

Iowa Current Developments



March 2009, Iowa Current Developments
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
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"Iowa Natural Resources Conservation Service: Excellence in helping people conserve and improve our natural resources, communities and environment."

A Message from the: **State Conservationist**



*Rich Sims,
State Conservationist*

Anxiously Waiting

Spring is here and the signs are obvious. As I traveled recently to the Spring Regionals hosted by East Potawatamie

SWCD, to my delight I saw several hundred feet of newly constructed waterways and terraces. This is always the best part of our jobs – NRCS employees going to the field and providing a very valuable service to our customers and helping to save soil resources and improving water quality.

Something entirely new this year is the opportunity we have through the Stimulus Package. I have been very active with National Office staff, as they provide answers and respond to our internal and external customers. The USDA will soon be releasing the total number of

projects that will be approved in Iowa. Along with these projects, at the end of this week, the three-week signup will conclude for the floodplain easement programs. We will have until December 2010 to complete these projects. All workload items will take coordination and cooperation. State and Area staff are ready to assist in the completion of the Stimulus Package workload. We also need to stay on top of our current workload in the mandatory conservation programs.

As we anxiously wait for these items to materialize, now is the time to prepare for them. We already know the application workload and the number of people who have recently signed up for EQIP. The funded amount of Stimulus Package workload is unknown, but we have done considerable pre-work in several watersheds. My message to you is work your plan and pace yourself.

Enjoy the spring layout season.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Sims". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joint Diversity Day 2009: Ralph Moisa, Jr.

The USDA Joint EEO/Civil Rights Annual Diversity Day Program was held March 11, at the Neal Smith Federal Building in Des Moines, featuring American Indian singer and storyteller Ralph Moisa, Jr.

The program, called "American Indian Stories that Build Cultural Bridges", showcased Indian survival, and the obstacles Indian Nations overcame to exist today.

Moisa, Jr. is a member of the Yaqui Nation and uses his voice to "mend the sacred hoop." He dressed in native regalia, and demonstrated his musical talent by playing drums, the flute and other hand-made instruments.

Moisa, Jr., who lives with his family in West Des Moines, also spoke about his personal struggles transitioning to life in Iowa, following a move here in 1992.

Moisa, Jr. is an accomplished children's author. He has published two books, "Great Eagle and Small One" and "Little Fish."



Moisa, Jr. demonstrates the handmade drum.

The event was sponsored by the Civil Rights committees of three USDA agencies: the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Rural Development (RD), and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship - Division of Soil Conservation (IDALS-DSC).

More than 400 people viewed the broadcast live via the Iowa Communication Network (ICN).

The program was recorded and is available on DVD. Contact Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen for a copy, at 515-284-4525 or e-mail a request to tanya.meyer@ia.usda.gov.

Christensen Presents Smallest Living Bird: **The Hummingbird**



Humboldt State Secretary Terri Christensen (back right) and commissioner Bob Lynch met with Gilmore City School second and third graders on January 26 to teach them about the smallest living bird: the hummingbird.

The class made hummingbird feeders from recycled

pop bottles. "The class had a blast making them," said Christensen.

The Humboldt Soil and Water Conservation District purchased the converter kits for the bird feeders.

Christensen presented the same program to a third grade class in Humboldt in February.

Meet New Area 2 ASTC-FO: **Aquanda Jones**



Aquanda Jones

Aquanda Jones began her duties as Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (ASTC-FO) in the Fort Dodge Area Office on March 16. She most recently served as a Supervisory District Conservationist for NRCS in Mississippi.

Jones is a native of Greenville, Miss., and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Agronomy with honors from Alcorn State University in 2002.

Prior to her Supervisory DC position in Mississippi, Jones was a District Conservationist in Bullitt and Spencer counties, Ky.

She began her career in 1999 as a student trainee with NRCS. Upon graduation in 2002, she accepted a career conditional position as a soil conservationist and worked in George, Stone, Washington and Leflore counties in Mississippi.

