

Iowa Current Developments

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 210 Walnut St., Room 693, Des Moines, IA 50309 Summer 2006

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."

On Aug. 8 we helped host a visit of Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Johanns, and 53 business, government and agricultural leaders. The group toured Lyon, Sioux, O'Brien, and Osceola counties in northwestern Iowa. This visit was part of a three-state, three-day bus tour that highlighted economic and conservation achievements found in South Dakota, Iowa and Minnesota.

This was a great opportunity for us to show people what we do to make their lives and the land better. Our tour partner, Rural Development, showcased energy related projects such as a wind farm connected to a biodiesel generator near Sioux Falls and an ethanol plant in Sioux Center. Iowa NRCS highlights included an EQIP project in Sioux County and conservation practices found in Osceola County.

I think many people on the tour did not know much about Rural Development or NRCS before the tour started. They do now. District Conservationist Greg Marek showed the Secretary and his guests a solid manure settling system that was designed by our engineers and built with Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds. District Conservationist John Vogel highlighted eight conservation practices and discussed their benefits to the environment as they rolled through Osceola County on their way to Minnesota.

Along the way NRCS folks also talked about our efforts to:

- promote the use of wind energy
- develop technology to burn switchgrass in coal power plants
- use solar power to pump water for cattle
- implement conservation practices that improve lives, the economy and the land.

The Secretary's tour was a great reminder to us as we enter the season of fairs and special events that we do good things to help the land and improve people's lives. I encourage you to share your stories and show your successes to the people we serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Van Klaveren".

In Memory of Marvin Mensching



Former District Conservationist Marvin Alan Mensching, 51, passed away at Mercy Hospice House in Johnston on June 14, 2006, after a battle with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease).

For 18 years he was the district conservationist at the Knoxville Field Office.

Marvin was born in Council Bluffs. He was an Iowa State graduate with a bachelor of science in forestry and a minor in soils.

Marvin worked for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for 25 years. He began as a temporary soil conservationist in the Shenandoah Area Office in 1981. He helped start two organizations: the Preserve Identity Iowa Grains and the Red Rock Environmental Education Fund.

Marvin is survived by his wife, Robbin, of Ankeny; two sons, Ryan and Andrew Mensching, of Ankeny; his parents, Kathleen and Orville Mensching, of Woodbine, and one sister and her husband, Lori and Jim Malone, of Council Bluffs.

Donations in memory of Marvin may be made to the Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District at the NRCS Office, 1445 Lake Drive, Knoxville, Iowa 50138.

RC&D Sends Bridge Airborne

The Limestone Bluffs RC&D helped send a bridge listed on the National Register of Historic Places flying. The bridge, over the Wapsipinicon River near the community of Hale in Jones County, needed to be moved to a new location near Wapsipinicon State Park. The Limestone Bluffs RC&D helped obtain \$583,000 of grants, local funds, and in-kind donations to renovate the bridge and help local partners move it to its new location.

On March 8, 2006, the three sections of the Hale Bridge were flown by the Iowa Army National Guard from Hale to its new piers and abutments near the park.

The History Channel is preparing a documentary about the move for its "Mega Move" program.

Warren Johnson, Limestone Bluffs RC&D Coordinator, said, "The Hale Bridge will serve as the connecting link between Wapsipinicon State Park and the City of Anamosa and will be the catalyst for future development in the area."



After months of preparation, an Army National Guard helicopter transports a historical bridge to its new location.

OIG Trains Area 2 Employees on Field Safety



Craig Hangsleben, Senior Special Agent with USDA's Office of Inspector General, talks with Stephanie Hill, Federal Women's Program Manager for Iowa.

At a recent Area 2 employees meeting held in Clarion, Craig Hangsleben, Senior Special Agent with USDA's Office of Inspector General, talked to employees about his office's role in investigating crimes against federal employees and field safety.

Hangsleben's invitation to speak came as a result of a Iowa Federal Women's Program Committee initiative.

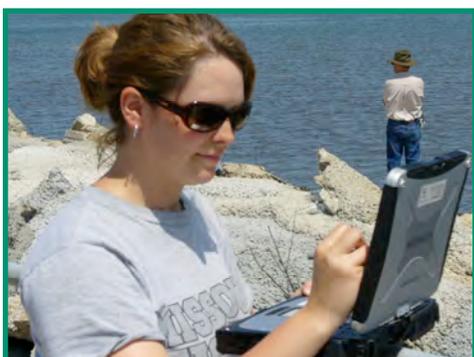
Hangsleben told employees that it is against the law to threaten federal employees doing their jobs or assault them. If a threat or assault is made, his office will investigate and can make arrests. If arrested, the subject will go before a federal judge and, if convicted, the punishment can be much more severe than one resulting from a state or county court proceeding.

