USDA

United States Department of Agriculture

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2016

WHO LEADS OUR SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAMS?

NRCS UNVEILS NEW AGENCY COLORS & BRANDING

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov

Soybeans, Madison County

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On the cover: *Badger Creek Lake in northern Madison County. The lake was built as a PL-566 project in 1980.*

a Message from the State Conservationist

Kurt Simon,
State Conservationist

A Busy, Rewarding First Year

I completed my first year as State Conservationist in October, and in that time I crisscrossed the state at least a dozen times meeting with nearly every NRCS staff member and partner employee. I've also met nearly half of Iowa's 500 soil and water conservation district commissioners.

I've formed relationships with members of the Iowa conservation community including farmers, state agencies, commodity groups and other non-profits. My goal was to listen and learn so that I can make informed decisions about NRCS policies, programs, funding and staff.

Despite the different backgrounds, professions, ages, and opinions of the people I met, there is one powerful common characteristic shared by nearly every person: We all care about Iowa farmers and the future of Iowa agriculture.

I've worked for NRCS for more than 30 years. I don't recall a time when the conservation community has been involved in such an important wide-scale public debate. Water quality is a complicated issue, with many stakeholders with opposing positions on the best solutions for Iowa's water quality concerns.

Although this is a challenging time for conservation farmers and professionals, from my perspective, it's also one of the most rewarding. The impact of our work has never been greater, the conservation focus has never been stronger, and our decisions have never been more significant.

So, as I move forward in my second year here in Iowa, I look forward to continuing to work with you to positively impact water quality and soil health in the state. And lastly, as we get closer to the holiday season, please be safe and enjoy time with family. Thanks for your hard work and commitment to conservation this past year.

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Current Developments is a product of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Des Moines, Iowa, published bimonthly by the Iowa NRCS Public Affairs Staff in cooperation with NRCS and partner agency employees from across the state.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS STORIES AND PHOTOS

Please submit your Current Developments story ideas and photos to State Public Affairs Specialist Laura Crowell at laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov. Past issues can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/ia/people/employees/?cid=nrcs142p2_008273

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GREAT EXAMPLE: EAGLE GROVE STUDENTS LEARN FROM SMITH

Submitted by Bruce Voigts, Boone River Watershed Coordinator

The Wright Soil and Water Conservation District and Iowa NRCS staff hosted a field trip for the Earth Science class from Eagle Grove High School on Sept. 20.

Their teacher, Lindsay Haugland, is covering a unit on "Conservation of the Land and Water" and the field trip fit right into this topic. Iowa Conservation Farmer of the Year 2015, Tim Smith, hosted the student field trip.

Smith, along with Bruce Voigts and Tas Stephen from the NRCS field office in Clarion, discussed such conservation practices as cover crops, bioreactors, strip tillage, soil health, nutrient management, and wetlands with the students.

Iowa farmer Tim Smith shows off a radish that was grown on his farm to students from local Eagle Grove High School.

From Smith's farm, the group toured a wetland (CREP) site under construction. The students became aware that a wetland like what they visited, has research and ongoing monitoring by Iowa State University, demonstrating that strategically sited and designed CREP wetlands remove 40-90% of nitrates from cropland drainage waters. This particular wetland has 1,025 acres that flows into this wetland. Even though the wetland is under construction, there were numerous water birds on the water with countless tracks in the mud of previous "visitors" to the pool that is starting to fill with water. Ducks and wading birds were plentiful.

Smith talks about the benefits of cover crops to a group of students from Eagle Grove High School.

Overall, a common comment heard from the students was, "this was good information for their reports" they are planning to do on conservation.

The students should have increased their knowledge on ways producers can help reduce nitrogen and phosphorus loss from their farm fields.

BACK IN THE DAY

1938

On the R.M. Thomson farm in Cresco, test plots of grass seedings show the effect of fertilizers. The left side is bromegrass and the right side is redtop.

1940

A northeast Iowa farmer makes full use of alfalfa. Sows were self-fed alfalfa during the winter. The producer cut costs by 50% using alfalfa hog pasture and hay.

1938

Knoxville farmer Asa Mann plows under sweet clover seeded in wheat stubble the prior spring.

