

NEW MEXICO INSIDER

A LOOK AT THE PROPOSED New Mexico OF THE FUTURE

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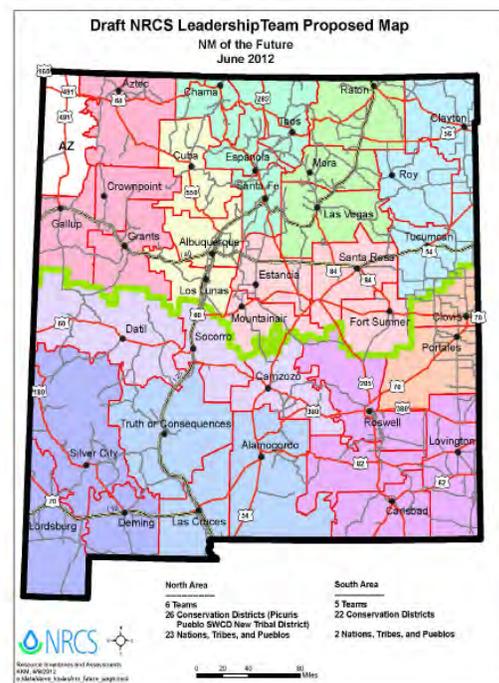
The goal of improving conservation planning and assistance to NRCS partners and clients continues. The concept of the New Mexico of the Future (NMOF) is one objective to help achieve that goal.

On a national level the process of developing the NMOF involves a complete evaluation of the partnership between NRCS and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) with the ultimate goal being to design the most effective system at the local level. NRCS Chief Dave White said the field office of the future should be one that makes better use of technical advances, divides labor between NRCS and conservation district staff, identifies cost saving opportunities and has locations that are best able to serve the public.

“Farmers and ranchers should not have to drive for hours to get to a field office,” said Chief White. “We must ensure that our range conservationists, soil scientists, soil conservationists, engineers, and agronomists are able to spend time in the field working with them one-on-one.”

The NMOF plan is an ambitious and proactive plan that builds on our foundation of a strong partnership with local Conservation Districts. It will maintain the sound scientific-base conservation technical assistance to farmers and ranchers that was used from this agency’s origin.

The NMOF team met to evaluate NRCS New Mexico’s current organization and identify needs and issues. During the second meeting the team developed partnership goals and a structure to address those issues. Some of the key purposes of the plan include (1) improving



our ability to spend more time providing direct conservation technical assistance to clients; (2) improve the supervisor to employee ratio; and (3) improve working relationships with Conservation Districts.

Their plan was presented to the New Mexico Leadership Team who reviewed it and its organizational structure map. A few of the changes were to create two Areas -- North and South. Another change involved re-drawing boundaries and consolidating some of the proposed teams, reducing the number from 14 to 11 teams. This plan was presented earlier this summer to NRCS New Mexico employees during a statewide employee teleconference.

The NMOF plan must now be submitted to NRCS National Headquarters for review and approval.

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STATE CONSERVATIONIST'S NOTES

While the world may seem as if it's whirling around us too fast, the employees of NRCS New Mexico must remain focused on the task at hand.

There are many things that can easily distract us from our daily work. The new Farm Bill is in draft in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. The rumors of how the Farm Bill will look are abundant, but until a final Farm Bill is passed nothing is certain.

In our state we are discussing the New Mexico of the Future. In this issue of the *Insider*, you will find a story which provides you with more detail about the progress and process. As I mentioned when I first spoke to all of you a few months ago, my role as State Conservationist is to place us in the best position possible to handle the challenges that await us. I want to make this agency the best it can possibly be and work within the parameters defined by our national headquarters and the Department of Agriculture.

Your role needs to be continuing to provide the best service possible to our producers, partners and the general public. There will be tough challenges in the way we conduct our business in the future. You can bet that the new Farm Bill and the New Mexico of the Future will have an impact on each of us. In spite of all the change there is a constant factor.

