



United States Department of Agriculture

*Natural Resources Conservation Service Earth Team*

# Volunteer Showcase

## *Veteran Volunteers through Operation Warfighter*

NRCS Earth Team volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds. In Fort Benton, Montana, the NRCS field office recently welcomed SSgt. Nicholas Johnson, a 12-year Air Force veteran, as an Earth Team volunteer through the Department of Defense's Operation Warfighter program.

Johnson, currently serving as a medical material craftsman at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls, Montana, was previously deployed to Afghanistan and was later attached to Special Operations Forces as a supplies and equipment manager serving in Okinawa, Thailand, Bangladesh, Nepal and Cambodia.

While volunteering for NRCS in Chouteau County, Johnson met producers and assisted the NRCS staff with taking inventories of natural resources on rangeland and checking conservation practices.

"The entire Fort Benton staff appreciated Nick's promptness, skills and enthusiasm in completing the work at hand," said Bob Nansel, NRCS district conservationist in Fort Benton. "Nick seemed to enjoy the work setting, whether in the Missouri River breaks or the Highwood Mountains. He was anxious to return to the Lost Lake with his family after seeing it for the first time."

Nansel said he would recommend Operation Warfighter as a source of volunteers for field



offices within commuting distance of a military base, as SSgt. Johnson proved to be a net benefit from day one.

Operation Warfighter is an internship program that matches qualified wounded, ill and injured service members with non-funded federal internships in order for them to gain valuable work experience during their recovery and rehabilitation. This process assists with service members' reintegration to duty, or transition into civilian work where they can employ their newly acquired skills in a non-military work setting.

For more information, visit the Operation Warfighter website at <http://www.dhs.gov/homeland-security-careers/operation-warfighter>.

The Earth Team is the volunteer component of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. If you are interested in volunteering, contact the National Earth Team Office at 888-526-3227 or visit: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/people/volunteers/>

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