

West National Technology Support Center

Third Quarter Report FY2008

A Note from the Director



It may be my imagination but it sure seems like the pace of our work is increasing. Most of our specialists have been in travel status assisting the States almost continually this summer. Several of our folks have been working on the new Farm Bill policies, technical tools, and supporting documents at a frantic pace. And Tom Gohlke and Jim Briggs are currently serving as acting national discipline leaders in addition to their already full schedules. The few assistance efforts that we highlight in these quarterly reports don't begin to describe the scope of all the work that is underway.

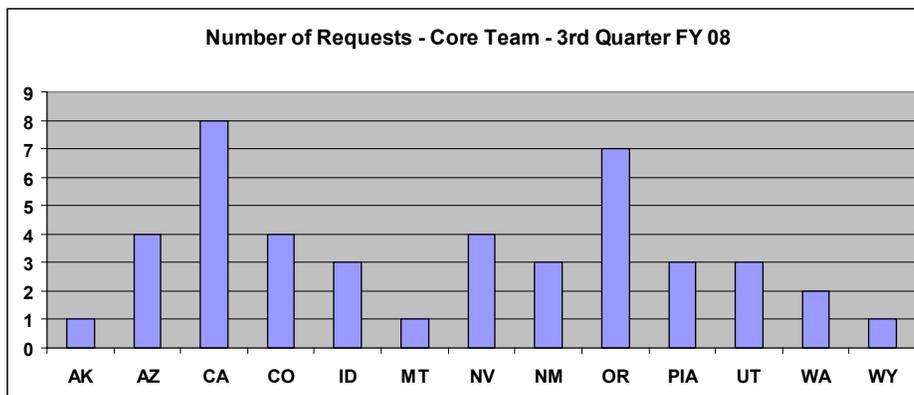
I encourage State specialists to continue to participate in their West Consortium teleconferences and to share information with each other about technology projects and training efforts, many for which we are providing assistance. As always, please don't hesitate to call us to discuss your needs.

- Bruce Newton

An Analysis of our Assistance

FY08 3rd Qtr All WNTSC Requests			
Requested	In Progress	Ongoing	Completed
135	175	55	106

Note: Requests that benefit multiple States are tallied in each State's individual totals but count as only one request under the WNTSC total. (For example, a request for training for employees from 3 States would show as one request in the graph at left and one for each of the States in the graph below.)



For more information or to track a specific request, visit the Assistance Tracker web site at <http://ssiapps.sc.egov.usda.gov/RequestTracker/Default.aspx>.

Core Team Highlights

Biology -- WNTSC Helps States with Data Collection in Sage Grouse Endangered Species Redetermination

Wendell Gilgert, WNTSC Wildlife Biologist, and John Brenner, Western Governor's Association NRCS Liaison, were given the responsibility of leading an NRCS data collection effort to provide the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) with information to use in a redetermination of the listing status for the Greater Sage Grouse as a Threatened or Endangered Species. A Boise Federal Court Judge remanded the 2005 FWS decision not to list the Greater Sage Grouse back to FWS for the redetermination. A determination will be made by December, 2008.

Working with field office conservationists in the 11-state range of the grouse, NRCS collected information related to conservation planning and application that had direct and indirect benefits for the Sage Grouse. That information was supplied to the FWS through state interagency teams. In addition, NHQ and Plant Materials staff developed and provided a general overview of NRCS activities related to Farm Bill Programs, NEPA documentation, and Plant Materials Program activities affecting Greater Sage Grouse conservation.



"Conservation planning can protect Sage Grouse breeding grounds and provide safe habitat for these amazing birds."

Summary of NRCS Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plans and Plan Application

State	Planned Acres	Applied Acres	Total Acres
California	199,043	83,705	282,748
Colorado	138,548	89,234	227,782
Idaho	76,314	112,185	188,499
Montana	2,077,131	1,072,457	3,149,588
Nevada	77,647	150,282	227,929
North Dakota	174,240	86,478	260,718
Oregon	199,939	191,713	391,650
South Dakota	163,696	83,832	247,528
Utah	577,803	324,415	902,218
Washington	75,590	97,440	173,030
Wyoming	3,074,451	2,513,132	5,587,583
TOTAL	6,834,402	4,804,873	11,639,273

Helping People Help the Land

Core Team Highlights Continued

Wetlands-- WNTSC Assists with Wetland Delineation Course

Wendell Gilgert, WNTSC Wildlife Biologist, assisted **Terri Skadeland**, State Biologist; **Tom Weber**, Assistant State Soil Scientist; **John Andrews**, State Conservation Engineer; and **Chris Fabian**, MLRA Team Leader; all from Colorado, in delivering the four-day Wetland Delineation course in Fort Collins, Colorado.

The course included several classroom lectures and interactive review sessions in addition to field delineation trips to Cobb Lake palustrine wetlands, Poudre River riverine wetlands, and a farmed wetland site south of Fort Collins. Twenty-nine NRCS District Conservationists, Field Conservationists, Biologists, and Field Technicians from Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming were required to pass a final examination to earn their wetland delineation certification.



Terri Skadeland providing vegetative instruction for wetlands course

Forestry -- Training Targets Forest Health and Reducing Wildfire Risk

Lyn Townsend, Forestry Specialist with the West NTSC, provided assistance to NRCS state specialists **Pat Davey** from Lakewood, CO; **Cheryl Grapes**, Casper, WY; and **Terry Everard**, Sundance, WY; in completing classroom and field training to about 60 participants in two forestry training sessions conducted near Evergreen, Colorado and Sundance, Wyoming. Participants included NRCS employees, state foresters, private landowners, and consultants. A number of South Dakota participants attended the Wyoming session.

The objectives of the training were to improve the capacity of area and field planners and clients to plan forest land conservation activities. This is particularly important as the new 2008 Farm Bill provides additional opportunities for financial assistance to forest land owners. Both Colorado and Wyoming are preparing for those opportunities by training staff, reaching out to clients, and coordinating with state forestry agencies partners.

Right--The CO class listens to equipment safety strategies for thinning forest stands.



Below--WY participants inventory a forest stand adjacent to a Fuel Break (background), a new practice designed to reduce wildfire risks and produce income.

National Resource Concerns --

John Copeland, National Technology Specialist on the West NTSC Core Team, worked with members of the East and West NTSCs to finish work on the proposed changes to the National Resource Concerns. This project started over 2 years ago and has been through many steps, phases, and committees.

Their work was presented to the Deputy Chiefs for final approval.



National Technology Development Team Highlights



Air Quality and Atmospheric Change National Technology Development Team Energy National Technology Development Team

The National Technology Development Teams for Air Quality and Atmospheric Change and Energy have been working together with representatives from National Headquarters and the National Employee Development Center to develop interactive computer-based training to assist NRCS conservation planning professionals improve their knowledge of energy and air quality issues, their connections, and conservation practices to improve those resources. After several months of writing, videotaped interviews with NRCS leadership and interested producers, and re-writes, they are almost ready to release the training that will be available through the AgLearn system. This first session will be required training for those attending Boot Camp. Additional session will focus on each of the resource issues individually.



Photos from Conservation Tour in north central Oregon focusing on energy and air quality issues.

Helping People Help the Land

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