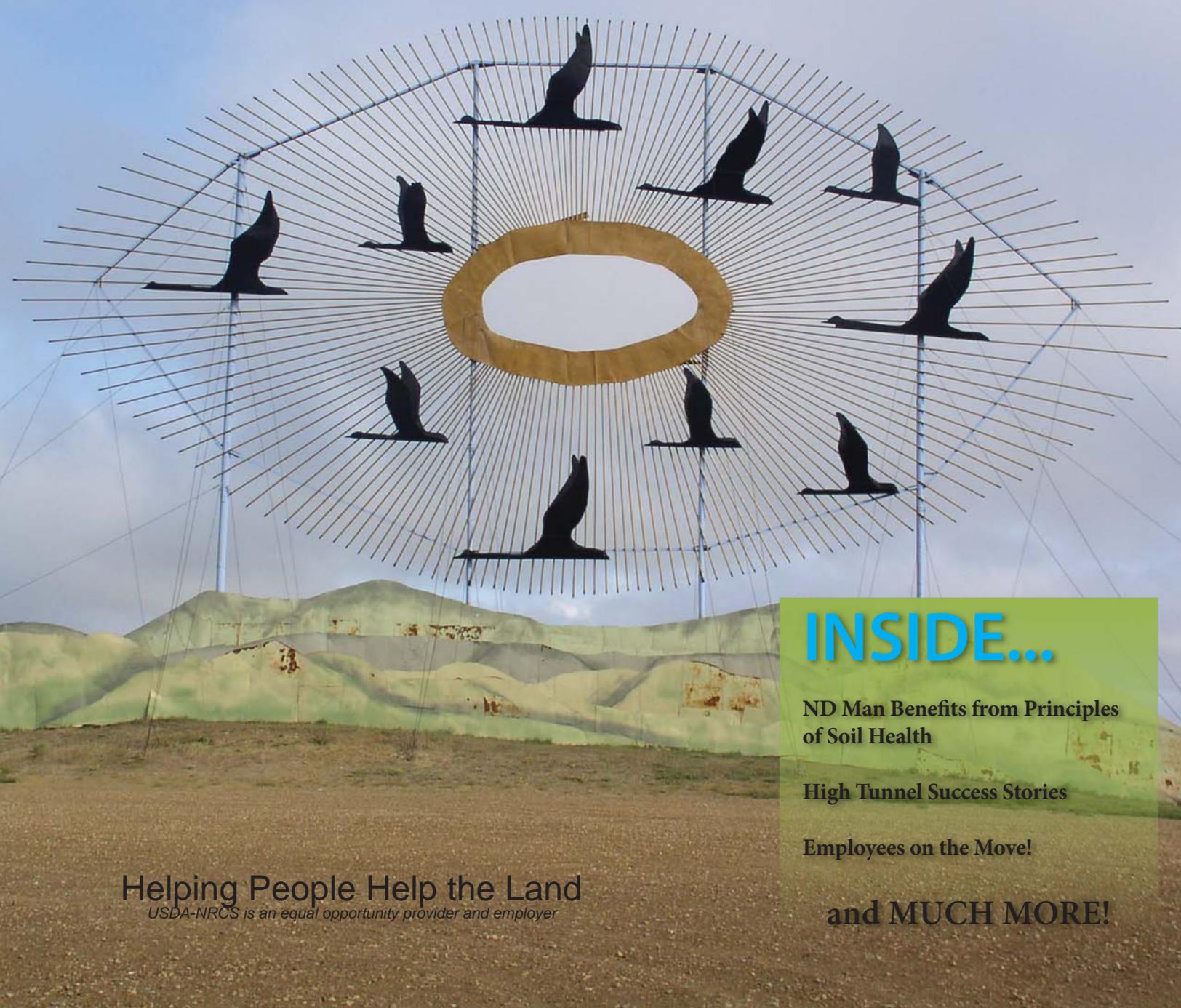




United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Fall 2012  
Quarterly Newsletter

# CONSERVATION COMMUNICATOR



## INSIDE...

ND Man Benefits from Principles of Soil Health

High Tunnel Success Stories

Employees on the Move!

and MUCH MORE!

Helping People Help the Land  
*USDA-NRCS is an equal opportunity provider and employer*



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## From the State Conservationist...



Mary Podoll, State Conservationist

### *Time Flies...*

What a year it's been! I cannot believe that I've served as your State Conservationist for a year already.

My values remain the same:

**Communication**  
**Customer Service**  
**Technical Excellence**

To improve internal communications, there will be quarterly District

Conservationist's VTC's planned beginning in October. Our first VTC will be a review of FY2012 and direction for FY2013. The second will be on the policy of separation of duties for compliance.

Speaking of the separation of duties topic, Jen Hegge and Ginny Melholff spent part of their time in August on a very special assignment. Specifically, they helped coordinate and formulate ideas so this requirement is defined. State-wide consistency was one of their overarching goals. Beginning October 1, each area will implement their own plan allowing time to create a state wide process and formulate the necessary documents, policy, and procedures.

Recently, Lena and Area 1 hosted a "Tech Talk". GREAT IDEA! The Cultural Transformation team also brought this idea forward. I hope to make this a regular event to promote awareness training and additional opportunities to disseminate information.

Soil Health is going to hit a new milestone in October when a national public campaign is rolled-out.

