

# California

## CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

### Brooks Receives National Honor

by Dave Sanden

On July 8, Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman presented a 2002 USDA Honor Award to Lin Brooks, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Op-



erations, at USDA's 56th annual Honor Awards ceremony, held at the Ronald Reagan Building in Washington D.C. Brooks was chosen for the prestigious award for maintaining and enhancing the nation's natural resources based upon his outstanding leadership and record of service in northern California.

"Lin Brooks is a dedicated conservationist who has

(Award on page 3)

### FIRE SEASON HEATS UP



Gary Wilson, NRCS

by Anita Brown

Fall is always fire season in California and everybody knows that, right? Well, maybe, but there are several reasons why NRCS and the Resource Conservation Districts should take special pains to keep this issue in front of citizens. This year's drought conditions have kept the wild fire danger at moderate to high for much of the west, including California, according to an interagency drought monitoring service, <http://drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>. In southern California the conditions is especially acute with Los Angeles currently logging the driest season on record and the Santa Ana winds standing ever ready to stir an ember into an inferno.

There are also many "urban refugees" escaping to California's scenic wild lands with little previous experience with the perils of wild fire. And we have all heard the mantra that you need to hear something seven times before you really hear it. "Perhaps one of the best services we can perform as a natural resource agency is to raise people's awareness of how natural resources operate and the role they can play in the watershed," says State Conservationist Chuck Bell. "In the case of wildfires and fuel loads, that awareness can literally be the difference between life and death," said Bell.

No time to reinvent the wheel?

(Fire on page 3)

### BLYTHE FOCUS

by Paul Laustsen

Blythe area farmers gathered on September 4 for a USDA contracted focus group looking at potential applications of the Conservation Reserve Program's Continuous Sign-Up.

Continuous Sign-Up offers rental payments for farmers who implement conservation practices on eligible land. Even with rental payments, farmers find the cost of establishing and maintaining marginal farmland a deterrent because of the extremely dry climate and environmental restrictions.

"We would be creating habitat that might prevent future farming in that area," said a local farmer.

The independent focus group contractors, Jordan Petchenik and Dr. Edward Nelson, travel from state to state, collecting information to improve the program.

### Women of Courage and Vision



**Ashley Winston**

Redlands High School

Advances to State Speak Off Competition

**Mentor,**  
Keri Neal, EVRCD



**Antelope Valley Earth Team**

**Frances Krueger**  
(pictured)

886 Hours since 1/89

**Nereida Henderson**

1457 Hours since 3/88

**Yolanda Vivado**  
2674 Hours since 2/99



**Dr. Sharon Nance**, Rural Sociologist, received the Woman of Courage and Vision Award at the 2002 S.E.P.M. Training held in St. Louis, MO.

(more on page 3)



**Rita Bickel**

Mentor & Area IV Resource Conservationist

#### EDUCATION

B.S. in Plant/Soils Science  
M.S. in Agriculture  
Cal Poly Pomona

#### 1<sup>ST</sup> NRCS JOB

Soil Conservationist



**Mary Grace**

Riverside Earth Team  
180 Hours since 3/01

**Major Project**  
Congressional Guide

#### Famous Words

"How can I help you?"



## A Message from Chuck

*Greetings folks.* I want to thank you for working together to implement programs funded under the new Farm Bill. Obligating millions of dollars in the last month of the fiscal year is not only difficult and demanding, but a phenomenal achievement! You did this

by planning ahead, preparing conservation plans for landowners, and working with others to develop easements and cooperative agreements. You used teamwork, obtained assistance from our Resource Conservation District (RCD) partners, and came up with recommendations that streamlined the application process. I know many were surprised by our quick response. While I am delighted, I am not surprised. This agency always finds a way to get the job done.

Some articles in this issue of Current Developments are devoted to honoring our people who received national awards. These awards make us very proud, though in my book, each of you deserves an award for your part in implementing the Farm Bill process. Support came from all levels within our organization including administrative staff, technical specialists, program managers, clerical staff and others. Every position is important to the success of our agency and I am proud to be part of this effort.

## Partners Cover Klamath Basin

by Reina O'Beck

The first contract with a producer in the Klamath Basin was signed under the 2002 Farm Bill. Deputy Undersecretaries representing the United States Department of Agriculture, Mack Gray and David Tenney, attended and applauded the mission of those involved with the project.

