

California

JUNE 2003

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

No-till Planting in Klamath Basin

InsideOUTREACH

Mentoring in Area 3!

A Celebration in Butte County

A Message From Chuck

Awards & Volunteers!



A Message From Chuck



Watershed-based Natural Resource Assessment, Planning, and Practice Application is the Answer

Some of you who have worked with our agency for quite a few years will have noticed a significant shift with regards to public awareness and policies relating to natural resource conservation. As our agency mission began in the mid-1930s we directed most of our efforts towards soil erosion from wind and water. At that time, most of rural America was in farming and ranching and, indeed, much of the U.S. population was involved in agriculture in one way or another. Most of our Conservation Districts reflected this rural, agricultural conservation arena. The

vast majority of interest and influence relating to the shaping of farm and ranch land legislation and policy came from the rural sector.

We have noticed a significant shift in interest over the last couple of decades as voters in urban and more populated areas of the country have begun to weigh in on issues such as water quality, water quantity, air quality, endangered species, invasive species and so-on. These voters have come to significantly influence natural resource policies and programs directed toward rural areas and our traditional customers. You can be sure that many environmental organizations have strongly influenced Farm Bill legislation, for example.

During this evolution in conservation, the Soil Conservation Service and our key partners in Resource Conservation Districts and Resource Conservation and Development Councils have recognized the need to build bridges and open communications between agriculture and those concerned citizens who live in urban areas. We do this because we recognize the critical importance of agriculture in our state and our nation and we know what many people who are not directly involved with agriculture do not know. We know that the majority of farmers and ranchers are, in fact, good stewards of the land and that it is in the best interest of all of us to support them.

We also recognize that there are many other conservation issues that need to be addressed outside of the agricultural land-use sector as well. Many of our Resource Conservation Districts in California are working to address issues such as fuel management and air quality in suburban and urban areas as well. These are also private lands conservation issues.

— “A Message From Chuck” continued on page 4 —

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On the Cover

From the archives: On May 26, 1953, the Soil Conservation Service's Robert B. Branstead photographed Boy Scouts near Acton, Calif., volunteering their time in the field planting grasses to reduce soil erosion. Today, their legacy of environmental concern and selfless giving is embodied in the activities of contemporary volunteers, such as members of NRCS's Earth Team.

Original photography: Robert B. Branstead (1953); Collage: Jim Cairns (2003)

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NO-TILL PLANTING BECOMING POPULAR

— IN THE —

KLAMATH BASIN

By Dave Sanden
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Red Bluff
Photos: Dave Sanden

The no-till drill, purchased by the Klamath Soil and Water Conservation District last year, is getting a real workout this spring. Many growers in the upper Klamath Basin are taking advantage of the low rental rates offered by the district to test the concept of zero to minimum tillage on their farms.

“Success rates with the drill have been very encouraging,” says District Manager Rick Woodley. Fields planted last spring and fall produced well. Inter-seeding to fill in weak or open areas of existing crops was also very successful.

No-till and reduce-till (commonly referred to as conservation tillage) have become important soil-crop management systems on dryland farms in the Great Plains. These systems protect soil from erosion, increase soil-organic matter, improve water-storage efficiency, increase biological yield, provide fuel and tractor-life savings of 25 to 50 percent, and increase the number of crop options for dryland rotations. Using no-till in the Klamath Basin has good water-saving potential, a high priority for the farmers.



Sid Staunton of Staunton Farms near Tulelake, Calif., operating the no-till drill on some of his acreage in April.

Several workshops on using the no-till drill have been held around the Basin. The cost of leasing the drill is low and is offset by the potential savings in field preparation and increased yields. The district charges \$8.50 per acre to lease the drill. Growers must supply their own tractor. Every producer pays the same regardless of transport distance. The district wanted each farmer to have equal access at equal cost.

“People that use the drill — they’re your best sellers,” said Woodley. “Last year, growers who used the drill saved one irrigation, and that’s significant.” Last year the no-till drill was used on about 1,240 acres in the Basin. Woodley anticipates that 2,000 acres or more will be planted with the drill this year. Some growers are even considering buying their own no-till drill.

This year, conservation programs are again being tested using the no-till drill. “So far, the results of the field trials are very good,” said Woodley. Several new field trials were conducted this spring and growers will have results available sometime this fall.

The no-till drill is available for use in both Oregon and California. For more information, call (541) 883-6932.



