

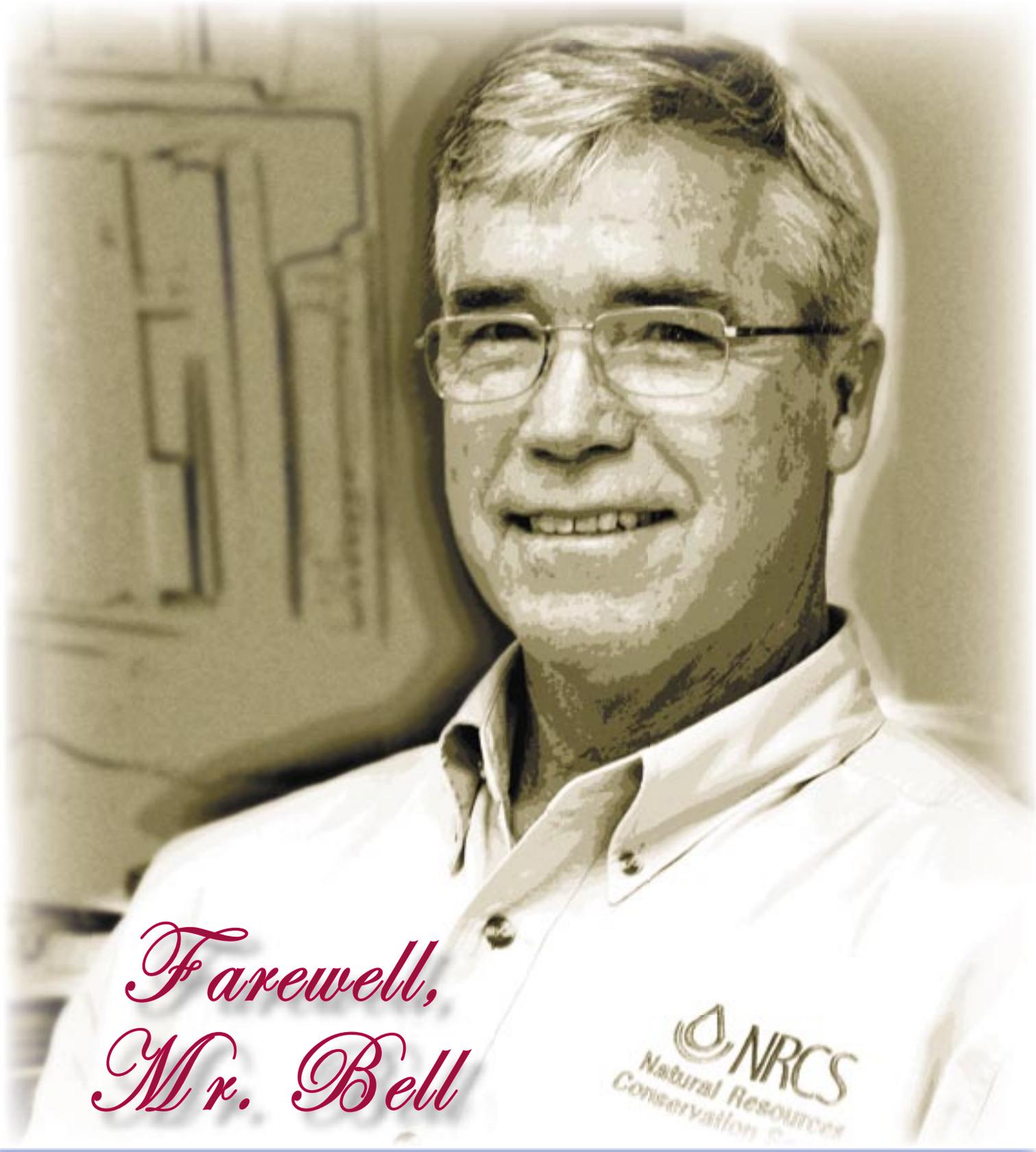
"A Partner in Conservation Since 1935"



California

APRIL/
MAY 2005

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS



*Farewell,
Mr. Bell*



Welcome to California, Ed Burton!



"The bottom line is," says Acting State Conservationist Ed Burton, "I want this transition period to be value-added for NRCS, our partners and our customers. I am going to be proactively engaged in that effort." Photo: Jim Cairns

By Jim Cairns
Public Affairs Specialist/Davis

"How's this," he grinned, perching his tall, generous frame on the corner of the credenza, topping it with his trademark white cowboy hat. The suit, tie and hat may have been incongruous in some fashion circles, but the image was striking nonetheless.

"Perfect," I said, adjusting the camera and my position. After taking a few more shots, I wrapped-up my first one-on-one meeting with Lincoln "Ed" Burton, NRCS California's new Acting State Conservationist. I came away with some of the same impressions that I'd heard from those that have known him for years: He's a straight-shooter; a what-you-see-is-what-you-get kind of guy; a dedicated career NRCSer that loves conservation and his job.

"It's a real honor for me to be asked to come to California to be the Acting State Conservationist," says Burton. "I am very excited about it. I'm already in the middle of everything but, obviously, I don't know everything about California yet. I'm eager to help you folks carry on your mission in this great state."

Since 1995, Burton has been the State Conservationist in Wyoming. Western born and raised, his early years were spent in southeastern Idaho before joining the Soil Conservation Service as a student trainee at age 18. After completing a B.S. degree in Range Management and a

Master's in Range Ecology at the University of Idaho, he gained experience in a variety of agency positions in Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

"I believe very much in empathy and trying to stand in the shoes of those you work with. I've held several positions with the agency and I think that's what makes it possible when I'm out in the field to interact with staff and partners," Burton says. "I've been there and have an idea of what they're going through." Ed has served as District Conservationist, Range Conservationist, Area Conservationist, and Assistant State Conservationist, among others.

