

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS



A Message from Chuck

This month the nation will be celebrating Earth Day. It is a time to reflect upon the importance of our natural resources; how critical they are to our ability to sustain the quality of life we sometimes take for granted.

April 22nd is the day we have chosen to try and elevate public awareness about our environment but for NRCS employees and our conservation partners, that level of awareness is not limited to a single day; it is continual.

We understand our dependence on our natural resource base and have an appreciation for the complex interrelationships between soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources. It is for this reason that we approach conservation, first, from a broad planning perspective rather than focusing on a single resource issue, a single land use sector, or a single site. This approach recognizes that all human activities impact natural resources whether they occur in rural, urban, or suburban areas. We all share in the responsibility to improve and sustain natural resources for current and future generations. This is really what Earth Day is all about.

Most of you know that NRCS has a very successful volunteer program called *Earth Team*. This program has been especially important in California. Although the current year's figures are not yet in, I can give you an idea of how important the

program has been based on the previous year. In Fiscal Year 2002, California NRCS had more than 440 volunteers contributing at least one hour of work and the total number of hours contributed came to 44,893! Volunteers provided assistance to 88 percent of the California NRCS offices. These people will have no problem understanding the significance of Earth Day!

While our type of work tends to draw people together, unfortunately, during trying times, external forces can create stresses that tend to degrade relationships. "Competitive Sourcing," potential office "consolidations," and budget uncertainties are all examples of external stresses with which we are currently dealing.

During times like these we really need to pull together and support one-another. It is especially important to be sensitive to the needs and perceptions of our fellow workers at these times. We truly are a team and our best work results from understanding the importance of, and concern for each team member. We certainly want to avoid insensitive and disparaging comments that might damage relationships and otherwise contribute to an unsettled atmosphere. I know that each of you will help to foster a supportive atmosphere for your team members. This is the reputation for which our agency is famous.



Chuck Bell
State Conservationist

Southern California Tree Mortality Emergency

By Bill Ward
State Design Engineer/Davis
and Paul Laustsen
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Riverside

Homes and vehicles crushed by dead and diseased trees are only a small example of what a four-year drought in Southern California forests can do. The recent proclamation by the California governor on March 7th, declaring a state of emergency within forested areas of Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties, outlines the "conditions of extreme peril to the people, property and environment" in these counties due to the imminent fire danger caused by the extraordinary number of dead and diseased trees.

The four-year drought in forested areas has weakened trees, exacerbating a bark-beetle infestation that has killed up to 80 percent of mature trees in the San Bernardino, San Jacinto and Palomar Mountains. As a result, the trees pose a significant threat to life and property from potential windstorms, devastating wildfires and subsequent erosion in these forested areas with interspersed urban communities on private lands.

EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION

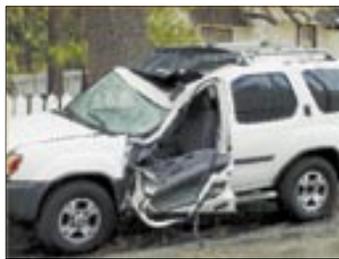
The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to protect lives and property threatened by natural disasters through its Emergency Watershed Program (EWP). To date, Riverside

County has officially requested assistance with a similar request expected in San Bernardino and possibly San Diego Counties.

After a site visit with Riverside County Officials, NRCS developed a damage survey report recommending the removal of 10,000 trees. This work to reduce the damage threat in priority areas will take a minimum of two years due to the magnitude of the work required. Significant reductions in the threat of life and property can be accomplished within the first year. The California Department of Forestry (CDF) estimated the cost of recommended work at \$20 million; estimated economic damages without tree

— "Tree Mortality" continued on page 2 —

Life, property, and the environment are at extreme risk from catastrophic events such as wildfires and windstorms. Dead trees can fall over in a windstorm or very easily turn the area into a raging inferno with just a spark.



removal are \$200 million. In addition, the value of private lands in Riverside County considered at risk is about \$650 million.

