

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

DECEMBER 2013

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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A Message from the: **State Conservationist**



*Jay Mar,
State Conservationist*

The Path of Change

As Team Iowa closes out a successful year of conservation program delivery and natural resource planning and implementation, we can also take pride knowing that the actions taken in 2013 - both nationally and statewide - to achieve our TAPP priorities have built a foundation for greater success in 2014.

Looking towards the upcoming New Year it is my hope that Santa Claus will bring us a budget allocation and a New Farm bill. I am sure that a new Farm Bill will bring streamlined changes, or what I would call...Opportunities. NRCS will implement the "Administration Transformation Process" as directed by the Secretary's Blueprint for Stronger Service. The streamlining process will improve administrative efficiencies through the creation of "Virtual" National Service Delivery Teams (NSDT) interfacing with a local State Support Framework. The NSDT is scheduled to be operational by December 2014 and will provide high

quality administrative service at less cost.

We will continue to work toward getting our staff out into the field, with assistance from a Farm Bill support structure of hard working Program and Farm Bill Specialists, incorporating electronic document review systems to keep us accountable and on track. We have also enlisted the support of a growing number of conservation partners - governmental, corporate, and agri-business - to assist in a more unified conservation effort for Iowa.

Training and support tools, as well as conservation marketing to better support our soil health campaign, cover crops, economics of conservation, conservation planning, and new practices and management will better position you to assist producers in changing landscape. I have also initiated a leadership building and strategic planning process at the state level to encourage more consistency among division leads through a shared mission, open communication, reduced barriers, and better assistance to the field through a more cooperative approach. Indeed, 2014 will continue down the pathway of change, but promises to be a very exciting year for Iowa!

Happy Holidays!

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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Goats Galore: Clearing Path to Conservation in Lake Park

Goats on the Go from Ames partnered with the City of Lake Park to restore a native prairie along Silver Lake in Lake Park in Dickinson County beginning last September.

Goats on the Go released goats Sept. 26-28 on the lakeshore bank of City Park on the East side of Silver Lake. The goats eat all unwanted weeds and shrubs to clear the bank of all existing vegetation.

This lakeshore bank, like many others along lakes across Iowa, has become overgrown with noxious weeds and undesirable trees. This vegetation over time has overgrown and shaded out native prairie plants that would have dominated shorelines before settlement. Goats are a natural way to eliminate unwanted plant species and act as an alternative to traditional methods of mowing and herbicide applications.

Early November brought on the next stage of this project – the seeding of the native prairie shoreline. After the shoreline was cleared, sunlight could reach the surface of the shoreline and allowed the native plant seeds to germinate.

“During the first full year of the shoreline restoration project, plants will begin to grow strong roots into the soil, protecting the banks from rain, wind, and wave action,” says Silver Lake Watershed Coordinator Catherine Sereg. “After the first year, plants will really start to take off and blossom in the spring.”



Top: Goats begin eating away at brush along the shoreline of Silver Lake in September. Bottom: Dickinson SWCD and the City of Lake Park shared the cost of the shoreline seeding and the erosion control blanket.

Partners for this project include the Silver Lake Watershed Project, the City of Lake Park, the Silver Lake Park Improvement Association, and Goats on the Go. “A project of this scale would not have been possible without the work and support of many different groups,” said Sereg.

“The City of Lake Park wanted to provide an area for the community to be able to see and access the lake. This project will provide an open view of Silver Lake for family to enjoy picnics, fishing, and other outdoor activities,” she said.

Prevented Planting: Sun-Drenched Radishes Grow Like Crazy in Pocahontas County

Many Iowa farmers were unable to get a crop in the ground in the spring of 2013 after untimely heavy rains doused their fields. Many of these farmers grew cover crops as a prevented planting option.

Producers who chose to grow tillage radishes likely experienced larger than normal cover crop growth. With warm growing conditions and no cash crops to shade the soil, radishes flourished with limitless sunlight.

In Pocahontas County, the pictures at right show a field drilled with winter wheat and radishes. A mix like this can scavenge over 40 pounds of residual nitrogen from the soil. This mix will also produce a more rapid gain in total soil biomass and a higher total nutrient availability for subsequent crops.

NRCS Resource Conservationist Bob Moser says this particular producer will leave the cover crops alone this winter and strip-till in the spring. "It will be interesting to see how that works and what is left of the radishes in the spring," he said.