"You have a huge state, a huge budget, and a huge conservation workload that can't afford any downtime," says Burton. "So, basically, I'm hitting the ground running. I'm here to serve California and not create my own agenda. That's my job. And happy to do so," he adds with a quick smile.

Ed and wife Diane have six grown children, including a daughter living in Southern California.

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On the Cover

Chuck Bell (2004): Former State Conservationist Chuck Bell retired on February 3, 2005. With a wonderful family—including two young sons—and lots of personal interests to hold his attention, the NRCS extended family congratulates Chuck on 30-plus years of dedicated service to the agency. We wish him the very best! See articles on pages 3, 6 and 7.

Photo & Design: Jim Cairns

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Greetings From Paradise!



SWCS award: Chuck Bell, upon receiving a Distinguished Service Award from the California Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society at his retirement recognition event held at the Davis State Office February 3. *Photo: Jim Cairns*

By Chuck Bell
Paradise, California

This business of retirement is really habit-forming. Not quite as hectic as the State Conservationist position. Not quite as challenging yet, though I must admit I don't miss the sleep deficit that I might have been experiencing late in the week. I do miss the folks I've worked with though, the folks at *America's Conservation Agency*.

We were certainly fortunate to be able to meet with **Ed Burton** for a California briefing during my last week. Ed, as you know, is State



Signage is everything: Chuck Bell holds up a safety vest presented by State Engineer Charles Davis (left) as a remembrance to Bell's philosophy of agency visibility. *Photo: Jim Cairns*

Conservationist in Wyoming, a position he's held since 1995. He will be Acting State Conservationist in California beginning February 14th and continuing until the "permanent" State Conservationist position is filled. We are very fortunate to have someone of Ed's caliber in California. He has had a long career with SCS and NRCS and has held many positions at the field, area, and state office levels—both technical and management. I can't think of anyone better suited to the task in California. Who knows, maybe Ed can be talked into applying for the permanent position. Thanks for giving him all your support.

Recently, I've been giving a lot of thought to the subject of "change," as you might imagine. Speaking of change, it looks like next year's budget could bring some significant changes to the agency again. I suspect that the strength of our Conservation Technical Assistance budget (part of CO-01) will reflect our success in demonstrating that we are a natural resource conservation agency rather than a farm agency only. By now, through our successes with the wildfire rehabilitation, our water efficiency work in suburban metropolitan areas, our watershed-based, multiple resource work in the Klamath Basin, and our permit streamlining work along the central coast, much of the public and their representatives should be familiar with our agency name and mission. They will be if we have done our homework! California, of course, is only one state, but it is a powerful state when it comes to Federal representation.

Looking back, I can truly say that change was inherent in my entire career. Many times our agency faced cut-backs, potential mergers, and office closures. Many times the people we serve intervened to ensure that the agency remained in place as one of two Federal natural resource conservation agencies under USDA. My bet is that this will continue to be the case.

Regardless of what people say, of course, not all change is good. Change can be healthy, and change is inevitable, but we need to make sure that it is based on a strong foundation built over years; retaining what is proven and discarding whims whose only objective is "change for change sake." That approach can never work in natural resource conservation. It seems better adapted to the political arena.

Federal employees have wonderful opportunities. Those of us who work in the technical assistance arena are twice-blessed. NRCS is the best example of the latter. As Federal employees, sooner or later, each of us must answer a pivotal question that will pervade every aspect of our careers: "Who do we work for?" Think about it! It's not as easy to answer as it sounds. Remember that the people we

serve may not always be the ones who "write the rules." Our mission is to get natural resource conservation on the ground for the people—the people we serve. I know who I tried to serve in my career and am very proud to have served in that capacity. I know you are doing the same and I know you will continue to thrive in your work. At some point you too will be thinking of retirement. You too will be blessed with many wonderful memories having served the people well in *America's Conservation Agency*.

Thank you for the opportunity to have served you!



Great minds thinking alike: Chuck Bell (right) got a big laugh from the group while commenting on the fact that he and new Acting State Conservationist Ed Burton (left) wore the same ties and shirts to Bell's retirement event. *Photo: Jim Cairns*

Jones Valley Emergency Watershed Protection Update

By *Dave Sanden*

Area Public Affairs Specialist/Red Bluff

After the Bear Fire swept through Jones Valley last August, destroying more than 80 homes, the Redding office successfully led a \$264,000 effort to protect the community and implement emergency watershed protection measures funded through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP). The work included installation of 1,900 linear feet of sandbags, new culverts, trash racks, and hydro-seeding and mulching on slopes.

The work progressed in phases. In October, **Western Shasta RCD** work crews placed rows of sandbags on slopes above and around threatened homes to protect them from flooding and mud slides when winter rain soaked the barren hillsides. Standing about three feet tall, the completed barriers that snaked around the houses gave the impression of tiny castle walls. They were up just in time. Heavy downpours brought down loads of sediment from the upper slopes, but the sandbags successfully repelled the mud and debris. The homes were untouched.

In a race against winter, EWP crews continued their erosion-control work. By mid-November, culverts and trash racks were in place and 87 acres around the subdivision had been seeded and mulched. Crews placed a dry application of grass seed and mulch on slopes of less than 30 degrees and used hydro-seeding in steeper areas. According to plan, expected rains would help the seed germinate and establish ground cover to hold the soil in place.