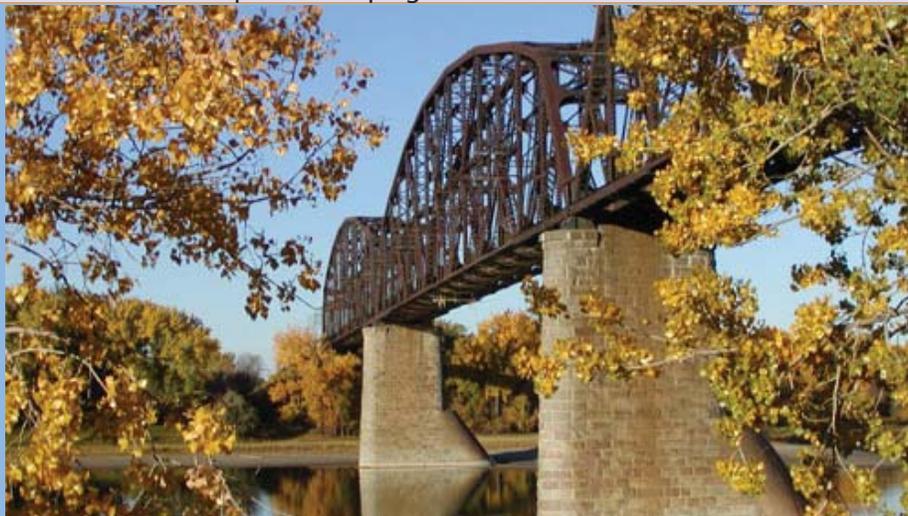
It is the end of the fiscal year – time for performance reviews, balancing budgets, and completing conservation practices before the snow falls. It also marks the beginning of a new fiscal year. New beginnings are so precious – like new babies, new relationships, and new friendships- so I leave you with this quote appropriate to a new fiscal year.

"The chief beauty about time is that you cannot waste it in advance. The next year, the next day, the next hour are lying ready for you, as perfect, as unspoiled, as if you had never wasted or misapplied a single moment in all your life. You can turn over a new leaf every hour if you choose."

~ Arnold Bennett Author of "How to Live on 24 Hours a Day" published 1910

Autumn is a beautiful time of year. Be sure to enjoy it.

*Mary*



*Autumn on the Missouri River.*

# Tri-State Leadership Development Program

Submitted by: *Lisa Lund, Bismarck SO*

The State Leadership Development Program (SLDP) is a unique developmental activity for Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees of North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana, who have the potential and desire to pursue greater leadership responsibility. This program was established with the support of the 3 State Conservationists (Mary Podoll, Jeff Zimprich, and Joyce Swartzendruber) to address a major component of a National strategic approach to developing leadership

talent for the future of the agency. As a multi-state program, it will enhance each individuals learning experience and will expand their perspectives. This program uses a competitive application process and will include formal mentoring by state leadership team members.

The objectives of the program will be achieved through a variety of activities tailored to the specific needs of the individual and the organization. Activities include training courses, temporary

details, special projects, reading assignments, job shadowing, self-assessment, and/or other activities appropriate to the program and may also include a training opportunity at NRCS Headquarters in Washington, DC.

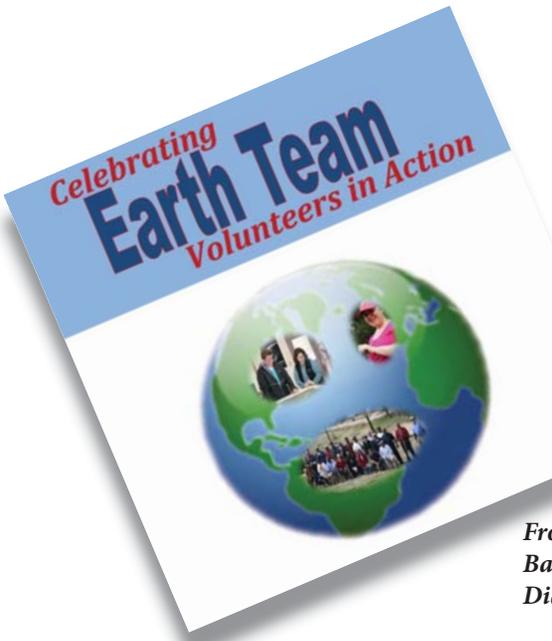
The 2011/2012 class had 16 participants. The ND participants included: Darlita Sarkilahti; Jill Howard; Mike Gerbig; Penny Doty; Michelle Jezeski; and Lena Bohm

The current 2012/2013 class has 16 participants. ND participants include: Brent Gustafson; Ron Herr; Tracy Dove; Steve Cole; Paul DuBourt; Corie Lund; and Wendy Bartholomay.

## ND Hosts Earth Team Training

Submitted by: *Diane Krzmarzick, Garrison FO*

North Dakota hosted an Earth Team Training session for state and area coordinators in Bismarck on July 30th & 31st. Ten Coordinators from ND and surrounding states were trained by Bonnie Allely, Earth Team Liaison from Urbandale, Iowa. Discussion topics included position responsibilities, volunteer tracking system, recruiting and marketing, awards and recognition, and budgets and business plans. The training session provided an ideal setting for networking opportunities. Thank you Mary Podoll for helping make this happen.



**Front row: Michele Devaney, UT; Lori Kauk, SD; Brenda Ling, WY; Carol Ziegler, ND  
Back row: Bonnie Allely, IA; Kristi Nile, MT; Donna Goodsell, CO; Darlean Karna, ND;  
Diane Krzmarzick, ND**

*Not pictured Lisa Lund, ND*

# ND Cultural Transformation Update

Submitted by: Tanner Blair, Bismarck SO

Ponder for a moment, if you will, what cultural transformation means to you. Well if you are like me, then thoughts of racial differences or socioeconomic status jump to the forefront of your thoughts. (These items most certainly are a part of cultural transformation.) That said, cultural transformation is a far more encompassing subject—it includes our work habits, our personal preferences, the way we conduct business, even our writing style.

The North Dakota Cultural Transformation Team was charged with narrowing the focus of cultural transformation and, in the process, devise new ideas to ensure NRCS is a premiere employer and provider of conservation services. The team began its work by

exploring the five main components of the cultural transformation framework—outreach, organizational effectiveness, leadership, employee development, and talent management. To gain a better understanding of what gaps may exist within each component, the Cultural Transformation Team sought feedback from NRCS staff.

A state-wide survey was released to determine where the team should focus its efforts. From the responses to this survey, it was clear that internal and external interactions could be improved. Therefore, the CT Team developed three action items that it hopes to implement in the months ahead to help improve our communication framework. These items include:

- 1. Success Stories:** develop conservation success stories to share with the general public and within NRCS.
- 2. Salesmanship Training:** offer training that will improve our ability to work with producers.

**3. Internal Updates and Education:** initiate a monthly teleconference with DCs; develop a schedule of tech talks where staff received conservation education; send out a summary/review of leadership team meetings.

