

"Helping People Help the Land"



California

WINTER
2006

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

A photograph of two men standing side-by-side in an office setting. The man on the left is wearing a white cowboy hat, a dark suit jacket, a striped shirt, and a dark tie. The man on the right is wearing a red button-down shirt and a dark patterned tie. Behind them is a painting of a landscape with mountains and a river. The text "Burton & Suarez: The New California Team" is overlaid on the image in a large, bold, yellow font with a black outline.

Burton & Suarez: The New California Team

Plus!

Milk Producers in San Joaquin Valley

All Hail the King & Queen of CSP!

Flach Says Good-Bye; Aslan Gets Honored



with Ed Burton

State Conservationist

Now that I'm fully recovered from that horse accident I had a few months ago—someone even told me I had “spring in my step” the other day—I'm going to get out to the field and meet everyone as soon as possible. I like to lead from the field, not from Davis.

With Carlos' help as well as other leadership team members, I will spend

as much time in the field as I can. I want to get to know our field employees and partners to better understand their concerns and issues, so I can help them and us—as a team—accomplish the agency's mission here in California.

Wherever I go in California, I see local leadership. Recently, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting in Burbank along with private citizens, city and county officials, and legislators that came together to discuss conservation and natural resources issues. I was honored to have been invited to discuss who NRCS is and what we do to protect natural resources, and to offer our help as a partner in their efforts.

At the meeting, I experienced firsthand what local leaders and citizens are trying to do to get organized, to develop open spaces, build horse trails, and protect wildlife in the heart of the LA Basin area.

Their concern and groundwork now will help ensure those areas are protected and available for future generations.

I just want to take this opportunity to thank the leadership and staff for all of the great conservation work you are doing, day-in and day-out. I'm so proud of our accomplishments—as an agency, a state, and a team—of how we get conservation on the ground.

Whatever the obstacles may be, we work through them in a coordinated team effort to get the job done. And that says a lot for who we are as an agency and as individuals!

Space here doesn't allow me to thank everyone individually, but rest assured that you and your great work are invaluable and much appreciated by me, California, and NRCS as a whole.

Thanks again, folks, for all that you do!

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On the Cover

State Conservationist Ed Burton & Deputy State Conservationist Carlos Suarez, December 2005.

Photo & Design: Jim Cairns

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Past issues are available on the Web at www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/news/currentdev/

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California Current Developments magazine is published quarterly

Spring issue deadline: April 3, 2006

Materials submitted may be edited for content, clarity & length

Some photos have been digitally enhanced

California's New Deputy STC, Carlos Suarez



Deputy State Conservationist Carlos Suarez (right) is pictured with Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns (center) and then Acting State Conservationist Allen Green at August's Farm Bill Forum in Fresno. *Photo: Reina O'Beck*

Congratulations, **Carlos Suarez**, as California's new Deputy State Conservationist as of September 4, 2005. He had served as Acting Deputy STC since May.

Carlos began his career with NRCS (SCS) in 1990, as a summer intern in Puerto Rico. He has held positions as a Soil Conservationist in West Virginia, District Conservationist in Pennsylvania, Resource Conservationist in Indiana, Watershed Advisor assigned to USAID/American Embassy in Nicaragua, ASTC for Field Operations in Wisconsin, and most recently served as Deputy State Conservationist in Nebraska.

Carlos earned a B.S. in Agricultural Engineering (Mechanization) Technology from the University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez, and a M.S. in Geoenvironmental Studies from Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania.

Carlos is married to former NRCS Field Engineer **Yamilette Suarez**. They have two children, **Andrea 8**, and **Alex 4**.

Ag Secretary Johanns Visits Fresno For Farm Bill Forum

By Brian Ziegler

Area Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno

The tugging for money from the next multibillion-dollar federal Farm Bill is already underway, and U.S. Agriculture Secretary **Mike Johanns** got to hear a good share of it in August at a forum in Fresno.

Johanns said his role was to listen at the three-hour Farm Bill Forum that drew more than 450 people to the Fresno Fairgrounds. Listening was what he did, sitting on the dais with Reps. **Jim Costa**, **Devin Nunes**, and **George Radanovich**, as more than 50 participants stepped to the microphones to call for a wide range of actions in shaping the legislation, which is more than two years away.

Several in the parade of speakers said they want the bill to provide more for producers of specialty crops such as fruits, vegetables and nuts, which form the bulk of California's farm production.

