



# IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS



**March 2014**

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Iowa NRCS **BLACK OUT DATES:**  
**April 14-18**

## A Message from the: **State Conservationist**



During a recent conference, a farmer proudly informed me of how his local conservationist had helped him through the planning process. Knowing this employee, I imagined them meeting on a beautiful spring morning bouncing across the producer's pastures, fields, and forestlands discussing livestock trailing, field erosion, and other resource concerns; as well as production needs, the overall operation, family and his vision for the operation.

They likely discussed current tillage management, planting, weed control, available forage, livestock grazing, and wildlife and forestland management. Their morning included kicking up pheasants from riparian areas and watching waterfowl lift off the ponds, providing opportunities to laugh about great family hunting memories.

Later, over coffee and homemade caramel rolls, they discuss the land and operation. The conservationist makes more notes and returns to the office to make a map documenting the producer's current management (cropland, pastureland, riparian areas, waterways, fences etc.). He also compiles useful soils information, crop and forage potentials, cultural resources, wildlife species and corridors, and forestland resource information. He runs calculations utilizing the morning's information to get a better handle on erosion rates, available forage to feed livestock and productivity of forestlands. Documentation also includes the farmer's resource concerns and future plans for the operation. He prepares to discuss the structural and management practices he will propose to the farmer, careful to make sure these recommendations are feasible, affordable, and will achieve the future goals identified by the producer.

They meet again. Like two investigators they comb through the resource information and potential practices to see how they can be used individually or together to solve a problem. Knowing these two like I do, I am sure they dig into root causes and not just "Band-Aid" solutions. The farmer decides which practices to implement now and which to consider for later. Decisions and preferred timelines are documented. Financial assistance opportunities are discussed.

As we continue down our path back to our conservation planning roots, I know many of you might feel this process seems overwhelmingly technical. But I want to reassure you the conservation planning process I just described is not just a time-proven process to successfully plan and implement conservation. It's about building enduring, supportive relationships between conservationist and farmer.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay T. Mar". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jay T. Mar  
State Conservationist

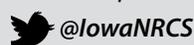
# IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

**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](mailto:laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov).*

*Past issues can be found at [www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/  
currentdevelopments.html](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/currentdevelopments.html).*



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## Prairie Pothole Project: Protecting Iowa Wetlands & Grasslands

Iowa joins four other states in a special Prairie Pothole project to offer producers various options to consider before they convert grassland or return expired CRP acres to cropland.

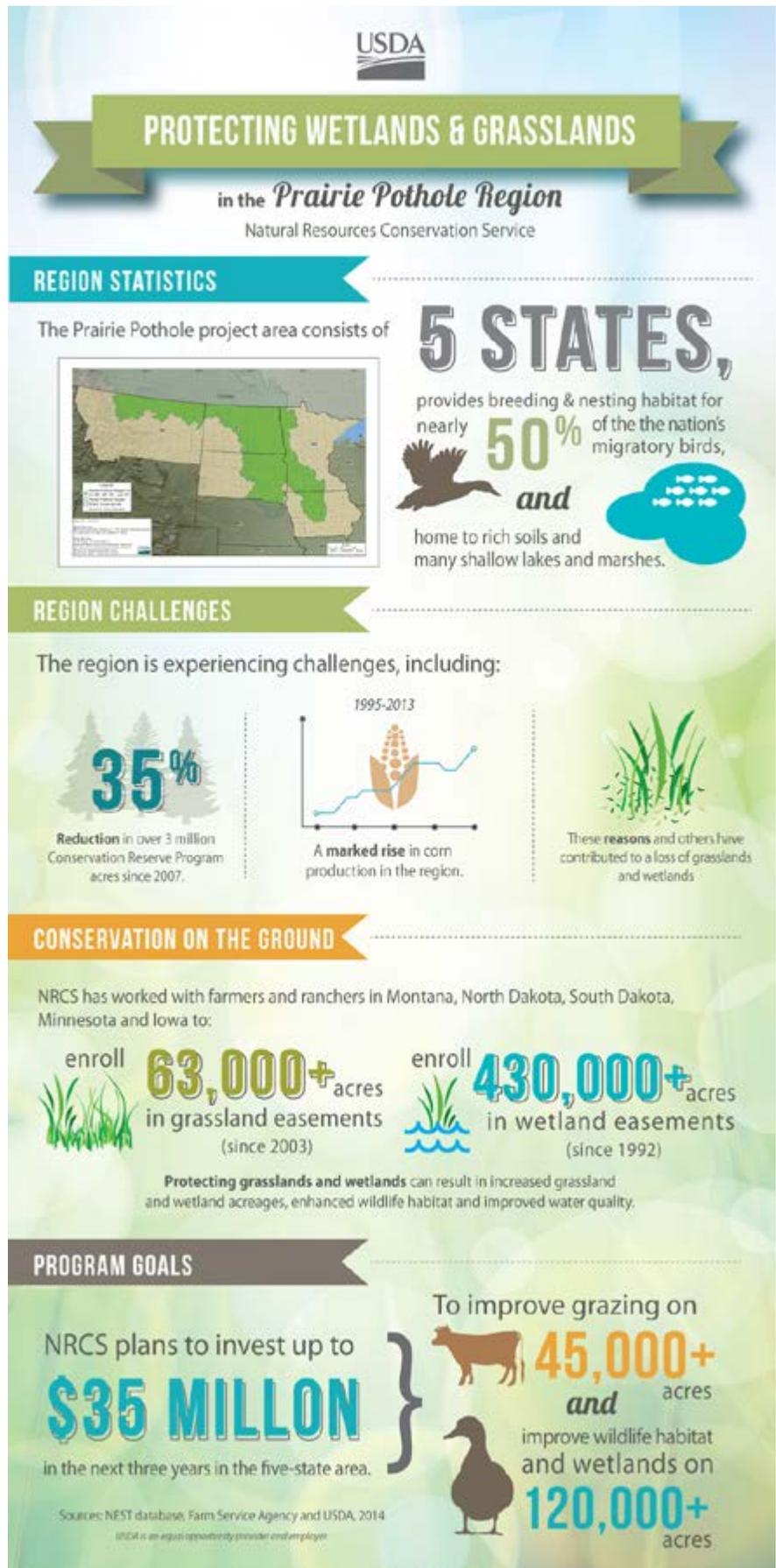
NRCS is committing up to \$35 million over three years to help producers protect the grasslands and wetlands in the PPR. The project will cover the following areas for Iowa:

### Targeted Delivery of EQIP

NRCS will provide up to \$30 million through EQIP to producers with expired or expiring CRP acreage, existing grasslands or marginal cropland. Producers will gain up to two additional years of payment beyond the traditional three years for selected practices including prescribed grazing, wetland wildlife habitat management and upland wildlife habitat management. Producers can use these practices to effectively address grassland- and wetland-related natural resource concerns, including wildlife.

### Agricultural Wetland Mitigation Banking

Development and use of wetland mitigation banks is one way for agricultural producers to comply with Wetland Conservation Compliance (WCC) provisions, but their use is not widespread. NRCS will use CIG to solicit projects that would develop wetland mitigation banking options in the PPR.



## NRCS Logo: Do's and Don'ts

USDA recently required all agencies to stop using their individual logos as part of its OneUSDA effort.

NRCS may no longer use its logo unless it is the "signature" version of the logo including the USDA logo to the left of NRCS. NRCS is **ONLY** allowed to use this logo on shirts and vehicles when serving our customers in the field.



More detailed information as well as templates and sample USDA logos for field office use are included in the recent instruction: [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/PA\\_NRCSConsumption/download?cid=stelprdb1247329&ext=pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/PA_NRCSConsumption/download?cid=stelprdb1247329&ext=pdf).

For specific questions about the new logo use policy, please contact Public Affairs at 515-284-4262.

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## Back in the Day

This issue's photo features a farm pond build in 1963. The pond is located in the Davis-Battle Creek Watershed near Soldier in Monona County. About 700 acres drained into this pond, which featured a 30" pipe spillway.

The pond was stocked with bass by the owner Ralph Oldham. The tenant, Ralph Gorham, was a district commissioner.

Do you have a "Back in the Day" photo you'd like published in Current Developments? Photos need to be at least 10 years old---the older, the better!



## HR Corner

### Leave Options to Care for a Family Member

An employee is entitled up to a total of 12 weeks (480 hours) of sick leave each leave year to care for a family member with a serious health condition, which includes up to 13 days (104 hours) of sick leave for general family care or bereavement purposes. If the employee previously has used any portion of the 13 days of sick leave for general family care or bereavement purposes in a leave year, that amount must be subtracted from the 12-week entitlement. If an employee has already used 12 weeks of sick leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition, he or she cannot use an additional 13 days in the same leave year for general family care purposes. An employee is entitled to no more than a combined total of 12 weeks of sick leave each leave year for all family care purposes.