In addition to these action items, comments from the survey showed a number of other areas where the culture of NRCS may need some tweaking. Since its inception, the North Dakota Cultural Transformation Team has recognized that there are a multitude of components associated with cultural transformation. We also recognize there are many different ways North Dakota NRCS can implement cultural transformation measures. Ultimately, however, the final goal must be kept in perspective: ensuring NRCS is a place where there is equal opportunity for all employees and everyone who works here is empowered to reach their full potential.

## Dwight Tober, Retired Plant Materials Specialist Recognized!

Dwight is recognized for over 32 years of service to the Plant Materials Program. His tireless work evaluating new plant materials, preparing technical documents, delivering training, and promoting the plant materials program and its products have ensured that Field Offices in the Northern Great Plains have the newest and best plant technology for conservation efforts. Dwight's service to the national program, the partnerships he has fostered, and his interaction with field and plant materials staff will have a lasting impact on NRCS employees and partners.

Meritorious Service Award – Dwight Tober, Plant Materials Specialist, North Dakota (May 2012)

*Congratulations, Dwight!*



# The Selfridge Garden: A Case Study in Social Entrepreneurship

*Written by: Tanner Blair, Bismarck SO  
Submitted by: Corie Lund, NRCS and  
Debbie Vollmuth, SCD, Selfridge FO*

Many of today's social problems are generational—they come and go as time passes. Others have been prevalent for as long as history has been recorded. To resolve (or, more accurately, to better address) these issues, new and innovative methods must be explored. One such novel idea is, literally, thriving on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in Sioux County, North Dakota. The Selfridge NRCS Service Center, in conjunction with the Cedar Soil Conservation District, is utilizing their entrepreneurial skills to help resolve an age-old social issue—ending hunger.

What began as a project to demonstrate the sustainable benefits of no-till production has spawned into a pioneering way to provide perishable goods to the local community—particularly to those in need of assistance. To date, over 60 pounds of produce from the Selfridge Garden has been donated to various organizations throughout the Sioux County community. These donations correlate with a USDA-wide effort, called Feds Feed Families, to help replenish food banks during the summer months.

“The Selfridge Garden showcases NRCS employee’s commitment to sustainability and their commitment to the communities

in which they live and work,” stated State Conservationist Mary Podoll. “Social entrepreneurship is a growing theme throughout the world, and I am pleased it is being incorporated into the culture of NRCS.”

The Feds Feed Families Food Drive is a voluntary effort undertaken by Federal employees around the country to collect and donate perishable and non-perishable goods to food pantries and service organizations within their communities. The drive began in early June, and includes donations of fresh, healthy produce grown in gardens across the country. The Selfridge Garden is a glowing example of this larger effort to provide wholesome foods to our neighbors in need of nourishment.

USDA estimates show that nearly

50 million Americans – including 16 million children – struggle to put food on the table at some point during the year. Many communities and organizations report an increase in demand during the summer. (This is especially prevalent on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation where the individual poverty rate is over 40 percent.) NRCS and USDA employees are helping to fill this gap through the Feds Feed Families Food Drive.

“This is not only a wonderful way to demonstrate the helping people help the land mission of NRCS, but also the people helping people nature of federal employees,” stated District Conservationist Corie Lund. “We are making a positive difference in the lives of our neighbors and strengthening the fabric of our community as a whole.”



*Selfridge Garden in full bloom.  
Photo by Corie Lund, NRCS*

# North Dakota Man Benefits from Principles of Soil Health

*Submitted by: Trisha Feiring, Beach FO*

Diversity, intensity, and zero-disturbance. When talking about his farming operation, those are the three goals of Mike Zook in Beach, N.D. He started farming in 1977 and watched the wind that blows through western North Dakota lift his soil and start small dust storms, eroding the topsoil and displacing valuable nutrients.

In addition, Zook said his conventional-till wheat operation had what he called the “cide disease”—that is, extensive use of herbicides, pesticides, and fungicides. “We knew that if we didn’t change, it wouldn’t be sustainable,” says Zook.

In 1988, when Zook started to manage his own operation, he learned about the benefits of continuous cropping, and how it can facilitate the principles of soil health. These principles work with natural laws and include growing as many different plants as practical (diversity), keeping the soil covered year-round (intensity), and limiting physical disturbance (zero-disturbance).

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works with farmers to manage their operations with these three principles.

To manage his diversity, Zook planted almost everything that would grow in a 14-inch precipitation zone. Spring wheat, winter wheat, durum, corn, grass, lentils, peas, safflowers, sunflowers and sorghum all became

part of his operation. “We spread our crops and harvest dates in the year... by diversifying the growing season, it minimizes risk,” says Zook. This also meant he could apply the soil health principle of intensity—his continuous crop of diverse plants would cover the soil year-round.

In order to limit physical disturbance of the soil, Zook invested in a tillage system with minimal disturbance. He now uses a no-till drill, which uses small disks to “slice” the ground and insert the seeds, without using any tillage. “When the soil is moved, it’s exposed to the sun and wind. No-till avoids those things,” says Zook.

Now, over 20 years after he began this system, Zook has seen a dramatic improvement in his soil health, which has translated into a substantial increase in his harvest

yield. On his wheat alone, he went from harvesting between an average of 30 to 40 bushels per acre, to an average of 60 to 90 bushels per acre. He has also seen an increase in native bird species. Pheasants, sharp-tail grouse, and Hungarian partridges have returned to the habitat near his fields.

Jon Stika, NRCS area resource soil scientist in Dickinson, N.D., was able to evaluate Zook’s operation and called it an excellent example of soil health. A shallow hole dug on the cropland shows that the soil easily forms clumps, called aggregates, and the worm population is thriving. When Zook used conventional tillage and a chem-fallow rotation, he said the soil smelled “sterile” and there was not a worm in sight. By applying diversity, intensity and zero-disturbance, Zook’s soil smells healthy, produces higher yields, and doesn’t blow away when the wind comes up.



