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## West Virginia NRCS News and Views

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
 August 2011

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West Area Women in Agriculture Day, East Area High Tunnels Meeting.



[EQIP Improves Permanent Pastures](#)

Rex Gardner, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician (now retired), worked with Frank and Liz Abruzzino to improve their grass pastures.

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[Multiple Programs Adds up to Success in the Chesapeake Bay](#)

A producers uses a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Reserve Program (CREP) to improve his family's land.

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NRCS employees set up another beautiful exhibit this year

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West Virginia USDA are participating in the 3rd annual "Feds Feed Families" Food Drive from June 1 through August 31, 2011.

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The South Area had two Landjudging events taking place; one was held at the Appalachian Plant Materials Center, which is located on the Old Prison Farm Road near Alderson. The second event was held in Kanawha County.

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SanJeanette (Sandi) Williams, Sarah Fitzwater, and Luis Marin.

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To submit news items for the November *News and Views*, please send an e-mail message to [Carol Lagodich](#).

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The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain and improve our natural resources and environment.

NRCS West Virginia State Office  
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Kevin Wickey, West Virginia State Conservationist

NRCS field offices are located throughout West Virginia  
Visit <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/> for addresses and phone numbers.

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**Message from Kevin Wickey**

FY2011 has been a tough year in several ways, but once again a very productive year for conservation and I'm proud of what we've been able to get done together in West Virginia. We've had a lot on our plates the past few months with the budget issues, losing the RC&D and watershed programs. These times of uncertainty can be very challenging, and there are more uncertainties ahead. One issue pending in 2012 is the passage of a new Farm Bill. It's hard to say just yet what it will look like, but I will keep you updated.

USDA is undergoing Cultural Transformation. Like Chief White said in a recent e-mail, *at NRCS, Cultural Transformation isn't a dramatic departure from how we operate. Instead, it is an affirmation of our core beliefs; founded upon mutual respect for each other and an abiding love for conserving our natural resources.* The goal is to ensure USDA is a place where there's equity of opportunity for all employees and everyone who works here is empowered to reach their full potential. And not just employees, we treat our customers equally as well. Over the past two years, USDA has worked to resolve all large civil rights cases and has entered into settlements with black farmers, Native American farmers, women farmers and Hispanic farmers who faced discrimination in the past.

As noted in this newsletter and in emails sent out over the past few months, the Feds Feed Families food drive wrapped up this past week. Thank you for supporting the Feds Feed Families initiative. It was a great opportunity to show how valuable NRCS employees are to their communities.

Kevin Wickey  
 State Conservationist  
 West Virginia

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## From the Field

### West Area Women in Agriculture Day

The 2nd "Women in Agriculture Day" workshop was held on June 7, 2011 at the Moundsville Center located at the former WV Penitentiary. The conference floor was lined with exhibits including an NRCS exhibit featuring pollinators. The speakers topics included food storage and preservation, beef, and garden maintenance. Many door prizes were given out and all participants went home with at least one houseplant.



David Bauerbach staffed the NRCS information table and met some of the women connected with family farms.



Katie Fitzsimmons and Nicole Viars were part of the team that organized the successful event--doing everything from initial planning to preparing for the lunch. Other West Area NRCS employees helping included Crystal Buchanan, Cathy Jefferson, Ed Hanson, and Noah McCoard.

The Sponsoring/Supporting Agencies included USDA - Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development. Non-USDA support came from Northern Panhandle Resource Conservation & Development; Northern Panhandle Conservation District; WV Department of Agriculture; Marshall County Farm Bureau, Northern Panhandle Stockman's Assoc., and Knight's Farm Supply.

### East Area High Tunnels Growers Learn About High Tunnels from Industry Expert



Sixteen growers from West Virginia attended a meeting with Rimol Greenhouses salesman Rich Connor on July 12th, 2011 at the Tygarts Valley Conservation District office conference room. The Tygart Valley Growers Association (TVGA), a local group of growers working with WesMonTy RC&D, hosted Rich Connor to speak about high tunnel options available to them.

Most attending growers have recently accepted NRCS EQIP contracts that will allow them to fully transition to organic, year-round production using high tunnel technology.

Mr. Connor is an industry expert, and his extensive knowledge on greenhouses was appreciated by the attendees. He answered questions from growers and showcased different materials for over one hour. He then reviewed orders with growers and stayed to socialize and speak about farm operations. He fielded questions such as when to use fans, the advantages of roll-up sides and how long different materials are expected to last.

