

**Office of the Chief  
Weekly Report**

**Soil Science and Resource Assessment  
Soil Science Division**

**March 20, 2013**

**Deadline Reminders –**

- Aglearn No Fear Training due on March 22, 2013
- Mid-Year Performance Appraisals due on April 30, 2013, our internal date is March 31, 2013.

**Upcoming Meetings/Conferences - None**

**Soil Science Division Update –**

**Soil Science Division International Authority Update**

SSRA staff met with Assistant Chief James Gore on Monday, March 18, to provide update on international programs and the request for revision of the delegation of authority to engage in international research, extension, and teaching related to soil survey, soil classification, soil mapping, and soil survey information systems. The Revision of Delegations of Authority for international activity is on the docket for Chief Weller's signature. Micheal Golden established rationale for the necessity of international soil activity. James provided insight into the legislative process. Herby Bloodworth outlined the international programs division staff, procedures, and activities. James also suggested partnerships with NGOs to advance soil conservation in LDCs. The impact of soil survey information on successful soil conservation implementation was underscored.

**Soil Climate Analysis Network (SCAN) station maintenance, California**

On March 4-15, 2013 Deb Harms (Soil Scientist- NSSC Soils Standards Branch) assisted Tony Tolsdorf (Hydrologist-National Water and Climate Center) and Peter Fahnestock (Soil Resource Scientist-California) in the maintenance and repairs of Soil Climate Analysis Network (SCAN) stations in California. The sites were established in 2011 as a cooperative effort between BLM and NRCS (California, NWCC and NSSC) to monitor the habitat of the desert tortoise and the kangaroo rat. Travel and equipment has been supported by the BLM. The data for the sites and other SCAN sites across the country are available on the NWCC web site at <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/scan/>.

**State Conservationist VTC Updates**

David Smith, Soil Science Division Director, provided updates to the SE, Central and Western Region State Conservationists on the status of the Soils reorganization, ESI handbook and other administrative and budget issues relating to the Soil Science Division Reorganization during the week of March 18, 2013. This was an excellent opportunity to interface with State Conservationists to provide information and answer questions. Soil Science Division will continue to work closely with the State Conservationists as the reorganization progresses forward.

**Administrative Discussion at NCSU**

Roy Vick , Associate Director for Soil Survey Operations, visited the National Centers Servicing Unit in Ft. Worth, TX on March 18-19, 2013 on coordination of a variety of topics in preparation for realignment and implementation of the Soil Survey Program into a nationally organized program. Many

administrative topics and issues were discussed and potential avenues for implementation were documented.

### **Geophysical Assistance in Massachusetts**

During the week of 11 March, Jim Doolittle, NSSC Research Soil Scientist, and the Massachusetts Soil Staff complete ground-penetrating radar (GPR) surveys across several cranberry beds located in Plymouth County, Massachusetts. Also participating in these surveys were the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts. The objective of this investigation was to determine the depth of organic materials and the location of deep, filled kettle holes within the bogs. The radar data will be used in a wetland restoration project designed to recreate a natural stream channel that previously crossed the wetlands. Compared to traditional manual methods, GPR is a faster and requires significantly less time and effort to obtain information on the thickness, volume, and geometry of peatlands. Compared to manual methods, the continuous profiling capability of GPR provides greater numbers of observations, which yields more accurate estimates of peat thickness and detailed information on the hydrogeological framework of peatlands. Training was also provided on the operation of the GPR and the processing of radar data.

### **Active Shooter Awareness Training**

Recently, 33 NSSC employees attended “Active Shooter Awareness” training presented by Inspector Megan Johnson with Federal Protective Services (Department of Homeland Security) in the Lincoln Federal Building. The training was to educate the employees in proper reaction and protocols to follow to maximize personal safety and assist law enforcement if an active shooter was in the Denney Federal Building. Information from the training has been added to KSSL Safety Packets, and additional sessions are planned to provide this important training to additional NSSC staff.

### **Kellogg Soil Survey Laboratory Update**

The KSSL regularly cooperates with Southeast Community College in Lincoln to provide practicum experiences for students enrolled in laboratory technician programs. Minon Wilkinson and Andrew Killman recently completed a 90 hour practicum in the lab. The KSSL recently reached a major milestone - the 200,000<sup>th</sup> sample number was assigned since the laboratory information system (LIMS) was instituted in 2001 (Not equivalent to the number of samples processed. Different types of samples from the same horizon receive separate numbers.) The lab has received 3,719 samples for analysis in FY2013 which suggests sample submission will be 20-30% higher than in FY2010 and 2012 (FY2011 included NWCA and RaCA samples and was higher than normal).

**Personnel Highlights** – Dr. Pamela Thomas was selected for a 90 day detail to serve as the acting Assistant Program Manager for the Soil Science Division. Pam’s detail will start on April 1, 2013. She will be assisting with a variety program management and Soil Science Division activities.