All of the protective measures were completed before strong storms hit the area in December. On



Before and after: In August 2004 before EWP measures had begun, this Jones Valley home was in danger from flooding, large debris, and landslides. During heavy rain, runoff and debris would flow right through the house. By September (top, right), a sandbag wall was placed by a WSRCD crew. The barrier is designed to deflect water around the sides of the home and down to the roadside drainage ditch. In early October (above, left), Grass seed and mulch were sprayed onto the steep slopes using hydro-seeding techniques. In January 2005 (above, right) despite heavy winter rains, the sandbag barrier and stabilized slopes had successfully protected the home and surrounding area from disaster. *Photos: Dave Sanden*

December 6-9, a strong Pacific weather system brought heavy rain—nearly nine inches—and wind gusts of up to 56 mph. More than four inches of rain fell in the first 24 hours, providing a severe test of the project work. Other heavy storms occurred later in the month and into January, but the EWP measures worked as designed.

Now, more than six months after the fire, Jones Valley residents are still clearing away fire debris and slowly rebuilding their lives. Their threatened homes survived winter's rainy onslaught without casualties. Their recently charred hillsides are lush with green grass. And soon, they should see drier weather with the coming of spring.

CARC&D Annual Conference Burns Brightly

By *Jeff Raifsnider*

Area Public Affairs Specialist/Salinas

The **California Association of RC&D Councils** (CARC&D) held its annual conference in Magalia in late October. The conference, titled "The Rural/Urban Interface: Challenges and Opportunities for Forest Communities Conference," featured speakers and panelists who focused on the status of wildfire threats in California and throughout the U.S. Participants enjoyed a bus tour of local fire projects and several highly informative and technical presentations. The first annual Glow-Ball Golf Tournament lit up the first night as golfers witnessed a full lunar eclipse.

North Cal-Neva RC&D Coordinator **Mark Steffek** received the California RC&D Coordinator's Choice Award for "hard work, enthusiasm, commitment

to excellence and tireless dedication to the RC&D Program." The CARC&D presented three service awards for "Outstanding Leadership and Service to the California Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils." The award recipients were RC&D Coordinators **Jim Vancura** (**Ore-Cal RC&D**), **Jack Wright** (**Mojave Desert-Mountain RC&D**), and **Robert Roan** (**High Sierra RC&D-retired**).

Each NRCS California Area selected one RC&D Coordinator and Council to receive an "Exemplary Partnership Building" award. Area 1 honored RC&D Coordinator **Jim Vancura** and the **Ore-Cal RC&D Council** for community beautification and projects that included the Volcanic Legacy Community Road, and a biomass utilization feasibility model.

Area 2 selected RC&D Coordinator **Jeff Rodriguez** and the **Central Coast RC&D Council** for creation of a direct marketing program that includes the **Central Coast Agri-Tourism Council**, and the San Luis Obispo Buy Fresh, Buy Local program.

Area 3's award went to RC&D Coordinator **Daniel Macon** and the **High Sierra RC&D Council** for creation of local marketing for locally produced, grass-fed beef. Area 4 honored RC&D Coordinator **Sam Cobb** and the **South Coast RC&D Council** for the protection of geoglyphs, water conservation and native plants projects.

Thanks and congratulations to RC&D Coordinator **Larry Akin** and the **Central Sacramento RC&D Council** for hosting a well organized and highly informative conference.



A 15-mile stretch of California's scenic coastline is now protected by a conservation easement on the Hearst property north of San Simeon. Photo: Jeff Raifsnider

Hearst Conservation Easement Completed

By Jeff Raifsnider
Area Public Affairs Specialist/
Salinas

On February 18, **Governor Schwarzenegger** announced that California and its conservation partners have closed escrow on the purchase of a conservation easement on the scenic Hearst Ranch north of San Simeon. After six years of controversy, negotiation and planning, the agreement between the **Hearst Corp., American Land Conservancy, California Rangeland Trust, and the State** to preserve some of California's most beautiful coastline was finally realized.

The land covers an 82,000-acre area that is eight times the size of Manhattan. It includes 18 miles of pristine scenic coastline with gorgeous beaches, mountains with breathtaking views, and species of plants found nowhere else on earth. According to the deal, 13 miles of coast will be added to the state's public shores. Hearst Corp. will retain ownership of the remaining five miles of coastal land. Most of the 82,000 acres will be protected from development. However, the corporation can build 27 private homes away from public view, and build a 100-room hotel with employee housing.

When Hearst Corp. Vice President **Stephen Hearst** addressed the 59th annual meeting and conference of the **California Association of Resource Conservation Districts** in San Luis Obispo last November, he said the view at Hearst Ranch is more attractive than from Hearst Castle, once home to publishing tycoon **William Randolph Hearst**.

"Visitors walk right by the art and the antiques room and

In Focus

State Office Staff Welcome Ed Burton



Changing of the guard: Retiring State Conservationist Chuck Bell (left) with new Acting State Conservationist Ed Burton during a staff-welcome gathering for Ed on February 1. Bell and Burton were able to spend a few days together during Chuck's last week to ensure a smooth transition of leadership. Ed assumed his new position at the State Office on February 15. Photo: Jim Cairns

look out the windows and talk about the view. This is a property that would just be a big house if it didn't sit where it sits," Hearst said. Annually, some four million tourists drive through the Hearst Ranch and one million visit the world-famous Hearst Castle.

Hearst described the family trust's asking price of \$135 million to preserve a huge portion of California's most beautiful coastal property as a "sweet deal" for the State of California. Independent appraisals of 128 square miles of land owned by the Hearst Family Trust have valued the land at \$230 million. The agreement was reached for \$95 million.

Hearst called the deal one of the largest and most comprehensive conservation easements in the country. He said it is a conservation solution that pleases most stakeholders, is a wonderful deal for the community and state, and for all who come there to enjoy the coast.

By Brian Ziegler
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno



Worry-free travel: Vehicles can safely travel across Panoche Creek thanks to a new low-flow crossing. Photo: Brian Ziegler

Bridge Over Troubled Water

For years, farmers working in west Fresno County couldn't drive on North Avenue after heavy rains. Fast moving water would wash so much sediment down Panoche Creek that culverts southwest of Mendota would become clogged and the road there would flood.