*L to R: Jon Stika, NRCS area resource soil scientist and producer Mike Zook discussing soil health.*

# North Dakota Welcomes...

## Annie Cummings

*Resource Conservationist, Grand Forks FO*



Hi, I'm Annie Cummings, Resource Conservationist in Grand Forks, I'm new with NRCS and to North Dakota. I moved from Colorado where I was

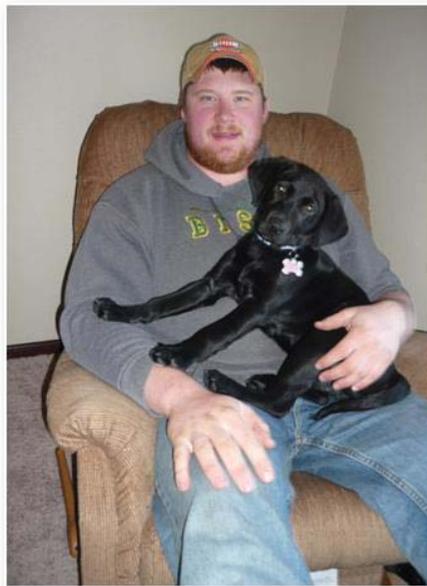
the Program Director for the Natural Resource Programs at Colorado Northwestern Community College. I've worked in the Natural Resource field in a variety of positions; forestry technician, environmental analyst, natural resource instructor, and community partner. I have a B.S. from University of California – Davis in Renewable Natural Resources and an MBA from Thunderbird School of Global Management. After growing up in Kansas, I am excited to be back on the Great Plains.

My 13 year-old daughter, Elena, and I love all the parks and fun activities that the area offers. Traveling, biking, hiking, 4H, reading, music, and just about anything outdoors are activities we both enjoy.

## Ryan Foster

*Soil Conservationist, Bismarck FO*

I started working with NRCS in August of 2012 as the new Soil Conservationist in the Bismarck field office. I am originally from Eleva, WI, where my family ran a small beef operation. I graduated with a BS degree in Range Science from North Dakota State University. I have previously worked for the WI DNR, NDSU Research Ranch, USFS in Lisbon and for the last year and a half I was employed by the Morton County Soil Conservation District. In my spare time I enjoy hunting, fishing, and spending time with family and friends.



## John Bauer

*Biologist, Cooperstown FO*



I am currently working as a Biologist in the Cooperstown field office. I was born and raised in Wishek, ND. I graduated from NDSU in 2003 with a B.S. in Zoology (Fish & Wildlife Management). Prior to working for NRCS, I worked for the ND Game & Fish Department as a Private Lands Biologist in Riverdale for about 6 ½ years. I also worked for Ducks Unlimited in term positions in Kulm and Cooperstown. My wife, Linsey and I currently live in Finley. Linsey is the CED in the Steele County FSA office. My spare time is spent hunting with our German Shorthair Mojo, fishing, golfing, and most other outdoor activities.

# James Beavers

Soil Conservationist, Bottineau FO



I am the new Soil Conservationist at the Bottineau field office. I am originally from Jordan, Minnesota. After graduating high school I enrolled at South Dakota State University in Brookings, SD. I graduated from SDSU in the spring of 2011 with a B.S. in Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences. After graduating college I was offered a position with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at the Chase Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Woodworth, ND. While working at the Chase Lake NWR, I gained valuable experience working with a variety of people on habitat management practices. I currently live in Souris, ND, with my yellow lab. We enjoy hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities during our spare time. I am very excited to be working for the NRCS and look forward to working with landowners on a variety of projects.

*When it comes to the future, there are three kinds of people: those who let it happen, those who make it happen, and those who wonder what happened.*

~John M. Richardson, Jr

# Sharnae Klein

Soil Conservation Technician,  
Center FO



I recently joined the NRCS as a soil conservation technician for the Center field office in May of 2012. I grew up in Gillette, Wyoming and moved to Beulah, North Dakota during high school. I recently graduated from North Dakota State University with an M.S. degree in Animal Science specializing in ruminant nutrition. My thesis topic was concerning the effects of alternate day feeding of dried distiller's grains plus solubles in forage -fed cattle. My husband and I live in Hazen, North Dakota where we are currently expanding our commercial cow/calf operation.



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Helping People Help the Land

# High Value Vegetable Crops Grown in Seasonal High Tunnels

Submitted by: Brian Gysbers, Rolla FO

In an isolated pocket of Rolette County, there is a concentration of a new type of industry. The production of high value vegetable crops grown in seasonal high tunnels. Within a 1 ¼ mile stretch, there are three seasonal high tunnel sites, with hopes for a fourth site to be funded in 2013.

Of the three sites, two are fully constructed and in production and the third is scheduled to begin construction shortly. The managers of each site intend to produce high value vegetable crops for marketing locally and across the state. Each of the managers saw an opportunity for fresh, locally produced vegetables. All of the managers will sell some of their produce at the Rolette and Rolla farmers markets, but each is



working to fill a niche of their own. Aside from farmers markets, one of the managers has started a program locally, where customers pay an amount per year and receive weekly delivery's of fresh produce. A second manager is taking orders for events, like weddings, which require large amounts of fresh vegetables. The second manager is also looking into supplying fresh vegetables for an oil field man camp next year. The third manager has yet to decide what marketing strategy to use, but is looking into several options.

The use of seasonal high tunnels will allow the managers to extend their season, both at the beginning and at the end. This will be extremely valuable because this will equate to a

longer time period for local residents to have access to locally produced vegetables, and will allow for increase profits for the managers.

The idea of seasonal high tunnels is one that the managers of each site have been considering for a few years, however the steep initial investment required was holding them back from allowing the dream to become reality. Through local NRCS outreach, the managers were made aware of cost share availability that would help to lower the initial cost of investment. A meeting was scheduled with the interested participants and the local NRCS and information about the cost share program, requirements, and expectations were discussed. Each of the three interested managers applied and received cost share funding to construct a seasonal high tunnel. This is the first time any of the three had applied for cost share through NRCS.

The availability of the NRCS cost share program has provided a number of benefits to both the individuals and the community. The small community will now have greater access to greater amounts of fresh locally grown food for a longer period, and the individuals are able to supplement their incomes.



