



United States Department of Agriculture

IOWA

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Summer 2019

**A CIVIL RIGHTS BALLAD
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**CHIEF LOHR
VISITS IOWA
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NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE
www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov



Ankeny Field Office staff got a special visit from NRCS Chief Matthew Lohr on August 21. He was in Iowa to speak at the 2019 Soil and Water Conservation Districts Annual Meeting in Ames. From left to right: State Conservationist Kurt Simon, Conservation Assistant Ann Hughes, Watershed Coordinator Julie Perreault, Chief Lohr, District Conservationist Clint Miller, Soil Conservationist Jason Foss, Farm Bill Specialist Scott Breach and Soil Conservationist Aaron Eggert.

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a **Message**
from the
State Conservationist



Kurt Simon,
State Conservationist

On the Eve of our 1010 Package Approval

We are on the verge of completing the second major step of our statewide reorganization. We received word this week our 1010 package will soon be sent to Congress for the last step of the approval process.

So where do we go from here?

Once we have the final 1010 package, there will still be lots of work to do here in the State Office and at the FPAC Business Center level before any major changes begin.

We must do a great deal of “behind the scenes” work to update information that drives all of our business tools, EmpowHR, Protracts, etc. We must finalize the new tools and processes that will be used to coordinate work between the field offices and the resource teams. And we must begin sharing our structure with our customers and members of the public.

So like many of you, I am ready to get this ball rolling and turn our plan into action. But this work will likely take several weeks, and possibly months, to complete.

We still must take this one step at a time to ensure a smooth transition into our new structure. So, continued thanks for your patience as we move forward in this complicated process.

Sincerely,

Kurt Simon
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. Past issues can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/ia/people/employees/?cid=nrcs142p2_008273



@IowaNRCS



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CONSERVATION SUMMER: INTERNS GAIN IOWA EXPERIENCE



Summer 2019 is in the Books

New and returning students kicked off their summer internship experiences at the summer tour in June. This year's tour returned to the LICA farm near Melbourne and featured a tour of the farm's conservation practices, including a new saturated buffer (pictured above) and a soil health workshop by retired NRCS employee Mike Hubbs and NRCS Regional Soil Health Specialist Doug Peterson. The second day included panel discussions with conservation partnership employees. Nearly 30 students from across the state participated in the tour.

IT TAKES FOUR TO TANGO: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS



About 300 people attended the 2019 All Employees Professional Development Events held in Madrid, Atlantic and Amana. The afternoon speaker Candy Whirley taught staff about four communication and personality types: the lamb, chameleon, lion and owl. These folks attended the meeting in Amana. Pictured from left to right: Conservation Assistant Debbra Wearmouth, Farm Bill Specialist Miranda Beebe, Speaker Candy Whirley, District Conservationist Abby Beltz, Soil Conservationist Chad Gilles.

NRCS GOLF TOURNAMENT

A total of 16 teams (32 golfers) participated in this year's 2-person best shot tournament held at Lakeside Municipal Golf Course in Fort Dodge. *(Photos: Vince Sitzmann and Kyle Ament with their first place trophy. Retired NRCS GIS Specialist Jim Phillips and his wife Kelly hit the links and NRCS Soil Conservation Technician Doug Adams gives the thumbs up.)*

RESULTS!

FIRST:

VINCE SITZMANN/KYLE AMENT (-5/67)

SECOND:

JASON JOHNSON/LYNN BETTS (-2/70)

THIRD:

BRIAN TUMEY/SCOTT TUMEY (-2/70)

2ND FLIGHT WINNER

NICOLE JONES/JOSH STRANSBURY (+1/73)

3RD FLIGHT WINNER

GREG TOWNLEY/MIKE PHILLIPS (+13/85)



CHIEF LOHR VISIT: FOCUSES ON PARTNERSHIPS AND PEOPLE



Chief Matthew Lohr visited Iowa August 21 to speak at the Annual Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners' Meeting held in Ames, to visit the farm of AJ and Kellie Blair in Webster County and to meet staff in the Ankeny Field Office. His presentation focused on the importance and power of partnerships and reminded the audience that even the smallest moments can have the biggest impacts on our customer's experiences. You can watch the video of his Iowa visit [here](#).



PHOTO 1: Chief Lohr and State Conservationist Kurt Simon meet with staff at the Blair Farm in Dayton, Iowa. **PHOTO 2:** The Blair farm dog photobombs Chief Lohr. **PHOTO 3:** Watershed Coordinator Julie Perreault discusses water quality work in Polk County. **PHOTO 4:** Chief Lohr stops for a selfie with Cy before heading back to Des Moines from the Gateway Hotel in Ames.





