



A Message from Gus

C'mon spring! I'm ready. I'm tired of grey and white. I want to see some blue and green, blue skies and green fields. I've seen enough snow, thank you very much. Spring will be here soon. While I'm eager for that, we also need to be aware of the tremendous challenges the next few months will bring.

We welcome the increases we are seeing in most of the Farm Bill programs. But there will be a substantial amount of work to get those funds committed. Then there is the challenge of getting the contracted practices and systems applied. We estimate there are approximately 2000 practices from previous years' contracts awaiting installation.

Certainly, we look to Technical Service Providers to help us get this work done. The conservation districts and other partners will be a tremendous help. While that assistance is appreciated, we also recognize that the new TSPs in particular will require some staff time (perhaps significant staff time) to manage and monitor. We are lucky to be able to count on the seasoned assistance of the districts.

We also anticipate another CRP sign-up this spring. And a CSP sign-up is likely before the end of the summer.

These are exciting times for conservation, but they are also really challenging. We need ensure we manage and use our time wisely and carefully. There is much good work to be done. And we're the folks that can do it. I'm very proud of your accomplishments so far, and confident in your ability to succeed.

Hang in there!



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Welcome

- Kathleen Callum** Cultural Resources Specialist/Archaeologist, East Area Office, effective 1/11/04.
- Jason Outlaw** Soil Scientist, Mount Vernon Soil Survey Office, transferred from NRCS, Ontario, Oregon, effective 1/11/04.
- Laren Nalder** Soil Conservationist, Pasco Field Office, transferred from Forest Service, Caribou Targhee National Forest, effective 1/11/04.
- Beverly Burnley** Administrative Support Assistant (OA), Olympia Area Office, transferred from Forest Service, Olympia, Washington, effective 1/25/04.
- Sherre Ingle** Management Analyst, Spokane State Office, effective 1/25/04.
- Adrian Aragon** Soil Conservationist, Longview Field Office, effective 2/22/04.

Congratulations

- Kathy Randazzo** promotion to Secretary, Spokane State Office, effective 1/11/04.
- Georgia Sormun** promotion to Office Automation Assistant, Spokane State Office, effective 1/11/04.

Reassignments

- Tim Riebe** reassigned to the Spokane Soil Survey Office, as the Soil Scientist, effective 1/25/04.
- Roberta Lewis** reassigned to the East Area Office, as the Civil Engineer, effective 3/8/04.
- Jen Bell** reassigned to the Toppenish Field Office, as the Career Intern Soil Scientist, effective 4/18/04.

Retirements

- Gordon Franklin** District Conservationist, Longview Field office, retired effective 12/31/03.
- Joe Henry** EPA Liaison, Seattle Office, retired effective 1/3/04.
- Michael Klungland** Resource Conservationist, Ritzville Field Office, retired effective 1/3/04.
- Jim Walls** RC&D Coordinator, Montesano Office, retired effective 1/24/04.

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THANKS JOE

Submitted by Frank Easter, State Resource Conservationist

After 37 years of federal service with the US Forest Service, Army and SCS (NRCS), Joe Henry retired January 2, 2004.



Joe began his career with the Soil Conservation Service as a student trainee in 1966 and graduated from Southern University in his home state of Louisiana in 1968. He worked in the Sunnyside Field Office until 1968 when he was furloughed to the Army and eventually Long Binh Viet Nam.

In 1971, Joe returned from the Army and was reassigned to the Toppenish Field Office as a GS-5 Soil Conservationist and was soon promoted to a GS-7 Soil Conservationist in the same office.

Joe was reassigned in 1973 to the Renton Field Office where he would spend the next 19 years as a GS-9, 11 and 12 District Conservationist. On January 30, 2002, Joe was promoted to a GS-13 Soil Conservationist and began a new job as the EPA Liaison representing NRCS for EPA Region 10.

Joe's legacy clearly was his ability to work with people to get conservation on the ground. His personnel file is full of thank you letters, commendations and awards from people Joe touched during his career. He is very proud of several accomplishments including the success and strength of the local CD, the Eastside Green River Project, saving prime farmland, the purchase of development rights program and the urban erosion control efforts he started in the county.

As most of you know, Joe suffered a damaging heart attack and stroke over a year ago and remains challenged daily trying to recover. Those of us who know Joe have confidence he will continue to make progress.

Because we did not get an opportunity to thank Joe personally for all the years he worked for the cause, we thought it would be appropriate to provide everyone an address to drop Joe a note, card or even pictures. We're sure Joe would really enjoy hearing from you all.