Moser says farmers planted more than 13,000 acres of prevented planting cover crops in Pocahontas County. "Many farmers have been using cereal rye for several years as a cover crop, and are now incorporating other species, like radishes."



NRCS Resource Conservationist Bob Moser holds one of many large tillage radishes that grew in Pocahontas County in 2013.



A winter wheat/radish cover crop mix in Pocahontas County.



District Conservationist Larrette Kolbe holds a large radish.



Radishes produce a long tap root which aids in water infiltration.

Video Spotlight: Goldsmith Promotes EQIP

In a November interview with Kent Mowrer, senior field coordinator with Coalition to Support Iowa Farmers, Iowa NRCS EQIP Coordinator Paul Goldsmith promotes the program during the recent signup. Goldsmith provides some interesting insight and information about EQIP in Iowa.



Promoting Cover Crops: Hamilton County Adds Winter Rye to Soil Monolith

To help promote cover crops and the massive root systems they can provide, Hamilton County added the winter rye root system to the other common soil types on their soil monolith.

Bruce Voigts, MRBI project coordinator for the Boone River and Lyons Creek Watersheds in Wright and Hamilton Counties, says they are growing other monoliths of winter rye root systems. "We plan to display them in the Clarion Field Office," he said.

Voigts says another MRBI project coordinator, Emily Funk, also plans to display monoliths featuring cover crop root systems in the Kossuth and Humboldt offices.

Iowa farmers grew an estimated 300,000 acres of cover crops in 2013 - up from about 100,00 in 2012.



The Hamilton County soil monolith features the root system of winter rye on the far right.



Cedar County USDA Office Donates Most Food in 2013 Contest

With a large donation of produce from a local gardener to county food shelters, the Cedar County USDA office of NRCS, FSA and RD placed first place in Iowa in this year's Feds Feed Families contest.

The Tipton office earned a pizza party in early December with NRCS State Conservation Jay Mar, Iowa FSA Executive Director John Whitaker and RD State Director Bill Menner.

Jon Matz, NRCS district conservationist in Cedar County, says the partner USDA agencies have a great working relationship. "We try to have a cookout each year where staff can make donations to attend," he said.

Matz says RD's Mike Boyle provided extreme dedication and leadership. "He truly believes in community service and is a big part in the garden project where most of the weight comes from."

Cynthia Page, who helps run the program for Iowa NRCS, says the Clayton and Crawford County offices also did well, with donations of 45.3 and 43.6 pounds of food per employee respectively.



Back In the Day: 1937

This edition of "Back in the Day" features two pictures taken in 1937, both found in the Iowa NRCS state office archives.

The top picture was taken on Oct. 11, 1937, on the Farley Henkes farm in Farmersburg in Clayton County. The photo highlights how a sweet clover cover crop helped the soil absorb water and reduce runoff and erosion, and contributed to an excellent yield.

Tests indicated that Henkes produced 100 bushels/acre after incorporating sweet clover in May of that year. The average corn yield in Iowa during the 1930s was less than 40 bushels/acre.

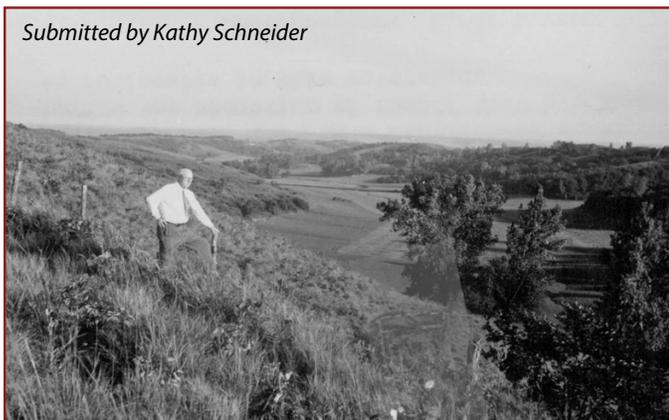
The bottom picture was taken in the spring of 1937 on the George Gibbs farm in Greenfield in Adair County. The caption on the image says, "Eighth round of the blade in constructing a terrace."

If you have a "Back in the Day" picture you would like to contribute, please mail to Jason Johnson or Laura Crowell in the state office, or scan and e-mail a high resolution version to laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov.



