

Iowa Current Developments



USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 210 Walnut St., Rm. 693, Des Moines, IA 50309 Summer 2007

**From the Office of
Iowa State Conservationist
Rick Van Klaveren**



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Iowa Natural Resources
Conservation Service:
Excellence in helping people
conserve and improve our
natural resources,
communities and environment."

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

During the first few days in May, southern and southwestern Iowa received three to ten or more inches of rain, resulting in severe damage and flooding. Nineteen counties were declared disaster areas and became eligible for federal assistance. The heavy rains caused parts of 22 Iowa counties to experience exceptionally high soil losses of more than seven tons per acre. Calculations of soil loss in sections of Ringgold and Union Counties topped more than 20 tons per acre.

The rain formed gullies, there was extensive sheet and rill erosion, sediment filled road and drainage ditches, and terraces across the region were breached. Damage was widespread.

From one perspective, the heavy rains showed the results of great conservation work we and our partners have successfully completed. Cropland with complete conservation systems, not just one practice, showed the least damage. No-till fields and those with standing corn and bean stubble fared pretty well. Grassed waterways worked and terraces did their jobs.

Even where terraces and structures were breached, it wasn't necessarily bad news. Terraces are often built to withstand a ten-year rainfall event. In the case of the May 5-7 storms, many experienced 50- to 100-year rainfall events. In cases where rainfall exceeds design standards, we expect terraces to fail. If they do not, it indicates they were over designed.

The heavy rains allowed us to see conservation practices passing Mother Nature's test. We could clearly see how we have helped the land. We could also unmistakably see where conservation practices need to be put in place. Those areas of erosion and soil movement have become tools to convince others of conservation's value and necessity. We should use these opportunities as a tool to help more people help the land.

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NRCS Regional Assistant Chief Christina Muedeking (center) stands in the Malcom Field Office with Marvin Waechter, district employee; Mark Kennett, district commissioner; Greg Townley, district conservationist; and Jeremy Saugstad, Holiday Lake Watershed coordinator. Muedeking was a guest of Commissioner Kennett.

Malcom District Hosts Regional Assistant Chief

NRCS Central Region Assistant Chief Christina Muedeking spent a day in June shadowing Poweshiek County farmer Mark Kennett as part of a work exchange program between producers and government workers.

Muedeking oversees NRCS programs and personnel in 15 states from Texas to Minnesota. Kennett farms soybeans and corn near Malcom and is chairman of the Poweshiek Soil and Water Conservation District.

The Muedeking visit was part of the Walk a Mile in My Boots initiative, a work-exchange program developed by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Walk a Mile National Coordinator Bonnie Allely says, "The exchanges provide opportunities for producers and NRCS employees to learn more about each other's lifestyles, issues, and operations."

Walk a Mile exchanges normally last from one to two weeks. Because of scheduling, Muedeking was able

to spend only one day with Kennett.

During their day together, Muedeking and Kennett inspected a water quality project that is administered by the Poweshiek Soil and Water Conservation District, toured the Kennett farm, and examined corn-on-corn fields using no-till and reduced tillage.



At the State Office, Earth Team volunteer T. J. Burt, Michelle Wall and T. J.'s sister, Jill Clothier, prepare a shipment of SoilView CDs for field offices.

SoilView CD Team

Cartographic Technician Michelle Wall, Secretary Jill Clothier and Earth Team Volunteer T.J. Burt have teamed up at the State Office to send out 1,000 copies of SoilView computer software compact disks to field offices in the past six months. SoilView is a companion to a county's soil survey which includes aerial photos, soil types, Iowa corn suitability index, an Access database and a built in version of ArcView software. By the end of this year all Iowa counties are expect to have their own digitized version of SoilView.

Wild Rice Reintroduced in Louisa County

District Conservationist Drew DeLang and Soil Conservation Technician Norman Stone are helping reintroduce wild rice to Louisa County. Working with graduate biology student Beth Dalrymple, DeLang and Stone found three sites to plant wild rice. They selected a farm pond, a Conservation Reserve Program shallow water area and a Wetlands Reserve Program site to seed and plant plugs.

They made their plantings in June and placed wire cages over the plants to protect them from fish and muskrats.

At one time wild rice, a warm season grass, ranged from southern Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. In presettlement Iowa it was found in wetlands, natural lakes and backwater sloughs. It has since pretty much vanished.

DeLang, Stone and Darymple hope the vanished wild rice will now reappear in Iowa—or at least in Louisa County.

Iowa NRCS Help to Louisiana Continues

Iowa NRCS personnel continue to help Louisiana recover from Hurricane Katrina. Civil engineering and soil conservation technicians who have been detailed to Louisiana this spring and summer to work on Emergency Watershed Projects are: Corby Walde, Sioux City; Ross Hopp, Sibley; John Leichtman, Anamosa; Raymond Frana, second trip, Osage; Eric Peitz, Fairfield; and Jacob Groth, Waverly.

