



Idaho

Current Developments

February 2003

Message from the State Conservationist

Earlier this month Dan Ogle, Plant Materials Specialist, and I met with K Lynn Bennett, new state director for the Bureau of Land Management. This was a courtesy call, because I had never met K Lynn, and I wanted to take the opportunity to discuss our plant materials program and the PMC at Aberdeen.

I feel there are excellent opportunities for NRCS and BLM to work together on private and public lands. We already have many successes in plant materials work with Department of Interior agencies.

I was pleased to hear that K Lynn already knew about PMC activities. He even asked about a plant species we were working on 15 years ago. He has a sincere commitment to use the best plants for public and private land.

We are planning a trip to the PMC in June with K Lynn and the Director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Plant materials can help fill a critical need in applying conservation on private and public lands. I encourage each of you to look for plant materials opportunities.

Rich Sims
State Conservationist

New look for Idaho Current Developments

Welcome to the first issue of our electronic *Idaho Current Developments*. The design and layout have been carefully planned to make it as reader friendly online as possible. It can also be printed out by those of you who prefer to read from the printed page.

This newsletter is published for employees, retirees, and conservation partners. The content varies

from month to month, but we are constantly striving to:

- Keep you informed about significant developments and issues in NRCS and how they will affect you.
- Highlight the successes of employees at all levels.
- Announce staff changes and promotions.

- Promote health and safety awareness.
- Share new and innovative methods that employees use to get the conservation job done.

Our new format provides the opportunity to include the digital photos that many of you are taking. As you capture images of employees in action or images that illustrate conservation in action, please send them to Sharon Norris, Public Affairs Specialist, along with a caption, for use in future issues.

Technical Service Provider process

Chief Bruce Knight discussed the Technical Service Provider process at a Jan. 17 meeting of the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants. Formal comments on the interim final rule for Technical Service Providers were due Feb. 19. The interim final rule takes effect on March 1.

Key points from the Chief's speech

Goal of Technical Service Provider process: To use private sector, non-profit, and public agency resources to help get the job done. What we're doing is building an industry of certified conservation professionals to help us.

Technical Service Providers will not replace NRCS employees: NRCS will still have plenty to do, providing the service landowners have come to expect and fulfilling the inherent government responsibilities assigned to our agency. Technical Service Providers will be important because they will expand our capabilities well beyond what we can do ourselves.

Compensation: The intent is to let market forces determine what the government and the landowner will pay for technical services. Competition in the open market must keep us from paying more than is fair. We are striving for a competitive price discovery system that will work for all.

Structuring payments: There is little we can do to make payments before the work is complete. That is simply the way traditional contracting works under Federal law. But there are ways within the system to provide payments in a reasonable time. We simply have to structure the work in such a way that we can pay as soon as a well-defined task is complete.

Conflict of interest: The certification process ensures that anyone who becomes a technical service provider is qualified. Accountability and de-certification systems guarantee that everyone has to do the work at an acceptable level. Supply and demand should result in a not-to-exceed rate.

Local and Federal roles in implementation: Our guiding principle is that whenever practical, national headquarters should set broad national criteria and local offices should implement the specifics. Local decisions and local responsibility simply work best.

So far, much of the work has been national in nature. We are setting up a system to use the Federal Business Opportunities site on the Internet to solicit or survey pricing information from those who want to provide services. Surveys will give us a chance to see what services are available and how they are priced. We are also setting up a web site that will act as a registry for technical service providers.

Partnership helps protect wetlands in Teton Basin

The Winter 2003 issue of *Birdscapes*, a U.S. Department of Interior publication, featured several wetland projects of the Teton River Basin Project Partners. NRCS (Driggs Field Office) and the Teton Soil Conservation District are members of the group along with Teton Regional Land Trust, Idaho Dept. of Fish

and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and several private individuals.

Through conservation easements, the Partnership has protected and restored 1,058 acres of wetlands in the Basin, which has been ranked as a number one priority landscape for conservation because of its irreplaceable wetland ecology and the high threat of development.

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Richard W. Sims, State Conservationist

Sharon Norris, Editor

Send inquiries, comments, and contributions to sharon.norris@id.usda.gov or call 208-378-5725.

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Private forest landowner conference scheduled

"Forest Management: Challenges for Private Timber in the Interior West" is the theme of a two day conference for private forest landowners scheduled for March 24-25, 2003, in Moscow at the University Inn-Best Western.

The conference is sponsored by the Clearwater Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc. and affiliate groups.

The conference agenda contains sessions on marketing, the National Fire Plan, forest management programs, and tools of the trade.

To register for the conference or to obtain more information, contact Dan Pierce, RC&D Coordinator, Clearwater RC&D Office at (208) 882-4960, Ext. 4. Registration is \$40 per person.

