



Highlights



The newsletter for Idaho NRCS employees and conservation partners.

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highlight \hi-lit\ n. 1: the lightest spot or area. v. 2: to throw a strong light on, to emphasize.

Quotable Quotes

“Always use the word ‘impossible’ with the greatest caution.”
-Werner von Braun

Outdoor humor from Patrick McManus:

“Camping is now aluminum-covered, propane-heated, foam-padded, air-conditioned, bug-proofed, flip-topped, disposable and transistorized. Hardship on the modern camping trip is blowing a fuse on your electric underwear...”

“One of the axioms of hunting is that more time is spent hunting for hunting companions than for deer.”

Special Feature

319 Program Offers Cooperative Solutions



Tracy Nakamura cultivating onions.

Program Helps Farmers Try New Practices

by Jody Fagan, Boise

These days, many southern Idaho farmers are just making it by the “skin on their onions.” That’s why an EPA 319 grant for two Japanese American farmers near Weiser—close friends since high school—is providing resources for new conservation practices.

Tracy Nakamura and Dyke Nagasaka grow onions, sugarbeets, beans and other crops on their individual family farms. They continually ask each other for advice—usually by cell phone while in the field. And that may just be how they decided to both incorporate new irrigation water

Grant Brings Good to Clark County

by Kristen Clayton, Idaho Falls

The Angielen Ranch is a beautiful place to raise cattle. Irving Creek meanders down the small valley, just west of Dubois, where the Egan brothers’ cattle roam on scheduled rotations.

The Egans have always tried to conserve the ranch. However, no amount of care was saving it from erosion. **Gary Egan** remembers feeling at a loss.

“Fifteen years ago a storm came through that eroded the bank back another five feet overnight.”

Finally several programs came along offering answers. NRCS assisted Egan to convert all land along the stream to the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP). They built fences and now the Egans don’t allow cattle to graze the fine silt streambank.

Over the past three years, the Egans have repaired 28 sites along the stream by installing vegetation and protecting the plantings with willow bundles and rock armor. Funds for the stream work came from an EPA Section 319 Grant.

The Idaho Soil Conservation Commission (ISCC) submitted the 319 proposal to implement nonpoint source

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Idaho RC&D Folks Recognized with Regional Awards

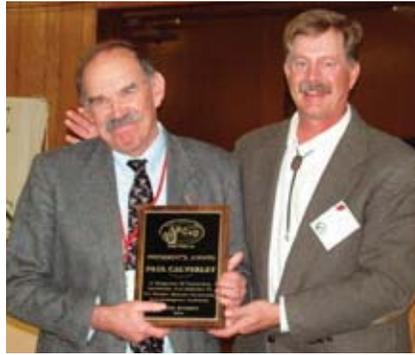
The Western RC&D Association recently recognized several Idahoans for exemplary work at their annual meeting in Casper, WY. The Association includes the 11 western states.

Paul Calverley, Southwest Idaho RC&D Council member and former NRCS Idaho State Conservationist, received an award for his outstanding commitment to the local, state, regional and national RC&D organizations.

Arin Nesbitt and **Russ Manwaring**, both from the West Central Highlands RC&D, received the Outstanding Program Assistant and Outstanding RC&D Coordinator awards respectively.

“Through their efforts our six counties have addressed fire mitigation planning and all hazard mitigation planning,” says **Ken Roberts**, chairman of the RC&D.

“We have worked on fish screens for endangered bull trout to preservation of historic buildings. Russ and Arin are at the heart of every project our RC&D sponsors.”



Paul Calverley with Keith Kessler, president, *Western RC&D Assoc.*



Arin Nesbitt, Russ Manwaring.

Snapshots from the Field



Marika Kearsley, range conservationist, and **Ron Blake**, DC, from Mountain Home visit with rancher and new Elmore SWCD supervisor **Erin Lord** about noxious weeds on his range.



Leah Juarros, Meridian soil scientist, visits with FFA state officers about NRCs career options.



Are we having fun yet? **Tom Yankee**, Weiser DC, hazards a smile during the recent Arc-GIS and Toolkit training.



WRP planning in Clearwater County. **Art Shoemaker**, state engineer, **Bruce Hanson**, Orofino DC, **Frank Fink**, state biologist, and **Dick Yetter**, area biologist, discuss the Weippe Prairie project.



The look of a happy AC? **Bob Tribblehorn**, area conservationist in Moscow, pauses between field office phone calls.



PMC Plants New Display Nursery

by Derek Tilley, Aberdeen PMC

Last fall the Aberdeen Plant Materials Center and **Dan Ogle**, plant materials specialist, planted a new display nursery at the Orchard test site southeast of Boise. The planting is in cooperation with the Great Basin Native Plant Selection and Increase Project and the BLM Great Basin Initiative.

There were 82 accessions of 27 native and introduced grass, forb and shrub species planted in 7x60 foot



The PMC folks in action.

plots. The purpose of this nursery is to allow agency personnel and landowners to see firsthand how these plants perform in a low precipitation environment (10–12 inches annually). The display also will be useful in comparing different releases from within a species as well as comparing native and introduced species with similar environmental requirements.

The Great Basin Project is a group of cooperators from the BLM, Forest Service, ARS, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Utah Crop Improvement Association and NRCS who are collaborating to develop and increase native plant materials for the Great Basin and Intermountain West.

With a little luck, plants should germinate next spring with most species reaching maturity in one or two years. All are encouraged to visit.

SWCD Helps Create New Discovery Center

by Linda O'Hare, Sandpoint

The Waterlife Discovery Center in Sandpoint, Idaho, is off to a great start! Many local volunteers have worked for ten years to get this project off the ground. They are seeing part of their dream completed with the help of two grants, and local and state donations.