Joe Henry
6117 142 Court St NE
Redmond, WA 98052



New Addition to the East Area

Laren (Soil Conservationist, Pasco) and Shauna Nalder are the proud parents of a new baby boy. Austin Laren Nalder was born February 20 at 6:00 pm, weighing in at 9 lbs 1.6 oz, and is 21" long.

Congratulations Laren & Shauna!

The Crush is On!

Powering Southeast Washington's Future

Submitted by Lisa Naylor, Blue Mountain RC&D Coordinator

The Blue Mountain RC&D and the Columbia County Farm Bureau are not talking about grapes! The Council and Farm Bureau are excited about growing oil seeds and crushing them as a value-added product. The partnership that began over a year ago has culminated in a combined effort to encourage producers to raise oil seed crops with the goal of a crushing and blending facility in Columbia County.

The Blue Mountain RC&D prepared, in conjunction with the Farm Bureau, an application for federal funds through USDA Rural Development, Value-Added Program. The Farm Bureau was awarded \$50,000 and a \$52,000 match was identified, including \$32,000 cash. The grant will fund a feasibility study and business plan for growing oil seed crops and producing biodiesel.

Southeast Washington is well suited for growing wheat, but doing so invites weed species and predatory insects to crops. Wheat has little resistance to these pests, but the mustard plant is ideal for rotational crops, allowing producers an opportunity to "clean" their fields of disease pests. Mustard has a very deep tap root and effectively breaks up tillage pans, permitting water to reach deep into the soil. Mustard can be crushed and its oils used for a variety of purposes, including lubricants. Residue from crushing can be used as a soil amendment, reducing the need for chemical fertilizers.

A request for proposals (RFP) was released on Feb. 1 and proposals were accepted until Feb. 25.

Robe Valley EWP Project

Submitted by Larry Johnson, State Conservation Engineer



The Robe Valley EWP project is located on the South Fork of the Stillagaumish River in Snohomish County. October storms in 2003 caused a failure in the rock riprap bank protection which exposed highly erodeable riverbank soils. One section of the river has laterally migrated 200 feet north into the Robe Valley community. Accelerated erosion has undermined two homes causing them to fall into the river and two other houses are in eminent threat of failure. An additional 40 landowners could be impacted if the lateral migration of the river is not halted. The State Office engineering staff and Regional Design Team are providing engineering

assistance in the design and construction of this project with support for construction activities provided by the Northwest Team. Snohomish County is the sponsor for this project.

SOLIDIFYING GRAY MATTER

By Gary Cook, Soil Conservation Technician, West Palouse Team

Information and Education: Does anyone remember that as part of our public outreach? It seems we dream about having the time for such things, but deadlines and staffing problems keep it only a far off dream; or if we are lucky, a vague memory.

We have had the rare opportunity to put education into action in Adams County. The Adams Conservation District (ACD) holds an annual essay contest for the county's sixth graders. For the last several years they have asked NRCS to make the presentation to those kids on environmental issues. This year's theme was "How Do Wetlands Impact Adams County?" If you've been to Adams County, it seems like an absurd question, even though there are some.

These twelve year olds had to dig into their libraries, the web, and even beg their parents to provide input. In all we visited four schools in December for about 80 kids. The teachers use this as both science and writing skills classes. The District supervisors and local NRCS staff judged each paper at the January meeting, and everyone who wrote an essay gets a free lunch at the ACD annual meeting in February. There are trophies presented to the top three winners in each school and the best three over all. Those three then read their essay to the whole crowd.

Interacting with young folks is a rare and rewarding part of our conservation efforts. So the next time you look at a 12 year old and think of their 'head of mush' remember that with a little perseverance and good will it can be changed into something useful.

Registration Opens for Othello Sandhill Crane Festival

Submitted by Lolo Garza, Soil Conservationist, Big Bend Team

This article was written by Dick Erickson, East Columbia Basin Irrigation District Manager

Othello's 7th Annual Sandhill Crane Festival is set for March 26-28. Each year's wildlife celebration is timed to coincide with the spring migration of thousands of sandhill cranes through Washington's Columbia Basin area. Program information and registration details will be available beginning February 12th.

The special guest presenter this year will be renowned wildlife artist and naturalist Robert Bateman who will present a wildlife art seminar on Friday evening, March 26th. A portion of the proceeds will be contributed toward a scholarship for a 2004 Othello High School graduate. Mr. Bateman will also appear at the festival's author's forum on Saturday, March 27 and will be the featured speaker at the banquet being held that evening.

