



A Message from Gus

Feels like the Holiday Season. It seems to have all the marks. Cold nights. Snow. Christmas carols in the stores. People I need to talk to are on leave. Folks braving the cold to collect for the needy. Christmas parties. My belt shrinking a couple notches. Employee lunches. Little kids looking for Santa. Ross eager to be Santa.

So I'm thinking that one day soon I'm going to have to start thinking about the possibility that sometime in the not-too-distant future, I'll need to begin to plan to get ready to initiate the thought process that will allow me to consider the first steps that will cause me to start thinking about maybe going shopping. But there's no need to rush into anything, right?

Take the time during this season to enjoy your family and friends. We are lucky to live in a time and place that affords us the luxury of freedom. Remember those that struggled to grant us that freedom. And think about those currently in harm's way.

Help someone in need. Hold your children.
Reconcile with your long lost and slightly weird
cousin. Count your blessings.

Happy Holidays!



Wishing Everyone A
Wonderful Holiday Season
And A Happy New Year!

Inside this Issue

2. **New HR Officer**
3. **Personnel Actions**
3. **Quinault Reservation**
4. **GIS Happenings**
5. **Rosbach Project**
7. **Forgotten Trail**
7. **Environmental Learning**

Introduction – Cheryle Miller, Human Resources Officer

Hi, one and all. I'm the new kid on the block so thought I'd introduce myself. I'm very excited to be a part of NRCS and have heard good things about both the agency and the employees.

I've worked for the government for 16 years, starting with the Forest Service in California and Alaska, next the Park Service at Bryce Canyon N.P. in Utah, and then the Bureau of Reclamation in Billings, Montana. I've worked in Human Resources (still hard not to want to call it Personnel) for all but 2 months of that. I love my job, which is rare to find, so I feel very fortunate.

I left the Forest Service almost 4 years ago when they were going through some "rightsizing" (who came up with that name?). On a personal note, my husband still works for the Forest Service in Grangeville, Idaho and we have had a long distance relationship since I left the Forest Service. I can't believe I am actually only 180 miles from him now. Hum, wonder if I can stand to see him more often.

Anyway, thanks for selecting me and allowing me to join your great group of employees. Please feel free to stop in and say hi. No guarantee I'll remember every name, but I'm working on it. I look forward to working with and helping whenever I can be of assistance.

Smiles

We would like to recognized the retirement of the following NRCS employees

Mike Klungland, Resource Conservationist, Ritzville Field Office will retire 1/3/04

Gordon Franklin, District Conservationist, Longview Field Office will retire 1/3/04

We would like to wish both of them well!

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

Betty Schmitt betty.schmitt@wa.usda.gov
Georgia Sormun georgia.sormun@wa.usda.gov

Visit Our Web site: www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer

Personnel Actions

Welcome

Scott Williams, Cultural Resources Specialist, Olympia Area Office, effective 11/16/03

Christopher Bove, Soil Conservationist, Yakima Field Office, effective 12/14/03

Sergio Paredes, Soil Conservationist, Yakima Field Office, effective 12/14/03

Rebecca Hoffman, Soil Scientist, Okanogan Soil Survey Office, effective 1/11/04

Kyle Stephens, Soil Scientist, Spokane Soil Survey Office, effective 1/11/04

Promotions

Anitra Gorham, Soil Conservationist, Lynden Field Office, effective 11/2/03

Sue Merrell, Budget Analyst, Spokane State Office, effective 11/16/03

Reassignment

Emily Smelser, reassigned to the Soil Conservationist position in Colfax, effective 11/30/03

NRCS adds to the field office on the Quinault Reservation

Submitted by Nancy Allison, Quinault Tribal Liaison

For several years now, NRCS has maintained a soil survey field office on the Quinault Reservation. Ed Brinken is the lead soil scientist on the survey project and has worked out of the tribal facility since July 1998; the survey is scheduled for completion within the next three to four years. Although the soil survey will be completed and Ed will leave the Reservation, NRCS has committed to maintaining a permanent field office here in Taholah. I was hired in June 2003 and will stay as the permanent Tribal Liaison to the Quinault Nation. My job is to work with tribal staff to identify resource problems and assist the tribe with the application process for funding through the 2002 Farm Bill.