That factor is your personal and professional commitment to do your very best. NRCS is an anomaly -- a federal agency whose roots began by working one-on-one with our producers and partners who own and manage



J. Xavier Montoya, NRCS New Mexico State Conservationist

private agricultural lands in the U.S. This is our business, this is who we are and what we do. We may use different technology and more advanced scientific data, but we still do it in the old fashioned way— one-on-one with our producers and partners.

I applaud your consistent effort to do it right, despite the distractions. We will continue to keep you informed on what happens as our national lawmakers weave through the process that we know as the Farm Bill and with updates on the New Mexico of the Future. Keep up the good work!



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EARLY WARNING AND DETECTION SYSTEM UNITS TO HELP NEW MEXICO COMMUNITIES

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE FUNDS UNITS FOR BURN AREAS

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in New Mexico will provide funding for approximately eight Early Warning and Detection System (EWDS) units that will provide emergency management officials with more time to notify residents of impending floods.

The rainy season in New Mexico officially began in mid-June and the threat of flooding is compounded by the damage caused by two major wildfires in New Mexico – the Whitewater Baldy Complex Fire and the Little Bear Fire.

The burned areas are prone to flash flooding, endangering communities downstream from these impacted watersheds. There is also the concern over water quality as ash and debris make their way into affected watersheds.

“The EWDS units will provide residents and landowners downstream with more time to prepare for impending flood waters resulting from monsoon rains,” said State Conservationist for NRCS New Mexico, J. Xavier Montoya.

“I applaud the NRCS for moving quickly to protect New Mexicans by installing an Early Warning System,” U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman said. “Many New Mexicans have already suffered too much this year as a result of major wildfires, which have done a tremendous amount of damage. Installing an Early Warning System will help keep those residents safe.”

New Mexico is the first state to use EWP funding to obtain the Early Warning Detection Systems. Other states dealing with fire reparations are looking at NRCS New Mexico's success and plan to follow it.



Units similar to these will be customized and installed in NM; pictured units are located in AZ.

To reduce the threat to life and property, NRCS NM used Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program funds to purchase and install EWDS units along those burned watersheds.

NRCS traditionally provides funding and technical assistance primarily to private agricultural producers. In this instance the EWDS units will be located on U.S. Forest Service-managed lands, upstream from private landowners' properties that are at risk.

NRCS NM is cooperating with the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security Emergency Management, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Catron County and the New Mexico State Division of Forestry.

USGS will install, monitor and maintain the EWDS units on the upper end of the impacted watersheds in the Gila National Forest.

Annual USDA Feds Feed Families Food Drive Reaching the End

Every year USDA employees have the opportunity to lend a helping hand to those who need it, with one goal in mind: to feed families. The annual Feds Feed Families food drive helps accomplish just that.

In only its fourth year, Feds Feed Families has prompted USDA employees into action and collected millions of pounds of food for those in need.

In 2010, USDA employees donated 432,000 pounds of food, but raised the bar in 2011, with over



2,000 food drives organized across the country and a collection of 1.79 million pounds of food!

This year's goal is to collect 1.8 million pounds of food nationwide, amounting to about 20 pounds per employee. Types of food needed include: boxed, canned or bagged non-perishable food items.

A donation bin has been set up in the New Mexico USDA State Office building on the first floor, and New Mexico USDA employees have donated a total of 281 pounds!

The Road Runner Food Bank of New Mexico will be the recipient for all donations; they will collect the last barrel at the end of the day on Friday, August 31. For more information on the food drive visit, www.fedsfeedfamilies.gov.

New Mexico Office of the Future Frequently Asked Questions

The New Mexico of the Future (NMOF) work continues. Here are some updated Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that offers some clarity on the process. You can find more detailed information on the NMOF at:

<https://nrsc.sc.egov.usda.gov/west/nm/ops/NM%20OF%20THE%20FUTURE1/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

What is the process used to 'reassign' District Conservationists?

