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

Quotable Quotes

"If there is no dull and determined effort, there will be no brilliant achievement."

-Hsun-tzu

(submitted by **Pete Sinclair**)

"Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming 'Wow, what a ride!'"

-Unknown

(submitted by **Kathy Dingman**)

Highlights

The newsletter for Idaho NRCS employees and conservation partners.

In This Issue

Emmet Tackles WRP ... 2
Ranchers Balance Smart Grazing ... 2
Snapshots from the Field ... 3
Directly Seeding ... 3
Grass Gazing at the PMC ... 4
Personnel Actions ... 4

Salmon Office Holds First CSP Sign-Up

About 13 percent of Lemhi Watershed producers signed up for the first ever Conservation Security Program (CSP).

"The sign-up was overall a success," says **Lindsay Obray**, CSP team leader and soil conservationist in Salmon.

State Conservationist **Rich Sims** *offers opening comments at one of the two public meetings held in the Lemhi Watershed.*

The Lemhi was one of 18 watersheds nationwide to participate in the sign-up July 6-30. CSP, authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill, rewards those farmers and ranchers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation on their land.

"This was definitely a hard time to hold a sign-up in the Lemhi Valley," Obray says. "Haying was in full-swing. Fifteen of the producers showed up the last afternoon and almost all of them had to go back home and get their farm records."

Still, Obray says the sign-ups demonstrate the valley's good conservation ethic. Several of the producers may qualify for Tier 2 or 3, the program's highest funding levels.

In 2005, the CSP sign-up is expected to include more than one watershed in Idaho, or about one-eighth of the state's producers. It may be another eight years before CSP returns to the Lemhi.

"With a new program, there is always skepticism," Obray says. "With a few success stories from producers in the Lemhi Valley, there will be more interest in the 2005 sign-up."

Just a few of the people making the sign-up a success: **Barry Albert**, *Cascade;* **Lindsay Obray**, *Salmon;* **Ralph Fisher,** *Boise;* **Frank Fink**, *Boise; and* **Glenn Shea**, *Boise.*

What to Expect in 2005

CSP will play a larger role in Idaho next year. We plan to target 3,000 producers in as many as six watersheds. A large information campaign will be needed to inform NRCS conservation partners and local producers about the program.

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Special Feature

Emmett Creates 100+ Acres of Wildlife Habitat

What do you get when you mix a range conservationist, some irrigation water and a few homeless ducks? Believe it or not—the final concoction is the Emmett Field Office's first Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) project.

In 2000, Landowner Richard Zamzow enrolled a 118-acre irrigated pasture along the Payette River into a perpetual WRP easement. After four public meetings and four years of engineering head-scratching, the Emmett office has transformed the pasture into three wetland cells making up 32 acres of surface water.

"We've been learning as we go," says Scott Henderson, Emmett range conservationist turned wetland engineer. "This was our first wetland restoration handled out of this office and there will probably be more."

The results of the sharp learning curve are readily evident—native grasses swinging in the wind, yellow-headed blackbirds perching on cattails, bull frogs croaking across rippling water.

"It didn't take long for wetland species to colonize this new habitat," Henderson says. "When you go out, you see wood ducks, blue-winged teals, stilts, herons, frogs … ducks were even nesting and raising ducklings this year."

Although the project's results are now readily evident, Henderson says it's important to allocate more time than you think you need.

"These projects take three to four years from planning to completion," he says. "But it's worth it—this is a perpetual easement and the values will be long term."

It's also important to communicate with the neighbors, Henderson says. The office held four public meetings—two for information prior to construction, another during construction and the final one after project completion.

Most of the neighbors believed the wetland would use more water than the prior pasture. However, once the wetland is full, it will use the same amount or less.

"We wanted to start meeting early so the neighbors felt they could still provide input," Henderson says. "All of them began as naysayers and now they're in the wait and see mode."

