

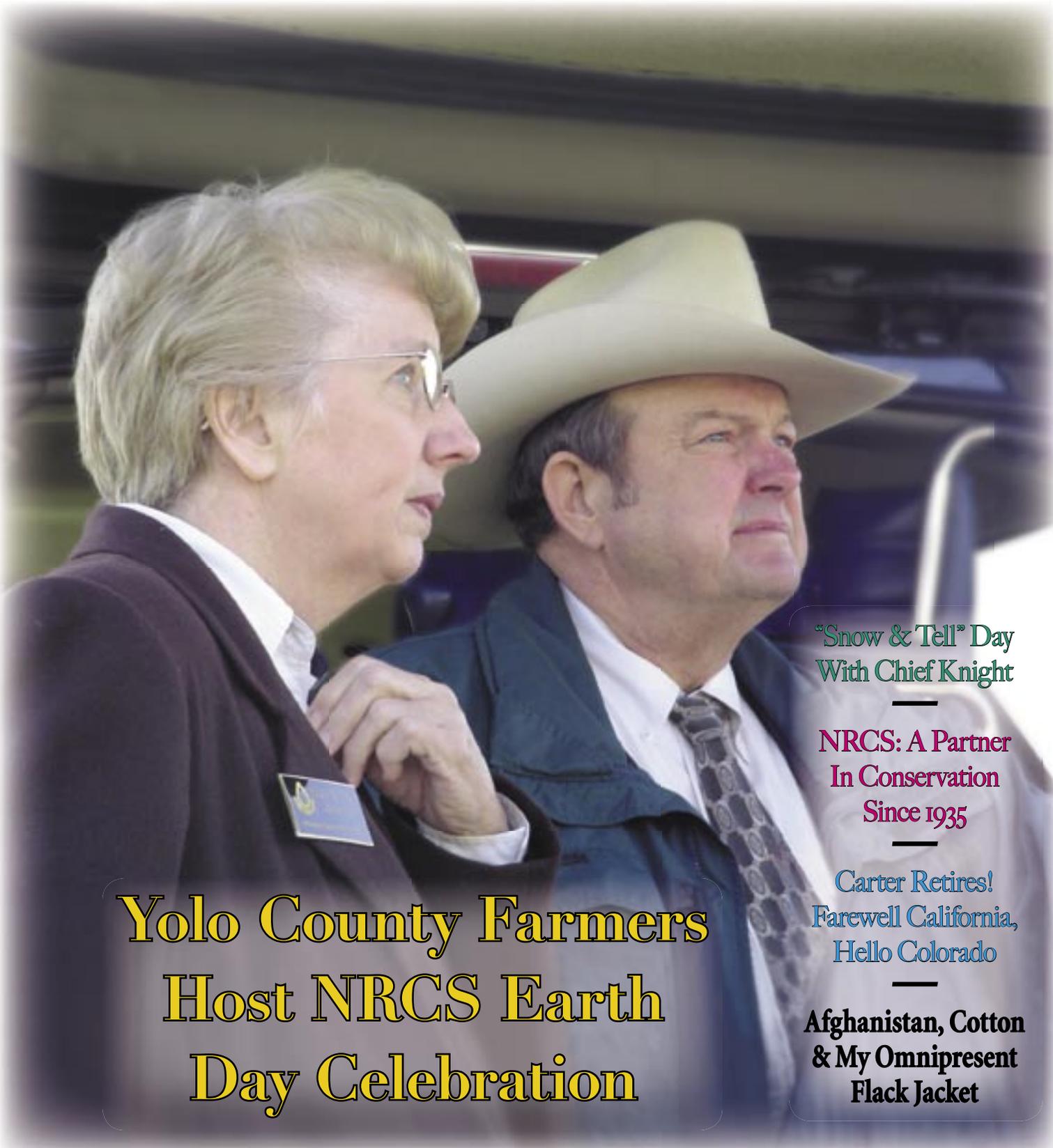
"A Partner in Conservation Since 1935"



California

JULY/
AUGUST 2005

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS



"Snow & Tell" Day
With Chief Knight

NRCS: A Partner
In Conservation
Since 1935

Carter Retires!
Farewell California,
Hello Colorado

Afghanistan, Cotton
& My Omnipresent
Flack Jacket

**Yolo County Farmers
Host NRCS Earth
Day Celebration**



It's Been A Pleasure, California!

By **Ed Burton**

Acting State Conservationist

I want to personally thank each of you for making my stay here in California as Acting State Conservationist such a pleasure. As you know, on June 13 **Allen Green**, the State Conservationist in Colorado, will be your new Acting State Conservationist. He is a great guy—well respected and dedicated to putting conservation on the ground—and will serve you well.

Don't feel like you are in the "land of Actings" or that you are the "forgotten

ones" here in California. This is just part of the process, which sometimes takes time. Sometimes more time than others, but you will have a permanent State Conservationist as soon as he or she is selected. Rest assured, Chief Knight is committed to providing California with the very best person for this position as soon as the process allows.

I've learned a little about process myself over the last 120 days, the maximum time allowed when acting. The process of coming into a highly functioning organization, working your hardest and having to leave not because the work is done, but because it's time to go. I've learned about the great variety and opportunity that exists in California to continue doing some wonderful conservation work. This is valuable work, and you know it. It shows in your dedication by what you do and how you do it everyday. You should be proud of yourselves and the conservation partnerships you develop and sustain on an ongoing basis.

My last 120 days here have gone by so quickly. But I was able to see and do a lot

related to conservation, and meet some of you too, as time permitted. I have learned so much about this state and the hard working and dedicated folks I've met here as I traveled around the state. It's really been an honor to serve you.

In some ways I feel like I'll be leaving my home, and that I now have two homes—Wyoming and California. So many of you made me feel right at home from the beginning. Warm, hospitable, friendly. That's what I'll remember when I think of my time here in your great state.

I know that all of you will do your very best to welcome Allen to California as you have me. I'll be spending a few days with him to try to make this continuation of "Actings" as seamless as possible. Thanks again for giving me, the agency and conservation your very best. It's been a pleasure.

Editor's Note: Since this article was written, Ed Burton has been selected as State Conservationist for California by Chief Bruce Knight, pending Secretary Johanns approval. Congratulations, Ed!

In This Issue

	Page
It's Been A Pleasure, California!	2
Welcome to California, Allen Green	3
"Snow & Tell" With Chief Knight	3
Farewell California, Hello Colorado	4
Yolo County Farmers Host NRCS Earth Day Celebration	5
California Chapter Of SWCS Discusses Urbanization At Spring Meeting	6
Afghanistan, Cotton & My Omnipresent Flack Jacket	7
Stakeholders Give Feedback On EQIP Priorities	8
People In The News	9
Civil Rights Corner	11
Tehama County RCD Hosts Workshop For Alternative Energy	12
Lancaster To The Rescue: Los Angeles County EWP Activities	13
Ventura County Emergency Assistance	15
HR — Personnel Actions	16

On the Cover

Ed Burton & Helen Flach, April 2005: Acting State Conservationist Ed Burton and Assistant State Conservationist Helen Flach observing the activities at the Earth Day celebration in Yolo County. See article on page 5 and photos on page 11.

Photo: Phil Hogan / Design: Jim Cairns

CALIFORNIA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS STAFF

Editor: Jim Cairns

Editorial Supervision: Luana Kiger

Layout & Design: Jim Cairns

Contributors: Dave Sanden, Brian Ziegler, Paul Laustsen, Jeff Raifsnider, Rudy Perez, Carter Christenson, Tanya Robles, Dave Dyer, Raul Ramirez, Stephen Jewett, Steve Hill, Karla Vega, Phil Hogan, Jae Lee, Carol Rush, Kathy Wold, Carla Koop, Dina Cadenazzi, Ken Oster & Jim Cairns

Send Questions, Comments & Contributions to:

California Current Developments, NRCS Public Affairs

430 G Street, #4164, Davis, CA 95616-5475

E-mail: jim.cairns@ca.usda.gov; Phone: (530) 792-5693

California Current Developments magazine is published six times a year

Next issue deadline: August 15, 2005

Materials submitted may be edited for content, clarity & length

Some photos have been digitally enhanced

Welcome To California, Allen Green

By Jim Cairns

Public Affairs Specialist/Davis

Allen Green joined us in California on June 13 as Acting State Conservationist. He has assumed leadership for the transition period—up to 120 days—while **Ed Burton** is being confirmed the new California State Conservationist, after being selected by **Chief Bruce Knight**.

“I’m excited to be here to learn what California does,” said Green, who has been the State Conservationist in Colorado since 2001. “I know California has one of the most complex conservation programs in the country—there’s no doubt about that. Not only on the conservation side, but the level of agriculture and environmental issues too, you’re probably second to none,” he added.