EARNING THEIR SPURS: AT THE WOMEN IN AG LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Emily Ludwig and Ava Haun had the opportunity to attend the 20th Anniversary of the Women in Agriculture Leadership Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The event emphasizes: business etiquette, selling skills, time management, leadership, and organization.

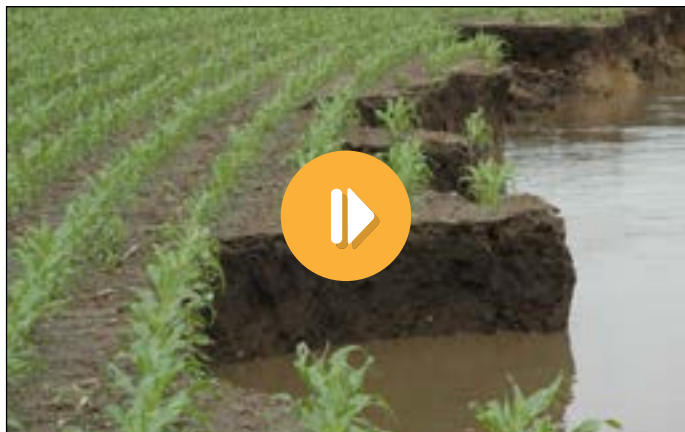
One of the event highlights included a farm field day--New Mexico Style at the El Pinto restaurant. The restaurant is located on a 14-acre farm where the owners grow many of the ingredients used daily in the kitchen. The operation includes a worm farm, chickens and the vegetables/fruits grown in the high tunnel. The owners use the worm castings to brew a "worm tea" to use on all their vegetables as a source of nutrients. They pump the "worm tea" through their micro irrigation system.

--Submitted by Emily Ludwig and Ava Haun



DON'T TREAT IT LIKE DIRT! SOIL HEALTH MUSIC VIDEO

Panora High School Earth Team volunteers are featured in this Iowa NRCS produced music video that reminds us all not to treat soil like dirt. This [video](#) was first released in 2010.



IOWA NRCS 1010 PACKAGE: GETTING THE 411

Employees and partners have submitted more than 150 comments and questions to the Iowa Reorganization Survey Monkey Feedback link. As new questions are asked, we distribute updated versions of the Frequently Asked Questions document. All questions and comments are anonymous, unless an employee chooses to share their name and contact information. Click [here](#) to access the feedback tool.

ADKINS HONORED FOR A CAREER WELL-DONE


Marty Adkins, former assistant state conservationist for partnerships, who retired on August 2 was recently honored at the Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners Annual Meeting in Ames.

Paula Ellis, chair of the State Soil Conservation & Water Quality Committee, presented Marty the Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality Award. Ellis was named the 2019 Iowa Conservation Woman of the Year Award, presented by the Federal Women's Program committee at the conference.

BACK IN THE DAY

THE CIVIL RIGHTS BALLAD

TO:
DANA HOLLAND



WELL I AM TITLE 7,
COMPREHEND AND GO TO HEAVEN.
TREAT YOUR CLIENTS AND ONE ANOTHER,
ALMOST LIKE YOU WOULD YOUR MOTHER.

WHETHER ON THE TOWN OR ON THE JOB,
SHOW RESPECT, DON'T BE A SLOB!
EVERY COLOR, EVERY CREED,
DESERVES A CHANCE TO SUCCEED.

EQUAL AND FAIR IS OUR GOAL,
ANYTHING LESS WILL TAKE A TOLL.
SHOW BY EXAMPLE, IT'S NOTHING NEW,
WE LEAD THE WAY IN AREA 2!

YES, CIVIL RIGHTS ARE A NATURAL THING,
REMEMBER THE WORDS OF DR. KING.
NRCS AND DSC,
WE DO THINGS RIGHT, 'CAUSE WE'RE FAMILY!

An Ode to Civil Rights

Thank you Ava Haun for submitting this Back in the Day feature written by Dana Holland--back in the day.

The Civil Rights Ballad

Title 6 and Title 7,
Comprehend and go to heaven.
Treat your clients and one another,
Almost like you would your mother.

Whether on the town or on the job,
Show respect, Don't be a slob!
Every color, every creed,
Deserves a chance to succeed.