A bridge that could withstand huge volumes of water was too costly to build and maintain. So to help growers safely get across during large rain storms, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helped replace the culverts with a low-flow crossing.

"The purpose of the low-flow crossing," says Fresno Office Engineer **Jon Chilcote**, "is to pass small rain events under the road and large rain events over the road."

The structure is 80 feet wide and made of concrete. It is equipped with removable metal grates so a backhoe can easily clean out sediment from its channels.

The **Panoche-Silver Creek Coordinated Research Management Planning group** obtained a \$100,000 grant to install the crossing. NRCS provided initial survey and engineering work, and a local consulting firm came up with the final design. NRCS also assisted with planting shrubs and trees to stabilize the creek's banks on both sides of the crossing.

Farewell, Mr. Bell

*So, after 32 year with this outfit—America's Conservation Agency—
I have decided to take on some other priorities...*

—Chuck Bell



Chuck (center) with District Conservationists Terry Huff (Livermore) and Lisa Hokholt (Concord) at Bell's retirement party on February 4. The DCs were among over 50 well-wishers that attended the going-away bash in Davis. *Photo: Jim Cairns*



Chuck (right) with John Lowrie in the field at an early point in his career. Note the mustache and sideburns! *Photo courtesy of Marya Bell*

A Short Note On Chuck

A big “Thank You” from the **California Resource Conservation Districts** and the **California Association of Resource Conservation Districts**.

Chuck has always provided excellent support and promoted the local leadership partnership. Many times I've heard him say that conservation installation depends on the strong local and federal partnership in working with landowners and producers. Thanks, Chuck, for the strong leadership you provided to the RCDs and CARCD.

—Tom Wehri, CARCD

Dear Chuck,

It has been a great pleasure to work for you these past three years. Your leadership has taken California in a new direction, raised employee morale, and strengthened our partnerships. But you will be missed mostly because you cared about the people of NRCS and reminded us that we are “family”... I wish you the greatest enjoyment of your retirement years.

P.S. You should leave the motorcycle riding to the youngsters!

—Helen Flach, ASTC



Chuck (above) at the wheel in the field in his early days with the agency. *Photo courtesy of Marya Bell*



Chuck (right) getting his hands in the soil and just doing what comes naturally to a future NRCS State Conservationist. *Photo courtesy of Marya Bell*

Dear Chuck,

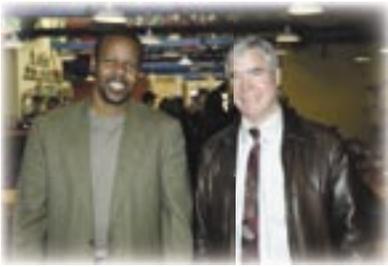
I want to thank you for the excellent partnership work you carried out on behalf of NRCS with the **California Association of Resource Conservation Districts**. Your dedication has been unparalleled...

My best memory of you is the time we got to spend together at NACD in Hawaii. Sometimes it's difficult to connect on an individual level with those we work with because we're just too busy to have a conversation. The wonderful ambiance in Hawaii and our chats during walks to meetings helped reconfirm my belief that you are a good person who is truly dedicated to our natural resources. Plus, it helps that you are a “San Diego” guy, too!...

Aloha, best wishes and here's to your continued good health!

—Nadine L. Scott, CARCD

Farewell, Mr. Bell



Chuck (right) with former Deputy State Conservationist James Tillman at James' going-away luncheon in Davis on January 6. Tillman is now the State Conservationist in Georgia. Photo: Jim Cairns



A relaxed, post-retirement Chuck Bell (left) attended former State Biologist Wendell Gilgert's (right) *bon voyage* lunch on February 10 in Davis. Gilgert transferred to Portland, Ore. Photo: Jim Cairns



Chuck proudly holds a Proclamation signed and presented by Secretary A.G. Kawamura, California Department of Food and Agriculture, on February 4. The citation reads in part, "...Mr. Chuck Bell has made a long-lasting contribution through the use of new and innovative practices and technology to the field of resource conservation in four Western states—Oregon, Hawaii, Alaska and California... [His] service to the people of this great state through his visionary leadership in the areas of private lands conservation through watershed management..." Photo: Jim Cairns

Dear Chuck,

Congratulations on your retirement!

Chuck, you can be proud of the tremendous contributions you have made, not only to the conservation of our nation's natural resources, but also to the success of all of us who have worked with you...

We will miss your strong leadership, good council and help. We all wish you the best.

—Bob Graham, Oregon State Conservationist

Dear Chuck,

The **Resource Conservation Districts of California** thank you for thirty years of dedicated service to improving the natural resources of this great nation. The Districts appreciate your commitment to working in partnership with local districts and individual landowners as you implemented the mission of NRCS... Thank you again for your many years of service and dedication to the natural resources that we all live in.

—Brian Leahy, Executive Director, CARCD

Dear Chuck,

On behalf of all NRCS employees in Southern California, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your retirement. You have been an influential leader for the advancement of conservation in California and across the nation... I personally want to thank you for your mentorship and assistance while working with you over the past two years. It has been a real pleasure and honor... Again, thank you for your many years of service. You are an inspiration to us all.