Infomania

"Ranching in Harmony with the Land" is the title of a new teaching tool on rangeland

produced by the Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission. Check with your local teachers to find out if they received a copy. If not, call the IRRC office at 208-398-7002 and ask for a free copy for your school.

The Idaho Rangeland Resource commission also has a new website ready for use that provides information on Idaho's rangelands in an attractive, easy-to-use format. Topics on the site include rangeland research, hot top-

pics, issues, teacher resources, stuff for students, plus information about IRRC. Address is www.idrange.org.

Upcoming events

Earth Day: Tuesday, April 22, 2003

National Agriculture Day (celebrating its 30th year):
March 21, 2003

National Agriculture Week: March 16-22, 2003

Unsolved mystery... ice circles

Last month, Phil Morrissey, Snow Survey Staff, received these pictures of mysterious ice circles from Scott Krause, reporter for the *Wood River Journal* in Hailey.

"Are they a hoax or a circular oddity in a bend in the river as the ice froze?," asked Krause. "Let me know what you think. The people who took the photos said the ice was too thin to support a person."

Phil couldn't come up with an explanation, but locals took their best guess as to what caused it in a Jan. 15 article in the *Wood River Journal*.



Some speculated the circles were caused by a tree trapped under the ice and swirling around. Others believed that someone carved them from the top. And there were some who said maybe aliens had decided to switch from crop circles to ice circles.

According to one local expert, ice circles have been recorded in the U.S. and Canada for many years, the most impressive of which was in the Charles River in Boston, Mass., in Feb. 1992, when dozens of ice circles and concentric rings formed.

Another Sun Valley resident reported having seen one of the perfect ice circles a year ago on Trail Creek near the Corral Creek Bridge.

"I looked over this eddy and saw this perfect ice circle floating," she said. "The current somehow flowed past and around this circle and kept it in motion. It was phenomenal. There is no way anybody could have done it."

Employees complete safety course

Conservation District, Soil Conservation Commission, and NRCS employees in early January.

The following individuals attended, passed the courses,

Division I sponsored and conducted a Basic First Aid and CPR course for

and received first aid cards and American Heart Association CPR certification cards: Kim Golden, Bob Kinney, and Jerry Macdonald, Coeur d'Alene; Mike Gondek, Bonners Ferry; and Jeff Stewart, Sandpoint.

State Office employees also received a refresher course—Ron Abramovich, Phil Morrisey, Kelly Vick, Bill Patterson, Jeff Graham, and Vinh Hoang.

Snowmobile safety

by *Bill Patterson*,
State Safety Officer, Boise SO

Gear

Carry a map, first-aid kit, pocket knife, flashlight, matches, flare, compass, high-energy food, extra ignition key, work gloves, extra gas, satellite phone or cell phone (provided you have cell coverage in your area). Carry a repair kit, including spare belt and spark plugs, manufacturer's tool kit, nuts and bolts sized for your snowmobile, tow rope, pry bar, duct tape, and wire.

Wear a helmet and protective glasses or goggles and appropriate clothing. Don't wear long scarves that might get caught in the snowmobile's moving parts.

Driving

- Stay to the right hand side of the trail at all times
- Slow down at corners and rises to avoid drifting into the left hand side of the trail

- Don't drink and ride
- Use standardized hand signals
- Yield right of way to wildlife
- Stay on the trails
- Don't over drive your headlights
- Don't cross frozen bodies of water unless you're sure of the ice thickness
- Use caution crossing public roads
- Go slowly near skiers or snowshoers
- Avoid running over bushes, small trees, fences and other obstacles

More tips

- Check weather report before you leave
 - Be aware of avalanche potential at all times
 - Don't travel alone
 - Keep your sled in good operating condition; be knowledgeable enough to be able to make minor repairs
 - Let someone know where you're going and when you expect to return. File a route plan.
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Business etiquette

Some basics of introductions

- Remember to smile as you introduce yourself
- Always stand if seated
- Always shake hands. Failure to do so is considered rude. Grip hands so the web of the thumbs meet. Shake from the elbow, not the shoulder. Remove gloves if you're wearing them.
- Ask if you are uncertain of how to pronounce a person's name or were unable to hear it clearly. This will help avoid future embarrassment with subsequent introductions to others.

Introducing others

Business introductions are based on professional rank. Introduce the person of the highest rank to others in descending order of their positions.

In the case of introductions of persons of equal rank, the person with whom you are least familiar is presented to those with whom you are most familiar.

An introduction should be conducted by saying the name and title of the person being introduced first, followed by the name and title of the other person. Say both first and last names distinctly, including titles. For example: Mr. Senior, I would like you to meet district conservationist Mr. Junior. Mr. Junior, this is Mr. Senior, state conservationist.

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Business etiquette (continued)

Client introductions

Always introduce the client first, even above someone of higher rank in your organization.