Equal and fair is our goal,
Anything less will take a toll.
Show by example, It's nothing new,
We lead they way in Area 2!

Yes, Civil Rights are a natural thing,
Remember the words of Dr. King.
NRCS and DSC,
We do things right, 'cause we're family!

Do you have a photo or idea for Back in the Day? Please send it to Laura Crowell at 210 Walnut Street, RM 693 Neal Smith Federal Building, Des Moines, IA, 50309 or laura.crowell@usda.gov.

OUTREACH UPDATES: FROM FFA TO URBAN STUDENTS

Soil Health Undies at the FFA Conference

The 91st Iowa FFA Leadership Conference took place this spring in Ames. With over 6,000 FFA members and guests the Scheman building was a buzz of navy-blue corduroy jackets.

A highlight of conversation was the "soiled undies" on display at the NRCS booth. The experiment displayed consisted of nine pairs of cotton underwear that were buried two inches below ground under various land uses. After 6 weeks the underwear was dug up, hand washed and dried. The soils with greater microbial activity resulted in higher levels of decomposition. The undies provided an excellent visual and conversation starter to get students thinking about what goes on below ground! In addition to the soil health takeaway, the more than 150 students who visited the booth were informed on the Pathways Program as well as various career options.

A special thank you to Deanna Brennecke, Ava Haun, William Peek, Anand Hase, Matthew Allen and Michael Henderson for volunteering to staff the booth.

— Emily Ludwig, Federal Womens Program Manager

I'll Make You A World in Iowa Education Day

Hundreds of middle and high school students come to learn about African American culture and explore higher education. The important goal of the event is promoting education, awareness, and reservation around African-American history. The education day held this spring in Des Moines includes a day-long series of workshops and learning activities for students including a STEM workshop and a black history game show.

NRCS had a booth at this education day to promote soil health ideas and careers with the agency. To introduce soil health ideas, three simple models were used. A piece of chocolate cake to show the layers of soil and how soils are moist. A jar of different sized candies to show how many different microorganisms are present within a tablespoon of soil. A sponge and a brick were used to demonstrate how water moves over a healthy soil and pavement. The food models attracted many students to check out our booth and ask questions. It's thrilling when the students understand and ask what they can do in their own backyard.

— Rubyana Neely, Black Special Emphasis Program

Title: Public affairs specialist Des Moines State Office; He is currently serving a public affairs detail assisting the Missouri NRCS State Office in Columbia through October.

College Education: Bachelor's Degree: Communication Studies, 1996, Simpson College (Indianola)

Career:

After graduating from Simpson, he accepted a full-time position in their Admissions Office. I recruited high school students in SW Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, and Colorado. Before joining NRCS he produced a recruitment advertising television show called JobsTV at The Des Moines Register for a contract company - Digital Media Classifieds. He joined NRCS in 2003. A few of his duties include updating the Iowa NRCS website; designing publications and exhibits; writing success stories and feature articles; taking photos; and helping with special events and campaigns.

He also served a couple other details:

- In March 2008, he worked in the Riverside, CA Area Office to promote wildfire assistance in southern California.
- In September 2017, he served as a USDA-FEMA liaison in Austin, TX during post-Hurricane Harvey recovery.

What do you like most about your job?

I think most public affairs people would concur that the best part of the job is getting out in the field and talking to landowners. I really enjoy helping to tell the producer's conservation story and taking photographs to show off their practices. I also really enjoyed helping with the "Unlock the Secrets in the Soil" campaign. I think the soil health movement has been the most satisfying development I've seen since I started with the agency.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Council Bluffs. My background is not in agriculture, but my dad and grandpa worked in ag fields. My grandpa, Cliff Johnson, was a longtime ISU Extension Director in Page and Pottawattamie Counties. My dad was an ag loan officer and later worked for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). My grandpa raised a herd of purebred Hereford cattle just outside of town. My siblings and I were in 4-H and showed his cattle at Westfair in Council Bluffs.

Family:

My wife, Jen, and I married in 2003. We have three boys: Spencer (13), Carter (12), and Graham (10). We live in West Des Moines, and the boys attend Waukee Schools.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

I am a total sports nut. I played basketball and tennis in college, and now enjoy coaching my kids' basketball and baseball teams. The boys and I also love to play golf. We are big Cyclone fans and are longtime Iowa State football season ticket holders.