Because of their successful experience, farmers who used the no-till drill last year are using it again this year. Most had a better crop and yield.

NRCS is America's premier private lands conservation agency. Of that there is no doubt. Our challenge is to get conservation on private lands. We have the infrastructure and relationships that can enable us to accomplish this. We need to do everything that we can to help build this bridge of connectivity between all land use sectors because we know that this is the only way we can effectively treat natural resource conservation issues that transcend these typical boundaries.

It is my personal belief that watershed-based natural

resource assessment, planning, and practice application is the answer. I believe this because I know that we need to bring the land-use sectors together within some common, readily describable treatment unit. Watersheds boundaries, in their purest interpretation, are physiographic boundaries. They are not based on political or theoretical delineations. Clearly understanding the location or “place” is imperative if we ever hope to bring together different sectors. I don't believe this is the only way to accomplish this objective, but I believe that it is the best and most acceptable method.

I very much appreciate

NRCS and Resource Conservation District efforts to look at this approach when considering delivery of our program tools, such as those relating to the Farm Bill. This is a different approach for those who are used to applying these “tools” and assessments on a county basis. Conservation is not “county-based.” The issues we deal with know nothing of such boundaries. They will not be resolved on a county basis.

Many of you have heard me express this. I did so as District Conservationist in Colusa County in the late 1970s, as State Resource Conservationist in the mid-1990s in California, and I haven't changed in my thinking. I am equally

convinced that NRCS is the Federal agency that can implement this approach effectively. I believe that the land-use sectors will be very interested in our progress.

Thanks for keeping our standards high as California's premier Federal, private lands conservation agency.

Chuck Bell
State Conservationist

ALBA's First Family Farm Day

By Cheryl Lambert
Project Coordinator/Salinas

The Agricultural Land-based Training Association (ALBA) held its first Family Farm Day on June 1. The event attracted more than 50 men, women and children from Latino-owned and operated organic farms around Salinas to ALBA's Rural Development Center for a fiesta-style chicken BBQ, farm tour, and exhibition. A disk jockey played mariachi and rock 'n' roll music, while event-goers learned about a bio-diesel powered tractor and pickup truck, and straw bale construction in the new classroom building, or took a tour of the farm. Organically grown vegetables and strawberries were available for sale by ALBA's Community Supported Agriculture producers.

Many area organizations, including the Natural Resources Conservation Service Salinas Field Office, participated by hosting tables displaying a great variety of information. The NRCS booth demonstrated how to use worms for composting and the EnviroScape watershed model. Other participants included the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County, Elkhorn Slough Reserve, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Water Quality Program, the “5 A Day” Vegetable and Fruit Council, Monterey County Migrant Education,



Images from ALBA's Family Farm Day.

and the University of California Santa Cruz Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems Life Lab Program.

The Rural Development Center (RDC) provides educational programs for new farmers in the Salinas area. The classes are given in Spanish, which is the native language of most of the student farmers. Most of the students are usually former fieldworkers from the Salinas Valley who are learning about sustainable farming practices on the 92-acre farm. The farmers who complete the six-week program can rent one to five acres of prime agricultural land at a reduced rental rate at the RDC, and produce their own organic produce to market with the help of the ALBA staff. In the end, the new farmers, the community economy, and the environment benefit by promoting appropriate agricultural and conservation practices. What a partnership!

For more information, please contact Cheryl Lambert at the NRCS Salinas Service Center at (831) 424-1036, ext. 119, or e-mail cheryl.lambert@ca.usda.gov.

Success Tastes Sweet...



During the ceremony, awards were bestowed to those who were instrumental in getting the district to happen. Among the recipients was NRCS's Lin Brooks (above), who worked for many years to get a district going in Butte County.



Representing NRCS, State Conservationist Chuck Bell (above) spoke about local leadership and empowerment that a district brings to producers and the technical assistance and expertise NRCS can provide.

A Celebration in Butte County

at Honey Run Covered Bridge

By Dave Sanden

Area Public Affairs Specialist/Red Bluff

Photos: Dave Sanden

On an already baking-hot Wednesday morning at the end of May, a diverse group of Butte County citizens gathered under the cooling shade of majestic oaks surrounding Honey Run Covered Bridge to celebrate two events that many thought they would never see: The formation of a conservation district in Butte County and the signing of an MOU formalizing the relationship between the district and NRCS.