—Dave Heilig, ASTC-FO, Riverside



While in the field preparing to shoot the introduction for the *Conservation Partnerships at Work 2004* video, Chuck (right) relaxes with a coffee, the script, and the crew from Cinnabar Video. The video highlighted projects in all four Areas in the state, and premiered at the annual CARCD Conference in San Luis Obispo last November. Photo: Jim Cairns



Chuck Bell (far left) attending a Watershed Recovery Tour in Area 4 in 2004 with NRCSers (left to right) Bill Ward, Rick Aguayo, Jim Earsom, Rita Bickel, Tom Schott, Charles Davis, Sara Braasch, Adam Lerner, Jim Cairns, Paul Laustsen, Veronica Lopez and Cindy Montepagano. Photo: Hank Wyman/CARCD

Area 3 Mentor Training Focuses On RCD Relationship

By **Brian Ziegler**
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno



Area 3 NRCS employees, plus Chuck Bell (center), attended a mentor conference in Fresno. "It makes a real difference," Bell said, referring to the program's long-term benefits. *Photo Courtesy of Brian Ziegler*

New NRCS employees stationed in Area 3 were briefed about the agency's relationship with Resource Conservation Districts (RCD) at a recent mentor conference in Fresno.

Meeting facilitator **Ray Ledgerwood**, a former employee of the **National Association of Conservation Districts**, explained the function of an RCD. "It is to make available technical, financial, and educational resources so that they meet the needs of the local land user for conservation," he says.

More than 30 NRCS employees heard Ledgerwood speak at the conference. Those with less than two years' experience working

for the agency were paired with veterans who volunteered to advise them about career development.

Mentee **Susan Perez**, an Air Quality Specialist in the Fresno Field office, thinks it is important to have regular face-to-face meetings with a mentor. A planned activity during those meetings helps one to become aware what the possibilities are for growth and learning. "What I really needed in a mentor was figuring out career paths," she says.

Merced District Conservationist **Malia Ortiz** says not knowing your partner ahead of time is a challenge that can be overcome. "You're meeting a stranger, but what usually happens is you gain a friend that you'll have a long time into your career."

Those comments were echoed by Assistant State Conservation for Field Operations **Curtis Tarver**, who told the group that it is important to find enough time and energy to make the program work. "Anything that's important and worth having," he says, "is worth taking the time to make it work."

The goal of the mentor-mentee program is to develop employee careers, recruit new employees, and retain current ones. Mentors and mentees agree to a one-year commitment, and stay updated through frequent communication.

WHIP Helps Deer Refuge Get Makeover

By **Brian Ziegler**
Area Public Affairs Specialist/
Fresno
Photo: Brian Ziegler



The winter home of a large population of central Sierra Nevada mountain mule deer is getting a much-needed housecleaning, and NRCS gave Fresno news media a tour of how it's being done.

Every winter, when the first snow hits the Sierra Nevada, mule deer exit the forests, cross the San Joaquin River, and congregate at the Kinsman Flat Wildlife Area, a 508-acre oak

woodland in eastern Madera County. During those months, the bushes and shrubs scattered among the live oaks and ponderosa pines serve as their primary food source. "When it storms, hundreds of deer come off there," says **Coarsegold Resource Conservation District (CRCD) President Tom Wheeler**. Funds from the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) were used to renovate an existing windmill, so that a nearby pond would be filled with drinking water for the animals. But lately, it's the feeding conditions at Kinsman Flat that haven't been optimal. That is changing thanks to a massive brush-clearing project by CRCD.

Without fire at regular intervals, native shrubs become overgrown. Instead of tender leaves at ground level, there are thickets of prickly branches.

"See that bush with all the dead stuff? There's nothing there for deer to eat," Wheeler says.

Reporters were given a tour of the work being done to remove dead and overgrown shrubs. A \$7,000 grant from the **California Deer Association** is funding the work. When that money runs out, the **California Department of Fish and Game (DFG)** will send another \$15,000 from deer tag sales.

DFG Biologist **Doug Bowman** believes the brush removal project could help boost the deer population. The size of the San Joaquin herd is estimated at up to 1,500. DFG records show 50 years ago the herd peaked at 11,480.

"What we're doing will increase the carrying capacity of the area," Bowman says. "When you have this whole thicket of brush, it can't feed as many deer."

'Round
the State



Farm show fun: Dina Cadenazzi (left), Civil Engineer in Hollister, and Cheryl Lambert, Project Coordinator from Salinas, staff the NRCS information booth at the Salinas Valley Farm Show. *Photo: Jeff Raifsnider*



USDA Service Center re-opens: District Conservationist Hue Dang was among many speakers at the ribbon-cutting ceremony in Oroville where over 100 visitors attended. See article on page 9. *Photo: Dave Sanden*



First line meeting: Attendees at the Area 2 First Line Meeting in Salinas discussed workloads, programs, goals, civil rights and safety, among other things. **Left to right, kneeling:** Mike McElhiney, Charlotte Epifanio, Jeff Raifsnider; **2nd row:** Lisa Shanks, Margy Lindquist, Pat Kelly, Lisa Hokholt, Pedro Ramos; **3rd row:** Bob Rohde, Walt Cheechov, David Simpson, Terry Huff, Joe Mota; **Back row:** Carter Christenson, John Bechtold, Rich Casale, Phillip Blake, Daniel Mountjoy and Ken Oster.



Soil Survey Update: NRCS Completes Field Work

By John Stern

Public Affairs Specialist/South Lake Tahoe

In November 2004, the NRCS Soil Survey crew completed data collection within the Tahoe Basin. Soil Scientist and project leader **Woody Loftis** moved the effort indoors to begin the process of converting about 1,000 field notes into useful, accurate digital data.

Nearly 100 sites were sampled for comprehensive analysis by the NRCS National Soil Survey Laboratory in Lincoln, Nebraska. Lab analysis includes total nitrogen and phosphorous levels found in Tahoe soils. The lab data and new map units will give Tahoe Basin land managers, civil engineers, and natural resource regulators improved landscape-level information on soil locations, chemistry, hydrology, and erodibility.

