USDA

United States Department of Agriculture

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Summer 2018

FARMER FEUD: SURVEY SAYS?

PAGE 5

SUMMER INTERNS BAND TOGETHER

PAGE 6

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov

Area 2 Pathways interns Adam Buseman and Joy Stone spend the day in Winnebago County assisting with wetland monitoring and learning about engineering from Area Engineer Sarah Anderson. See page 4 for a list of NRCS 2018 Pathways interns. Photo by Brenda Tenold-Moretz.

WHAT'S INSIDE?

3 Message from Acting State Conservationist Jon Hubbert
4 2018 Pathway Intern Roster
5 Professional Development Event Save the Date
Boot Camp Students Gather in Lincoln
6 Earth•Soil•Life•Diversity
Farmer Feud: You Decide What the Survey Says
7 Summer Interns Band Together
8 Back in the Day: Albia Newspaper
NRCS Honors Young Soil Health Expert
9 Employee Spotlight:
State Resource Conservationist Kevin McCall
10 25 Year Easement Anniversary Celebration
Video Spotlight: Big Wall Lake Wetland Complex
11 NRCS Personnel Actions
DSCWQ Personnel Actions

a Message from the State Conservationist

Jon Hubbert, Acting State Conservationist

Looking Ahead: Staffing and Structure

During FY18, NRCS and FSA will hire 2,400 employees (1,100 NRCS positions). Because USDA's priority is to focus on customer service, 90 percent of these positions will be directed to the field and state level. These positions will be advertised in a series of phases.

So what does this mean to Iowa NRCS? Currently our agency is wrapping up the second hiring phase, making a total of 33 new positions. And we are currently working to develop a list of 75 additional positions, to be hired before the end of FY18.

Even with additional staff, we know that Iowa NRCS needs to look at efficiencies to address future workloads and meet customer service expectations.

We are just beginning the process of working with our partners and a facilitator to develop alternatives for field office and staffing structure.

Finally, I'm very pleased to announce that Kurt Simon will return to duty here in Iowa on July 30. After he returns, he will likely pull some double duty, serving as an advisor to Under Secretary Bill Northey until our agency has a new chief in place. But he is excited to get back home at the end of July.

Hope you have a great summer!

Jon Hubbert
Acting 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

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
210 Walnut Street, Room 693
Des Moines, IA 50309
515-284-4769

An equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

WELCOME TO IOWA! FEDERAL PATHWAYS 2018 INTERNS

NAME	INTERNSHIP TYPE	STATUS	LOCATION
Dylan Rague	Soil Con Intern	Returning	Carroll FO
Nicholas Dumke	Soil Con Intern	Returning	Spirit Lake FO
Darcy Sunderman	Soil Con Intern	Returning	Clarinda FO
Alycia Recker	Soil Con Intern	Returning	Manchester FO
Nicholas Klingenberg	Engineering Intern	Returning	West Union AO Eng
Bailey Monroe	Engineering Intern	Returning	Creston FO
Adam Scharnhorst	Soil Con Intern	Returning	Clarinda FO
Derek Grube	Soil Con Intern	Returning	Clarion FO
Erienne Davis	Soil Con Intern	Returning	Maquoketa FO
Abigail Hansen	Soil Con Intern	Returning	Marion FO
Joshua Heims	Soil Con Intern	Returning	Winterset FO
Brian Jensen	Soil Con Intern	Returning	Fairfield AO
Adam Behr	Engineering Intern	Returning	Ottumwa FO
Carlos Diaz Reyes	Engineering Intern	Returning	Sioux City FO
Raeanna Crile	Soil Con Intern	Returning	Fort Dodge FO
Joy Stone	Engineering Intern	Returning	Ankeny FO
Corey Mickle	Engineering Intern	New	West Union FO
Brian Boese	Engineering Intern	New	Sioux City FO
Adam Buseman	Engineering Intern	New	Ankeny FO
Nicholas Campbell	Engineering Intern	New	West Union FO
Eliason McNees	Engineering Intern	New	Red Oak FO
Mitchell Grove	Engineering Intern	New	Williamsburg FO
Natasha Klocke	Soil Con Intern	New	Sergeant Bluff FO
John Baker	Soil Con Intern	New	Ankeny FO
Eric Bro	Soil Con Intern	New	West Union FO
Madalyn Boehm	Soil Con Intern	New	Muscatine FO
Alec McLellan	Soil Con Intern	New	LeMars FO
Timothy Pearson	Soil Con Intern	New	Humboldt FO
Rodney Blackwell	Soil Con Intern	New	Atlantic FO

