



Idaho

Current Developments

May 2003

Message from the State Conservationist

Last week I visited our National Office to make a One-Plan presentation.

It just so happened the presentation was being made in the same room that was scheduled for use by the Conservation Security Program technical team. After making the presentation, we had a discussion on how to streamline and reduce the CSP workload for field offices.

Their idea was to have a full range of guidance documents, which is exactly what Idaho has been doing for one year.

I am now convinced more than ever that in order to prepare ourselves for the large CSP workload, development of guidance documents must be completed.

I encourage you to get prepared for the CSP workload by completing as many guidance documents as possible that are needed for your resource areas.

Rich Sims
State Conservationist

Idaho's unsung hero

Dave Steube, who retired April 3 as civil engineering technician, Burley, is a recipient of the 2003 Unsung Hero Award. He received his award on May 6 at a ceremony in Washington, D.C.

The award recognizes those who exemplify the best in public service through quiet and efficient dedication to the public good. Only one other NRCS employee received the award.

District Conservationist Mike Combs submitted Steube's nomination for the work he did to get 2.5 miles of living snow fence planted along a dangerous stretch of Interstate 84 located 15 miles east of Burley.

Steube identified farmers who owned land next to the freeway and called them to pitch the idea of planting the snow fence. They agreed, and the eight-row windbreak was installed just this spring.

The windbreak will reduce both blowing dust and snow that has caused several fatalities along this portion of the highway in years past.

The USDA Unsung Hero Award is sponsored by the Association of Technical and Supervisory Professionals, USDA Employees Services and Recreation Association, the National Association of Federal Veterinarians, the USDA Chapter of Senior Executives Association, and USDA Organization of Professional Employees.

Drought recovery

A USDA news release on May 9 announced that Idaho is among 17 states to receive \$53 million to help farmers and ranchers implement practices to mitigate the long-term impacts of drought through the Ground and Surface Water Conservation (GSWC) provision of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. Idaho's alloca-

tion was listed as \$4,459,100 (\$673,000 technical assistance and \$3,786,000 financial assistance).

Bob Bartholomew, assistant state conservationist for programs, says the funds are included in our state's EQIP allocation—they are not new or additional funds. He also said it is likely we will commit even more than that amount in approved EQIP applications.

Technical standards revised

Chief Bruce Knight announced on May 12 that NRCS had issued a series of new or revised conservation practice standards that provide guidance for applying conservation on the land.

"Conservation practice standards provide criteria for conservation districts, technical service providers and others who offer conservation assistance to provide technically sound practices, on the ground, to our customers," said Knight.

We currently have 166 conservation practice standards in our National Handbook of Conservation Practices. This series of 34 were reanalyzed to determine if they directly affected atmospheric resource quality issues. If so, then air quality was added as a purpose. If not, their effect on air quality was included as a consideration. The practices will help landowners and other customers address a wide variety of atmospheric resource issues on their land. They will assist with reducing regulated and greenhouse gas emissions and offsets.

The standards were published in the Federal Register on April 28 with a 30-day public comment period.

Lee Brooks, assistant state conservationist for technical services, said he and his staff will determine which of the standards are applicable in Idaho and add the technical detail needed to effectively use the standards at the field office level.

Standards issued for public review:

- Anaerobic Digester, Ambient Temperature
- Anaerobic Digester, Controlled Temperature
- Composting Facility
- Constructed Wetland
- Fish Raceway or Tank
- Hedgerow Planting
- Irrigation Water Management
- Land Clearing
- Land Reconstruction, Abandoned Mined Land
- Land Reconstruction, Currently Mined Land
- Monitoring Well
- Mulching
- Pasture and Hayland Planting
- Residue Management, Mulch Till
- Residue Management, No-Till/Strip Till
- Residue Management, Ridge Till
- Residue Management, Seasonal
- Riparian Forest Buffer
- Sediment Basin
- Spoil Spreading
- Stream Habitat Improvement & Management
- Tree/Shrub Establishment
- Tree/Shrub Pruning
- Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
- Waste Facility Cover
- Waste Storage Facility
- Waste Treatment Lagoon
- Waste Utilization
- Wetland Creation
- Wetland Enhancement
- Wetland Restoration
- Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation

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NRCS will participate in grazing workshops

NRCS has been invited by Senator Larry Craig to participate in a series of Public Land Grazing Workshops being held at four locations in the state later this month. Ron Abramovich, water supply specialist, and local district conservationists, will present an update of the current water situation at the sessions.