The soil survey update will also add new climatic

data from sensors attached to SNOTEL (for SNOWpack TElemetry) sites. In the Tahoe Basin, 12 SNOTEL instruments provide real-time measurements of snow depth and water content. Newly added sensors not only benefit the soil survey, but streamflow forecasting, providing data on soil absorption properties under the snowpack.

The new map units verify 1974 soil characteristics, but now provide much greater detail on map unit boundaries, as well as identifying new soils. The 1974 soils map depicted large areas of rock outcrop where Loftis' team identified soils of medium to shallow depth. The crew spent significant time sampling urban lots in the company of **Tahoe Resource Conservation District** and **Nevada Tahoe Conservation District** staff.

The urban samples allow Basin scientists to compare characteristics of urban soils where development has occurred. The information is of value to modelers who calculate the effects of urbanization on the lake and its carrying capacity for sediment and nutrients.

Part of the update process is to refine the attributes of soils in the Tahoe Basin, including the erodibility of the soil. Woody hopes the attributes in the new survey will be incorporated into Tahoe Research models, such as TMDL, Total Maximum Daily Load.

The update process will identify many new soils. For example, the crew recently named one "Echolakes," for a particular soil in the Desolation Wilderness. Woody and his crew took hundreds of photographs to document soil sample sites with their accompanying vegetation. The photos reveal the complexity of mapping units, capturing as



Soil Survey student trainee Stephanie Templeton measures the flow rate of water through soil using a constant head permeameter. The measure informs agencies using soil infiltration data. Photo courtesy of Woody Loftis

many as four soil or vegetative classification types in one map unit.

NRCS and the soil survey are an integral part of the Tahoe Basin Pathways 2007 process. By April 2006, the complete soil survey in digital form will be available, to include soil boundaries and the associated database. Final publication is expected in December 2006.



By Dave Sanden

Area Public Affairs Specialist/Red Bluff

Photo: Dave Sanden

In October, representatives from USDA's **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**, **Farms Service Agency (FSA)**, **Rural Development (RD)** and the **Butte County Resource Conservation District (RCD)** helped to officially launch the new, improved USDA Service Center in Oroville.

Rain and gusty winds couldn't keep people away from this locally significant

Bigger, Better Service Center Re-Opens In Oroville

occasion. More than 100 visitors, including TV and newspaper reporters, turned out to witness the ribbon-cutting ceremony and view the remodeled facility. The building interior had an extensive makeover to modernize it and to accommodate the new NRCS Field Office and Butte County RCD staff.

Having the three agencies and the conservation district all under one roof means the Oroville Service Center can offer faster, more efficient and cost-effective services and programs to Butte County farmers, ranchers, and rural communities.

Visitors explored the service center, stopping to chat with old acquaintances or to make new ones. And as with any proper birthday celebration, cakes and other refreshments were plentiful.

But during the open-house tour, just minutes before the ceremony was

to begin, events seemed to take an unfortunate turn. Strong winds knocked out the electrical power, throwing the entire building into semi-darkness. No one missed a beat, however. And the program progressed as planned, although in dimmer surroundings.

The ceremony began with a color guard presentation. Next came some inspirational words from distinguished speakers, including NRCS State Conservationist **Chuck Bell**, FSA State Director **John Smythe**, RD State Director **Paul Venosdel**, and Butte County RCD President **Bernard Flynn**. District 1 Butte County Supervisor **Bob Beeler** then cut the ribbon, flanked by uniformed students of local 4-H and FFA chapters who held it for him.

Chico's Northern California TV News videotaped the ceremony and reporters interviewed the speakers afterward.



At home with the Morrises: Jessica (left) with husband Josh and son Asa in the milking barn. *Photo: Dave Sanden*

By Dave Sanden
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Red Bluff

In January, the California NRCS Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) got a chance to sample the local flavor while taking a break from their meetings held at the Redding Service Center. Despite a cold, relentless rain, District Conservationist **Bob Bailey** conducted the group on a conservation tour that featured a visit to Anderson Creek Dairy to hear limited-resource farmers discuss their participation in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The tour also included a trip to Jones Valley to view fire restoration and watershed protection work completed through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP).

CRAC Team Gets A Taste Of Shasta County Conservation

Anderson Creek Dairy, an organic dairy farm off Balls Ferry Road in Cottonwood, is owned and operated by **Josh Morris** and wife **Jessica**. The Morrises bought their 97-acre dairy farm in 2001, and started making cheese in 2003. Running the place themselves, they've put in many long hours to get the operation up and running. Farming organically takes more work, but the Morrises say they want to farm in a way that is more environmentally friendly and healthy.

Jessica led the CRAC team through the dairy barn and cheese-making facility, explaining the production process. Josh gave them an overview of the farmland and its current condition. He also outlined the couple's goals, their conservation plan, and EQIP practices developed with the Redding Field Office.

EQIP cost sharing will allow the Morrises to implement several conservation practices and reach many of their goals. For instance, retrofitting the existing irrigation system will greatly reduce water use and decrease soil loss.

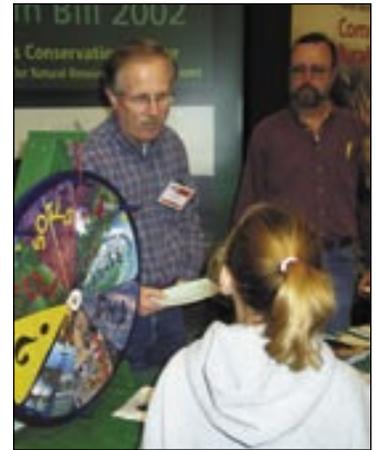
Josh said that using prescribed grazing will allow them to realize the maximum benefits from the EQIP improvements, and irrigation water management will help them to meet their water-saving goals.