If confronted by an angry customer Hangsleben says the best defense is to get out of there. He suggests employees remove themselves from the situation, report the incident to their supervisor and follow their office's Emergency Preparedness Plan.

Tough Notebook for a Tough Job

Tablet notebooks, built to function under field conditions, are being used in the state. The fully functional computers come with a GPS capability that allows soil scientists or engineers to walk around the landscape looking at a soil survey map on the computer screen and add land features to that map with GPS accuracy.

According to Gregg Hadish, Geographic Information Systems Specialist in the state office, NRCS Iowa has seven of the ruggedized tablet computers. They are located in soils offices and are primarily used in soil survey work.



Christina Murphy, a civil engineer on the state office Planning Team recently used a “ruggedized” tablet notebook while on a detail to Louisiana. She used the portable computer on the shore of Lake Pontchartrain to fill out damage survey reports.

Watch for the Bull’s Eye

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection most commonly contracted from a tick bite that may cause flu-like sickness. Untreated, it may cause long-term, persistent illness that can affect many systems of the body.

While many symptoms of Lyme disease mimic other diseases, one sign that is unmistakable is the development of a bull’s eye rash around the site of a tick bite. If you have this rash, you have Lyme disease and need to seek treatment.



Application of Conservation Practices training was held June 19-23 at Springbrook State Park near Guthrie Center. Attending were: Front Row: Hani Nguyen, Fairfield; Courtney Myers, Burlington; Sara Klindt, Muscatine. Second Row: Wyatt Sperry, Centerville; Brandy Franklin, Keosauqua; T.J. Lynn, Fort Dodge; Dan Case, Oakland; Jim McGrath, Independence; Pat Corey, Mount Ayr; Kate Timmerman, Washington; Andrew Focht, Corning; Tom Klever; Karla Horihan, Leon; Luke Frobish,

DeWitt; Joe Frerk, Pocahontas; Kelvin Pruitt, Sergeant Bluff; Jeff Porter, Instructor (I), State Office. Third Row: Chuck Abel, Indianola; Mark McWilliams (I), Anamosa; Scott Shifflett, (I), Sigourney; Tina Cibula, Malcom; Kelly Heather, Carroll; Alexis Straka, Sioux City; Laurie Humpal, (I), Davenport; Melinda Tague, (I), Marshalltown; Deb Vonnahme, (I), Carroll; Ray Frana, (I), Osage. In the foreground are the class volleyball mascots Bob and Babbs.



Roy Campbell gestures to punctuate verbal instructions given to four blindfolded co-workers during a team building exercise that was part of a state office training and awards day held in early June. Campbell’s group consisted of Connie Bishop, Human Resources; Jennifer

Dubendorf, GIS; Jean Sandstrom, Design Team; and Jennifer Anderson-Cruz, Ecological Sciences. Campbell’s team was one of 14 that was timed as it worked a ball through a maze designed and built by John Paulin of the Planning Staff.

Townleys Host Spring Cleaning Event

With tools in hand and a "git 'er done" attitude, 23 co-workers and friends met April 15 to complete home improvement chores for Greg Townley, Malcom District Conservationist, who is currently on active military duty in Iraq. The effort was spearheaded by Bruce Trautman, Assistant State Conservationist (Field Operations), Area 5. Trautman was joined by friends and co-workers from Conservation Districts of Iowa, Iowa Department of Soil Conservation, NRCS, and the Soil and Water Conservation Society. They teamed up to tackle the Townley "to-do-list" a list of things Greg would do if he was home.

The group painted outside buildings, moved a strawberry patch, drilled and seeded garden and field areas, washed windows, cleaned and repaired gutters, replaced a toilet fixture, and many other miscellaneous chores. Greg's wife, Janet, said the large group completed her original "to-do-list" so quickly that another had to be prepared.

The Townleys were amazed and very appreciative of the support and help they received from Greg's work family.

Participating in the Spring Cleaning Event were: Jeff Collins, Larry Jones, Dana Holland, Kevin Funni, Ted Oswald, Shawn Dettman, Kerry Richards, Bruce Trautman, Deb Ryun and her husband, Steve Rassler, Teresa Reed, Steve Johnston, Craig Hempy, Amy Bouska, Dick Tremain, Denis and Michelle Schulte and sons Kyle, Nick, and Ryan.

Major Greg Townley serves with the Army Reserve as a liaison officer with a Marine logistical unit just west of Baghdad. He is expected to return home in October.