Some speakers said they want more support for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which helps share costs of projects farmers adopt to meet water or air quality standards.

"I would like to see the expansion of EQIP," said citrus grower **Richard Moss** of Ivanhoe, adding that a national air quality director's position should be made in the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The forum marked Johanns' first official visit to California as U.S. agriculture secretary. At the end of the gathering, he said he was impressed by the state's diversity of crops, pointing out it is home to only a few program crops that have

long been part of the federal Farm Bill, including rice and cotton.

"A lot of crops are not subsidized in the Farm Bill," he said. "Seventy-five percent of our nation's agriculture is not subsidized."

Johanns says it has not yet been decided whether "a specific legislative proposal" will emerge from the listening sessions. Fresno was the sixth location for sessions that continued through 2005.

The current Farm Bill runs through 2007, and Johanns said he would like to see action on a new bill by the first part of 2007.

At a news conference prior to the event, Johanns appeared with California Agriculture Secretary **A.G. Kawamura** and California Resources Secretary **Mike Chrisman**. He took the opportunity to present a \$2,500 check to the African-American Farmers of California so it can award a scholarship to an African-American student who is interested in studying agriculture. Established four years ago, this year's scholarship is given in memory of the late **Sam Sherman**, a long-time member of the African-American farmers group.

"Sam Sherman's death in June left a void in the agriculture community," Johanns said. "This is a small token of our esteem and appreciation for his dedication and support of agriculture and education."

Johanns also announced the 2005 scholarship recipients of the NRCS Tribal Scholars Program and Asian-Pacific Islander Scholars Program. Both programs



From left to right, Reps. Jim Costa, Devin Nunes, George Radanovich, and Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns listen to what should be included in the next Farm Bill. *Photo: Brian Ziegler*



Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns conducts a news conference prior to the Farm Bill listening session in Fresno. Rep. George Radanovich (right) looks on. *Photo: Brian Ziegler*

provide Native American and Asian-Pacific students with an opportunity to study agriculture and related natural resource sciences, as well as giving USDA the opportunity to recruit some of the brightest students of native heritage in the country.

California NRCS Staff Attend White House Conservation Conference

By **Johnnie Siliznoff**
Air Quality Specialist/Fresno



California NRCSers Johnnie Siliznoff (left) and John Beyer (right) chat with NRCS Chief Bruce Knight at the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation. Photo courtesy of Johnnie Siliznoff

The White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation was held the last week of August in St Louis, Missouri. Its purpose was to encourage cooperation from the various partners in the nation's conservation effort, bringing together participants from throughout the country. It was only the fifth such conference in the past 100 years and the first this century.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was as a lead agency in bringing the conference together. Many federal level officials attended or presented talks through closed circuit television, including President **George Bush**, Secretary of Agriculture **Mike Johanns**, EPA Administrator **Stephen L. Johnson**, and Defense Secretary **Donald Rumsfeld**.

The theme of the conference was strengthening partnerships and promoting cooperative conservation as an alternative to regulatory conservation. Presenters from throughout the nation talked about conservation efforts they have implemented and the results achieved.

NRCS State Air Quality Coordinator **John Beyer** and Air Quality Specialist **Johnnie Siliznoff** of the Fresno Area Office attended through the invitation of a partner group called Agriculture Improving Resources (AIR). AIR is a consortium of some 20 agricultural producer groups throughout the San Joaquin Valley who work with stakeholders, regulators, government agencies, private industry, and environmental groups to improve air quality in the region.

The NRCS air quality staff has been an active participant in AIR, helping the group obtain start-up grant money and developing Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) as a way for growers to voluntarily comply with regulations of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

The AIR booth was one of the most popular booths in the Exhibitor's Hall, drawing more than 500 visitors, including Secretary Johanns and NRCS Chief **Bruce Knight**. Beyer and Siliznoff staffed the booth and distributed more than 500 information packets about California's air quality program, along with samples of dried fruits and nuts from the agriculture bounty of the San Joaquin Valley.

This event provided an opportunity to interact with people from diverse backgrounds who share a common interest in conservation. Many seemed surprised at the willingness of agricultural producers in the San Joaquin Valley to comply voluntarily with air quality regulations through the CMPs.

For more information on the White House Conference, visit their Web site at www.conservation.ceq.gov/index.html.



