Montana NRCS Conservation Update

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Helping People Help the Land

Message from the State Conservationist

Joyce Swartzendruber

2010 will go down in the NRCS history books as one of the most full and eventful years we have had. Nationally we tackled new programs and new initiatives: Two Conservation Stewardship Program signups were conducted and completed within a thirteen-month period. We celebrated our 75th anniversary in great style. We embarked on an aggressive initiative to increase sage grouse populations to keep the species off the Endangered Species List. We staffed a new project planning team. We added more diversity to our staff through permanent hires and 20 Student Career Enhancement Program employees. We watched national newscasts with NRCS at the forefront of an unprecedented wetlands creation initiative to provide habitat in the Gulf of Mexico states for migratory birds. We embarked on several new engineering initiatives to better assess animal feeding operations and improve our water conservation and energy conservation on irrigation systems. We completed the first-over soil survey on private land in Montana!

We'd like to stop, take a breath, and celebrate our accomplishments, but life, and NRCS, are speeding by. 2011 presents new challenges and will bring new successes. This fall we are faced with writing conservation plans on approximately 700 Conservation Reserve Program contracts. We expect another CSP signup to end before the first of January. We will embark on a new way to capture the time it takes for our workload processes through Activity Based Costing. We will begin a new goals and budgeting process, based on what resource issues we report that we will address in the coming years. We will change to a new financial management system along with most other USDA agencies. We will implement a new USDA Consultation Process with American Indian Tribes. We will start using video-conferencing technology on a state to state and NHQ level. We will see some components of our stream-lining initiative begin to roll out to the field offices. And we hope to get approval to hold a state-wide safety conference for all employees.

State Conservationist Joyce Swartzendruber and Libby Office Team. As of August 30, 2010, when she visited the RC&D office in Libby, State Conservationist Joyce Swartzendruber has visited 100 percent of the NRCS offices in Montana. That means she has personally visited and met with the staffs of 70 field offices located throughout the state of Montana. This was a goal that Joyce set when she became Montana's state conservationist in 2009.

All in all, we are in an era of rapid growth in NRCS. We are a little bit like a teenage boy – growing and changing daily, and sometimes not understanding what it's all about! Our basic mission of Helping People Help the Land is still valid and alive. We must continue to find the ways to provide the best conservation planning for our customers. Hopefully our tools and programs can continue to improve to facilitate that mission.

National GLCI Steering Committee Meets in Montana

Lori Valadez, Public Affairs – Carla Lawrence, Beartooth RC&D

The National GLCI Steering Committee tours the Lee Ranch near Judith Gap.

Members of the National Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) steering committee convened in Billings, Mont., for their annual fall business meeting and tour, Sept. 10-11, 2010. The steering committee meets annually to discuss how it can continue to promote the health and well-being of the nation's grazing lands. Steering committee members represent national organizations and industries that have an interest in grazing lands

Steering committee members toured the Lehfeldt Ranch, a sheep ranch near Lavina, Mont. The ranch was founded in 1886 and fourth and fifth generation ranchers, Bob and Marie and Ben and Jamie Lehfeldt, still use the sheep genetics used by their ancestors to raise fine-wool Rambouillets. While raising sheep for meat and wool is the number one priority on the ranch, the Lehfeldts have also taken on conservation projects that benefit the sheep as well as the land. Working through the Montana Sheep Institute at Montana State University, they target sheep grazing in areas infested with leafy spurge and spotted knapweed. They are also working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to improve sage grouse habitat on their ranch by renovating pasture and developing water systems.

Next, the committee toured the Lee Ranch near Judith Gap, Mont. Owners Bob and Kathy Lee run a diversified cattle and grain operation raising crossbred cattle and dryland wheat and barley. "We manage our cattle in a way that enhances our natural resources," said Bob Lee. "We believe that caring for our land and caring for our cattle go hand-in-hand." The results of this philosophy were recognized in 1996 when the Lees won the 1996 national Environmental Stewardship Award, a program that has honored farm and ranching families for outstanding resource management since 1991.

The final tour stop was at the Invenergy wind power facility at Judith Gap, Mont. The facility consists of 90 General Electric wind turbines capable of producing 135 mega-watts. Each turbine has a rotor diameter of 77 meters, which is about 253 feet. Total height of the structure, with the blade straight up, is approximately 389 feet. All power is sold to Northwestern Energy.