We are also preparing a handout with drought range tips for use at the meetings.

Other participants include personnel from the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Idaho Department of Lands who will cover range improvements, categorical exclusions, range health tools, fire, noxious weeds, endangered and sensitive species, crickets and grasshoppers.

Sessions are scheduled for May 27 in Weiser and Jerome, May 28 in Malad, and May 29 in Challis.

Hot off the press: Two new soil surveys published

It took years of digging on millions of acres, but the soil surveys for Jerome County and part of Twin Falls County and Owyhee County Area are finally published and available from NRCS.

The published soil surveys contain information on all the soils of the survey areas, maps with soil boundaries and aerial photos, and narrative descriptions and tables explaining specific soil properties and features.

Users of published soil surveys include farmers and ranchers, real estate agents, city personnel, land use planners, engineers and others who want information about soil resources.

Jerome-Twin Falls Survey

NRCS soil scientists who worked on the Jerome-Twin Falls survey included Dal Ames (retired), Daryl Lund (now in NHQ), Donnie Holbrook (whereabouts unknown), and Kimberly Blake (now working for the Forest Service).

The new survey replaces older surveys of Jerome and Twin Falls that were published in 1927.

The first known inhabitants in the survey area were Shoshone and Northern Paiute Indians, who seasonally

migrated between the Snake River and the southern uplands. The Oregon Trail, which generally followed the Snake River, was established in 1843. Emigrants passed through the area until 1863.

Owyhee Survey

The Owyhee survey is Idaho's largest and took 10 years of digging on more than 3.5 million acres to complete. A news clip about the Final Acre Ceremony marking the conclusion of the survey from the Idaho Press Tribune, Nampa, said publication of the survey was another three to four years away. That was in 1988. Well, we finally made it!

NRCS soil scientist Al Harkness, Meridian, worked on the survey along with several Bureau of Land Management soil scientists. One of those BLM soil scientists was our own Richard Spencer who is now district conservationist at Grangeville.

Owyhee County was established on Dec. 31, 1863. Its name reportedly was taken from an earlier spelling of a word missionaries later spelled "Hawaii," which referred to the Sandwich Islands. Natives of these islands were brought to the Northwest to work for the fur companies.

Silver City served as the county seat from 1867 to 1934. It was the first city in Idaho to have telegraph service and a daily newspaper.

Drought declared in 9 counties

As of May 14, the Governor had issued formal drought emergency declarations for nine Idaho counties: Bannock, Bingham, Butte, Caribou, Clark, Custer, Fremont, Lincoln, and Power.

The declarations are issued in response to formal requests from county commissioners and are then approved by the Idaho Department of Water Resources. The formal declarations allow irrigators in the declared counties to work with IDWR to secure temporary water rights and to modify existing water rights.

Last year, drought declarations were issued for 17 counties.

CRP signup underway

Conservation Reserve Program signup 26 started May 5 and will run to May 30. The signup is drawing lots of interest from Idaho farmers.

This is the first general signup to benefit from new personal computer-based common computer environment (CCE) technology. Through CCE, local FSA of-

fices can, for the first time, enroll producers and calculate eligible acres and rental rates in an automated environment.

Idaho already has more than 800,000 acres enrolled in the program through previous signups. Idaho ranks 15th in the nation in terms of acreage enrolled. A total of about \$31 million is paid annually to nearly 3,000 farms in Idaho. The average rental payment in the state is about \$39 per acre.