The district was formed after passage of a countywide ballot measure last year. The measure passed by a very slim margin — only 156 votes. Misconceptions about the intent of a conservation district, including fears that cities might gain control of its funding and authority, thwarted its formation in the past. Two previous attempts to form a district in the county failed to win support from farmers and large land interests and never came before voters.

“The same reason we weren’t able to form a district for years is the same reason we finally did,” said Butte County Supervisor Jane Dolan. “We are a diverse county. The people want to know. They want information. And they want to have input.”

Sharing in the celebration were representatives from NRCS, California Association of Resource Conservation Districts, California Department of Conservation (DOC), Butte County, and the Butte County Farm Bureau. Among the speakers were NRCS State Conservationist Chuck Bell, DOC Assistant Director Eric Vink, Tom Wehri of CARCD, Butte County Farm Bureau President Tod Kimmelshue, and Ed Chombeau of Butte County RCD.

Hue Dang, District Conservationist at the new Local Partnership Office in Oroville, was there as well. She helped setup the ceremony and has worked as hard as anyone to get the district up and running.

The benefit of cooperation among the various interests was a recurring theme during the presentations. “We must all work together towards common goals to save rural California,” said Kimmelshue, who offered the farmers’ perspective on the MOU.

The picturesque bridge, built in 1894 at the confluence of Big Butte and Little Butte Creeks and one of only 12 covered bridges remaining in California, served as the ideal backdrop to the joyful event. Black cliffs formed by ancient Cascade Range lava flows towering above the bridge only added to the grandeur.

“The RCD is in a position to build bridges between rural Butte County and urban Butte County,” said Bell emphasizing the symbolic setting.

Newspaper reporters were on hand, and a television crew captured the occasion for posterity — and local news broadcasts. That evening, the story aired on Chico’s channels 12 and 24, including after-event comments from Bell and Chombeau.

It was a fine beginning.

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Farewell Jeff, We Hardly Knew Ye

By Dave Sanden
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Red Bluff
Photo: Dave Sanden

Jeff Goebel served as District Conservationist in Willows from February 10, 2002 to May 4, 2003. He left Willows to serve as NRCS Basin Team Leader in The Dalles Region in Oregon, a position similar to that of Assistant for Field Operations or Area Conservationist in California.

A lot of us had the pleasure of working with Jeff while he was here, but many may not know that Jeff is a very effective teacher and something of an expert on consensus building, conflict management, and regional planning.

In Glenn County, Jeff used and promoted what he calls a new way of thinking. Its called "holistic management," a decision-making process developed by Allan Savory in New Mexico to improve over-grazed rangelands. While the

roots of holistic management are in grazing, Jeff insists it's more than "a cow thing." It's a decision-making process with lofty goals for natural resources, families and communities. To holistic management practitioners, decisions must be socially, economically and ecologically sound.

One of Jeff's priorities has been finding ways to retain more of the water that falls as rain and snow. He believes that projects should be essentially grounded in helping people to respectfully learn from each other so they can effectively enhance their ecological conditions. Jeff says that the knowledge exists in the few who are already doing these changes. The problem is one of behavioral change. "My part of this work is to change human behavior and belief so

Technology Transfer Field Day



Jeff Hansen (far left) briefs NRCS, BLM, and Co-op Extension Service employees about the soil and range inventory conducted in western Fresno County from the early 1980s to the present. His remarks came at a recent technology transfer field day. Hansen was among current and retired NRCS employees who had an active role in the research.

In Focus



Cal Poly Holds Ag Career Fair

On April 24th, Liaison Mon Yee and Area 2 Public Affairs Specialist Jolene Lau (above, right) encouraged students from the Agriculture Department to learn more about the careers within NRCS. More than 100 Cal Poly Pomona students learned who we are, what we do, and the jobs available. Recruitment at the time was for civil and ag engineers in Escondido and Somis; resumes were collected and applicants were encouraged to apply before the deadline.

it is consistent with the desired outcomes," he says.

Jeff has more than 23 years experience in human development and uses the consensus building skills he and others have developed to enhance the work of delivering quality service, planning for growth and change, managing people and programs, grant writing, resource management of land, wildlife and recreation, agriculture, water quality and environmental education instruction. He was the Project Coordinator for Washington State University's Holistic Management Project and the Director of the Pacific Northwest Sustainable Community Consensus Institute at WSU funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. He has consulted with businesses, universities, government agencies, Native American Tribes, environmental organizations, and private groups internationally and throughout the United States. He also directed regional centers for Holistic Management in Texas and Oklahoma.