The following day, the national steering committee met to review actions outlined in its strategic plan. GLCI seeks to carry out its activities through local, state and national partnerships. NRCS is a key partner in the initiative providing a national coordinator and advisors to the steering committee. GLCI is founded on the principles of voluntary action by those who own and manage grazing lands and a respect for private property rights. GLCI emphasizes high quality, voluntary technical assistance, expanded grazing lands research and education, and a more knowledgeable and informed public.

"Our work now is just as important as when we started this endeavor nearly 20 years ago," said Bob Drake, national GLCI steering committee chairperson. "For the land that we love and for the benefit it provides, we must continue to work to meet our goals."

The national steering committee was hosted by the Montana GLCI steering committee.

Planting the Seeds of Partnership

Misty Vermuln, Shelby

If you have spent much time hiking mountain trails or enjoying a public campground, you may have encountered a group of young people sporting green T-shirts, hard-hats, and pulaskis. This describes a crew with the Montana Conservation Corps (MCC). MCC is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to environmental and community services through a partnership effort. These services occur primarily on public owned land, although their mission encompasses a wide variety of service objectives including: trail work, community service, conservation, habitat development, historical restoration and more. The Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) has been in existence officially since 1993, but has roots that go back further than that. Their projects are sponsored by public entities and, in this way, these partnership efforts have a multiplying effect toward the on-the-ground results.

In 2010, The Toole County Conservation District (TCCD) partnered with the Montana Conservation Corps in an effort to create and enhance wildlife habitat for the critters along a stretch of the Marias River. Tom and Debra Lewis of Marias Ridge Ranch had developed and committed to a conservation plan and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) contract with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) which entailed planting 6,000 trees and shrubs to complement the existing river corridor. As the time for planting the trees approached, the Lewises began searching for labor to assist in this task. Available labor in the spring can be tough to come by, especially in an agricultural community with calving and seeding crops taking a front row seat. The Lewises' search led them to check into the MCC and from there, they approached the TCCD. The Conservation District board members were supportive of a partnership effort that would get trees planted in a timely fashion and facilitate project success. Marlene Moon, administrator for the TCCD, submitted a sponsorship agreement for the project. The MCC conducts projects on privately owned land as long as there are environmental and service oriented benefits. This wildlife planting was an ideal fit for their program such that two crews were scheduled.

In reference to the process, Moon and the TCCD felt it happened rather smoothly. They view this as "another way (they) can partner with other agencies and organizations to help producers put conservation on the ground." They plan to promote this cooperative effort further within the county. The MCC cost to support a crew for a week of labor was $4,500 and sponsors were asked to contribute $3,600. In cases like this, the landowners typically donate that amount back to the sponsor. In turn, the landowner can expect a crew of six to show up for the week that is scheduled and do whatever needs done. A technical (usually local) advisor is needed to direct them on the diverse projects that they agree to complete.

The efficient, dedicated MCC members kept the Lewises and their help hopping just to keep work lined up for them.

The MCC assisted the Lewises with planting their 6,000 trees that were devoted to wildlife habitat as well as helping to build the wildlife exclusion fencing, which will enable the plants to be protected from browsing deer in the area until they can become established. The crew endured all four seasons of Montana weather during their week of work. They diligently kept working through the wind, rain, and snow. At times they were forced to work in the Lewises' shop constructing fences but to their credit, they were highly flexible and willing to tackle any task that was at hand. The hardy folks tent camped in freezing weather, but woke up each morning ready to go and smiling to boot.

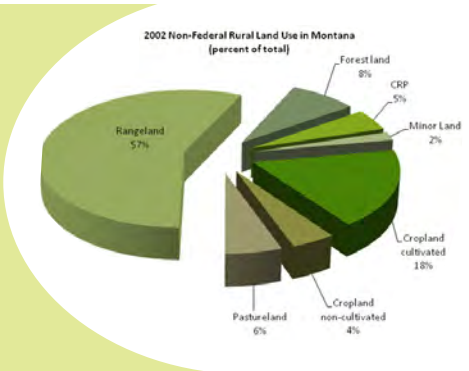
The Lewises were ever thankful and pleased with the quality of help they received from the Montana Conservation Corps. The assistance from MCC is helping them to achieve their goal of developing a diverse, productive, and wildlife-dense property. The help from MCC was just the beginning. Years of ongoing labor and effort are what lay ahead of the Lewises, but they are committed to seeing this through, and it's that dedication that will ensure the ultimate success of the project. The Lewises, TCCD, MCC, and NRCS are all hoping that this ground-breaking partnership effort and this particular project will "take root." For information or to learn about project sponsorship, check out the MCC Web site at www.montanaconservationcorps.org.