Rangeland field study scheduled

Over the past 10 years, NRCS has developed, in collaboration with other agencies and institutions, new NRI procedures to monitor the nation's rangeland.

The 2003 NRI Rangeland Field Study involves about 65 primary sampling units and will be conducted in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska,

Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

The rangeland field data collection will involve about 40 PSUs located in Adams, Bannock, Caribou, and Gem Counties.

New look for

To help NRCS identify itself to the public, a national team has developed a new basic format and layout for each NRCS web site that will provide a consistent look and feel for every state home page. You'll see the results soon on our Idaho Home Page.

Purpose of the new design is to:

- * Enhance NRCS' brand and identity
- * Increase consistency across NRCS sites through the use of a global navigation bar, common layout, and predefined design styles
- * Improve NRCS pages to meet and exceed Section 508 accessibility requirement
- * Provide the ability to browse for in-depth information about conservation
- * Emphasize optimal usability for existing and future NRCS web users

- * Create an environment that enables users to feel comfortable with the web system and its information
- * Provide consistent naming conventions between pages for consistent and easy-to-find links
- * Integrate the USDA multi-agency search engine

All states and regions are following an identical baseline directory structure to assist in organizing content.

Primary directories include About Us, News, Programs, Technical Resources, Partnerships, and Contact Us.

The Employee Intranet will no longer be password protected and will contain non-secure information for employees.

Whenever possible, our state pages will be linked to related content on the national site.

A great big thanks goes to Kathy Dingman, Coeur d'Alene, along with Phil Morrissey, Kelly Vick and Pat Phelps, State Office, for all their hard work in getting our site converted to the new format! It was a huge task that they completed competently and efficiently.

Irrigation video in production

by Martin S. Pena,
Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager, Payette

The Payette Field Office staff, with support of the Payette Soil and Water Conservation District, is in the process of developing an Irrigation Water Management video in Spanish with the help of Boise State University.

We completed the first filming at the BSU facilities in Nampa on April 10. A total of four filming sessions throughout the summer season are being planned in the field. The first session will include filming of crops in their early stages of irrigation and types of irrigation systems being used.

Preparation work such as the editing of a slide presentation is in the process of being completed by Lee Ruiz, Civil Engineering Technician, to streamline the production process.

Idaho teens among national Land judging contest winners

FFA teams from Culdesac, Gooding, Kuna, and Bliss competed in the 52nd annual National Land and Range Judging Contest held May 7-9 in Oklahoma City.

The Culdesac FFA chapter won the team competition in the Homesite Evaluation. Team members were Jenni Crawford, Sabrina Zenner, Megan Huddleston, and Kyle King. Terry Crawford was the coach. Megan Huddleston of that team took a second place medal in

the individual category.

The Gooding team ranked 13th among homesite total results.

In Land Judging, out of 89 teams, the Culdesac team finished in 22nd place and the Gooding team finished in 47th place.

In the Range Judging Contest, out of 30 teams, the Kuna team finished in 21st place and the Bliss team finished in 25th place.

Over 140 teams of FFA and 4-H members from 35 states competed in the national contest.

Cambridge HS wins state envirothon competition

The Cambridge High School FFA Envirothon Team, sponsored by the Weiser River SCD, took top honors for the second year in a row at the annual Idaho Envirothon competition held May 12-13 at Challis.

Twelve school districts were represented by 20 teams at this year's competition that combined acquiring knowledge of natural resources with creative deci-

sion-making in a teamwork building experience.

Gooding Team B, sponsored by Wood River SCD, placed second in the competition. Third place went to Challis, sponsored by Custer SWCD. Gooding Team A, sponsored by Gooding SCD, and Butte Team A, sponsored by Butte SWCD, took fourth and fifth place honors.

The Cambridge team will compete in the International Envirothon at Mount St. Mary's College, Frederick, Maryland, in July.