Back In the Day Bonus: Hugh Hammond Bennett

Submitted by Kathy Schneider



Pictured above is Hugh Hammond Bennett, first Chief of the Soil Conservation Service, inspecting areas of the Jones Creek Watershed in Monona County in 1948. This pilot watershed, one of the first of its kind in the United States, demonstrated the results of cooperative efforts between an organized group of

concerned farmers, in this case the Moorhead Soil Improvement Association and the newly formed Soil Conservation Service.

This watershed is located in Monona and Harrison Counties in the Loess Hills, five miles southeast of Moorhead and two miles north of Pisgah, adjacent to the Soldier River Valley. The pilot watershed project involved construction of nine watershed structures in the 1400-acre Jones Creek watershed. Five of the structures are poured concrete flumes. One structure is a water and sediment control dam, which ponded roughly nine surface acres of water at the time of construction. Contour farming, pasture seeding, grass waterways and tree plantings were adopted by upland landowners in the watershed to curb erosion and runoff along with bottom land flooding. Much of the excavation and construction was done with hand labor. The project employed a labor force of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) workers stationed at Moorhead from 1937 through 1940. The Jones Creek Watershed is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Landmarks.

Employee Spotlight: Victoria Turnipseed-Henderson

Position: Victoria Turnipseed-Henderson began her position of Area Farm Bill Support Assistant in the Fairfield NRCS Area Office on Oct. 6, 2013. Her work will cover the lower half of Area 5.

Background: Turnipseed-Henderson grew up in Denver, CO, the oldest of three siblings. "I am a pretty easy-going person who is very family-oriented," she says. "I love music, trying new places to eat, and competition!"

Education: Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Sciences, Tennessee State University, 2012.

Turnipseed-Henderson received a USDA 1890 Land Grant University Scholarship to Tennessee State thanks to the dedication of former NRCS employee and Tennessee State agriculture liaison, Will Nesby.

"This is a scholarship offered at 20 historically black agricultural universities," she says. "I received a full-ride, along with a laptop, printer, paid travel expenses, and guaranteed a job with the USDA sponsoring agency upon graduation."

In November 2012, Turnipseed-Henderson began working on her Masters of Business Administration degree with an emphasis in Human Resources Management.

"I realized that I needed to find a more administrative position to help me prepare for some of my career goals," she said.

NRCS Experience: After graduating in May 2012 from Tennessee State, Turnipseed-Henderson became a soil conservationist in Las Animas, CO.

"I learned how an extreme D4 drought can affect the implementation of NRCS conservation programs," she said.

She also had the privilege of practicing one of her passions by serving as the Black Emphasis Program Manager on the Colorado NRCS Civil Rights committee. "My experience on the civil rights committee further solidified that I want a career that will allow me to aid people from my community," she said, "and help other employees navigate through difficult situations."

She feels her new Farm Bill position in Iowa is a good transition, from a field office background to a more administrative position. "It has been an interesting, yet enjoyable transition so far," she says. "I have enjoyed meeting all of the NRCS employees in Iowa."

She says accepting the Iowa NRCS position has given her the opportunity to travel and see new parts



Victoria Turnipseed-Henderson

of the country. "I have received great advice from NRCS employees," she says. "One common word of advice is to be willing to move around, especially while you are young."

"Moving to Iowa has been a major step for me, but I am excited about the knowledge I will gain and the challenges I will encounter. I hope other Iowa NRCS employees will truly get to know me as a helpful, hard-working, and passionate person who cherishes this opportunity."

Program Signups: Webster/Hamilton Offices Use Local COOPs as Promotional Tool

As the first 2014 signup deadline for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP - Jan. 17) and the second cutoff deadline to apply for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP - Feb. 14) approach, it brings to light ways offices are getting creative in the way they market these conservation financial assistance programs locally.

The Webster/Hamilton NRCS Management Unit, led by District Conservationist Sam Adams and Resource Conservationist Marvin Hoffman, is finding success promoting programs through their local ag retailers.

Hoffman said two agronomists from Van Diest Supply Company in Webster City contacted him about nutrient management issues and NRCS conservation programs. "They wanted to know more about our programs so their clients could potentially receive



USDA United States Department of Agriculture

2014 CSP Signup Deadline

Jan. 17

Farmers who apply for the Conservation Stewardship Program by Jan. 17, 2014, will receive first consideration for Iowa funding selections. Talk to your NRCS office today!

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financial assistance for upgrading nutrient management practices," said Hoffman.

Adams and Hoffman met twice with Van Diest – once about the new nutrient management standard and once about CSP.

