georgia Sormun georgia.sormun@wa.usda.gov

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Expanding program requires new communications strategies, innovations

Ron Nichols, Public Affairs Officer

Farmers and ranchers work to keep our soil healthy, our water clean and to improve wildlife habitat. They do it on their own land – largely at their own expense. And now, for the first time in our history, the Conservation Security Program (CSP) gives our nation a way to recognize producers who practice good stewardship and – even better – to reward them financially.

In the first year of the program, Washington successfully implemented the program in the Moses Coulee Watershed – which was one of only 22 watersheds that were selected nationwide.

For fiscal year 2005, the number of Washington watersheds eligible for the program has expanded to 11. While this increase has provided new conservation opportunities, it has also required significant efforts at the state, area and field level to implement the program – including expanding marketing communications.

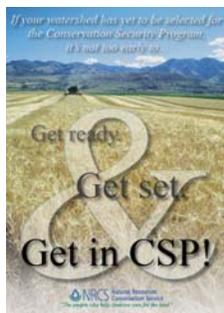
From the state level, we're casting a rather broad net regarding CSP. To date, we have...



- Sent one "Dear Producer Letter and Checklist," and one "Wanted/Reward" postcard to producers in the selected watersheds via NASS;
- Distributed two CSP state-wide news releases (and will do more when the sign-up is announced);
- Focused our trade show activities around CSP;
- Worked with the state producer group executives and newsletter editors to increase CSP visibility on a state-wide level; and
- Distributed radio PSAs to more than 50 radio stations in the selected watersheds.

In addition, we have developed a number of ancillary marketing products that the local offices have already put to good use. Those include:

- Radio PSAs (some offices prefer to do the distribution locally);
- Fill in the blank news releases (information meetings & program announcement);
- Posters (CSP general awareness and CSP local meeting notice -- being sent out this week);
- Newsletter article(s);
- Talking points; and
- PowerPoint presentations (CSP overview for public meetings)



One significant area of focus of the state public affairs team will be in communicating to the groups and organizations at the state level that represent the various agricultural sectors and interests throughout Washington. These groups will play a key role in particular as we launch the second phase of our CSP marketing communications plan – “Get Ready. Get Set. And get in CSP!” This campaign will focus on what producers in non-selected watersheds can do now to get ready for CSP when their watersheds are selected.

But despite our best efforts on a state-wide basis, the key to our overall outreach success are well-executed, local communications efforts. Already, a number of innovative approaches have been developed and implemented by various CSP teams throughout the state. Those teams have shown tremendous creativity and innovation in developing new or adapting existing tactics that will reach our target audiences.

Working with our local offices, we will continue to explore new avenues for reaching potential participants and work to develop additional communications strategies to help us “Reward the best,” through the Conservation Security Program.

Irrigation Water Management (IWM)
Submitted by Paul Majer, Agricultural Engineer, Big Bend Team

Irrigation Water Management, IWM, is controlling the rate, amount, and timing of irrigation water in a planned and prudent manner. In 2004, EQIP cost shared 149 Irrigation Water Management plans in the Big Bend Team. Those plans covered approximately 67,000 acres for a total of \$495,500 of cost share funds.

IWM is separated into two categories, Standard IWM and Real Time IWM. The difference between the two is the way the data is collected and available to the grower.

Standard IWM is an irrigation scheduling program that retrieves the soil moisture data either on a daily or weekly basis. The data is then interpreted by the grower and is used with other variables such as evapotranspiration rates, weather predictions and crop growth stage to base irrigation decisions. The data is either collected by a consultant hired by the grower or by conventional methods such as tensionmeters or gypsum resistance blocks that the grower reads to acquire the data.



Real Time IWM is defined as an irrigation scheduling program that includes a soil moisture probe in the field that takes a soil moisture reading at least once an hour and stores the information in the data logger. The grower has access to the data 24 hours a day and can plan irrigations according to the soil moisture readings from the probes and other variables such as evapotranspiration rates, weather predictions and crop growth stage. The grower has many options on how the data is then accessed. One way is through the internet with a user name and password. Other ways include downloading to a laptop, a handheld organizer or by taking the logger back to the office and downloading to a pc.

