



A Message from Gus

Boy! Time really does fly! How can it be holiday season already? I haven't completely healed from all the money I spent last Christmas. And it's time to start thinking about it again?!? (Well, not really. I won't worry about presents until about 2 p.m. on Christmas Eve.)

This is the time to think back on accomplishments of the previous year. We did well. We committed money to future projects, got a lot of projects installed and have designed systems that will increase efficiency. We rolled out a couple new programs. It was a good year.

Ross told me that we committed approximately \$26 million in cost-share projects during FY04. That is a serious chunk of change. I'm extremely proud of the work the field folks did to get that money secured for our farmers and ranchers. Yet despite our focus on conservation planning and contracting, we still were able to get a lot of practices installed.

We have designed and initiated a system for Cultural Resource protection that will put Washington on the leading edge in that discipline in the country. The three CR Specialists have been running hard to catch up with the work backlog. Frank has been working with the folks at SHPO to improve the efficiency of the system. When everything comes together, we will be getting more work on the ground AND protecting our precious cultural resources at the same time. Ain't that cool!

The big news for many of us was the roll out of the Conservation Security Program. We had one of the first watersheds in the country, Moses Coulee, to be authorized for CSP. Working as a statewide team, we were successful in getting 43 contracts written. Special recognition goes to the folks in the Central Highlands Team that were on point for delivery of the program. We also got a great deal of good experience that will serve us all well as we proceed with additional CSP watersheds in FY05.

While CSP was the big dog of new programs, we also are gaining experience with a couple of smaller, but important grant programs, like the Conservation Innovations Grants and the Conservation Partnership Grants. It has been a very good year.

Now, take some time over the holidays to appreciate your family and count your blessings. We work for a great agency, doing really significant work. While we sometimes get overwhelmed by all the deadlines, we can't lose track of the really important things in life.



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Happy Holidays

Welcome

David Jones, Soil Conservationist, Colfax Field Office, effective 10/03/04.

Molly Smith, Civil Engineer (Career Intern), Chehalis Field Office, effective 10/31/04.

Steven Becker, Soil Conservation Technician, Ritzville Field Office, effective 11/14/04.

Kelley Paup-Lefferts, reassigned and promoted from NRCS in Oregon to the Soil Scientist (MLRA Soil Survey Leader) position in the Zillah Soil Survey Office, effective 11/14/04.

Joel Poore, Conservation Agronomist, Spokane State Office, effective 11/14/04.

Douglas Higbee, Agriculture Engineer, Colfax Field Office, effective 11/28/04.

Congratulations

Wes Durhiem, promoted to the Civil Engineer Technician position in the Spokane State Office, effective 10/31/04.

Nancy Allison, promoted and reassigned to the RC&D Coordinator position in the Montesano Field Office, effective 11/28/04.

Bari Williams, promoted and reassigned to the Resource Conservationist position in the Montesano Field Office, effective 11/28/04.

Sergio Paredes, Soil Conservationist in Yakima, promoted, effective 12/12/04.

Goodbye and Best of Luck

James Utley, Soil Conservationist, Ritzville Field office, effective 09/27/04.

Jerry Smith, RC&D Coordinator, Col-Pac RC&D, Montesano, retired effective 10/03/04.

Kip Yasumiishi, Regional Design Team Leader in Spokane State Office, was reassigned to the Agricultural Engineer position with the West Technology Support Center in Portland, Oregon, effective 10/31/04.

Kristi Yasumiishi, Civil Engineer Technician in Spokane State Office, was reassigned to the Civil Engineer position with NRCS in Portland, Oregon, effective 10/31/04.



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PLANT MATERIALS FORUM
Gary Kuhn, Plant Materials Specialist

Below are some neat plant material activities that are underway or scheduled to be developed or installed.

Highway 25 Living Snowfence

The living snowfence installed April 2002, 14 miles north of Davenport on Highway 25, is doing well and should start doing its job in the next two years. The landowner and Lincoln County CD have done a good job of maintenance. WSU Extension is doing a five- year comparative growth study on the Rocky Mt. juniper i.e. leeward vs. windward rows. WSU, in conjunction with NRCS, will be conducting a Tri-State Living Snowfence Workshop October 2005 in Spokane, Washington. This living snowfence will be the featured field stop.



