



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

“These guys are some of the top producers. I’ve been impressed.”

-**Kelly Olson**, *Moscow resource conservationist, after helping producers with CSP in Bonners Ferry*

“We believe that a farm can be a partner to conservation. A farmer, in fact, is very mindful of his resources ... We are excited to learn how farming and conservation can merge. We are open to learning from the CSP program...”

-*Written by a Bonners Ferry landowner in his ID Conservation Recordbook*

“It is one thing to interfere with a man’s livelihood and another to mess with his recreation.”

-*Rose Lake farmer Mike Schlepp, referring to the wave action and associated bank erosion caused by boats along the Couer d’Alene River:*

Special Feature

Idaho Holds CSP Public Meetings

Idaho Conservation Security Program (CSP) team leaders held 16 informational meetings across the state during late March and early April.

About 200 farmers and ranchers attended to learn eligibility requirements for this year’s 15 watersheds. Many offices are now holding workshops to help producers through the self-assessment workbook, the Idaho Conservation Recordbook and the application process.

“I felt good about the New Meadows meeting,” says **Tom Yankey**, Weiser DC. “We only had seven individuals present but there were a lot of questions and good discussion. We had the larger land operators at the meetings.”

Attendance varied at the meetings from three producers in Bruneau to 45 in Grangeville (68 total with agency and conservation partner attendance). Low attendance may be due to calving and planting season, and the CSP interest of the local conservation districts.

However, several of the offices are now busy with the workshop and sign-up process. For example, Bonners Ferry held a workshop

on April 13 where many of the producers stayed until 11:00 p.m. working through their paperwork. Bonners Ferry staff were able to load the application information directly into ProTracts while the producers watched.

“These CSP producers are fun to work with,” says **Kelly Olson**, Moscow resource conservationist, who helped out at Bonners Ferry. “These guys are some of the top producers. I’ve been impressed.”

The sign-up runs from March 28 to May 27. For the latest on CSP, visit the NRCS Idaho website.



Charles Barnes, *agriculture representative for Congressman Mike Simpson, speaks in support of CSP at the Arco public meeting.*



Producers at the Grangeville public meeting.



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CSP Keeps Some Field Offices ‘Rockin’

The 2005 CSP sign-up workload has varied from office to office.

Grangeville DC Richard Spencer describes his office as “chaotic.” Over 100 producers attended the workshops and, on some days, the staff has conducted six producer interviews. Spencer estimates they may end up with over 75 contracts.

Meanwhile, St. Anthony is working with about 60 producers, Arco 25 and Bonners Ferry over 20. The rest of the offices are helping 5-12 producers each.

Looking Toward 2006

As the 2005 watershed offices work on sign-ups, NRCS Idaho is gathering data for next year. At this



Producers work on applications after the Bonners Ferry workshop.

time, the 2006 proposal includes the following watersheds (subject to approval by the Secretary of Agriculture): Pend Oreille Lake, Hangman, Palouse, Clearwater, Upper North Fork Clearwater, Lower North Fork Clearwater, Camas, Big Wood, Little Wood and Upper Snake-Rock.

EQIP Helps Prevent Heavy Metal Leaching

by Sarah Bigger, Idaho Panhandle

They say too much of a good thing can turn sour. Such is the case with Mike and Brenda Schlepp’s farm near Rose Lake, Idaho.

The Coeur d’Alene River traverses the farm where the Schlepps raise cattle, wetland plants and wild rice. The river helps create optimum growing conditions, but it also causes flooding and erosion. The erosion releases heavy metals from the riverbanks, the result of a century of mining upstream.

Levees protect the farmland, but in 2002 a high water event breached the dike releasing 150 tons of soil into one of the Schlepp’s fields.

“It literally happened in the blink of an eye, like a case of dynamite had exploded,” Mike says.

Like many landowners in the area, the Schlepps were losing up to six feet of property to the river every year. The bank erosion is magnified by the wakes of recreational boats along the river. Limiting boat speeds has been discussed in the community but deemed unenforceable.

“It is one thing to interfere with

a man’s livelihood and another to mess with his recreation,” Mike says.

Instead, in 2003, the Schlepps worked with the Coeur d’Alene NRCS office to enroll in EQIP.

“We viewed EQIP as an opportunity to continue our efforts to leave the land in better shape than we found it,” Mike says.

NRCS constructed a rock spillway and installed water control structures within the dike. This included a culvert with a headgate allowing Mike and Brenda to relieve pressure during high water and to maintain the water level for their wild rice crop.

Mike is pleased with the results. “Any time I can let gravity do the work instead of the power company, that’s a plus.”

The bank stabilization proved more challenging. The Schlepps proposed to use an NRCS design consisting of placing a wedge of rock into the wake zone for armoring the undercut bank.

Other agencies involved with mine remediation in the valley pressed for alternative designs requiring a fabric barrier. Since

Idaho Hosts Earth Day Media Event



Sara Braasch, regional assistant chief - West, speaks to the media and conservation partners at the CB Springs Wetland Project near Parma. She announced the acres of wetlands created nationwide since the last Earth Day, and highlighted that Idaho NRCS has improved over 16,000 acres of wetlands in the last five years.

the slope was so steep, one of the suggestions cost 10 times more.

NRCS found a resolution by adding a gravel filter in the wake-cut to hold in fine sediments.

“It would have been easy to fold the tent and say, ‘Why bother?’,” Mike says. “But NRCS hung in there. The local staff has a commitment to conserving natural resources ... it was refreshing.”



Before and after the EQIP work.



People Profile Cates Builds Trust at Fort Hall

by Kristen Clayton, Idaho Falls

Kurt Cates' office set-up is a bit unconventional.