According to Ben Nemeth WesMonTy program manager "the presence of Mr. Connor demonstrated the importance of small-scale agriculture in West Virginia, and the active supporting role USDA NRCS is playing." One couple drove over two hours just to attend the meeting and have their questions answered. According to Mark Hollen TVGA President "Small-scale growers in West Virginia need continuing support for their operations and the Tygart Valley Growers Association, WesMonTy RC&D, NRCS and Tygarts Valley Conservation District are in a position to continue to provide it."

For more information, contact [Jason Teets](#) at 304-457-4596.

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## Multiple Programs Add up to Success in the Chesapeake Bay

Josh Frye is the third generation farming his family's land in the Cacapon Watershed in Wardensville, WV. Frye Poultry manages over 260 acres, which includes the operation of three broiler houses with a flock capacity of 93,000 birds. The annual production is approximately 700,000 birds. Currently, approximately 100 head of cattle are kept on this farm and the adjoining property (owned by brother, Joe Frye) during the grazing season. Several NRCS financial assistance programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG), and the Conservation Reserve Program (CREP) have been used to improve the land.

Josh grappled with a problem most poultry growers face—the rising cost of heating with propane. Research led Frye to an Illinois-based company, Coaltec Energy, which produced gasifiers for agricultural use. Frye applied for grants and low-interest loans from NRCS and other government agencies. He was awarded a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to install the necessary technology.

The poultry litter is used as fuel to heat the poultry houses and significantly reduce fuel costs for the farmer. The operation also has a positive impact on the bird growth and health. The humidity level in the house is lower—over 20% less, and the bird's growth was as much as 7% higher. The use of the gasifier reduces the workload to maintain the house and could have a significant impact on the operating costs when incorporated in the design of a new facility. The reduced work load and the ability to bake the house between flocks can decrease the time between flocks, increasing the opportunity for the farmer to generate revenues. Initially, the benefits were thought to be confined to cold weather and winter months. However, the ability to utilize the gasifier to produce cool air through a chiller has huge potential.

A variety of unexpected benefits were discovered. The ash as a fertilizer supplement has substantial value. The byproduct of the gasifier, biochar, contains high levels of carbon and is a very effective organic fertilizer. One of Josh's primary focuses is the benefits of using biochar to replace organics in depleted soils to improve productivity. Researchers are investigating using biochar to capture carbon in soil to lessen global emissions and as a way to remediate coal fields and Superfund sites, since the material readily absorbs toxic metals. Mr. Frye is dedicated to continuing research on the possibilities of the biochar material. It may also be beneficial as a feed supplement to replace dicalcium phosphate.

The first-ever Clean Energy Award was awarded to Frye in 2009 by the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection for his efforts in his poultry litter gasification project. His interest in energy issues recently led him to be one of the first agricultural producers in the nation to have a Farm Energy Audit completed by EnSave with funding through EQIP.

The farm well pumping system was updated and 760 feet of pipeline was installed to supply an off-stream watering system for the cattle. These improvements compliment the prescribed grazing system that had been put in place approximately six years ago when Mr. Frye worked with tenants who lease the farm and practice sound grassland management. The off-stream watering system excludes cattle from the stream, improves water quality, reduces streambank erosion and improves and restores wildlife habitat. Frye Poultry has installed a Waste Storage Facility and follows an approved Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP).

A seven-acre riparian forest buffer is in the Conservation Reserve Program (CREP). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) built over 3,300 feet of fence to exclude cattle from the protected area. Many conservation partners are interested in this riparian project, because of native trout populations in the headwaters of Slate Rock Run. Trout Unlimited (TU) uses the site to monitor

water temperatures and improve stream habitat. Hardy County students planted 160 trees (in addition to the 720 that were planted by a private consultant) as a way to learn about conservation.

Mr. Frye hopes to preserve this property for future agricultural use by enrolling in the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) to put a conservation easement in place.

Mr. Frye has hosted many agricultural researchers and members of Congress at his farm to promote what he believes can be a great opportunity for farmers in our region. It is hoped that research at this facility will help make the system more affordable for other farmers and provide a solution for excess manure in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and reducing dependence on foreign oil.

Poultry farm production in eastern West Virginia has tripled in the past 20 years. Enormous amounts of manure is produced annually—more manure than can be safely applied to nearby fields. This excess animal waste has the potential to degrade water quality, especially in the Chesapeake Bay. Finding other uses for poultry litter helps reduce excess nutrients in the area, protect water quality, and bolster the economic strength of West Virginia poultry industry.

For more information, contact Christi Hicks, Acting District Conservationist at 304-530-2825, Extension 105 or [Christi.Hicks@wv.usda.gov](mailto:Christi.Hicks@wv.usda.gov).



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**Publication Updates****NRCS Distribution Center Office Relocation Update**

The National Earth Team and the NRCS Distribution Center Office will be relocating to Urbandale, IA in October 2011. The move to the new facility will consolidate millions of publications under one roof and give customers better service. They anticipate this move will require the office to close down for approximately 2 weeks in October.