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Soil Scientist Tom Champa stands in the Mojave Desert. He was detailed to conduct soil survey work on land 120 miles west of Los Angeles.

Soil Scientist Detailed to Desert

Area 2 Soil Scientist Tom Champa, Fort Dodge, spent 10 weeks in the Mojave Desert earlier this year on detail. His assignment was to conduct soil survey work on land within Joshua Tree National Monument 120 miles west of Los Angeles.

Working with a soil scientist from Indiana, Champa helped complete the initial soil survey on this federally owned land. Their work will assist with wind erosion control planning and revegetation.

Carrying two shovels, a bucket auger, soil analysis equipment and lots of water, Champa walked 4 to 5 miles in a typical day. He would dig four pits and do field soil testing. Champa said, "The soils are very unique in the area which I surveyed. All the soils I described are formed from granite. Most soils contained 80 to 95 percent sand and the combined clay and silt content was seldom above 20 percent."

While in the field, Champa experienced several high wind days. "The excessive wind," Champa said, "caused dust storms reminiscent of the pictures I have seen from the Dust Bowl. Driving was a challenge and reminded me of a blizzard."

Champa enjoyed the detail. "Besides gaining valuable work experience," he said, "there were other fringe benefits. I got needed exercise, lost weight, worked on my tan and I didn't have to shovel snow."



Rain Fall Simulators Are Popular Tool

Tina Cibula, soil conservationist from Malcom (pictured above) and Robert Lawson, soil conservationist from Elkader (pictured below), use rain fall simulators to demonstrate to children the importance of soil conservation to water quality.



Where Are They Now?

Meg Mueller started working for NRCS in 1998 as a student trainee in the Nevada Field Office while finishing her degree at Iowa State. She became a soil conservationist in Hampton with Charlie Kiepe and then a soil conservationist in Iowa Falls with Gary Hillmer. She went back to Hampton as a district conservationist after Charlie retired.

The Minnesota native missed living near woods and lakes, so she applied for and was selected for a resource conservationist position in Kenai, Alaska, in February 2003. Now she is the district conservationist in Kenai.

Mueller says their local agriculture work consists of hay land and pasture planning and livestock work. Her other work involves improving salmon habitat and passage, a range utilization survey on an island in the Kodiak Archipelago, and addressing flooding in the Seward area, in addition to working routinely with many of the same conservation programs used by Iowa NRCS.



Meg Mueller

Meg and her husband Marcus, have two kids, Tucker (5) and Amelia (3) who both love canoeing, camping, clamming, fishing, and hiking. They still have "good old" Hazel, their Chesapeake Bay Retriever.

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Conservation Photos On Line

Thousands of conservation photos are available on line at <http://photogallery.nrcs.usda.gov/>. They may be used free of charge to dress up newsletters and help customers understand practices.

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Urban Practice Showcased on Radio and National TV

A group of NRCS staff and partners are helping rain gardens become urban conservation media "stars." Led by Paul Miller and Wayne Petersen, this team has helped build rain gardens on a statewide radio program and now on a national television show.

Storm Lake Water Quality Coordinator Kimberley Proctor sparked the recent rain garden media interest.

Her appearance on WHO Radio's "The Big Show" in January 2007 was memorable for farm broadcaster Bob Quinn. He remembered Proctor describing the benefits rain gardens offer landowners and thought,

"Why not at my house?" Quinn did research and then, in early May, contacted Iowa NRCS public affairs for more information. He and his wife, Ann, studied the rain garden material and asked for help from Paul Miller, district conservationist in Ankeny and Wayne Petersen, urban conservationist.

With the NRCS team's assistance, the couple selected a site in their backyard, developed a design, and gathered materials.

Radio farm reporter Quinn broadcast the "play-by-play" installation of the rain garden from the backyard of his home. The construction and radio show took place Tuesday, May 29 at Quinn's West Des Moines house. Thousands of radio listeners heard the broadcast.



Wayne Petersen and Paul Miller plant a rain garden with Michele Beschen for her cable program that will be seen on the DIY and HGTV networks.

Millions more will see Petersen and Miller build a rain garden on national television. Michele Beschen, a Des Moines area hobbyist, invited Miller and Petersen to build a rain garden for her nationally syndicated television show. Beschen, of rural Van Meter, is producer and star of a show called B. Original that airs on the DIY (Do-It-Yourself) and HGTV (Home and Garden Television) cable networks.