Sigourney is an 'Extinguished' Field Office

State Technician Scott Shifflett is a volunteer fireman. When all the outdated fire extinguishers were being replaced in the Keokuk County Service Center, Shifflett volunteered to take the old extinguishers and offer his co-workers hands-on firefighting training. After the new extinguishers were installed, the old extinguishers were collected, classroom training was conducted, and all 14 employees were able to go to the parking lot to pull the pin, aim and sweep out a fire.

One person said it was "thrilling" to use an extinguisher to put out a fire. All agreed it was worthwhile training.

Three Energy Estimators Now On-line

The Energy Estimator for Nitrogen joins two other web based tools NRCS has developed to increase energy awareness in agriculture. Producers, using this website, will now be able to calculate the cost of nitrogen, tillage and irrigation used on their farm to help make better informed decisions.

The results, generated by these tools, are estimates based on NRCS models and are illustrative of the magnitude of savings. They can be found at <http://energytools.sc.egov.usda.gov/>.



Teresa Reed, DC in the Tipton Field Office, cleans a paint brush after helping the Greg Townley family compete spring cleaning chores while he is on active duty in Iraq.



Tim Terrill and daughter Abryelle at the Ankeny Field Office.

Take Your Daughter to Work Day

Tim Terrill, an Environmental Specialist with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship in the Ankeny Field Office, was recently assisted by his nine year old daughter, Abryelle, as part of the national Take Your Child to Work Day. She helped her dad take pictures of grade stabilization structures, filter strips, and water and sediment control basins. She also was able to spend some time with family farmers who fed her cookies and kool-aid. When she left their house she said, "Farmers are really nice people."



The Greene County USDA Service Center sent supplies to a military unit in Iraq in time for Easter. Involved in the effort were NRCS employees Carolyn Schwartz, Kevin

Kordick and Steve Gilbert, district employee Mike Tighe, FSA employees Diane Wise, Jean Finch and Diane Ostrander, and state secretary Kathy Van Gundy.

National Attention Focused on Chariton Valley RC&D Project

ABC-TV's World News Tonight, Wallaces Farmer, the Brownfield Radio Network, The Des Moines Register, and even my.NRCS has featured stories on the Chariton Valley Biomass Project managed by Chariton Valley Resource Conservation and Development. According to Chariton Valley's RC&D Coordinator Dora Guffey, ever since President Bush mentioned switchgrass as a renewable energy source in his State of the Union Address, media have been very interested in their project.

Co-funded by the US Department of Energy, USDA, Alliant Energy and other project partners, the biomass project recently ended a 3-month test burn of a switchgrass and coal mixture at the Ottumwa Generating Station in Chillicothe, Iowa. During the test burn, 31,568 bales of locally grown switchgrass were burned generating enough electricity to provide all the electrical needs for over 1,874

homes for an entire year. By burning renewable switchgrass that was planted, grown, harvested, stored, delivered and processed by Iowa farmers, 12,060 fewer tons of Wyoming coal were required by the power plant.

International media and local politicians have also been keeping tabs on the project. Iowa gubernatorial candidate Jim Nussle and staff members for Senators Grassley and Harkin have all toured the biomass facility.

Currently the generating station is in the testing phase where it burns only coal. When this testing is completed and additional test results are released in early winter, Guffey expects media attention to increase again.

Iowa SCSer Inducted into Hall of Fame

Chuck McCarty, former Chariton Valley RC&D coordinator, was recently inducted into the National Association of RC&D Councils Hall of Fame during their annual confer-

2006 SCS/NRCS Retiree's Bi-annual Reunion

Where: Iowa Arboretum, 1875 Peach Avenue, Madrid, IA

Time: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. August 25

Menu: Choice of smoked pulled pork or orange teriyaki chicken with potato salad, baked beans, coleslaw and cookies.

Price: \$10 per person

Tour: an optional tour of the Arboretum is available for an extra \$4 fee. It is a walking tour, but a small carriage is available for up to five people who may find walking difficult.

To register: contact Duane Miller at 515-278-8495 or send e-mail to drmill10@msn.com.

2006 NRCS Golf Tournament

The annual NRCS Golf Tournament will be held August 18 at the Fox Ridge Golf Course located on the edge of Dike. There will be a shotgun start at 9 a.m. with individual flag events.

The gold course is well suited for golfers of all skill levels.

The entry fee is \$40 per person, which includes the 18-hole green fee, golf cart, lunch and prizes.

Each of the past two years there has been a hole-in-one. Will it happen again?

Primitive campground sites are available.

For more information or to register, contact Dana Holland at 641-753-8677 or Jim Allen at 641-648-3463 by August 4.

ence in Savannah, Georgia. He served as the first coordinator at Chariton Valley RC&D.

The Hall of Fame Award recognized McCarty for "leadership and dedication to the principles and ideas of the RC&D Program" and for "leaving a legacy for others to follow."