After the farm tour, the Morrises treated everyone to generous helpings of their delicious cheese, organic cookies and apples. Then the CRAC members were off to view the EWP work in Jones Valley, where well-protected homes, stable slopes, and the driving rain provided vivid proof that watershed protection measures have been successful and are working as planned.

'Round the State



Learning landforms: The hill in the background looks like the normal San Joaquin County landscape, but, in fact, it is a landfill. Madera Soil Scientist John Rule (standing in back) used it to teach Fresno State students the value of learning about soil, landforms, and the behavior of the landscape. *Photo courtesy of Brian Ziegler*



The answer is: NRCS staffed an exhibit at the World Ag Expo in Tulare that included a "Wheel of Conservation." Fresno DC Dave Durham (left) and Madera Soil Conservationist Rob Roy (right), quiz a young contestant on a conservation-related question. After successfully answering it, she earned a prize. *Photo: Brian Ziegler*



Photo op: NRCSters (left to right) James Tillman, Tom Burgin, Chuck Bell, Jim Kocsis and Dave Heilig pause during the CARC&D conference. See article on page 4. *Photo: Sam Cobb*



Western Shasta RCD Recognized With NACD Communications Award

The Western Shasta Resource Conservation District was honored with an Excellence in Communications Award at February's 59th Annual Meeting of the **National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)** in Atlanta, Georgia.

Western Shasta won top honors for their Watershed Information Model (WIM) for Education and Adaptive Management Web site that was developed to provide a single-point source for all of the region's watershed information, while serving diverse user groups. NACD noted that the Web site's "design is attractive and well organized, yet basic and easy-to-use, and contains a wealth of information that can be easily accessed by educators, decision-makers and the general public."

The WIM Web site was chosen in part for its appeal to multiple audiences, watershed-driven design and successful use of Web technology. WIM offers unlimited information for visitors seeking watershed related assessments, reports, photos and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data files in an easily searchable data catalog. The Web site was funded through a grant from the CALFED Bay-Delta Authority Watershed Program and California Department of Water Resources.

WIM is available either through the Western Shasta RCD's Web site (www.westernshastarc.org) or directly at <http://wim.shastacollege.edu>.



EQIP Convinces Grower To Shred Not Burn

By **Brian Ziegler**
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno

Lee Moren (left) says he'll continue to shred orchard prunings after his contract expires. Photo: Brian Ziegler

“**W**e should farm in such a way that we leave the land better off than when we started with it,” Livingston almond grower **Lee Moren** says. “Trimming up brush and feeding it back into the soil is a way to do that.”

Moren uses Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds to shred his annual orchard prunings. He used to burn them, but found that shredding reduces the amount of matter he releases into the air and replenishes his soil with nutrients. Moren also plants clover and vetch between tree rows. He mows this cover crop prior to harvesting his almonds and incorporates the material back into the ground as well.

“By growing a cover crop, he increased nitrogen in his soil, reduced chemical input, and increased his yield,” according to NRCS Soil Conservation Technician **Sharon Boyce** from the Merced Field Office.

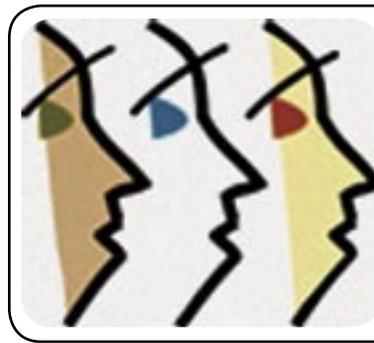
The conservation plan NRCS created for Moren made a believer out of him. “I received money for three years of shredding. I spread it over five years and gave it a real test. The program works so good I’ll continue shredding on my own after the contract expires,” he says.

My.NRCS Keeps You In The Know

By **Jim Cairns**
Public Affairs Specialist/Davis

Ever wonder where to find the latest NRCS news, thoughts from **Chief Knight** or USDA happenings without searching several Web sites? Look no further than **My.NRCS** (<https://my.nrcs.usda.gov/>), an employee intranet site for all your one-stop-shopping NRCS information needs!

Simply login using your Web-TCAS ID and password, then explore the seven tabs at the top of the page that offer NRCS Today, myNRCS, Programs, Technology, Accountability, CIS, and Field Tools.



CIVIL RIGHTS CORNER

By **Dave Rose**
California Civil Rights
Advisory Committee Chair

Civil Rights Corner is a new regular feature that highlights Civil Rights-related issues, accomplishments and individuals that positively contribute to the Civil Rights effort.

Diane Abbot-Blohm has been a member of the **Civil Rights Advisory Committee** since October 2003. During that time she has been an invaluable member, providing

insight and advice on issues affecting employees and the agency in California. As an example of her leadership, Diane took the lead role in developing new employee welcome kits and kept me on task as this year’s Chair. Unfortunately, she has been forced to resign from the committee due to some health concerns. The committee and I would like to thank Diane for all her efforts as a member and wish her well with her health and future endeavors.

Jenny Gabor is the **Federal Women’s Program Special Emphasis Program Manager** for NRCS California. She plays a lead role keeping women’s issues in the thoughts of the leadership and employees. As an example of her exemplary leadership, Jenny developed an informational brochure on her own time to provide to individuals and groups as an outreach tool. The committee would like to applaud Jenny for her superior efforts.



Diane Abbot-Blohm (left) and Jenny Gabor. Photo: Reina O’Beck

On the NRCS Today page you’ll find the most up-to-date and relevant information, such as Chief Knight’s speeches (The Chief’s Corner), an employee spotlight, NRCS This Week, an events calendar, and legislative affairs. Did You Know?, at the top of the page, lists interesting and fun-to-read conservation factoids. On a recent visit the question was posed:

*Did you know that on February 23, 1937, **Franklin D. Roosevelt** wrote to the governors of the states and transmitted the Standard State Soil Conservation Districts Law to them?*

A handy archive lets you read previous postings that you might have missed when they first ran.