This is the second rain garden Petersen and Miller have made for Michele Beschen's audience. In 2003 they appeared on camera to demonstrate to her Des Moines and Cedar Rapids television viewers how to build a rain garden. That local "how to do it" show called Courage to Create has now morphed into her national B. Original show.

The new program is shot in high definition and required a new rain garden building segment for her DIY and HGTV viewers.

Iowa Heartland RC&D's Linda Appelgate helped Beschen with the application for a \$400 grant to create the latest rain garden.

The show Petersen and Miller taped in June 2007 will air first on the DIY network in February 2008 and then on HGTV. The DIY network reaches 35 million homes and HGTV reaches 88 million.

Biting Forecast?

A mosquito forecast is now available at: <http://www.weather.com/activities/homeandgarden/mosquito/?from=breadcrumbs>.



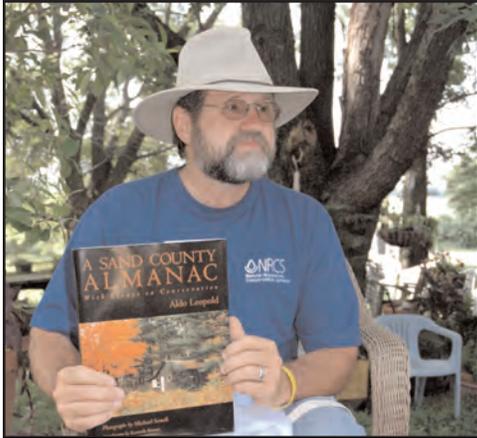
Mary Carter, Fairfield Buy Fresh Buy Local coordinator, Detra Dettmann, Pathfinders RC&D coordinator, and national local food leader Tim Schlitzer, FoodRoutes executive director, promote Buy Fresh Buy Local at an event in Fairfield.

Iowa RC&Ds Embrace Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign

Buy Fresh Buy Local (BFBL) is a campaign to promote locally produced goods. Started in Cedar Falls, BFBL now has 50 campaigns in 27 different states, eight of which are in Iowa. Iowa Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) councils participating in the BFBL campaigns include Pathfinders, Geode, Prairie Partners, Interstate and Northeast Iowa.



A fawn takes refuge beneath State Technician Brett Bengard's motorcycle in Council Bluffs. District Conservationist Dale DuVal believes nearby construction scared the fawn to the shade and relative safety of the motorcycle.



Leroy Haeffner, a Washington County soil conservationist, shows off *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold. The book was a gift from one of the landowners he worked with, Leopold's niece, Caryl Leopold Smith.

Washington County Wet, Wild Because of Haeffner

Leroy Haeffner retired June 29 after serving the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for 27 years, the last 16 as a soil conservationist in Washington County.

Bruce Trautman, Iowa NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, says Haeffner left his signature on the landscape of Washington County and all of southeast Iowa. "Leroy is a dedicated conservationist and his passion for wetlands can be witnessed driving around the county, seeing the many wetland projects he's responsible for," he said.

Haeffner's passion for wetlands and conservation message undoubtedly made an impact on area producers. Since 1992, 3,557 acres of wetlands have been restored through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in Washington County, which is 1,279 more acres more than any other county in Iowa.

A major influence on Haeffner was Aldo Leopold. A conservationist, forester, philosopher, educator and writer, Leopold is believed by many to be the father of wildlife management. Coincidentally, Leopold's niece, Caryl Leopold Smith, resides in Washington County, near Brighton, Iowa. Smith worked with Haeffner to install a 102-acre wetland along the Skunk River bottoms.

Haeffner and his wife plan to move to the Quad Cities, where his two daughters' families live. "We have five grandchildren there that we want to see more of," he said. Haeffner also has a son who lives in Cedar Rapids.

2007 NRCS Golf Tournament

Crawford County NRCS employees are hosting a statewide golf tournament August 17 at the Majestic Hills Golf Course in Denison. The \$40.00 entry fee includes an 18-hole green fee, golf cart, lunch and prizes. The event begins at 9 a.m. with a shotgun start.

The annual golf tournament has been set up by NRCS golf enthusiasts from around the state. Federal, state, district and partner employees and guests are invited to attend.

Scott Eischeid, Jay Ford and Ray Brotherton, of the Denison County field and engineering offices, are arranging this year's tournament. Eischeid says fun with friends will be woven around a little golf.

For more information, phone 712-263-4123.



NRCS Engineering Specialists Help FEMA

The heavy rains this spring caused flooding and widespread damage to south and southwest Iowa. The Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) was called in to help and FEMA asked NRCS for technical assistance. Civil Engineer Lya Hatton, State Office, and Civil Engineering Technicians Curt Fopma, Newton, and Larry Trauger, Algona, volunteered to work with FEMA.



Lya Hatton

They were assigned to the drainage ditch team based out of Council Bluffs.