Green, a native of Florida, earned a degree in Forest Resources and

Conservation, with a specialty in Range Ecosystem Management, from the University of Florida. He started his 28-year career with SCS and NRCS by working in numerous locations in Florida as a Range Conservationist and District Conservationist.

In 1985, Green accepted the position of Area Conservationist in Dayton, Ohio, where he oversaw 19 counties. Four years later—prior to going to Colorado—he served as Assistant State Conservationist for Programs and Operations in Missouri.

“My main effort while I’m here is to make things run as smooth as possible and provide a leadership roll as needed. Basically, to continue with some of the things that Ed has put in place,” Green said, then paused a moment. “I’m from the South. We have an expression; when we like someone we’ll say ‘He’s good people.’ Ed Burton is good people. He’s



“I’m really excited to have an opportunity to be involved in California, even for a short period of time,” says Allen Green. *Photo: Jim Cairns*

honest and sincere—a real stand-up guy. I think everyone will be very pleased,” he concluded with a knowing smile.

Allen and his wife have five children and one granddaughter. In his spare time while in California, Allen plans to get in a few rounds of golf and maybe some hiking too, as time allows.



In late March, Chief Bruce Knight helped NRCS staff collect Sierra Nevada snow pack data. He’s pictured here with South Lake Tahoe DC Jane Schmidt. *Photo courtesy of Jane Schmidt*

By Brian Ziegler

Area Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno

NRCS Chief **Bruce Knight** said he wanted a better understanding of the agency’s role in water forecasting, so he was given a first-hand look at snow pack telemetry, referred to as SNOTEL, during a recent visit to Lake Tahoe.

Knight led a group of high-ranking conservation officials, including Deputy Chief **Lawrence Clark** and National Association of Conservation Districts President **Bill Wilson**, to a SNOTEL site in the Tahoe Basin in late March.

“I’m a farmer myself,” commented the Chief, “and want to get into the field and

understand all aspects of our agency’s mission. I understand that the entire economy of the West depends on water availability.”

NRCS operates over 700 SNOTEL sites in 11 Western states, including eight in the Tahoe Basin. The sites are located in remote high-mountain areas and are designed to operate unattended for a year.

The units are equipped with a pressure sensing snow pillow, storage precipitation gauge, and air temperature sensor that automatically collect snow pack data every hour during the snow season. This information is then uploaded to two master stations in Boise, Idaho, and Ogden, Utah, using meteor-burst technology.

Radio signals originating from the SNOTEL sites are reflected off meteorites orbiting 50 to 75 miles above Earth, then down to the master stations. A central computer at NRCS’s National Water and Climate Center in Portland, Oregon, controls system operations and ultimately receives the data collected by the SNOTEL network.

But not every site is automated. A number of them in the Tahoe Basin don’t have SNOTEL equipment because of cost and location constraints. Snow pack samples at these sites are manually measured once a month using a snow tube.

“Snow & Tell” Day With Chief Knight

The aluminum tube—1.5 inches in diameter by 22 feet in length—is shoved down into the snow to collect a core sample. Chief Knight successfully produced a good core sample in about 12 feet of snow on his first attempt.

South Lake Tahoe District Conservationist **Jane Schmidt**, who accompanied the Chief during his visit, said he was especially interested in the technology and how the network could be utilized to collect other data in the future.

“He was intrigued with the possibility that other agencies may want to add other equipment to these sites in the future to monitor other environmental factors,” she said. “The network is already set up.”



Snow Day: From left to right, Bill Wilson, Chief Knight, NRCS Nevada Hydrologist Dan Greenlee collect a snow sample. *Photo: Jane Schmidt*



Carter (left to right) enjoys a chat with wife Gwen, Ed Burton and Lisa Shanks at his retirement party.

By Carter D. Christenson
Boulder, Colorado
Photos: Jeff Raifsnider

My wife **Gwen** and I came to California over seven years ago to put some NRCS excitement into my life. At the time, Area 2 had an ag productivity equal to 3.8 times that of the six New England states combined, 41 Congressmen (thus a huge population to serve), and El Nino was on the way that winter. Needless to say, the excitement started immediately and has continued to today!

I have certainly been impressed with the talents and expertise of all the people in California, and in particular, those I'm most familiar with from Area 2. As some of you have reminded me many

Farewell California, Hello Colorado

times, my talk in front of the All Employee Training Session last summer expressed my sincere sentiments. In almost any NRCS competition, I would take a randomly selected group of people from Area 2—or from all of California for that matter, regardless of the discipline in the competition—and put them up against a hand picked group from any other state and guess what: WE WOULD CLEAN THEIR CLOCKS!

My main purpose here is to thank both NRCS people and our partners for our wonderful time together, and for letting me share in delivering conservation to the citizens of California. It has been a satisfying time, and I think we have done well in our efforts!

I'm also taking the liberty to pass on some of my personal philosophies as food for thought. I consider them career revelations.

It's up to you to judge if they have any value:

1. Treat everyone with more respect than they deserve until they prove that they deserve less. Then, give them at least a second chance.

2. Remember that knowledge that you have, and that others do not have, gives you power and control. Therefore, SHARE that knowledge whenever possible with anyone who needs it. You'll change control and fear into trust and partnerships!

3. Match people's talents and passions with NRCS work items wherever possible. If you find your talents and passions do not match NRCS needs, get out and do something else that satisfies your passions.

4. Don't hold grudges against those who you think have "sinned" against you. Grudges only infect and hurt those who hold them, and the other person usually doesn't even know.

5. Turn people loose to try new methods that make us better. But make sure they keep you "in the rear view mirror." (i.e., District Conservationists are paid professional managers of their offices; but as they "push the envelope" their supervisor needs to know what's going on so they can back them up when challenged.)

6. Don't worry about receiving



"Thanks for being our friends!"

credit for good work. It will happen if it is good work!

7. Read Steve Covey's book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, and get surprised by how many of these you do well and work on those that need to be improved!

8. Use your own personal values to make all decisions: "Talk the Talk and Walk the Walk."

9. And, probably the most important one: "Take the high road." If you can't take the high road, don't take any road at all.

As we move on to Colorado to be close to our kids (who still both love us and like us!), I look forward to hearing about all the wonderful things you will do for the people and natural resources of California. Thanks for being our friends!

By Brian Ziegler
Area Public Affairs Specialist/
Fresno

Until now, scientists conducting studies at the San Joaquin Experimental Range were confident their research wasn't compromised by invading animals such as wild pigs. But no more.

About four years ago, the nomadic animals started appearing at the Range near Coarsegold, on land grazed by cattle owned by California State University, Fresno. Now they've entered scientifically

sensitive areas and their presence has Madera County Co-op Extension Livestock and Range Advisor **Neil McDougald** worried.

"If you're studying the effect of livestock use on the San Joaquin Experimental Range and you come into a set of plots that show you have 65 percent bare soil, and you don't know this is caused by a pig, your data is compromised," he says. "From a research standpoint, it's a non-controlled variable and it's ugly."

McDougald and NRCS Range Conservationist **Dennis Dudley** discussed the impact

wild pigs have on range land with high school students attending a recent workshop at the Range sponsored by the Center for Land-Based Learning.

The students were there to learn about environmental issues and sustainable practices related to range management.

Another component of the workshop was studying the role range land has with water quality. **Edd Russell**, Area 3 Soil Scientist, provided students with a hands-on demonstration of how quick water can move through sandy soil.

By contrast, Russell showed them how much more slowly water moves through clay soil. He stated that clay absorbs

water, sometimes making it hard for plants to draw water up through their roots. Such was a situation he encountered in a Tulare County orchard. "You can have this really wet soil and the poor trees are dying of thirst," he explained.



Edd Russell (right) provides high school agriculture students with a demonstration of how quick water can move through sandy soil. Photo: Brian Ziegler



Yolo County Farmers Host NRCS Earth Day Celebration

By Dave Sanden

Area Public Affairs Specialist/Red Bluff

About an hour after sunrise on April 22, farmers, conservationists, and farm officials started gathering at a restored wetland on **Barrios Farms**, just east of Zamora in Yolo County. They came to celebrate **Earth Day**, **wetlands restoration**, and the **70th anniversary of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**.

It was a perfect morning. The temperature was just right, and a slight breeze gently rustled through the surrounding tules, wild flowers and wild rye. Overhead, the emptiness of the pale blue sky was occasionally punctuated by a lazily circling osprey or the “V” formation of ducks. The sounds of ducks, flowing water, and red-winged black birds added to an overall sense of tranquility.