Group introductions

If you're in a group and making many introductions, it's helpful to include a bit of information about each person to help facilitate further conversation. Don't leave people in an uncomfortable situation by introducing them and then just walking away.

If you forget someone's name, apologize briefly and wait for the person involved to volunteer his or her name.

Use of first names

Don't use first name in the following situations unless specifically requested to do so:

- To a superior in one's business
- To a business client or customer
- To a person of higher rank
- To professional people offering their services
- To an older person

Use of Ms.

Use the title Ms., not Miss or Mrs., when introducing a woman and you're unsure of her marital status.

Almost without argument, the Snake River is the lifeblood of the many people who live on the Plain.

Facts about the Snake River...

The Snake River is the tenth longest river in the U.S.. From its headwaters in Wyoming's Yellowstone and Teton National Parks, the Snake flows 1,056 miles, dropping some 9,500 feet in elevation, to its confluence with the Columbia River in Washington.

The West Coast's most eastern seaport, located 465 miles from the Pacific Ocean on the Snake, is Lewiston, Idaho.

The Snake passes through 25 dams. In fact, reservoirs account for 508 miles of the Snake, nearly half of the river's total distance.

Water from the Snake is used to produce hydroelectric power and irrigate about 3.8 million acres of agricultural land.

The Snake is drained nearly dry at one point in southcentral Idaho.

The rights to every drop of water in the Snake are owned.

Of the more than three million acres of irrigated land on the Snake River Plain, about one million are supplied by the aquifer and other groundwater sources. The other two million are supplied by surface water through an extensive system of canals.

Large-scale irrigation came to the Snake River Plain with Mormon settlement in the 1860s. One of the world's largest and most successful networks of gravity flow canals was built near the town of Rexburg.

The Snake shaped the human geography of southern Idaho. Many of Idaho's largest population centers are located near the Snake or its tributaries.

Idaho now leads the country in water use rates with a consumption of 22,200 gallons of water per capita per day. This is partially due to the well-drained soils of the Snake River Plain, which require constant watering to produce Idaho's famous potatoes.

Idaho uses nearly 19.26 billion gallons of water per day for agriculture and livestock, second only to California in the U.S.

Source: *Agricultural History*, published by the Agricultural History Society (Volume 76/Number 2/ Spring 2002)

Recipients of FY 2002 Performance Awards

Sustained Superior Performance

- * Frank Fink, Biologist, Boise SO
- * Robin Hadeler, Civil Engineering Technician, Weiser
- * Chris Hoag, Wetland Plant Ecologist, Aberdeen PMC
- * David Hoover, State Soil Scientist, Boise SO
- * Bonnie Long, Office Automation Clerk, Payette
- * Jan Mervin, Staff Assistant, Boise SO
- * Phil Oestreich, Soil Conservationist, Weiser
- * Julie Phelps, Soil Conservation Technician, Meridian
- * Lee Ruiz, Civil Engineering Technician, Payette
- * Glenn Shea, Tool Kit/PRMS Coordinator, Boise SO
- * Art Shoemaker, State Conservation Engineer, Boise SO

Outstanding Performance

- * Kim Ann Erk, Civil Engineering Technician, Coeur d'Alene
- * Martin Pena, Soil Conservation Technician, Payette
- * Bob Sandlund, Soil Conservationist, Grangeville
- * Bruce Sandoval, Agriculture Engineer, Pocatello

Extra Effort

- * Leigh Ann Davis, Soil Conservation Technician, Blackfoot, assistance to 37 cooperators in the planning and installation of 52,821 feet of wind-breaks.

- * Kathy Dingman, Program Assistant, Panhandle Lakes RC&D Office, Coeur d'Alene, extra effort in completing the NRCS web page migration and added job assignment and accomplishments as web master.
- * Mike Durham, Engineer, Moscow, timely and professional engineering assistance to 9 field offices located in Divisions I and II and for contributions to the Division II AFO/CAFO 319 grant.
- * Carrie Janssen-Smith, Resource Conservationist, Pocatello, for exceptional leadership and guidance in developing guidance documents for Divisions 4, 5 and 6.
- * Ken Preston, Soil Conservationist, Preston, for leadership in addressing and completing a backlog of over 250 uncompleted CRP status reviews.
- * Dave Steube, Civil Engineering Technician, Burley, for outstanding efforts in the installation of 2.5 miles of living snow fence along a dangerous stretch of Interstate 84 that was subject to blowing dust and snow during the period of May 1 through September 30, 2002.

Non-Monetary

Certificate of Appreciation

Jan Mervin, Staff Assistant, Boise SO, for assistance to all field offices in implementation of the 2002 Farm Bill and dedication to the mission of NRCS during the period May 1 through September 30, 2002.

Personnel Action

Carrie Janssen-Smith, Resource Conservationist, Pocatello, promoted to GS-12 effective Oct. 20, 2002.

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