This collaborative effort will protect the historic Sandpoint Fish Hatchery and surrounding wetlands and forest for wildlife habitat, outdoor education and public access. The hatchery acreage along the Pend Oreille River remains with the Idaho Fish & Game.

The Bonner SWCD wrote and administered two grants. The Five-Star Challenge Grant built the 6.5-acre Wetland Forest Trail. The Wildlife Conservation & Restoration Program Grant excavate and

landscaped the pond for waterfowl, aquatic mammals, birds and fish. When the pond is completed, visitors will get to observe native fish through four viewing windows.

The Bonner SWCD is still pursuing grant money to finish the project.



The Native Plant Society assisted with plantings around the pond.

ESD Process Underway

by Jim Cornwell, Boise

The effort to convert Range Site Descriptions to Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs) has been in progress for four years. New programs and other priorities stalled the effort to a snail's pace. Now Idaho NRCS has contracted with Intermountain Rangeland Consultants to revise range site descriptions into ESDs and write needed new site descriptions.

The contract began last October. Intermountain has evaluated existing sites to compare for similarities as well as determine which sites are unique. The first sites targeted for update are in MLRA 25. About 10 sites are drafted and ready for review.

Concurrently, NRCS has started correlating ecological sites in MLRA 25 with Utah, Nevada and Oregon.

The completion of the ESDs is scheduled for February 2009. NRCS range conservationists will be reviewing ESDs and also helping to locate example sites in the field when additional data is needed. NRCS is asking other agencies for input in reviewing, providing data and locating sites for data collection.

Intermountain is owned by retired NRCSers **Jacy Gibbs** and **Dave Franzen**.

New Products!

* The reprint of **Steve Cote's** book, "Stockmanship" is complete. For copies: 1-888-LANDCARE.

* New Idaho OnePlan brochures are being sent to every NRCS Field Office. Please share them with interested conservation partners and producers. Contact: **Jody Fagan** at 208-685-6978.



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management practices on parts of their farms.

Through a 319 grant, they are trying practices like surge and drip irrigation, soil moisture sensors, sediment ponds, filter strips and PAM.

“We’re glad to be a part of this demonstration project,” Nakamura says. “It’s helping to upgrade some of our systems which, with capital expenses of \$30,000 or more, is really hard for farmers to do.”

Nakamura farms 800 acres with two brothers. His father started the farm in 1951 after both his parents spent time in a relocation camp during World War II.

“I learned my work ethic by example,” says Nakamura. “I continually try to do the best I can for the farm ... We’re going to learn a great deal from this project to help us manage it better.”

Nakamura says the conversion from furrow to surge irrigation has reduced their water use by half and cut back on fertilizer output.

“And the filter strips are a real easy method to reduce the amount of soil running off the field,” he says.

Dyke Nagasaka farms 500 acres a few miles from Nakamura. Nagasaka’s grandfather raised hogs before World War II. After returning from the

relocation camps, his father switched to row crops. Now Nagasaka is trying drip irrigation on parts of the farm.

“These are the best onions I’ve had on this ground,” he says. “The drip irrigation spoon-feeds the crop.”

Like his friend, Nagasaka has reduced water usage and cut fertilizer outputs by one-third or more on his 319 fields. He’s also using PAM, straw mulching and sediment basins.

“Everything we do can create problems and it’s up to us to try and minimize them,” Nagasaka says. “Water, soil are limited resources ... but, unfortunately, it costs money to be environmentally conscious, especially when we compete with countries like Mexico. The 319 grants help a lot.”



Dyke Nagasaka and his father look at an onion grown on his 319 field.

Good News!

Chief Bruce Knight recognized Idaho NRCS for efficient management of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) this past year at the NACD meeting held Feb. 6-9 in Atlanta. Idaho ranked third in the nation and received a bonus of \$1.3 million in EQIP funding for this year.

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programs in the Medicine Lodge area of Clark County. The Clark SWCD administers the 319 funds and NRCS writes the contracts.

“The project is a joint effort” says **Cleve Bagley**, NRCS soil conservation technician. “The agencies, landowners and contractors have pitched in to make things easier all around.”

Funds from the 319 grant cover 60 percent of costs. The ISCC pitched in another 15 percent and landowners pick up the rest.

“We wanted to make the decision to participate an easy one for the landowner,” Bagley says. “The extra 15 percent from ISCC sealed the deal.”

The Egans are only one among a dozen benefitting. On a recent Clark SWCD field tour, participants saw fence projects, rehabilitated diversion points and vegetative projects along key streams.



Tour participants look at the Egans’ rehabilitation efforts.

Personnel Actions - Oct. to Dec. 2004

Retirements:

Bill Patterson, Electronics Tech., 10/29/04

Benito Mar, SAO, 12/31/04

Art Shoemaker, State Engineer, 12/31/04

Ed Haagen, Soil Scientist, 1/1/05

Lee Brooks, Asst. State Con., 1/3/05

Gary Pfiefler, AC, 1/3/05

Promotions:

Frank Gariglio, State Forester, Lewiston, 11/14/04

Keith Griswold, DC., Cascade, 11/28/04

Ben Letourneau, Soil Con., Lewiston, 11/28/04

Blake Tubbs, Soil Con. Tech., Montpelier, 11/28/04

Reassignments:

Terrence Edwards to Gooding, 11/14/04

Kari Short to Rexburg, 11/14/04

Ron Brooks to Weiser, 11/28/04

Lindsay Obray to Coeur d’Alene, 11/28/04

New Hires:

Kyle Tackett, Soil Con., St. Anthony, 9/26/04

Conversions:

Amie Jungert, Soil Con. SCEP to permanent, Gooding, 12/26/04

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