1937

Monona farmer Alvin Lanker stands in a cornfield with his son, showing off the results of phosphate fertilizer has advanced corn maturity date.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Doug Adams

Title: Soil Conservation Technician, Humboldt

College Education:

» A.A. Applied Science Degree, Iowa Lakes Community College, Farm Management, 1993

Younger Years: I grew up on the family farm near Humboldt. We raised corn/beans and some pigs. I have one younger sister, Julie, who lives in the Kansas City area now.

Conservation Background: My dad was open to trying new things. For my 8th grade science project we looked at different tillage practices on cornstalks comparing plowing, chisel plowing and no-till. I also read a lot of magazine articles of farmers modifying equipment to make their farms more efficient, and reducing tillage seemed to be a great way to make the use of the equipment we had.

In college we visited Jerry Crew's farm in Clay County and I remember him saying, if you think you have gumbo soil that needs worked, take a look in your fence row and how that soil naturally looks.

NRCS Career: I worked for neighboring farmers while in high school and college. I started working for NRCS in the summer of 1995 as a WAE/district employee. I have worked mostly in the Humboldt/Kossuth management unit, but also helped in the Fort Dodge field office as a WAE early in my career. I helped the Soil Survey office in Humboldt as a cartographer when they were working on the Clay County soil survey in the late 1990's. I started full time with NRCS in 2002.

NRCS Goals: My goal has always been to farm full-time, but I really feel that I fit well into the SCT position and enjoy sharing the soil health message with producers. I hope cloning is perfected so I can spend more time at the office and survey when the weather is nice, as well as farm during the daylight hours and save my vacation for family time.

Favorite Part of Job: I enjoy talking with landowner/producers about their farms and their resource concerns. I also enjoy going around the county and looking at the projects we have done in the past.

Twitter: I saw Twitter as a way to spread my message about farming and my farming techniques, but found that I can also learn a lot from the other people on Twitter. It is a great way to network with others. When I got started I didn't have a smart phone, but now that I do it has become easier to share photos and videos at any time throughout my day.

Family & Free Time: My wife Kim and I have 4 kids. Elena is 12, Dalia is 8, Tyler will be 7 in December, and Tommy is 5.

I enjoy riding bikes on local bike trails with the kids, spending time with extended family for holidays and family vacations.

Doug Adams

SPOTLIGHT VIDEO

Resource Stewardship Evaluation: Jeff Matthias Featured in National Video

Resource stewardship evaluation is a new tool in conservation planning that assists producers in achieving a stewardship level of conservation, recognizes the stewardship benefits achieved by farmers, ranchers and forestland owners and better communicates the alternatives offered through conservation planning and science-based conservation practice implementation.

To learn more about the Resource Stewardship Evaluation Tool, visit http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/technical/cp/?cid=nrcseprd429509.

HR CORNER

ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

Please contact Jaia Fischer at 515-284-4525 with any Human Resources questions. She can assist you in finding the national team member to contact.

As a reminder to Iowa NRCS staff, USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights announced an Anti-Harassment Policy Statement, effective July 2015.

The policy reinforces USDA's zero-tolerance for any form of harassment, and provides a clear explanation as to what is considered harassing conduct.

The policy states, in part: "Harassment prohibited by this policy is any verbal or physical conduct that is unwelcome, humiliating, or demonstrates hostility or aversion towards a person based on race, color, religion, national origin, age (40 and over), sex, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity, political beliefs, marital, familial or parental status, genetic information, or reprisal (retaliation) for prior Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) activity. It is behavior that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment and interferes with work performance or otherwise alters the terms and conditions of employment.

Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to, bullying, slurs, negative stereotyping, threats, intimidation, written or verbal disrespectful comments, and graphic material that insults an individual or protected group.

One form of prohibited harassment is sexual harassment. It is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature, where submission to such conduct is made a term or condition of one's employment, or submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for employment-related decisions, or such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment."

Full Policy Statement:
Anti-Harassment Policy Statement

SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAMS:
WHAT ARE THEY & WHO REPRESENTS IOWA NRCS?

Special Emphasis Programs (SEP) are an integral part of Natural Resources Conservation Service's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program. SEPs have been initiated to address the employment-related concerns of groups not specifically included in other programs where a need for special emphasis or employment concerns of such programs has been demonstrated.

Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPM) serve 3-5 year appointments. SEPM duties are collateral to your regular job. They are not limited to those who are ethnically or culturally linked to a specific group.

Iowa NRCS SEPMs:

American Indian/Alaska Native. Abby Beltz, district conservationist in Independence, is serving her second year of a 4-year term as the AI/AN manager. This program is designed to ensure that equal emphasis opportunities are provided for Native Americans in all personnel management policies and activities.