EMPLOYEE
SPOTLIGHT

Jason
Johnson



Changes In IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Ackerman, Heidi	Soil Conservationist	Resignation	6/8/19	Adel FO
Adam, Eric	District Conservationist	Promotion	7/12/19	Tipton MU
Adkins, Martin	Asst State Conservationist for Partnerships	Voluntary Retirement	8/2/19	State Office
Anderson, Tracy	Soil Conservation Technician	Resignation	5/16/19	Fort Dodge MU
Bednarek, Richard	State Soil Scientist	Voluntary Retirement	4/30/19	State Office
Burgess-Conforti, Jason	Soil Conservationist	Career Cond. Appt	4/14/19	Oakland MU
Duvel, Thomas	Soil Conservationist Aid	Voluntary Retirement	7/31/19	Waukon FO
Flowers, Charles	District Conservationist	Promotion	9/1/19	Corydon FO
Grube, Derek	Soil Conservationist	Conversion to Career Cond. Appt.	6/26/19	Charles City MU
Hansen, Abigail	Soil Conservationist	Conversion to Career Cond. Appt.	7/21/19	Greenfield FO
Hase, Anand	District Conservationist	Reassignment	9/1/19	Greenfield FO
Hanson, Barbara	Soil Conservation Tech.	Voluntary Retirement	7/31/19	Waukon FO
Heims, Joshua	Soil Conservationist	Conversion to Career Cond. Appt.	7/21/19	Charles City MU
Jensen, Brian	Soil Conservationist	Conversion to Career Cond. Appt.	7/21/19	Corydon MU
Klocke, Natasha	Soil Conservation Tech.	Conversion to Career Cond. Appt.	8/18/19	Decorah FO
Lowe, Stacie	Resource Conservationist	Promotion	8/18/19	Fairfield AO
Mickle, Corey	Civil Engineer	Conversion to Career Cond. Appt.	7/21/19	State Office
Romero, Betty	Soil Conservation Technician	Voluntary Retirement	4/26/19	Spirit Lake MU
Shetler, Amanda	District Conservationist	Reassignment	7/21/19	Guthrie Center FO
Sporrer, Jeffrey	District Conservationist	Reassignment	8/4/19	Carroll FO
Yaddof, Dexter	District Conservationist	Promotion	8/4/19	Osceola FO

Changes In IDALS-DSCWQ PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Parker, Pam	Conservation Asst.	New Hire	5/17/19	Muscatine SWCD
Dunnick, Shelly	Conservation Asst.	New Hire	5/20/19	Poweshiek SWCD
Sebastian, Angela	Conservation Asst.	New Hire	5/28/19	Dallas SWCD
Reinert, Tracy	Conservation Asst.	New Hire	7/1/19	Hardin SWCD
Brekke, Allison	Conservation Asst.	New Hire	7/9/19	Humboldt SWCD
Theesfeld, Grant	Conservation Asst.	New Hire	7/15/19	Calhoun SWCD
Swenson, Kristi	Conservation Asst.	New Hire	8/29/19	Emmet SWCD
Forret, Denise	Conservation Asst.	Retirement	4/18/19	Dallas SWCD
Smith, Jayne	Conservation Asst.	Retirement	7/5/19	Boone SWCD
Hawkins, Dan	Finance Specialist	New Hire	4/18/19	Accounting Bureau
Judge, Casey	Env. Spec. Senior	New Hire	5/31/19	Water Resources Bureau
Lowry, Jeanine	Conservation Asst.	Left Employment	5/16/19	Calhoun SWCD
Osborn, Ann	Conservation Asst.	Left Employment	6/4/19	Emmet SWCD
Meek, Beth	Conservation Asst.	Left Employment	8/28/19	Ringgold SWCD
Davis, Cynthia	Financial Specialist	Transfer	5/31/19	Accounting Bureau
Sitzmann, Vince	Bureau Chief	Transfer	6/14/19	Mines & Minerals
Myers, Will	Bureau Chief	Transfer	8/23/19	Field Services

In Memoriam

State Soil Conservation Technician Ned DeBoer, age 49 of Sibley, Iowa died Monday, July 15, 2019 from injuries sustained in a tractor accident while raking hay. He was a member of the First Baptist Church where he had served as an Elder. He was the Sibley-Ocheyedan Shooting Generals coach. Some of his hobbies included, restoring antique tractors, antique tractor pulling and trap shooting and other shooting sports activities as a whole.

He is survived by his wife Linda and two sons, Samuel and Daniel, his parents, siblings and extended family members.