



United States Department of Agriculture

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

April/May 2015

**BIRD FLU:
WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?
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**2015 CROP PRODUCTION COSTS
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NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE

www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov



No-Till Planting, Harrison County

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a **Message** from the **State Conservationist**



Jay Mar,
State Conservationist

Why I Go To the Field

As a part of our Earth Day celebration I attended a signing ceremony with Gov. Terry Branstad proclaiming the week of April 26 - May 2 as Iowa Soil and Water Conservation Week. The ceremony was hosted by the Plymouth County SWCD on the Bob Puetz Farm.

It was uplifting spring day with a backdrop of golden corn residue, managed in an artistic system of terraces and waterways. Bob talked about his family's legacy and continued commitment to stewardship, how he has used no-till for more than 8 years and has incorporated cover crops. He said he feels good about doing his part to conserve resources. He had utilized both state WQI and EQIP programs, and praised the technical assistance provided by the field office staff. The mutual appreciation between Puetz and the local staff for each other's conservation ethic

was apparent. They have built a strong and enduring stewardship relationship. It was a proud moment listening to commissioners and attendees talk about soil health, cover crops, grassland management, the importance of planning and implementing conservation practices as part of a system approach, outreach to women in agriculture, and genuine concern for the control of erosion and improved water quality.

I also recently participated in a dedication ceremony for a Storm Lake community garden, sponsored by "The Bridge", a non-profit community group which seeks to connect, support and empower people in the local area through a variety of projects. Once again I was very proud to witness how our staff positively impacts local communities through natural resources conservation. If you stay in the office too long you separate yourself from the many accomplishments and opportunities that truly make the world a better place ... guess that is why we go to the field!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay F. Mar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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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AVIAN INFLUENZA: CONSIDER BIOSECURITY FOR EVERY FARM VISIT

By Eric Hurley, Nutrient Management Specialist

At the end of April there were at least seven Iowa operations with flocks affected by Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5 (HPAI H5). Note that the initial protocols for these farms is to:

1. **Quarantine** – restricting movement of poultry and poultry-moving equipment into and out of the control area;
2. **Eradicate** – humanely euthanizing the affected flock(s).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers the risk to people from HPAI H5 to be low and no transmission to humans has been detected. However, avoid contact with domestic and wild birds and their feces to reduce the risk of infection. If after contact, you or a person close to you experience flu-like symptoms, inform your health care provider so that they can provide proper testing and care.

For swine operations, keep in mind that there are now nearly 600 premises with confirmed or presumptive Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea virus (PEDv) in Iowa. There are also 25 premises with confirmed or presumptive Porcine Deltacoronavirus (PDCoV) in Iowa. Again, always consider biosecurity for every farm visit.

For more and updated information visit the APHIS website at: www.aphis.usda.gov.



- **Consider biosecurity for every farm visit.**
- **Call ahead prior to the visit and ask what are their biosecurity protocols and follow them.**
- **If a farm has HPAI H5, do not visit the operation unless directed by the State Veterinarian or other responsible official (e.g. Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)).**
- **Observe NRCS biosecurity protocols.**
- **No additional protocols have been issued at this time, but stay aware as we learn more about this disease.**

**SAVE THE DATE:
NRCS GOLF
TOURNAMENT**



August 28 - 9 AM
American Legion Memorial
Golf Course
Marshalltown, Iowa
More Info Coming Soon!

BACK IN THE DAY

1980's

Here is a photo directory page featuring some Iowa SCS primary staff stationed in the State Office. How many people do you recognize? How many are still in the State Office?



CONSERVATION COMPLIANCE: CROP INSURANCE DEADLINE JUNE 1



comply by **June 1** by filing form AD-1026. The 2014 Farm Bill relinked crop insurance premium subsidies with conservation compliance.

Farmers seeking federal crop insurance premium subsidies for the 2016 reinsurance year must

Producers who do not comply with the provisions can still purchase crop insurance, but they will no longer be eligible to receive the government paid premium subsidies.