- Where only one GS-12 District Conservationist (DC) exists within the new proposed teams, he/she will be "reassigned" to the new GS-12 District Conservationist positions at their current locations.
- Where two or more GS-12 DCs currently exist within the new proposed teams, retention standing will be used to determine which GS-12 is reassigned into the new position at their current location.

So, what exactly does that mean?

The existing GS-12 DCs will be "ranked" based on retention standing with the other GS-12s currently within the boundaries of their respective teams to determine who is higher on the list. The person higher on the list will be reassigned to the position. Retention standing is based on years of service, veteran's preference, and performance ratings. There are 3 locations in which there are more than one GS-12 DC:

- Clovis, Portales
- Los Lunas, Albuquerque
- Roswell, Carlsbad, Lovington

Based on retention standing, the DCs currently in Portales, Los Lunas, and Lovington will remain the DCs. The others will be reassigned to other GS-12 positions and may involve relocation.

At this time, we plan to reassign the East Area Engineer to the vacant GS-12 Water Quality Engineering position located at the State Office. We have not determined the reassignments for the DCs currently in Albuquerque, Clovis, Roswell, or Carlsbad nor have we determined the reassignment for the East Area Resource Conservationist. However, there are several options available such as:

- o DC positions in the teams that do not currently have a GS-12. Those teams are:
 - Datil, Socorro, Carrizozo
 - Mountainair, Santa Rosa, Estancia, Ft. Sumner
 - Lordsburg, Deming, Silver City
- o Area Programs Specialists located at:
 - Albuquerque
 - Las Cruces
- o Other GS-12 positions that may open up due to attrition

Where will the locations for the DCs in the above three teams be?

- Socorro
- Estancia or Ft. Sumner
- Lordsburg or Deming

How soon will the plan be implemented?

Once the New Mexico reorganization plan is approved, implementation will begin January 1, 2013.

NMOF continued from page 1

The NMOF implementation will happen next calendar year and be fully operational over a one-year period.

The NMOF plan has one important component that will help launch its successful journey – that is the direct input from the very people who know this agency's mission best – its employees and partners.



NRCS Assists with Little Bear Fire Public Information Expo

NRCS joined more than 40 government, non-government, business, property insurance, faith-based and non-profit organizations to answer questions and provide assistance to hundreds of residents and property owners impacted by the Little Bear Fire. The Little Bear Fire Public Information Expo was held in July in Ruidoso, New Mexico.

Cliff Sanchez, Assistant State Conservationist for Water Resources; and John Hartung, former District Conservationist for the Carrizozo Field Office, visited with 100 residents impacted by the devastating fire that consumed 240 homes and 12 outbuildings.



Sanchez and Hartung provided information to residents on topics such as on how to seed their land, erosion control practices, and scheduled appointments for one-on-one field visits by NRCS New Mexico and Upper Hondo SWCD specialists.



Pictured above (from top to bottom): Cliff Sanchez, NRCS NM Assistant State Conservationist for Water Resources briefs Susie Galea, Mayor of Alamogordo, NM, on the role NRCS provides in helping fire victims; Sanchez answers questions and provides conservation assistance to Ruidoso residents.

Pictured bottom right: John Hartung, former District Conservationist in Carrizozo, NM provides conservation assistance to a local resident.

THIS VOLUNTEER IS HERE TO STAY...MEET MELISSA MAY

Interview by: Hillary Bravenec and Edwin Kitzes

Melissa May has been hard at work in San Juan County since her volunteer position began last September. Through a partnership between the San Juan Watershed Group, the NRCS Earth Team program and the San Juan Soil and Water Conservation District, she has brought education and awareness to water quality issues afflicting the San Juan River watershed. Not only has she collaborated with producers, community leaders, residents and students, she has been instrumental in implementing water quality programs and securing grant funding for watershed group projects. She's been an asset to the Aztec Field Office, and her dedication has not gone unnoticed.

Tell us a little about your background. Where you grew up, your family, your interests and hobbies?