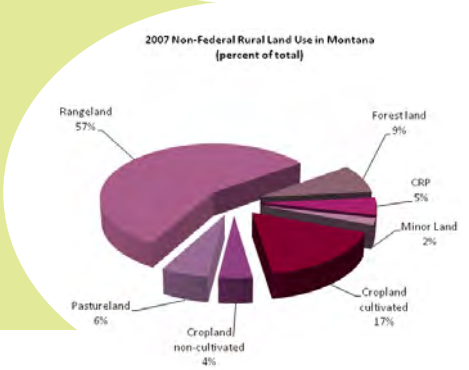
Montana Results from the 2007 National Resources Inventory (NRI)

Julie Tesky, State Resource Inventory Coordinator

Montana state level estimates from the 2007 NRI are now posted on the Montana NRCS website at http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/nri/index.html.

The 2007 NRI provides scientifically-based, statistically accurate estimates on the status, condition, and trends of land, soil, water, and related resources on the Nation's non-Federal lands. The latest NRI data are suitable for national, regional, and statewide analyses and are comparable across the 25-year period 1982 - 2007. NRCS conducts the inventory in cooperation with Iowa State University's Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology.





USDA Announces Conservation Innovation Grants in Montana and 45 Other States

Larry Cooper, Public Affairs

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced the winning proposals for the 2010 Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG). CIG invests in innovative, on-the-ground conservation technologies and approaches, with the eventual goal of wide-scale adoption to address water quality and quantity, air quality, energy conservation, and environmental markets, among other natural resources issues.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) received 230 full proposals and awarded nearly $18 million in Conservation Innovation Grants for 61 projects nationwide; six of those projects involve Montana. NRCS Montana State Conservationist Joyce Swartzendruber says projects approved for Montana "address significant concerns for our state and address viable on-the-ground conservation implementation issues."

Approved projects involving Montana include:

- A $170,000 grant to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to evaluate Sage-grouse and habitat responses to livestock grazing management practices.
- A $15,000 grant to the Arctic Grayling Recovery Program to install low-head fish screens for fluvial Arctic grayling in the Big Hole Watershed.
- A grant for $502,659 to the National Center for Appropriate Technology for a project in Montana and nine other states to integrate sustainable and organic agriculture into NRCS programs.
- A grant for $638,793 to the Environmental Defense Fund to develop protocols and accounting methods for carbon sequestration on rangelands in Montana and five other states.
- A $1 million grant to Montana State University to develop innovative conservation approaches to invasive plant management in the Missouri River Watershed, from prevention to control to biomass utilization/bio-fuel generation in Montana and five other states.
- A grant for $83,000 to the American Bird Conservancy to develop integrated management for forest health and cavity-nesting bird conservation in ponderosa pine forests in Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

Call for Nominations - Deadline: December 15, 2010

2011 National Wetlands Awards

The nomination process for the 2011 National Wetlands Awards is now open. Visit www.nationalwetlandsawards.org to download the nomination form.

Since 1989, the National Wetlands Awards have honored more than 150 outstanding individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary effort, innovation, and excellence in wetland conservation, research and education. Award recipients demonstrate the tremendous impact that individual dedication makes - inspiring greater stewardship of our national wetlands heritage. Recipients are chosen by a selection committee of wetland experts from across the country and honored at a ceremony on Capitol Hill each May - American Wetlands Month.

Awards will be given for individuals in the following six categories:

- *Conservation and Restoration*
- *Education and Outreach*
- *Landowner Stewardship*
- *Science Research*
- *State, Tribal, and Local Program Development*
- *Wetlands Community Leader*

More information and guidance on which category best fits a nominee's work is available on the nomination form. Nominees can only be nominated for one category each year.

The National Wetlands Awards are administered by the Environmental Law Institute and supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Highway Administration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the USDA Forest Service, the NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the George and Miriam Martin Foundation.