AROUND THE CORNER: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

For the fifth consecutive year, the Federal Women's Program committee is coordinating an all-employee professional development event this summer. Once again, the event will be repeated at three locations throughout the state to provide opportunities statewide. Lunch, which will cost $13, will include a pasta bar, salad, bread, water and lemonade. Reservations are due by July 23 to Conservation Districts of Iowa.

FAMILY AFFAIR: MOTHER-DAUGHTER EASEMENT MONITORING

CDI Wetland Easement Technician Mary Fisher and her Iowa Earth Team Volunteer Carol Miller completed more than 40 monitoring visits in Dickinson, Clay and Emmet counties this past May. Carol completes wetland determinations for NRCS in Wisconsin. *(Submitted by Brenda Tenold-Moretz)*

COMING SOON:
2018 IOWA NRCS GOLF TOURNAMENT

- AUG. 24, 9 AM
- 2-PERSON BEST BALL
- SPRING VALLEY GOLF COURSE (LIVERMORE, IA)
- $50/PERSON (18 HOLES, CART, LUNCH & PRIZES)
- PAY BY AUG. 10 CONTACT: BRIAN TUMEY (BRIAN.TUMEY@IA.USDA.GOV)

ONEUSDA: CONDUCTS OUTREACH AT LGBTQ YOUTH CONFERENCE

For the 13th consecutive year, bus loads of students, teachers, parents and LGBTQ youth supporters attended the Governor's Conference on LGBTQ Youth in Des Moines. Held at the Iowa Events Center, more than 1,500 people came from all corners of the state to attend workshops and hear a terrific slate of speakers.

Conference topics included LGBT civil rights laws, bullying prevention strategies, homelessness and human trafficking among LGBT youth, and social justice advocacy. Several well-known Iowa LGBT individuals, Iowa State Representative Liz Bennett and Iowa State Senator Matt McCoy, who shared their life stories.

NRCS and APHIS provided students, teachers and parents career and Pathways information, as well as soil health bracelets and resources. USDA staff at the booth included:

- Judy Martinson (Resource Conservationist, Des Moines),
- Kelsey Blodgett (Soil Conservationist, Malvern), and
- Lilly Amador, the LGBT SEPM for APHIS in Ames.

FARMER FEUD: HELP DECIDE WHAT THE "SURVEY SAYS"

For the third consecutive show, NRCS and our Conservation Central partners will host six sessions of Farmer Feud during the 2018 Farm Progress Show, Aug. 28-30. Similar to the well-known game show Family Feud, each game features questions based on the results of 25 survey questions.

We are gathering input from Iowa farmers, landowners and conservationists and would like your input too. Not everyone will have the opportunity to play Farmer Feud, but you can participate by taking our 10-minute survey at www.surveymonkey.com/r/FarmerFeud.

BANDING TOGETHER: SUMMER INTERNS HELP WITH DNR PROJECT

This month a group of five summer interns assisted the Iowa DNR Missouri River Wildlife Management Unit with a state-wide banding project to monitor the migrating population of Canada Geese. NRCS wetland easements provide important habitat for migrating birds, like Canada Geese.

The group banded more than 100 Canada Geese, and also identified a Cackling Goose, which typically is found in arctic climates. They also identified five previously-banded geese. DNR staff will use their band info to track the migration of each goose. When any of the banded geese are harvested or found dead of natural causes, their band number is reported back to the DNR and data is added to the study.