Potential costs for "priority area" tree removal in San Bernardino County are estimated by CDF at \$70 million. The higher cost is a result of larger urban communities with larger populations and more properties and structures at risk.

CURRENT STATUS OF EFFORTS

NRCS has approved the Damage Survey Report for Riverside County and requested \$18 million to remove the dead and dying trees from five critical priority areas. This request for funds is currently on a national wait list as there are no EWP funds

yet available for emergency work. Damage Survey Reports are currently being prepared for similar work in San Diego and San Bernardino Counties. It is anticipated that ultimately \$100 to \$120 million would be needed to remove dead and dying trees in the three counties identified by the Governor Davis as state disaster areas.

On April 16th, Governor Davis requested that the President declare a federal emergency in San Bernardino, Riverside and San Diego Counties. This is a follow-up action to the State disaster declaration he made March 7th. If acted on by the President, this would open up potential new avenues of federal funding to assist California with this critical problem.

Students Get Hands-on With Soil

By Jolene Lau
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Salinas

What better way to learn about soil, than to stick your hands right in it! Over 2,000 fourth and fifth graders from Santa Clara County hiked through Sanborn Park and participated in this year's Forest Conservation Days. Sponsored by the Northern California Chapter of the Society of American Foresters, this two week Saratoga event in March gave students the opportunity to feel various soil textures, including sand, silt, granite and clay. They also got to feel various types of rocks and learn about soil's important place in the Web of Life.

"This year went well. There were higher proportions of minorities and children who had never been in a forest attending this year — which was good," said Area Resource Soil Scientist Jim Komar from Red Bluff.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS STAFF

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Visit the California Web site at www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov

Area Two Holds First Line Meeting

By Jolene Lau
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Salinas

So when was the last First Line meeting held in Area Two? It was time to round up and meet face-to-face to discuss and get updates on major issues.

Carter Christenson, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, welcomed supervisors and Area staff from the Bay Delta and Central Coast clusters on March 24th and 25th in Salinas. Topics covered civil rights compliance in program delivery, safety, competitive sourcing, working with partners, our strategic plan, CNMPs, and technical service providers.

Alec Arago, District Director for Congressman Sam Farr, presented *Communicating with Members of Congress and Staffers*. These are his top ten suggestions:

- 1) Know your Representative and appropriate staffers in both local and Washington, D.C. offices;
- 2) Be their resource without lobbying: Provide the information, contacts and issues — don't describe needs;
- 3) Network: Be a "relationship rolodex," make sure constituents know NRCS;
- 4) Organize field visits to showcase projects and introduce key constituents involved;
- 5) Personal contacts and site visits work better than printed/mailed information;
- 6) If you have to mail things, send to both the local and D.C. offices, then follow up with a phone call;
- 7) Don't send your only copy, always have backup ready to Fax or e-mail;
- 8) Understand that staff turn-overs occur frequently and establish new relationships when necessary;
- 9) Answer the questions being asked; if you don't know, research it and get back, and
- 10) Continue to be the "happy face" federal agency: Put conservation on the ground.



Daniel Mountjoy discussed the effect of new State Water Quality Control Board policy on agricultural runoff waivers with the District Conservationists. Farmers in the Central Valley region will soon be required to develop water quality management plans and conduct monitoring at the watershed level. This change will result in an increased demand for technical assistance. Central Coast DCs expect a similar increase in work load, but the Bay Area Regional Board has not taken any action to date.

Carter congratulated us all for a job well done. Thanks to Chuck Bell for the awards for last year — the jackets, laser pointers and name badges! We did have a very productive 2002!

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Fired Up in the Foothills

By Brian Ziegler
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno

A new firebreak in eastern Madera County has homeowners in the area relaxing a little easier. The impressive, 4.4-mile firebreak was built by the Coarsegold Resource Conservation District to protect the communities of North Fork and Bass Lake from devastating wildfires. A fire that began on August 20, 2001, near North Fork scorched more than 4,000 acres and cost \$6 million to control.