IWM is an effective tool for the grower, saving water and energy, improving crop quality and yields, and protecting ground water quality due to over application.

South Central Washington RC&D

Submitted by Dave Myra, RC&D Coordinator

South Central Washington RC&D (SCWRC&D) recently assisted Kittitas County in completing work on a Recreation Plan/Inventory which has been in development over the last two and a half years. The work was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners in December as an amendment to the Counties Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The plan contains multiple elements but the main driving force behind the effort was to identify and promote maintenance of access through private land to the extensive public lands within the County. (Kittitas County is approximately 62% public lands).

Information in the document was generated by a citizens group associated with various recreation user entities, in the area, as well as managers from public lands such as WDFW, BLM, Forest Service and DNR. The group met each month and generated the information contained in the plan. The actual document was created by utilizing "technical writers" to organize and write the

various parts of the plan. The information was also entered into the Counties' Geographic Information System for utilization in future land use planning efforts. The work was financed with a Forest Service Community Assistance grant obtained and administered by the RC&D.

The work has already generated progress on items identified in the plan. Private landowners are discussing with user groups which access points need to be maintained and in some cases have already agreed to create easements to perpetuate those points. Additionally, there is work underway to create a Upper County Parks and Recreation Commission to be the holder of the easements as they materialize.

Overall the project has been deemed a success by those involved and will provide the ability to maintain the very important recreation/tourism revenue source for businesses and individuals in Kittitas County into the future.

NEW TOYS! ...oops I mean NEW TOOLS



Washington State NRCS has dipped a toe into the future of surveying technology. We are now the proud owners of a survey grade GPS/TPS system.

GPS is short for: **Global Positioning System** A system of satellites, computers, and receivers that is able to determine the latitude and longitude of a receiver on Earth by calculating the time difference for signals from different satellites to reach the receiver.

TPS is short for: **Total Station Positioning System** A survey system that locates a position by triangulating from a known coordinate by a line of sight system. The distance and angle are calculated from the time difference it takes for a laser signals to bounce off a prism at one position and the known position and angle of the instrument receiver. The TPS is also a robotic system which allows the surveyor to be on the prism pole rather than at the Total station thus the surveyor then knows exactly what data point they are collecting.

The data collectors operate as computer flash disks which The cool thing about this We are able to survey in state bench mark points and equipment to covered areas



portable computers and the data is stored on are interchangeable on the collector equipment. equipment is that these two systems talk together. plane coordinates; establish equivalent USGS transition easily from open sites with the GPS with the TPS equipment.

The equipment is available for state-wide use. To schedule this equipment for a survey project contact Wes Durham at 509-323-2959 or e-mail: Wes.Durheim@wa.usda.gov

Other folks you can talk to about this equipment that have had some hands-on-training:

West Area

Travis Bouma, - Lynden
Marty Rankin, - Everett
Molly Smith, - Chehalis

Central Area

Joe Lange, - Wenatchee
Rod Lobos, - Zillah
Paul Majer, - Ephrata

East Area

Roberta Lewis, - Spokane
Jim Shawley, - Pomeroy

State Office

Sally Bredeweg, - Spokane

Retiree Spotlight – Featuring NRCS retiree, Ralph Schmidt

The past six months have been very busy and it has been a good transition from work to retirement with freedom and relaxation. I believe I have found a good balance with travel and volunteer work that supplements the normal activities that are found in retirement.

Since retirement in June, Lynn and I went on five weeks of travel and visiting Todd, Bekki and our three grandsons in Ireland. The grandsons Scott, 7, and Tanner, 5, had just finished their first year in the National Irish boys' school and have acquired an Irish accent, words and phrases. Derrick, 2, enjoyed playing with his older brothers' toys and having his mother to himself during the day. We also had the opportunity to travel 3,500 miles with our rental car on the notorious Irish roads and saw lots of sheep, castles, World Heritage Archeological Sites, stone fences, rugged coastline and Irish Pubs. Todd is a member of the

Intel start up team for their factory in Ireland and is scheduled to return to the Intel Research Center at Beaverton, OR in June 2006.