Seven Montana Tribal Colleges Receive Grant Funds

Larry Cooper, Public Affairs

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced awarding of $1 million in USDA Rural Development Tribal College Initiative Funds to tribal colleges in nine states. The grant awards include the following Montana tribal schools:

Blackfeet Community College:
$196,400. The funding will be used to purchase equipment and supplies for the new "green" math/science building on the main campus located in Browning, Mont.

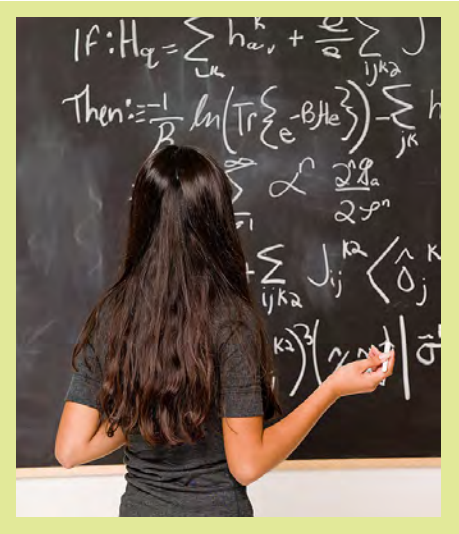
Little Big Horn College:
$196,400. The funding will be used to purchase equipment for the health and wellness facility.

Stone Child College:
$196,400. The funding will be used to purchase equipment and supplies for the Little Bear Health Enhancement Center, Physical Fitness Certificate Program, Athletic Program, Allied Health Program, and Nursing Program.

Fort Belknap College:
$196,400. The funding will be used to construct an addition to the cultural center by adding two immersion classrooms.

Confederated Salish and Kootenai College:
$196,400. The funding will be used for construction of a new Extension Education Complex headquarters which will provide offices, meeting space, training space, and vegetable and native seed processing space.

Fort Peck Community College:
$196,400. The funding will be used for energy efficient renovations and rehabilitation of facilities.



Chief Dull Knife College:
$196,400. The funding will be used to purchase an air conditioning unit for the information technology room, replace kitchen equipment, renovate buildings and purchase a 12-passenger van and four-door sedan

The Rural Development program helps Equity in Educational Land Grant tribal colleges purchase equipment, finance infrastructure improvements and develop facilities.

USDA Steps Up Organic Standards Enforcement

Larry Cooper, Public Affairs

The USDA s Agricultural Marketing Service instituted new procedures on September 1 to improve enforcement of standards established in the National Organic Program. The policies are designed to ensure all complaints of alleged violations of the standards and civil penalties are consistently handled.

Previously, complaints were referred to certifying agents for investigation and enforcement. The new procedure requires collaboration with the National Organic Program personnel by accredited certifying agents while dealing with all enforcement actions.

A new handbook prepared by the National Organic Program is now being published by the USDA. The book establishes the best practices for organic production and provides guidance on the allowance of green waste and approval of liquid fertilizers in organic production systems. The book addresses the use of processed animal manure, reassessed inert ingredients and calculation of dry matter intake to meet pasture requirements. Organic certification, accreditation procedures, international procedures, compliance and enforcement measures and appeals procedures are all identified in the book. The handbook is accessible at www.ams.usda.gov/NOPProgramHandbook.

Montana Organic Association Announces Glasgow Seminars

Jim Lindquist

Montana Organic Association is pleased to announce the Glasgow Seminars, Organic Grain -- Field to Market, at the Cottonwood Inn in Glasgow, Mont., on Oct. 9, 2010. This event will be "of particular interest for dryland grain farmers and grain processors in the eastern region," states Jim Lindquist, one of the seminar's organizers and a certified organic grain farmer. "We'll cover many topics of interest, such as what processors are looking for, as well as learning practical farming methods. This is also a great opportunity for conference attendees to network and brainstorm ideas with like-minded folks."

Keynote speaker, Dr. David Granatstein from Washington State University's Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources, will kick off the seminar with "Farm Sustainability: a Journey or a Destination?" Dr. Granatstein will give a hard look at sustainability of the whole farm, including environmental, social and economic aspects. Dr. Granatstein will speak again in the afternoon to examine "Dryland Grain Cropping Systems that Support Farmers and their Soils."

Also presenting will be Karri Stroh from FARRMS, the Foundation for Agricultural and Rural Resources Management and Sustainability. FARRMS, headquartered in central North Dakota, is an internationally recognized program for education and research on organic topics that bring sustainability to rural communities. Speakers from the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) will also explain the organic provisions of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and farmers enrolled in the program will discuss their experiences.

