



United States Department of Agriculture

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

IOWA NRCS

WINTER 2022



USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE



@IowaNRCS

[IA.NRCS.USDA.GOV](https://ia.nrcs.usda.gov)



A NOTE FROM THE STATE CONSERVATIONIST

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had the opportunity to enjoy the holidays, take some time off from your busy schedules and spend it with friends and family.

The new year brought a change in weather! Snow and lower temperatures across most of the state is finally making it feel like winter. With the warmer and dryer fall, I know many of you were able to get out in the field to conduct monitoring, practice design, planning, and to participate in training, field days, and various other activities.

It is important for us to get out and develop and maintain good relationships and provide customer service to producers and other customers. With the continued pandemic work environment where it's easy to stay cooped up behind a computer monitor, I encourage you to get out of the office as much as possible to help you develop your interpersonal skills and abilities.

As we are likely to be faced with a new "normal", our relationships with producers and our ability to provide them with science-based solutions will continue to be foundational in our individual and overall agency success.

Lastly, I hope you enjoy the new Current Developments newsletter design. We received excellent feedback from the survey that was sent out to staff last year about Current Developments. Responses helped develop the framework for the new look.

Survey feedback also let us know what you enjoy reading about and what you want to learn more about. We were open to major changes, but survey responses indicate you were happy with the magazine style layout but were open to some new topics. I hope you are happy with the results!

Jon Hubbert, State Conservationist

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Current Developments

Current Developments is a product of 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.

Stories and Photos

Please submit your Current Developments story ideas and photos to State Public Affairs Specialist Jason Johnson at jason.r.johnson@usda.gov. Past issues can be found at https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ia/people/employees/nrcs142p2_008273/.

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OUTREACH REPORT: TANYA MEYER-DIDERIKSEN



NRCS Priorities Include Urban Agriculture and Outreach

During NRCS Chief Terry Cosby's All-Employee Meeting on Dec. 15, he shared the agency's priorities, which include outreach and urban agriculture. NRCS will continue to build the Office of Urban Agriculture, whose work will include review of conservation programs, policies, practices, and payment scenarios with consideration of urban farmer needs. Chief Cosby also explained that the agency does not have a set definition of urban agriculture at this time, although emphasis is placed on ensuring no one is left out. NRCS will have a permanent Urban Agriculture Director in the future.

Iowa NRCS is taking the Chief's priorities seriously, as we learn more about NRCS' role with urban agriculture producers and other small-scale farmers. The recently distributed fact sheets, [Gaining Trust with Small & Urban Farmers](#) and [Social & Professional Skills to Work Effectively with Small & Urban Farmers](#), are intended to assist field staff as more outreach opportunities with this customer group develop. The fact sheets and other urban agriculture resources are located on the

Partnership Sharepoint site. A supplemental virtual training about outreach to and assisting small and urban agriculture farmers is being planned for the near future. Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen, State Outreach Coordinator, serves as the Urban Agriculture Contact for Iowa NRCS and can be contacted with any related questions.

There are currently several potential urban agriculture and small farmer projects in the state, particularly in counties with larger urban populations. A project in Linn and Johnson Counties will begin soon through an Iowa Valley RC&D USDA 2501 (outreach and assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program) grant. The project includes efforts to connect NRCS and local partners to small-scale, non-English speaking urban agriculture farmers that are currently unaware of NRCS and agency assistance offered. A non-profit from the Southeast United States directed by James Bunch was recently awarded an Equity Conservation Cooperative Agreement through NRCS for an urban project that includes Waterloo, Iowa. The project will work in an underserved community to include high tunnels (one through the agreement and one through EQIP), soil health, vegetable production and marketing education and building capacity to access conservation programs.

Staff in more counties will receive requests to work with small and urban agriculture farmers in the future. This is a unique and new form of assistance, requiring additional learning at all levels. As understanding evolves, more information and resources will be provided to assist staff with this non-traditional method of assisting customers.

WE ARE EACH OTHER'S HARVEST

By Celize Christy, Practical Farmers of Iowa

Representation matters to bring along the next generation of Black Iowan farmers and growers.