Drainage ditches are used in western Iowa to keep rivers and streams coming off the Loess Hills from spreading out and flooding vast areas of flat land as the water flows to the Missouri River. Those drainage ditches were extensively damaged and the three worked with FEMA and state officials to fix the damage.

They started in June and spent four to five weeks conducting damage assessments and making repair estimates. With damage estimates of \$6 million in Monona and Harrison Counties, there was much work to be done. Putting in overtime was normal. Curt Fopma said he even worked the Fourth of July.

"I had a wonderful time," said Fopma. "It worked out real well. It was excellent to work with the FEMA folks and I'm ready to volunteer again."



Larry Trauger



Curt Fopma

Personnel Actions

Name	Title	Grade	Action	Eff Date	Duty Location
Corey, Patrick W	Soil Consvst	7	Promotion	4/15/2007	Area 4 Mt. Ayr
Gatlin, Cynthia R	Soil Consv Techncn	6	Promotion	4/15/2007	Area 4 Winterset
Groth, Jacob C	Soil Consv Techncn	6	Promotion	4/15/2007	Area 3 Waverly
Jensen, George A	Soil Consv Techncn	6	Promotion	4/15/2007	Area 4 Winterset
Smith, Joe	Soil Consvst	11	Promotion	4/15/2007	Area 1 Sioux City AO
Straka, Alexis A	Agrl Engr	9	Promotion	4/15/2007	Area 1 Sioux City AO
Zittritsch, Connie E	Soil Consv Techncn	6	Promotion	4/15/2007	Area 2 Algona
Murphy, Christina A	Civil Engr	11	Resignation	4/20/2007	State Office
Fedler, Gary L	Soil Consv Techncn	6	Promotion	5/13/2007	Area 5 Donnellson
Freilinger Mohs, A	Soil Consv Techncn	6	Promotion	5/13/2007	Area 3 Decorah
Hanson, Barbara R	Soil Consv Techncn	7	Promotion	5/13/2007	Area 3 Waukon
Horihan, Karla M	Soil Consvst	7	Promotion	5/13/2007	Area 4 Leon
Koch, Lavonne J	Soil Consv Techncn	7	Promotion	5/13/2007	Area 3 West Union
Larsen, Randall B	Soil Consv Techncn	6	Promotion	5/13/2007	Area 4 Atlantic
Mellinger, Scott A	Soil Consv Techncn	6	Promotion	5/13/2007	Area 5 Mt. Pleasant
Ruopp, Douglas C	Soil Consv Techncn	6	Promotion	5/13/2007	Area 2 Newton
Schlader, Stacy L	Soil Consvst	7	Promotion	5/13/2007	Area 5 Albia
Sperry, Wyatt N	Soil Consvst	7	Promotion	5/13/2007	Area 5 Centerville
Watson, Donald	Soil Scntst	9	Promotion	5/13/2007	Area 1 Storm Lake
Welshhons, Randal L	Soil Consv Techncn	6	Promotion	5/13/2007	Area 5 Knoxville
Wiley, Phoebe M	Soil Consv Techncn	5	Promotion	5/13/2007	Area 5 Washington
Dermody, Ryan P	Soil Scntst	11	Reassignmt	5/27/2007	Area 5 Soil Survey Office
Steele, Jason E	Soil Scntst	11	Reassignmt	5/27/2007	Area 5 Soil Survey Office
Moltzen, Roberta A	State Admv Offcr	13	Promotion	6/10/2007	State Office
Haeffner, Harold L	Soil Consvst	9	Retirement	6/30/2007	Area 5 Washington
Sandvik, Mark S	Resource Consvst	11	Retirement	6/30/2007	Area 1 Wetland Restoration
Grimm, Marcia	State Secretary		Reassignmt		Area 5 Knoxville
VanGundy, Kathy	State Secretary		Retirement	5/15/2007	Area 2 Jefferson
Jenkins, Corrine	State Secretary		Hired	4/13/2007	Area 4 Red Oak
Wolfe, Gary	State Technician		Retirement	5/31/2007	Area 4 Atlantic
Grimm, Marcia	State Secretary		Reassignmt	6/29/2007	Area 5 Knoxville
Fluckey, Steve	State Technician		Reassignmt	6/29/2007	Area 4 Atlantic



Conservationists Refresh Bike Riders

Teresa Sue Snyder-Thomas gets water from Colleen Trees, state secretary in the Clarion office. Snyder-Thomas, the Area 2 area resource conservationist, was participating in the Register's Annual Great Bike Ride Across Iowa (RAGBRAI) when she stopped for

water at the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) booth near Lake Cornelia.

Each day of the ride SWCS promotes conservation and distributes water and bananas to thousands of RAGBRAI riders.