The NRCS website recently added a new page which provides some helpful steps to new customers on the compliance requirements. Additional resources for staff can be found on [USDA Connect in Field Tools community](https://connections.usda.gov/wikis/home?lang=en-us#!/wiki/Web27f58b0ea0_4f2f_b5a1_9aab28b154c5/page/Conservation%20Compliance): (https://connections.usda.gov/wikis/home?lang=en-us#!/wiki/Web27f58b0ea0_4f2f_b5a1_9aab28b154c5/page/Conservation%20Compliance.)



Title: Farm Bill Specialist
Sioux City, Area Office

College Education:

» B.A. in Education, History & Political Science,
Westmar College, 1992

Younger Years: John was born in Vinton, IA and grew up in Sioux Center, IA. His family owned a small farm until he was in the 6th grade and then he worked on farms until after high school. John's father-in-law is a livestock and grain farmer.

Conservation Career: John started with NRCS in Jan 2015. Prior to joining NRCS he worked as a Quality Manager and a Regulatory Affairs Manager for Government Contractors. He also was a Program Manager for two government grants.

NRCS Goals: As a Farm Bill Specialist John reviews contracts and other documents to ensure they are complete and legal prior to payment. I enjoy passing on my knowledge of contracting and legal documents to the NRCS employees.

In His Free Time: John volunteers for youth and veteran organizations. He also assists veterans in navigating the maze of state and federal programs and benefits.

Family: John and his wife Brenda have three grown children. Andrew age 25 is an Electronic Technician in Brookings, SD; Daniel, age 22, is an Inventory Clerk in Sioux Center, IA; and Amber, age 20, is a Postal Worker in Le Mars, IA. Amber is married to Shawn, an Electrician in Akron, IA. They have a son Max, age one, and are expecting their second child in October.



John Milroy



**CELEBRATING
POLLINATORS!**

**Happy Soil and Water Stewardship Week
April 27-May 1**

SPOTLIGHT VIDEO

This American Land: Farming the Upstream

Meet some of the stewardship-minded farmers working with NRCS to protect water quality in the Mississippi River Basin. This video is produced by "This American Land" in partnership with NRCS. This video features Iowa NRCS District Conservationist Jon Matz and Iowa farmers David and Amy Peterson of Blue Grass. Learn more about conservation work in the Mississippi River basin at nrcs.usda.gov/initiatives.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNlx4F-duXw>



CONSIDERING RETIREMENT?

HR
CORNER

Are you considering retiring this year? Do you have questions about your retirement benefits, including your annuity, insurance and spousal/survivor options?

In the past, Iowa NRCS employees could contact Human Resources staff to assist with their retirement decisions and process. Due to the national NRCS Administration Transformation, this important HR function is now handled by a continuity team.

For many, the decision to retire or the possibility of retirement is private matter they wish to keep confidential until they

are certain of their decision and are ready to announce their future plans. Please be assured that your confidentiality is still protected and a primary concern of the continuity team members and Iowa's point of contact Jaia Fisher.

If you are considering retirement, or have retirement questions, please contact Jaia Fisher at 515-323-2225 or Jaia.Fisher@ia.usda.gov. She will provide your information to the appropriate Administrative Transformation continuity team member who will provide you retirement planning services.

Economics: 2015 Crop Production Costs

By Alan Lauver, Agricultural Economist



Alan Lauver

It has been said that for conservation to make sense, it has to make cents to the farmer. The high grain prices of 2012 (corn at \$7.89 per bushel and soybeans at \$16.80 per bushel) are gone and producers will be scrutinizing their production costs.

As you are working with producers on their conservation plan, you should be familiar with current crop production costs and the break-even costs. Every year Iowa State University Extension publishes the Estimated Costs of Crop Production in Iowa and the Iowa Farm Custom Rate Survey.

Both are excellent sources of estimated production costs. You can find the 2015 documents at the [Iowa State University Extension Ag Decision Maker website](http://www.iastate.edu/extension/agdecisionmaker) or use the link on the economics webpage <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ia/technical/dma/econ/>.

The 2015 estimated total costs for corn following soybeans is \$760.81 per acre (assumed yield of 180 bushels) and soybeans following corn is \$547.80 per acre (assumed yield of 50 bushels). Based on these estimated costs, a producer's total cost per bushel or break-even price for corn and soybeans is \$4.23 and \$10.96 per bushel respectively.