In 2018, a report from 24/7 Wall St., an independent financial news and commentary website, ranked the Waterloo-Cedar Falls metro as the No. 1 worst metropolitan area in the country for Black Americans. The report bases its analysis on racial gaps in several socioeconomic indicators, such as income, unemployment, homeownership and more. In the latest report from 2020, the metro was no longer first, but still ranked as the fifth worst metro area for Black Americans.

As a district conservationist for Black Hawk County, Shaffer Ridgeway supports farmers in his county by educating them on the various NRCS programs and funding opportunities. After many years advising farmers how to implement conservation practices on their farms, he began to think about putting some of those same practices to work outside his job. His initial idea was to install a test plot that would let him try soil health practices – but he quickly realized he needed a way to pay for the idea.

“So, then I thought, I’ll grow vegetables to pay for it,” Shaffer says. “It’s one thing to see something on paper, or see the change on the landscape, and a whole other to put it into practice yourself. I wanted to practice what I have been preaching to farmers.”

In 2019, Shaffer and his wife, Madelyn, established their farm, with an emphasis on growing Southern vegetables for Midwesterners. Acknowledging that aim,



Shaffer and Madelyn named their farm Southern Goods. “My wife came up with that name,” Shaffer says. “There were already a few folks in the community growing these types of crops – for example, purple hulled peas. Others were growing peas on a garden scale of about 5 or 6 bushels, whereas I wanted to be able to grow and market about 50 to 100 bushels of peas.”

Shaffer’s original idea of testing soil health practices quickly transitioned into a vision that was greater than himself. As he experimented with vegetable varieties, he felt increasingly pulled to make an impact in his community – the Black community, which comprises 75% of his customer base. “In the Black community, 40% of folks live with at least two chronic diseases, which I believe ties back to our food,” Shaffer says.

Soon, Shaffer’s path would intersect with that of DaQuan’s. Having learned about each other through mutual friends, both DaQuan and Shaffer connected as growers with a strong desire to serve the community.

To read the full story, go to <https://practicalfarmers.org/2021/10/we-are-each-others-harvest/>.

TEACHOUT SUCCEEDING BY RETURNING TO HIS COVER CROP ROOTS

by Jolene Bopp, Public Affairs Specialist, USDA-NRCS, Des Moines

Chris Teachout – an innovative Fremont County farmer and the 2017 Iowa Conservation Farmer of the Year – is continuing his conservation efforts in hopes of inspiring and encouraging farmers and the next generation of producers to focus on improving soil health.

Teachout has been involved with conservation and soil health for decades, but it wasn't until the 1990s that he realized how beneficial practices like no-till and cover crops are for the soil. At the time, he knew he wanted to experiment and saw the potential for innovation when he began learning more about conservation.

When he began farming, Teachout and his father grew cereal rye in the spring for livestock feed and to help suppress weeds. The following year – when he tilled the rye – Teachout noticed the disk sank and stuck into the soil. He said he began to wonder what caused soil conditions to change.

"After attending a few meetings with other local farmers throughout the years, I started hearing about cover crops and no-till and my light bulb exploded," said Teachout. "I had a specific mental image of our family growing rye and what it did to the ground."

He and his family grew Balboa Rye, a very specific heirloom rye with a large pencil stem which creates great bedding for livestock and is beneficial to the soil. Balboa Rye yielded 60-70 bushels per acre. Other rye Teachout grew has a much finer stem that can lodge if given too much nitrogen and typically yields about 30 bushels per acre. Teachout says Balboa Rye can be planted until freeze and still greens up early. He learned later Balboa Rye creates a big biomass yield, making it perfect for producers focused on conservation.

"What Chris didn't realize in the beginning is the bigger stems Balboa Rye create produce a higher

carbon to nitrogen ratio and decompose slower," said Hillary Olson, State Soil Health Specialist for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Iowa. "He needs massive amounts of carbon on his land because the biology in his soil is so active that residue breaks down quickly and can leave the soil exposed."

Cover crops and residue can help prevent drastic changes in soil temperatures. High temperatures can impact the rate of nitrification, soil moisture content, aeration, and plant nutrient availability.