Personnel Actions

Name	Title	Grade	Action	Eff Date	Dept
Sandquist, A.	Soil Conservst	09	Promotion	2/19/06	Area 2 FO Newton
Frerck, Rodney	Soil Conserv Tech	05	Career-Cond Appt	3/5/06	Area 1 FO Pocahontas
Sandstrom, Jean	Civil Engineer	12	Conv to Reins-Career	3/5/06	Eng Staff Des Moines
Ehlers, Loren F	Soil Conserv Tech	07	Promotion	3/19/06	Area 1 FO Rock Rapids
McMichael, Julie	Soil Conservst	09	Conv to Career-Cond Appt	3/19/06	Area 1SSO Storm Lake
Koenig, Chad M	Natrl Res Speclst	11	Promotion	3/19/06	GIS Staff Des Moines
Zimmerman, M	Soil Conserv Techn	05	Conv to Career-Cond Appt	4/2/06	Area 1 FO Primghar
Pruitt, Kevin	Soil Conservst	07	Career Intern Appt	4/2/06	Area 1 FO Sergeant Bluff
Byers, Ann M	Soil Conservst	09	Reassignment	4/2/06	Area 1 FO Spencer
Woodrich, Karen A	Supvy Soil Con	13	Promotion	4/2/06	Area 2 AO Fort Dodge
Jung, Jay J	Soil Conservst	11	Promotion	4/2/06	Area 5 FO Knoxville
Hoskins, Phoebe M	Soil Conserv Tech	04	Conv to Career-Cond Appt	4/2/06	Area 5 FO Washington
Lawson, Robert D	Soil Conservst	09	Promotion	4/16/06	Area 3 FO Elkader
Page, Cynthia O	Phys Sci Tech	05	Conv to Career-Cond Appt	4/30/06	Area 2 SSO Ames
Lewis, Steven L	Soil Conserv Tech	07	Promotion	4/30/06	Area 4 FO Audubon
Allen, Steven D	Soil Conserv Tech	07	Promotion	4/30/06	Area 4 FO Corydon
Rohlf, David	Ag Engineer	12	Retirement	5/3/06	Area 2 FO Ankeny
Fopma, Curtis G	Civil Engrg Tech	09	Promotion	5/14/06	Area 2 FO Newton
Drewelow, R P	Soil Conserv Tech	07	Reassignment	5/14/06	Area 3 FO West Union
Carper, Ronald E	Civil Engrg Tech	09	Promotion	5/14/06	Area 4 FO Audubon
Johnson, Douglas	Soil Conservst	11	Reassignment	5/14/06	Area 5 FO Muscatine
Dixon, Joseph W	Soil Conservst	07	Reassignment	5/14/06	Area 5 FO Wapello
Brinkman, Steven	Natrl Res Mgr	12	Promotion	5/14/06	Eco Sci Staff Des Moines
Koenighain, Jean	Clerk Typist	05	Retirement	5/31/06	Area 5 RC&D Williamsburg
Weese, Judith	Office Asst	06	Retirement	6/3/06	Area 4 RC&D Creston
Owen, Hillary	Soil Conservst	07	Conv to Career-Cond Appt	6/11/06	Area 3 FO Allison
Harris, Lori J	Soil Conservst	12	Promotion	6/11/06	Area 3 FO Maquoketa
Biggs, Angela L	Soil Conservst	11	Promotion	6/11/06	Area 4 FO Harlan
Gundlach, David	Soil Scntst	09	Promotion	6/11/06	Area 4 SSO Atlantic
Niedermayer, Lisa	Soil Conservst	07	Resignation	6/12/06	Area 4 FO Winterset



Conservation Planning for New Employees, a two week course put on by the Ecological Sciences Team, was held in Marshalltown in late April and early May. Instructors and students were, left to right, dairy farmer and tour host Kevin Blood; Paul Vondra, Epworth; Patrick Cory, Mt Ayr; Valerie Johnson, Rock Rapids; Jon Matz, Algona; Hani Nguyen, Fairfield; Jennifer Stewart, Oskaloosa; Courtney Myers, Burlington; Tina Cibula,

Malcom; Nichole Webb, LeMars; Stacy Schlader, Albia; Kelly Heather (back row), Carroll; Karla Horihan (middle); Leon, Christine Louisias (with dog), Clarion; Joe Dixon, Muscatine; Jennifer Anderson-Cruz, Des Moines; Wyatt Sperry, Centerville; Steve Brinkman, Des Moines; David Carter, Malvern; Deanna Rohrer, Iowa Falls; Barb Stewart, Des Moines; and Dana Holland, Marshalltown.