



Iowa Current Developments



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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

After months of planning, lots of windshield time and way too much pizza, it's time for me to begin analyzing and prioritizing the input collected during the recent Partnership meetings.

Your feedback was tremendous. Thank you for your questions, comments, ideas and commitment to sharing.

Initially the success of these meetings relied heavily on you because they were developed from your input and depended on your participation. But now, the responsibility lies with me and the rest of the Leadership Team.

I am very hopeful we can implement some meaningful changes that will improve the quality of your work life, strengthen our partnerships and increase the amount of conservation applied to the ground without running ourselves into the ground.

It is my job now to convert words into action as we develop workable solutions to the challenges you shared. But I may ask some of you to help fine tune and field test our new policies and procedures before rolling them out statewide.

Thanks again for all your great input. I ask you to continue to provide feedback as we roll out new improvements. And I promise to keep you updated on our progress in Current Developments and other communications.

Under the Rotunda: Partnership Day 2010



Conservation Districts of Iowa and the State Soil Conservation Committee sponsored the annual Iowa Conservation Partnership Day at the State Capitol on Jan. 27. Participating groups included NRCS, IDALS-DSC, Iowa Learning Farms, Iowa DNR, and local SWCDs. This year's theme was Healthy Land, Healthy Economy, Healthy Iowa. In the photo: Webster County SWCD representatives met with State Senator Daryl Beall of Fort Dodge (from left) are Beall, Brushy Creek Lake Watershed Coordinator T.J. Lynn and Webster County SWCD Commissioner Doug Seltz of Clare.

Get a Grant: For Watershed Planning

The DNR is accepting applications for watershed planning grants until April 1. Local or regional groups; organizations or public/private agencies are eligible to apply.

DNR offers \$10,000 to \$50,000 to develop Watershed Management Plans that address problems and create solutions for waters in the state's impaired waters list.

More information is available at www.iowadnr.gov/water/watershed/planning.html or by contacting Steve Hopkins, DNR Watershed Improvement Program Grants Coordinator, at 515-281-6402 or [Stephen.Hopkins@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Hopkins@dnr.iowa.gov).

Produce Pickup: Consumers Get Connected to Iowa Farm Products



With the help of local farm producers and volunteers, consumers pick up their Iowa Food Cooperative online orders at Merle Hay Mall in Des Moines. The Iowa Food Cooperative at www.iowafood.org offers year-around sales and purchase of local food via the internet benefitting Iowa farmers and consumers. The one-time membership fee is \$50. Expansion is planned for a second site in eastern Iowa. The Iowa Food Cooperative was assisted by a \$25,000 grant written by Iowa Heartland Resource Conservation and Development.

Reaching Out: How to Be a Smart Protégé

Just as one First Lady once said “It takes a village” to raise a child, it takes a developmental network to build a career. In other words, instead of relying on one individual or a sequential series of trusted advisors, it’s okay to build a team of multiple mentors to work with you during your whole career.

But developing this team isn’t always easy and probably just won’t happen naturally. Following are eight basic steps from Kathy E. Kram and Monica C. Higgins for developing a mentoring network.

1. Talk First -- and Often.

Don’t be shy about initiating and maintaining contact with people who can support your development. Ask for information, help, feedback and advice. And just don’t reach out to your peers or bosses. Try asking the people who may work for you or professionals who work in different part of the agency.

2. Read Between the Lines.

Recognize when colleagues are interested in becoming mentors, even when colleagues aren’t being direct about it. When in doubt, it doesn’t hurt to ask.

3. Go the Extra Mile.

Put in extra work at the beginning of the relationship to get a good start. That might mean getting together outside of work so you can talk privately and informally. And keep in frequent contact with your mentors.

4. Do Your Homework.

Always come prepared for meetings with a current or potential mentor. Instead of asking how your mentor would handle a situation, present some of your own alternatives first and get your mentor’s advice about your possible solutions.