"The most important thing is the soil, the health of it, and what we can do, especially now with the current nitrogen issues," said Teachout. "If you have your biology really cranking you can get there."

Teachout's favorite conservation practice may be cover crops, but he also hopes to inspire others to start implementing no-till whenever they can. He tries to warn other farmers to be aware just one tillage pass can make a dangerous impact on the soil. Tilling the land can increase the threat of soil erosion, among other potentially harmful outcomes like breaking the soil structure, destroying the habitat of helpful organisms, and causing compaction.

Teachout says the biggest challenge about transitioning [to no-till] was the lack of equipment. "Today, our planter has notched discs and we just slice in there. We do not have the trash whippers on, and you just see corn coming up and the residue is still intact clear around to keep it all mulched" he said. "Last summer, by the end of June, corn residue was completely gone. We don't have to do tillage."

In the future, Teachout said he wants to open a training center or turn part of his acreage into research plots. His goal is to teach the next generation of farmers how conservation practices like no-till and cover crops improve soil health, thus improving yield. Teachout says he hopes to continue spreading the message of how conservation has improved his yields and how he farms in general.

Photo by Jolene Bopp, Iowa NRCS Public Affairs Specialist

unlock the
SECRETS
IN THE
SOIL



SOIL AND WATER OUTCOMES

Soil and Water Outcomes Fund Produces More Than Tenfold Increase in Environmental Outcomes in 2021

Courtesy of the Iowa Soybean Association

The [Soil and Water Outcomes Fund](#) announced in December that carbon sequestration and nutrient reduction outcomes produced by participating farms in Iowa, Illinois, Ohio, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina in 2021 are projected to be more than 10 times greater than the totals from the prior year. Enrollment is completed for 2021 across the six states, with more than 120,000 acres of cropland contracted in the program by farmers adding new conservation practices such as cover crops and reduced tillage.

The preliminary environmental outcomes resulting from practices implemented by Soil and Water Outcomes Fund farmers are:

- » More than 111,500 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (CO₂e) sequestered (a 260% reduction from baseline levels). This is equivalent to removing 24,250 cars from the road for one year.
- » Nearly 112,400 pounds of Phosphorus prevented from leaving enrolled fields (a 27% reduction from baseline levels).
- » More than 1.9 million pounds of Nitrogen prevented from leaving enrolled fields (a 28% reduction from baseline levels).
- » \$33.60 average farmer payment per acre.

"We are thrilled with farmer's willingness to enroll in an outcomes-based program and even more excited about the environmental benefits resulting from the addition of new conservation practices," said Adam Kiel, managing director of the Soil and Water Outcomes Fund and executive vice president of AgOutcomes.

"Our 10x-plus growth this year reflects the growing market for an efficient and turnkey solution that puts farmers first," said Dan Yeoman, managing director of the Soil and Water Outcomes Fund and CEO of ReHarvest Partners. "We look forward to continued expansion in 2022 with new and existing corporate and government partners across more states and commodities."

The Soil and Water Outcomes Fund is widely regarded as the most farmer-friendly ecosystems services offering on the market today because of its ease of enrollment, simple contracting, local support from conservation agronomists, and industry-leading farmer payments.

"The Soil and Water Outcomes Fund provides a great incentive to create and expand conservation practices on my farm; helping protect our land for this generation and the ones to follow," said Ryan Vavroch, a farmer from Iowa enrolled in the Soil and Water Outcomes Fund.

In 2021, the Soil and Water Outcomes Fund worked with a mix of public and private partners to support farmer's conservation efforts. Outcome financing partners include Cargill, Nutrien Ag Solutions, PepsiCo, Ingredion, BASF, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Dubuque County Board of Supervisors, City of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, City of Ames, Iowa, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Additional support is provided by the Agriculture Technology & Environmental Stewardship Foundation, American Farmland Trust, the Illinois Soybean Association, the Iowa Soybean Association, Ohio Corn & Wheat, and the Ohio Soybean Association.