A Message From Chief Bruce Knight

Thanks For Your Dedication!

I want you to know how proud I am of what we've accomplished with our partners for conservation. I deeply appreciate all that each of you have done to make this a successful year for NRCS. We are fulfilling our mission and making a difference for our customers and for the environment.

At the same time, I want you to know I recognize this hasn't been easy. Many of our field offices are definitely on overload. Someone told me it's like playing in the big leagues with all your players on the field—and no one on the bench or in the bullpen to relieve them. Thank you for rising to the challenge.

As we've moved into the big time with our funding, we've also experienced additional workload and closer scrutiny. We have to find new ways to accomplish our work, and we have to depend more on technology than ever before. That's a stressful transition. We're operating in a new environment with greater demands, but also greater opportunities to increase conservation on working agricultural lands.

Nevada County Student Takes Top Honors At Annual CARCD Speak-Off



A Future NRCSer? Speak-off champ Casey Moreno (left) with Deputy STC Carlos Suarez at CARCD. Photo: Paul Laustsen

Nevada Union High School senior **Casey Moreno** took top

honors in the California Association of Conservation District's statewide Speak-Off Contest held in San Diego in November. The topic of this year's contest was "The Impacts of Fire and the Role of the Resource Conservation Districts."

Presenting the California Speak-Off Contest awards was the National Association of Conservation Districts president, **Bill Wilson**, and NRCS Deputy State Conservationist **Carlos Suarez**, who offered each of the regional winners a summer internship with NRCS.

Students from seven regions in California competed in the highest level of the competition. Casey's speech included his family's experience in the 49er fire, and how their farm animals helped manage the fuels on their property. Through good grazing techniques, the animals helped save the Moreno's home and their land from the catastrophic fire that consumed 30,000-plus acres in Nevada County in 1989.

Congratulations, Casey Moreno!

CSP Celebrated In Richvale

By **Dave Sanden**

Area Public Affairs Specialist/Red Bluff

A signing ceremony and celebration of the outstanding success of California's first round of Conservation Security Program (CSP) funding was held in September at Lundberg Family Farms in Richvale.

Amidst waving fields of rice, Lundberg Family Farms was honored for their high achievement in CSP, receiving a plaque from NRCS and high praise from attending industry and government leaders.

Lundberg Family Farms achieved the first Tier III level of CSP land stewardship in the Lower Butte Watershed due to their many soil and water conservation practices and wildlife enhancements. The Lower Butte Watershed had 141 CSP contracts out of a total of 393 in California's five eligible watersheds.

"CSP is a win-win for farmers and ranchers, the public, and the environment," said District Conservationist **Hue Dang**. "It encourages farmers and ranchers to continue with their conservation practices, and it provides incentives to do more. Farmers and ranchers not only produce food for our nation, but they also produce clean air and water and habitat for wildlife. And this benefits everyone."



Deputy STC Carlos Suarez (center) and District Conservationist Hue Dang (right) with Jessica Lundberg of Lundberg Family Farms. *Photo: Dave Sanden*

The event drew about 40 attendees. Speakers included NRCS Deputy State Conservationist **Carlos Suarez**, State Assemblymen **Doug LaMalfa** and **Rick Keene**, RCD Director **D.C. Jones**, Butte County Farm Bureau past president **Tod Kimmelshue**, California Rice Commission Manager **Paul Buttner**, and Lundberg family member **Jessica Lundberg**.

The Lundberg farm is part organic and part "eco-farmed,"

which is what the family named its farming style that uses minimal chemicals and improves the soil each year. The 3,200 acre, family run-rice operation has long farmed in harmony with nature, respecting the land and wildlife, and using methods that continue to improve the environment for future generations.

"The way we farm actually started when my grandfather moved to California from Nebraska in the 1930s," said Lundberg. "He came with ideas about how the ground should be cared for. He thought we should leave the ground better than we found it."

The Lundbergs use ecological farming methods on all fields. They do not burn rice straw after harvest. Instead, it is re-incorporated into the soil. Other conservation practices include recycling animal manure into fertilizer, crop rotations, and integrated pest management.

"Farmers like to cooperate with each other, and that's what we have here," said Kimmelshue who as President of the Butte County Farm Bureau was very supportive of the formation of the Butte County RCD.

