



USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 210 Walnut St., Rm. 693, Des Moines, IA 50309 Summer 2008

From the Office of  
Iowa State Conservationist  
Richard Sims



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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.

**M**y first month back in Iowa is now over. I have attended five commissioner meetings, two conservation tours, listened to field office staff and met many conservation partners and I like what I saw and heard. There have been many conservation practices and land improvements made since I was last in Iowa. I found NRCS employees committed, energetic and working hard with land-owners and partners to improve the land.

Iowa NRCS has a national reputation for excellence. That reputation is deserved.

In my statewide travels, I have found a very strong bond between NRCS and our partners. Our partners want to continue to work together with us to meet resource concerns. District commissioners were quick to identify technical resource needs in their counties and suggest solutions.

I appreciate our leadership team that is guiding our work and response to Iowa's conservation needs.

A very high priority for me is to analyze our workload, budget and hire additional people in response to the new Farm Bill, weather related damage and our customer needs.

There is much work to do. We will continue to communicate, better organize and work with partners as we meet the resource challenges of Iowa.

## Iowa Current Developments

### Chief Lancaster in Des Moines



NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster, center, talks with Iowa NRCS state office employees. Shown with Chief Lancaster are Paul Sweeney, assistant state conservationist for operations; Karen Woodrich, assistant state conservationist for field operations; Pooh Vongkhamdy, acting state conservationist; John Skerritt,

natural resources specialist on the easement programs team; Chief Lancaster; Richard Rogers, archeologist; Monica Monk, easement programs coordinator; and Jim Phillips, GIS specialist. Lancaster was in Des Moines May 19 to address a conference on air quality and took the opportunity to visit with NRCS state office staff.



Marshall County's field office staff members Melinda Tague, soil conservation technician (left), Dana Holland, district conservationist (seated), and Sigourney Odor, state secretary (fourth from left) are joined by Soil Conservationists Deanna Rohrer, Iowa Falls

(center) and Nichole Williams, Allison (right). Rohrer and Williams helped the Marshalltown staff with the increased workload caused by the Conservation Security Program signup in Marshall County this spring.

### Team Effort Tackles CSP Workload

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) sign up this spring greatly increased the workload in the nine counties in east central Iowa that are part of the Middle Iowa Watershed. NRCS employees from non-CSP counties moved into CSP affected offices to help out.

"Our employees are the best," said Al Ehley, assistant state conservationist for field operations (AC) in West Union. "Many NRCS employees left their home counties to help balance the increased CSP workload. I was told over and over that the employees who were detailed to help CSP counties were lifesavers. They helped tackle a greatly increased workload within a short signup window."

Employees detailed to CSP counties were not the only ones who pitched in. Bruce Trautman, AC for Area 5 in Fairfield, said, "This was really an all-out, three-area-wide effort. Staff detailed to CSP counties left assignments for their co-workers to pick up and everyone pitched in. Work got done. Customers were served and conservation was put on the ground. Everyone made CSP work for Iowa."

This year, 241 CSP applications were made and 137 contracts were awarded. The new contracts cover 76,236 Iowa acres at a first year cost of \$727,881.

## Iowa Current Developments

### Mitchell County Fifth Graders Get Trees

Every fifth grader in Mitchell County got a tree seedling from the Mitchell County Soil and Water Conservation District in late April.

The district purchased 150 potted Black Hills Spruce seedlings and gave them to students in each of the county's four elementary schools as part of an Arbor Day and Stewardship Week celebration.

"The kids in all four schools were very interested in our conservation presentation," said State Secretary Sandie Adams, "and the kids really liked getting the foot-tall trees to take home and plant. The kids had a great time and so did we."

Dan Bratrud, environmental specialist; Ray Frana, Soil Conservation Technician (SCT); Mike Praska, acting district conservationist and Beth Rachut, SCT, also participated in the project.

Adams said the district hopes to continue this program in the future.

### Amana New Home to RC&D

The Iowa Valley RC&D recently relocated to main Amana due to severe water damage to its old Williamsburg office. The IVRC&D is now located at 920 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Amana, south of the Amana Millrace from the Woolen Mill and southeast of the Millstream Brewing Company.



Soil Conservation Technician Beth Rachut stands with some of the 150 Mitchell County fifth graders who received a spruce tree as part of an Arbor Day celebra-

tion. The Mitchell County Soil and Water Conservation District gave a tree and conservation lesson to every fifth grader in the county.