"We're always looking for the best way to partner with farmers and are pleased to work with the Soil and Water Outcomes Fund to partner with growers in our supply chain to enhance regenerative agriculture outcomes in a way that keeps farms strong today and for the future," said Margaret Henry, director of sustainable agriculture at PepsiCo. "And we are looking at expanding our partnership into new geographies in the year ahead."

Read more at: https://www.iasoybeans.com/newsroom/article/soil-and-water-outcomes-fund-tenfold-in-2021?utm_source=weekly&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsroom.

The Soil and Water Outcomes project is a 2020 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) project that is expanding the implementation of on-farm conservation practices that create both water quality and carbon sequestration outcomes by making pay for performance payments to participating producers for independently verified environmental outcomes. The goal is to utilize a pay for performance approach to achieve significant conservation outcomes during the project period. Through this project, the project team is highlighting the advantages of pay for performance approaches to conservation and establish a framework that will continue to leverage NRCS continued investment in pay for performance projects and programs.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Eldon Weber



Photo by Christopher Gannon, Iowa State University.

Eldon Weber retired from Iowa NRCS in 1987 after serving 27 successful years in several capacities.

His NRCS résumé includes stints as a soil conservationist, district conservationist, area conservationist, and assistant state conservationist for operations at the State Office in Des Moines.

Weber has been passing on his conservation knowledge to the younger generation since federal retirement. He spent the next 14 years in Iowa State University's Dept. of Agriculture Education and



Studies as an affiliate instructor. While there, he developed the Pizza-A-Thon program, which helps teach kids where food comes from. Weber was featured in ISU's STORIES magazine in June 2018 and commented on the program, "I thought, 'What food do kids like best?' And I thought of pizza and all the different ingredients and kinds of pizzas." The Pizza-A-Thon was part of ISU Vision 2020, funded by the Kellogg Foundation. (Read more about the program at <https://stories.cals.iastate.edu/2018/06/pioneering-agvocacy-through-pizz-a-thon/>.)

Weber has also served as the Executive Director of the Iowa Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners and authored the elementary science enrichment book, *Earthworm Empire, Living Soil*.

For the past 20 years, Weber has spent his retirement years in Ames, staying active with the Pizza-A-Thon program and cheering on the Iowa State Cyclones in football and basketball.



SIGNS, SIGNS EVERYWHERE SIGNS

In early 2021, the Iowa NRCS State Office asked field offices to inventory NRCS signs in their counties. Staff documented 181 various conservation signs in 42 counties.

Winnebago has the most signs with 15, followed by Pocahontas with 13, and Clay County with 12.

The majority of the signs across northern Iowa are wetland or easement signs. In fact, 64 percent (115) of the NRCS signs are wetland/easements signs.

About 20 years ago, the State Office began installing signage near easements to promote NRCS easement programs and the benefits and partnerships that go into them. Since then, some of those signs have been replaced and more have been added.

There are also 28 conservation practice signs highlighting grassed waterways, terraces, buffers, windbreaks, and other permanent structures. Many of those signs were installed

by members of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) along the RAGBRAI route to draw attention to conservation practices.

Staff also inventoried 22 Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) signs across the state. NRCS did not install CREP signs, so we can't replace, remove or add more, but knowing how many and where the signs are located is good information.

Besides documenting how many signs and where they are located, the State Office asked for the condition of existing signs and locations where staff think new signs would benefit.

Staff requested 25 new signs across the state and 23 signs that need replaced. There was only one request for a sign removal with no replacement.

The Iowa NRCS Leadership Team is meeting in January to discuss how best to move forward with sign requests and removal, so look for more information in the coming months.

FABULOUS FIELD PHOTOS!



Fall Photos



Above average temperatures and mostly dry weather helped Iowa farmers and NRCS staff get outdoor work accomplished last fall.