On several occasions, Jeff traveled to Africa to conduct training workshops in holistic

management and provide conflict management skills to Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resources Management-West Africa (SANREM-WA) participants in a troubled part of Mali. The region is facing a serious food crisis as a result of long-term drought, bad grazing practices, deforestation, and an ongoing process of desertification. Jeff helped the various interests to put aside their differences and work together to develop a process for regeneration and sustainable management.

Ironically, Jeff learned just how successful his work had been when he received a call from someone at NASA who wanted to know what he'd been doing in Mali. Satellite photos of the region showed that the area where Jeff had conducted the training had gotten inexplicably greener since he had been there.

A lot of fascinating and useful information on holistic management and conflict resolution is available on Jeff's Web site (www.aboutlistenin.com), including workshop materials, trip reports, success stories, and even his thesis on Holistic Decision Making in Regional Planning Programs.

Mentoring In Area 3

Mentor-Mentee Program Success Attributed to “Leadership and Vision”

By Brian Ziegler
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno

Employee recruitment, retention, and career development are the goals of a mentor-mentee program now underway in NRCS Area 3.

Coordinated by Curtis Tarver, Malia Ortiz, Jenny Gabor, and Lori Perez, the program matches new NRCS employees with agency veterans who have agreed to provide them with career guidance.

“The program in Area 3 is a result of the leadership and vision of our Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, Curtis Tarver,” says Ortiz. “Without his support and dedication, the program could not have been conceptualized and

delivered as well as it has been so far.”

Program coordinators strived to match employees by job descriptions. For example, a soil conservationist would be paired with a district conservationist. “Then if a new employee wants to know more about how to advance in their career position, that person could ask their mentor for assistance,” Gabor says.

Terms of the program include a minimum one-year commitment by mentors and mentees, and longer if both parties wish to continue their relationship.

Over 40 people were in attendance when the program was rolled out in January during a gathering on the campus of California State University, Fresno.



Area 3 employees (above) proudly display t-shirts identifying them as participants in the mentor-mentee program. Photo: Brian Ziegler.



Elk Grove Civil Engineer Jennifer Faler (top) and Merced District Conservationist Malia Ortiz (bottom). Photos: Brian Ziegler.

Mentor Program: “A Great Way to Fill That Void”

By Brian Ziegler
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno

When she was hired, Jennifer Faler, a wetland team civil engineer in Elk Grove, knew very little about NRCS. She was curious about what career paths and training opportunities were available to her within the agency.

She met with Merced District Conservationist Malia Ortiz, the person she was paired with as part of Area 3’s mentor-mentee program, and got the answers she needed.

“I asked Malia how she likes being a district conservationist and what steps she took to become one. She’s been very helpful with my training plan,” Faler says. “People want to know who they’re working for and

how they fit into the organization. The mentor program is a great way to fill that void.”

For Ortiz, the program offers a chance to give something back to the agency. “I know how daunting it can be when you first start out,” she says. “I had some really wonderful people who were mentors to me and they helped me with my career.”

Ortiz says her goal is to provide help, advice, and guidance to as many new employees as possible. She recommends the program to other NRCS areas in California. “The feeling I got when we were paired with our mentees was a great sense of family and camaraderie. It makes for better working conditions and a better workplace.”



Arroues Receives NCSS Soil Scientist Achievement Award

By Dave Smith
State Soil Scientist/Davis
and Edd Russell, John Rule and Jim Regal

A big congratulations goes to Kerry Arroues, Supervisory Soil Scientist in Hanford, Calif., recipient of the prestigious National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS) Soil Scientist Achievement Award for 2003! Kerry was selected from a list of nominees from around the country for this award, which recognizes exceptional achievement working in production soil survey under the auspices of the NCSS Program.

The award, which is in the form of a

plaque, is granted to one person nationwide each year, and will be presented at the Awards Luncheon of the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) meeting held in Denver, Colo., in November.

Kerry has worked on soil surveys in the San Joaquin Valley region for more than 27 years, from Merced County south through Kern County. He has been an innovative leader in recognizing and describing extreme



Kerry Arroues (above) sampling in the field.

human caused (anthropogenic) alterations of soil due to such activities as deep ripping, heavy fertilizer use, and addition of massive amounts of irrigation water. He has taken more than 1,000 soil samples for NSSL analysis during his career to add to the scientific basis of soil survey reports.