Two projects were accepted for funding in FY2003. The first was funded through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program and addressed a water quality and fish passage problem. Three culverts had collapsed, blocking fish passage, and the road fill had started to fail and deposit sediment into the stream. To fix the problem, the culverts were removed and a bridge was installed in their

Continued on page 4

Quinault Reservation continued,,,

place. The stream is now flowing freely and I was informed by a local tribal member that he noticed a nest in the stream. Apparently, our practices have fixed the problems. The second project in FY03 was approved through the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program and will fund an abandonment project for a road that currently runs through one of the Reservation's wet prairies. The road fill will be removed and the old road bed will be planted with seedlings of native wetland species.

Although new to NRCS, I am not new to Taholah. I came to work for the tribe in 1999 as their Planning Forester tasked with completing the 10-year Forest Management Plan. My history with the tribe contributed to my selection for the position with NRCS. The learning curve has been steep trying to get up to speed with the new job, but my established ties with the tribe and existing knowledge of the Reservation were considered to be more important than having a history with NRCS. I look forward to the challenge of identifying those natural resources issues and helping the tribe to find funding to fix them.

What's happening with GIS?

by June Johnson
Chas Scriptor
Dave Brower

The first two of eleven training sessions for Customer Service Toolkit (CST)/ArcView have been completed. Topics covered include Geodata Management and basic ArcView. The CST ArcView Extensions are used to make a Conservation Plan map and Soils Map. The Soil Data Viewer is demonstrated and used to make maps displaying soil limitations.

The sessions have been well received with lots of positive comments. The participants enjoy the "hands-on" experience of actually using the computers in the NRCS state office training room. The students are given a take-home assignment which must be returned before receiving certification of class completion.

Using the Toolkit with ArcView Extensions enables us to provide professional looking products to furnish our customers. When using this tool, we are geo-referencing the producer's fields. This information will be used in the Performance Results System (PRS). When the Toolkit Check-In Wizard is released in early December, the Customer's database will be uploaded to a central warehouse where practice application and location data will be mined. Since those Customer's with Toolkit ArcView maps already have this information, the NRCS person who is performing the "check-in" will not have to place push-pins in a map to locate the fields.

Continued on page 5

GIS continued

The training utilizes many of the new geospatial data themes that are now in place in each Field Office. There are over forty unique data themes available for mapping in the Toolkit, including Ortho Imagery, Sections and Townships, Soils, Elevation, Common Land Units and Landuse/Landcover.

There are new geospatial datasets being prepared for distribution by this next summer. One of these is the Common Resource Areas (CRA) theme. The CRA is being developed through a nationally coordinated effort and is slated to be completed by January 1, 2004. This data layer will be used in conjunction with standardized resource templates to assist field personnel with conservation planning, application and reporting.

The Garmin Map 76 Global Positioning System (GPS) units have arrived at the State Office. The GPS units are a valuable tool for collecting data in the field, whether the GPS is used standalone or in conjunction with GIS and the Customer Service Toolkit. The GPS Core Team is developing a deployment and training schedule for the GPS units.

Steve Rosbach Project

Submitted by Chris Johnson

In Kittitas County, one of our most challenging issues is addressing fish. It is estimated that there are as many as 400 unscreened irrigation diversions in streams throughout the county. Most of these diversions would also be considered a fish barrier due to a dam check structure in the stream to allow water to gravity flow out from the creek. Along with the fish issues, there are two Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) in the Upper Yakima River watershed to address suspended sediment/turbidity and bacteria. Landowners are under extreme pressure to comply with all regulations and they rely heavily on NRCS and the Kittitas County Conservation District (KCCD) for technical assistance and possible use of our programs for financial assistance to address these resource issues.

Steve Rosbach contemplated these issues on his farm. Steve and his sons farm about 350 acres of timothy hay southeast of Ellensburg. In January 2001, he requested assistance to improve his irrigation system by increasing his irrigation efficiency, eliminating all of the tailwater leaving his fields and installing fish screens on his private creek diversions. Allen Aronica (STC Ellensburg FO) started working with Steve to determine different alternatives for irrigating his fields. Steve was open to a sprinkler conversion if he could qualify for an EQIP contract.

Allen and Mark Crowley (KCCD resource technician) worked with Steve throughout the planning process. Steve decided to convert all 350 acres to linear move sprinkler irrigation systems.

Continued on next page

Rosbach Project continued...