Asian American/Pacific Islander Program. Anand Hase, soil conservationist in Carroll, is in his first year serving as a SEPM. The program objectives include encouraging the participation of Asian Pacific Islanders in all NRCS-sponsored programs and activities and providing a network of professional support for Asian Pacific Islanders in NRCS.

Black Emphasis Program. Shaffer Ridgeway, district conservationist in Waterloo, is serving his second term in this position. This program is designed to ensure that the Black community receives equal treatment in all aspects of employment. The BEPM seeks to ensure equal opportunity for advancement in accordance with their abilities, providing the opportunity to participate in training, cooperative education, and upward mobility programs.

Disability/Veterans Employment Program. Ava Haun, soil conservationist in Marshalltown, takes over this year as a new SEPM. Haun was an active duty soldier for six years in the US Army, 2003-2009. This program contains organized action plans and procedures which promote the hiring, placement, and advancement of employees with disabilities.

Federal Women's Program. Nichole Williams, resource conservationist based in Grundy Center, enters her third year leading the women's program. The FWP designed to create advancement opportunities throughout all occupational levels and all disciplines, to encourage the participation of women in all NRCS sponsored programs and activities, and to assure that female clients receive fair and equitable services.

Hispanic Emphasis Program. Louis Moran, wetland specialist in Fairfield, begins his first year as SEPM for the Hispanic program. This program is designed to assure consideration of the needs and problems of persons of Hispanic origin in all aspects of federal personnel management. Hispanics are persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Emphasis Program. Jean Sandstrom, civil engineer in Des Moines, started leading the LGBT program in January 2015. Her term as program manager goes through fiscal year 2018. The program is an integral part of the overall equal employment opportunity (EEO) program and is designed to promote a welcoming workplace and equal opportunity employment for all lesbian, gay bisexual, and transgender employees.

Abby Beltz (left) works with local farmer Dick Sloan.

CREATING CHANGE: 5 EFFECTIVE WAYS TO SELL

Submitted by Lori Schnoor, District Conservationist, Maquoketa

Do we really know how to sell change? We are learning so much about soil health, but getting people to change is a whole other field of study. I'm sure there is a lot of good information and advice on how to do this. We can give all the facts and figures we want, but the best sales people use emotion. I thought I would share an excerpt from an article in *Forbes* about the *"5 Most Effective Wayst to Sell Change,"* by Glenn Llopis, in hopes it would provide some ideas on how to inspire positive change in our customers:

Effectively selling change demands a strategy embracing the following five essential components that serve as the foundation for successful change management and change leadership.

1. Awareness

You must be aware enough of the business landscape to recognize that a need for change exists. This requires you to anticipate the unexpected and take proactive steps to provide solutions for a changing terrain, magnifying your vision from being traditionally "linear" to what I call "circular vision." For example, Estee Lauder had circular vision and created a family dynasty in the cosmetics industry. She anticipated the unexpected and took action to address the changing needs of women who were demanding to sample cosmetic products before buying them. As a result, she pioneered two marketing techniques that are still popular today: the free gift and the gift with purchase.

2. Timing

Selling change requires impeccable timing. This means having the ability to seamlessly sell change while minimizing disruption. It requires you to not only be aware of when to make your pitch – but more importantly how to sell change knowing that regardless of what type of opportunity or innovative idea you are selling – it will create a counter-effect of resistance.

Timing is the single most important component to gaining initial "buy-in" to the change that you are selling. The right timing can build the required momentum to get your colleagues, senior management and the boardroom excited about your idea(s).

3. Competency and Know-how

Once you have become aware of the need for change and your timing was on-point, your ability to sell change now requires you to showcase your competencies and capabilities to most effectively generate the outcomes you are projecting. Don't sell an unattainable forecast – sell an ability to sustain long-term bottom line impact that comes from the change you are selling.

4. Desire

Having the required tenacity, endurance and passion to sell change all the way through to the end is never easy and could be the ultimate breaking point to your successful change management and change leadership efforts. Selling change requires a level of desire that makes it mandatory for you to get your hands dirty throughout the selling cycle. This means that you need to be ready to face uncertainty head-on and welcome the fiercest battles from the doubters who want you to fail.