During her tenure with NRCS she has acted in several positions, including District Conservationist, RC&D Coordinator, Area Resource Conservationist and Area Conservationist. In 2008, she began serving with the National Employee Development Center as a member of the Conservation Bootcamp Instructor Cadre.

Earth Team Volunteer Gets a Sweet Treat

Members of the Fort Dodge St. Edmonds High School Choral Group presented Earth Team volunteer Bridgett Keim a "Sweet Valentine" on Valentine's Day, from acting ASTC-FO Denis Schulte and his wife.

Keim has served as an Earth Team volunteer in the Fort Dodge field and area offices for more than five years. She uses a wheelchair, and arrives at the office via the local Dodger Area Rapid Transit (DART) bus, according to Administrative Management Assistant Becky Scott.

"Rain, snow or freezing temperatures do not deter Bridgett," says Scott.

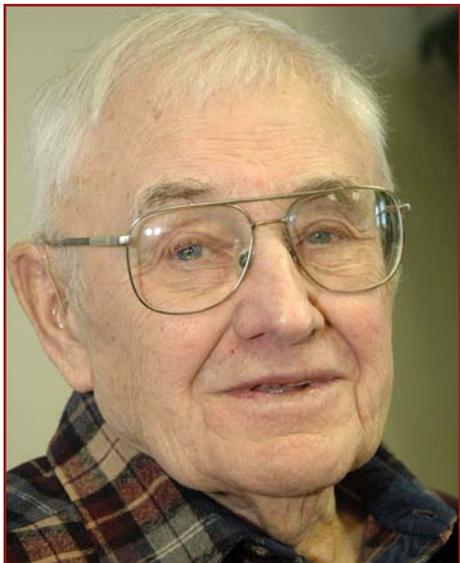


Keim's duties have varied, and currently include working on digitizing compliance slides for the Fort Dodge field office and assisting the area office with clerical work, including answering the phone, scanning documents and data

entry into spreadsheets for the soil scientist.

"She is an amazing person who enriches our lives," says Scott.

Maynard Koppen Recognized for: Million-Acre Milestone



Maynard Koppen

NRCS is recognizing Maynard Koppen of Fort Dodge as the first soil scientist to map more than one million acres of land in Iowa.

The agency is recognizing million-acre soil scientists across the nation for their contributions to effective land use. Koppen is the first Iowan recognized by NRCS.

Koppen served the agency from 1951 to 1979. "He visited thousands of farms in the state systematically cataloging and mapping each of the hundreds of Iowa soils found in each county," says State Soil Scientist Mike Sucik. "His work serves to this day as a predictor of soil behavior for many land uses."

Farmers, planners, developers, homebuyers and builders routinely use Koppen's work to plan land use, corn and crop suitability, select sites for construction and determine land values.

Koppen said he usually worked alone, mapping an average of 480 acres a day or 40,000 acres per year. Records show Koppen worked in half of Iowa's counties and he authored seven soil surveys while at NRCS. He completed the 459,520-acre Webster County soil survey just before retiring.

The Lakota native retired from NRCS 30 years ago, but he says he misses soils work. "I can still look at a farm and remember. I didn't pay attention to what was grown on the land then, but I can still put together a soil map of that farm in my mind. I can remember soil and I know what to call it," said Koppen.



Koppen, 86, examines a tablet notebook computer used by 22-year-old John Hammerly to map Iowa soils. The two NRCS soil scientists recently met to compare notes in Fort Dodge.

M&M Divide RC&D Presents: Animated BMPs

Six animations of Best Management Practices (BMPs) were recently released on DVD, courtesy of the Missouri & Mississippi Divide Resource Conservation and Development, Inc.

The DVD features 30-second to 5-minute segments that cover conservation tillage, water quality, wind erosion, filter strips, water erosion and windbreaks.

According to M&M Divide Chairman Walter Wittrock, the purpose of the DVD is to provide a tool for introducing conservation practices to landowners and operators. "It can also be used to educate students and the general public about the natural resource conservation on working lands," he said.