Annual Conservation Day in North Fork



School kids dig learning at the annual Conservation Day in North Fork, Calif. Fresno NRCS field office staffers joined the U.S. Forest Service and other agencies to present workshops on such things as land formation and soil description.

Photo: Brian Ziegler.

EQIP Meeting Gets the Word Out

By Kate Simpson
Area Administrative Manager/Riverside

The theme was cooperation as the Farm Services Agency (FSA) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) met in Palmdale May 30th and 31st to combine their expertise on the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The first day each agency held their own session, and the second day, they met together to bring their input to each other.

NRCS will be the lead on the EQIP program, with the help of FSA in administering it. Each agency has certain

roles to play, and those different responsibilities were explained. It will require diligent communication between the agencies to ensure delivery of a quality program to the landowners they serve.

Helen Flach, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist, gave an overview of the EQIP Program and the changes in the new Farm Bill, and presented the funding information and timelines. It was emphasized that any contract for more than \$100,000 must be authorized by the Regional Conservationist, with justification for that

contract amount. There is a new funding category for Ground and Service Water conservation, too.

Mark Parson, Resource Conservationist from Davis, presented some "EQIP Myths" which helped explain the nuts and bolts of the EQIP program. He urged NRCS to include FSA in their local work groups. It was stressed that FSA needs to receive new applications within 5 working days, so they can start to determine producer eligibility and additional administrative tasks.

Larry Plumb of FSA in Davis, explained the FSA/NRCS program agreement and talked about the administration of the contracts, including payments and producer notification and appeals. He presented a slide show detailing the roles and responsibilities of each agency. FSA conducts appeals, so if a practice is not to be accepted the NRCS District Conservationist will generate a letter explaining this, and the appeal goes to the FSA County Committee.

Cheryl Butler of the Washington, D.C. Farm Services Agency attended, and helped explain and clarify some of the questions of the field offices. Chuck Bell,

NRCS State Conservationist, provided some comments, saying that we have common customers, and we need to focus on them and improve delivery.

John Smythe, of the FSA State Office in Davis said the three EQIP meetings held in California have been productive, and that our business is still conservation delivery. We are in a transition period, but John reminded the group to keep in mind that EQIP is intended for the benefit of the farmers and ranchers in California, and our customers want a simple program that is easy to participate in.

Brian Hallet and Ray Miller from NRCS, Davis, explained the liability of Accountable Officers and some of the financial principles and procedures to be followed.

A panel of FSA and NRCS people held a question-and-answer session to help solve some the problems that had been encountered by the field. Several concerns were addressed, and there will be more details on the other issues being given to the field. The bottom line is that with good cooperation and attention to our customers, we can deliver a good program.

State Office Recognizes Their Volunteers During National Volunteers Week

By Rachel Lopez
State Earth Team Coordinator/Davis
and Marina Barajas
Earth Team Coordinator/Davis

On April 30, 2003, the state office recognized their volunteers during an awards ceremony attended by approximately 30 NRCS employees in Davis. State Conservationist Chuck Bell and Resource Technology Staff Director Diane Holcomb presented the awards with assistance from Marina Barajas, State Office Volunteer Coordinator, during National Volunteers Week, April 28 through May 2.

Ron Schultze and Walt Bunter, former NRCS employees, were recognized for their continued dedication and commitment to the Earth Team Program.

Since Ron's retirement on January 3, 2002, he has volunteered approximately 450 hours. Some of his ongoing volunteer projects have included filling in for the vacant State Biologist position he once occupied, assisting with the McCoy Wash EWP Project, and revising biology conservation practice standards.



Walt Bunter (left) and Ron Schultze were recognized for their continued dedication to the Earth Team Program. *Photo: Jim Cairns.*

Walt Bunter has volunteered approximately 175 hours since retiring on December 31, 1999. His volunteer projects include distributing crop management reports to our field offices, providing support to the SWCS – RUNOFF newsletter, serving as treasurer for the California Chapter of SWCS, and maintaining our recycling program.

These are just a few examples of Ron and Walt's continued contributions to our agency. I could literally go on and on about their wonderful and generous gifts of time and support!

We thank Ron, Walt and all of our California Earth Team Volunteers for their contributions to the program.



Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations Curtis Tarver (left) presents Mailha Lee of the Agape Refuge Ministry & Services in Fresno a certificate of appreciation for her work assisting NRCS in educating Hmong immigrants about resource conservation.

