

In This Issue

- Heart to Heart
- Employee Spotlight
Dario Lee
Engineering Technician
- Hoosier Happenings
Employee Kudos
- Soil Health Presentation
Careers Event Held
Earth Team Tip
- Earth Team Hours
Black History Month
- Partners' Web Links
- Personnel Update
- Soils 101 Website
- Mark Your Calendar

Heart to Heart with Hardisty

I was able to find my way back home to Indiana and found things at home were in good shape. I am finding out things here in the state office and in the state are in good shape too. I had no doubt that things were in good hands. I want to thank you all for your support while I was on my two details in our National Office. I want to thank you all for your continued conservation accomplishments and for your support to Kimberly Neumann and Roger Kult as they stepped up as the Acting STC while I was on my detail. They both did an outstanding job in demonstrating their Leadership and I was very pleased with how they handled things.



I started this detail in August 2012 as the Acting Deputy Chief for Management, which ended the end of December. During this period of time, one of the challenges I was responsible to carry out was the results of a Human Resource Audit in our national office. This basically involved revamping the entire Human Resource (HR) Division. This involved several adverse actions against employees, vacancies in over 60 percent of the Division positions, declining creditability with the Department, a major lack of updated policies and procedures, and morale that was about as low as it could get. Besides this task there were other operational issues that also needed attention. With the support of the Leadership and some dedicated staff, we were able to identify what needed to be done and started the process of making the needed improvements. Then towards the end of December, Acting Chief Jason Weller asked me to stay on another 120 detail and continue serving as the Deputy Chief for Management plus serve as the Acting Associate Chief for Operations, which is a new position in the NHQ reorganization. So during the next four months we were able to continue the improvements plus hire some mission critical positions. Two key positions filled were our new Deputy Chief for Management, Gayle Barry, and our new HR Director Tammie Edmunds, who are both exceptional Leaders, highly skilled and played a big role in getting Operations in our National office back on track. Other key issues I worked on during my second detail, along with the HR audit, were carrying out results from our Financial Audit and our contracting Audit. We have some really good Leaders addressing those issues. I was involved with the budget and sequestration challenges. And I was responsible for IT, CDSI and compliance and Internal controls. One of the biggest accomplishments I was glad to see happen was finalizing and getting approval to reorganize NHQ to where we now have an Associate Chief for Conservation and an Associate Chief for Operations. There has been one Associate Chief in the past and now there will be one to give equal Leadership and guidance from the Conservation side and the Operations side of the agency. The other major accomplishment was the Chief getting the green light from the Secretary on our plan to completely reorganize our administrative functions across the agency. This will be a huge task to complete but will be worth the effort once in place.

I wanted to share all these issues that seem to be a challenge at our National Office, and to share that the timing of all these challenges is giving us the opportunity to plan for the future. While the agency has been praised for our conservation work by the public, the Department and Congress, it is obvious that as we grew from a \$1 billion to a \$4 billion agency, and we have been extremely successful on the conservation side of the agency, we have not kept up with what was needed on the Operations side. So we are now tackling that challenge and I am pleased with our plan. With the new direction of our Operations, we will be more streamlined, efficient and in a position to actually get more conservation on the ground. And I predict that once we catch up on getting our operations back on track, we will be a model agency that others will want to follow.

During my many meetings and discussions, it is obvious that Indiana is recognized as a strong leader in the agency. This is a result of all your hard work. We are in the third quarter of the fiscal year, and we have much work to be done in getting conservation on the ground. I look forward to getting out in the counties and visiting with you and seeing all the good work. Thanks again for all you do and I'll be seeing you all soon.

Jane E. Hardisty

**** * * Employee Spotlight * * * ***

Dario Lee, Engineering Technician—Salem Technical Team

Q: As the one of the newest NRCS employees, please help us get to know you better. Are you a Hoosier native?

Yes, I am a native of Indiana. I was born in Washington, Indiana and lived in the big city of Loogootee until after high school.

Q: Before coming NRCS, what did you do?

I was a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division, 18th Airborne Corps, U.S. Army. One thing I remember most about training to become a paratrooper in the United States Army, I asked the Airborne instructor what do I do if my parachute doesn't open when I jump from the plane? He looked at me and said, "you'll have the rest of your life to figure that out."

Q: How did your past work experience prepare you for your current position with NRCS?

Well, it's hard to go from being an Artilleryman, wrestling Grizzly Bears and kissing poisonous snakes to the professional I am today. My past work experience has prepared me to be able to handle a variety of situations in a variety of ways using tact and bearing to bring an ultimate resolution that will benefit all involved.

Q: What are you looking forward to most in your position?

Knowledge! My first week on the job I was going around talking to everyone and by the time the week was over, I had an acronym hangover.