The event setting—the Barrios wetland—was restored through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) in 2002, converting about 100 acres of marginal farmland. It is adjacent to another WRP project, just getting started in 2005, that will restore wetlands and riparian habitat on 2,600 acres. That project will be one of the largest WRP easements in California. Benefits will include improved water quality, habitat for wildlife, and flood attenuation.

Among the more than 40 Earth Day celebrants were the featured speaker USDA Under Secretary **Mark Rey**, Acting State Conservationist **Ed Burton**, former NRCS Regional Conservationist **Gene Andreuccetti**, Yolo County farmer and former USDA Deputy Secretary **Rich Rominger**, Under Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture **A.J. Yates**, event hosts **Wayne** and **Bryan Barrios**, and Earth Team Volunteer **John Weatherford**.

The event got underway with welcome and introductory remarks from Burton. “In California, farmers have stepped up to help protect natural resources and improve the environment,” said Burton. “You are a treasure to this country.”

Rey spoke of the many benefits of wetlands and the success of **President Bush’s** wetland initiative, announced on Earth Day last year. Bush set an aggressive goal that goes beyond “no net loss” of wetlands, to improve, restore, and protect three million acres of



Team USDA: Joining Ed Burton (back row), Helen Flach (front row) and other NRCS staff were Under Secretary Mark Rey and former Regional Conservationist Gene Andreuccetti (front row). *Photo: Jim Cairns*

In Focus

Area 2 Holds First Line Meeting



Acting State Conservationist Ed Burton attended the May 11 meeting, which was ASTCFO Carter Christenson’s final before his retirement. The meeting included administrative and program updates, plus field office reports on activities and concerns. *Original photos: Jeff Raifsnider & Daniel Mountjoy; Photo composite: Jeff Raifsnider*

wetlands within five years.

“For that goal to be achieved, it’s important to acknowledge and celebrate local achievements in protecting the national environment,” said Under Secretary Rey.

Many of NRCS’s conservation partners participated in this triple celebration: California Waterfowl Association, Audubon California, Ducks Unlimited, California Department of Food and Agriculture, California Department of Conservation, and CARCD.

“Partnerships make a huge contribution toward the increase in conservation in California,” said Burton. “This past year over \$53 million in Farm Bill funds were leveraged for erosion control, water supply, water quality, air quality, and habitat improvement.”

High school students from the **Student Landowner Education and Watershed Stewardship Program (SLEWS)** also participated in the event, installing bluebird houses and wood duck boxes as attendees watched. After the ceremony, most participants lingered for quite awhile, talking and enjoying the serenity of the place and the beautiful spring day. Maybe enjoying nature and the company of friends is the best way to celebrate Earth Day.

See additional photos on page 11.



WRP In Action: This restored wetland is an excellent example of the president’s wetlands initiative, which sets aggressive goals to go beyond “no net loss” of wetlands. *Photo: Dave Sanden*

California Chapter Of SWCS Discusses Urbanization At Spring Meeting

By Jeff Raifsnider

Area Public Affairs Specialist/Salinas

The California Chapter of the **Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS)** explored "A Growing Concern: The Rural-Urban Interface," at its annual spring meeting in Davis in May. Members from the California and Nevada SWCS chapters attended discussions and presentations about urban expansion into California's rural landscape, and enjoyed a field tour of local practices.

Acting State Conservationist **Ed Burton** spoke on NRCS Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA). Burton explained that CTA is the process of working with landowners to apply conservation on the land, on a voluntary basis, and in a science-based, cost-effective manner that sustains the resource base.

Burton said, "The conservation planning process is who we are and what we do. We are conservationists first, foremost and always. The process is voluntary. What is unique in our relationships is that we have established trust. Trust allows us to provide conservation that goes way beyond what you'd get if you just brought an engineer out. We provide conservation in an

economically viable manner that allows farming to continue over future generations. Farmers request our assistance. They know their own land better than we do. It's our job to bring the science and the art of conservation in a value-added manner that fits their land, their needs and their time-frame."

Discussion topics included "Making Smart Land Use Choices," moderated by NRCS District Conservationist **David Rose**; "Tools for Farmland Preservation," moderated by NRCS State Resource Conservationist **Diane Holcomb**; and "Keeping Agriculture Viable," moderated by NRCS Resource Conservationist **Mark Parson**.

UCCE-Davis Public Policy Specialist **Alvin D. Sokolow** delivered the conference keynote message, "Farming at the Urban Edge: Strategies for Reducing Conflict and Supporting Agriculture." Undersecretary **A.J. Yates** of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) presented "California's Agriculturalists: First in Conservation." Environmental Scientist **Ken Trott** of the CDFA presented "California Agriculture: Food, Fiber, Fish, Fowl, Fuel, Floodplains." CARCD Executive Director **Brian Leahey** spoke on "Keeping Agriculture Viable."

'Round the State



Chief Bruce Knight: The Chief addressed a group of 100-plus attendees at the National Environmental Policy Meeting in Sacramento in June. He discussed NRCS's future direction, the 2007 Farm Bill, and answered questions from the audience. *Photo: Jen DeLorenzi*



A Growing Concern: Hank Stone (on left in brown vest) discusses conservation practices installed on his family's Yolo Land and Cattle Co. Ranch during the SWCS Conference conservation tour. See SWCS Spring Meeting article on this page. *Photo: Jeff Raifsnider*



Helping Big Sandy Rancheria: Rob Roy (left) and Dave Krietemeyer study a potential site for an apple orchard. See Big Sandy Rancheria article on page 15. *Photo: Brian Ziegler*

NRCS WATERSHED RECOVERY Emergency Watershed Protection Program

Southern California Progress Update & Highlights: 2004 Review & 2005 Expectations

- NRCS receives EWP funds for the Southern California tree mortality emergency, March 2004.
- Impacted Counties and NRCS develop overall project framework and sign individual MOUs.
- NRCS hires three teams of Foresters, Engineers, and Conservationists while local sponsors create teams to work with NRCS, both largely in place by end of 2004.
- 2004 tree removal progress mixed in three counties as teams develop working relationships and operating procedures between all involved agencies/levels.
- Above normal rain/snow in 2004 impacts progress, approximately 10% of total accomplished in 2004.
- Foundations established by prior efforts will accelerate progress throughout 2005.
- Highly professional teams established, contract processes in place, relationships formed.
- Private consulting Foresters/Archeologists hired to accelerate tree marking and surveys.
- With above support in place, estimated that 50-70% of total area will be treated in 2005.
- San Diego County's goal to complete all remaining local contracts by the end of 2005.



The Green Yarder: A yarder is used to move trees safely across slopes that could suffer severe erosion. After removal, some trees are chipped and used to protect slopes against erosion.

Afghanistan, Cotton & My Omnipresent Flack Jacket

By Dave Dyer

PMC Manager/Lockeford

I traveled to Afghanistan recently on a three-week assignment to assist Afghan scientists in promoting and developing a cotton variety trial that will lead to the selection of the best performing varieties. The goal is to increase the economic viability of cotton production in Afghanistan and provide alternatives to poppy production, which is the source of opium that is eventually processed into heroin. Two additional reasons for the trip were to provide **Plant Materials Center** forage grass varieties for the improvement of forage resources, and to support **Provincial Reconstruction Teams** (PRTs) regarding agronomy, soil science, and plant materials issues.

My first stop was Kabul University to meet with the **Dean of Agriculture** to discuss the need for inexpensive soil testing laboratory equipment. Then, off to Bagram Air Force Base and the Parwan PRT to prepare for a mission to meet with the **Minister of Agriculture** in Bagram District, Kabul Province. Later, I traveled to Mazar-e-Sharif PRT—an area controlled by the British Army—to assist with the cotton variety trial.

In working with the Dehadadi Center, I found the research staff very capable scientists who will do an excellent job with this trial. I gave the staff six forage grass varieties developed by the **USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Program**, and provided training on how to establish and maintain them. Some of my activities at the Dehadadi

Center were filmed and will be shown on Afghan TV to promote PRT efforts.

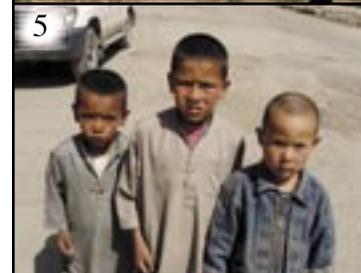
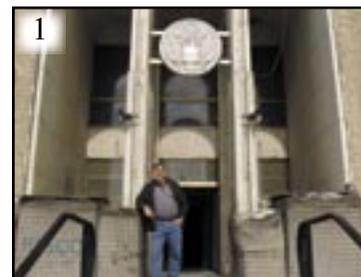
After returning to Kabul, the Parwan PRT staff and I assisted the **ACC Afghanistan Conservation Corp** in reviewing their Paghman nursery production and Qargaj watershed site. We provided information about seed cleaning and storage, greenhouse facilities, and watershed practices.