Selling change is difficult and it takes a special level of desire to translate something that may be difficult for others to see into something that is concrete enough for people to believe in and begin to hold onto. When others observe your genuine desire to breakthrough what seemed impossible, they will begin to support you as a sign of respect and gratitude. This also helps in building momentum.

5. Mental Toughness

To withstand the obstacles and resistance by those affected by the change you are selling demands mental toughness. In many respects, mental toughness is a first-cousin to desire. They feed off of each other during the "change selling cycle." For example, you may have the will and desire to sell change – but you may not be mentally tough enough to finish each task at hand.

Read the entire article...

THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN: DON'T JEOPARDIZE YOUR ACCOUNT

Keep a watchful eye for third-party mobile applications. There are a number of applications that reference the Thrift Savings Plan and may prompt you for your TSP account credentials. ***These applications are NOT sponsored by the TSP.*** Providing your TSP account credentials to third-party applications may jeopardize the security of your account. The TSP cannot endorse any information or advice provided by third-party applications. For more information on keeping your account safe, visit the online Security Center or contact the ThriftLine at 1-877-968-3778.

INK OR TONER: DO NOT ACCEPT SUPPLIES OVER THE PHONE

If you receive any calls concerning ink or toner for any Pitney Bowes machines, do not accept any goods over the phone. Supplies are not part of our current contract and accepting such items may result in an unauthorized commitment.

Field Office employees should contact their respective Area Office for supplies. State Office employees should contact Cindy Slagle.

All supplies for the Pitney Bowes postage meters are to be purchased through the normal supply process.

NEW BRAND: NRCS HAS A NEW LOOK

You may have noticed some changes to the NRCS color scheme and designs in recent months. If so, you aren't seeing things. NRCS unveiled new Identity and Design Guidelines this fall. It includes three new primary colors: **GREEN** - **BLUE** - **GOLD** and three seconday colors: **USDA BLUE** - **BROWN** - **GRAY**.

You can start using the new look right away with a PowerPoint template that is available on the PowerPoint Presentations webpage on the Iowa NRCS website.

The entire Identity and Design Guidelines are available in a document on the Public Afffairs page on the Iowa SharePoint.

Changes In
IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Dennis, Lee	Soil Conservation Technician	Retirement	8/31/16	Oskaloosa
Voltmer, Steven	Resource Conservationist	Retirement	9/2/16	Atlantic
Beck, Katherine	Soil Conservation Technician	Promotion	9/4/16	Atlantic
Cibula, Christina	Resource Conservationist	Duty Station Change	9/18/16	Toledo
Gottemoeller, Adam	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	9/18/16	Creston
Livermore, Nicholas	Soil Conservationist	Career Cond Appt	9/18/16	Cherokee
Crosby, Lynn	Soil Conservationist	Career Cond Appt	10/2/16	Sigourney
Geib, Darrell	Area Resource Conservationist	Promotion	10/2/16	Atlantic Area
Hart, Jason	District Conservationist	Promotion	10/2/16	Indianola
Focht, Karla	District Conservationist	Promotion	10/2/16	Corning
Kragel, Jackie	District Conservationist	Promotion	10/2/16	Onawa
Matthias, Jeff	State Grassland Specialist	Promotion	10/2/16	State Office
Snow, Jacob	Soil Conservation Technician	Conv to Career Cond Appt	10/2/16	Atlantic
Walters, Bailie	Soil Conservationist	Career Cond Appt	10/2/16	Corning
Ahders, Alex	Soil Conservation Technician	Career Cond Appt	10/16/16	Rock Rapids
Dekok-Mercado, Omar	Soil Conservationist	Career Cond Appt	10/16/16	Clarion
Moen, Kathleen	Soil Conservationist	Career Cond Appt	10/16/16	Cresco
Richardson, Brad	Soil Conservation Technician	Career Cond Appt	10/16/16	Red Oak Engineering
Shetler, Amanda	Soil Conservationist	Name Change	10/16/16	Creston

Changes In
IDALS-DSC PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Smith, Cody	WQI Intern	Returned	9/1/16	Central Office
Couchman, Scott	Conservation Technician	Deceased	9/16/16	Wayne SWCD
Dunkin, Sharon	Conservation Asst.	Retired	9/30/16	Van Buren SWCD
Taylor, Becky	Conservation Asst.	Retired	9/30/16	Ringgold SWCD
Stevens, Robbi	Conservation Asst.	New Hire	10/7/16	Franklin SWCD