I grew up in the city, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I went to college at Penn State, where I got my Bachelor of Science in Environmental Resource Management and stayed on to get my Masters of Science in Wildlife and Fisheries Science. Both of these programs at Penn State were in the College of Agriculture, which at the time I didn't really appreciate, but now I'm definitely glad to have a background in agriculture! I moved to New Mexico last September, and am really enjoying all of the outdoor recreation in this region. I love hiking, camping, and bird watching, and so far I've barely gotten started on all there is to see and do in the Four Corners area.

Describe your Americorps position.

I am a member of the Western Hardrock Watershed Team, which is a joint program between the Office of

Surface Mining and AmeriCorps VISTA. The team was initially started to address the water quality and economic impacts of legacy hardrock mining in the mountain west, and now our team members work on a broad range of environmental and community development issues across Colorado and New Mexico. (Visit www.americorps.gov for more information)



How have you collaborated with NRCS?

My volunteer placement is with the San Juan Watershed Group, which is working to reduce nutrient and bacteria pollution in the San Juan, Animas, and La Plata Rivers through implementing best management practices at the local level. I am working out of the NRCS Aztec office, and have been working with the staff there to talk with producers about the BMPs they can use to help reduce the amount of runoff containing nutrients and bacteria that reach the river.

The watershed group has funding available through a Clean Water Act Section 319 grant, so producers in the EQIP program who choose to add additional BMPs to improve water quality are eligible for additional funding. This is a win-win because the producers end up paying less than they would have without the added BMPs, and they are having a positive impact on water quality.

What do you like about working with conservation and NRCS?

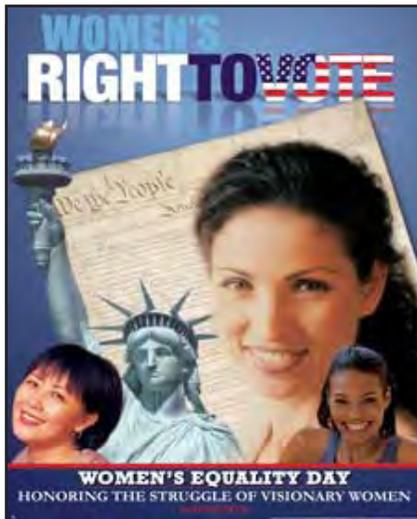
I really like meeting with local landowners and producers and getting involved in projects that are going to have a real improvement to water quality. So far I have only worked in the planning stages of these projects, and am looking forward to seeing some actually happen on the ground.

Do you think you will pursue a career in the field of environment and conservation?

I am already planning to pursue one! When my AmeriCorps term ends in August, I am going to work for the San Juan Soil and Water Conservation District, which also operates out of the NRCS Aztec office. I'm excited to get to continue collaborating with NRCS, and hope to see some of the projects that I helped with through to their final stages.

If you had a million dollars to use towards conservation, what kind of project would you develop?

I would love to see a conservation effort that involved all of the landowners on a whole stretch of river. If you could get all of the people that lived in a sub-watershed to work together alongside their neighbors and address multiple resource issues - nutrient management, erosion control, riparian buffer restoration, invasive species removal, etc. - it would create a model of what could be possible if these conservation practices were used together on a larger scale. Of course money isn't the only thing preventing a project like this from happening, but a million dollars definitely wouldn't hurt!



Celebrating Women's Equality Day

In 1971, Congress designated August 26 as Women's Equality Day after Rep. Bella Abzug (D-NY) brought forth the request.

That particular date was selected to commemorate the passage of the 19th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which was passed in 1920, granting women the right to vote.

The passage of the 19th Amendment was the culmination of a wide spread peaceful civil rights movement by women that began in 1848 at the world's first women's rights convention, in Seneca Falls, New York.

The observance of Women's Equality Day not only commemorates the passage of the 19th Amendment, but is now also meant to shed light on women's continuing efforts toward full equality.

Workplaces, libraries, organizations, and public facilities now participate with Women's Equality Day programs, displays, video showings, or other activities.