Q: Do you have any professional or personal goals for 2013?

Professionally, I have set goals to advance my career and I am well on my way of accomplishing these. Again, it's not anything I can accomplish overnight but with time, I will reach them.

Personally, I want to use this summer to achieve my goal of catching the state record Bowfin. I've come close a few times only to see the record slip through my hands.

Q: I've heard an interesting rumor about you kayaking down a fish ladder in North Carolina. Care to set the story straight?

Um, the statute of limitations hasn't expired on this yet.

Q: This is a great picture that you submitted, can you tell us a little bit about it?

Well, my eyelids were sunburned cause I fell asleep in the sun after being up for 3 days straight. The mission was called Operation Mongoose and our specific task was to clear Taliban fighters from existing caves. We were to be extracted that day and you can see the excitement on our faces. We had been involved in an ongoing firefight for most of that morning. So, a caption could read, "**Tired, Hungry and Happy Happy!!!!**"



Hoosier Happenings

KUDOS TO:

The Public Affairs staff for working hard to keep the Indiana -NRCS website up to date. The website has been extremely helpful in gathering information about the agricultural conservation programs currently taking place throughout Indiana. I appreciate the hard work all of you do, and your willingness to meet with me.—**Sarah Hamang, Graduate Student at IUPUI**

Bill Moran, District Conservationist, for providing great information in a timely manner. Not only did he answer my questions but he also brought some other issues to my attention. Because of this he most likely saved me headaches and a good sum of money. The services and knowledge he provided was greatly appreciated. - **Sean Clark, Landowner**

PRESENTATION ON COMMON SOIL HEALTH TERMS AVAILABLE

As the new Soil Health Division begins to take shape, and as customer demand for soil health-related technical assistance grows, we want to ensure that all NRCS technical employees have (as a minimum) soil health “awareness level -training”. To that end, Amanda Kautz, District Conservationist for Elkhart County has developed a “Common Soil Health Terms” PowerPoint presentation to assist NRCS employees in understanding some of the common soil health lingo being tossed around. Barry Fisher, State Soil Health Specialist, was so impressed that he sent the presentation to the Soil Health Team in Greensboro, NC to be considered for use in the national Soil Health Basics curriculum and the Soil Health Communications Team has added it to public affairs sharepoint for other states to use. If you would like to use this presentation as a training tool or to present at one of your events, the presentation can be found on SharePoint, under the Soil Health tab. **Kudos, Amanda, for doing such a great job!**

Partnership Links

IN Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Bi-Weekly

Updates: www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/index.html

IN Conservation Partnership: www.iaswcd.org/icp/index.html

IN Dept. of Environmental Management: www.in.gov/idem

IN Dept. of Natural Resources: www.in.gov/dnr

IN State Dept. of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation:

<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>

Purdue University: www.purdue.edu

BIOTECHNOLOGY, THE FUTURE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL CAREERS EVENT 2013

On March 13, 2013 Daniel Phillips, Akhtar Soomro, and Lindsey Martinez greeted over 100 students from four different Indianapolis high schools at an event hosted by several agricultural related organizations. NRCS staffed the “environment” station located in the Amazing Maize exhibit. As part of the workshop, we also set up an exhibit and table of NRCS program and recruitment information, including Earth Team Volunteer brochures. Lindsay set up a soil health slake test for the students to observe.

Students were instructed to come to the station to talk about careers in agriculture related to an ag-based product they received when they arrived, i.e., animal feed, corn starch, ethanol, etc. NRCS then had the opportunity to talk with them about all we do as an agency. It was challenging for us, because the careers and activities we discussed had to relate either directly or indirectly to the ag-based product the student had in hand. Keeping the environment safe and healthy was the point we made to each student that visited the exhibit. It was an amazing experience seeing students so interested in agriculture and our environment. If you haven't been down to see the Amazing Maize exhibit, it is definitely worth the trip.



**** SPECIAL EMPHASIS ****

STATE OFFICE CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY



USDA employees gather for the 2013 Black History Month Luncheon

In March of 2013 we focused on recalling and celebrating a unique part of our American History and the roles of African American notable figures in shaping what our country is

today. History teaches us that every culture and every society endures good and bad, and it is essential that we continue to learn from our past and move forward to better ourselves for the future. The 2013 theme was **“At the Crossroads of Freedom and Equality: The Emancipation Proclamation and the March on Washington.”**

The 13th annual Black History Luncheon was held on February 26th at the state office. Employees from FSA, Risk Mgt. and RD attended this year’s luncheon and program. A presentation of “Indiana African American History”, made by Wilma Moore who works for the Indiana Historical Society was well received. The food was wonderful as always! Daniel would like to thank everyone who attended and send a special thanks to everyone who helped with the food, setup and clean up.