State forestry contest winners

The 21st Annual State Forestry Contest, coordinated by soil conservation districts, Idaho Department of Lands, and Forest Service, was held in early May at the Ray Delay Farm in Careywood, Bonner SCD.

Taking top honors among the senior division teams were Post Falls High School, 1st place, and Sandpoint High School 2nd and 3rd places.

Post Falls Middle School took 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in the junior division competition.

About 23 teams participated, involving 185 students from central and northern Idaho.

Quick tip: Get organized

Make better use of your calendar by color-coding entries. Use red for high priority tasks, green for phone calls or recurring events, and yellow for personal engagements.

News from other agencies

BLM names new manager for Lower Snake River District

Bureau of Land Management State Director K Lynn Bennett has announced the appointment of Glen Secrist to fill the position of District Manager for the Lower Snake River District, which manages 5.3 million acres of public land in southwestern Idaho. Secrist began his new job on May 5.

Since February 1996, he has served as the vegetation management bureau chief for the Idaho State Department of Agriculture. He also has 29 years of natural resource management experience, including 11 years with the Soil Conservation Service in Utah and Idaho and 18 years with BLM.

New supervisor selected for Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office

Jeff Foss has been selected as the new field supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office in Boise. He replaced Bob Ruesink who retired in January 2003.

Foss has worked on natural resource issues for FWS and the Forest Service in Challis, Twin Falls, and Boise. He also worked in Alaska and Utah and for the governments of Nepal and Malaysia in land use planning and developing environmental legislation.

Hanson will head Idaho Section SRM

Congratulations to Bruce Hanson, district conservationist, Orofino, who has been elected new President-elect of the Idaho Section of the Society for Range Management. He will take over as president at the winter meeting in December.

Annual banquet and golf tournament scheduled

NRCS employees are invited to the Association of Retired SCS Employees annual banquet and golf tournament scheduled for Spokane July 26-30 in conjunction with the annual SWCS meeting. The banquet will be held the evening of July 29.

The 30th Annual Western States Golf Tournament is scheduled for July 29-30 in Spokane. Anyone can join in the fun—from the scratch golfer to the beginner.

Call Stan Hobson in Boise to register for either event or for more information—208-336-1878.

Stream workshop teaches recovery techniques

Chris Hoag, wetland plant ecologist, Aberdeen, was an instructor at a recent two-day workshop in Elko, aimed at teaching natural resource specialists from state, federal, and local agencies along with private landowners to repair streambanks and riparian zones.

Sixty people from Nevada, Utah, and Idaho attended the classroom session on April 19, 2003. The next day, 35 of them learned how to apply the knowledge first hand on a stretch of Trout Creek near Jackpot, Nevada. Trout Creek is a test center for riparian projects for NRCS in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management.

The session was sponsored by an interagency consortium including the Northeast Elko Conservation District, Nevada Division of Forestry, BLM, Forest Service, NRCS, Nevada Cooperative Extension, and Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group.

Tune in to conservation

A national radio campaign promoting NRCS and conservation has been released. Sharon Norris, public affairs specialist, distributed the specially designed CD with five public service messages to selected radio stations earlier this month.

Of the five spots, two are written for rural audiences encouraging listeners to stop by their local service centers. The other three spots are targeted to urban audiences to help them understand the benefits of conservation that touch everyone.

If you hear the spots on your local radio station, give the station a call and thank them for supporting conservation.

Quick tips

Running smart meetings

Where people sit in a meeting can have a dramatic effect on their participation. Here's some tips on how to pick the right seating arrangement.

Theater style. Chairs are placed in straight rows with either one or two aisles. When to use: Best suited for presentations to large groups since this style limits participation.

Classroom style. Chairs are placed in rows like theater style, but with tables added. When to use: Works best for training sessions where the trainer is the focal point.

Square style. Chairs and tables are set up in a square with an open space in the middle. When to use: When you want everyone to participate. It works well because there's no position of power.