I have enjoyed my work on a construction team for building a sixteen-station computer classroom in Belize, Central America. I was also very active at the Habitat for Humanity Blitz Build in Spokane this past summer. During the presidential election, I worked at the Spokane County Election Department counting and processing absentee ballots. This short assignment required working on Saturdays and holidays to meet deadlines that I found interfered with the relaxation and freedom one has in retirement.

Retirement has been very good to me and I am looking forward to many more years of this leisure lifestyle without alarm clocks. We wish you happiness and best wishes.

Riparian Buffer Program – Rock Creek

Dave Welk, Soil Conservation Technician, Spokane Field Office

The air had the smell of a recent summer shower. It had rained the night before so there was not the usually taste of dust in my mouth.

Tom said we were almost there. “We just have to go down this little road to the bottom of the canyon.” Tom had a way of understating things. The “little road” had a 40 percent drop in places. The “road,” more like a trail, was slick from the night rain and Tom was beyond 80 years old. Just what I need I thought; sliding off the road and having to walk out with old Tom. To look at him he seemed spry for his age, though his skin was weathered from the years of outside work.

“I gotta get back and fix these water bars,” he said as we bounced over one that seemed fine to me. As we reached the bottom of Rock Creek Canyon, Tom brought the big Chevy truck to a stop and said, “Well here it is. This is what my boy wanted you to see.”

His “boy” Paul, was sixty years old and had signed up for the CRP Riparian Buffer program. If all this land was eligible for the program there would be 300 acres of stream bank riparian protection, the largest ever for Spokane County on one contract. After years of cattle grazing and logging, the banks were exposed and vulnerable to erosion, with over 20 foot vertical drops in places. In the spring, when the thaw begins, ice flows send chunks of ice as big as an 18 wheel truck crashing through the canyon. Not much can hold up against that.

Now Tom began to speak in a louder voice. “This isn't my idea!” he snapped. “I have been working this land for over 50 years and I know what works and what doesn't work. I haven't seen any new trees that can hold up to these conditions: flood, drought, deer, elk, disease, freezing weather!” Tom was about to add a few more reasons, but I jumped in and said “I think this government program will work for you.”

“I don't believe any government program can make trees grow here!” Tom scowled. This is a waste of government money and I don't believe in it. Paul signed up for this program not me!” It is times like this that make me long for my safe and secure cubicle back at the office. Just me and my computer, free from harm, no back talk, no griping. All I have to do is just punch a few key strokes and presto a government program installed.

“This sure is a beautiful spot down here,” I said trying to change the subject. “Yes it is!” said Tom. “I try to spend as much time down here as I can.” “You know that road we came down” Tom went on to say. “Well that was the only road into Spokane from this part of the County. The ford was right there.” Tom pointed to a narrow area in the creek about 50 yards down stream from where we were standing. I could make out the faint sign of a trail up the other side. “Yep, there was a corral and stage coach stop on the bank above the crossing. And up there,” Tom whorled 90 degrees and pointed to a knoll just out of the flood plain. No trees on it just farm land now. “Years ago before I was born, my mama told me the Indians used that site to camp on. So back then they didn't try to farm that area. We just started farming that land the last 20 years or so,” he said. Tom began to fidget a bit then he said “if we have seen enough we should move on.” I wanted to ask more about his stories but I could tell Tom felt he had said too much and was in no mood to talk any more.

Back at the office we began to assemble the maps of the area. Ninety six square miles were covered by Paul and Tom's holdings on this portion of Rock Creek. The entire drainage system for Rock Creek is 177 square miles. Part of it was owned by the state, so DNR became a player in this. Nine separate plans and contracts were needed to cover this area. The planning phase started in the spring 2001 and the plans and contracts were finally signed in the fall of 2003. The actual planting of the trees and shrubs was done in the spring of 2004.

In the past we have used scalping as the main method for ground prep but were never able to achieve the results we hoped for. We also tried burning along with chem fallow before planting. We tried spraying strips and using arbor guards; all with limited success.