USDA projects commodity prices to decline for a third consecutive year to \$3.50 per bushel corn and \$9.00 per bushel soybeans for 2015/16. Future expectations are that the average farm price for corn will not top \$4 per bushel until 2022/23. And soybeans will remain below \$10 per bushel through the same projection period.

When you are working with producers on their conservation plan, keep in mind that you are helping them to develop a long-term plan. These are decisions that will get implemented over time. In general, producers tend to think year-to-year, but you need to get them to think long-term when developing a conservation plan.

If you need assistance in interpreting or using the crop production information email or call me at alan.lauver@ia.usda.gov or 515-323-2726.

Corn Production
Break-Even Price:

\$4.23/acre

USDA Projected
Corn Price

\$3.50/acre

2015 Predictions

Iowa NRCS Receives Almost \$1.5M in EWP Funds

By Laurel Foreman, State Hydrologist



In early March of this year, Iowa received nearly \$1.5 million dollars for Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Funds for stream projects which were damaged in the floods of 2013.

There are 12 sites located in Ringgold, Warren, Henry, Audubon, and Winneshiek Counties and comprise mostly of road embankment erosion adjacent to bridge abutments. Shaping the stream banks, placing fabric and rip-rap, is the most common type of repair.

What the take home message here is that when damages occur from flooding, our field staff should document the damages on an Electronic Damage Reports (EDR) so when EWP funds become available, we can get assistance through the program for repairs. EDRs are the first way to document damage, then the more detailed Damage Survey Reports (DSR) are developed with the specifics of the project components.

Blank EDRs and DSRs can be obtained through EWP Coordinator, Laurel Foreman. She may be contacted at laurel.foreman@ia.usda.gov, or 515-323-2291.

We may have started out a little dry this year, but as we've all experienced, things can change in a minute. And if floods do occur, the EWP program is available for us.

Bennett Bucks Update



Leadership has decided to have one Bennett Bucks Store at the State Office. We are in the process of collecting items from the Areas and ordering new items. We plan to have the store fully functional mid-late May, but are taking orders right now.

Employees can view the catalogue at the SharePoint Site:

https://ems-team.usda.gov/sites/NRCS_Iowa/admin/hr/Employee%20Recognition/Forms/AllItems.aspx

Employees can submit orders or questions regarding the items to the following email inbox:

IowaNRCSAdmin@ia.usda.gov

To place an order, type "Redeem Bennett Bucks" in the subject line.

Include the following in the body of the message:

- Name
- Shipping Address
- Item Name and Number
- Color
- Size
- Level 1 or 2 Bennett Buck

CELEBRASIAN: FOOD, FUN AND CULTURE ON MAY 23

Submitted by Greg Townley, NRCS District Conservationist, Malcom, IA

Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM)

This is the 13th year the [CelebrAsian Festival](#) will be held in Des Moines to celebrate Asian cultures. This year the event will be held on Memorial Day Weekend: Friday, May 22 from 2 to 9 PM and Saturday, May 23 from 11 AM to 10 PM. It will be at a new location this year, Western Gateway Park in downtown Des Moines, between Locust St. and Grand Ave. on 12th St.

More than a dozen Asian villages representing various Asian countries will feature authentic food, educational activities, cultural exhibits, history, sports, martial arts, family-friendly activities, and live cultural entertainment. NRCS will have a booth at the event to provide outreach to local people as well as to those who come from all parts of the world. The booth will help NRCS share how we can assist people with urban projects, gardening, hoop buildings, and farming as well as offer information about job opportunities within NRCS.

The 2015 CelebrAsian will honor the 40th anniversary of the resettlement of Southeast Asian Refugees. Governor Robert Ray invited Tie Dam refugees from Vietnam to resettle in Iowa in 1975. They were originally from northwestern Vietnam, but had fled to Laos and Thailand between 1954 and 1975. The Hmong people, originally from China, had also migrated to

Laos and to refugee camps in Thailand. Many of them also migrated to Iowa from refugee camps.