5. Share Information.

Deep relationships are based on openness, sharing and trust. This doesn’t mean sharing your most troubling personal issues, but career-related events and struggles.

6. Make it Mutual.

Realize you have something to offer your mentor too and help them out whenever you can.

7. Be Personable.

Have empathy, listen well and build a good rapport with others.

8. Have a Positive Attitude.

Don’t look at leaning on people as being a burden. See it has a chance to build bridges. And asking for advice gives people permission to help you—and helping others is a very rewarding experiencing.



Dig It! Smithsonian Exhibit Coming to Omaha in 2010

The Durham Museum in downtown Omaha will be home to the Dig It! The Secrets of Soils exhibit which just recently closed its 18-month run at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C.

The exhibit is currently scheduled to open Oct. 2 and run through Dec. 26.

Many organizations and individuals contributed to the realization of the making and design of this exhibit including NRCS.

It includes the All-American Soils - Find Your Home Earth, a collection of 54 soil monoliths on loan from the NRCS.

Dig It! transports visitors to the world of fungi, bacteria, worms, and countless other soil organisms to discover the amazing connections between soils and everyday life, encouraging visitors to think about this hidden world in a whole new way.



Celebrating Hacklebarney Success: At Montgomery County Banquet

District Conservation Tom Burkhiser (left) presents Bob Cerven (pictured with his wife Bernice) with an award recognizing his long-time dedication to the Hacklebarney Watershed--one of Iowa's four watershed projects which received ARRA funding last year. SWCD Chair Steve Mainquist is also pictured.

Organics Online: Webinar Replay Available

Iowa SARE Professional Development sponsored an organic webinar on Jan. 12 called "Transition, Tilth, and Tillage: A Training on Organic Farming Systems."

If you could not attend you can watch the webinar at the following link: <http://connect.extension.iastate.edu/p17328270>.

Presenters included:

- Kathleen Delate---Principles and Practices for Transitioning to Organic Ag (starts at 4.24)
- Martin Kleinshmit--Management of Organic Farming Systems (starts at 43.30)
- Dave Brommel--EQIP and Transition to Organic Production (1:37.40)
- Sarah Carlson--PFI's Environmental Quality Incentives Program Farm Bill Hotline (2:01.10).

You can download individual presentations at <http://drop.io/organiccrops>. (Please note some are large files that may take longer to download.)

Iowa SARE welcomes any feedback or input on possible future topics of interest.

Happy Anniversary!

**Feb. 17 marks
the one-year
anniversary of
the American
Recovery and
Reinvestment
Act of 2009!
Time flies....
right?**



Did You Know? Harassing Facts

There are four main types of harassment: physical, verbal, psychological and intimidation, according to Chief Dave White's January all employee memo (*Field Code: 230-15*). Here is a list of behaviors from the memo which can be considered harassment.

Physical	Verbal	Psychological	Intimidation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitting • Tripping • Kicking • Punching • Unwanted touching • Malicious or insulting gestures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwelcome remarks • Jokes • Innuendos • Taunts causing offense or embarrassment • Name calling • Swearing • Bullying • Expressing or insinuating threats • Incessant teasing • Wolf whistling • Spreading rumors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shunning or ostracizing • Talking • Staring • Gesturing • Hiding, damaging or taking another's property • Displaying objectionable materials, graffiti or pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using physical or organizational power to coerce a person to perform an action to instill a feeling of humiliation or intimidation.

Training Day: Professional Selling Skills



Team Tumey participates in a group activity during a four-day professional selling skills training course in Iowa Falls, Feb. 2 - 5. A total of 27 NRCS employees completed selling skills training in January and February during classes in Carroll, Iowa Falls and Spencer. Plans are underway for additional classes which teach the basic skills for consultative or needs-based selling. In this photo: Tangela Sinn, SCT in Clarion, John Paulin, RC&D Coordinator in Ames, Brian Tumey, RC in Algona.