Other highlights include a grain buyers' panel with a discussion on the latest developments in the organic grain markets. Grain buyers from in and outside the state will speak to the current market trends. A video will feature Herb Sand's organic grain farm north of Glasgow. The video will follow a year in grain production on the farm from planting to harvest and sale. Sand has been certified organic since long before the USDA organic regulations were published in year 2000. He raises spring wheat, flax and peas and uses sweet clover and peas as green manure crops for soil building. Innovative practices include applying liquid carbon to the soil, vinegar for weed control and molasses for grasshopper control.

The all-day seminar will close with an open discussion forum for growers, moderated by Mikel Lund of Scobey. Lund is also a long-time certified organic farmer with a diverse cropping system and organic livestock.

The seminar includes snacks and a lunch meal featuring organic meat and vegetables from Montana producers.

The Glasgow event is sponsored in part by Kamut International, Montana Milling, West-Dakota Seeds, OFARM, North Central OCIA Chapter, North East OCIA Chapter, Montana Flour and Grain, Timeless Seeds, Montana Department of Agriculture, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and T&E Equipment. This event is also a great opportunity to spread the news about your product, service or organization. Sponsorship and advertising opportunities are still available.

For more information or to register, visit www.montanaorganicassociation.org or contact Jim Lindquist: orgwheat@yahoo.com 406-583-7722.

Montana Organic Association

Mark the Dates – Great Entertainment at MACD this Year

Thanks to Jeff Tiberi

Two legendary writers-performers have agreedtospeakandentertainatthisyear's Montana Association of Conservation Districts meeting, Nov. 16-18 in Billings, Mont. **Trent Loos** has agreed to open the convention offering a perspective on "food and conservation." Loos produces a radio program on his laptop and sends them out to more than 100 radio stations across the country boasting a listenership of 4 million people. He's a regular columnist for "Feedstuffs" newspaper and a partner in "Feedstuffs Foodlink" a project designed to provide facts related to the U.S. food production system. Loos has a ranch in central Nebraska and was himself raised on a diversified farm near Quincy, Ill.

The second MACD surprise guest this year will perform on Thursday night. He is famous country poet and humorist **Baxter Black**. You've heard his broadcasts on National Public Radio, on the Northern Ag Network and on many commercial radio and television shows. Baxter lives in Benson, Ariz., and has produced books, CDs and videos. He's proud of the fact he doesn't personally own a television or a cell phone. He says his idea of a modern convenience is "Velcro Chaps."

The MACD annual meeting is always considered a must-attend for many Montana NRCS employees, and this year will go beyond educational to truly entertaining. Be sure to mark the dates.

F5 Food Drive Ends with a BANG

Jill Binette

On Saturday, August 27, we braved the wind and rain and took out the 1952 NRCS work truck, the oldest truck in the agency's fleet, to challenge Bozeman Wal-Mart customers to help us "fill 'er'up"!! It seemed to be a fitting wrap-up for a pretty great effort to feed Montana's hungry. We staked out the grocery entrance to the store and cheerfully handed out our NRCS 75th anniversary commemorative shopping bags as gifts, telling folks we were having a food drive and would be grateful for any help they could provide.

Our generosity backfired (in a good way) as many people misunderstood the intent of the green bags being a gift. They continued on into the store, did their shopping, and then returned the bags to us full of food!! A lot of folks who may have only donated a can or two, gave us entire bags of food. We also encountered several busy people who threw money at us (literally), and we found ourselves in Wal-Mart purchasing additional food for the drive--what fun!

Our efforts were rained out about 2½ hours into the day, but declared the day a big success after we donated the 987 pounds we raised that day to the Helping Hands Food Pantry. In total, we collected more than 2,300 pounds of food which were donated to food banks throughout the state.

A huge thanks to employees throughout the state who participated.

Lower Birch Creek ARRA Project Tour Successful

Larry Cooper, Public Affairs

Darryl Baker, (left) NRCS civil engineer, explains to Robert Apodaca, (right) NRCS regional assistant chief for the West, the function of the AN-2 inlet and canal on the Lower Birch Creek irrigation project. The structures help control the flow of water, reducing soil erosion.