This plan involved combining his three water sources (private diversions from Cooke and Caribou Creeks and an allotment from the Ellensburg Water Company) and routing them to a common system. The creek diversions would have fish screens installed and most of the existing barriers removed. The preliminary cost estimate for this project was over \$500,000.

Due to this high cost, Steve wanted to pursue other funding sources for his project in addition to EQIP. Through the Kittitas County Conservation District, Steve was eligible for the Irrigation Efficiencies Program because of his stream water rights, and he was willing to lease a portion of the saved water to the State Water Trust. The overall project would save enough water so he was willing to accept these requirements to be eligible for the program knowing he would use less water with the new improvements. The Yakima Tributary Access and Habitat Project (YTAHP) is another funding source Steve was able to utilize. Money is provided for this program through Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and it is administered by the South Central Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) and the Kittitas County Conservation District. Steve did take advantage of all three of these funding sources and still had a substantial financial contribution of his own to make the project go forward.

The last remaining hurdles for the project was completing and approving all the designs and technical specifications for all the practices. Finally, completing all the

environmental work, including attaining the necessary permits. Dealing with endangered species and stream work was a lengthy process in itself.

A Biological Assessment (BA) was completed due to the short term negative impacts for fish. A cultural review was completed. All JARPA permits were attained through the various permitting agencies. It took two years to attain all these permits to allow construction to take place. Steve did most of leg work in attaining the permits including a spontaneous trip to Olympia.

Project construction started in the late fall of 2002 by installing the buried delivery pipe from Steve's turnout on the Ellensburg Water Company Canal. The three linear sprinkler systems were installed in the spring of 2003, in time for the irrigation season. Steve and his son's now have one growing season behind them with their new, modernized irrigation system. Steve has enjoyed the benefits of saving time and labor. He said he is using less than half the water he previously did with the old surface system. Erosion rates decreased to where they are insignificant. Steve also claims that his yields have increased mainly because water is more evenly distributed.

To the field staff of NRCS, KCCD and Steve himself it feels like a milestone project to finally have implemented. Bringing together several different funding sources to make a project of this scope go forward is truly unique and been very rewarding for everybody.

The Forgotten Trail Unites the Blue Mountain RC&D

Submitted by Lisa Naylor, RC&D Coordinator

The Forgotten Trail is the name given to a portion of an ancient Native American Indian trail known as the Nez Perce/Celilo Trail by the Blue Mountain RC&D. Historical references of the Lewis & Clark Expedition repeatedly fail to mention the Corps of Discovery's travels through this corner of present day southeast Washington State. The Lewis and Clark Expedition, after spending a wet, cold, miserable winter on the Pacific Coast, learned of the overland shortcut from Yellept, a prominent tribal member.

The Blue Mountain RC&D knew this story needed telling. The region, whose economy is based primarily on agriculture, stands to benefit from the tourist dollars the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial brings. It is a timely opportunity to showcase this little known part of the Lewis & Clark trail and home to several prominent Indian tribes for thousands of years.

The Board has worked cooperatively with several Indian tribes and prepared an informational visitor brochure, collectible place mat, colorful commemorative banners, and web site, www.forgottentrail.com.

We cordially invite you to come transcend to the days of 1806 and retrace the footsteps of the Lewis & Clark and the Native American tribes who made possible the success of the Corps of Discovery, but at an enormous cost to their way of life.

Environmental Learning at its Best

*Submitted by Lisa Naylor,
RC&D Coordinator*

Camp Wooten, located adjacent to the pristine Tucannon River, sixteen miles from Pomeroy, Washington, hosts the Environmental Education (Outdoor School) program for over six school districts in southeast Washington State, serving over 200 6th graders in April and October for four days each year. Camp Wooten is one of Washington State Parks Environmental Learning Centers located around the State.

The Blue Mountain RC&D is proud to support environmental education with financial and teaching assistance for the annual Outdoor School program. Funding is directed for tuition support and supplies for course instructors.

Students spend two full days with professionals in a variety of natural resource fields such as forest ecology, macro invertebrates, hydrology, forestry, silviculture, wildlife management, plant identification, tribal and cultural resources protection, and forest engineering. Classes are held in the field and last for 90 minutes each.

For most sixth graders, this is the highlight of their elementary school years. The RC&D hopes to continue this fine tradition for future Camp Wooten students.

U.S. DEPT OF AGRICULTURE
Natural Resources Conservation Service
316 W. Boone Avenue, Suite 450
Spokane, Washington 99201-2348