In July 1975, President Ford wrote to every governor to urge state governments to do all they could to help resettle Southeast Asians and offered \$500 to help resettle each refugee. Governor Ray accepted the challenge and was a leader in bringing refugees to Iowa. Governor Ray formed the Governor's Task Force for Indochinese Resettlement to take care of refugees who were currently at four military bases in the US. He worked to find a home for the Tai Dam refugees and requested an exception from President Ford to allow them to settle together in one location.

The first Tai Dam arrived in Iowa in October 1975. The 2015 CelebrAsian will recognize the

40th anniversary of resettlement of these refugees in Iowa and will honor Governor Ray's legacy.

The CelebrAsian Festival is always a great way to celebrate many Asian cultures at one time. During the 2014 festival, NRCS had a booth in the Hmong Village. It was a great opportunity to interact with the Hmong people who are an Asian ethnic group from the mountainous regions of China, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. Many of them who have settled in Iowa are active in gardening and small scale farming.

The 2015 CelebrAsian promises to be another great opportunity to learn about Asian cultures. NRCS employees are encouraged to come out with their families and enjoy a day of family fun on May 23 at CelebrAsian. Be sure to stop by the NRCS booth.



Christian Osborn and Jeff Mathias at NRCS booth at CelebrAsian Festival in Des Moines on May 31, 2014

Changes In IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Gilles, Chad Donald	Office Assistant	Reassignment	2/1/15	Decorah
Huck, Daniel Duwain	Program Assistant	New Hire	2/8/15	West Union
Ross, Wayde A.	District Conservationist	Resignation	2/16/15	Creston
Couchman, Troy A.	Soil Conservation Tech	Resignation	2/22/15	Mt. Ayr
Brown, Pamela Kay	Program Assistant	Career Cond. Appt.	2/22/15	Atlantic
Wynn, Melissa Jean	Program Assistant	Career Cond. Appt.	2/22/15	Red Oak
Bradley, Shiloh M.	Soil Conservationist	Reassignment	2/22/15	Burlington
Welsh, Matthew Alan	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	2/22/15	Spirit Lake
Galer, Rochelle Evonne	Soil Conservationist	Reassignment	2/22/15	Storm Lake
Hubbert, Jon A.	Assistant State Conservationist for Management and Strategy	Reassignment	2/22/15	State Office
Schwery, Joan K.	Soil Conservation Tech.	Retirement	3/7/15	Harlan
Eggert, Aaron J.	Soil Conservationist	Reassignment	3/8/15	Jefferson
Kordick, Kevin	District Conservationist	Reassignment	3/8/15	Boone
Rogers, Jacqueline	Soil Conservationist	Reassignment	3/8/15	Indianola
Bahe, Daniel John	Student Trainee	Resignation	3/17/15	West Union
Kuennen, Benjamin F.	Resource Conservationist	Conversion to Excepted Appt	3/22/15	New Hampton
Ruopp, Douglas C.	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	3/22/15	Malcom
Timmerman, Katherine L.	District Conservationist	Promotion	3/22/15	Williamsburg
Wilden, Laura K.	Resource Conservationist	Reassignment	3/22/15	New Hampton
Musselman, Aaron	Resource Conservationist	Reassignment	4/5/15	Mt. Pleasant
Dixon, Joesph	Resource Conservationist	Reassignment	4/5/15	Iowa City
Corey, Patrick	Resource Conservationist	Reassignment	4/5/15	Denison
Derringer, Lori	Financial Resource Spec.	Reassignment	4/5/15	State Office

Changes In IDALS-DSC PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Bhatnager, Dharmvir	Environmental Engineer	Retirement	2/5/15	Franklin SWCD
Suchan, David	Environmental Specialist, Sr.	Transfer to Central Office	2/13/15	Buchanan SWCD
Sellers, Nichole	Secretary	New Hire	2/27/15	Jefferson SWCD
Fevold, Jackie	Secretary	Retirement	3/6/15	Webster SWCD
Myers, Will	WQI Projects Coordinator	New Hire	3/27/15	Central Office
Richmond, Shawn	CREP Program Coordinator	Left for New Career	4/3/15	Central Office
Eggena, Susan "Sue"	Secretary	New Hire	4/13/15	Marshall SWCD



For more information visit: <http://www.opm.gov/blogs/Director/2015/4/20/A-New-Educational-Alliance/>