Robert Apodaca, NRCS regional assistant chief for the West, and Joyce Swartzendruber, NRCS state conservationist for Montana, led a successful tour on Aug. 6 of the now completed Lower Birch Creek Watershed irrigation project. This three-section project, located in Pondera County, was partially funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The federal funding, administered through NRCS, totaled $527,000 while funding from the Pondera Canal and Reservoir Company and the Pondera County Soil and Water Conservation District added another $366,000. Completion of the three work sites will result in stabilization of severe gully erosion by conveying excess irrigation flows back into the Lower Birch Creek. The water is now conveyed through buried pipes into stable water outlets into the stream corridor. Birch Creek ultimately flows into the Marias River and the Missouri River.

This is the outlet structure for flow from the AN-2, A, and A-4 canal. It serves as a stable outlet and flows directly into Birch Creek.

The AN-2 inlet and headgate/overflow structure. Excess flows are diverted into a stable canal that also collects excess water from the A canal. The inlet provides a stable structure for water to move into and down the canal without causing soil erosion.

The new outlet structure for flow from the L9-2 canal serves as a stable outlet for the project.

The A-4 canal inlet structure allows water to enter a 5,000-foot underground pipeline. It is one of three canals that are served by the AN-2, A, and A-4 canal erosion control project.

The new inlet structure that will direct water overflows from this point on the C canal (in foreground) into a new buried pipeline. Where no such pipeline exits, overflows resulting from irrigation shut downs during power outages, or heavy rainfall cause washout and erosion at vulnerable points along the canal. The buried pipeline extends downhill from this structure and along the road until it reaches the low point on this side of the road.

Montans NRCS employee, Tom Pick (wearing cap), and Iraqi farmers standing in a field of okra, tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers with sunflower borders to protect the vegetables.

Agriculture Secretary Honors Civilian Workers in Afghanistan and Iraq

Larry Cooper, Public Affairs

Although Montana NRCS Water Resource Specialist Tom Pick is still doing volunteer work helping farmers in Iraq, 20 of his USDA volunteer co-workers who have returned from similar duties were honored this month by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. He said the Obama Administration has sought out civilian expertise to help build a sustainable agricultural sector. In Iraq, Pick has been working the past 10 months to help farmers in Iraq deal with depleting water supplies.

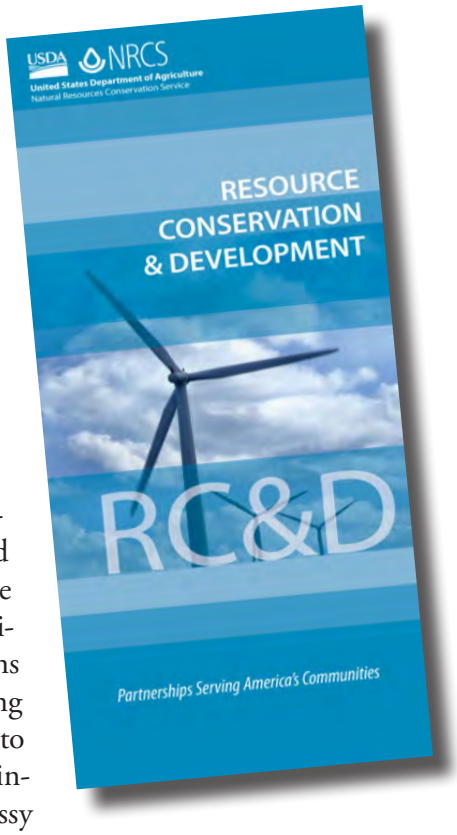
Because agriculture is so important to Iraq and Afghanistan, agricultural development is playing a major role in establishing stability and security in both nations. Vilsack says USDA specialists, like Tom Pick, are teaching producers in both countries to increase farm productivity, develop functional markets, improve availability of agricultural credit and enhance the supply chain infrastructure. USDA experts began working in Afghanistan in 2003 and in Iraq in 2006. Currently there are more than 90 USDA personnel working in the two countries.

Tom Pick (center) assisted with a class for young farmers in remote desert villages. These two young farmers won the hats they are wearing with their answers to questions Tom posed to a class about the subject matter of drip irrigation. They are holding cans of improved cucumber seeds (American source) that were handed out as part of the class.

RC&D Outreach Tools Available

Jacqueline Fernette, NHQ Public Affairs Director

A new Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) campaign – Partnerships Serving America's Communities – has been developed to highlight the many ways RC&D councils and their partners conserve natural resources, help communities become self-sustainable, help with job creation and retention, ensure sustainable agricultural production, make nutritious food more available, and assist with renewable energy opportunities.