In the spring of 2003, Paul decided to try a new approach. He used the no till method of tree planting; no scalping. At each stem he applied a chemical to control the grass for up to 2 years. Along with this he applied pre-emerge chemicals for broad leaf control. These all have a residual for up to two years. After checking the plantings in the fall of 2004, we have found a survival rate of 85 to 90 percent. This is the best survival rate to date in Spokane County. After years of watching tree and shrub plantings fail, this is very exciting to finally have a system of planting that shows a potential for success.

Two New Snow Courses for Kalispel Tribe

By Dave Kreft, District Conservationist, Northeast Team

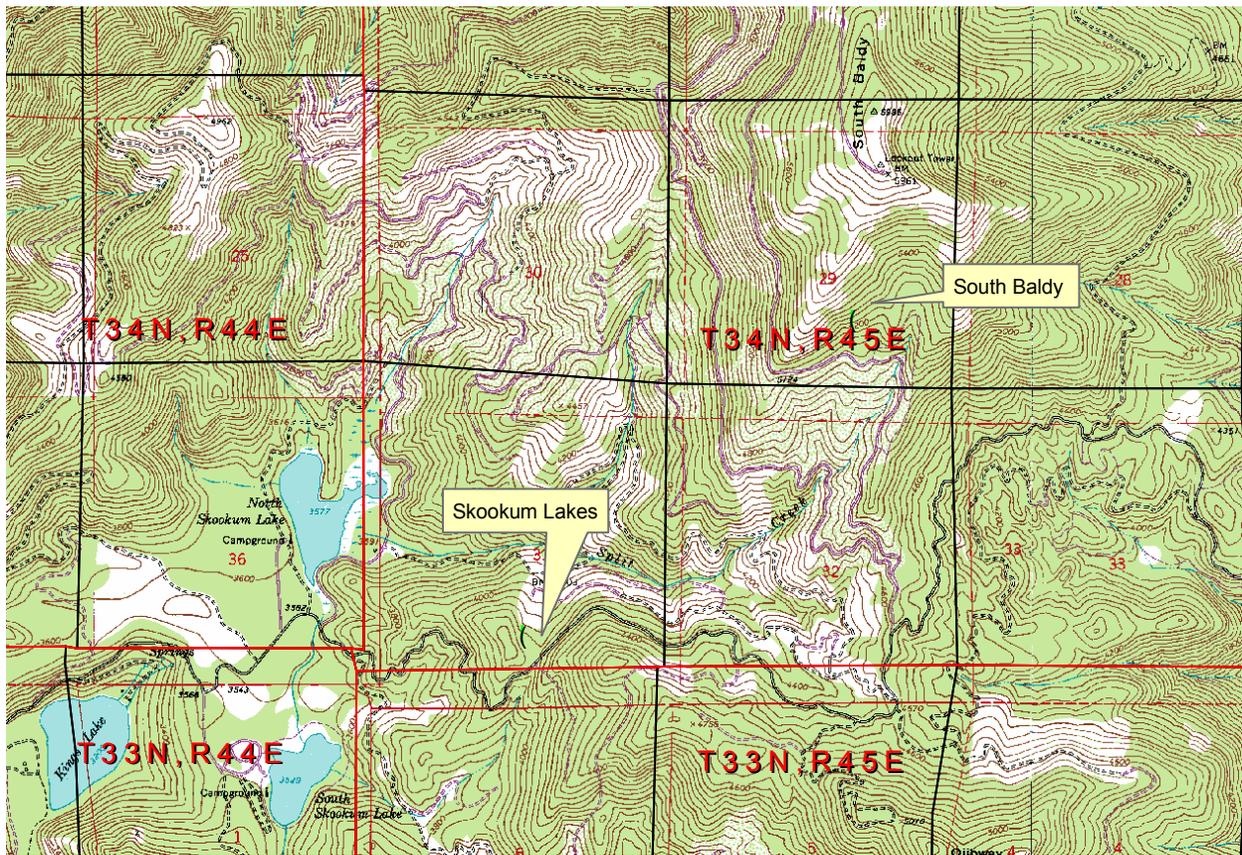
The Kalispel Tribe of Indians is establishing two new snow courses in Pend Oreille County. Michele Wingert of the Kalispel Natural Resources Department requested assistance from the NRCS in locating and laying out the courses. Data from the snow courses will improve runoff forecasts for the streams of Pend Oreille County.