Soil Conservationist Receives Recognition for Past Work

Santa Fe, NRCS employee, Sharon Elias recently received acknowledgement for her past work from Texas State Soil Scientist, Dennis Williamson.

While working as a Soil Scientist in Texas, Sharon helped complete the Soil Survey for Loving and Winkler Counties from 1989 to 1992. Prior to relocating to the NM Natural Resources Conservation Service, she spent 1992 through 1993 working on the Young County Texas Soil Survey.

All NRCS employees, as well as many others who work in the field of conservation know that the completion of the Initial Soil Survey is an historic milestone, representing over a hundred years of dedication and cooperation.



Because of Sharon's contributions in the completion of the Initial Soil Survey, Texans (and some on our side of the line) are using detailed information about their soil, helping them to make more educated and wise decisions about their land under their care.

NRCS Launches New Employee Organization for Women

NRCS has a new employee organization, the National Organization of Professional Women in NRCS (WIN). WIN is currently accepting membership and is preparing to become fully operational.

"In this year of the 150th Anniversary of the Department of Agriculture, this is a historic event for women in NRCS and all who support them," Chief Dave White said. "This grassroots effort began in 2009 and through the diligence of several NRCS employees, this organization became a reality."

WIN aims to promote the recruitment, retention, and leadership development of its female members, as well as female participation in NRCS programs and services. The goal is to provide women with training, opportunities, and mentoring so they can develop into their fullest professional potential and improve their advancement opportunities.

WIN also wants to assist its members to become high performing, diverse, innovative, and motivated employees who transform the workplace, which they say will be accomplished by:

- Advocating for a gender diverse work force and leadership;
- Identifying and resolving barriers to employment, leadership development, and retention of female employees;
- Serving as a liaison to promote greater female participation in NRCS programs and services; and
- Shaping the future of natural resource management.

"I encourage all interested employees to join and become active, participating members," said Chief White.

Membership is open to all regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, familial status, or political status.

For more information about WIN and how to get involved visit www.winnrccs.org.

PERSONNEL NEWS

NRCS Faces in New Places

Effective March 2012

Angelica Chavez was selected for the Budget Officer position in the state office.

Chambliss Lantana was selected as the District Conservationist in Aztec, NM.

Johnna Blankenship was selected as the District Conservationist in Santa Rosa, NM.

Justin Riggs, Soil Scientist in Las Cruces, transferred to the Army.

Effective April 2012

Bridget Howell, Contracting Officer, transferred to U.S. Customs in Washington, DC.

Gary Garrison, Rangeland Management Specialist in Deming, retired on April 30, 2012.

Joseph Whitehead, East Area Resource Conservationist in Clovis, retired on April 3, 2012.

Steven Alves was selected for the Contracting Officer position in the state office.

Effective May 2012

Brenda Reed was selected as the new Archeologist in the state office; she joins NRCS from the Forest Service.

D'LLaynn Bruce was selected as the East Area Resource Conservationist.

Effective July 2012

Daryl Nieto was selected for the Budget Analyst position in the state office.

NM Civil Rights Advisory Committee Welcomes New Members...Current List Below

Sean Lewis, from Roy, is the Chair and Member-at-Large.

Troy Thompson, from Roswell, is the South Area Representative.

Amber Riordan, from Lordsburg, is a Member-at-Large.

Mark Lewis, from Lovington, is the East Area Representative.

Hilary Bravenec, from Aztec, is the Northwest Area Representative.

Kristen Lemoine, from Albuquerque, is the State Office Representative.

Chambliss Lantana, from Aztec, is the American Indian Program Manager.

D'LLaynn Bruce, from Clovis, is the Asian-Pacific Islander Program Manager.

Shawna Allen, from Carrizozo, is the Black Emphasis Program Manager.

Donna Lisby, from Lovington, is the Disability/Veterans Emphasis Program Manager.

Kristi Justice, from Las Cruces, is the Federal Women's Program Manager.

Phillip Herrera, from Carlsbad, is the Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager.

Edwin Kitzes, from Los Lunas, is the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Program Manager.