# WRP Produces Buck\$ and Ducks!

Submitted by: Chris Nelson, Cavalier FO

In 2009, a Pembina, ND landowner approached NRCS seeking alternatives to treat cropland that is frequently wet during the growing season within the last 15 years and unable to produce decent crops.

The 160 acres of cropland located in the Red River Valley near Bathgate had old drained wetlands and many other wetlands with sedimentation issues. The landowner was looking for a better economic return, and to restore the land by means of wetland restoration and grass seeding to provide wildlife habitat for hunting.

He offered the 160 acres in 2009 into the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) and received funding in 2010 and completed wetland and grass seeding restoration practices in 2011 and 2012.

He has recently completed twelve wetland pond embankment and five sediment excavations on wetlands. Seventeen wetlands have been restored hydrologically with buffers and upland grass seeding. The entire quarter section is restored and the landowner is very satisfied with the timely economics of the easement and great hunting!

*Wetland Restoration before sediment removal.*



*Wetland Restoration after sediment removal.*



*Wetland Restoration after a pond embankment*



## Did You Know?

*MYTH: By eating less meat, Americans would improve the environment and free land and resources for the production of food crops rather than animal products that could be used to feed the hungry overseas.*

*FACT: The optimal use of natural resources involves use of both animals and plants to produce the nutrients that humans require. For example, about half the land area of the United States is strictly grazing land – not suitable for crop production. That land would be of no use as a food resource if it were not for ruminant, grazing livestock. The United States has more than enough cropland to grow both feed grains and food crops.*

[http://www.agweb.com/agriculture\\_facts.aspx](http://www.agweb.com/agriculture_facts.aspx)

# Irrigation Water Management Plan in a High Tunnel; Richard Johnson's Operation

*Submitted by: Roberto Luciano, Forman FO*

During the winter of 2011, Richard Johnson visited the Forman NRCS field office in search of a way to extend the growing season of his Sargent County farming operation. Field office staff presented him with information on conservation practices offered through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Through EQIP, NRCS provides financial assistance for the installation of a wide variety of conservation measures.

Mr. Johnson was intrigued by the Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative and the prospect of adding a few additional weeks to his growing season of fruits and vegetables—primarily for cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, lettuce, cabbage, and melons. High tunnels are unheated, non-permanent structures made out of metal pipe with a plastic cover. Unlike greenhouses, where crops are generally grown in pots or on benches, high tunnel crops are grown directly in the soil.

Like most producers, Mr. Johnson was also interested in learning about programs that would provide benefits to his entire operation—such as water management and maximizing yield. Working through the EQIP program, he was awarded a contract for an Irrigation Water Management Plan (IWMP). Together with a high tunnel, Mr. Richards was able to develop a strategy for meeting the resource concerns identified during the planning process with field personnel. In particular, the IWMP helps him apply and manage his irrigation water resources while the high tunnel improves plant and soil quality, and reduces nutrient and pesticide transport.



*Richard Johnson showing the sandy soil and drip irrigation system inside of his High Tunnel. Richard's High Tunnel Tour.*

Drip irrigation—where drip tape or drip tubing delivers water—has also been incorporated within Mr. Johnson's high tunnel. It is important to control nitrogen inputs and prevent excess nutrient runoff. Therefore, the combination of drip irrigation and a seasonal high tunnel should add greater efficiency and help manage fertilizer application.

This conservation success story demonstrates the many positive conservation options contained within the EQIP program. Mr. Johnson was able to transform his small garden into an efficient and environmentally sensitive operation with the help of a high tunnel and an IWMP.



## New Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM)

*Submitted by: Karyn Neve,  
Minnewaukan FO*

My name is Karyn Neve, I'm the new North Dakota Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgendered (LGBT) Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM). I recently replaced Kristen Brennan who transferred out of state earlier this year.

Currently, I am the District Conservationist at the Minnewaukan field office. I originally came to North Dakota from Albert Lea, MN. In 1984, I started my SCS/NRCS career as a Soil Conservation Technician in the Hettinger field office. In 1989, under the SCS Upward Mobility Program, I attended Dickinson State University full-time while working part-time at the Dickinson Field Office to complete my educational requirement to become a Soil Conservationist. After I received my degree in

1990, I was stationed at the Stanley field office as a Soil Conservationist. Following that, I served as the District Conservationist in Selfridge from around 1991 to 2001 and have been in Minnewaukan ever since.

The purpose of the LGBT Emphasis Program is to provide awareness and education to NRCS employees and partners while focusing on such issues as employment, retention, promotion, training, career development, and advancement opportunities affecting LGBT (and those who are perceived to be LGBT) applicants and employees at NRCS to receive equal treatment in all aspects of employment.

LGBT refers collectively to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. The term "LGBT" is intended to emphasize a diversity of sexuality and gender identity-based cultures and is sometimes used to refer to anyone who is not heterosexual instead of exclusively to people who are homosexual, bisexual, or transgender.

With the support of the North Dakota Deputy Equal Employment

Opportunity Officer (DEEOO), State Conservationist, Mary Podoll, the North Dakota Civil Rights Advisory Committee (NDCRAC), I will be providing ongoing LGBT informational and sensitivity training to all NRCS employees and partners by raising the overall level of awareness of LGBT workplace issues and concerns.

As the LGBT SEPM, I can provide mentoring support and a network of professional support to those in need of assistance.

Everyone needs to be kept current of ever evolving Federal law and USDA policies regarding equal rights and treatment of LGBT employees as to how these laws and policies affect the NRCS workforce and workplace.

I encourage everyone to go into the ND SharePoint site under the Civil Rights tab and checkout the information available from all the SEPM's and the CRAC.

If anyone has questions regarding ND Civil Rights or any of the Special Emphasis Programs please contact any of the CRAC Members or the SEPM of your choice.



# Successful Grazing Systems: Bruce Speich

Submitted by: Jaime Palczewski, Lisbon FO



Stacy Erdmann (NRCS) and Bruce Speich admiring an ungrazed pasture.