Boats were used to safely herd the geese to the shore at the Lewis and Clark State Park campground, and then guided to a catch pen by staff walking slowly and calmly towards them---similar to herding livestock.

Staff (carefully) determined the gender of each goose which were then banded by the DNR biologist. After they were "escorted" back to the shoreline for a safe release.

Several interns, Charolette Rielly (Onawa) and Isabella Faris (Sioux City), got some extra training when they volunteered to backup the boat trailers and load the boats. District Conservationist Jackie Kragel reported both efforts were very successful. :) Other interns included Dylan Rague (Carroll), Natasha Klocke (Sergeant Bluff) and Alyssa Scott (Onawa).

The birds were much larger and stronger than many of the interns expected, especially when handling them while trying to determine their gender While the experience would be award enough, Kragel shared that each intern received special participation awards: goose poop!

LEFT PHOTO: *Natasha Klocke, Sergeant Bluff intern, holds a gosling ready for banding.*
RIGHT PHOTO: *Isabella Farris (left), Sioux City intern, and Onawa DC Jackie Kragel attempt to determine the gender of a goose.*

BACK IN THE DAY

Banking on Conservation

This newspaper advertisement from 1957, promotes conservation as a way to boost farm income. The First Iowa State Bank ad in the Albia Union-Republican states that the bank supports SWCD recommended practices as a sound investment in everyone's future--not just the farmer. A message that still rings true today!

Thanks to Stacy Wickman for sharing these historic newspaper pages.

Do you have a photo 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@ia.usda.gov.

NRCS Area Agronomist Neil Sass presents Liam McVey a certificate of appreciation for his science fair project on soil organic matter. Also pictured, Mrs. Holthaus, Liam's science teacher.

MEET LIAM MCVEY: IOWA'S YOUNGEST SOIL HEALTH EXPERT

Liam McVey, currently a sixth grader at Fayette Elementary school, recently participated in a Practical Farmers of Iowa field day on the Don Elsbernd farm near Postville. Liam is the son of Kelsi Solheim, Farm Bill Specialist in the West Union Field Office.

One of Elsbernd's long term goals is to increase soil organic matter which in turn will increase his profitability. Liam's experiment, which showed the benefits of healthy high organic matter soil, illustrated this point perfectly by simulating a drought on high and low organic matter soils.

Liam began working on his experiment as a fifth grader after talking to NRCS Area Agronomist Neil Sass about soil health. During the field day Neil and Liam discussed the experiment using an interview style with Liam answering questions about his methods, materials, hypothesis, etc. He answered them all clearly and accurately, and then afterwards he took any and all unprompted questions from the audience of 40 farmers. According to Neil, Liam was calm, cool, collected, and very confident. And he stole the show!

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Kevin McCall

Title: State Resource Conservationist, Des Moines State Office

College Education: Graduated from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree in Agronomy in 1983.

Younger Years: Kevin grew up in southwest Iowa on a diversified farm in Mills County. His family's 350-acre farm included corn, beans, cattle and hogs. His father, who was a strong conservationist, passed along that ethic to Kevin. He was first introduced to the agency by his uncle, who was a civil engineering technician in Shenandoah.

Conservation Career: He started his career while at ISU, serving as a student intern for three summers. Kevin joined the agency in 1984, as a soil conservationist in Red Oak. His career path included stops in Wapello, Donnelson, Shenandoah, Fort Dodge and now Des Moines.

NRCS Mission: "Growing up I always thought I would be a farmer. My goal was get back to close to home to farm and work for NRCS. When I transferred to Shenandoah, I was able to do both but discovered it was too big of a commitment to do both, so I made a decision to make NRCS my career."

Kevin shared the highlights of the three phases of his career: working directly with farmers and contractors to add conservation to the landscape; investing in individual employees and help them grow professionally; and hopefully in this third phase of his career he wants to focus on doing more things to provide technically help for field office staff.