In Kabul, I briefed USDA Deputy Secretary and Special Advisor **Jim Moseley** on my activities. Coincidentally, I was in town when First Lady **Laura Bush** arrived for a women's conference promoting the advances now being made since their freedom from Taliban repression.

Many watershed areas in Afghanistan are in extremely poor condition. Some local people are so desperate for firewood for cooking that they'll cut down all available trees and bushes, and even dig up the roots. These activities have destroyed the hydrology in watersheds, and many villages no longer can obtain water from their wells.

Obviously, safety was always a big concern out in the field. But I always felt safe on all of the missions when two or three armored vehicles were present and six gunners were on guard. The flack jacket, however, was a bit heavy to wear all the time. It's just something that quickly becomes second nature in such an unstable environment.

The project's benefits overtime will increase the yield and quality of cotton produced in Afghanistan. This will increase the potential of cotton as an alternative to poppy production, which will help stabilize the country. Assistance to ACC and other PRT's will help improve Afghanistan's watersheds, too.



- 1) Dave Dyer in front of U.S. Embassy in Kabul. A new, larger embassy is currently being built.
- 2) Ahmad Shah, Dehadadi Center Manager (left); Dave Dyer (middle); Ajab Khan, Research Scientist (right). All work was done by hand preparing the cotton variety trial planting site.
- 3) Biblical agriculture is the norm in Afghanistan.
- 4) Afghan Conservation Corps tree planting site at the Qargaj watershed. Note how the terraces were not installed on a level gradient, which will lead to gullies in the future.
- 5) War-hardened street kids in Kabul.

Photos courtesy of Dave Dyer.

Kirker Creek Cleanup Succeeds In Contra Costa County

By Carla Koop

Watershed Coordinator/
Contra Costa RCD



Volunteers remove trash during Kirker Creek Cleanup in the City of Pittsburg. Photo: Carla Koop

The fourth semi-annual Kirker Creek Cleanup, held on April 30 in Contra Costa County, was a great success! The **Partners for the Watershed** and **City of Pittsburg** sponsored the event, which attracted 97 enthusiastic people.

Hardworking volunteers collected trash from the creek where it flows through the flood control channel along the Pittsburg-Antioch Highway, just east of Central Park. A dedicated crew from **Pittsburg High** also removed trash from along the road.

Volunteers included students from schools in and outside the watershed, student clubs, **Mt. Diablo JROTC**, and scout groups. They braved the mud, tall grasses and allergies to collect over three yards of trash and one yard of recyclables.

Assorted items collected included a sofa, CDs, motel card, boot, golf ball, Frisbee, seatbelt buckle, cans, bottles and clothing. A wallet, credit card and purse were turned in to the local police.

During the cleanup, volunteers observed parts of the habitat. Some of the creatures their cleanup efforts benefited included wildflowers, the native plant mugwort, red-winged blackbirds, butterflies, lizards, ladybugs, and frogs.



NRCs Assistant State Conservationist Helen Flach listens to Craig Knudson, president of the Tulare County Farm Bureau, as he testifies. Photo: Brian Ziegler

California stakeholders, attending listening sessions on adjusting the four national priorities used to implement the 2002 Farm Bill, testified that Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) funds should be made available for practices that promote efficient use of water, improve air quality, reduce fuel loads on private forest land, and conserve energy.

The sessions, required by law and held in Fresno, Perris and Anderson, were conducted on behalf of NRCS by Assistant State Conservationist **Helen Flach**.

Flach told participants that in California EQIP addresses the national priorities—reducing non-point source pollution, reducing emissions, reducing soil erosion and sedimentation, and

Stakeholders Give Feedback On EQIP Priorities

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

promoting at-risk species habitat—but a considerable amount of money is also spent on other things that are only a concern in this state. She added that if large sums of money are spent on matters other than the national priorities, then California will receive a lower portion of national EQIP funds.

“Here in California we are always looking for ways to get more money because this program is greatly over-subscribed,” Flach said. “In a very good year, we might fund 75 percent of the eligible and worthy applications that we receive.” In 2005, California will receive \$48 million to fund EQIP contracts, an increase of about \$2 million from last year.

Fresno County Farm Bureau Issues Coordinator **Karri Hammestrom** said money should be given to organizations that apply for EQIP funds, not just individuals.

Ron Gosling of Rain For Rent, a company that sells irrigation equipment, asked if anything can be done to streamline the EQIP application process. “If you say ‘EQIP Program’ [to a grower] you just put a six month stall on your project because of the time that it takes for the grower to make the application... and then get your final approval or denial.”

Comments made at the listening sessions have been forwarded for national review and consideration. Updating the national priorities will help NRCS respond to emerging issues and prepare for the next Farm Bill reauthorization in 2007.

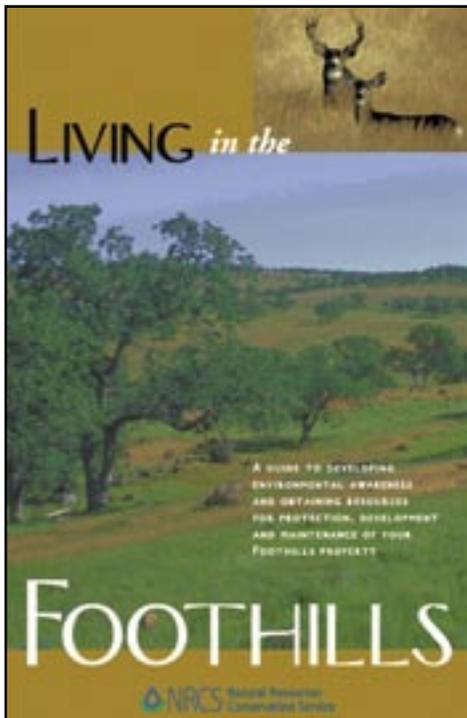
‘Round the State



Kicking-Off CSP: NRCSers attending the first introductory meeting for the Conservation Security Program held in Paso Robles in April were (left to right) Giulio Ferruzzi, Daniel Montjoy, Diane Holcomb, Carter Christenson, Karl Striby, Marge Lindquist, Tina Vander Hoek and Jon Gustafson. Photo: Jeff Raifsnider



Soil Salinity Conference: Admiring a drainage management poster display at the International Salinity Forum are, from left, Raul Ramirez, Kathleen Buchnoff, Lisa Basinal, Vashek Cervinka and Julian Martinez Beltran. See Soil Salinity articles on pages 13 and 14. Photo courtesy of Raul Ramirez



t's the fire season!

LIVING in the FOOTHILLS available now!

Living in the Foothills was created to explain the environmental responsibilities that come with living in California, and provide practical advice for the fire season. Many Californians live with the threat of wildfire destroying lives, homes and wildlife habitat.

Living in the Foothills gives clear instruction on fire prevention and provides details on what to do when a fire threatens your home. Guidelines for creating defensible space, making evacuation plans, environmental awareness, dangers and first aid are just some of the helpful tips found in this booklet.

For copies of *Living in the Foothills*, please call **Jen DeLorenzi** at (530) 792-5647. Downloadable versions are available on the Web at www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/news/publications.



Multi-Cultural Day In Salinas: USDA and RCD employees show cultural artifacts they brought to the Multi-Cultural Day event held at the Salinas Service Center in March. Pictured, left to right, are Student Intern Marco Barbosa (FSA), Michael Wu (FSA), Julie Irinco (NRCS), Karminder Brown (RCD of Monterey Co.), Danny Marquis (NRCS), Dorothy Dowling (NRCS), Rixon Rafter (Earth Team Volunteer/NRCS retired) and Melanie Fry (FSA). Photo: Jeff Raifsnider

People—in the— News

Welcome, Carlos Suarez: Carlos will be serving as **Acting Deputy State Conservationist** for 90-120 days, beginning May 2, 2005. He currently serves as the **Deputy State Conservationist in Nebraska**. During his detail, Carlos will be attending meetings, conferences and visiting our Area and Field employees. Please feel free to come by his office and say hello if you are in the Davis State Office.

Welcome, Allen Green: Effective June 13, Allen will serve as **Acting State Conservationist** for up to 120 days, pending **Ed Burton's** confirmation as State



Walt Sykes, Watershed Planning Specialist in Davis, celebrating 45 years! *Photo: Jim Cairns*

Conservationist. Allen is currently **STC in Colorado**.

Congratulations, Walt Sykes: 2005 marks **45 years** Walt has been with the agency. He started with SCS in Maryland in 1960, then worked his way West.

Congratulations, Folks: **Luana Kiger** (25 years); **Rachel Lopez** (20 years); **Laure Swenson** (20 years).