The Kalispel Tribe water resources program will use the information to help monitor habitat conditions for the Bull Trout, now listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The Pend Oreille River and several tributaries in the county have recently been designated as Critical Habitat for the species.

The courses will be measured in 2005 for the first time. An initial trial period of 2-3 years is needed to see if the courses will yield consistent data and will be easy to measure and maintain. The courses will be called Skookum Lakes and South Baldy, in reference to nearby landmarks. Each course will have 10 sample points spaced at a 20 foot interval. Skookum Lakes is located at an elevation of 4,227 feet and is just east of the North and South Skookum Lakes area. South Baldy is at 5,041 feet elevation and is situated on the slopes of South Baldy Mountain.

Michele will go through the process of becoming a qualified snow surveyor this winter and will accompany an NRCS snow surveyor to measure the courses in 2005. A second tribal employee will become qualified next winter and the Tribe will take on sole responsibility for measuring and maintaining the courses after that. The tribe is also interested in establishing more courses in the future. Who knows, they might even sponsor a new Snotel site!

The Kalispel Tribe of Indians' reservation is situated on the east shore of the Pend Oreille River across from Usk, Washington. If you are interested in learning more about the Kalispel Tribe of Indians, check out their web site at www.kalispeltribe.com.



BIG BEND RC&D RECOGNIZES LOCAL ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

During their annual meeting in December, Big Bend Resource Conservation and Development Council (BBRC&D) recognized individuals and groups in the area who have contributed significantly to the economic vitality and sustainability of the region. Individuals and groups that were recognized included:

- Port of Quincy - Intermodal Industrial Park,
- Rebecca Morrison - McKay Health Center Calendar,
- Ann Olson - First Historical Preservation Grant awarded in Washington State benefiting Ritzville, Grant County,
- EDC - Japan Marketing and Gunpo City Exchange.

The BBRC&D is a non-profit, grass-roots organization serving Grant, Adams, Franklin and Lincoln counties. The council believes that local community leaders know best what is needed to improve community well being. Our mission is to develop human and natural resources through cooperative efforts. Our vision is to empower local people to take a proactive role in improving their standard of living and quality of life. To serve as a catalyst in creating the partnerships needed to successfully achieve economic and natural resource development while maintaining an environmental ethic.

For more information, please contact Andrea Mann at 509-754-2463 x115.



NRCS Employee Honored

Chris Johnson, District Conservationist for the South Central Team was recently presented with an award from the Kittitas Conservation District at their annual meeting.

Chris was recognized for his excellent service to the agriculture community in Kittitas County during his three years as a resource conservationist.

Congratulations Chris!

Congratulations to the Miller Family

This is to let you all know that the world has just become a better place again. There has been another Miller added to our nation. Chris and Carol Miller have just recently taken into their home another beautiful baby boy from South Korea. John Henry Miller joined the Miller clan officially last week. John was born 2/26/2004 and becomes the fifth child added to Chris and Carol's great family. If you would like to send your congratulations, I am sure that Chris and Carol would appreciate hearing from you.

On diversity.....

Lisa Naylor, FWPM, RC&D Coordinator

The most dramatic workforce change since the 1960s is the growing number of **women in the workforce**. Women have historically worked in certain occupations (health, personal service, professional and administrative support). They continue to earn less than males and have been underrepresented in management. [Source: Anthony Patrick Carnevale and Susan Carol Stone, *The American Mosaic* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995), 37]

By 2050, close to **one-half** of the U.S. population will be made up of Asians, Hispanics, African Americans and other nonwhite groups. [Source: Maureen Minehan, "The Fastest-Growing U.S. Ethnic Groups," *HR Magazine*, May 1997, 160]