Polk County District Conservationist Paul Miller checks the rain garden he built in late May at his Johnston home. The construction of the rain garden was broadcast statewide on WHO Radio by Farm

Reporter Bob Quinn. The broadcast was part of WHO Radio's campaign promoting the construction of 1,040 rain gardens in Iowa.

## Iowa Current Developments

### NRCS Staff Volunteers for Work Day

NRCS staff and their families held a spring work day on the Doug Bahl farm west of Dubuque. The volunteers met in early May during National Volunteer Week to help the Bahl family sort and plant 700 Christmas trees on their farm.

Bahl, district conservationist at the Manchester field office, is recovering from a stem cell transplant and chemotherapy to treat leukemia.

Linda Schmitt, administrative management assistant in the West Union area office said, "The weather cooperated to make for a super day. Everyone had a good time and we feel good because we were able to help a fellow employee and his family."



Volunteers planted 700 Christmas trees on the Doug Bahl family farm in early May. Participating were (kneeling) Linda Schmitt, Sheryl Struthers, Neal Struthers, Doug Bahl, Joey Bahl (son), Kathy

Bahl (wife), (Back row) Dennis Weiss, Theresa Weiss, Spenser Schmitt, David Gibney, Nathan Bahl, David Mellick, Bob Vobora, and Uncle Joe Bahl.

### Easement Programs Has New Law Clerk

The Easement Programs Team at the state office has a new law clerk. Erin Light is starting her second year at the Drake University School of Law and will work part time in the easements section.

Light's position is funded through an arrangement with Professor Neil Hamilton, Director of the Drake University Agricultural Law Center.

The previous law clerk, Ed Cox, is now clerking at the Story County Attorney's office.



Soil Conservation Technician Jim Everts, Grundy Center, (far right) pauses for a moment as he picks up trash in Parkersburg with relatives of Grundy Soil and Water Conservation District Secretary Denise Freeseaman. The five were

helping friends clean up after a devastating tornado leveled much of the town in late May. Pictured left to right are Freeseaman's son Jason, brother-in-law Jerry, and husband Dave Freeseaman.

## Iowa Current Developments

### Take Your Child to Work Day

Soil Conservation Technicians Tammy Eakins and Lynn Kluger took advantage of Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day and brought their children to work in April. Eakins and her daughter, Rylee, went to the Bloomfield field office and Kluger took his son, Trevor, to his Winnebago County office in Thompson.

The Klugers spent the day examining a recently restored wetland. Kluger said he explained to his son the steps necessary to restore the wetland and the benefits wetlands provide. Young Kluger helped his father survey and stake a waterway and he learned how to take slope shots to determine the steepness of a hill.

Tammy Eakins took her sixth grader to the field to get a feel for surveying. Back at the office, Tammy had Rylee input survey information into a computer.

Eakins said, "At least now Rylee has a better understanding of what's involved in my daily routine and why I can come home tired some days."

The Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day is held the fourth Thursday in April. It is supported by Iowa NRCS and promoted by the Federal Women's Program.



Soil Conservation Technician Tammy Eakins, Bloomfield, gives her daughter, Rylee, a surveying lesson during Take Your Daugh-

ters and Sons to Work Day. Rylee is 12 years old and in 6th grade at Davis County Middle School.

### Flood Information on Iowa NRCS Website

The Iowa NRCS website has the latest information for employees concerning flooding and conservation practice damage due to this summer's severe weather, at [www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/news/Floods.html](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/news/Floods.html).

This includes bulletins, program details, press releases, radio news releases, fact sheets, frequently asked questions, photos and contact information. This web page is updated daily with the newest available information.

Contact the Iowa NRCS webmaster, Jason Johnson, if you have questions regarding the Iowa NRCS website.



Office Assistant Venessa Homewood stands in front of a display holding a sample of brochures and pamphlets. LANDCARE offers free of charge. Districts can borrow displays from LANDCARE and order copies of national and state brochures, including the new Highway Guide of Iowa Soils Associations, by calling 1-888-LANDCARE.

### Asian American/Pacific Islander Meals Held Around the State

#### Asian American/Pacific Islander Events Held in Iowa

Iowa Asian American/Pacific Islander Emphasis Program Manager Linda Wells suggested NRCS staff have an event in May celebrating Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. Many offices responded by holding potluck meals to improve understanding of the Asian Pacific Islander cultures.