The RC&D program is an important part of the NRCS and the entire USDA. RC&D councils help USDA agencies, including NRCS, accomplish priorities while meeting their own program elements of land conservation, water management, community development and land management. RC&D councils have been extremely successful at offering agricultural and conservation-based solutions to meet community needs. They help bring conservation and agricultural awareness to millions of people that are not directly involved in agricultural production. A glossy folder, brochure, fact sheets and do-it-yourself templates have been developed to showcase RC&D success stories. The brochure is available through the NRCS distribution center at: http://landcare.sc.egov.usda.gov/.

Montana State RC&D Association Announces 2010 Award Winners

Susan Sutherland

Dixie Berwick, Montana State RC&D Association president, announced the 2010 RC&D award winners:

- *Outstanding Coordinator – Monty Sealey, Central Montana RC&D*
- *Outstanding Council Member – Chris Malgren, Northwest Regional RC&D*
- *Outstanding Program Assistant – Becki Koon, Bitter Root RC&D*
- *Outstanding Council Employee – Casey Kulbeck, Northern Rocky Mtn. RC&D*
- *Outstanding Supporting Organization – Montana DNRC*

"These people have done a superb job of representing RC&D throughout the state" said Berwick. "We are proud of their efforts."

Major Railroad to Put Biodiesel to the Test in Montana

An announcement made at a 25x'25 Alliance discussion at the annual Montana RC&D Association meeting in Havre holds promise for biofuel development in Montana. The dean of the Montana State University (MSU) Northern College of Technical Services, Greg Kegel, reported that Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway will begin testing the use of biodiesel very soon. BNSF plans to rebuild two switch engines, one to run on standard diesel and the other to run on biodiesel fuel. The biodiesel will be produced in the Havre-Chester area. The railroad plans to periodically dismantle the two engines to analyze and compare engine wear. The tests are expected to be very comprehensive. Kegel said if successful, the tests could create a demand for biodiesel. He said the Havre BNSF refueling station alone uses 35 million gallons of diesel a year.

A research biochemist at MSU, Nester Soriano said a successful test could also result in significant changes in the creation of greenhouse gasses. Just one biodiesel powered switch engine in Havre could reduce greenhouse gas production by an estimated 1.4 million tons. The 25x'25 Alliance is an organization working to increase renewable energy resource production to 15 percent of the nation's total energy by 2025.

Forest Restoration Project Includes Montana Acreage

Forest Restoration projects in Montana are included in a new Federal program designed to partner conservationists, forest industry workers and cooperating agencies through a new law called "the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program." Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell announced approval of 10 projects throughout the United States.

In Montana, the 1.5 million-acre Southwestern Crown of the Continent Project will receive a little over $1 million. The project covers the Blackfoot, Clearwater and Swan River watersheds, 30 percent of which is private land. The initial funding for the Montana project is being matched by another $1 million in federal funds plus contributions from local partners

The initial funding in Montana will be spent to restore 1,368 acres of forest land, reduce fire risk on 1,535 acres, improve water quality and fisheries habitat on 181 miles of streams, pulling or spraying noxious weeds on 14,655 acres and other projects.

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Natural Resources Conservation Service

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Upcoming Events

For up-to-date conservation and agriculture-related events and activities in Montana, visit http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/news/events.html.

October 2010

- 1, State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
- 1-3, Young Ag Leadership Conference
- 2, Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) Renewable Energy Tour
- 5-6, Women Stepping Forward for Agriculture - Bozeman
- 8, AERO Renewable Energy Tour - Fort Benton
- 9, Montana Organic Association Seminar: Organic Grain - Field to Market
- 13-17, Society of Environmental Journalists Conference
- 15-16, Montana Farmers Union Annual Conference
- 22-24, AERO Annual Meeting

November 2010

- 6, Montana Organic Growers Association Conference
- 7-10, Montana Farm Bureau Federation Annual Convention and Trade Show
- 16-18, Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) Annual Meeting

December 2010

- 1-4, Montana Grain Growers Annual Convention and Trade Show
- 16-18, Montana Stockgrowers Association Annual Convention

January 2011

- 11-13, Montana Weed Control Association Annual Conference
- 6-10, Society for Range Management 2011 Annual Meeting