In His Free Time: Kevin enjoys using his free time to travel to Minneapolis to visit his 14-month old grandson.

Family: Kevin and his wife Beth, who live in Ames, have been married since 1984. They have two adult children: a daughter who lives in Minnesota with her husband and child; and a son, who recently married and lives in Seattle.

M&S CORNER

HATCH ACT TRUE OR FALSE?

Federal employees can display a political campaign bumper sticker on their personal vehicle, even if it's parked in a federal parking lot.

TRUE. However, employees are limited to ONE standard size political bumper sticker.

You can drive your personal vehicle for government business, even if it displays a political bumper sticker.

FALSE. Personal or government-owned vehicles used for official Government business must not display political bumper stickers.

(Please see NB 360-18-31 PER-Hatch Act Information for more specifics about federal employee responsibilities under the Hatch Act.)

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF EASEMENTS: AT BIG WALL LAKE & DOWS

More than 1,500 Iowa landowners have enrolled about 186,000 wetland acres into conservation easements since 1993. Iowa NRCS celebrated 25 years of easements at a special event on June 15 in Dows.

Iowa leads the nation in the number of conservation easements with 1,620, about 65 percent of these remain in private ownership. Nationally, private landowners have enrolled more than 22,000 easements, covering more than 4.4 million acres through NRCS easement programs.

Originally, the event was to be held at the Big Wall Lake wetland complex. But was relocated because of high rainfall.

TOP PHOTO:
State Conservationist Kurt Simon addresses the crowd of 70 partners, landowners, employees and NRCS retirees.

BOTTOM LEFT PHOTO:
Retired NRCS Biologist Mark Lindflott catches up with Todd Bogenschutz, DNR.

BOTTOM RIGHT PHOTO:
NRCS employees EQIP Program Manager Paul Goldsmith and Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (A4) Lori Altheide were among the 70 attendees who attended the easement anniversary celebration.

SPOTLIGHT VIDEO

TAKE A BIRD'S EYE TOUR: BIG WALL LAKE WETLAND COMPLEX

Thanks to drone footage provided by the Northeast Iowa RC&D you can take a bird's eye tour of the four USDA-funded easements at the Big Wall Lake wetland complex in Wright County. This video was shared at the easement anniversary event hosted by Iowa NRCS on June 15.

25 YEARS OF EASEMENTS
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Changes In
IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Brady, Benjamin	Soil Conservationist	Converted to Career Cond.	3/18/18	LeMars MU
Dojutrek, Christopher Richard	Soil Conservationist	Transfer to different federal agency	5/12/18	Indianola FO
Harris, Aris Anthony	Soil Conservationist	Transfer to different federal agency	3/17/18	Atlantic AO
Holcombe, Kevin E	Civil Engineering Technician	Voluntary Retirement	3/2/18	Decorah FO
Sande, Aaron	Soil Conservationist	Converted to Career Cond.	3/18/18	Newton FO
Swanson, John Michael	Soil Con Tech	Resignation	5/3/18	Ankeny FO

Changes In
IDALS-DSCWQ PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Kline, Kelly	Conservation Asst.	New Hire	4/24/18	Mitchell SWCD
Ewers, Joan	Conservation Asst.	New Hire	4/25/18	Cerro Gordo SWCD
McMichael, Julie	Conservation Tech.	New Hire	5/4/18	Madison/Warren SWCD
Krebsbach, Judie	Environmental Spec.	Retirement	5/31/18	Water Resources Bureau
Ernst, Christina	HR Associate	Left Employment	5/31/18	IDALS

Central Office New Employees:

- Carly Coltvet, Intern (Field Services Bureau/Urban); 5/29/18;
  email: carly.coltvet@iowaagriculture.gov

- Michelle Timmer, NW Field Rep.(Field Services Bureau); 6/1/18;
  email: michelle.timmer@iowaagriculture.gov; **Cell Phone:** 515-805-6555