Debris is burned to create a new firebreak that will protect property in eastern Madera County.

“Had this fuel break been completed two years ago, the fire would have been confined to 10 acres and cost only \$10,000 to put out,” said Project Coordinator Paul Rich.

Concerns about dry years helped spawn a joint effort among property owners, conservation district members, and state and federal agencies

to reduce vegetation that might provide fuel for future wildfires.

To build the firebreak, homeowners and volunteers carefully pruned or removed trees from 575 acres along Road 274, which connects North Fork and Bass Lake. Thick brush was also thinned. Property owners and the U.S. Forest Service burned several piles of debris to reduce the fuel load.

Conservation district board member Larry Ballew said, “this was a project driven by local people with cooperation of government agencies and not the reverse. That’s the key — neighbors helping neighbors.”

The Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Don Nielsen, a district conservationist in Madera, adds, “the completion of this firebreak is one component of a larger effort by several partnering agencies over the last ten years to accomplish fuel reduction work in eastern Madera County.”

New Butte County RCD Holds First Stakeholders Meeting

By Pia Sevelius
Watershed Coordinator/
Butte County
and Dave Sanden
Area Public Affairs Specialist/
Red Bluff

On March 11th, about 50 Butte County residents and public agency officials heard how their newly formed Resource Conservation District might be used to help landowners improve watersheds, restore habitat and utilize conservation programs from the 2002 Farm Bill.

Butte County RCD (BCRCD) held its first-ever general stakeholders meeting in the Durham Memorial Hall. The district was voted into existence last March, and priorities are still being set. The need and anticipation for the RCD was illustrated by the powerful and diverse response from the meeting participants. Stakeholders were as varied as the conservation needs of Butte County, including agriculture, watershed groups,

In Focus

Leaders in the Central Sierra Cluster were recently awarded NRCS jackets for their work on the 2002 Farm Bill.



Pictured are (back row, left to right): Dan Macon, High Sierra RC&D; Bob Long, Jackson; Paul Sweeney, South Lake Tahoe; Surjit Toor, Elk Grove; Jerry Progner, Mariposa; Cliff Heitz, Auburn; Ron Zinke, Grass Valley. Front row (left to right): Jim Kimmel, Placerville; Curtis Tarver, Assistant State Conservationist, Fresno.

Fire Safe Council, agencies, and interested citizens.

“The goal of the district is to promote wise use of resources to sustain productivity and maintain quality of life,” said Hue Dang, NRCS District Conservationist in Oroville.

The conservation programs of Glenn County and Tehama RCDs, both up and running for many years, were highlighted as examples of the types of projects that could evolve in Butte County. Showcased projects included erosion control and rangeland improvements in Stony Creek watershed, streambank stabilization, fuel load reduction and prescribed burns to reduce wildfires, and irrigation system evaluations, as well as water monitoring and noxious weed control programs.

The public responded to BCRCD leader’s requests for their invaluable input to identify and discuss resource issues that the district could address. And from the responses, several themes emerged: Land Use; Water Quality; Fuel Reduction and Healthy Forests; Mitigation;

Invasive Species; Flood Control; Soil Quality; Air Quality; Habitat Restoration, and Water Conservation.

“We were impressed by the number of people interested in improving the natural resources in Butte County,” said BCRCD President Ed Chombeau. “We were also impressed by the representation of folks coming from a diverse cross section in the community.”

The next steps for BCRCD include drafting comprehensive work plans, both short- and long-term. The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) in partnership with the NRCS will be holding a Director’s work-plan development seminar in April to assist this process. Other RCD directors from throughout California have also been invited to attend.

Once the work plans are complete, BCRCD will set up financial structures and decide on specific projects that fall within the vision of the work plans. Diverse partnerships will be sought and encouraged at all levels.