Photo: Brian Ziegler.

Upcoming in the August Issue

Look for stories in the next *InsideOUTREACH* section on today's youth getting involved in conservation. Both the Environmental Youth Camp in Taylorsville and Elkus Youth Range Camp in Half Moon Bay will be hosting a fun-filled, educational experience during the week of June 15-20.

Meet Salinas's New District Conservationist!



"A perfect fit for this important NRCS position"

*By Jolene Lau
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno
and Jim Cairns
Public Affairs Specialist/Davis*

Pedro Ramos, Jr. is the new NRCS District Conservationist at the USDA Service Center on LaGuardia Street in Salinas. Ramos, a native of Bakersfield, will supervise seven employees and oversee the planning and implementation of conservation practices with

Monterey County's private landowners. He comes with experience in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, irrigation, farmland protection, sediment and erosion control work, and urban/rural interface issues.

"Pedro is a perfect fit for this important NRCS position and should strengthen our established delivery of technical and financial assistance to customers," says Carter Christenson, Assistant State Conservationist.

Before coming to Salinas, Ramos was the District Conservationist in positions in Renton, Washington and Onawa, Iowa, and a Soil Conservationist in Bakersfield.

Ramos, whom is fluent in Spanish, has been an active member of the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees since 1997, and is currently serving as the group's president. He has also participated in the West Regional Leadership Development Program,

and served as California's acting Assistant State Conservationist in Programs for Helen Flach during her absences in 2002.

Ramos first became aware of NRCS as a high school student in the Future Farmers of America program, when Paul Benedict recruited him to join NRCS in the co-op program for the soil survey office in Kern County. He continued his studies in plant science and graduated with a Bachelors degree emphasizing soils and irrigation from Fresno State University in 1996. Upon graduation, Pedro came onboard full-time for Jack Wright as a soil conservationist in Bakersfield. Ramos felt fortunate to begin his NRCS career in his hometown. His parents, originally from Mexico, had raised Pedro and his eight sisters and three brothers where the family has lived for 40 years.

But now Ramos is very excited about his new position as District Conservationist in Salinas and settling in as a Monterey County resident. As an avid outdoorsman, he plans to pursue the area's recreational opportunities for mountain biking, camping and kayaking in his spare time.

Alan Forkey Receives Wildlife Biologist Award

Award recognizes outstanding achievements in wetlands management

*By Karen Fullen
Wetland Team Biologist/Elk Grove*

National Awards for Outstanding NRCS and Partner Biologists and Ecologists were presented at the NRCS Biologists Conference and Training Session in San Antonio, Texas on April 17, 2003. Receiving an Outstanding Wildlife Biologist Award was Alan Forkey, State Wetlands Biologist. State Conservationist Chuck Bell submitted Forkey's nomination with input from State Resource Conservationist Diane Holcomb, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs Helen Flach, and Karen Fullen.

Sixteen criteria were used to evaluate award nominations. Achievement in any one of the 16 categories was sufficient to justify an award. Forkey's nomination noted accomplishments in no less than eight of these areas, including Habitat Restoration, Interagency Cooperation and Coordination, Mentoring, Partnership Development and Maintenance, Policy Development, Professional and Individual Leadership, Program Management and Training and Guidance Delivery.

Forkey was unaware he had even been nominated until the Awards Reception when National Biologist Mike Anderson called his name. Under Forkey's leadership, the Wetlands Reserve Program in California has grown by 58,000 acres in six years. Past California recipients of the award include Larry Norris, Area Biologist, for his contribution to wetlands restoration in the Tulare Basin.



Alan Forkey proudly displays his award. Photo: Jim Cairns.

Caligrams

Statewide News in Brief

2003 Civil Rights Awards Recipients

By Carolyn LoFreso
Soil Conservationist/Lancaster

Sam Vang, Soil Conservationist in the Fresno Field Office, was selected as the award recipient of the 2003 California Civil Rights Individual Award, as well as the 2003 National Civil Rights Award.

The 2003 California Civil Rights Team Award was given to the Hoopa Valley Technical Outreach Team in Area 1, consisting of James Spear, Reina Rogers, Gerry Hubatka, Tom Benson and Sue Aszman. Kenneth Grimes, Soil Conservationist in Fresno, received Honorable Mention for his excellent work with Civil Rights Activities. Read about their noteworthy accomplishments in the August issue of *California Current Developments*.