Please keep in mind that the sick leave and Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) are two separate entitlements. An employee has an entitlement to use his or her accrued sick leave in addition to invoking FMLA. For example, if an employee takes 12 weeks of sick leave to care for a parent with a serious health condition and then invokes FMLA, the employee has exhausted his or her entitlement to sick leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition and cannot substitute any sick leave (but may substitute annual leave) for the 12 weeks of unpaid leave under FMLA. The employee providing care for a family member is eligible to use up a total of 12 weeks of sick leave and then 12 weeks of unpaid leave under FMLA, and may substitute any annual leave for the unpaid FMLA leave.

For additional information and entitlement refer to the General Manual (GM) Title 360, Part 415 or contact HR at 515-284-4587.

## Soil Health Infographic: Organic Matter & Water Retention Benefits



The Unlock the Secrets in the Soil campaign has developed an impressive amount of unique marketing tools to help you communicate the benefits of soil health to your customers.

One of these tools is a series of newspaper style info graphics. These graphics can be used in your district newsletters, as posters in the office, as signage on your counter and flyers at soil health events.

You can download these graphic files from the following link:

<http://1.usa.gov/1fRQ00S>

Explore the [Soil Health web page](#) for more resources.

## Termination Time: Cover Crop Guidelines

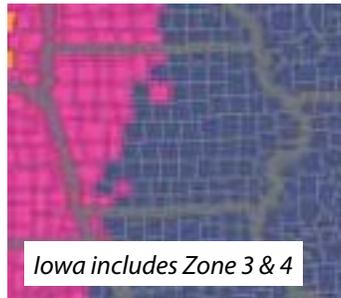
These guidelines, published in December, apply to non-irrigated cropland, including systems that contain a fallow period. Termination of cover crops utilized in an irrigated cropping system is not restricted to a given cover crop termination zone.

Cover Crops in irrigated cropping systems should be terminated based on the crop system and conservation purpose, but before the planted crop emerges.

Research literature, plant growth and soil hydrology models, and input from national/local experts in cover crop management provided the basis for developing cover crop termination

guidelines to achieve their conservation benefits while minimizing risk of reducing yield to the following crop due to soil water use.

Here's a link to the full fact sheet: [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/PA\\_NRCSConsumption/download?cid=stelprdb1242590&ext=pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/PA_NRCSConsumption/download?cid=stelprdb1242590&ext=pdf)



Zone 3 - See Map	Zone 4 - See Map
<b>Non-Irrigated Cropland:</b>	
Terminate cover crop at or before planting the crop.	Terminate cover crop at or within 5 days after planting, but before crop emergence.
<b>RMA Designated Summer Fallow Practice</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For summer seeded or fall seeded crops terminate the cover crop at least 90 days prior to planting.</li> <li>For early spring seeded crops terminate the cover crop either in late fall or as early as possible in the spring prior to planting.</li> </ul>	



JAN 28-30, 2014  
IOWA POWER FARMING SHOW

## Video Spotlight: Why Use Cover Crops?

More than 1,200 people attended the three-day Cover Crop Workshops held during the Iowa Power Farming Show held Jan. 28-30 in Des Moines. Subjects included cover crop mixes, termination, seeding options and the benefits of using cover crops. This video features some of the key farmer speakers participating in the workshops this year.

CELEBRATING

# Women of Character Courage & Commitment

Women's History Month, March 2014

## **Teleworking: How it benefits me and NRCS**

Observing national telework week has reminded me how thankful I am to telework from home for various reasons. Teleworking has assisted in managing work vs home schedules. I wanted to share with everyone how teleworking has benefited NRCS, me and my family.

I am able to complete reports requested from NHQ and Management. Using on-line systems, I am able to run the requested reports and provide the important data that NHQ and Management needs to perform their work via email.

The use of Lync allows me to make calls to employees as well as instant communication throughout the day. I also attend HR staff meetings via video.

Last summer, while required to stay at home due to a medical issue, I was able to continue working. I was able to issue vacancy announcements, monitor applications, sending applications to selecting officials, make offers (electronically), and close out the vacancies.

This allowed NRCS to continue to fill vacancies in a timely manner, without having to wait until I returned to work.

My commute to work is 25 minutes. When one of my children has a doctor's appointment, I am able to stay at home and telework. When it is time for the appointment, I use leave, pick them up from daycare, take to the appointment, return them to daycare, then return home and continue teleworking. This assists me in not having to use as much leave as I would have to if I was working from my office.