Event refreshments included homemade rice puddings, fresh fruit, and a variety of rice chips. A tour of Lundberg Family Farms' production and processing facilities followed the ceremony.

In Focus

Helen Could Always Do It!



After 35 years of Federal service—11 years in California—former Assistant State Conservationist for Programs Helen Flach retired in January. "My years in California have been the highlight of my career, and I will miss working with all of you," says Flach. Helen, pictured above, is shown at her *bon voyage* party in August before beginning a detail in Washington, D.C. *Photo: Jim Cairns*

What Is CEAP?

By **Vern Finney**
Geologist/Davis

The Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) has a two-pronged approach. One is a national component using statistical data from the National Resources Inventory and the reporting systems for accomplishments that employees provide on individual and systems components. This component will look at cropland, wildlife, wetlands and grazing lands results. The second is a detailed study and analysis of selected watersheds distributed across the country. Studies in these watersheds are expected to help correlate the national findings and ultimately point to ways to improve the measurement of results.

Stemple Creek CEAP Watershed — A Cooperative Effort

- NRCS in California is the recipient of funding to manage this Special Emphasis Watershed
- The Agricultural Research Service (ARS, Oxford, Miss.; Tifton, Ga.), UC Davis Extension Service and the Marin County RCD are Cooperators
- The Stemple Creek CEAP Watershed will utilize three linked models to analyze sediment and nutrient loadings for present watershed condition, affects of installed practices through programs like EQIP, and evaluation of alternatives. The three linked models are AnnAGNPS, REMM, and CONCEPTS.

CEAP Project Team

NRCS in California's evaluation of the Stemple Creek Watershed is continuing to move forward under the guidance of **Luana Kiger**, CEAP Coordinator, and other NRCS staff including **Tom Share**, GIS; **Charlette Epifanio**, District Conservationist; **Vern Finney**, Geologist; **Jessica Sternfels**, Soil Conservationist; and **Ken Oster**, Area Soil Scientist, among others.



By Brian Ziegler
Area Public Affairs Specialist/
Fresno

Milk producers struggling with new laws requiring them to report how much waste their dairy operations generate got help from the California Dairy Quality Assurance Program (CDQAP), a partnership of educators and government agencies that includes NRCS, during a series of workshops held recently throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

New federal and state regulations for animal feeding operations have led to growing scrutiny of dairies in central California. State law now requires all milk producers in the valley to report how much waste their dairy operations generate, with fines ranging

By NRCS Field Office &
Placer County RCD Staffs



Cliff, who lives in Auburn with his family, plans on staying active during his retirement years. His immediate plans include helping his son on a home remodeling project and assisting his mother on the Heitz Family Vineyard located in Napa County.

Cliff Heitz had integrity throughout his career and will be missed by his co-workers, staff, and farmers and ranchers alike. Happy retirement, Cliff!

Milk Producers Get Help Reporting Dairy Waste

Visalia District Conservationist Joe Williams (right) answers a dairy producer's question during a water quality workshop in Tulare. Photo: Brian Ziegler

from \$1,000 to \$5,000 a day for those who don't.

The purpose of the waste discharge report, which had to be filed with the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board in Fresno by October 17, 2005, is to confirm who owns and operates dairies and to identify how much land is available for applying manure.

Required information included stating how many gallons of new wastewater is generated daily, whether a tail water return system is available, the total number of acres of cropland to which liquid manure is applied, and whether an emergency response plan is available if a liquid waste storage facility has an accidental spill.

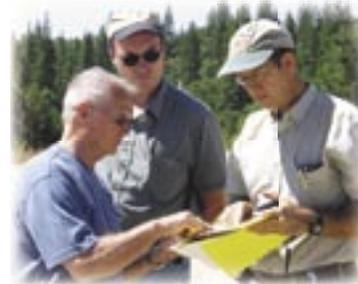
The workshops were conducted to help milk producers prepare their reports. NRCS staff attended the

meetings to inform attendees about **Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans** (CNMPs). Developing a CNMP lets producers find out if they have enough manure storage volume, enough cropland to effectively use that manure, a record system to help apply manure relative to crop needs, and whether any safeguards they have will keep runoff on site in the event of a major storm.

NRCS staff also answered questions about how the **Environmental Quality Incentives Program** (EQIP) can help dairy operators meet the new requirements.