The NRCS field office in Muscatine had a potluck lunch May 12. The menu included Chinese (stir fry), Filipino (lumpia), Hawaiian (cake), Japanese (nigiri-sushi, maki-sushi), Korean (bulgogi, kim chee), and Polynesian (baked sweet potatoes, chicken with bananas and pineapple, rabbit and rice casserole) foods.

District Conservationist Paul Viner said, "The potluck was a great success. Everyone tried something new and had a chance to discuss the origin of their food contribution."

Participants were also treated to a lesson in how to use chopsticks, the various kinds of sushi, and proper sushi eating etiquette. Several people requested recipes at the end of the lunch.

Poweshiek County USDA Service Center staff participated in a special emphasis observance May 13. The event featured food from various cultures. **(Story Continued Next Page.)**



The Muscatine field office held a potluck in honor of Asian American/Pacific Islander Month.

Participating were Paul Viner, Joe Dixon, Tasia Brown, Shelly Moore (back) and Sara Klindt (front).



Participating in a Asian American/Pacific Islander meal in Malcom are: Jeremy Saugstad, Jean Oswood, Mike Tinkle, Meleia Shelman, Cindy Gatlin, Stacy Schlader, Marv Waechter, Teresa

Simonton, Jenny Stewart, Laverda Fitzgerald, Carol Brown, Tina Cibula, and Jane McCulley. The May meal was a special emphasis observance of Asian American/Pacific Islander month.

### Asian American/Pacific Islander Meals Held Around the State (Continued)

(Story Continued From Previous Page)

District Conservationist Greg Townley said, "The staff enjoyed the opportunity to study the foods of this special emphasis group. The dishes were very tasty and we all enjoyed the experience."

The Mitchell County service center staff held an authentic Hawaiian "ohana" (family) "lu'au" (feast) in May. The "Wahines" (women) wore grass skirts and "leis" (garlands of flowers), while the "Kanes" (men) sported festive Hawaiian shirts and also wore leis.

The feast began with "pupu" (hors d'oeuvres), including a special, fresh, salsa-type treat called "Lomi Lomi", which is made with chopped, smoked salmon. The main course included a Hawaiian "Slow Cooker Kalua Pig" Soil Conservation Technician Beth Rahut purchased while living in Hawaii.

Rahut showed pictures of Hawaii and shared her experience and knowledge of the Hawaiian culture and people.

Sandie Adams, state secretary, said everyone had a great time at the event and gained insight into the Hawaiian culture.



The "Wahines," or women of the Mitchell County service center, model the Hawaiian fashions they recently wore at a Hawaiian luncheon in celebration of Asian

American/Pacific Islander month. The wahines are Michelle Stevenson, Sandie Adams, Michelle Uthe, Beth Rachut and Janine Schwarck,



Mitchell County service center staff enjoy a Hawaiian meal to celebrate Asian American/Pacific Islander month. Participating are (seated) Janine Schwarck, Mi-

chelle Uthe, Sandie Adams, Mike Praska, Michelle Stevenson, Ray Frana, and Beth Rachut. Standing are Charles Heiderscheit and Dan Bratrud.

## Iowa Current Developments

### Where Are They Now?

Former Iowan J.B. Martin is the assistant state conservationist for field operations in Flagstaff. He is in charge of the northern counties of Arizona.

Martin started his NRCS career as a Co-operative Education (Co-op) student

in 1991, serving in Red Oak, Anamosa and Storm Lake. He was named a full-time soil conservationist in the Marshalltown office in the fall of 1993 and became a district conservationist (DC) in Burlington four years later.

In 2000, Martin left Iowa for a DC job in Madison, Wis., and moved to Arizona in 2004.

Martin said he considers Iowa his second home because he started his career in Iowa and because his daughter Jaria, 11, was born in the state.

In Arizona, Martin continues to mentor young people and coach high school basketball, football and track.

Martin, his wife Teresa, and Jaria live in Flagstaff.



J.B. Martin

### Annual NRCS Golf Tournament Scheduled

The 2008 annual NRCS Golf Tournament will be held August 22 at the Pleasant Valley Golf course in Iowa City. The two-person best shot tournament starts at 9:30 a.m. and costs \$47 per person.

Randy Robb, a natural resources specialist in Mount Pleasant, is organizing the tournament this year. Robb said, "I want everyone to feel welcome. Having fun at this golfing event is a priority and good golf scores can be a happy accident."

The annual golf competition is held at different golf courses around the state each summer. Last year it was held in Denison and the tournament winners were Dana Holland and Steve Radosevich.

Webster City, Altoona, Dike, Pella and Humboldt have all hosted the contest.