Washington Officials Visit Klamath Basin

By Dave Sanden

Area Public Affairs Specialist/Red Bluff

On March 25th, NRCS Chief Bruce Knight met with California and Oregon NRCS State Conservationists, the two FSA State Executive Directors, and the Klamath Basin Team in Klamath Falls for an overview of issues and progress in the Klamath Basin and a tour of the Irrigation Project area in Oregon and California. He was accompanied by Merlin Bartz, USDA Special Assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture, and Dave Anderson, who works for the White House as Associate Director for Legislative Affairs, Council on Environmental Quality.

The bus tour around the project area included stops at farms, ranches, irrigation district pumps, and drainage canals. Knight, Bartz, Anderson, and the other tour participants were also treated to a guided tour of Cal-Ore Produce's potato packing facility in Tulelake, conducted by Cal-Ore President Sid Staunton and his brother Ed Staunton.

Owned and operated by local growers, Cal-Ore Produce is the largest Grower/

Packer/Shipper of fresh potatoes in California and Oregon, with a grower acreage base of more than 3,200 acres and the ability to pack and ship over 4,000 truckloads of quality product annually.

The main purpose of Chief Knight's visit was to see the Klamath Basin project first-hand and to better understand local needs. Knight listened to local farmers, ranchers, conservation district directors and managers, and irrigation district managers throughout the tour and answered questions.

"This has been an incredible educational experience," said Knight in his closing comments. "I want you to know that the situation in the Klamath Basin is extremely important to NRCS and the Bush Administration."

Knight's visit roughly coincided with Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman's announcement that \$7 million was being released to assist farmers in the Klamath Basin. The funds are part of the \$50 million fund for Klamath farmers made



Aw, You Shouldn't Have...

During a stop at NRCS's new office in Tulelake, Mike Byrne, Chair, Lava Beds/Butte Valley RCD, presented NRCS Chief Bruce Knight (left) with a box of locally grown horseradish. Ironically, the Tulelake office was a horseradish factory before its recent renovation.

(Also pictured in photo: Bill Gardiner, DC in Yreka; Carolyn Pimentel, District Manager for Siskiyou RCD, and Chuck Bell, California State Conservationist.)

available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill.

"You will be seeing quite a few things rolled out in the weeks ahead," said Anderson. "The President cares about the Klamath Basin more than you'll probably ever know," he added.

Keeping an Ancient Cultural Landmark Intact

Phillip Smith: "It is hard to save what you don't understand"

By Paul Laustsen

Area Public Affairs Specialist/Riverside

Situated along side the Colorado River near Blythe lie ancient figures drawn in the desert surface by indigenous people. These gigantic geoglyphs, commonly known as intaglios, range from 150 to 10,000 years old. Despite their cultural significance, the intaglios have received minimal protection from visitors and outdoor enthusiasts who use the area for recreation. But this is all about to change thanks to a concerned Southern Low Desert Resource Conservation and Development Council (SLD RC&D).

Alfredo Acosta Figueroa, an energetic 80-year-old member of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, has been studying the

intaglios for the last 45 years.

"The Blythe Intaglios is a part [of] us, and we would like to see it saved for future generations," said Figueroa in an enthusiastic presentation to a group of conservationists at the intaglios on March 18th. Figueroa led the group around the different geoglyphs describing the symbolic nature of what was shown, often touching on the theme of inter-connectivity of all living things.

Figueroa discovered the newly formed Southern Low Desert RC&D months ago, and realized that this fledgling organization might just be what was needed to ensure the intaglios were protected.

Figueroa tried many times before to generate interest in saving the intaglios beyond the current chain link fences that surround a select few geoglyphs, but ran into problems when funding was brought up.

After attending a RC&D meeting and making a presentation to the council, members were moved by the importance of keeping this cultural landmark intact.

David Erskine, SLD RC&D Indian Liaison, recalls Figueroa's presentation as stirring emotion within him compelling him to do something about it. Others on the council agreed, and soon after the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), who manages the land, were contacted. Karen Reichardt, a BLM archeologist out of Yuma, was interested in the project and is working on ways

to obtain funds to support the project.