Of the 43 million Americans who have disabilities, 20 million are of working age (16-64) **14 million** from this group were unemployed in 1992. With improved technology, many disabled are now joining the workforce. [Source: *The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities*, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, 1992]

By the year 2050, **15 percent** of the workforce will be 55 years of age or older. [Source: Carnevale and Stone, 47]

The two most racially and ethnically diverse states in the U.S. are **New Mexico and California**. [Source: *USA Today Diversity Index* developed from 1990 Census statistics by Philip Meyer, 1991]

The two least racially and ethnically diverse states are **Maine and Vermont**. [Source: *USA Today Diversity Index* developed from 1990 Census statistics by Philip Meyer]

75 percent of U.S. working-age women are in the labor market. [Source: *Human Capital: The Decline of America's Workforce*, "Business Week, 19 September, 1988, 100-141]

The most profound challenge for managers and administrators in all organizations striving for diversity will center on **communication**. Consider learning about your own culture and that of others acknowledging unconscious stereotypes and becoming more sensitive to cultural barriers that intimidate minorities. [Source: Taylor Cox, as quoted in Ross L. Fink, "English-only Work Rules: Balancing Fair Employment Considerations in a Multicultural and Multilingual Healthcare World, Hospital & Health Services Administration, Winter 1996, 473]

Source: The content of this fact sheet was obtained from www.westwords.com

Cultural diversity is the acceptance and promotion of the variety of human cultures and their different value systems in a given society.



Earth Team News

- Mid- Year reports are due to your area coordinator by April 7, 2005.
- Volunteer Week is April 17 – 23. Let's show our appreciation for our volunteers. Contact your area coordinator if you need assistance.

Reminders

- ✓ Be sure that you have a signed application for all of your volunteers. Make a copy for your files and send the original to your area coordinator.
- ✓ If your volunteer is driving a government vehicle, a certification statement for operation of a government vehicle must be completed. The volunteer will then receive a volunteer card which they must have in their possession when driving a GOV.

The Olympic Peninsula EQIP Program is Changing
By Jeff Harlow, District Conservationist, Olympic Peninsula Team

The Olympic Peninsula EQIP program has expanded. The contracts are either cranberry bogs or small acreages with limited numbers of livestock. The following are examples of our success thus far:

BEFORE



AFTER



However, we have been moving our planning effort for 2005 to:



Heading in the right direction? You be the judge!

Profile Earth Team

Gonzaga student helps turn public relations into an “earth science”

It's not often that one thinks of public relations as an earth science. But the power of effective communications is often the key to helping landowners realize the value of conservation.

At a recent Public Relations Society of America breakfast meeting, Gonzaga University senior Nicole Reid was introduced to NRCS-Washington Public Affairs Officer Ron Nichols. Soon after their meeting, the topic turned to farming and the environment -- and the importance of strategic communications planning and execution. In less than the time it takes to butter a piece of toast, the two began discussing the real-life experience possibilities the Earth Team Volunteer program could offer a budding P.R. professional.

After visiting the Washington state office in Spokane and learning more about the agency's mission, Nicole signed up as an Earth Team volunteer.

Nicole is now spearheading an effort to develop a comprehensive marketing communications plan targeted to Hispanic and underserved producers in Washington -- starting first with locating



Earth Team volunteer Nicole Reid is getting a jump-start on the competition by applying her public relations skills to help the NRCS reach underserved producers throughout Washington. A senior majoring in public relations, Nicole attends Gonzaga University.

and evaluating secondary research about the target audiences. Once Nicole completes her research, she will work with the state's outreach committee to help craft the appropriate messages for the campaign and she will also provide creative direction on the tactics used in the implementation of the campaign.

Because the Earth Team program is so flexible, Nicole is able to carry a full load of academic studies AND begin applying public relations theory in a very practical and useful way.

"It's a great fit for both of us," says Nichols. "We get the benefit of Nicole's energy, enthusiasm and communications skills, and she'll walk away from her

experience with some impressive portfolio materials she can show prospective employers," he says. "She'll definitely have a competitive edge when she graduates. And we'll have a campaign that will help us reach out more effectively to Hispanic producers," Nichols says.

March 2005

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