Unlocking Efficiency: Progress Report Four— Administrative Services Update

Each Leadership Team member was asked to provide progress on their efforts on the field's list of barriers. Following is the update from Roberta Moltzen, Assistant State Conservationist for Management.

Slow Computers and Servers

The speed of our lap top and desktop computers is interfering with our ability to use ARCVIEW, complete engineering work and other functions.

Solution: This is done. We are buying faster desktops and lap tops. Sometimes it's not the computer, it's the docking stations and instructions on who to contact with problems were sent to field staff. The slowest of our servers have also been replaced.

Voice Mail

Each individual's phone should be equipped with voice mail.

Solution: This is in process. As we replace phone systems, this is being done. Twenty systems will be replaced during FY2010.

Email Organization

Sorting and reading through email takes a lot of time. A standard naming system for the subject line would be helpful for organizing and managing email information.

Solution: This is done. Instructions were sent in February. The same filing system is also used on the Statewide Shared Drive.

Customer Email

It would be helpful to revise our program applications to allow our customers to provide us their email addresses and permission to communicate with them using email.

Solution: This is a FY2010 Business Plan item for Administrative Services.

Unlocking Efficiency



ROOT Questions

ROOT information sent to field offices contained errors, some caused by National Headquarters some by Iowa NRCS. Reviewing and double checking would help alleviate this.

Solution: ROOT instructions are sent as soon as we receive them. There have been fewer questions and changes each quarter.

New Employee Training

Training for new employees is not offered in a timely manner.

Solution: The Employee Development Committee created an "18-month training plan" for new employees. ASTC-FOs are responsible for ensuring new employees receive this training.

Employee Directory

Publish the Iowa Personnel Directory more frequently.

Solution: The directory is updated monthly.

Field Office Trucks

Trucks are often inefficient: gas mileage, 2-wheel drive, extremely long or unequipped when traded.

Solution: If available, we buy only flex-fuel or hybrid vehicles. We also only buy 4-wheel trucks with extended/full cabs and short beds. And we now provide money to each Area to equip new trucks with the after market tool boxes to ensure each Area gets what it needs.

Success Story: Easement Team Leads Nation in ARRA Work

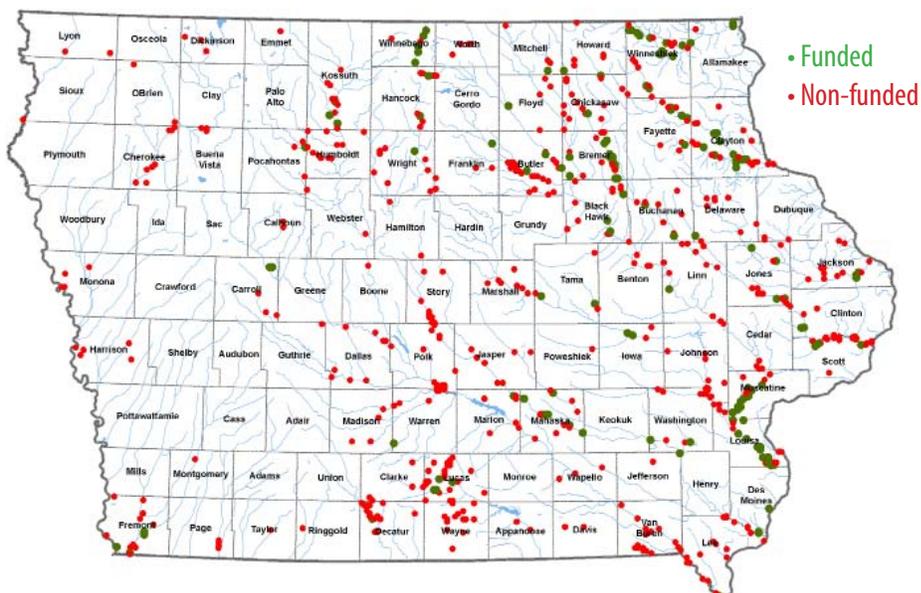
In less than a year's time, the Iowa NRCS Easement Team working together with area easement specialists and local field office staff have closed on 31 Emergency Watershed Protection-Floodplain Easements, funded by ARRA. These easements included 3,000 acres and were worth nearly \$9 million.