Anatone Living Snowfence



Site preparation activities have been completed for the living snowfence (lsf) to be installed adjacent to State Route 129 south of Anatone, Washington. A 40' X 1500' strip has been fallowed in CRP grassland in preparation for next spring planting. A three row lsf, consisting of skunkbush sumac, ponderosa pine, and Rocky Mt. juniper will be planted along with fabric mulch. An interagency crew will assist in the planting. The Blue Mt. RC&D and Clarkston field office have done a good job in the planning and implementation details.

Horse Heaven Hills Buffers

Plans are underway to install a 60' X 700' field border adjacent to Highway 221 to demonstrate to the local dry cropland farmers in the Horse Heaven Hills that permanent buffer strips can be established and effectively maintained. The Pullman PMC will install the field border using drought tolerant grass species mixtures. In addition, this past spring the Pullman PMC planted a variety of drought tolerant shrubs in fabric mulch to test their use in woody buffer plantings. Shrubs include fourwing saltbush, clematis, sagebrush, rabbitbrush, and caragana. Rocky Mt. juniper and selected wild rye varieties were also planted. All species are doing well so far. The sagebrush growing in fabric mulch is something to behold. Precipitation in this area is 6 to 8 inches.



Washington Seeding/Planting Guide

The Plant Material Technical Committee met November 8 & 9 to revise the guide for more effective field office use. The goal of this revision is to put this guide on the web for quick access. The guide will be in spreadsheet format for selecting species for adaptation, suitability, and attributes in relation to Forage Production, Habitat Improvement/Restoration, Erosion Control, and Filtration. The guide will include resource links to valuable information such as plant characteristics, noxious weeds, weed control methods, entobotany, poisonous plants, etc.

East Area Soil Conservation Technician Meeting

Submitted by Toots Ekholm, Soils Conservation Technician, Walla Walla

The soil conservation technicians from the East Area had their technical meeting on Sept.8th in the St. John field office. There were seven technicians in attendance. A meeting is held every two to three months.

A special training was given by Dave Brown, East Area Resource Conservationist, on the new GSI/Garmin unit. It was a good training and will be very useful to us after we get more experience. Thanks Dave for coming down to train us!

We were also privileged to have our State Conservationist, Gus Hughbanks, join us for a short time. He discussed the CSP and TSP programs and clarified several things for us. A special thanks to Gus for joining us in our meeting.

It was a very good day.

Soil Science Society of America Meets in Seattle.

Neil Peterson, State Soil Scientist, and Chris Miller, MLRA Project Leader, attended the 2004 Soil Science Society of America held in Seattle during the week of November 1-4. Chris presented a poster paper on the soil survey work recently completed for Fairchild Air Force Base.

The meetings were well attended by soil scientists from all over the world. Many interesting papers and posters were presented concerning soil activities throughout the world. One particular session that was of interest to Washington was concerning soil survey mapping utilizing new techniques. This includes computer models used to complete updates to soil surveys and initial surveys in limited access areas. Our MLRA Soil Survey Staff in Mt. Vernon is presently gearing up to start the soil survey activities in the North Cascade National Park Complex utilizing a computer model for initial pre-mapping and final mapping of the area. This model has been named RASP (Remote Area Soil Proxy). Toby Rodgers and Crystal Briggs developed and refined the model during the completion of their Master of Soil Science Degrees at WSU under a cooperative agreement with the NRCS and WSU. Toby is the Soil Survey Project Leader for the North Cascade Soil Project and Crystal is assigned to his staff as a new soil scientist as of September 2004.

We are excited about this project and it is presently receiving much national attention. There are other models being used in the United States but this one is designed for the remote locations that we in the West encounter during the soil mapping process.

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.

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



Toolkit 2004

What's Happening with Toolkit 2004?

By June Johnson, Toolkit Coordinator

Deployment of Toolkit 2004 has been delayed until January 2005. This was caused, in part, by the decision to purchase new high end and laptop computers for use in the field. The new computers will be better able to run ArcGIS, the mapping software that Toolkit 2004 uses.