1. Fremont County farmer Chris Teachout talks to NRCS Soil Health Specialists Ruth Blomquist and Hillary Olson on Nov. 16 about his soil health management system. (*Jolene Bopp, Des Moines*)
2. A colorful maple leaf fallen to the ground in late September near Dike. (*Lissa Tschirgi, West Union*)
3. Surveying a wetland restoration in Winnebago County on Dec. 8. (*J.D. Goemaat, Garner*)
4. Four members of the Williamsburg Resource Team stand in an Iowa County wetland easement on Dec. 2. (*Jolene Bopp, Des Moines*)
5. Soil in Howard County cropland shows great aggregate stability thanks to cover crops. Jess Stevens performed an in-field wet aggregate stability test on Dec. 2. (*Jess Stevens, Cresco*)

Thank you to those who submitted photos. For the next Current Developments, submit images at: https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/:f:/r/sites/nrcs_iowa/PA/Shared%20Documents/Photo%20Submission?cs-f=1&web=1&e=aKV9q.

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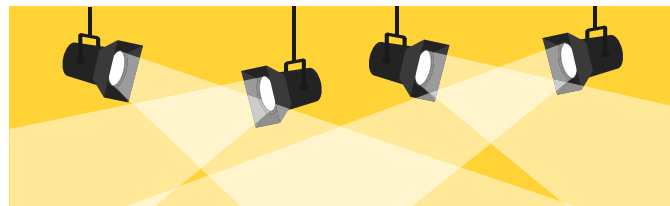


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NORTHWEST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



BRIAN TUMEY



Title: District Conservationist

Location: Kossuth and Acting in Humboldt

College: My first year of college (1997-1998) I attended Indian Hills Community College in Ottumwa with intent of being a computer programmer. After discovering I didn't care for programming at all, I got back to my agricultural roots and went to Kirkwood

Community College in Cedar Rapids (1998-2000) for 2 years and got an Associate of Science degree geared specifically for my transferring to Iowa State University (2000-2002) where I graduated with degrees in Agricultural Systems Technology (major) and Agronomy (minor).

Where did you grow up?

I am the oldest of 5 kids. My dad farmed with his brother and my mom was a nurse. We grew up on our family farm about 20 minutes southeast of Manchester in Delaware County. Growing up, we milked cows and had a farrow to finish hog operation and also raised corn, soybeans and alfalfa for crops. My family got out of hogs in 1998 before the pig market crashed. The dairy herd went down the road around 2005-2006 time frame. Luckily, a neighbor happened to be selling his herd of stock cows so the farm was able to transition into a cow/calf operation since we could utilize plenty of pasture. After the passing of my uncle in 2019, my parents decided to sell the cows so now we primarily raise crops while dad still occasionally does some custom grain hauling for neighbors and friends.

What other jobs have you had? I started as a Soil Conservationist in the Le Mars Field Office back

in November 2003 and worked there almost 3 years until 2006 when I got accepted for the Soil Conservationist position in Storm Lake. I worked there for almost 2 years before I applied for the new Resource Conservationist position that had opened in Algona. I accepted that position and moved to Algona in 2008 and worked in that position until 2020 when I got the District Conservationist job in Algona.

How did you get interested in conservation?

Keith Krause was the District Conservationist in Delaware County and was a family friend of my parents. We happened to be visiting one day and he told me I needed come up to his house some time because he wanted to talk to me about the NRCS and some job opportunities that were coming out soon. Needless to say, the rest is history. I will be forever grateful to Keith for sitting down and talking to me about the agency and everything it had to offer for opportunities. I didn't realize the agency existed growing up and didn't realize they had the summer intern positions, otherwise I would have definitely tried to go that route but everything worked out.

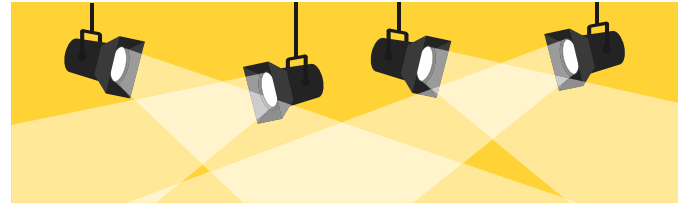
What do you do in your free time?

Besides farming, I like to do most anything that revolves around being outdoors, like playing with my daughter, gardening, hanging out with friends on their deck, etc. I also like to golf and try to win the NRCS Golf Tournament every year (unsuccessfully I might add!) I also enjoy a good beer from time to time, so I like to check out different breweries if I am out traveling, not on work time of course!