Exploring the other pages further, you’ll find community bulletin boards and an eGovernment section on the myNRCS page; a programs staff directory and Conservation Security Program information on the Programs page; program and delivery news, and related links on the Field Tools page.

My.NRCS is an invaluable information tool that’s as close as your browser and mouse. With thoughtful user feedback and further development, the Web site can only evolve into a daily digital go-to place for NRCSers’ info needs.

Caligrams

Statewide News In Brief

CTA Helps Reduce Erosion And Risk To Persian Creek

By Brian Ziegler
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno



Fire Capt. Jeff Simmons (left) and NRCS engineers Dave Krietemeyer (center) and Jon Chilcote discuss plans to control erosion at the Miramonte Conservation Camp. Photo: Brian Ziegler

The heavy rains that fell on much of California in early January is causing concern among state forestry officials

about sewage leaving a prison labor camp in the Sierra Nevada Mountains east of Fresno. Runoff entering a creek running through the Miramonte Conservation Camp caused considerable erosion when more than three inches of rain fell during a four-day period the first week of January.

Officials from the **California Department of Forestry** are worried that continued erosion could damage the prison camp's leech field, sending sewage into Persian Creek and contaminating water downstream.

Fire Captain **Jeff Simmons** asked Fresno Area Engineer **Dave Krietemeyer** to assess the damage. Krietemeyer in turn brought in Fresno Field Office Engineer **Jon Chilcote**, and together they're working to provide technical assistance in stabilizing the creek. Among their recommendations will be to install gabions, boxes made of wire mesh that are filled with stones and then strategically placed to secure the creek bed. They're also suggesting planting

willow trees along the stream banks.

The Miramonte Camp was established in the 1940s to train minimum-security inmates to fight forest fires. They learn to repair fire-fighting vehicles, build fire breaks, and reduce fuel loads. The 89 prisoners currently at the camp will spend an average of between 18 months to three years at the facility.

Simmons says he's trying to secure money from the State to implement the conservation plan NRCS is developing.

Coastal San Luis RCD Hosts Field Tour

By Jeff Raifsnider
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Salinas

Coastal San Luis RCD organized a four-stop field tour of conservation projects in the San Luis Obispo area during the 59th Annual Meeting of **CARCD** last November. Tour stops included the Turri Ranch and Cattle Company, Chorro Flats, and the John Maino Ranch. Tour participants also



Fog often obscures the view, but Morro Rock was clearly visible during the field tour. Photo: Jeff Raifsnider



Participants enjoyed perfect weather and views of Morro Bay. Morro Rock is visible on the horizon. Photo: Jeff Raifsnider

enjoyed the scenic vistas of Morro Bay, the Morro Bay Natural History Museum, and a presentation by **Dan Berman**, Morro Bay's National Estuary Program Director.

HR Personnel Actions

| Name | Position | Action | Grade | Location | Date |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------|------------------|----------|
| Jeffrey Goats | Soil Scntst | Conv to CC Appt | GS-9 | Victorville | 11/14/04 |
| Colin Nugent | Agrl Engr | CC Appt | GS-9 | Hanford | 11/28/04 |
| Jamie Schnably | Soil Scntst | Conv to CC Appt | GS-9 | Arcata | 12/26/04 |
| Marc Horney | Range Consvst | CC Appt | GS-11 | Klamath Basin Tm | 1/9/05 |
| Hugo Calvillo | Soil Consvst | Conv to CC Appt | GS-7 | Fresno | 2/6/05 |
| Keli Christopher | Civil Engr | TERM Appt | GS-11 | Lake Arrowhead | 2/6/05 |
| Nicholas Gallager | Range Consvst | Conv to CC Appt | GS-7 | Woodland | 2/6/05 |
| Andrea Casey | Dist Consvst | Promotion | GS-11 | Colusa | 11/28/04 |
| Steven Hill | Dist Consvst | Promotion | GS-12 | Blythe | 11/28/04 |
| Wendy Rash | Soil Consvst | Promotion | GS-11 | Placerville | 12/26/04 |
| Sai Syhaphom | Civil Engr | Promotion | GS-11 | Chino | 1/9/05 |
| Jeremy Svehla | Agrl Engr | Promotion | GS-9 | Eureka | 1/23/05 |
| Veronica Lopez | Soil Consvst | Promotion | GS-11 | Victorville | 2/6/05 |
| Daniel Taverner | Soil Consvst | Promotion | GS-9 | Grass Valley | 2/6/05 |
| Todd Golder | Range Consvst | Reassign from Redding | GS-9 | Eureka | 12/26/04 |
| Rudy Perez | Pub Aff Splclst | Reassign from Fresno | GS-11 | Riverside EWP | 1/9/05 |
| William Gardiner | Dist Consvst | Transfer to CO | GS-12 | Yreka | 11/27/04 |
| Eric Crook | Soil Consvst | Transfer to OR | GS-9 | Visalia | 2/5/05 |
| Heath McAllister | Ecologist | Resignation | GS-7 | Lancaster | 12/25/05 |
| Richard Campbell | Dist Consvst | Retirement | GS-12 | Lancaster | 12/11/04 |
| Leonard Kashuba | Dist Consvst | Retirement | GS-12 | Lakeport | 1/3/05 |
| James Regal | Soil Scntst | Retirement | GS-12 | Bakersfield | 1/3/05 |
| John Weatherford | Soil Consvst | Retirement | GS-11 | Woodland | 1/3/04 |
| Charles Bell | State Consvst | Retirement | SES | Davis | 2/3/05 |