**Web Soil Survey**

The latest version of the Web Soil Survey will soon be posted on line. As in the past, we updated the WSS brochure to reflect the changes and/or enhancements. In addition to updating the brochure we also redesigned the brochure to coordinate with the newer WSS exhibit, produced a few years ago. Also the new brochure has been posted online as a pdf file (<http://soils.usda.gov/survey/>) for downloading if needed. In addition, for those who requested it, a Spanish version of the new brochure also has been posted as a pdf file at the same address, however, we did not print the Spanish version because of limited funding. It is only available as a downloadable file. Keep in mind the actual Web Soil Survey site is only in English.

Submit your orders to Carol Fisk, at [Carol.Fisk@lin.usda.gov](mailto:Carol.Fisk@lin.usda.gov) or [LindaM.Greene@lin.usda.gov](mailto:LindaM.Greene@lin.usda.gov). Please make sure you include your mailing address so we know where to ship your order. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call Linda at 402-437-5879.

**Small Scale Solutions for Your Farm**

A new series of publications is "Small Scale Solutions for Your Farm." The publications were developed by the East and Central National Technology Support Centers to support NRCS conservation planning activities with small scale and specialty farms. NRCS State, field, and area employees can customize these publications by entering their local contact information in the yellow box on the last page of each publication prior to distributing them to their local producers. (Good for fair handouts).

There are 41 small scale conservation practices in this series with four of the publications translated into Spanish. These publications are written in an understandable manner that explain the practices and present multiple pictures so producers can also visualize the practices.

Go to the East National Technology Support Center Share Point Site at <https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/st/ENTSC/Planning%20%20Assessment/Small%20Scale%20Farms/Small%20Scale%20Solutions%20for%20Your%20Farm%20-%20Publications> to download the PDF document.

The publication titles are:

- SmallScaleSolutionsforYourFarm-ReadMe
- Ag\_Chemical\_Handling\_Facility\_2011
- Alley\_Cropping
- Animal\_Mortality\_Disposal\_2011
- Balancing\_Animals\_w\_Forage
- Biological\_Pest\_Management\_Insects\_Disease
- Biological\_Pest\_Management\_Plants
- Composting\_Manure
- Cover\_Crops
- Direct\_Seeding\_Trees
- Early\_Successional\_Habitat\_Management
- Farmstead\_Windbreaks\_2011
- Fence
- Fish\_Pond\_Management
- Forest\_Farming
- Fuel\_Fire\_Breaks\_2011
- Grade\_Stabilization
- Heavy\_Use\_Area\_Protection
- Irrigation\_Water\_Management
- Irrigation\_Water\_Management\_Spanish
- Low\_Cost\_Irrigation\_System
- Low\_Cost\_Irrigation\_System\_Spanish
- Managing\_for\_Native\_Pollinators
- Managing\_Manure\_Nutrients
- Managing\_Manure\_Nutrients\_Central\_2011
- Managing\_Manure\_Nutrients\_East\_2011
- Manure\_Storage
- Odor\_Control\_Livestock
- Pasture\_Management
- Pruning
- Rotational\_Grazing
- Rotations\_for\_Livestock\_Feed
- Rotations\_for\_Pest\_Management
- Rotations\_for\_Soil\_Fertility
- Runoff\_Management
- Selecting\_an\_Irrigation\_System
- Selecting\_an\_Irrigation\_System\_Spanish

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- [Small\\_Woodlot\\_Improvement](#)
- [Soil\\_Erosion\\_Control](#)
- [Soil\\_Testing](#)
- [Sources\\_of\\_Water](#)
- [Sources\\_of\\_Water\\_Spanish](#)
- [Spring\\_Development](#)
- [Stream\\_Crossing](#)
- [Vegetative\\_Barrier](#)
- [Watering\\_Facility](#)
- [Well\\_Plugging\\_2011](#)

If there is a topic you would like covered that is not in the series, contact David Lamm, East National Technology Support Center, by telephone at (336) 370-3339 or by e-mail at [david.lamm@gnb.usda.gov](mailto:david.lamm@gnb.usda.gov) or Cheryl Simmons, Central National Technology Support Center, by telephone at (817) 509-3314 or by e-mail at [cheryl.simmons@ftw.usda.gov](mailto:cheryl.simmons@ftw.usda.gov) and they will try to satisfy your request.

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## The 87th West Virginia State Fair

Submitted by Debra Murphy, South Area Program Assistant

The West Virginia State Fair is an annual event that takes place in mid-August on the fairgrounds in Fairlea, near picturesque Lewisburg, West Virginia. The Lewisburg fair evolved from local events that date back to 1854. It was in 1941 when the state government declared the present site as the official site for the State Fair. When the gates opened Friday morning, August 12th, West Virginia began the 87th annual event in grand style.