The council is partnering with the Colorado River Indian Tribes and the Bureau of Land Management to create double fences in the intaglios to lead people by the geoglyphs, keeping them on the trails. When the new fences are erected, the geoglyphs will be restored to their original forms that are preserved by aerial photographs from the early part of the 20th century. The partners also intend to build a visitors center that will be staffed by youth from nearby reservations.

Phillip Smith, a member of the Chemehuevi Tribe, would like to see the intaglios saved but recognizes the challenge to educate others who haven't grown up with the same reverence for nature. "It is hard to save what you don't understand," he said.

Bay Delta Cluster Holds Training For New Employees

By Jolene Lau
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Salinas

Who's in the pipeline? The NRCS workforce is getting older and data shows that a good number of employees are eligible for retirement in the next five years. Luckily, the Bay Delta area has talented and energized "new hires" recently added to our family.

Lisa Shanks, Area Resource Conservationist had the tough task of organizing 14 topics within a six-hour time frame for 13 of the newest employees in Concord, Dixon, Livermore, Modesto, Napa, Petaluma, and Stockton. Area Two's New Employee Meeting was held on March 26th at the Concord Service Center.

Each participant was asked to research a given NRCS topic. They all studied up, put together a PowerPoint presentation that briefly presented the back-bones of our agency. Never before has there been such enthusiasm and good humor over the General Manual, and everyone learned what the mysterious "title" and "part" numbers mean. The e-FOTG was determined "cool," and we were all encouraged to develop our personal online e-thunderbook. In one day, we also learned (or got refreshed on) the technical reference sources, PLANTS database, WRP, PL-566, EWP, soils, RCDs, the Pacific Basin, employee development plans, and flip chart use and techniques. Carter Christenson, ASTCFO, described competitive sourcing, technical service providers, the California strategic plan, and acknowledged that each new employee in Area Two has an official mentor.

Lisa Hokholt, District Conservationist from the Concord Service Center, presented several tips on "Being Professional":

Volunteers Mean the World to Us!

By Rachel Lopez
State Volunteer Coordinator/Davis

This year's theme for National Volunteer Week — celebrated in April — is *Volunteers Mean the World To Us*. "Whoever came up with that phrase took the words right out of my mouth," said Chuck Bell, NRCS State Conservationist. The Earth Team is a group of volunteers who assist us in our mission to conserve, improve and sustain natural resources and the environment.

NRCS employees in California know and recognize that volunteers are vital members of our conservation team. To recognize their efforts, volunteers throughout the state will be awarded a card, T-shirt, and certificate of appreciation during April 27th through May 3rd. In addition, some volunteers who have gone "above and beyond the call of duty" will receive a non-monetary award.

Please remember to thank your volunteers not only during this time, but also throughout the year for their hard work and dedication.



Some of the talented and energized Bay Delta meeting attendees!

Front row (left to right): Amy Rocha, soil conservationist, Stockton; Amy Bastone, ag engineer, Livermore; Joe Takai, soil conservationist, Concord, and Jackie Shick, ecologist, Livermore.

Back row (left to right): Ora Goldsmith, soil conservationist, Stockton; Erin Norris, soil conservationist, Livermore; Mike Grinstead, cluster engineer, Stockton, and Tom Moore, cluster biologist, Dixon.

Other attendees not pictured: Chip Bouril, soil conservationist, Napa; Chris Delaney, ag engineer, Petaluma; Brad Hicks, ag engineer, Modesto; Ivana Noell, biologist, Livermore, and Jessica Sternfels, soil conservationist, Petaluma.

- 1) Take initiative: Don't wait for tasks, access situations, and offer ideas;
- 2) Team work: Participate in healthy interaction with a common focus;
- 3) Take the high road: Vent responsibly (in-house) and not openly;
- 4) Know your position: Support the line;
- 5) Be helpful: Mentor others, share in open kudos;
- 6) Think before you speak: Be aware of agency policies, and
- 7) Work hard: Weekends are for partying and relaxing.