The easements will restore floodplain functions and values such as fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention, ground water recharge and open space. In the long term, the easements will also reduce federal disaster assistance payments, increase carbon sequestration with permanent vegetative cover, and safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, and erosion.

Easements are located in the following counties: Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Carroll, Chickasaw, Clayton, Delaware, Fayette, Hancock, Iowa, Kossuth, Lousia, Lucas, Mahaska, Scott, Washington and Winneshiek.

The Easement Team anticipates closing on eight additional ARRA-funded easements worth another \$6 million in the next several weeks. These easements include 2,000 acres.

Emergency Watershed Protection Floodplain Easement Requests (ARRA and Non-ARRA)



Santa's Helpers: Clarion Office Catches Spirit of Giving



The Wright County Service Center in Clarion participated in the "Spirit of Giving" activity that was held around the county during the holidays. The local field office donated toys, games and personal items to Wright County residents in need. The field office also held a Christmas potluck dinner and everyone wore their "favorite" holiday hat throughout the day. A local church distributed the donated items.

Changes In: NRCS Personnel

Name	Official Title	Grade	Effective Date	Nature of Action	Location
HUITINK,NELVA J	Soil Consvst	09	12/20/09	PROMOTION	ORANGE CITY FO
ROHRER,DEANNA M	Soil Consvst	09	12/20/09	PROMOTION	IOWA FALLS FO
SHAW,CHANDRA E	Soil Consvst	09	12/20/09	PROMOTION	DEWITT FO
SIEREN,JOSHUA M	Soil Consvst	09	12/20/09	PROMOTION	MT PLEASANT FO
WILLIAMS,NICHOLE L	Soil Consvst	09	12/20/09	PROMOTION	ALLISON FO
SEIPOLD,LINDA K	Soil Consv Techncn	07	12/31/09	RETIREMENT	MALVERN FO
SMITH,GARY A	Soil Consvst	11	1/1/10	RETIREMENT	RED OAK FO
GIBNEY,DAVID A	Soil Consvst	12	1/2/10	RETIREMENT	ELKADER FO
KURTH,RUSSELL G	Soil Consvst	12	1/2/10	RETIREMENT	LOGAN FO
MUFF,GERALD L	Soil Consvst	12	1/2/10	RETIREMENT	WEST UNION FO
FOCHT,KARLA M	Soil Consvst	09	1/3/10	PROMOTION	CRESTON FO
LEWIS,STEVEN L	Soil Consvst	09	1/3/10	PROMOTION	CORYDON FO
FITZGERALD,WILLIAM D	Soil Consv Techncn	06	1/17/10	CONV TO CAREER COND APPT	ESTHERVILLE FO
ALLGOOD,STEPHANIE J	Civil Engr	09	1/31/10	CAREER INTERN APPT	OTTUMWA ENGRG OFFICE
DAVENPORT,DOUGLAS	Dist Consvst	12	1/31/10	PROMOTION	BEDFORD FO
MILLER,THOMAS O	RC&D Coordinator	12	1/31/10	REASSIGNMENT FROM RD TO NRCS	MAQUOKETA RC&D
VINER,PAUL P	Soil Consvst	12	1/31/10	RETIREMENT	DAVENPORT FO

Changes In: IDALS-DSC Personnel

Name	Official Title	Effective Date	Nature of Action	Location
Kennedy, Agnes	Secretary	12/31/2009	Retirement	Clayton SWCD
Larson, Richard "Tate" II	Soil Technician	12/31/2009	Retirement	Page SWCD

Have a story idea for Current Developments?

Email your item to Laura Greiner, State Public Affairs Specialist, at laura.greiner@ia.usda.gov. Current Developments is published six times a year.