NRCS employees set up another beautiful exhibit this year thanks to the staff from the Lewisburg Service Center which included District Conservationist Tom Vance and Soil Conservationist Katy McBride, as well as Randall Lester and Warren Haynes of the Appalachian Plant Material Center. The exhibit included information on the Earth Team Volunteer Program, colorful posters about pollination, information on the USDA Settlements & Claims Process, as well as informational handouts about NRCS programs. A popular planner displayed pictures of NRCS conservation practices along with a description of each practice.



The exhibit also featured a variety of beautiful grasses and legumes provided by the Appalachian Plant Material Center located in Alderson, West Virginia. The sample of grasses & legumes seemed to attract and play toward the curiosity of the people.



Thanks to a generous partnership with WVU Extension, the State Fairgrounds had a High Tunnel on display for Fairgoers to enjoy.

NRCS employees that worked during the fair helping to pass out NRCS literature and to talk with folks about NRCS programs included: Lee Godbey, District Conservationist from Union; Clay Handley, Soil Conservation Technician from Summersville; Susan Davis, District Conservationist from Buckeye; Rick Patterson, District Conservationist from Summersville; Dewey Broyles, Soil Conservation Technician from Union; Bill Harris, District Conservationist from Princeton; Debra Murphy, Program Assistant from Beckley; Rob Pate, Soil Scientist from Beckley; Laura Davis, Soil Conservation Technician from Summersville; Warren Haynes, Biological Science Technician from Alderson; Randall Lester, Plant Materials Center Assistant Manager from Alderson; Matt Ware, Wildlife Biologist from Huntington, Dustin Adkins, Soil Conservationist from Huntington; Adam Merritt, Soil Conservation Technician from Buckeye; Tom Vance, District Conservationist from Lewisburg; and Katy McBride, Soil Conservationist in Lewisburg.

To quote a famous movie line "WHO ARE THOSE GUYS"?? Mr. Wickey is definitely on the right but who is that man on the left with the new hairdo??



That's right! It's Greg Stone, Assistant State Conservationist for the South. Greg is saying "hats off" to his South Area staff for meeting all of their goals before opening day of the state fair and doing such a great job with the State Fair exhibit.

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## Bits and Pieces

### "Feds Feed Families" Food Drive

In June, West Virginia USDA employees and friends contributed 617 pounds of food to the *Feds Fed Families* food drive. Bobby Lewis (Rural Development State Director), Sarah Graham (Scott's Run Settlement House), Kevin Wickey (Natural Resources Conservation Service WV State Conservationist), and John Pettit (Farm Service Agency State Executive Officer), discussed most needed items. The agency heads agreed to match pound per pound their employee's contributions.



For more information on the food drive go to

<http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/news/release/2011/11july6ff.html>.

Jeff McClure, Geologist, took the challenge to join the OPM Hall of Fame, a recognition program reserved for those individuals who make a one-time donation of 250 pounds or more. He took the shopping list given to him by the coordinator of the Duff Street Methodist Church in Clarksburg and spent several hours shopping for food. The Pantry serves approximately 8 families a week. The families are allowed to select the type of food they like so they will receive food they will use.



Barbara McWhorter, State Forester generously donated 70 pounds of food to the Horner United Methodist Church.

Charlotte Elliot-Friend and JR Wolf collected donations from employees and did the shopping for them—purchasing case lots of food.

The total state donations will be available at a later date but we have at least doubled the 2010 total.

Thank you to everyone who has made a donation.



### SharePoint Photo Submissions

Remember to submit photos to the NRCS photo site at

<https://nrcs.sc.gov.usda.gov/east/wv/photos/layouts/viewlists.aspx>

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## Conservation Education

### South Area Landjudging

Submitted by Debra Murphy, South Area Program Assistant

The month of May was a busy time for the South Area, particularly May 5th.

The South Area had two Landjudging events taking place; one was held at the Appalachian Plant Materials Center, which is located on the Old Prison Farm Road near Alderson. The second event was held in Kanawha County under the direction of new District Conservationist Julie Stutler. Mother Nature cooperated fully as it was a beautiful day for both events with each having a good turnout of participants and NRCS employees to help with the contests.

Landjudging in West Virginia focuses on the conservation of agricultural land. Many of the same factors for judging the agricultural land apply to the evaluation for home sites. The Landjudging program teaches students about soil properties such as texture, drainage permeability, soil depth and erosion. It also shows how certain land practices such as farming on the contour, diversion ditches, and pasture management can protect and conserve the soil and water resources. Students learn about land capability classes which tells them how intensively land can be used without causing damage, how to protect it from erosion and loss of plant nutrients, and how to improve crop production.