Additional comments from the group included:

- Be on time; Make the effort to learn new things
- Follow through on requests; Don't over promise
- Provide quality service; Get back to the person if you don't know the answer

The session was a pleasing glimpse at who's in our pipeline. It did more than match the face to the name — it was an opportunity to personally welcome the new additions. They are full of spark and ready to rock 'n' roll!

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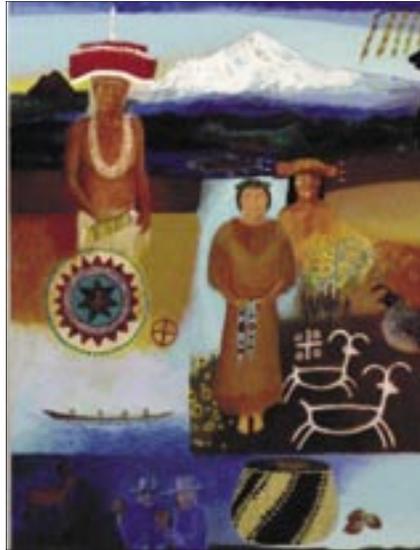
For Information: www.glci.com

NRCS American Indian Heritage Month 2002 Poster

By Reina Rogers
American Indian Liaison/Greenville

The artwork created by California native artist, Frank LaPena, for the 2002 heritage month poster is still attracting attention. Every week, since November 2002, at least one person calls or writes for a copy of the poster. Either they saw the original artwork on display at Turtle Bay Museum at Turtle Bay Exploration Park in Redding (on display until April 27th), or read about it in *News from Native California* Winter 2002/03 edition.

Frank LaPena has captured a vision of native people throughout California. So much that the California Department of Parks and Recreation and the California State Parks Foundation borrowed the image from NRCS to use on invitations for a reception March 16th to honor guests, acknowledge contributions, and introduce members of the newly formed California Indian Cultural Center and Museum Task Force. Heard Museum also requested a copy of the poster to put on display in the Phoenix museum.



More recently, directors from 30 American Indian Education Centers in California were able to get a copy at the 27th Annual California Conference on American Indian Education, March 6-8, 2003, in Santa Clara. Many people at the conference had heard or read about the poster and were very excited to receive one.

Civil Rights Compliance in Program Delivery

By Jolene Lau
Asian Pacific American Program Manager/Salinas

Healthy communication? Why not? Our programs and services are open to all customers equally and fairly, that's why every employee is responsible for civil rights compliance in program delivery. Here's a brief summary of the NEDC course on Title VI-Program Delivery and effective outreach.

Lesson 1: Know the laws and regulations we follow

- Civil Rights Act of 1964 – Title VI and VII
- Education Amendments of 1972
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Age Discrimination Act of 1975
- 7-CFR-15
- General Manual 230 Part 405 (NRCS's organizational policy)

Lesson 2: Living with diversity and the importance of healthy communication. Each of us carries a unique package of backgrounds, cultural values, and communication methods. We need to be aware of the differences, respect each other, and avoid discriminatory practices.

Lesson 3: Program outreach and carrying out effective programs. We are all responsible for insuring that our program benefits and services are available to all customers.

Lesson 4: Effective use of NRCS management tools in achieving civil rights compliance in program delivery. Our strategic, performance, business, and action planning; workload analysis; position descriptions and performance standards; and training

need to incorporate the civil rights compliance in program delivery. Work smarter, not harder. Identify the best means of informing our target audience, organize educational events, and encourage participation with local work groups.

Lesson 5: NRCS partnership with districts and our role:

- Encourage, support, and assist boards, councils, etc., to achieve appropriate representation
- Review Memorandum of Understanding annually
- Examine activities to determine if they are in compliance
- Communicate with customers about the assistance available

Lesson 6: Assessment of program compliance. From position descriptions, letters, training requests, and even mailing lists, documents from our office should reflect program compliance. Update your files with current information and make sure the "...and Justice for All" poster displays the Web site and phone number for filing complaints.