NRCS Shares Expertise At Annual "Farm Day In The City"

*By Carol Rush, Air Quality/Soil Conservationist/Bakersfield
& James Booth, North West Kern RCD*

Children came from as far away as Tehachapi for "Farm Day in the City," and Bakersfield NRCS staff and **Earth Team Volunteers** were there to meet with and teach them. Held in Bakersfield in late April, the **Kern County Farm Bureau** has been sponsoring the annual event since 1985 as a way of educating first through fourth graders about the role of agriculture and agricultural by-products in their daily lives.

NRCS's **Daniel Meyer** and **Carol Rush**, along with Earth Team volunteers **James Booth** and **Max Rivera**, joined farmers, university representatives, and ag business professionals in lending their knowledge and expertise to the event. "Farm Day in the City" is organized as a series of 10-to-20 minute presentations designed to give children a glimpse of various particular aspects of agriculture. Covering such topics as the hydrologic cycle, air pollution sources, and the importance of trees and soil dynamics, the NRCS team focused its program on conservation and the role of NRCS in helping farmers and landowners achieve their goals of sustainable ag practices and good land stewardship.

"We need to make sure that children are exposed to the importance that farming plays in all of our lives," said Rush about the goals of the program. "We obviously need to eat and put clothes on our backs, but there's also the need for conserving our natural resources that are the basis of farming: Soil, water, air, plants, animal and human resources."

Staff at the Bakersfield NRCS office have participated in "Farm Day in the City" at various times over the past 15 years, and they look forward to being involved in future events.

River Restoration Is Kids' Play

*By Brian Ziegler
Area Public Affairs
Specialist/Fresno*

Students from 15 high schools across California pitted their knowledge of natural resources and the environment against one another during the 13th annual **California Envirothon**, held recently in Oakhurst.

The competition is co-sponsored by NRCS, several Resource Conservation Districts, and others. "It's a great educational outreach that all participating agencies enjoy," says Envirothon Committee President **Sharon Boyce**, an NRCS Soil Conservation Technician from Merced.

During the contest, students were challenged to work as a team to conduct hands-on experiments and answer written questions focusing on soils, aquatics, forestry and wildlife. They also had to give an oral presentation about managing cultural landscapes, and in particular restoring the San Joaquin River.

"The students were asked to assume that they are a committee of agency representatives that want to restore the river watershed to its native state. How best to do that without disrupting the communities that surround it, agriculture, all of that sort of thing," Boyce says.

At one time, the river flowed unobstructed to the San Joaquin-Sacramento Delta and on into San Francisco Bay. But the river has now been diverted, so that water no longer flows in its historic riverbed, even during California's wettest months.

New to the Envirothon this year was a team made up entirely of Native Americans. They called themselves the F.B.I., an acronym for Five Beautiful Indians. "[Madera Soil Conservationist] **Jenny Gabor** was able to talk with the folks at **Sierra High School** and **North Fork Rancheria**, and they sponsored our first Native American team," Boyce says.

In addition to Boyce and Gabor, NRCS employees who serve on the state Envirothon committee are **Veronica Lopez** and **Robyn Smith**.

NRCS employees who volunteered as judges at this year's contest were **Jennifer Foster**, **Jerry Progner**, **Carol Rush**, **Edd Russell**, and **Curtis Tarver**. Retired State Conservationist **Chuck Bell** also served as a judge.

The winning team, **Arlington High School's Mountain Lions of Riverside**, will compete at the national Envirothon competition later this year in Springfield, Missouri.



Among the judges at this year's Envirothon were Merced Resource Conservationist Jennifer Foster and Mariposa District Conservationist Jerry Progner. *Photo courtesy of Brian Ziegler*



The F.B.I., short for Five Beautiful Indians, tests its wildlife knowledge. *Photo courtesy of Brian Ziegler*



Hands-on experience helped stimulate questions and learning. The students were grouped into small teams and rotated around the five science stations.

By Dave Sanden

*Area Public Affairs Specialist/
Red Bluff*

Photos: Dave Sanden

On April 20, NRCS participated in an exciting local Earth Day event, sponsored by the **Bureau of Land Management**. And fourth through eighth grade students from Redding's **Chrysalis, Mistletoe, and Shasta Meadows** schools got a valuable opportunity to learn by doing in a dynamic outdoor laboratory along Clear Creek.

This three-hour educational activity, appropriately named "Kids in the Creek Day," was held on a beautifully restored segment of the Lower Clear Creek Stream Restoration and Salmon Habitat Enhancement Project.

Shasta County Students Explore Area Ecology During "Creek Day"

The \$9 million, multi-phased Lower Creek Restoration Project is reversing the negative impact of past mining and gravel extraction, improving spawning habitat for salmon, and restoring the health and function of the Clear Creek watershed. It is a cooperative effort led by the **Western Shasta Resource Conservation District (RCD)** in cooperation with NRCS and other partners.

More than 90 students participated, moving through five stations, each demonstrating different aspects of area ecology. NRCS provided a Soil Science station, staffed by Earth Team member **Denise Lerner** and Soil Conservation Technician **Erik Kennedy** from the Redding Service Center. Through hands-on experience and locally collected samples, students learned about the process of soil formation and the importance of soil conservation and also discovered how to determine soil texture by feel.

Western Shasta RCD ran three of the learning stations—watersheds, rock and rivers,



Erik Kennedy shows and explains some diatomaceous earth samples he collected in Shasta County.

and restoration—which explained various aspects of the Clear Creek restoration and its effect on the watershed. Chrysalis Charter School ran the fifth station, called "Creek Critters," where students learned about the wide variety and importance of creatures in and around Clear Creek.



"Kids in the Creek" Day is aptly named. Here students are collecting samples of stream life to analyze at the Creek Critters station.

Quotable quotes

From the Past 70 Years

Hugh Hammond Bennett's insights remain as relevant today as when he spoke them more than 50 years ago. Bennett was the first chief of the Soil Conservation Service.

"Out of the long list of nature's gifts to man, none is perhaps so utterly essential to human life as soil."

"Take care of the land and the land will take care of you."

"In this democracy, national action to conserve soil must be generated by these millions of land users. If they are active and willing participants in such a movement, it will endure; otherwise it will fail."

"Before any work is done, each farm or ranch is carefully analyzed, both as a piece of land and as a business enterprise."

NRCS: A Partner In Conservation Since 1935

2005 marks the agency's 70th anniversary!



In March 1935, fierce windstorms from the Great Plains carried huge dark clouds of dust eastward and blackened skies as far away as the nation's capital. **Hugh Hammond Bennett**, a career soil scientist in USDA, convinced Congress that soil erosion was a menace that merited national attention.

On April 27, 1935, Congress established the Soil Conservation Service in the U.S. Department of Agriculture to conserve natural resources on agricultural lands, and named Bennett as Chief. During his tenure, Bennett stressed the importance of soil conservation to crowds across the country.

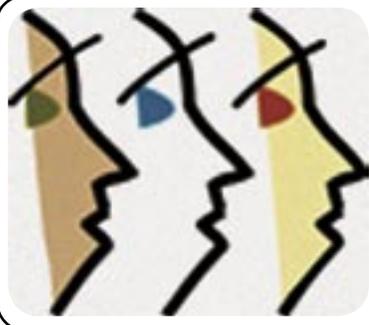
Today, NRCS remains the nation's leading agency in conserving natural resources on private lands. Celebrate with us as we mark the agency's 70th anniversary. Every employee and partner contributed to the agency's many accomplishments.

The nation's citizens can enjoy the benefits of productive soils, clean air and water, and open spaces because of the agency's work. We all have a reason to celebrate!

To view additional 70th anniversary materials, including articles, photos, interviews, NRCS timeline, and video, go to the national Web site at www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/seventiethannv.html.



The Father Of Soil Conservation: Hugh Hammond Bennett (1881-1960), the first Chief of the Soil Conservation Service, circa 1939.



CIVIL RIGHTS CORNER

By Tanya Robles
California Civil Rights
Committee Member

In April the National Civil Rights Committee (NCRC) convened in Fresno to learn about California's Civil Rights program and outreach activities. Included in the meeting's attendance were the National Special Emphasis Program Managers; California Civil Rights Advisory Committee; **Dave Smith**, California Civil Rights Liaison; **Jenny Gabor**, Federal Women's Program Manager; **Joe Takai**, Asian Pacific Islander Special Emphasis Program Manager; **Ken Grimes**, Black Emphasis Program Manager; **Chu Yang**, Soil Conservationist; **Dr. Sharon Nance**, Rural Sociologist; **Curtis Tarver**, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations; and



Tracy McDermott, recipient of the "Outstanding Disability Special Emphasis Program Manager of the Year" award from NRCS. Photo: Jim Cairns

Ed Burton, Acting State Conservationist.