#### **Kanawha County:**

The Landjudging contest held in Kanawha County benefited from assistance by the West Area staff. The West Area was gracious enough to send help in the form of Soil Scientist Carlos Cole, Rodney Sites and Luke Hunter. I know Luke, there is no place like home, but you do not need ruby slippers to come back! The South Area employees present were Julie Stutler, Patti Mitchell, and Jackie Byars. These three ladies made a wonderful team providing information to contestants and doing whatever the situation called for. Some of the tasks preformed by the above mentioned employees during the contest included being a "buddy", which is someone who takes a team around to each of the sites; a "Pit Monitor, who is a person who makes sure that the contestants follow the rules; a "runner", who is a person who runs the contest cards back to the scoring table for grading and calculation of final scores; and finally the group that actually grade the individual cards and tally the final scores.



NRCS employee Carlos Cole passes on his many years of knowledge and experience.

I know the suspense is killing you, let us find out who the winners are.

#### Homesite Evaluation:

- 1st: Ravenswood FFA
- 2nd: Wirt FFA
- 3rd: Ripley FFA

#### Landjudging Evaluation:

- 1st. Ravenswood FFA
- 2nd. Mason FFA
- 3rd. Ripley FFA

### **Appalachian Plant Materials Center:**

This contest was sponsored by the Southern Conservation District and the Greenbrier Valley Conservation District.

The Landjudging contest held at the Appalachian Plant Materials Center near Alderson benefited greatly from the vast knowledge of the following NRCS employees : Soil Scientist Rob Pate from the Beckley Area Office; District Conservationist Tom Vance and Soil Conservationist Katy McBride from the Lewisburg Service Center; District Conservationist Susan Davis ,Norris Long Soil Conservation Technician from the Buckeye Service Center and Adam Merritt Soil Conservation Technician with the Buckeye and Lewisburg Service Centers ; District Conservationist Lee Godbey, Soil Conservationist Wanda Smith and Conservation Technician Dewey Boyles from the Union Service Center; and District Conservationist Bill Harris from the Princeton Service Center. Randall Lester, (PMC Assistant Manager) and Warren Haynes (Biological Science Technician) assisted Rob and Katy with the preparation of the soil pits.



Rob Pate goes over the rules before sending the teams to the sites.

Contestants are allowed to have the following pieces of equipment:

- a writing pencil with an eraser,
- a clipboard,
- knife,
- towel,
- score sheet.

Once the contest begins and contestants are at the field sites, no talking or comparing answers are allowed.



Bill Harris thinks he is “King of the Hill”, but his role here is “Pit Monitor”. The Pit Monitor’s job is to make sure that there is no talking at any time, and to gather up the score sheets as each person is finished with their test.

The contestants are given 30 minutes to judge the factors in each field and record them on score sheets. Then the sheets are handed to the runner who takes them to the scoring table to be calculated.



Grading and calculating the scores, starting from the top left is Dewey Bolyes and to his right is Norris Long . In the bottom picture to the left is Susan Davis and to her right is Lee Godbey.



Busily organizing and entering the final scores into the computer; starting from the left is Susan Davis, Tom Vance and Katy McBride.



Katy McBride reads the results as Rob Pate gets ready to hand out the awards.

#### Homesite Evaluation

1st: Shady Gold  
2nd: Monroe 4-H  
3rd: Summers FFA

#### Landjudging Evaluation

1st: Summers FFA  
2nd: Monroe 4-H  
3rd: Shady Gold

Clay County was the overall winner of both Homesite and Landjudging.

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## Useful Links

### Could Soil Help Heal the Climate

Submitted by Rob Pate

Article from Discover Magazine, May 2011

<http://discovermagazine.com/2011/may/06-could-dirt-help-heal-the-climate>

### Your Working Life in a Cube: Making the Best of a Difficult Environment

Many federal employees work in an office "cube" environment. With more people in a smaller area, observing common etiquette is essential. Here are tips on how to get along with your "cube mates."

<http://www.fedsmith.com/article/2939/living-cube-making-best-difficult-environment.html>

### Six Tips for Bridging the Communication Gap

As you may have observed, women and men who work closely together often get tied up in communication knots, especially over issues that involve power, advocacy, and managing the troops.

That's because the sexes have distinct ways of communicating. They request action and advice differently. Their verbal responses and timing are different. And they have different styles for expressing workplace demands.

The result can be miscues and misunderstandings. In other words, lots of crosstalk.