After a severe drought in 2001, NRCS assisted the Lava Beds and Klamath RCD to "balance water needs of agriculture and other natural resources." NRCS initially responded with the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) that provided \$2 million for cover crops, alleviating wind erosion on more than 170,000 acres of farmland.

Implementation of conservation programs in the Basin are conducted by a fully staffed Tulelake Field Office. Partnerships with the Resource Conservation Districts and local irrigation districts contribute to a long-term conservation commitment that benefits producers in advocating good land stewardship.

For more detailed information regarding the Klamath Basin refer to the Watershed Planning Services website at [www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/wps](http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/wps).

Questions, comments, and contributions may be forwarded to:

*Current Developments*  
NRCS Office of Public Affairs  
430 G Street #4164, Davis, California 95616.  
Phone (530) 792-5644 or fax (530) 792-5791

Visit the California web site [www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov)

While I am very pleased with this effort, there has been a significant cost. I am concerned as more of our technical assistance is directed toward mandatory programs instead of meeting the specific needs of our RCD partners. Funding for our broad Conservation Mission (working with conservation districts) comes through our enabling legislation, Public Law 74-46. This is not Farm Bill legislation. This law provides funding we need to meet local natural resource conservation issues. When Farm Bill programs carry with them funding to pay for required technical assistance, we do not have to redirect people from conservation needs identified by RCDs. When the mandatory programs provide financial assistance but not sufficient technical assistance funding we have no choice but to redirect staff.

Farm Bill programs are vitally important. Our agency administers many of the conservation provisions because we have an established track record of success and are recognized as America's premier conservation agency. We will continue our responsibilities associated with these programs and meet the needs of our conservation partners' locally derived conservation direction. We need to assure America's successful grass roots conservation approach for private lands continues. I ask all of you to redouble efforts to communicate with your RCDs and to help them address local concerns. I know you understand this and I appreciate your help.

## Elkhorn Slough Streamlines Permits

by Cheryl Lambert

A 2001 pilot Permit Coordination program, featured on a USDA *Farm Day* satellite broadcast, prevented 41,314 tons of sediment from entering the Elkhorn Slough. The feature, produced by the USDA Office of Communications in Washington D.C., highlights the RCD of Monterey County, NRCS, and Sustainable Conservation of San Francisco as "Partners in Conservation."



*Santiago Renteria Jr. and Emily Hanson star in USDA satellite broadcast.*

The Permit Coordination program provides a method to streamline the permit process with six regulatory agencies. The successful program helped 28 landowners implement conservation practices near streams and on farms protecting highly erodible hillside farms.

For more information please contact [Cheryl.Lambert@ca.usda.gov](mailto:Cheryl.Lambert@ca.usda.gov)

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Some photos have been digitally altered.

# Hoopa Hopeful New Irrigation System Will Boost Ag Production

by Dave Sanden

In February 2002, recognizing the need for an improved water supply and distribution system, the Hoopa Valley Public Utilities District (PUD) and the Hoopa Valley Tribal Council asked NRCS to develop a conceptual irrigation water supply design for the eight major fields in the Hoopa Valley.

Completed in early June, the NRCS plan envisions a system that can meet all of the valley's foreseeable irrigation water needs in the most efficient way. The proposed design uses the Trinity River as a water source with seven pumping stations that can deliver 10 gallons per minute per acre to every lot in the eight major fields. Estimated cost for the fully implemented design is \$6,901,630.

The plan features seven separate irrigation supply systems, each with its own pump and 300,000-gallon storage tank. Gravity pressure of 60 to 80 pounds per square inch (psi) would be maintained in the pipeline, and all lots would be able to receive water from the pressurized system. Water would be brought to each lot, and the Hoopa Valley Tribe and Hoopa Valley PUD would work with individuals to connect to the water for



*The new irrigation design proposes to supply irrigation water under pressure from seven separate systems pumping from the Trinity River.*

irrigation. Each lot would have a 4-inch diameter PVC pipe riser with a shutoff valve.

Now that the conceptual design has been completed, the next step will be to secure funding for implementation of the project. Once funding is available, Hoopa Valley PUD will turn the project over to a private engineering company for final plans and specifications. Actual construction will most likely be completed in planned phases.

## **Award (continued)**

an exceptional ability to work with people and open channels of cooperation and communication between our agency, customers, resource conservation districts, and other partners," said NRCS State Conservationist Chuck Bell. "He instills in his employees an appreciation for the importance of each personal contribution to team accomplishment—resulting in a well trained work force that gets conservation on the ground," he said.

As Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, Brooks oversees NRCS Conservation work in 19 counties in northern California, supervising 18 field offices, four Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) offices, and a team of 87 conservation professionals. He is responsible not only for conservation leadership and technical oversight, but also

for employee development and training, inclusive program delivery, outreach to underserved groups, and equitable customer service.

"Caring for and enhancing natural resources and the environment is a heartfelt passion for Lin," said Bell. "I don't know anyone who deserves this award more."

## **Fire (continued)**

Many field offices and RCDs throughout the state have very active fire awareness programs and would probably be willing to share ideas. Just a few examples include Auburn, Somis, Lancaster, and Redlands. Or log onto the CDF website for fire information at <http://www.fire.ca.gov>.



## **Vision (continued)**

The award symbolizes the positive influence Nance has on others and the dedication and hard work of the women in the agency. Upon receiving the honor, Nance said, "I am very flattered that this work is being seen as vision and courage, because it takes both to do the job well!"

Thank you Dr. Nance for being an inspiration to us all.



**Dr. Sharon Nance and Civil Rights Director Andrew Johnson.**

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# Caligrams...

## All American Distinction May Boost North State Tourism

Mount Shasta and the north state's scenic landscape will be getting a lot more attention, thanks to Ore-Cal RC&D. On June 13, the U.S. Government declared 360 miles of north state highways to be among the nation's most treasured scenic roads. U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta added California's Volcanic Legacy Scenic Byway to the list of America's Byways.



"America's Byways are roads to the heart and soul of America," said Secretary Mineta. "Byways help create a sense of pride in America. They connect us to this country's beauty, history and culture."

The American Byway designation was the culmination of a six-year effort by Ore-Cal RC&D, who worked in partnership with National Forest districts, local chambers of commerce, visitors bureaus, county agencies and other organizations in northern California and southern Oregon to get the roads listed.

"We will be placed almost as a top priority for any type of transportation grants there are," said Ore-Cal RC&D Coordinator **Jim Vancura**.

For additional information or to obtain brochures and maps, call 1-800-4-BYWAYS (1-800-429-9297) or through the National Scenic Byways Program website, [www.byways.org](http://www.byways.org)

## Want a Calendar in Current Developments?

MAIL YOUR EVENTS TO  
Paul.Laustsen@ca.usda.gov  
Subject: CD-CAL

Congratulations go out to  
Paul Benedict for his new  
position in North Dakota!

## McElhiney Honored

Michael McElhiney, district conservationist in Modesto received the 2002 USDA Honor Award from Secretary Veneman on July 8th. He was recognized for leading and coordinating the protection of 5,000 acres for the establishment of wildlife habitats, flood alleviation, improved water quality, and crop production. A local celebration and tour was held on July 30th with close to 100 partners, coworkers, and legislative representatives.

## AWQA Unveiled with Congressman & Media

A successful press conference and field tour was held in Watsonville, CA in late August to celebrate the achievements of the newly formed Agriculture Water Quality Alliance (AWQA). This group is a unique partnership of farmers, ranchers, community members, and government agencies in six counties that addresses concerns in the watersheds that drain into the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Congressman Sam Farr (District 17) joined California Farm Bureau Federation's president Bill Pauli and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary's superintendent Bill Duoros in praising AWQA's projects and results. NRCS offices serving Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz counties partnered with Resource Conservation Districts, the University of California's Cooperative Extension, and others to provide conservation technical assistance towards projects outlined in the Sanctuary's Agriculture and Rural Lands Plan.

*California*  
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## HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Name	Position	Action	Grade	Location	Date
Moore, T.	Biologist	Transfer	GS-11	Dixon	8/25/02
Larson, D.	Soil Cons Tech	New Hire	GS-7	Lakeport	8/26/02
Sandberg, R.	Soil Conservationist	New Hire	GS-11	Fresno	8/25/02
Kelley, G.	Soil Cons (DC)	Reinstatement	GS-12	Tulelake	7/28/02
Householder, K.	Ag Engineer	Transfer	GS-9	Tulelake	8/11/02
Roy, R.	Soil Consvst	New Hire	GS-11	Fresno	8/11/02
Warner, J.	Range Mngmt Speci	New Hire	GS-9	Hollister	8/11/02

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