Do you have a family?

I have been married to my wife, Mary, for just over 7 years. She is a Client Service Manager with Ascendant Wealth Management Group and she also manages the Columbia Events Center here in Algona. We have been blessed with one child, our daughter Millie, who is 3.5 years old. They both keep me on the move and I wouldn't want it any other way!

NORTHEAST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



ELISA BENITEZ-AYALA



Title: Soil Conservationist

Location: Anamosa/
Jones County

College: I carried out my university studies at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez campus. My major for the bachelor's degree was Agricultural Science and my minors

were in Livestock science and Pre-Veterinary science. Afterwards, I did my master's degree, which was in Food science, focused on Dairy science.

Where did you grow up?

I was born and raised in Puerto Rico and on July of 2020, I move to the beautiful state of Iowa.

What other jobs have you had?

I worked in dairy farms; in a nonprofit company, which the goal was to improve and support

the island's manufacturing sector; as a Teacher Assistant at the university and as Food Technologist.

How did you get interested in conservation?

After working with manufacturing, food processing and agricultural companies; I realized the importance of our environment and the conservation of our Resources. I start looking for a way that I could incorporate my love for Agriculture and this new concern I developed for our resources. When I saw that NRCS had an opening, I saw it as an opportunity to help the conservation of the resources.

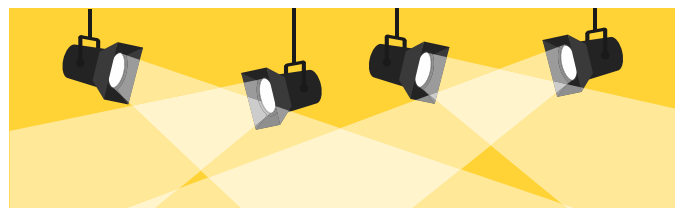
What do you enjoy most about your job?

The idea of helping in the conservation of our Resources and Environment, by helping producers get interested and apply conservation practices in their production.

What do you do in your free time?

In my spare time I like to read, enjoy music, do puzzles, visit parks, beach and go to the theater.

SOUTHWEST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



JOSEY RYAN



Title: Soil Conservationist

Location: Chariton

College: Indian Hills Community College, 2016-17

Iowa State University, 2017-19 (Bachelor's Degree in Agricultural Studies)

What other jobs have you had?

I started as an Elyon/MEC contractor in Chariton in May of 2019. I then became a Soil Con in April of 2020.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up on my family's century farm south of Melrose, IA. We have a cow/calf and row crop operation.

How did you get interested in conservation?

The Monroe County SWCD reached out to the high school scholarship applicants to see if any of us would be interested in being their intern in the summer of 2016. I was their intern for 6 months, and I learned so much.

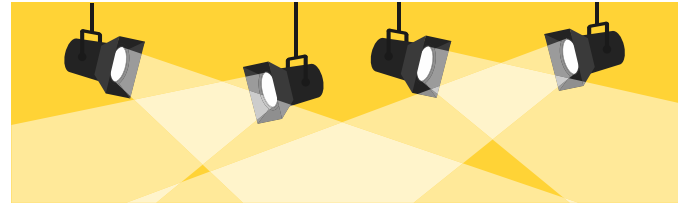
What do you enjoy most about your job?

I like being able to help producers improve their operations through various conservation practices. Coming from a farm myself, I know that what works on one producer's farm, may not work on another producer's farm. I appreciate the working relationships that I have built through my position, and hope to reach more producers in the future.

What do you do in your free time?

I enjoy spending time with my friends on the weekends, whether it be hanging out at a friend's house, boating on the lake or cruising on our side-by-sides.

SOUTHEAST AREA SPOTLIGHT EMPLOYEE



NATHAN SHELMAN



Title: District Conservationist

Location: Keosauqua/
Van Buren County

College: B.A. in
Agricultural Studies,
Minor in Agronomy
Iowa State University,
2014

Where did you grow up?

I am from Olds, a small town in Southeast Iowa, where I attended WACO Community High School. I grew up on my family's row crop farming operation.

How did you get interested in conservation?