Training of employees will begin January 3 and end February 17. Eleven sessions are planned. Employees will travel to Olympia, Spokane, or Ephrata for three days of formal, hands-on, training. While they are away from their office, the IT staff will be installing the new computers and software. Instructors will be Dave Brower, June Johnson, Chas Scriptor, John Kendig, Kevin Guinn, David Brown and Bari Williams. Bob Gillaspay will assist with teaching the Toolkit Core Trainers.

Toolkit 2004 mirrors most of the features available in Toolkit 4.1. The main difference is that the plan databases are stored in a centralized warehouse at Ft. Collins, CO. This is called the National Conservation Planning Database (NCPDB). This will enable us to enter a practice applied in Toolkit 2004 and have it automatically show up in the Progress Reporting System (PRS), or to certify a cost-shared practice that has been completed in ProTracts and it will appear in the practice schedule of Toolkit 2004.

Outlook is no longer used to start the Toolkit. Instead, when the Toolkit 2004 program starts, the user is prompted to eAuthenticate and to select from a list of plans for a county that can be checked-out. The user will just highlight the desired plan and click on a Check-Out button. When that is completed, the user opens the file and uses the same tabs that were in Toolkit 4.1. When the user is finished with the file, it is checked back in by clicking the Check-In button.

If the user has the correct permissions, remote access to a customer in another county is a breeze. The longest delay we have experienced during testing is about 15 minutes for a customer file containing lots of ArcView shapefiles.

The mapping features of Toolkit 2004, because it uses ArcGIS and not ArcView, are different from Toolkit 4.1. However, the developers have done a good job of creating a Toolkit Toolbar that looks nearly the same as Toolkit 4.1 with most of the same features.

Pilot testing is still on-going at our Colville Service Center. According to Steve Ekblad, Ft. Collins ITC, Toolkit 2004 will be submitted to the Interoperability (IO) Lab for testing the week of Thanksgiving.

North Central Washington RC&D News

Lake Chelan Mirror, October 27, 2004

An Economic Development District (EDD) has been re-established in North Central Washington. "This is another example of the benefits of working together in our region for the mutual benefit of all," said Ron Walter, Chelan County Commissioner. The RC&D board of directors voted to authorize its coordinator and staff to dedicate time to the reactivation of the EDD. "The RC&D felt that the reactivation of the NCW EDD was a top priority for the region," said Jay Kehne, RC&D coordinator. We dedicated staff time to make it happen as quickly as possible. Our hats are off to all the local folks who worked hard to make it happen." The reactivation of the EDD is intended to complement individual county and tribal economic development programs and to provide additional funding opportunities for regional projects that fall beyond county jurisdictional boundaries.

EDD goals include improving transportation; developing communications strategies; strengthening health care and hospitals; giving educational support to small businesses; developing a quality workforce; educating public and community leaders; recruiting, retaining and developing new business activity; expanding the area's economic base; developing the area's tourism potential; and expanding recreation opportunities.

Sinlahekin Creek Project

Submitted by Central Highlands Team

A group of agencies and non-governmental organizations has recently formed and undertaken the “Sinlahekin Creek Project”. This project really took off when a major land-owner in the area applied for, qualified and received an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contract in 2003 from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Working collaboratively, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Upper Columbia Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group (UCG), has tackled this project. The “Sinlahekin Creek Project” has fisheries habitat, stream channel, stream bank, and riparian area restoration, and watershed ecosystem components.

Sinlahekin Creek, located near Loomis, WA, drains north into Palmer Lake, which then drains east and south into Similkameen and Okanogan Rivers, tributaries to the Columbia River. The creek has been identified by agencies as a high priority watershed for implementation actions to improve water quality for humans and recreational use of Palmer Lake, and has major direct impacts on fish production by influencing habitat for the last significant wild sockeye salmon stock in the entire Columbia Basin plus ESA listed Chinook and steelhead spawning grounds. These listed species are found below Enloe Dam; however, the quality of Sinlahekin Creek affects the lower water bodies. It also directly impacts human drinking waters and regionally important recreational areas. There is also a native run of Kokanee, which has a genetic tie to the Frazier River stock. Sinlahekin Creek is the primary spawning grounds for those Kokanee.