Of course none of the above would have worked if it wasn't for the support of my supervisor as well as the open communication between us both. If you are interested in teleworking I encourage you to talk with your supervisor about the type of work you can complete in order to develop your own individual win-win telework situation.

**Submitted by: Trish Mootz**



## Unlocking Secrets: National Conference on Cover Crops and Soil Health Webcast Now Online

The opening session of the National Conference on Cover Crops and Soil Health is now available for viewing on the SARE web site.

<http://www.sare.org/Events/National-Conference-on-Cover-Crops-and-Soil-Health>

Presentations and recordings from the breakout sessions and a report on the recommendations and comments from the conference and local forum participants will be posted as soon as they are available.

The National Conference on Cover Crops and Soil Health, held Feb. 17-19, 2014 in Omaha, Neb., brought together 300 agricultural leaders and innovators to explore how we can make American agriculture more sustainable through improved soil health. Attendees represented agricultural industry, the farm community, academia, government, commodity and conservation organizations.



As part of this landmark event, Cover Crops and Soil Health Forums took place Feb. 18 at over 200 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Extension offices nationwide. These forums gave farmers and other agricultural professionals the opportunity to send their thoughts to the national conference and engage in local conversations on cover crops and soil health. Forums were attended by an estimated 6,000 people.

### Remembering: **Jacob Wolter**



Jacob "Jake" Michael Wolter, 27, of Dubuque, Iowa passed away on Thursday, December 5, 2013, at Mercy Medical Center after a sudden turn with a life long battle. He was born on May 25, 1986 in Dubuque, Iowa the son of Michael and Mary Jane (Kueter) Wolter. He attended UNI where he graduated in 2008. He married Lindsey Massey on September 1, 2012 in Waukee, Iowa.

Jake was a Soil Conservation Technician in the Epworth Field Office. He was a member of Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever and a life member of the NRA. He was an avid outdoorsman and enjoyed 4-wheeling with his four legged friend Duke.

But when he wasn't hunting or fishing he could be found cheering on his favorite teams: Iowa Hawkeyes, Miami Dolphins and Chicago Cubs. Jake lived everyday as an adventure and always with a smile. He was a very dedicated and loving husband, son, brother, grandson and uncle.

## Employee Spotlight: Jaime Sandoval

This issue features Jaime Sandoval, who was raised in Anaheim, California until he was 10 years old when his family moved to Des Moines. Jaime is a soil conservationist in the Corning office.

### Where did you go to college?

I went to Iowa State University, studied Animal Ecology and Agronomy.

### What are your interests and hobbies?

Hanging out with my kids, biking, reading, gardening, eating, being outside, trying new things

### Where did you work as a student?

Union, Franklin, Butler, Ida, Crawford Counties

### What did you learn working as a student for NRCS?

I learned the purpose and history of NRCS and about the agency's relationship with the state and local groups to apply conservation on the ground. I was able to get familiar with some of the software that NRCS uses such as Toolkit, ProTracts, ArcGIS, etc. I also learned:

- Basic vegetative and management practices such as terraces, no-till, cover crops, rotational grazing, etc.
- Concepts of Soil Health



Jaime Sandoval (left) receives some in-the-field training from former DC Paul Goldsmith, who is the current EQIP coordinator.

- Learned about the compliance process
- Conservation programs which help get conservation practice on the ground
- People are always wanting to talk with you about conservation whether you are at the grocery store, city hall meeting, church, at the Coop, etc.

### Why are you working in natural resources conservation field?

The Earth is a gift, filled with incomprehensible diversity and richness, and humans exert a disproportional influence on it.

Farm ground can be some of the most degraded land in the world, and I feel blessed to work for an Agency that is working tirelessly to change that.

## Sweet Treat!

Christian Osborn, design engineer, is ready to enjoy a cup of soil pudding--complete with gummy earthworms. The surprise celebration on March 7 was part of a special Employee Appreciation Day in Des Moines hosted by the State Office Leadership Team.



## Honoring: **Our Veterans**



*Kate Timmerman, DC Williamsburg*

In a special project coordinated by Disability/Veteran Special Emphasis Program Manager Joe Thompson, 24 veterans are receiving Certificates of Appreciation from NRCS signed by Chief Jason Weller and State Conservationist Jay Mar. Each veteran agreed to be publicly honored by NRCS for their military service. Mr. Mar recently presented certificates in Area 5 and the State Office. All veterans were self-identified for this project. If you are a veteran and wish to receive a certificate please contact Joe Thompson at 515-323-2631 or [joseph.thompson@ia.usda.gov](mailto:joseph.thompson@ia.usda.gov).