Phone Randy Robb at 319-385-2824 for more information about the tournament or to register. The registration deadline is August 8.



### Conservation Partnership Serves RAGBRAI Again

Iowa Conservation Team partners handed out free bananas, water and conservation-themed postcards to bicycle riders participating in (The Des Moines) Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa (RAGBRAI).

RAGBRAI was held July 20-25 and followed a route across central Iowa.

Partners participating in the Iowa Conservation Team were from the Iowa Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS), Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship-Division of Soil Conservation (IDALS-DSC), USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD).

Donations from bicyclists fund the purchase of bananas, postcards and postage.



Harrison County Soil Conservationist Weston Dittmer (left) and Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations Jeff Zimprich keep the water coolers full on the first day of RAGBRAI.

## Iowa Current Developments



Bloomfield Soil Conservationist Stacy Erdmann shows off her twin boys wearing "NRCS Future Soil Conservationist" shirts. Erdmann's future co-workers, Owen and Ethan, were born April 4, 2008, in Ottumwa. The boys' shirts were gifts from Soil Conservationists Sarah Zimmerman, Stacy Schlader and Jaia Fischer.

### Congratulations, May Graduates

Justin Blauwet, Rock Rapids district employee, graduated with an Associate of Science Degree in Environmental Studies from Iowa Lakes Community College.

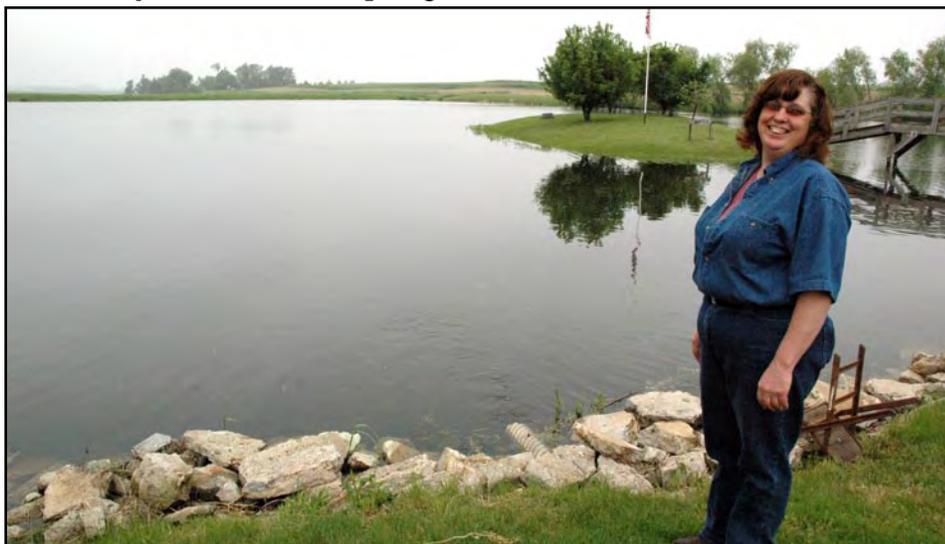
Renae Nicholson, soil conservationist in Harlan, received a master's degree in English from the University of Northern Iowa.

Woodbury County SWCD employee Jason Beckler graduated from the University of South Dakota with a bachelor's degree in biology. He works in the Sergeant Bluff field office.



Hi Ho. It's off to training we go. Deb Vonnahm, soil conservation technician (SCT) from Carroll leads students Phoebe Wiley, Ben Gleason and Steve Kiley on a terrace layout exercise at Spring-

brook State Park. The hands-on training was part of the week-long Conservation Applications course for 25 state, district and federal employees in late June.



Soil Conservation Technician Melinda Tague stands near her favorite conservation project in Marshall County. In 1993, Tague designed a soil erosion control structure for Gerald Walken's farm. Walken built the structure. He like the pond it formed so much he also built a house, bath-house, boat dock and bridge next

to it. Tague jokes Walken turned her erosion control design into an on-the-farm resort.

Do you have a favorite soil saving project? Send a high resolution picture of you and your favorite conservation project to [dick.tremain@ia.usda.gov](mailto:dick.tremain@ia.usda.gov).