"Van Diest prides themselves on the technology they offer in nutrient and pest management," said Adams. "However, they are finding that many farmers are not willing to pay the extra cost for that data."

Adams says Van Diest would like to use CSP as a way to offset the

cost of the technology. "I gave them all of the CSP information that we have," he said. "We are now in contact with them about the first signup cutoff date. They have a goal of helping us sign up 20 producers this year."

"Van Diest offers services that would help producers with CSP enhancement activities," said Hoffman.

Since meeting with Van Diest, Adams said they also have plans to meet with Heartland COOP.

WFAN: Awarded \$25K by Newman's Own Foundation

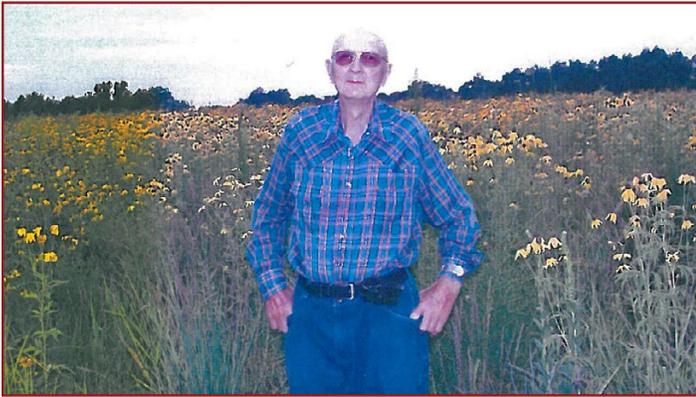
Women, Food and Agriculture Network – an Iowa NRCS conservation partner – has been awarded a \$25,000 grant from Newman's Own Foundation, the independent foundation created by the late actor and philanthropist Paul Newman.

WFAN will use the funds to create an Iowa Women Farmer Veteran Network within its broader network for women engaged in healthy food and farming

nationwide. The project will serve Iowa women veterans interested in farming careers. WFAN will connect aspiring and beginning women farmer veterans with service providers, hold two career development workshops, and match women veterans who want to farm with women farmer mentors.



CRP Lesson: Landowners Need Patience with Native Plantings



Nearly a year after Ivan Hansen placed row cropland into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), he thought he had made a mistake. The land, seeded to native plants in July 2011, he said looked like a “weedy mess” in the spring of 2012.

NRCS Resource Conservationist Dora Guffey and a very active Story County assistant commissioner met

with Hansen to walk the field with him. “We identified numerous plants of the more than 20 species seeded,” said Guffey.

There is a little saying, “first year roots, second year shoots,” said Guffey. “You must be patient with the CRP plantings.”

By 2013, Hansen was totally convinced he made the right decision. He stopped in the Nevada Field Office with the picture at left, proud of his land.

“He even told us a story about the children of a couple who were dating wanting to take some pictures of them in the CRP field,” said Guffey. “Ivan agreed, and the gentleman actually proposed to the woman, and she said yes!”

Guffey says the couple is uniting two families, and will live down the road from Hansen.

Rock Your Watershed: Video Game Teaches Land Use & Conservation

A video game that is fun, educational, and attracts an audience of both kids and adults is almost unheard of. The new online computer game “Rock Your Watershed!” does just that; it entertains while it teaches players of all ages.

As part of the youth water awareness campaign Water Rocks!, the object of the “Rock Your Watershed!” game is to earn a high score by balancing productivity and environmental impacts, based on land management choices on 10 parcels of land within a watershed. Factoring in fertilizer use and tillage, players try to make the best balance of costs, profit, soil, nutrients and water quality on each piece of land. The big variable in the game is the amount of precipitation, just as in real life; the same land management practices under different rainfall scenarios can yield very different results! High scorers are recognized on the game’s leaderboard.

The game requires making decisions on the computer screen just as a producer would make on an

actual farm. What crops are grown? Are cover crops used? How much erosion is leaving the field? Is the field tilled or not?

While developed for youth, “Rock Your Watershed!” is essentially the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy (NRS) presented in a unique, interactive format.

The NRS suggests a suite of practices that fit the land best to reduce nutrients entering streams and rivers. It is part of the larger plan to reduce nutrients in Iowa waters and the Gulf of Mexico.

The “Rock Your Watershed!” game is designed using scientific data specific to Iowa. Scoring computations are based on research findings related to hydrology, nutrient transport, soil erosion, costs of conservation practices and soil loss, and the benefits of strategic placement of conservation practices on reducing nonpoint source pollution.