Daniel Phillips, Black History Special Emphasis Program Manager gives Wilma Moore a token of gratitude for speaking at the 2013 Black History Month Luncheon

NRCS employees are a very diverse group. It is diversity that in some respects is our strength. It is important for all of us to learn about the heritage and culture of the people we work with daily. Through understanding the differences in each culture, we can work together to improve service to our customers and employees.

Hoosier Happenings (cont.)

VALUE FOUND IN VOLUNTEERS

Have you ever wondered just how much your volunteers are helping you? Try putting a dollar amount to their service.

The Independent Sector has just released the new dollar value for volunteer contributions at \$22.14 per hour. For instance, last year 1,510 Indiana volunteers donated a total of 23,472 hours. Using the 2011 dollar value, that’s worth \$511,455 of benefit to our customers and savings to the taxpayers. Find out how your volunteers are helping your community today!

Below is a table of the history of the dollar value of a volunteer hour:

1980: \$7.46	1991: \$11.76	2002: \$16.74
1981: \$8.12	1992: \$12.05	2003: \$17.19
1982: \$8.60	1993: \$12.35	2004: \$17.55
1983: \$8.98	1994: \$12.68	2005: \$18.04
1984: \$9.32	1995: \$13.05	2006: \$18.77
1985: \$9.60	1996: \$13.47	2007: \$19.51
1986: \$9.81	1997: \$13.99	2008: \$20.25
1987: \$10.06	1998: \$14.56	2009: \$20.85
1988: \$10.39	1999: \$15.09	2010: \$21.36
1989: \$10.82	2000: \$20.85	2011: \$21.79
1990: \$11.41	2001: 16.27	2012: \$22.14

We’ve been challenged again this year by the Acting Chief to have 100% office participation in the Earth Team Volunteer program. While Indiana has been extremely successful in obtaining ETV hours, we have never been able to report 100% office participation. Let’s make 2013 our year!

INDIANA NRCS EARTH TEAM HOURS TO DATE

TOTAL VOLUNTEERS: 107
TOTAL HOURS: 1,484
TOTAL OFFICES REPORTED: 17



PERSONNEL UPDATE

SELECTIONS FROM VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gerald Roach selected for the ASTC (Farm Bill Programs) position on the Farm Bill Programs Staff effective 4-21-13
Ben Zuercher selected for the Resource Management Specialist position at the Southeast Area Office effective 4-21-13
Jayson Mas selected for the District Conservationist position at the Portland FO effective 5-5-13
Carey Lindgren selected for the Program Specialist position on the Farm Bill Programs Staff effective 5-5-13
Kevin Kalmbach Ag Engineer position at the Rensselaer CIT Office effective 6-2-13
Curtis Zurliene selected for the Ag Engineer position at the Lebanon CIT Office effective 6-2-13

RETIREMENTS

Brian Ingmire, Resource Management Specialist at the Southeast Area Office effective 2-19-13
Sue Anderson, Field Operations Assistant at the Southeast Area Office effective 5-3-13

REASSIGNMENTS

Kerry Nielsen converted from Pathways Program to Soil Conservationist at the Washington Field Office effective 5-19-13
Lori Beeker converted from Pathways Program to Soil Conservationist at the Monticello Field Office effective 5-19-13

Soils 101

Soils 101 is a compilation of fifteen videos featuring SC NRCS Soil Scientists. The videos include topics such as, Soil Physical Properties, Soil Biology, Soils for Conservationists, Soil Survey, and Soils for Homeowners. The videos were designed to help educate newer NRCS employees, give a refresher to seasoned NRCS employees, and to benefit anyone with an interest in soils.

<http://vimeo.com/channels/soils101/videos>

Mark Your Calendar

MAY

21: Area Conservationist Meeting
22: Leadership Team Meeting
27: OFFICE CLOSED
29: Northwest Area Meeting
Southwest Area Meeting
30: Joint NRCS/FSA/CCRP Webinar (tentative)

JUNE

4: Northeast Area Meeting
5: Certified Planner Evaluation
11: State Technical Committee Meeting

JUNE continued

11: SAC/FAC meeting
12: Southeast Area Meeting
13: State Office Summer Meeting
18: Area Conservationist Meeting
19: Leadership Team Meeting
21: Irrigation Training
24: Technical Staff Meeting
25: Northwest Area Meeting
26: Southwest Area Meeting
27: Mine Reclamation Field Day

You can find up-to-date information about upcoming events on the Indiana SharePoint site at:
<https://nrsc.sc.egov.usda.gov/central/in/Lists/Calendar/calendar.aspx>