As the tall grass billows in the wind, Bruce Speich looks across his pasture in southeast Ransom County. He is thankful that he still has grass to graze after a long, hot, and dry summer. He made drastic changes to the management of this unit in 2012. He went from having two herds of cattle running through a half section of pasture each, to one herd rotating through 16 pastures on a section of land. Although there were some challenges in the process, he is very happy with his new intensive grazing system.

Bruce had been thinking about cross-fencing these pastures for years. One of the half sections was split into four pastures and the other into two. He stopped into the Lisbon Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office in 2010 to discuss cross fencing, where he learned about the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Bruce decided to wait a few years to put in the system. During this time, Bruce kept hearing about intensive grazing and mob grazing at seminars he was attending. Since this is rented land, Bruce needed to get his landowners on board with his plans. He explained what he wanted to do and had them talk to the NRCS about the benefits of intensive grazing. His landowners care for their land and understood that what he wanted to do would be beneficial to their property. He considers himself lucky to have the landowners he has. In January of 2012, he was ready to move forward. He sat down with NRCS and put a plan together to cross-fence each half section into eight pastures and to combine his herds and run 120-130 pair through 16 pastures.

In April of 2012, Bruce and his son, Tyler, were busy building fence. They decided to go with two-wire electric fence with kiwi braces. By June, they had built 4.25 miles of fence - turning the two half sections into the 16 pastures they wanted. When the cattle were turned out at the end of May, they had enough cross-fencing completed to start their rotational grazing. Bruce wanted to be able to go through the 16 pastures twice during the season. He wasn't quite sure how fast to move them. There was still a lot of grass after the moves, so he felt like he was spoiling the cattle. After about four moves, Bruce started to see how much better the cattle were utilizing the grass. In the past, Bruce had checked his cows once per week. This system gave him the incentive to check them a little more often. Bruce said that he really enjoys moving the cattle. As soon as he comes out there the cattle start bellowing and heading toward the gate. He said that he doesn't have any problems getting them to move. He has always used range cubes so the cattle caught on quickly. Since 2012 was such a hot dry year, Bruce was happy that he

## BEFORE



## AFTER



# Successful Grazing Systems: Bruce Speich - cont.



was checking cattle more often. He had some water issues. His original system that was set up for 60 head did not have enough capacity in the tanks to keep up with the doubled herd. He ended up adding some tanks to make up for the difference. Bruce's advice to anyone developing water on their land is to plan for expansion because you never know what you will want to do ten years from now.

Bruce's thoughts after his first year of intensive grazing are that he is very happy with it. Looking back, he is wondering why he didn't do it earlier. He said, "It is kind of like when you get your first good cow dog, you are kicking yourself for not getting one years ago." He is impressed with the grass utilization and

happy that there is no more spot grazing. He hopes that the management will take care of some of his issues with Kentucky bluegrass and dandelions. After his first year of grazing he is hopeful that his goal of being able to increase his stocking rate will be a reality. He said that with the cost share it is hard for this system to not be cost effective, plus by combining herds he can use one less bull. With both of his sons interested in cattle he thinks this was a good move for their operation. Bruce mentioned that some of the most challenging parts were planning the gates and fences around the existing water sources and dealing with the water issues with the combined herds. He also said that the notebook he keeps his records in was never in the right pickup. He put up a mailbox at the gate of the pastures to put his notebook and a laminated map in. Now, no matter what vehicle he is in, the records will be right there.

## GIS/GPS Tab on SharePoint

Submitted by: Brian Johnston, Bismarck SO

The North Dakota NRCS SharePoint page now contains a 'GIS/GPS' tab. This tab contains tips, help documents, and reference material on several subjects. The number of subjects will surely grow as the need arises. For now, there are six initial subjects. These six subjects are: ArcMap Hints, GIS Tools, LIDAR, NCP Cleanup, Trimble YUMA and the Wetland Tool.

Specific examples of documents on the site currently include: a hint on geo-referencing (what is geo-referencing? Take a look at the document.) There is a North Dakota LIDAR status map. The ArcPad cards used for the Trimbles can be found. The user guide for the ND Wetland Tool is posted. Also find several documents relating to the Customer Service Toolkit cleanup effort.

I would like this tab to be interactive. If you have any thoughts on a hint that would be useful, let me know. Chances are, if one office has a question on it, that there are several other offices wondering the same thing. Also, if your office or Area Office has put together a help document that may benefit others, send it to me and I can review it and post it. Populating this tab will be an ongoing process and it will take time to build up. Let me know what your needs are, and we can make this tab useful to all North Dakota NRCS geo-spatial users.

A screenshot of the NRCS GIS/GPS SharePoint page. The page header features the NRCS logo and the text "GIS/GPS". Below the header, there are navigation links for "North Dakota" and "Talk to the State Conservationist". The main content area is divided into several sections: "View All Site Content", "Documents" (listing ArcMap Hints, GIS Tools, LIDAR, NCP Cleanup, Trimble YUMA, and Wetland Tool), "Lists" (listing Calendar and Tasks), and "Discussions". On the right side, there is an "Announcements" section with a "New GIS/GPS Tab" announcement by Brian Johnston, followed by a "Hello All," message and a "Welcome to the new" message. Below these are links for "Helpful hints", "Step by Step guides", "FAQ guides", "Shortcuts", and "Others...". At the bottom right, there is a link to "Add new announcement".

# EQIP Natural Disaster Recovery Signup Success

*Submitted by: Doug Dragseth, Towner FO*

When the Towner Field Office learned of the EQIP Natural Disaster Recovery signup we started an outreach plan to make sure producers impacted by the flood of 2011 had the opportunity to sign up for cost share assistance. With only two weeks to get the word out about the program and have producers sign applications. Knowing the short time span we called producers who had inquired about assistance, sent out a news release, attended flood meetings, discussed the cost share, reviewed maps and land ownership along the river (trying to reach affected producers), and also encouraged producers to let their neighbors know of the program. We received 42 applications in the two week timeframe. We then made a field visit and reviewed the producer's resource concerns on the ground and discussed what we could assist them with.

After completing all field visits and submitting applications, 38 contracts were awarded totaling \$610,00 in conservation assistance. All contracting has been completed and producers are starting to complete their practices. NRCS will be assisting with replacing fences destroyed by the flood, reseeding hay meadows that were destroyed, precision land forming to fill in washouts, remove large deposits of sediment, and assist with stream bank stabilization.