“Rock Your Watershed!” can be found on the Water Rocks! website, www.waterrocks.org.



Soil Health Binders: Assembly Complete, Ready for Use

Iowa's soil health binders are assembled and in the delivery process to NRCS offices statewide. The binders will help train field office staff and promote the concept and the NRCS "Unlock the Secrets in the Soil" campaign to customers, conservation partners, and other important stakeholders.

The goal of the soil health binders is to help field office staff in the conservation planning process - to lay out the benefits of soil health practices and show how other farmers are succeeding.

As new information is added to the binder, the Table of Contents section will be updated - with hyperlinks to the new information. An updated electronic version of the Table of Contents will be located on the Iowa SharePoint at https://ems-team.usda.gov/sites/NRCS_Iowa/PublicAffairs/default.aspx.

The Iowa Soil Health binders are a partnership effort between Iowa NRCS and North Central SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education).



The day before Thanksgiving, State Public Affairs Specialist Laura Crowell (left) invited her family, including Jacob Greiner (right) to help assemble soil health binders in the state office conference room. Crowell's other family members - husband, Brad, and kids Nathan and Zoe, also helped. Secretary Tara Kinyon-Anderson, Public Affairs Specialist Jason Johnson, and Katie Schrod, an Iowa State University freshman Ag Education/Journalism student and daughter of District Conservationist Dennis Schrod, also assisted in the assembly party, which took about two hours.

Soil Health: Playing Critical Role in Crop Production

From Corn and Soybean Digest, Dec. 4, 2013

The Soil Health Initiative will bring recognition to the central role of soil in productive agricultural systems, and establish a strategic plan to address soil health issues.

"Soil health is a key factor in any agricultural production system, whether conventional or organic, yet soil is too often ignored or overshadowed by other factors," says Noble Foundation President Bill Buckner. "It is critical that producers – the people working directly with the land – be in close communication with researchers and policy makers to ensure that their challenges are recognized and our soils are protected and sustained for future generations."

The Initiative evolved from discussions by 25 leaders representing conventional and organic agriculture, science and research, land managers and policy makers about the best tools to measure, promote and research soil health. This core group will be expanded to five working groups that will: find consensus on a definition of "soil health" to bring consistency and continuity to related work; define a standard for measuring soil health; identify opportunities for specific research work;

prepare a white paper outlining the current state of soil health; and develop a strategic plan to broadly advance work on soil health issues.

The first working group completed its work, reaching consensus on a definition of soil health: The continued capacity of the soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals and humans.

"This definition is used by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service," explained Working Group Chair David Lindbo, Ph.D., of North Carolina State University and president of the Soil Science Society of America. "It sounds simple, but establishing a basis of understanding of what soil health concerns is the first step to move forward with universal acceptance of soil health as a critical need."

The working group identifying a standard of measure for soil health is expected to complete its work on or before Feb. 1, 2014. A strategic plan for addressing soil health issues is expected to be completed on or before April 2, 2014. Once this foundational work is completed, deadlines will be established for the remaining work groups.

**HR
Corner****Retirement Planning**

As the end of the calendar year approaches, several federal employees have visions of sugar plums and retirement dancing in their heads. To make these dreams come true, it is important for all employees to be preparing for retirement throughout their federal career. You may run your own retirement calculation via the retirement calculator available through HRConnect

at: <https://usdanrcs.connecthr.com/>. In order to ensure your estimate is accurate, contact Human Resources to have your federal service verified at 515-284-4587.

Additional information about the retirement calculator, as well as other retirement articles/resources, are available on HR's sharepoint at: https://ems-team.usda.gov/sites/NRCS_lowa/admin/hr/Benefits/Forms/AllItems.aspx.