Compliance Review Guide

Here are the required elements from Title VI and VII regarding compliance review and program delivery:

1. Civil rights responsibilities and records
2. Required civil rights training on laws and regulations
3. Public notification about our programs and services
4. Outreach — everyone should know about our programs and services
5. Complaints of discrimination — poster "...and Justice for All" and AD-1126 should be visible
6. Evaluation of program delivery (monitor/evaluate)
7. Partnership responsibilities — civil rights in outreach, term limits, demographics, etc.
8. Access to all NRCS facilities by persons with disabilities — provide reasonable accommodations

Tune in to Conservation!

By Shelby Gatlin
Public Affairs Specialist/Davis



A national radio campaign promoting NRCS and conservation is being released this month. Select radio stations will receive a specially designed CD with five public service messages declaring *Conservation: There's something in it for you!* Of the five spots, two are written for rural audiences encouraging listeners to stop by their local service center. The remaining three spots are targeted to urban audiences to help them understand the benefits of conservation that touch everyone. If you hear the spots on your local radio station, please give the station a call and thank them for supporting conservation.

Reflections on Fresno and "Creating a Circumstance"



"We are creating a circumstance to encourage questions about the Farm Bill."
—Lou Gallegos, USDA, commenting on the reason for the Farm Bill meeting.



On February 26th, more than 280 minority, limited resource and beginning farmers joined with USDA agency representatives, agricultural interest groups, students, professors, and NRCS Earth Team volunteers on the California State University campus in Fresno for the 2002 Farm Bill and USDA Program and Services Briefing.



The entire event was simultaneously translated into Spanish, Hmong and Laotian languages. Headphones were made available with which participants could move about the room. Approximately 50 participants used this service.



Speakers that greeted the audience and set the tone for the activities included USDA Assistant Secretary for Administration Lou Gallegos (left), Deputy Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment Mack Gray, and NRCS State Conservationist Chuck Bell.

Pathways to Our Traditions

By Reina Rogers
American Indian Liaison/
Greenville

Nearly 900 people came to the three-day conference in Santa Clara to participate in the 26th annual conference on American Indian Education.



Earth Team volunteers Jeanene Hafen, Marlene Mullen, and Warren Gorbet (above) at the 26th annual conference on American Indian Education.

NRCS presented a workshop entitled "Learning from California's First Teachers: Listening to the Landscape," which gave examples of how native people gather and tend the landscape. The talk explored the variety of horticultural techniques used — both historical and present day — by California Indian people to manage wildlands. The audience learned how nature provides a storehouse of products.

Coyotes reservation. School representatives want to set up management of native plants and use the youth to monitor the projects over the years.

Warner Unified School District, a workshop participant from southern California, is interested in implementing a school program in conjunction with the Los

An NRCS information booth was available during the entire conference with brochures on careers, services available, and field office contact information. Earth Team volunteers Jeanene Hafen, Marlene Mullen, and Warren Gorbet helped set up, take down and staff the booth, plus answer visitors' questions during the conference.



Images from the Fresno Briefing

Caligrams... Statewide News in Brief



Templeton Soil Scientist Ken Oster (left) provides training in advanced conservation planning.

Advanced Field Training for Conservation Planners

By Brian Ziegler
Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno

Floyd Bechtold was not the least bit nervous when more than forty employees of the federal government showed up at his cattle ranch on April 8th. He had been expecting them.

The group belonged to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). They came to Bechtold's ranch near Galt for some advanced training in order to

become certified conservation planners.

The field visit was part of a week-long, statewide conservation planning course for NRCS employees. Bechtold allowed participants to roam vast stretches of his property to identify concerns that would help them write a conservation plan.

The visit was arranged by Elk Grove DC Surjit Toor. He and Bechtold have already collaborated on three training sessions this year.