The opening days of the week-long meeting included presentations on California's civil rights activities and outreach projects. Dr.

Sharon Nance and panelists, District Conservationist **Joe Williams**, Soil Conservationist **Ken Grimes**, and **Mailha Yang**, for Soil Conservationist **Sam Vang** discussed the barriers and successes encountered serving limited resource farmers.

Joe highlighted his partnership with the Tule River Indian Tribe. He and his staff have worked with the Tribe to implement various EQIP, WHIP, and reimbursable projects. Ken presented on the African-American Farmers of California, a group he helped establish with Dr. Sharon Nance and Curtis Tarver in 1998. Mailha Yang, Director of the Agape Refugee Ministry & Services (ARMS), discussed Sam Vang's outreach projects with the Southeast Asian community. Sam educated Southeast Asian farmers about NRCS programs, and despite many challenges facilitated the establishment of the



Meeting attendees touring the Community Garden Project Sam Vang helped establish for Southeast Asian communities in Fresno. Photo: Mary Baumann, NRCS North Dakota

Community Garden Project for the refugee community.

The Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPM) in attendance also presented activity reports for California. **Tracy McDermott**, Human Resources Specialist, was recognized for receiving the "Outstanding Disability Special Emphasis Program Manager of the Year" award from NRCS, National Headquarters in March. Tracy currently serves as the Disability SEPM and was praised for her excellent outreach and recruitment efforts.

The days were also full of educational tours of NRCS projects. One tour included a visit to the Community Garden Project which provides fresh fruits and vegetables to over 600 people. Following the tours, in observance of **Asian Pacific Islander Month**, the group met at B&K Restaurant for dinner where many experienced Thai cuisine for the first time!

Overall, the NCRC was impressed by their visit. The Committee felt "there are some very innovative and exciting outreach activities occurring in the State of California." In fact, two action items from this meeting regarding the NCRC will be forwarded to **Chief Knight**. The California Civil Rights Advisory Committee gives special thanks to the efforts of the Fresno Area and Field Office staff for the outstanding coordination of the NCRC visit.



Retired NRC Ser John Weatherford showing his Earth Team pride and spirit. Photo: Jim Cairns

In keeping with the celebration's conservation theme, blue bird houses and wood duck boxes (right) were installed at the wetland location. Eddie, a high school student in the Student Landowner Education and Watershed Program (SLEWS), attaches a box to a pole. Photo: Jim Cairns



QUICK SNAPS

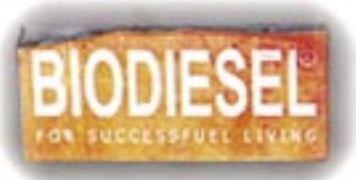
Yolo County
Earth Day celebration with
USDA Under Secretary
Mark Rey, April 22, 2005



Anita Brown (center) with Mark Cocke (left) and Under Secretary Mark Rey sharing a light-hearted moment. Photo: Dave Sanden

See article on page 5.

Tehama County RCD Hosts Workshop For Alternative Energy



One of several stickers on Devin O'Keane's biodiesel-powered truck espousing the virtues of the alternative fuel source.

By Dave Sanden

*Area Public Affairs Specialist/
Red Bluff*

Photos: Dave Sanden

On April 6, the Tehama County RCD hosted **Alternative: From Biodiesel to Solar** for ranchers, farmers and landowners at Elk Flat Ranch, west of Red Bluff. Demonstrations included biodiesel equipment and a solar pump watering system. The solar pumping watering system has been operated successfully by the ranch owner, **Larry Galper** for more than four years and is designed to

provide water for his livestock.

"The workshop was a great opportunity for ranchers and farmers to learn how they can use alternative energy systems on their property," said District Conservationist **Larry Branham**.

Program speakers were **Devin O'Keane**, farmer and biodiesel producer, and **Scott Jackson**, sales manager and installer for Evergreen Development, Renewable Energy Systems. O'Keane explained how easy it is to make your own biodiesel, cost of producing or purchasing, and laws and regulations related to producing and transporting the fuel. Jackson discussed solar power and how it pays the user, as well as wind power alternatives.

O'Keane demonstrated how anyone can make biodiesel in

their own kitchen by whipping up a small batch in a kitchen blender. The mixture consisted of mostly vegetable oil, with a little methoxide added (made with methanol and lye). He said the resulting mixture would need to settle for about 24 hours. Then the biodiesel could be siphoned off and used as a fuel.

There are at least three ways to run a diesel engine on bio-power, using vegetable oils, animal fats or both: Use straight vegetable oil (SVO); mix SVO with kerosene, diesel fuel or biodiesel; or convert oil/fat to biodiesel. All three work with both fresh and used oils. O'Keane prefers SVO or biodiesel made from used cooking grease because it recycles a waste product. He showed participants his Dodge Ram pickup truck, with



"I'm a little shy of government things," said rancher Larry Galper. "But I must say, working with NRCS and the RCD has been a very pleasant experience."

two separate fuel tanks and a switch, that runs well on both.

O'Keane said that you don't need to convert an engine to run it on biodiesel. "With SVO you do need to modify the engine a little." He says he gets about the same power and mileage as with conventional fuels—maybe a little better.

Jackson discussed solar power and how it pays the user, as well as wind power alternatives. He showed workshop attendees examples of solar panels and a solar/wind powered water pump that can pump 6,000 gallons per day. "The solar panels should last for at least 35 years," Jackson said. "They are guaranteed for 25 years, but the real lifespan is not yet known."

Jackson said he hasn't paid an electric bill in 25 years, since he converted his home to solar using two used panels. He is still using those panels and gets the same output as when he started.



Engine of O'Keane's alternative fuels pickup truck, modified to run on both biodiesel and SVO. When using SVO, the fuel tank needs to stay heated to prevent clogging the engine and injectors.

Arsenic & Old Stakes: Disposal Of Grape Stakes Funded

By Brian Ziegler

Area Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno

Photo: Brian Ziegler

NRCs is allocating \$450,000 this year to help farmers in eight central California counties dispose of grape stakes treated with chemicals that could negatively affect **San Joaquin Valley** air and water.

The money is being made available through the air quality enhancement portion of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) because of the hazards posed by stakes treated with chromated copper arsenate. It's believed that there are 16.6 million treated stakes needing to be disposed of in Kern, Kings, Tulare, Fresno, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus counties. That would equate to over 225,000 tons.

NRCS State Air Quality Coordinator **John Beyer** says it's not known how many growers will seek help through the EQIP program. "In most cases, we don't have enough to cover all the growers who come in and sign up," he says. "On average, we cover 66 percent."



Farmers are not allowed to burn the treated stakes because they would release chemicals into the air that are highly toxic and leave toxic ash. Chipping the stakes would also create an air quality problem, and the chemical can leach into the soil and contaminate water. Taking the stakes to an authorized landfill is the only viable solution.

Forward Landfill, Inc. of Manteca has been approved as a disposal site, and it's expected that American Avenue Landfill in Tranquillity will soon be approved.

Assistance will be given on a 50 percent matching basis. The deadline for farmers and ranchers to apply was June 17. First priority will be given to stakes pulled out earlier this decade.

The maximum amount any grower can dispose of on a cost-share basis is 310 tons, or about 200 acres, of stakes. Cost-sharing is allowed for disposal or dumping fees, transportation expenses, and costs associated with loading.

Lancaster To The Rescue: Los Angeles County EWP Activities

By Jae Lee
District Conservationist/Lancaster

Los Angeles County has had more than its fair share of disasters. Burned watersheds, torrential rainfalls, rising creeks and failing banks describe the conditions that have threatened property and lives in recent months. This past winter will go down as one of the wettest years in history for the storm ravaged county.

Gages record year-to-date rainfall levels of at least double the usual amount for many locations. The **Los Angeles Department of Public Works'** Newhall-Soledad gage reads 50.72 inches (as of May 6, 2005), where a normal year is 11.03 inches. Ominous storm clouds and thunderheads still loom and lurk overhead as the rainy season is not yet over.

Presidential disaster declarations were made for the storm events of January 3–5 and February 16–23 in several Southern California counties, allowing federal assistance to be made available to

eligible state and local agencies from the **Federal Emergency Management Agency** through the **California State Office of Emergency Services** for emergency work on infrastructure projects.

Private landowners and homeowners, however, don't have to wait for a disaster declaration to seek out project sponsors—typically public agencies of state, county, or city governments, or a special district—to represent them in Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) efforts.