Bayard Rustin: Activist Receives Presidential Medal of Freedom

Submitted by Laurel Foreman, LGBT Program Manager, Iowa NRCS

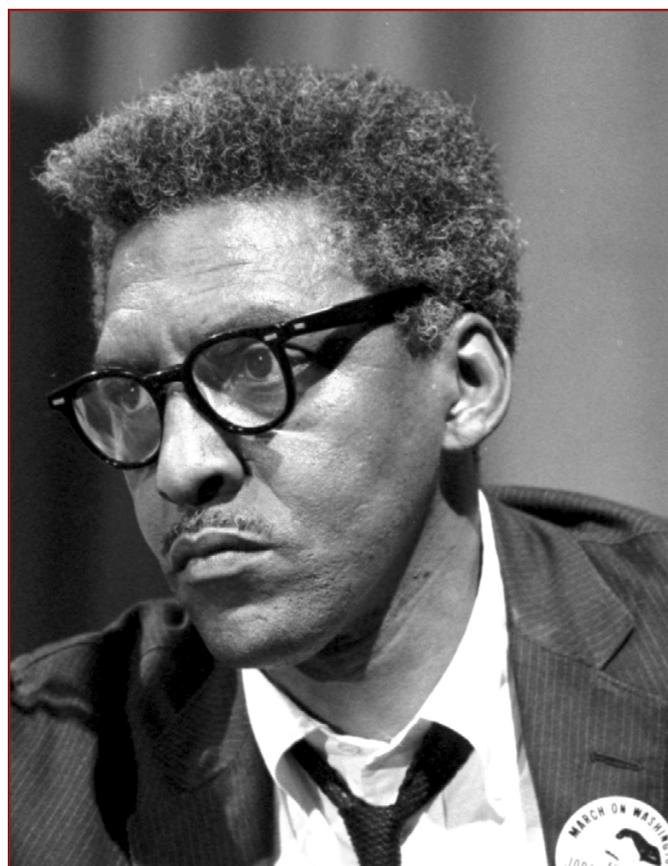
President Barack Obama recently named sixteen recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. One of these recipients, posthumously, was Bayard Rustin.

Bayard Rustin was an unyielding activist for civil rights, dignity, and equality for all. An advisor to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he:

- » promoted nonviolent resistance,
- » participated in one of the first Freedom Rides,
- » organized the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and
- » fought tirelessly for marginalized communities at home and abroad.

As an openly gay African American, Mr. Rustin stood at the intersection of several of the fights for equal rights.

If you'd like to read the article in its entirety, please go to: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/08/08/president-obama-names-presidential-medal-freedom-recipients>.



Bayard Rustin

Changes In: NRCS Personnel

In order of Effective Date

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Marketon, Kari	Soil Conservation Technician	Resignation	10/25/13	Cresco
Rachut, Elizabeth	Soil Conservationist	Resignation	11/1/13	Osage
Camp, Leland	Soil Scientist	Realigned to Indianapolis Regional Soils Office	11/3/13	Waverly Soils
Dermody, Ryan	Soil Scientist	Realigned to Indianapolis Regional Soils Office	11/3/13	Waverly Soils
Hammerly, John	Soil Scientist	Realigned to Indianapolis Regional Soils Office	11/3/13	Atlantic Soils
Pulido, Daniel	Soil Scientist	Realigned to Indianapolis Regional Soils Office	11/3/13	Atlantic Soils
Sass, Neil	Soil Scientist	Realigned to Indianapolis Regional Soils Office	11/3/13	Waverly Soils
Hawks, Joshua	Soil Conservation Technician	Promotion	11/3/13	Carroll
Wendt, Teresa	Soil Conservationist	Name Change from Reed	11/3/13	Tipton
Sandeen, Rhonda	Soil Conservation Technician	Promotion	11/17/13	Bloomfield
Van Waus, Teresa	Soil Conservation Technician	Name Change from Henson	11/17/13	Nevada
Anderson, Sara	Acting Easement Programs Coordinator	Detail	12/1/13	State Office
Olson, Hillary	Soil Conservationist	Reassignment	12/1/13	Nevada
Thole, Michelle	Soil Conservationist	Career Cond Appt	12/1/13	Anamosa
Sunderman, Darin	Soil Conservation Technician	Resignation	12/6/13	Clarinda

Changes In: DSC Personnel

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Hansen, Jake	Water Resources Bureau Chief	New Hire	9/30/13	Central Office, Des Moines
Lechtenberg, Matthew	Water Quality Initiative Coordinator	New Hire	10/11/13	Central Office, Des Moines
Coffelt, Todd	Mines & Minerals Bureau Chief	Transferred to IDNR State Parks Bureau Chief	11/22/13	Des Moines
Davis, Cindy	Secretary	New Hire	11/22/13	Marion SWCD
Heald, Jenifer	Secretary	New Hire	12/6/13	Wapello SWCD
Mullen, Tom	Technician	New Hire	12/6/13	Jackson/Jones SWCD
Hase, Anand	Technician	New Hire	12/9/13	Madison/Warren SWCD