Emmett Range Conservationist **Scott Henderson** *and DC* **Levi Montoya** *open a headgate to increase flows to one of the wetland's cells.*

Ranchers Balance Smart Grazing, Wildlife Habitat

by Kristen Clayton
Public Affairs Specialist, Idaho Falls

Verl and Shirley Arnold love their ranch as they should—they've spent their lives restoring it.

When they bought the place north of St. Anthony in 1954, it was in terrible shape. But 50 years of proper grazing and it's as productive as can be.

"Don't get greedy and overgraze," Verl Arnold says. "Sometimes when you get a dry year, you've got to cut back and you've got to do it yourself. You shouldn't wait until someone tells you to."

The Arnolds worked with St. Anthony DC **Ken Beckmann** to become one of the first Idaho landowners to enroll in the NRCS Grasslands Reserve Program

Ken Beckmann *(right), walks with the Arnold's on their property.*

(GRP). They signed their land into a permanent easement, keeping it for smart grazing and wildlife forever.

"There must be 50 different kinds of plants here," Beckmann says. "The Arnolds are good examples of western ranchers who not only have improved their deeded land, but also care about the public land they graze. The entire Sand Creek Allotment is in great condition."

Arnold says he's not sure what's going to happen with the ranch when it's passed on, but his hard work will remain for others to enjoy.

Snapshots from the Field

NRCS Chief **Bruce Knight** *presents a USDA Honor Award to Southwest RC&D Coordinator* **Bill Moore**. *The award went to all of Idaho's nine RC&D coordinators for their work on community wildfire projects.*

Carrie Janssen-Smith, *Pocatello, shows Soil Quality Workshop participants how to use the Soil Quality Test Kit during a session in Moscow. Landowner* **Gary Esser** *(with his dog) also attended.*

Salmon DC **Mark Olson** *and Challis SCT* **Joleen McCandless** *visit with Producer* **Jerry Hawkins** *about the fish screen installed on his property. Olson left June 28 for 18-month military duty in Iraq.*

Direct Seeding Focus of Tour

by Phil Oestreich, Soil Conservationist, Lewiston

Soil quality, earth worms, bacteria, assimilation, mycorrhizal action.

These are terms associated with soil when direct seeding and no–till are used. They are also terms 63 participants became familiar with after a recent tour near Genesee.

The Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association hosted the tour. Jill Clapperton, a rhizosphere ecologist from the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Research Center in Alberta, Canada, was the guest speaker. Participants visited field trials at the Russ Zenner farm south of town where warm season crops (corn) are used in rotation. The farm also includes herbicide spray plots for broadleaf weed control in lentils, and winter pulse and brassica seeding trials.

Direct seeding improves soil's biological and physical characteristics. Also, sheet and rill, ephemeral gully and classic gully erosion decrease significantly.

Jill Clapperton *talks about soil quality with local producers.*

Cooperator benefits include an average fuel savings of 3.5 gal./ac., return from annual cropping, improved crop quality and yields, and better winter moisture reserves.

Challenges with direct seeding include getting through winter wheat straw and not plugging the drill when planting spring crops, or creating crop rotation diversity.

Funding for the tours was provided by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 319 program. For more information, visit www.directseed.org.

Kurt Cates, *Fort Hall DC, describes how potatoes grow to several Shoshone Bannock students as part of a recent Green Manure Expo held in Fort Hall.*

Staff from Idaho Falls NRCS, IASCD, DEQ, and East Side/West Side SWCD supervisors discuss a spring-fed water trough a landowner developed through the Emergency Conservation Program.

New Resources-Check Out These Conservation Products!

A 10-minute video on how the Plant Materials Program can help conservationists. It features Idaho STC **Rich Sims** and scenery from MT and OR. Contact: **Dan Ogle**, Boise.

Arco DC Steve Cote has authored a book on low-stress livestock handling, funded by NRCS and the Butte SWCD. Contact: **Rhoda Suderman**, Boise.

New Employees Tour Plant Materials Center

by Kristen Clayton, Public Affairs Specialist, Idaho Falls

A stop at the Plant Materials Center (PMC) is not only educational, but a whole lot of fun says NRCS employees who recently attended a field day there. Among those gathered at the Aberdeen training were NRCS personnel from around Idaho, Nevada and Utah, and Idaho's new student employees.