The festival will again feature numerous tours for viewing cranes and other Columbia Basin wildlife throughout its three-day run. On Saturday's main festival day, Othello High School will be the site of lectures and displays about area wildlife, history and agriculture. New this year will be birding tours to Lower Crab Creek. The popular burrowing owls lecture and tour will again be offered. During expected lulls in festival events on Saturday and Sunday, Reichert's Showhouse will be screening Winged Migration.

For more about the festival and to register, surf to www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org or call 1-866-SANDHILL. Many of the specialty tours fill up early, so pre-registration is encouraged.

South Central Washington RC&D

Submitted by Dave Myra, RC&D Coordinator

South Central Washington RC&D is administering and coordinating a project in Yakima and Kittitas Counties related to assisting landowners with activities to reduce their liability with ESA listed salmonid species. The work is facilitated through an entity called the Yakima Tributary Access and Habitat Project (YTAHP) and funded by the Bonneville Power Administration. The Project is in its 3rd year of funding with excellent possibilities for dollars being available for a longer period.



Fishscreen – inlet to
EWC Canal

The Ellensburg Water Company (EWC)/Cooke Creek Project was a YTAHP early action project that was designed, engineered and constructed during FY02 and FY03. It involved correcting an uncontrolled creek and canal intersection and providing fish screening and passage structures for the water diversion from Cooke Creek.

The improvement prevents the entrainment of aquatic life into the irrigation canal with the addition of a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife / National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Fisheries) criteria fish screen on the creek diversion. Grade improvements were provided to remove an existing upstream fish passage barrier in Cooke Creek, allowing upstream fish migration past the old diversion site. Water quality in the creek will improve with the removal of canal sediments and agricultural pollutants. Water quantities (inflow) will increase in Cooke Creek and will be more easily monitored in the stream and canal.



Fish passage



Siphon under Cooke Creek

With the implementation of this project, a fish passage problem has been resolved which has existed since the late 1800's.

National Volunteer Week

April 18 - 24

Recognition is a very important part of the Earth Team program. Please take this opportunity to let our volunteers know how much they are appreciated. If you need an idea on how to recognize a volunteer, you can contact your Area Earth Team Coordinator

Amy Rodman	Central Area Coordinator	Cheryl Jacobson	East Area Coordinator
Erica Fifer	West Area Coordinator	Georgia Sormun	State Office Coordinator

FISH PASSAGE AND WATER QUALITY PROBLEMS ADDRESSED

ON THE QUINAULT RESERVATION

Submitted by Nancy Allison, Quinault Tribal Liaison

"I saw a redd out there!" exclaimed Phillip Martin, Jr., a tribal fisherman and water quality technician for the Quinault Indian Nation. "Out there" is a tributary to Boulder Creek on the Quinault Reservation. Until last fall, three collapsed culverts had blocked the tributary's natural course, blocking fish passage and creating a wet area upstream that was impacting the adjacent stand of timber. There was also a substantial amount of fill from around the culverts that was being deposited into the stream, negatively impacting water quality and fish habitat. These concerns have been addressed with financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program.



The NRCS engineering and survey crew assisted by the tribal field crew surveyed the area and provided information to the Tribe so that they could decide whether to replace the culverts, or pull them completely and replace them with a bridge. The decision was made to go with a precast concrete bridge and stabilize the stream banks with rip rap. The cut banks were then mulched and will be hydroseeded this spring (2004). Also this spring, the adjacent stand of timber will be thinned and the now drained wet area will be planted with culturally important western red cedar seedlings.



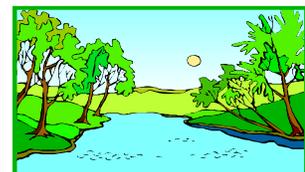
The "redd" that Phil Martin was so excited about seeing is a nest in the stream gravel where the female salmon lays her eggs. The fact the Phil saw one upstream from the new bridge is proof that fish are once again able to swim upstream on this tributary to Boulder Creek. If you've ever tasted the famous Quinault Blueback, I'm sure you'll agree that ensuring pristine water quality for fish habitat on the Quinault Reservation is something we can all get behind.

Let's keep that beautiful clear water running freely so we can keep Phil fishing!



Celebrate Earth Day
April 22, 2004

Upcoming Events



National River Cleanup Week
May 15 - 23, 2004

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