Of the 38 contracts issued, 22 had not worked with NRCS in the past on any voluntary programs. By meeting on site with the producers to do the planning, we have increased our customer base for future planning opportunities.



*Left: Picture of flooded land*



*Right: Same flooded land a couple of months after reseeding*

# Calling All Divas

*Submitted by: Sherry Demarais, Ramsey County SCD*

*Calling All Divas* was the theme for this year's 2012 Women's AG Night in Ramsey County. Heather Schiele, District Manager, and Sherry DeMarais, District Clerk, decided early in the year that they would bring back Women's Ag Night in Ramsey County. They put together a committee of eight women from all over the county and started planning. Over the next 4 months they meet to discuss food options, location, speakers, donations, decorations, and advertising. They were lucky to have Mary Podoll, NRCS State Conservationist, give her inspirational success story and provide an update on conservation within North Dakota.

The event was open to the public with a ticket price of \$20.00 which is a new feature to the Women's Ag night. The event was scheduled for Tuesday July 17th and leading up to the event the committee went about selling 150 tickets and advertising on the radio and in the newspaper. They were even interviewed for the local T.V. news station.

The evening finally arrived and all 150 tickets had been sold. The committee had worked for two full days decorating the huge showroom in hot pink, lime green, and purple. The centerpieces for all 21 tables were conservation grade trees that were potted and placed inside a cute purse tied with a scarf. Each centerpiece was given away throughout the night as door prizes. Several NRCS guys from the Devils Lake Office called out ticket winners throughout the night and were a huge hit with the ladies. A few more NRCS guys helped serve fruit punch, take pictures, and video tape the evening.

Many businesses donated a wide variety of items to be used as a raffle prize or auctioned off. There were 104 items bought, won, or given away throughout the night.

To start the evening off, a local man came dressed up as Elvis and sang to the crowd during the social hour while simultaneously there was a conservation tree match up game going on where if you found your match you won a prize. Dinner was served as a progression throughout the evening from a local caterer and dessert and punch were made by a committee member. One of the courses was a mashed potato bar where the potatoes were served in a martini glass. Guests enjoyed the meal, the fun atmosphere, the many prizes, activities and most of all, that the proceeds were going to a good cause. Participants are already looking forward to seeing what next year's event will hold.

With event proceeds, the District will be able to donate a scholarship for a young woman graduating in 2013. The district would like to host a Women's AG Night on a yearly basis, as well as increase the amount of tickets sold and size of the scholarship.





## Employees on the Move!

### NEW HIRES

**Kevin M. Cortes**, Soil Conservation Aid, GS-404-3, Bismarck PMC, May 14, 2012

**Sharna I. Klein**, Soil Conservation Technician, GS-458-5, Center FO, May 20, 2012

**Jeffrey A. Woodward**, Soil Scientist (TERM), GS-470-11, Jamestown AO, May 20, 2012

**Brandon C. Alveshere**, Soil Conservation Aid, GS-404-3, Bismarck PMC, May 21, 2012

**Teal R. Jacobson**, Soil Conservation Aid, GS-404-3, Bismarck PMC, June 7, 2012

**Darin J. Schepp**, Agricultural Engineer, GS-890-9, Minot FO, June 17, 2012

**Joseph D. Braun**, Resource Conservationist (Wetlands), GS-401-7, Jamestown AO, July 1, 2012

**Landon J. Dinius**, Engineering Technician, GS-802-6, Dickinson AO, July 29, 2012

**John A. Bauer**, Biologist, GS-401-7, Cooperstown FO, August 12, 2012

**Anne M. Cummings**, Resource Conservationist (Wetlands), TERM, GS-401-9, Grand Forks FO, August 26, 2012

**James T. Beavers**, Soil Conservationist, GS-457-5, Bottineau FO, August 26, 2012

**Ryan J. Foster**, Soil Conservationist, GS-457-7, Bismarck FO, August 26, 2012

**Michael D. Bellon**, Biological Science Technician, GS-404-6, Bismarck PMC, September 2, 2012

### PROMOTIONS

**Jason L. Sieler**, Resource Conservationist, GS-401-9 to GS-401-11, Devils Lake AO, May 6, 2012

**Carlee A. Elke**, Soil Conservationist, GS-457-7 to GS-457-9, Beulah FO, May 20, 2012

**Garrett R. Larson**, Soil Conservationist, GS-457-7 to GS-457-9, Fessenden FO, May 20, 2012

**Daniel D. Claussen**, Area Engineer, GS-890-11 to GS-890-12, Dickinson AO, June 3, 2012

**Wendy L. Thomson**, Agricultural Engineer, GS-890-9 to GS-890-11, Mandan FO, June 3, 2012

**Brian G. Gysbers**, Soil Conservationist, GS-457-9, Minnewaukan FO, to District Conservationist, GS-457-11, Rolla FO, July 1, 2012

**Joshua F. Elke**, Soil Conservationist, GS-457-5 to GS-457-7, Rolla FO, July 1, 2012

**Tyler J. Raeder**, Soil Conservationist, GS-457-9, Devils Lake FO, to Soil Scientist (Wetlands), GS-470-11, Devils Lake AO, July 15, 2012

**Wade D. Bott**, Soil Data Quality Specialist, GS-470-12, Bismarck SO, to State Soil Scientist, GS-470-13, Bismarck SO, July 15, 2012

**Curtis V. Francis**, Soil Conservationist, GS-457-7 to GS-457-9, Valley City FO, July 15, 2012

**Janet M. Caolo-Tanski**, Biological Science Technician, GS-404-7, Bismarck PMC, to Soil Conservationist, GS-457-9, Mandan FO, August 12, 2012

**Blake P. Johnson**, Agricultural Engineer, GS-890-9 to GS-890-11, Fargo FO, September 9, 2012

### REASSIGNMENTS

**Curtis W. Bradbury**, Resource Conservationist, GS-457-12, Bismarck SO, to State Biologist, GS-401-12, Bismarck SO, May 6, 2012