## Iowa Current Developments

Name	Title	Grade	Eff Date	Nature of Action	Area	Duty Station
Chafa, Christine	Natrl Resource Speclst	11	3/30/08	Promotion	Area 1	Sioux City
Lewis, Steven	Soil Consvst	07	3/30/08	Reassignment	Area 4	Corydon
Hand, Debra	Vchr Examnr	07	3/31/08	Resignation	State Office	Des Moines
Jensen, Mark	Civil Engr	13	4/3/08	Retirement	State Office	Des Moines
Laursen, Jens	Soil Consv Techncn	05	4/4/08	Resignation	Area 1	Sac City
Leazer, Steven	Soil Consv Techncn	05	4/11/08	Resignation	Area 5	Tipton
York, David	District Consvst	11	4/13/08	Reassignment	Area 4	Atlantic
Luz, Teresa	Secretary (OA)	06	4/24/08	LWOP NTE	State Office	Des Moines
Ceolla, Dale	Soil Scntst	12	4/25/08	Retirement	State Office	Des Moines
Slocum, Charles	Area Engr		4/27/08	Reassigned		Louisiana
Lehman, Brian	Civil Engrg Techncn	07	5/2/08	Resignation	State Office	Des Moines
Doran, Timothy	Soil Consvst	09	5/3/08	Retirement	Area 4	Greenfield
Brotherton, R A	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/11/08	Change in Title	Area 1	Denison
Carper, Ronald	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	09	5/11/08	Change in Title	Area 4	Audubon
Cink, Stephen	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/11/08	Change in Title	Area 2	Webster City
Fopma, Curtis	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	09	5/11/08	Change in Title	Area 2	Newton
Gibbs, James	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	07	5/11/08	Change in Title	State Office	Des Moines
Holcombe, Kevin	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	07	5/11/08	Change in Title	Area 4	Atlantic
Hopp, Russell	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/11/08	Change in Title	Area 1	Sibley
Langholdt, Steven	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/11/08	Change in Title	Area 1	Denison
Lutz, Jeffrey	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/11/08	Change in Title	Area 3	Waverly
Megggers, Dennis	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/11/08	Change in Title	Area 3	Manchester
Shilling, Nathan	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	07	5/11/08	Change in Title	Area 5	Ottumwa
Sholty, Stephen	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/11/08	Change in Title	Area 1	Denison
Trauger, Larry	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/11/08	Change in Title	Area 2	Algona
Walde, Corby	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/11/08	Change in Title	Area 1	Sioux City
Williams, Ronald	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/11/08	Change in Title	Area 1	Storm Lake
Brinkman, Steven	Natrl Resource Mgr	12	5/16/08	Resignation	State Office	Des Moines
Dake, Bruce	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/25/08	Change in Title	Area 4	Creston
Fillian, Robert	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/25/08	Change in Title	Area 4	Creston
Hammitt, Larry	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/25/08	Change in Title	Area 4	Council Bluffs
Hatton, Lya	Civil Engr	11	5/25/08	Reassignment	Area 5	Ottumwa
Johnson, Douglas	Soil Consvst	11	5/25/08	Reassignment	Area 5	Davenport
Mellick, David	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/25/08	Change in Title	Area 3	Decorah
Oswald, Theodore	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/25/08	Change in Title	Area 5	Williamsburg
Scott, Craig	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/25/08	Change in Title	Area 5	Ottumwa
Steffes, Kay	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/25/08	Change in Title	Area 4	Red Oak
Tope, Randy	Engrg Techncn (Civil)	08	5/25/08	Change in Title	Area 3	West Union
Betts, Suzette	Admv Mgmt Asst	07	6/1/08	Retirement	Area 5	Fairfield
Sieren, Joshua	Soil Consvst	07	6/8/08	Reassignment	Area 5	Mt Pleasant
Deutmeyer, Troy	Soil Consvst	11	6/10/08	Resignation	Area 3	West Union
Ehley, Ruth	Soil Consv Techncn	07	6/22/08	Reassignment	Area 2	Garner
Huitink, Nelva	Soil Consv Techncn	07	6/22/08	Reassignment	Area 1	Orange City
Sims, Richard	State Consvst	15	6/22/08	Reassignment	State Office	Des Moines
Aylsworth, Rhonda	Clerk	04	6/30/08	Retirement	Area 3	West Union
Oswald, Thomas	Soil Consvst	12	7/1/08	Retirement	State Office	Des Moines
Bowman, Angela	Geologist	11	7/4/08	Resignation	State Office	Des Moines

### **Iowa Department of Agriculture New Employees:**

Mary Hepker – Secretary in Linn Soil and Water Conservation District – June 27, 2008

James Martin – Environmental Specialist in Iowa Soil and Water Conservation District – May 2, 2008