Native Grasses Workshop

By Jen DeLorenzi
Editorial Assistant/Davis
and Diane Blohm
Admin. Assistant/Davis

The California Native Grasses Association Training Workshop held on April 2nd and 3rd in Winters was well-attended by fifty NRCS employees, representatives from the Susanville Indian Rancheria, and interested parties from the private sector. Workshop topics included site evaluation; seeding verses plug planting;

erosion control; and use of fire, grazing, and herbicides for management of invasive species.

A local field trip to Putah Creek gave an excellent example of how conservation practices can be used in an urban setting with collaboration from homeowners, conservation groups and governmental agencies.

A visit to Hedgerow Farms showed successful conservation practices that provided habitat for wildlife, and also gave attendees "hands-on" experience with various equipment demonstrations.

This Hedgerow is a Dairy Delight

By Brian Ziegler
Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno

Dairy producer Sally Magneson is ecstatic about a new hedgerow being planted on her farm north of Cressey. She and her husband were approached by NRCS about creating wildlife habitat for birds on an old oxbow bend of the Merced River that runs

through their property.

"I've always cared about animals and the environment," she says. "So much riparian land has been lost. I'd like to see every farmer leave space for vegetation and wildlife."

Using a grant from the Community Alliance With Family Farmers, Magneson is planting perennial grasses and a variety of shrubs to create the hedgerow which will help prevent soil from silting into the water.

Merced District Conservationist Malia Ortiz says NRCS revised the Magneson's conservation plan to include the hedgerow and provide grass seed for a filter strip. She hopes birds will make a home there.



Merced District Conservationist Malia Ortiz positions a plant for use in a hedgerow.

HR Personnel Actions

Name	Position	Action	Grade	Location	Date
Jessica Sternfels	Soil Consvst	New Hire	GS-7	Petaluma	12/29/02
Robert Pearce	Dist Consvst	New Hire	GS-11	Bishop	12/29/03
Deidre Levine	Soil Consvst	New Hire	GS-7	Yuba City	1/12/03
Dean Smith	Soil Consvst	New Hire	GS-7	Somis	1/26/03
Steve Perkins	Dist Consvst	New Hire	GS-11	Blythe	2/9/03
Chris Delaney	Ag Engr	New Hire	GS-9	Petaluma	2/23/03
Tim Leininger	GIS Spclst	New Hire	GS-11	Davis	3/9/03
Brook Gale	Soil Consvst	New Hire	GS-11	Fresno	4/6/03
Jen DeLorenzi	Editorial Asst	Conv to Perm Appt	GS-5	Davis	1/12/03
Robert Vlach	Range Convst	Conv from SCEP Appt	GS-7	Oroville	2/9/03
Phyllis Wells	Mngmt Asst	Reassign from APHIS	—	Davis	1/26/03
Lorrie Bundy	Ag Engr	Reassign from Weaverville	—	Yreka	3/9/03
Alan Wasner	Soil Scntst	Chng in Duty Station	—	Ventura	3/26/03
Barbara Foster	Budget Officer	Promo to Regional Off	GS-13	Davis	1/26/03
Jason Smith	Ag Engr	Career Promo	GS-7	El Centro	1/26/03
Sam Vang	Soil Consvst	Career Promo	GS-9	Fresno	2/9/03
Todd Golder	Range Consvst	Career Promo	GS-9	Redding	2/23/03
David Heilig	ASTC	Promo from Montana	GS-13	Riverside	2/23/03
Craig Muehlberg	Budget Analyst	Promo to BOR	GS-12	Davis-FNM	2/23/03
Marsha Gery	Dir, Public Affs	Promo from Outreach	GS-13	Davis	2/23/03
Mark Parson	Soil Consvst	Promotion	GS-13	Davis	3/9/03
Tiffany Hayes	Soil Consvst	Career Promo	GS-9	Weaverville	3/9/03
J. Figueroa-Golder	Range Consvst	Career Promo	GS-9	Red Bluff	3/26/03
Michael Ginsted	Ag Engr	Career Promo	GS-11	Stockton	3/26/03
Joe Williams	Dist Consvst	Promotion	GS-12	Visalia	4/6/03