<http://www.microsoft.com/business/en-us/resources/management/leadership-training/women-vs-men-6-tips-for-bridging-the-communication-gap.aspx?fbid=b82jOKeKqSD#tipsforbridgingthecommunicationgap>

### SC NRCS is pleased to announce the world premiere of *Soil Stories!*

Submitted by Amy Overstreet, SC NRCS PAS

*Soil Stories* was born out of a collaborative effort between the Earth Sciences and Resources Institute-University of SC and SC NRCS.

Dr. Buz Kloot, the film's director, cinematographer, scriptwriter, and editor, worked with SC NRCS State Soil Scientist Pam Thomas to get all the information about soils across, but in a way that was engaging. "While facts came easy, it's not always easy to be engaging on this subject," admitted Kloot. Until that is, when Kloot gained insight at a ScienceFilm workshop in Washington State. Someone suggested to him, "why don't you make a movie about people who have a relationship with the soil?" Well, the rest is history, and *Soil Stories* does just that.

In the production, our main character, Francine, embarks on a journey of discovery that begins with her realization that soil is alive and that without soil, life as we know it would not exist.

In her journey of discovery she meets with soil scientists who help her "see" beneath the surface of

the soil and help her understand how diverse yet ordered soil bodies are in the landscape and how much work has been done in soil survey.

In the second half of the story, Francine meets with characters that help her take an up close and personal look at some physical and biological attributes of soils without which they would not function. In the final part of the video, a character from history, Mr. Hugh Hammond Bennett ("Big Hugh") shares an epiphany about soils with Francine and translates this to modern terms.

Please visit the link below and let us know what you think!

<http://vimeo.com/channels/soilstories>

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## West Virginia's Civil Rights

### Interactive Census Map



The Washington Post has an interactive census map. It uses numbers from 1990, 2000, and 2010 to show trends including percent change, population, density, and family type by total, in White, Black, Hispanic or Asian populations. Information may be displayed by state, county, or zip code. There are very clear demographic shifts, most notably a dramatic increase in the Hispanic population across the country including WV. Since 2000, the ethnic change in WV has been 81.4% Hispanic, 31.3% Asian, 9.3% Black, and 1% white.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/nation/census/2010/>

### Sexual Orientation in the Workplace:

#### Questions and Answers

#### What is Sexual Orientation?

Everyone has a sexual orientation. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines sexual orientation as an emotional or affectional attraction to another person. This includes heterosexuality (attraction to the opposite sex), homosexuality (attraction to the same sex) and bisexuality (attraction to either sex). A person's sexual orientation emerges during adolescent development and is not the result of a conscious choice. The APA states that individuals can choose whether or not to act on their feelings, but cannot voluntarily change from one orientation to another.

#### Why is sexual orientation a workplace issue at USDA?

Employees should expect to find a diversity of sexual orientations at USDA. In the past, it was common practice to fire or to refuse to hire suspected homosexuals in the Federal workplace. Employees have been physically threatened, verbally abused, and subjected to hostile working conditions. Laws and policies have changed, and all USDA employees need to be aware of their responsibility to prevent this form of discrimination and to ensure that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals are an accepted and valued part of the diverse USDA workforce.

#### Why do some people need to talk about their sexual orientation at work?

Sharing aspects of one's personal life with coworkers is a normal part of everyone's workday. Conversations about spouses, friends and family help form bonds of mutual respect and trust that support a productive workplace. Unfortunately, many LGBT employees do not discuss their personal life at work for fear that they will be rejected, harassed or threatened by other employees, thereby damaging their opportunities for advancement and promotion. Therefore, to enhance the productivity of ALL employees, it is just as important for LGBT individuals to be comfortable to speak about personal issues and matters as do other co-workers.

#### What if my religion says that homosexuality is morally wrong?

The USDA workforce includes a diversity of religious views, and discrimination on the basis of religion is prohibited in the Federal workplace. This means that no one can or should ask an employee to change his or her religious beliefs on homosexuality. Conversely, this also means that religious objections to homosexuality cannot be imposed on other coworkers or be used to obstruct nondiscrimination laws, policies, and diversity activities.

#### What are the laws and policies that prohibit sexual orientation discrimination at USDA?

The 1978 Civil Service Reform Act states that Federal Agencies cannot "discriminate for or against

any employee or applicant for employment on the basis of conduct which does not adversely affect the performance of the employee or applicant or the performance of others" [5 USC 2302(b)]. Presidential Executive Order 13087, issued in 1998, provides for "a uniform policy for the Federal government to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation." The Secretary's Civil Rights Policy Statement has prohibited sexual orientation discrimination at USDA since 1993.