Dan Ogle, *Plant Materials Specialist, Boise, talks grasses with a new employee.*

How many of us really know what goes on at the PMC? A plot of land that, when viewed from the sky, looks like the striped brown and green shirt my sister wore back in the 1970s? That's why this one-day biennial training course is so important.

The tour participants learned the PMC can help them with their jobs—maybe finding a plant species for a rangeland need or offering willow cuttings for a riparian project. And ask PMC Technician **Brent Cornforth** to show you his natural way to catch mice! He'll likely demonstrate!

A visit to the PMC's demonstration plots teaches new techniques for plant establishment, windbreaks and grasses. New seeds are always springing and the PMC regularly releases new conservation plants to the public. The group toured the seed cleaning facilities, plots, nearby Idaho Department of Fish and Game farm, and ended with riparian training and a visit to a constructed wetland system just south of Aberdeen.

"Today's new employee training is probably the largest we've seen." says **Loren St. John**, PMC team leader. "Usually we'll have 20-30, but today we have close to 45 visiting."

An increase in new employees may be the reason. Since January 2004, Idaho has hired 20 new people. The student employment numbers have also grown—the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) and Student Career Experience Program's (SCEP) have made 10 new hires.

Above: New employees look over grasses being tested at the PMC in Aberdeen. Below: Idaho's STEP and SCEP hires from around the state.

Personnel Actions April-June 2004

CAREER CONDITIONAL APPT.

***Clayton, Ryan** to GS-05 SCT/Idaho Falls FO, 05/16/04.
***Elliot, Kathy** to GS-05 SCT/Lewiston FO, 05/16/04.
***Graham, Roberta** (Ronnie) to GS-05 SCT/Moscow FO, 05/16/04.
***McCauley, Connie** to GS-06 Admin. Asst. (P/T)/Mid-Snake RC&D, 06/13/04.
***Oliphant, Katie** to GS-05 SCT/Driggs FO, 05/16/04.
***Reaney, Dinah** to GS-05 SCT/Burley FO, 06/13/04.

EXCEPTED APPOINTMENT

***Helsley, Jessica** GS-03 returning Soil Con. Trainee/Moscow FO, 05/16/04.
***Firebaugh, Krystal** GS-04 Civil Eng. Trainee/Pocatello FO, 05/16/04.
***Josephson, Ben** GS-02 Bio. Sciences Aide/Aberdeen PMC, 05/16/04.
***Jungert, Amie** GS-04 returning Bio. Science Trainee/Gooding FO, 06/13/04.
***Matlack, Nathan** (Nate) GS-04 Range Mgmt. Trainee/Arco FO, 05/16/04.
***Poor, Emily** GS-04 Soil Con. Trainee/ Moscow FO, 05/23/04.
***Rodriguez, Krystle** GS-01 Soil Con. Aide/Payette FO, 06/06/04.
***Schwenkfelder, Kayla** GS-04 Civil Eng. Trainee/Salmon FO, 05/23/04.
***Tibbets, Donald** GS-04 Civil Eng. Trainee/Twin Falls FO, 05/16/04.

PROMOTION

***Albiston, Barbara** to GS-06, Human Res. Asst./Idaho SO, 05/02/04.
***Miller, Jack** to GS-07 SCT/Rigby FO, 05/30/04.
***Williams, Cameron** to GS-09, Soil Con./Soda Springs FO, 04/04/04.

TRANSFER

***Meagher, Maureen** to Rock Springs (Wyoming) RC&D, 06/12/04.

REASSIGNMENT

***Adkins, Denise** to GS-11DC/Rexburg FO (from Nevada BLM), 04/18/04.
***Simonson, Lorraine** to GS-06 Admin. Asst. (P/T)/Wood River RC&D, 06/13/04.
***Smith, Dean** to GS-11 DC/Blackfoot FO (from California NRCS), 05/30/04.

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