Two EWP projects administered out of the Lancaster Service Center, the Lost Canyon Bridge and the Polynesian Mobile Home Park flood protection projects, were both sponsored by the **City of Santa Clarita** and are near completion. A third project, the Sand Canyon Mobile Home Park, along a quickly eroding bank of the Santa Clara River is awaiting potential funding.

The Lost Canyon Bridge project protects the bridge, flooding of the nearby **Pinecrest Elementary School**, a municipal water well, and a house. The Polynesian Mobile Home Park project



Sand Canyon Mobile Home Park: One home (left) has already been lost to the eroding bank of the Santa Clara River, and several others are still in harms way. Photo: Paul Nguyen

protects 30 homes from further flood damage and restores access in and out of the residential area.

The City of Santa Clarita, specifically **Robert Newman**, Director of Building and Engineering, and his staff have been tremendously helpful in their efforts to assist the citizens of their city. Individual homeowners and landowners can sometimes become extremely frustrated and disillusioned with the role of government during times of disaster and distress. EWP is an important example of how local government can partner with a federal agency to come to their aid. Kudos to the City of Santa Clarita!

First International Soil Salinity Conference

By Paul Laustsen
Area Public Affairs Specialist/Riverside

Scientists and natural resource managers converged on Riverside in April for the first **International Salinity Conference**, to discuss ways to manage resources affected by high saline conditions found around the world. Various speakers addressed 350 participants from 17 countries on topics ranging from the science of salinity to the social issues surrounding it.

The **Colorado River Basin** was a major focus at the conference as it serves over 27 million people in seven states. The basin suffers from heavy salt loading as a result of irrigation and agricultural runoff. To reduce the loading, **Jack Barnett**, Executive Director of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum, explained that the most effective way found to reduce salinity is to control the rate and method of irrigating upper basin cropland that drains into the river.

Worldwide, an estimated five million acres of arable land are lost annually to soil salinization, and water treatment costs are constantly increasing at unprecedented rates.

The conference concluded with a tour of the **Coachella Valley** led by District Conservationist **Sam Aslan** of the Indio Field Office. Aslan brought participants to the Salton Sea and a variety of agricultural fields to show the impact of salinity on the region. Together with the **Coachella RCD**, Aslan has implemented practices that help restore and even increase agricultural lands productivity.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was a major sponsor of the event, with representatives from around the nation in attendance, including **Ron Williams**, Director, NRCS NTSC-Central, Ft. Worth, Texas.



Touring Coachella Valley: A high point of the conference was a tour of Coachella Valley that included a stop at the Salton Sea. At various locations District Conservationist Sam Aslan (above) discussed how innovative conservation practices restore and increase agricultural productivity. Photo: Paul Laustsen

Charles Davis, California State Conservation Engineer who served on the International Salinity Forum Committee, said "the conference increased awareness, provided networking opportunities with other professionals, and helped attendees learn about and share new technologies." Thirteen California NRCS employees participated in the event. For more information about the forum visit www.waterresources.ucr.edu.

NRCS Co-Sponsors International Salinity Forum

By **Raul Ramirez**

Soil Conservationist/Bakersfield

Over 350 participants representing some 17 countries recently attended the International Salinity Forum in Riverside.

The major topics discussed during April's event were the global impacts of saline soils on agriculture production and the research that is being carried out by the scientific community to mitigate the effects of this worldwide natural resource concern. The socio-economic issues faced by people of several continents, as it relates to salinity, were presented by economists and other researchers.

The opening-day moderator was **Ron Williams**, director of the NRCS National Technical Service Center in Ft. Worth, Texas. He gave an introduction to the opening plenary session, its guest speakers, and all participants.

Daniel Hillel of the Center for Climate Systems Research, Columbia University, New York, received great reviews for his "Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Soil Salinity."

Julian Martinez Beltran of the Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome, Italy, presented an "Overview of Salinity Problems in the World and Strategies to Address the Problem." Many more research papers and topics that held the interest of those in attendance were heard in the ensuing days.

A poster on California's Integrated On-Farm Drainage Management (IFDM) system was prepared and presented by the **Westside Resource Conservation District, California Department of Water Resources, NRCS, University of California, Davis, and California State University, Fresno.**

During the poster session, **Vashek Cervinka, Kathleen Buchnoff, Raul**



NRCS attendees included, from left, Bob Fry, Edd Russell, Raul Ramirez, Jennifer Foster, Charles Davis, Cydean Gillespie, Arturo Carvajal and Raul Alvarado. *Photo courtesy of Edd Russell*

Ramirez and Lisa Basinal answered questions concerning this current and effective technology now in use in the **San Joaquin Valley** to address salinity and drainage issues.

One of the three IFDM projects featured on the poster, which has demonstrated feasible solutions to the economic impacts of salinity and drainage, was **Andrews Ag** which is currently in operation south of Bakersfield.

Irrigation Water Management Program Helps

Klamath Producers Save Water

By **Ayn Perry**

Soil Conservationist/Yreka

One of the primary goals of the Klamath EQIP Program is water conservation. To that end, the Yreka Field Office has embarked on an **Irrigation Water Management (IWM) Program**. The goal: Working to ensure a high level of management ability for new sprinkler irrigation systems.

The IWM program has several components: Moisture measuring hardware, an irrigation plan, a system evaluation, an end-of-season meeting, and incentive payments. One of the key components that have increased the level of landowner technology adoption is the use of a highly trained **Technical Service Provider (TSP)**.

The original effort by the local Cooperative Extension was conceived to show a possibility for fall flows in the Scott River for anadromous species. The initial irrigation management evaluation was conducted for **Siskiyou RCD** by **Steve Orloff**, Farm Advisor in Siskiyou County.

The intent was to evaluate current irrigation practices to determine whether improved irrigation management practices could conserve water for

enhanced fall flows in the Scott River—a time period critical to anadromous fish. Orloff concluded, "There was a wide variation in irrigation practices between growers. Some fields were over-irrigated while others were under-irrigated. The results clearly indicated there was some room for improvement in irrigation management on most of the farms evaluated."

The idea was that if landowners could see how and when they were irrigating, perhaps they would save money and water by reducing demand during September.

Starting in 2003, the **Shasta Valley Resource Conservation District (RCD)** implemented a similar project with **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** funds. Dubbed the "Irrigation Efficiency Through Landowner Education" grant, 20 landowners over a two-year period were given Watermark sensors and taught how to interpret the readings.

Adriane Garayalde, Shasta Valley RCD's IWM Project Coordinator, worked closely with these growers. "One landowner was able to save a whole first irrigation on a field," she said.

John Bennett was hired to implement

the initial program, and has the most hands-on experience. As a rancher, his practical approach is appreciated by landowners and agency folks alike.

This is the second year of the comprehensive program, and NRCS has cooperative agreements with both Siskiyou and Shasta Valley RCDs.

So far, interest and opportunity has far exceeded the budget. NRCS has been able to develop a program that fits the local community well. Klamath EQIP has helped fund staff and equipment through cooperative agreements and individual contracts. Mobile irrigation labs (MIL) typically provide system evaluations and present the distribution of uniformity (DU) information to irrigators. There is no local MIL, but there is good local irrigation expertise. The program's main limitation right now is appropriate funding.

It is difficult to coordinate EQIP program funds with annual NRCS agreements since NRCS funding cycles are not in sync with irrigation cycles. Funds are generally available after irrigation season begins.

Lorrie Bundy, Yreka Field Office Engineer, is enthusiastic about the program. "Our current approach is to track new irrigation systems and offer a comprehensive IWM package," said Bundy. "Since the system is new, the irrigator is open to learning new tools for water management."

Irrigation Management Workshop In Blythe

By **Steve Hill**

District Conservationist/Blythe

On March 23, Indio Field Office Soil Conservationist **Kevin Carpenter** conducted an all-day Spanish-language workshop in Blythe. The event was attended by 10 professional irrigators. Kevin started the day with a PowerPoint presentation, discussing the various irrigation systems common to the Low Desert, including management considerations. After lunch, the group visited two farms for show-and-tell.

Discussion topics covered included soil/moisture/plant relationships, root-zone depth of crops in the Palo Verde Valley, water intake rates of soils in the area, and determination of available soil moisture content by look and feel. Field office staff also heard from irrigators what is important to them, particularly regarding irrigation system design, management and maintenance.

The Palo Verde Valley is mostly irrigated by graded border or level border flooding, with some flood-furrow, center-pivot, and micro-sprinkler irrigation systems. Major issues of concern are water conservation, nutrient conservation—avoiding unnecessary leaching loss of nitrate and other chemicals from excessive water application—and integration of irrigation scheduling with other field operations.