My conservation background is rooted in implementing conservation practices on the family farm. I continued learning about them in college and through my past positions.

Conservation is a family career choice. My mother has worked for the Iowa Department of

Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation, as a Conservation Assistant for the last 33 years. My wife, Kylie, works for the Farm Service Agency. Growing up, I watched how NRCS helps conserve the land by helping people help the land. That made it easy for me to choose the conservation career path. I wanted to work for NRCS since I was 12 and haven't looked back!

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Working with the clients is what I enjoy the most. I also enjoy furthering my knowledge and learning everyday within NRCS to help promote conservation programs along with managing and implementing them.

What do you do in your free time?

I enjoy farming on the family farm with my dad; playing, watching and coaching all kinds of sports, and spending time with family.

Tell us about your family.

My wife, Kylie, and I had our first child, Bennett, in May of 2021. Bennett was named after Hugh Hammond Bennett, the first NRCS chief.



Class participants conduct a pedestrian walkover at a Mill Creek Village site in Cherokee County.

FALL 2021 CULTURAL RESOURCES TRAINING

By Megan Messerole, State Archaeologist

In October and November, 125 NRCS and partner employees completed Module 8 Cultural Resource Training, which took place in seven different counties across Iowa, including Franklin, Adair, Benton, Washington, Cherokee, Pocahontas, and Winneshiek Counties.

Cultural Resource Module 7 and 8 courses are required for all conservation planners in Iowa. Module 8 is the field training portion that focuses on identification, evaluation, and documentation of cultural resources in the project impact area.

For these training, we visited local known historic and archaeological sites, reviewed NRCS policies, observed artifact types, and practiced shovel testing and pedestrian survey methods.



Top: Cultural Resources training participants visit the Adair County poor farm cemetery.



Right: A stone tool was found during a pedestrian survey at an archaeological site in Franklin County.

GRACIOUS HOSTS

NRCS Resource Conservationist Robert Mier, from the Partnerships Team at the state office, drove the Mexican agriculture delegation around during their Oct. 20 visit to Iowa.

The Mexican delegation were the guest of US Agriculture Secretary Vilsack, in town for bilateral meetings with Mexico's Secretary of Agricultural and Rural Development, Víctor Manuel Villalobos Arámbula.

Because Mier is fluent in Spanish, he was selected to transport the Mexican delegation.

The motorcade for the tour gathered at a parking lot near Hilton Coliseum in Ames, with the bilateral talks taking place at the Memorial Union at Iowa State University soon after.

The two secretaries then visited the ISU Seed Center, and Plant Sciences Institute.

After lunch at Cornbred in Ames, the next tour stop was the Griffieon Family Farm, located north of Ankeny. This farm is experiencing the pressures of urban sprawl but has successfully established and implemented conservation practices for over 20 years.

While in transit to the different stops, Mier says he was able to point out a small part of the good work NRCS staff is doing on the land. Although the Mexican delegation understood and spoke English, they appreciated the Spanish discussion and asked many questions about agriculture in our state.



NRCS Partnerships Team Resource Conservationist Robert Mier (left) escorted members of the Mexican agriculture delegation on their Oct. 20 Iowa tour. With Mier are (L-R): Ena Resendiz, Mexican Ag Secretary Victor Manuel Villalobos Arambula, Iowa NRCS State Conservationist Jon Hubbert, and Luis Martinez.

IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL CHANGES



Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Meyer, Daniel	Soil Conservationist	Retirement	9/27/21	Chariton RT
Hicks, Martin	Engineering Technician	Retirement	9/30/21	Charles City RT
Grube, Derek	Soil Conservationist	Resignation	10/1/21	Charles City RT
Hammer, Elaine	Soil Conservation Technician	Retirement	10/1/21	Waterloo RT
Cabalka, Griffin	Soil Conservation Technician	Appointment	10/10/21	Vinton RT
Couchman, Ty	Soil Conservation Technician	Appointment	10/10/21	Chariton RT
Neideigh, Erica	Civil Engineer	Appointment	10/10/21	Waterloo
Reed, Austin	Soil Conservation Technician	Appointment	10/10/21	Indianola RT
Rouse, Ricky	Soil Conservation Technician	Appointment	10/10/21	Tipton RT
Steele, Dallas	Soil Conservation Technician	Appointment	10/10/21	Red Oak RT
Walsh, James	Soil Conservation Technician	Appointment	10/10/21	Creston RT
Willeford, Johnathon	Soil Conservation Technician	Appointment	10/10/21	Algona RT
Kuhn, Laura	Program Assistant	Name Change from Bollman-Mracek	10/19/21	Decorah RT
Friedrichsen, Heather	Program Assistant	Appointment	10/24/21	Webster City RT
Hyle, Sara	District Conservationist	Resignation	11/5/21	Centerville
Brown, Dana	Archaeologist	Appointment	11/7/21	Des Moines
Casson, Andrew	Soil Conservation Technician	Appointment	11/7/21	Oakland RT
Gordon, Jonathan	Wetland Specialist	Appointment	11/7/21	Newton
Steinhoff, Victoria	Geologist	Appointment	11/7/21	Des Moines
Yule, Katie	District Conservationist	Resignation	11/11/21	Charles City
Hiney, Andrea	Soil Conservationist	Name Change from Hodgson	11/19/21	Newton RT
Wilson, Hannah	Soil Conservationist	Resignation	11/19/21	Ottumwa RT
Bennett, Abigail	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	11/21/21	Red Oak RT
Berlage, John	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	11/21/21	Decorah RT
Perkins, Penny	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	11/21/21	Guthrie Center RT
Mahoney, Michael	Area Easement Specialist	Promotion	11/21/21	Fairfield Area
Justiniano-Velez, Erika	Agricultural Engineer	Resignation	12/3/21	Des Moines
Birks, Cristine	Soil Conservation Technician	Retirement	12/31/21	Webster City RT
Brommel, David	CSP Coordinator	Retirement	12/31/21	Des Moines
Exey, Barbara	Soil Conservation Technician	Retirement	12/31/21	Decorah RT
McCall, Kevin	State Resource Conservationist	Retirement	12/31/21	Des Moines
Allen, Steve	Soil Conservation Technician	Retirement	12/31/21	Chariton
Walsh, James	Soil Conservation Technician	Retirement	12/31/21	Creston
Westfall, Wyatt	Soil Conservationist	Appointment	1/2/22	Epworth RT

IDALS-DSCWQ PERSONNEL CHANGES



Name	Title	Nature of Action	Effective Date	Location
Morris, Karen	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	10/29/21	Decatur SWCD
Moss, Carrie	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	10/29/21	Davis SWCD
Sunderman, Chenoa	Conservation Assistant	Resignation	11/9/21	Mills SWCD
Juhl, Amber	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	11/21/21	Cerro Gordo SWCD
Shields, Shannon	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	11/21/21	Ringgold SWCD
Smith, Sara	Environmental Engineer Senior (Water Resources Bureau)	New Hire	12/10/21	Central Office - Des Moines
McLaren, Shelley	Conservation Assistant	Resignation	1/5/22	Dallas SWCD
Noble, Catherine	Conservation Assistant	Resignation	1/5/22	Story SWCD
Eggena, Susan	Conservation Assistant	Retirement	1/6/22	Marshall SWCD
Grebert, Tammy	Conservation Assistant	Retirement	1/6/22	Fremont SWCD

Field Office Address Updates

Emmet SWCD
2700 Central Avenue
Estherville, IA 51334

Hamilton SWCD
501 Closz Drive
Webster City, IA 50595

Ringgold SWCD
800 S. Cleveland Street
Mt. Ayr, IA 50854

Iowa NRCS 2021 Year in Review

34,918 acres
Derecho Disaster
Relief



10,245
conservation
plans written

1,466
new program
contracts

4,564 new acres
enrolled in
Conservation Easements



322,769
acres contracted



797K acres with
conservation plans

\$2.2M



New
Regional Conservation
Partnership Program
- EQIP Projects



103,819

active CRP
contracts



Natural Resources Conservation Service

Top Practice
Adopted
through EQIP

8 years in
a row

Cover Crops
152,643 acres