Mother Lode Counties Find Gold in Resource Agency

By Brian Ziegler
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno

The Central Sierra Resource Conservation & Development (Central Sierra RC&D) program in Jackson, California has been reorganized to better carry out its mission of providing economic and natural resource conservation aid to the approximately 135,000 people who live in four of California's most mountainous counties.

The agency has attained non-profit status allowing it to obtain grants that will assist communities in Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, and Tuolumne counties carry out activities that support economic development, enhance their standard of living, and increase conservation of natural resources.

The reorganization came about to gain more pro-active participation from its all-volunteer governing council. Coordinator Dick McCleery says the group is now exploring what projects should be included in its area strategic plan.

Wildfire and flood hazard reduction, historic tourism, and marketing locally grass-fed beef are some of the projects under consideration.

Land Down Under

By Brian Ziegler
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno

It began with glaciers more than 200,000 years ago and ended in 1946 when Baldasare Forestiere died. But the creation of the Forestiere Underground Gardens in Fresno continues to intrigue people to this day.

The Underground Gardens, a labyrinth of subterranean rooms, courtyards, patios, and passageways were carved out of ten acres of San Joaquin Valley soil, the same material proclaimed by the state legislature in 1997 to be the official state soil of California.

San Joaquin soil is widely valued for the irrigated crops and pasture land it supports. But a few feet beneath its surface a cemented hardpan restricts roots and water percolation. This rock-like



From left, Kerry Arroues, NRCS, Andre Forestiere, Kim Chang, Earth Team Volunteer and Tom Caudill, NRCS.

layer is what Forestiere spent a lifetime digging to make himself a home.

Today, thousands of school children and tourists visit this underground marvel. To help them learn about San Joaquin soil, NRCS — in conjunction with the Professional Soil Scientists Association of California, Fresno State, and Cal Poly — presented the attraction with a display of the state soil extracted from the property. Manager Andre Forestiere says he'll use it to educate people about the soil conditions his ancestor faced as he dug his home.

HR Personnel Actions

| Name | Position | Action | Grade | Location | Date |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------|-------------|---------|
| Brook Gale | Soil Consvst | New Hire | GS-11 | Fresno | 4/20/03 |
| Steven Smith | Dist Consvst | New Hire | GS-11 | Colusa | 5/18/03 |
| Craig Ficenec | Ag Engr | New Hire | GS-11 | HMoonBay | 6/15/03 |
| Kirsten Jean | Ag Engineer | New Hire | GS-7 | Stockton | 6/15/03 |
| Pedro Ramos | Dist Consvst | Transfer from WA | GS-12 | Salinas | 5/18/03 |
| David Rose | Dist Consvst | Transfer from MN | GS-12 | Willows | 7/27/03 |
| Joe Takai | Soil Consvst | Career Promo | GS-9 | Concord | 4/6/03 |
| Theresa Bates | Soil Consvst | Career Promo | GS-9 | Tulelake | 5/18/03 |
| Jackie Schick | Ecologist | Career Promo | GS-11 | Livermore | 6/29/03 |
| Diana Yarborough | OA Asst | Career Prom | GS-5 | Yreka | 7/13/03 |
| Samara Iodice | Civil Engr | Conv to Perm Appt | GS-11 | Somis | 6/29/03 |
| Ayn Perry | Soil Consvst | Reassign from SCT | GS-7 | Yrkea | 6/15/03 |
| Jason Smith | Ag Engr | Reassign from El Centro | GS-7 | Escondido | 6/29/03 |
| Jeff Goebel | Dist Consvst | Transfer to OR | GS-12 | Willows | 5/3/03 |
| Patrick Evans | Soil Consvst | Promor to ID | GS-11 | Placerville | 7/27/03 |
| Patty Novak | Rangelnd Mgt Spc | Transfer to IL | GS-12 | Lancaster | 8/10/03 |
| An Peichel | Rangelnd Mgt Spc | Resign | GS-11 | Willows | 5/2/03 |
| Paul Olson | Ag Engr | Resign | GS-11 | Auburn | 5/30/03 |
| Jeff Ennor | Soil Scientist | Resign | GS-7 | Arcata | 5/31/03 |
| Mariah Garr | Biologist | Resign | GS-9 | Escondio | 6/4/03 |
| Gerard Samulski | CET | Retirement | GS-9 | Somis | 4/30/03 |