Even though he's one of Idaho's 37 DCs, he's not in a typical USDA building. He works out of an odd-looking gray building (possibly 100 years old) on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. He shares the building with two UI Ag Extension employees, one of them his sister, Nola, who is the 4-H program manager.

A Sovereign Nation

Cates says while he may work in a dissimilar situation to other DC's, a few things are the same.

"I work with individuals and a government entity. Well, I guess that entity is a sovereign nation."

He acknowledges that working on an Indian Reservation may feel like working in a foreign country. However, the biggest advantage is there are not as many hoops to jump through on field projects. The only approval he has to get is that of the Tribal Council.

Cates is accustomed to the Indian traditions and may have found his career niche. He started at NRCS as a soil conservation technician. In July 2000, he took over the Fort Hall

office as the first full time DC for the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe.

"This is what I want to be doing; it's the perfect job for me," he says.

Native American tribal governments and the NRCS forged a partnership that arose out of the 1996 Farm Bill. The partnership at Fort Hall has existed since that time when Roy Fowler, American Falls DC, served there part time.

Trust

Cates' family has Shoshone Bannock roots and he grew up living on the reservation. This has helped him gain much needed trust. He says it's hard for government workers to be trusted by the Tribe. As in dealing with any other nation, trust takes time and, for Cates, being a tribal member was an advantage for him early on.

Misunderstanding

Cates says the most common misunderstanding about the Tribe is that "we're getting rich on the casinos." However, much of the



All in the family: Kurt Cates, Fort Hall DC and Nola Cates, Fort Hall 4-H. The two siblings work together daily in the same office and Nola says they get along perfectly.

casino money goes to the Tribe's social programs. The poverty rate is high at Fort Hall. Unemployment runs 40-60 percent. With such statistics, casino money is necessary to maintain programs.

Cates says the demand for NRCS services by American Indian tribal groups continues to increase as the value of NRCS assistance becomes better understood. Cates is busy doing public relations and education as well as working in the field. He loves the rewards and looks forward to the future on the reservation.

Snapshots from the Field



Left: Mike Durham, area engineer in Moscow, and Mike Duval, technician in Sandpoint, visit with land-owner Tim Kelly about solutions for bank erosion along the Pack River.



Right: Terry Cosby, deputy state conservationist, helps Ron Abramovich, water supply specialist, measure snow at Mores Creek. Cosby recently accepted the State Conservationist job in Ohio.



Snapshots from the Field



Left: Rob Sampson, new state engineer, and Terril Stevenson, SO natural resource specialist, doing a stream assessment near New Meadows.

Right: Roger Hirschman, GIS coordinator, teaches a GIS class to Canyon County 4-H kids.



Twin Falls Canal Company clean-up. Volunteers: Chris Simons, district admin. asst., Eric Moore, soil conservationist, Andy Newbry, district employee, and Logan Berg, CET.



Tom Yankey, Weiser DC, and Dan Ogle, plant materials specialist, (right) evaluate a riparian planting with the landowner during the Stream Assessment Course training near McCall last summer.



Ecologist H. Wayne Phillips discusses the plants Lewis & Clark discovered at a recent forestry workshop sponsored by the Clearwater RC&D.

Personnel Actions - January to March 2005

CAREER COND. (New hires)

Janet D Jacobs - Human Resources Asst., SO, 01/02/2005

Beth R Rasmussen - Soil Con. Tech., Montpelier FO, 03/20/2005

Pamela L Scheinost - Soil Con., Caldwell FO, 01/09/2005

EXCEPTED APPOINTMENTS

Allyson Young - Soil Scientist Career Intern, CDL FO, 3/20/2005

PROMOTIONS

Lisa M Cole - Career Promotion, Soil Con., Lewiston FO, 02/20/2005

Jody K Fagan - Career Promotion, PAS, SO Mgmt Staff, 02/06/2005

Frank J Fink Jr - Natural Resource Spec. (temporary promotion), SO, from 01/09/2005 to 05/08/2005

Jeffrey T Graham - Merit Promotion, Elec. Tech. to Lead Elec. Tech., SO Soils Staff, 01/23/2005

Scott J Henderson - Soil Con. to District Con., Emmett FO, 02/06/2005

James P Montesi - Career Promotion, Hydrologist SO Soils Staff, 03/06/2005

V Bruce Sandoval - Civil Engineer (temporary promotion), Pocatello FO, 01/09/2005 to 03/19/2005

Kari A Short - Career Promotion, Soil Con., Rexburg FO, 02/06/2005

Susan K Tharp - Mgmt. Analyst to Admin. Officer, SO, 01/09/2005

Derek J Tilley - Career Promotion, Rangeland Mgmt. Specialist, Aberdeen PMC, 02/20/2005

REASSIGNMENT

Marika E Kearsley - Rangeland Mgmt Specialist, Burley to Mountain Home FO, 01/23/2005

Robert W Sampson - Civil Engineer, Transfer from Alaska, SO Tech. Services Staff, 03/20/2005

RETIREMENTS

Lee E Brooks - Natural Resource Specialist, SO Tech. Services Staff, 01/03/2005

David O Eby - Soil Con., Orofino FO, 03/01/2005

Marvin E Haagen - Soil Scientist, Moscow FO, 01/01/2005

Gary R Pfiel - Natural Resource Specialist, Pocatello FO, 01/03/2005

SEPARATIONS

Maureen S Boling - Soil Con., Jerome FO, 02/24/2005

Lynda S Jones - Admin. Mgmt. Asst., Pocatello FO, 03/01/2005

Emily Poor - Student Trainee Soil Con., Moscow FO, 01/31/2005