This on-going project was made possible with grant funds from NRCS, along with matching funds from Pheasants Forever, ISU Extension Service and M&M Divide RC&D.

To order a copy of the DVD, call the M&M Divide office at 712-792-4415. Spanish versions are also available.

The animations will also be posted on the Iowa NRCS Web site at: www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/partnerships/bmpanimations.html.

Madison SWCD Honors Beeler for: 50 Years of Conservation Service

A room full of well-wishers recently honored Larry Beeler of East Peru for 50 years of service to the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). The district recognized Beeler for his long service as a commissioner and his conservation work at a dinner in Truro.

“The length of his career serving as a commissioner and farmer is proof of his dedication to land stewardship and the protection of our natural resources,” said Farm Broadcaster Mark Pearson. “Larry began farming in 1957 and became a soil and water commissioner in 1958. To this day, Larry is serving in both capacities.”

Beeler’s son, Larry, assistant state conservationist for programs for NRCS in Des Moines, says there is a strong conservation ethic in his family carried down from generation to generation. “It’s been important to my dad to protect

the soil on the farm. The stock cow operation keeps much of the steep ground in hay or crop rotation protecting the soil from erosion. In dad’s life, raising and providing for a family has been number one in his life. Number two has been soil conservation,” said the younger Beeler.

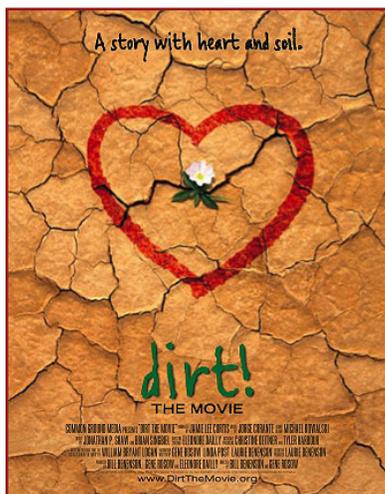
Pearson told the Truro audience Beeler’s conservation work also impresses others. He announced Beeler was invited to attend the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) convention to receive their Distinguished Service Award. This award recognizes in-

dividuals within NACD who have made significant contributions to the conservation and proper management of our nation’s natural resources.



Sons Gary and Larry congratulate their parents, Nelda and Larry Beeler, for being recognized by the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) for an award winning farm.

You Should See: “Dirt! The Movie”



Featured at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, “Dirt: The Movie” looks at the history and current state of the living organic matter that we come from and will later return to.

“Dirt: The Movie” was inspired by the book, “Dirt: The Ecstatic Skin of the Earth.”

In the movie, the directors employ a colorful combination of animation, vignettes, and personal accounts from farmers, physicists, church

leaders, children, wine critics, anthropologists and activists to learn about dirt – where it comes from, how we regard or disregard it, how it sustains us, the way it has become endangered, and what we can do about it.

To learn more about “Dirt: The Movie,” visit, www.dirtthemovie.org.

Sweeney Spends Winter Months: Acting In Rhode Island



Iowa NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Operations Paul Sweeney worked much of the holidays in

Rhode Island, as Acting State Conservationist in the Warwick, RI, state office.

Sweeney spent most of December helping Rhode Island NRCS employees successfully complete the agency-wide open obligations review.

The final six weeks Sweeney assisted the East Coast state with 2008 Farm Bill transition work, and helping to put conservation on the land. Sweeney's 10-week detail was complete in early February.

Sweeney says Rhode Island NRCS staff assist producers with a wide range of conservation practices from CNMP planning to irrigation efficiency on sod farms to establishment of oyster beds to improve water quality. "While I was there, they were removing the first historical dam in the northeast to allow native fish passage up rivers that have been blocked since the early 1800s," said Sweeney.