**Sinlahekin Creek
Project Area**

Problems on the creek have been aggravated over decades during winter livestock feeding in this area from livestock accessing the creek and essentially impacting the quality of water and habitat. The stream can no longer access its floodplain and it is essentially “digging its own grave”—eroding even during low flow times and depositing sediment in-stream. These conditions have severely degraded fish habitat throughout the proposed project area. Aspects of fish habitat that will be improved as a result of this project include channel shape, stability and width-to-depth ratios, pool riffle ratios, pool depths, spawning gravel distribution, sediment routing and hydrology. The project will also significantly improve riparian conditions over 8,200 feet of stream in an area where riparian habitat has been identified by Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife as a limiting factor to key non-aquatic endangered species in the region. This area will be excluded from livestock but livestock will have watering sites and crossings available so the associated pastures can remain as a key component of the owner’s livestock program.

Historically, landowners in this project area have been extremely skeptical of government-led watershed management and planning efforts in the proposed project area, although they recognize and are proud of their key role as stewards of the watershed. Due to its very visible location, the Sinlahekin project is an opportunity for the landowners, public and the conservation sector to learn about, recognize and encourage restoration benefits on private lands. With the growing level of awareness and understanding within the community we feel this proposed partnership will undoubtedly foster further community action in protecting ecosystem integrity benefiting species-at-risk throughout our region.

The “ecosystem approach” will be taken for the stream restoration. Riparian and in-stream concerns will be addressed via site-specific techniques such as protection of existing high quality habitat, livestock exclusion, installation of hardened livestock crossings, riparian plantings, modification of existing stream banks and installation of in-stream structures. This area along Sinlahekin Creek also has a Bald Eagle nest. Although it was not active this year, it has been in recent years, and anticipated to be in the future. There are currently a few Cottonwood trees on the

proposed property. Since the Cottonwood Galley is a very important factor to not only fish, but also wildlife habitat, we plan to do an extensive planting of the Cottonwoods in the project area.

The Education and Outreach component of the Sinlahekin Creek Restoration Project will concentrate on four areas of priority to engage community participation in the health and sustainability of this watershed: Schools, Watershed Committees, Volunteers, and specific Landowners. UCG will spearhead the following outreach initiatives:

1. Training landowners and volunteers, and improvement protocols for monitoring project success;
2. Habitat and species monitoring including data collection and project monitoring;
3. Signage development and eco-tour coordination; and
4. Public media coverage, partnerships, and other watershed programming.

To date, confirmed funding for the 2004 project year totals \$444,720 and are from the following sources: US Bureau of Land Management \$8,000; NRCS \$164,220; Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife Landowner Incentive Program \$50,000; Okanogan Conservation District \$10,000; National Fish & Wildlife Foundation \$72,500; OS CCP \$50,000; and a landowner donation of \$90,000.

The budget for this project is approximately \$702,760. UCG is currently seeking additional funding for the remainder of the project; approximated at \$258,040 pending final design plans from the NRCS engineer.

EMI

Submitted by Chuck Natsuhara, West Area Resource Soil Scientist

“EMI”, the latest Paul Allen project? No, EMI stands for Electromagnetic Induction Meter. For a week in August, the West Area received assistance from Wes Tuttle on the use of the EMI meter. Wes is a soil scientist (geophysical) with the National Soil Survey Center, and provides assistance and training on the use of the EMI meter and ground penetrating radar.



The EMI meter uses electromagnetic energy to measure apparent conductivity of the soil. By analyzing these changes in conductivity it is possible to remotely investigate areas for cultural resources and changes in salinity. The EMI is a bar approximately 2” by 6” by 40”, carried by a strap along with a data collection unit. The entire unit is carried by one person and does not come into contact with the ground.

During the week, WRP sites were measured for salinity, a cemetery site was investigated for the Squaxin Indian Tribe, and another cultural resource site was checked in Lewis County. The EMI meter provided excellent results in measuring and mapping changes in salinity on the WRP sites. Success was more elusive in checking for cultural resources. Some promising sites were located that warrant further investigation.

The Area greatly appreciated the assistance and training that Wes Tuttle provided. Follow-up assistance with the EMI meter may be received in the future.



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