Blythe NRCS Field Office staff would like to give special thanks to the following organizations: **Palo Verde RCD** (sponsor), **Indio NRCS Field Office** (presenter), **Riverside County Cooperative Extension** (host), **Riverside County Agricultural Commissioner's Office** (host), **Palo Verde Community College** (agenda/invitation translations), **CBI Properties** (host and participant), **Desert Security Farms** (host/participant), and **Hull Farms** (sponsor/participant).



At **Cavazos' Farm**: Host Rolando Cavazos is pictured in bush hat, fourth from right. Photo courtesy of **Steve Hill**

NRCS Helps Big Sandy Rancheria With Resource Concerns

By **Brian Ziegler**

Area Public Affairs Specialist/
Fresno

To hear **Kathy Childers** tell it, **Big Sandy Rancheria** is aptly named. "It's a big bathtub filled with sand," she says describing the topography of the 365-acre Rancheria near Auberry.

Childers, the Rancheria's natural resources manager, says that it's a bathtub that presents the Indians who live there—and who want to move back there—with challenges.

Soil erosion, water quality and quantity, too much brush, and inadequate fire emergency escape roads are some of the problems that concern her tribe.

Area 3 specialists **Steve Crow**, **Dave Krietemeyer**, **Edd Russell**, **Sharon Nance**, and **Brian Ziegler** recently teamed with **Rob Roy** and **Dennis Dudley** from the Madera Field Office to meet with Rancheria officials to help them solve these challenges.

Some of the Tribe's requests are straightforward enough:

Ventura County Emergency Assistance

By **Stephen Jewett**

District Conservationist/Somis

Following the 2003 firestorms that burned 176,000 acres in Ventura County and now this winters devastating rainstorms that triggered mud and debris flows, the NRCS Somis Field Office continues working to protect life and property through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program.

Working on the most recent flooding problems in partnership with local sponsors, Damage Survey Reports (DSR) for restoration work were completed to address critical areas of damage across Ventura County.



Jim Middleton (left) and **Stephen Jewett** inspect four emergency rock groins that were installed along the Santa Clara River bank, at the Santa Paula Airport facility through EWP. Photo courtesy of **Stephen Jewett**

Damaged areas such as the **Santa Paula Airport** and **Coyote Creek** received national media attention as the mud and debris flows washed away stream banks, homes, and property.

Help with planting an apple orchard and a community garden. Half a dozen homes need backyard conservation assistance as does the Rancheria cemetery.

But there are big ticket items too. Childers says a wastewater treatment plant is needed to service the 100 people who live on the Rancheria as well as its Mono Wind Casino.

Crow says the NRCS team is providing technical assistance

Upon talking with homeowners after the devastation, some commented that they were still in shock from seeing their life possessions—and seemingly part of their lives—lost to the storms.

One homeowner said he saw the overwhelming runoff flows coming over the top of their neighbor's home as his family retreated to higher ground for safety. Sediment and debris were left as high as seven feet above a bridge that was used by homeowners to access their property.

With \$6.9 million in EWP funding approved for seven DSRs in Ventura County, ongoing EWP work is a major part of this county's restoration. Project restoration work has consisted of removing sediment and debris, stabilizing stream banks, placement of rock riprap, placement of groins, installation of pilot channels and placement of sandbags.

The EWP workload continues to be a major portion of field office work in addition to providing Emergency Conservation Practice (ECP) assistance to farmers who are dealing with lost fencing and irrigation systems, in addition to debris removal.

The Somis field office is in the process of completing the final certification of 2003 ECP practices as they anticipate the arrival of additional ECP referrals for 2005.

to the Tribe by developing an inventory and analysis report. "We're identifying problems we were told about, plus what we saw during our visit, and will present the Tribe with a list of opportunities they can take for corrective action," Crow says. "The Tribe will review the document and determine their highest priorities. NRCS can then provide more detailed conservation planning assistance."

Caligrams

Statewide News In Brief

NRCS Seedling Giveaway Helps Celebrate Earth Day

By Karla Vega

Public Outreach Coordinator/
Escondido

In honor of Earth Day, the Seedling Committee of the Forest Area Safety Taskforce gave away tree seedlings to San Diego County residents on April 22. The seedlings package included planting and care instructions.

The Forest Area Safety Taskforce is continually working on projects to remove dead, dying and diseased trees. Removing hazardous trees will reduce falling hazards and fuel loads that contribute to wildfire conditions. “While we are reducing risks to life and property, we want to take opportunities like Earth Day to replace the trees we remove,” said Bryan Petit, NRCS Program Leader.



Evidence of an ancient lake was found in a pit Hanford Soil Scientist Kerry Arroues (above) dug near Kettleman City. Photo: Brian Ziegler

By Brian Ziegler

Area Public Affairs Specialist/
Fresno

An extinct lake that covered much of what was to become Kings County prompted NRCS Soil Scientist Kerry Arroues to lead a group of professional scientists to its shoreline and study the soil beneath it.

“I thought this would be a great way to get people involved and actually see how the soils, landscapes, and the cultures

Scientists Get The Dirt On Ancient Lake

living there in the past intersected right at that lake,” Arroues, president of the Professional Soil Scientists Association of California, says.

The ancient body of water was called **Tulare Lake**. It was named for the tules, or bulrushes, which grew thickly around it. At 760 square miles, it was almost four times bigger than Lake Tahoe, and was supplied with waters brought from the Sierra Nevada Mountains via the Kings, Kaweah, and Tule Rivers.

Evidence of the lake’s existence was found in a pair of pits Arroues dug near Kettleman City for association members to study during its annual meeting. “Sandy [soil] over clay. Even if you don’t have a background in soils that’s pretty definitive,” he says in describing the texture in one of the pits.

There is also evidence that its shores were a favorite habitation for Native American tribes. Chert and jasper arrowheads and stone cooking utensils have been found in great abundance on the various shorelines which have marked the periodic changes in water area as the cycles of wet and dry years have rolled on.

Today the lake has vanished, eliminated by the march of progress. Beginning in the early 1870s, much of its water was diverted into irrigation canals or reservoirs. What was once 116,000 acres of lake bottom has become some of the world’s richest agricultural land.

It is that land that attracted Arroues and his group of soil scientists—which includes several NRCS employees—to study the rim of the old lake basin. As part of the tour, the group also traveled to Coalinga, Huron, Mendota, and Three Rocks. The area is included in a new soil survey Arroues just completed which identifies the soil composition of 1.4 million acres of land in west Fresno County.

HR Personnel Actions

Name	Position	Action	Grade	Location	Date
Sheri Fox	Water Quality	Career Cond Appt	GS-9	Dixon	3/20/05
Erin O’Farrell	Env Engr	Conv to CC Appt	GS-9	Ukiah	4/3/05
Tim Morin	Forester	Conv to CC Appt	GS-11	San Jacinto	4/17/05
Bryan Petit	Forester	Conv to CC Appt	GS-11	Escondido	4/17/05
Brooks Englehardt	Res Consvst	Career Promo	GS-11	Riverside	2/20/05
Jackie Shick	Soil Consvst	Career Promo	GS-11	Livermore	2/20/05
Jason Smith	Ag Engr	Career Promo	GS-11	Escondido	2/20/05
Julie Irinco	Area Adm Coord	Promotion	GS-8	Salinas AO	3/5/05
Jae Lee	Dist Consvst	Promotion	GS-12	Lancaster	3/5/05
Carolyn LoFreso	Soil Consvst	Promotion	GS-11	Tehachapi	3/5/05
Susan Perez	Soil Consvst	Career Promo	GS-9	Fresno	3/5/05
Dale Kroschel	Range Consvst	Promotion	GS-11	FallRiverMills	4/3/05
Alaina Frazier	Soil Scntst	Promotion	GS-9	Arcata	4/17/05
Susan Looper	Soil Consvst	Promotion	GS-9	Oroville	5/1/05
Cindy Montepagno	Soil Consvst	Reassign to Fountain Valley	GS-9	Readlands	2/20/05
Rita Bickel	Res Consvst	Reassign to Davis-RTS	GS-12	Riverside	3/5/05
Madalene Ransom	Ag Econ	Transfer to SC	GS-12	Davis WSP	3/19/05
Larry Brewer	Dist Consvst	Reassign from WA	GS-12	Lakeport	3/20/05
Jennifer Golder	Range Consvst	Reassign from Red Bluff	GS-9	Eureka	5/15/05
Robert Long	Dist Consvst	Retirement	GS-12	Jackson	3/5/05
Scott Eberly	RC&D Coord	Retirement	GS-12	Weaverville	4/30/05
Theresa Bailey	Prog Spclst	Disability Retirement	GS-9	Davis – STC	5/13/05
Ann Francis	Landscape Eco	Resignation	GS-11	Alturas	3/25/05
Chris Delaney	Ag Engr	Resignation	GS-11	Petaluma	3/31/05