#### **What should I do if I believe I have been discriminated against because of my sexual orientation?**

There are five avenues of redress available to a Federal employee who wishes to resolve a conflict or file a complaint of discrimination based on sexual orientation: (1) Alternative Dispute Resolution; (2) Agency discrimination complaint procedure; (3) Agency or Union grievance procedure; (4) Office of Special Counsel; and (5) Appeals to the Merit Systems Protection Board (for allegations involving personnel actions that are otherwise appealable to the Board). The employee who wishes to pursue conflict resolution or file a discrimination complaint using one of the above options should contact his or her Agency's Office of Civil Rights for specific information.

#### **Does USDA offer domestic partner benefits?**

LGBT employees of USDA can share some Federal employee benefits with their domestic partners. For example, domestic partners can be designated as beneficiaries of an employee's Thrift Savings Plan and life insurance policies if the employee files the appropriate beneficiary forms. Insurance and retirement cannot be shared with an employee's domestic partner by law and regulation.

#### **What can I do to make USDA a better workplace for LGBT employees?**

LGBT coworkers should be welcomed and valued members of your work unit. Acts of harassment or threats against LGBT employees should be reported immediately to your manager. Employees should refrain from LGBT jokes and negative comments. An individual's sexual orientation should not be a factor in hiring, promotion, evaluation, and work assignment decisions. Finally, the Department needs the thoughtful attention of every member of the USDA family in order to create a work environment where LGBT employees are safe, respected, and able to share in the full responsibilities and benefits of employment.

#### **Where can I go if I have further questions about sexual orientation issues at USDA?**

The USDA Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Special Emphasis Program Manager (LGBT/SEPM) is located within the Department's Office of Human Resources' Management. Each Agency should also have a National LGBT/SEPM.

You can contact your Agency's Civil Rights and Human Resources Offices for further information on how to contact them as well as to obtain information on complaint procedures, benefits, and local events and activities.

Last Modified: June 8, 2011 by Nance/NRCS

### **USDA PRIDE Celebration**

The USDA PRIDE Celebration was held Thursday June 2, 2011 in the Jefferson Auditorium. The infamous montage is shown at the end of program.

Some of the highlights include:

- For the first time, in the over ten times that this event has been held, a Color Guard opened the program...in recognition of the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell.
- For the third year in a row, Secretary Vilsack attended the program.
- The Secretary's portion of the program opened with his "It Gets Better" message.
- The Secretary signed the new expanded Departmental Civil Rights' Policy that now includes gender identity.
- Carole Jett received the Award from GLOBE (the USDA Chapter of the Gay Federal Employee's Organization). Carole now serves as the Deputy Chief to the Secretary after a distinguished career with NRCS AND
- The Montage!!!

(1) LGBT Pride Observance (Open captions)

<mms://ocbmtcwmp.usda.gov/content/da/060211pride.wmv>

(2) LGBT Pride Observance (No captions)

<mms://ocbmtcwmp.usda.gov/content/da/060211f.wmv>

The entire program runs just over an hour (67 minutes).

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**Meet . . .****SanJeanette (Sandi) Williams**

Administrative Specialist Intern  
 Business Management Leadership Program (BMLP)

Morgantown State Office

Hi, I'm Sandi Williams. I bring you greetings from the Peach state Georgia!

I joined the NRCS family in January 2011 as an Administrative Specialist intern in the Business Management Leadership Program (BMLP).

Before joining NRCS, I served and retired from the United States Air Force after 20 years in June 1999. Most of my career was spent working for the Judge Advocate General (JAG) Department as a paralegal. I've had tours and the pleasure of seeing many great sites in Asia, Europe, and the United States.

After retiring from the Air Force, I took on the greatest challenge of my life, teaching high school students, as a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp (JROTC) instructor. I taught for 12 years before moving on to my current adventure, NRCS.

I have a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration which I put to good use as the owner and operator, for seven years, of a Child Care facility called "Lollipop Kids".

I am married to a wonderful man named Steven and we have two dogs, Misty and Scooter. We love motorcycles and spend most of our time seeing God's great countryside on a loaded Harley.

**Sarah Fitzwater**

Acting District Conservationist  
 Romney Service Center  
 AIAN SEPM

Greetings! Most everyone already knows who I am, but just in case you have forgotten, I am Sarah Fitzwater. I have been married to a wonderful husband, Chad for eight years and have three beautiful children; Calli who is 6 along with Bransen and Cohen who will be 5 September 1st. Yes they are twins!

I joined the NRCS team while attending college in 2001 as Soil Nutrient Aid and accepted a position as a Student Career Experience Program or a Soil Conservationist trainee. After graduation, I started full time as a Soil Conservationist. Over the past few years I have served NRCS in many capacities, from acting Toolkit Coordinator to RC&D Coordinator, and currently the Acting District Conservationist in Romney, WV.