Training Opportunities with: IMMAG

RUSLE2 and Iowa Phosphorus Index Workshop

A RUSLE2 and Iowa Phosphorus Index workshop is scheduled for April 1, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Polk County Extension Office, in Altoona, Iowa.

This workshop will provide training to service providers and livestock producers who need to develop nutrient and manure management plans for both the Iowa DNR and NRCS. This workshop is designed for people with little or no experience in using the RUSLE2 or Iowa P Index software.

Registration is limited to 30 people and requires a laptop computer. For a copy of the workshop brochure and registration information as well as computer requirements and directions, please visit www.ucs.iastate.edu/mnet/rusle2/home.html or contact Angela Rieck-Hinz at 515-294-9590 or Kapil Arora at 515-382-6551.

Advanced RUSLE2 Workshop

An Advanced RUSLE2 workshop is scheduled for April 2, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Polk County Extension Office in Altoona, Iowa.

This workshop will enable participants to explore practice-based changes that can be designed to reduce erosion. It will focus on RUSLE2 principles, dividing fields for RUSLE2, understanding tillage operations, and conservation practices both in RUSLE2 and the Iowa Phosphorus Index, combining soil analytical results, addressing land needs for Iowa Phosphorus Index requirements, and targeting sensitive areas.

Registration is currently open only to those participants who have previously attended a RUSLE2 and Iowa Phosphorus Index workshop. For more information, visit www.ucs.iastate.edu/mnet/rusle2advanced/home.html.

Grassland Specialist Retires: Brian Peterson

State Grassland Specialist Brian Peterson retired March 3 after 40 years with NRCS/SCS.



Peterson served in his latest position in Des Moines since 2000.

He began his career as a soil scientist, but by 1974 he became a soil conservationist, working in Greenfield.

Overall, Peterson worked for 21 years as a district conservationist in Jefferson, Cresco and Corning.

In 1996, he became a grassland conservationist in Creston, and assumed state duties in 2000.

Peterson lives with his wife, Kathy, in Corning.

Changes In: NRCS Personnel

Name	Official Title	Grade	Effective Date	Nature of Action	Location
Abbott, Tracy L	Carto Technician	5	1/17/09	Separation	STATE OFFICE - Carto Staff
Frobish, Lucas A	Soil Conservationist	9	2/13/09	Resignation	Area 3 WEST UNION FO
Gust, Thomas L	Soil Cons. Technician	6	2/1/09	Reassignment	Area 2 BOONE FO
Hammerly, John R	Soil Scientist	9	2/15/09	Promotion	Area 1 STORM LAKE SSO
Jensen, Sindra A	Natrl Resource Specialist	11	1/18/09	Reassignment	STATE OFFICE - Easements Team
Johannsen, Jeremy T	Resource Conservationist	11	2/15/09	Reassignment	Area 2 BOONE FO
Jones, Aquanda C L	Assistant State Conservationist (FO)	13	3/15/09	Promotion	Area 2 FORT DODGE AO
Klein, John C	Resource Conserv & Development Coordinator	11	1/4/09	Promotion	Area 1 RC&D CARROLL
Peterson, Brian C	Soil Conservationist	12	3/3/09	Retirement-Voluntary	STATE OFFICE - Eco Sciences Team
Rohrer, Deanna M	Soil Conservationist	7	2/15/09	Return from Detail	Area 2 IOWA FALLS FO
Schulte, Denis R	District Conservationist	12	1/4/09	Temporary Promotion	Area 2 FORT DODGE AO
Schulte, Denis R	Resource Conservationist	11	3/15/09	Return from Detail	Area 2 FORT DODGE FO
Steffens, Teresa K	Administrative Mgmt Asst	7	1/4/09	Promotion	Area 3 WEST UNION AO
Sweeney, Paul J	Assistant State Conservationist (FO)	13	2/15/09	Return from Detail	STATE OFFICE - State Conservst's Staff
Wells, Linda M.	HR Assistant	6	3/15/09	Reassignment	STATE OFFICE - Human Resources Staff