*Jess Jackson, Grazing Specialist, Fairfield*



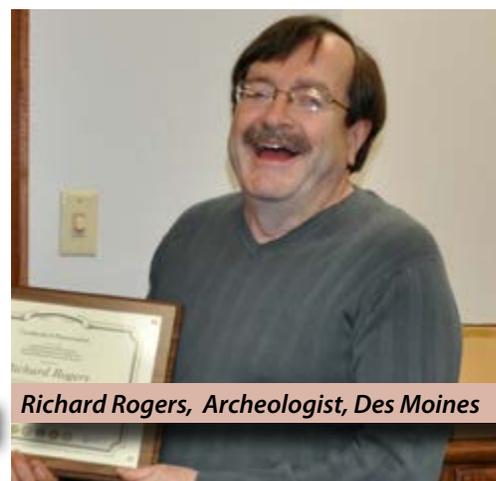
*Josh Sieren, SC, Mt. Pleasant*



*Geoff Moore, STC, Keosauqua*



*Adam Stiegelmeier, ASTC-M, Des Moines*



*Richard Rogers, Archeologist, Des Moines*

*Other veterans to be honored include: Russ Overton, SCT, Anamosa; Alan Vogel, District Employee, Spencer; Greg Townley, DC, Malcom; Denis Schulte, DC, Sac City; Darrell Christensen, SCT, Webster City; Ava Haun, Summer Intern, Northwood; Randall Larsen, SCT, Atlantic; Andrew Bingham, Office Assistant - Earth Team Volunteer, Urbandale; Anita Patrick, MRBI Project Coordinator, Storm Lake; Jack Bucklin, SC, Elkader; John Wills, District Employee - Clean Water Alliance Coordinator, Spirit Lake; Curt Fopma, CET, Newton; Larry Hammitt, CET, Atlantic; Marc Zucco, Area Resource Soil Scientist, Creston; Robert Vobora, Area Resource Soil Scientist, West Union; James Cronin, State Biologist, Des Moines; William Peek, Farm Bill Specialist, Fort Dodge.*

## April Black Out Dates: Top Five To Do List

This year Iowa NRCS is launching three weeks of black out dates to allow field staff time to focus on conservation planning. The Area and State offices will avoid scheduling state training, meetings and deadlines during this week.

The first of these weeks is April 14-18. Here's a suggested "Top Five" list of several possible activities to work on during this week.

1. Begin communicating with customers about the basics and benefits of conservation planning.
2. Start building stronger relationships with customers by discussing their goals and resource concerns (STEP 1 & 2 of Conservation Planning)
3. Take the opportunity to catch up on technical trainings from your local Area Office on how to use some of our planning tools.
4. Make some time to revisit some of the primary resource concerns in your county: what are they? where are they more concentrated? what has been done previously to address them?
5. As a staff, go out and visit some operations and discuss as a group how you manage conservation planning in your office.

## Changes In: NRCS Personnel

Name	Official Title	Effective Date	Nature of Action	Location
Frana, Matthew	Soil Conservationist	Convert to Career Cond from Temporary	1/26/14	Osage FO
Hart, Leiah	Soil Consv Technician	Promotion	2/9/14	Iowa City FO
Mahoney, Michael	Soil Consv Technician	Promotion	2/9/14	Estherville FO
Henke, Darwin	Soil Consv Technician	Reassignment	2/23/14	Ida Grove FO
Horton, Anthony	Soil Consv Technician	Resignation	12/28/13	Mt Ayr FO
Larsen, Randall	Soil Consv Technician	Retirement	1/25/14	Atlantic FO
Sohm, Randall	Soil Consv Technician	Retirement	1/3/14	Ida Grove FO
Tope, Randy	Engingeering Technician (Civil)	Retirement	1/11/14	West Union AO
Turner, F. Kent	Soil Consv Technician	Retirement	12/31/13	Adel FO
Niceswanger, Justin	Purchasing Agent	Transfer	3/9/13	VA, Iowa City
Anderson-Cruz, Jennifer	State Biologist	Promotion	3/23/14	NRCS, Georgia

## Changes In: DSC Personnel

*In order of Effective Date*

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Connie Harmsen	Secretary	New Employee	12/20/2013	Clarke SWCD
Kelsey Kinyon	Secretary	Transfer		To Adams SWCD

### Central Office Changes:

Suzan Kozak, Mines & Minerals Bureau Chief, February 14, 2014

susan.kozak@iowaagriculture.gov

515-281-6147