**Michael J. Gerbig**, District Conservationist, GS-457-11 Carson FO, to Rangeland Management Specialist, GS-454-11, Dickinson AO, May 20, 2012



**Martin J. Rosek**, Soil Data Quality Specialist, GS-470-12, Bismarck SO, to Natural Resources Specialist, GS-457-12, Bismarck SO, June 17, 2012

**Jonathan J. Fettig**, Rangeland Management Specialist, GS-454-11, Bowman FO, to District Conservationist, GS-457-11, Carson FO, July 1, 2012

**Brandon J. Schwab**, Soil Conservationist, GS-457-9, Minnewaukan FO, to District Conservationist, GS-457-9, Cando FO, July 15, 2012

**Donald K. Olds**, District Conservationist, GS-457-11, Carrington FO to New Rockford FO, July 29, 2012

**Jody A. Forman**, Area Rangeland Management Specialist, GS-454-11, Dickinson AO to Bowman FO, August 26, 2012

## TRANSFER OUT

**David H. Zimmermann**, Senior MLRA Soil Scientist, GS-470-11, Fargo MLRA SSO, to Soil Data Quality Specialist (GIS), GS-470-11, Amherst, Massachusetts, June 17, 2012

**Penny J. Doty**, District Conservationist, GS-457-11, New Rockford FO, to District Conservationist, GS-457-11, Fergus Falls, Minnesota, July 1, 2012

**Martin J. Rosek**, Soil Data Quality Specialist, GS-470-12, Bismarck SO, to State Soil Scientist, GS-470-13, East Lansing, Michigan, August 12, 2012

## TRANSFER IN

**Jeremy J. Thury**, Soil Conservation Technician, GS-458-7, Clear Lake, South Dakota, to Soil Conservationist, GS-457-7, Turtle Lake FO, August 26, 2012

**Beth E. Points**, Soil Conservationist, GS-457-7, Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin, to Soil Conservationist, GS-457-7, Hettinger FO, September 9, 2012

**Bethany J. Barth**, Soil Conservationist, GS-457-7, Moorhead, Minnesota, to Soil Conservationist, GS-457-7, Steele FO, September 9, 2012

## CONVERSION OF APPOINTMENT

**Brenyn D. Hardy**, Soil Conservationist (SCEP), GS-499-4 to Soil Conservationist, Career-Conditional, GS-457-7, Cavalier FO, May 6, 2012

**Jason H. Hanson**, Soil Conservationist (SCEP), GS-499-4 to Soil Conservationist, Career-Conditional, GS-457-7, Finley FO, June 3, 2012

**Abby N. Solberg**, Soil Conservationist (SCEP), GS-499-4 to Soil Conservationist, Career Conditional, GS-457-7, Stanley FO, June 3, 2012

## RETIREMENTS

**Michael G. Ulmer**, Senior Regional Soil Scientist, GS-470-13, Bismarck SO, April 30, 2012

**Elizabeth J. Case**, Financial Technician, GS-503-7, Bismarck SO, June 30, 2012

**Paul G. King**, State Administrative Officer, GS-341-13, Bismarck SO, June 30, 2012

**Allan R. Pfliger**, Resource Conservationist, GS-457-12, Fargo FO, June 30, 2012

**Jon E. Nestoss**, Design Engineer, GS-810-12, Bismarck SO, August 3, 2012



# 12TH ANNUAL TRI-COUNTY RANGE TOUR

*Submitted by:* Mark Crosby, Bowbells FO

The 12th Annual Tri-County Range Tour was held on Tuesday, July 31 at the Krecklau Ranch west of Noonan. Despite the sweltering heat, several area producers from Burke, Divide and Mountrail counties took in the Annual Tour.

John Dhuyvetter, NDSU Area Livestock Extension Specialist started the program by presenting information on minerals and supplements for grazing cattle. Jody Forman, NRCS Area Rangeland Management Specialist, then discussed

programs and specifications for livestock fencing and portable windbreaks. Kevin Sedivec, NDSU Extension Rangeland Management Specialist, followed with information on determining rental rates for grazing land. Prior to the noon meal Jamison Krecklau provided an overview of his ranching operation. Afternoon activities included a tour of the cattle handling facilities at the ranch, as well as a field trip where Kevin Sedivec discussed managing forage production on expiring CRP and determining stocking rates on rangeland.

Participating agencies that helped make the tour possible include the NDSU Extension Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Soil Conservation Districts in Burke, Divide and Mountrail counties and the US



Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Tri-County Range Tour is rotated annually between Burke, Divide, and Mountrail Counties. The Tour was started in 2001 as a means to bring valuable information on grazing land management and livestock production to producers in northwest North Dakota.



*Jody Forman, Area Rangeland Management Specialist in Area 3, is introduced by Keith Brown, Divide County Extension Agent*



*Kevin Sedivec, NDSU Extension Rangeland Management Specialist, discusses stocking rates on rangeland.*



## Article Submissions

This newsletter has been designed to help keep employees informed about what's going on in North Dakota as well as with each other. We encourage you to submit an article. Let us know what's going on in your neck-of-the woods!

To submit an article please take note of the following information:

1. Keep articles brief and to the point (less than 1 page with pictures included).
2. Always write articles using "plain language" as described in the plain language webinar training.
3. Do not put articles directly into an e-mail, create a word document and attach the properly named file to an e-mail.
4. Include any pictures as attachments; do not insert pictures into word or publisher files.
5. All pictures submitted must have a caption. You can provide the caption text at the bottom of your article.
6. Label your picture attachments with the same name as the article. (No pictures called DSN0078.jpg)
7. Do not send any .pdf files

### **Conservation Communicator Schedule:**

**Articles Due by: .....Issue Date:**

Dec. 1, 2012 ..... Dec. 15, 2012

March 1, 2013..... March 15, 2013

June 1, 2013 ..... June 15, 2013

Sept. 1, 2013 ..... Sept. 15, 2013

Please submit articles to [tanya.koch@nd.usda.gov](mailto:tanya.koch@nd.usda.gov)



**United States Department of Agriculture**  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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Bismarck, North Dakota 58501

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