Boardroom style. Chairs for 10 to 15 participants are placed around an oblong conference table. When to use: When the meeting is serious and participation is important.

Safety and Health

Microwave danger

by Bill Patterson, State Safety Officer

This is a story about a woman who put water in the microwave and waited three minutes for it to boil. But something seemed wrong—no bubbles. So she heated the water a little longer. When she took it out, the water exploded like a bullet up into her face. It hit the ceiling too.

She was rushed to the emergency room, where she was treated with first- and second-degree burns to her face. Even worse, the corneas of her eyes were scalded.

Experts say that what caused this injury is known as "superheating," which is one of the most potentially hazardous problems that can occur when heating water or other liquids in a microwave oven.

The scientific definition of superheating is that water can go above boiling temperature without any bubbles forming. In a process called nucleation, the energy that's already in the water can be triggered by a granule—such as a tea bag or instant coffee—or a utensil, which can then cause the water to erupt.

How to prevent microwave hazards:

- * Put your teabag or instant coffee in the water prior to heating it.
- * Always stir liquids before heating.
- * Stir food midway through cooking to distribute heat.
- * Allow standing time before touching.
- * Lift a lid or plastic wrap **away** from your face.
- * **Don't** microwave in styrofoam.

Personnel Actions

Career-Conditional Appointments

Barbara Albiston to GS-05 Human Resources Assistant, Administrative Staff, Boise State Office, effective 04/20/03. Selected from NRCS-ID-DEU-03-03, dated 01/03/03.

Jenifer Beddoes to GS-12 Environmental Engineer, Meridian, effective 01/26/03. Selected from NRCS-ID-DEU-02-16, dated 09/19/02.

Lynda Jones to GS-07 Administrative Management Assistant, Pocatello, effective 01/26/03. Selected from NRCS-ID-DEU-03-01, dated 10/31/02.

Reinstatement

Leah Juarros to GS-11 Resource Soil Scientist, Meridian Field Office, from Pacific Basin Director's Office, effective 02/23/03. Selected from NRCS-02-644A, dated 10/30/02.

Promotions

Rodney Kyar to GS-12, Supervisory Soil Scientist, Soils Staff, Boise State Office, effective 02/09/03. Selected from NRCS-ID-02-645A, dated 10/30/02.

Philip Oestreich to GS-09 Soil Conservationist, Weiser Field Office, effective 12/01/02. Based on the recommendation of the supervisor.

Kelly Olson to GS-12 Area Resource Conservationist, Moscow, from Wisconsin, effective 01/26/03. Selected from NRCS-02-0541A, dated 09/12/02.

Steven Schuyler to GS-12 District Conservationist, Twin Falls Field Office, effective 04/20/03. Selected from NRCS-03-169A, dated 01/13/03.

Janett Wagner to GS-06 Administrative Management Assistant, Moscow, effective 01/12/03. Selected from NRCS-ID-03-02, dated 10/31/02.

Cameron Williams to GS-07 Soil Conservationist, Idaho Falls, effective 03/26/03. Based on recommendation of supervisor.

Reassignment

Mark Addy to GS-11 District Conservationist at Coeur d'Alene, effective 04/06/03. Selected from NRCS-ID-03-05, dated 12/16/02.

Tanya Allemang to GS-09 Soil Conservationist at Caldwell, effective 01/12/03. Based on staffing plan changes.

Bob Bartholomew to GS-13 Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, State Conservationist's Staff, Boise State Office, effective 02/23/03. Selected from NRCS-02-613, dated 11/02.

Jeff Bohr to GS-12 Soil Conservationist at Caldwell, effective 03/09/03. Reassignment at request of employee.

Lelon Naylor to GS-09 Soil Conservationist at Shoshone, effective 02/23/03. Based on staffing plan changes.

Retirement

David Steube from GS-09 Civil Engineering Technician, Burley, effective 04/04/03.