I have lived in West Virginia my entire life and I am very fond of the mountains I call home. I graduated in 2004 from West Virginia University with a Bachelors degree in Agronomy. I have assisted local Envirothon Teams in preparing for national competitions and have been a guest speaker at several Professions in Agriculture courses offered at West Virginia University. I also serve

as the American Indian Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program Manager for West Virginia.

I believe in conservation and the ability to teach and guide producers through the planning and implementation process. I have proved to local farmers that smart conservation practices not only help the land but if they are managed properly they also help the farm's bottom line. I have written several success stories that have received attention from other states and often lead to an onsite visit for other conservationist to see the improvements that were made.

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**Luis Marin**  
Earth Team Volunteer  
Petersburg Service Center

In May 2011, I began working with NRCS as an Earth Team Volunteer in Petersburg WV. I moved to West Virginia from San Juan, Puerto Rico last January. I completed my bachelor degree in Agricultural Machinery, and I am currently finishing my Master's degree in the Department of Crops and Agro-environmental Sciences, with a major in entomology at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez Campus.

In 2006, I did my summer internship with NRCS at Caguas, Puerto Rico field office. I had such a great experience working with the agency, that in 2011 I decided to move to the United States for several reasons. One of them was to broaden my knowledge and learn more about different soil conservation practices.

While being a volunteer, I help conservationists with developing and implementing soil conservation plans, by assisting them in the field. I've also been having a good experience helping with Dam inspections around different counties in West Virginia. While working with the agency I have learned that the agency goals are the same as mine when it comes to helping people help the land, and I wish to obtain experience in the conservation field so when an opportunity comes, to have a professional career within the agency.

I thank the Petersburg field office staff and everyone who has helped me and allowed me be part of the broad NRCS family

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**Personnel Updates**

(Submitted by Sandi Williams as of 7/17/2011)

Name	Action	Location	Effective Date
Laura McLane	Retirement, Secretary	From State Office	05/30/2011
Sarah Fitzwater	Temporary Promotion, District Conservationist	To Romney FO	05/22/2011
Becky Strogon	Change in Hours, Secretary	From State Office	05/29/2011
Norm Bailey	Change in Duty Location, Waverly	To Parkersburg AO	05/29/2011
Pat LaRocco	Change in Duty Location, Oakhill	To Beckley AO	05/29/2011
Dick Gray	Retirement, District Conservationist	From Moorefield FO	07/02/2011
Barbara Casto	Retirement, Clerk	From Cross Lanes RC&D	06/30/2011
Heather Hinson	Temporary Promotion to Parkersburg AO	From State Office	07/07/2011
Rex Gardner	Retirement, Soil Conservationist Tech	Mt. Clare FO	07/16/2011
Debra DeLaney	Resignation, Clerk	Philippi RC&D	07/10/2011
Christie Hicks	Temporary Promotion District Conservationist	Moorefield FO	07/03/2011
Jessica Ball	Temporary Promotion District Conservationist	Petersburg FO	07/03/2011
Aron Sattler	Promotion to Texas	From Morgantown FO	07/17/2011
Valarie Hannon	Reassignment to Oklahoma	From Pt. Pleasant FO	07/17/2011
Jackie Byars	Reassignment From Cross Lanes	To Pt. Pleasant FO	07/17/2011

**HR Minute**

Submitted By Sandi Williams

Just a reminder that the Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) (also known as "early out") has been approved for all USDA employees with an initial open period of June 1, 2011 – August 30, 2011. The early-out authority is available to all employees, regardless of grade or job series. Contact Human Resources if you have any questions about VERA.

**Contact Information Update**

Hopefully everyone has updated their "Contact Information" in EmpowHR. The deadline was June 2011. In case you forgot, see NB 360-11-25 @ <http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=30226>. Follow the screen-by-screen instructions in the attachments.

**Government Credit Card Employee Responsibility**

It's the employee's responsibility to ensure that payments are made on time. Late payments are unacceptable and in direct conflict with USDA's "zero tolerance" policy and WV NRCS Instruction No. 360-300, WV 300.4 at [http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/wv\\_instruct/360-300penalty.pdf](http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/wv_instruct/360-300penalty.pdf)

**PayDay - National Finance Center's (NFC) Payroll Process**



Quiz: Do you know the official payment date of record?

A: The official payment date of record with the Department of Treasury is Thursday (2nd week of next pay period) following NFC's bi-weekly payroll process. Many financial institutions will post employees account early as "pending" or "memo posting" transactions however; this is a courtesy of some institutions, not all. Employees should not rely on their financial institutions to provide this courtesy service. Employees who have direct deposit could see their deposits as early as Monday after the Payroll processing weekend. For further information contact HR (Diana Bokoch or Karen Fitchett)

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