Typically, EQIP assistance comes in the form of planning, designing, and installing facilities that store and treat manure. This can include manure storage ponds, tail water return systems, manure separators, sediment basins, composting facilities, flow meters, and irrigation systems.

In 2005, EQIP provided \$48 million to about 1,600 producers, including dairy and other livestock producers.



Making "Muddy Falls" A Tourist Mecca: North Fork Rancheria Housing Director Bill Hussmann (left) points out plans for a development project to NRCS' Dave Krietemeyer (center) and Edd Russell. See article on page 7. Photo: Brian Ziegler



Ag Secretary Visits Fresno: NRCS staff pose with Secretary Mike Johanns (center) during the Farm Bill Forum. See article on page 3.



Thanks, Tanya : Deputy STC Carlos Suarez congratulates outgoing Civil Rights Committee member Tanya Robles. See Civil Rights Corner on page 11. Photo: Reina O'Beck



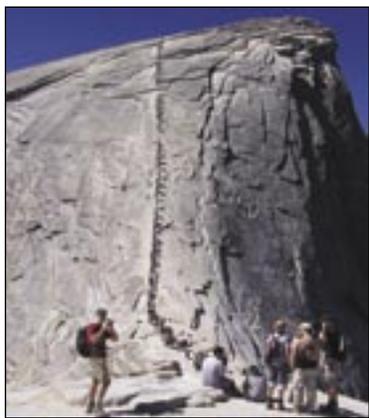
New Farmers Learn To Relish Trellises: Jon Chilcote (left) and Brook Gale spoke about soil fertility and efficient water use at a workshop for Southeast Asian farmers. See article on page 11. Photo: Brian Ziegler

Auburn District Conservationist Retires

After 35 years with USDA, District Conservationist **Cliff Heitz** retired from the Natural Resources Conservation Service in August 2005.

In 1968, Cliff began working for the U.S. Forest Service as a Forestry Aide, then joined the Soil Conservation Service in 1974. Following a brief stint in Lancaster, he was promoted to District Conservationist in Tehachapi in 1978. In 1984, Cliff was selected as District Conservationist at the Auburn Field Office where he remained until retiring.

Cliff was a leader in the Placer County agricultural community. Because of his efforts, hundreds of farmers and landowners received sound technical and financial assistance to improve their farming operations through the years. These types of improvements included water conservation measures, topsoil erosion control implementation and, most recently, healthy forest and wildfire reduction program implementation.



Yosemite Hikers Can Thank NRCS

Hikers in Yosemite National Park, like these waiting to inch their way to the top of Half Dome (left), an 8,800 foot granite cliff, will be able to enjoy new trails thanks to a soil survey being conducted by NRCS. *Photo: Edd Russell*

By Brian Ziegler

Area Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno

People hiking in Yosemite National Park can thank the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for getting a leg up on any new trails they walk on in the future. That's because the National Park Service (NPS) is planning to use a soil survey being conducted through the Hanford Soil Survey Office to help build new trails.

"Ninety-five percent of the park is wilderness and the only development we have out there are trails for people to get around in the back country," says NPS Branch Chief **Joe Meyer**. "Where

we put those trails—avoiding soil types that are highly erosive—are particularly important."

NRCS entered into an inter-agency agreement with the Park Service to provide a soil survey of the park outside Yosemite Valley, an area covering approximately 750,000 acres.

The survey began in 1996, under the direction of Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo soil science professor Dr. **Ron Taskey**. He is working with Hanford soil scientists **Kerry Arroues** and **Bry Schmidt** to complete the project by fall 2005. A similar survey of Yosemite Valley was completed by NRCS soil scientists in the early 1990s.

Arroues recently provided a status report to Park Service scientists and researchers. He told them that in order to complete the latest survey, almost 500 soil pits have been hand dug—each one about four feet deep—since the project began.

Arroues said the logistics to accomplish this was a big deal. "It took somebody to choose the site, then get to the site, dig the hole, sample the soil layers, get them out to a vehicle, take them to an office, get the description into a database, decide what you need in terms of laboratory data, and then send it to the National Soil Survey Lab in Lincoln, Nebraska."

In addition to building new trails, Meyer says the soil survey will have other applications, including water management, forestry, archeology, and facility placement. "There are some soils that will provide a good foundation for a building and others that won't. We'll use the survey to determine where to put future development."

Making "Muddy Falls" A Tourist Mecca

By Brian Ziegler

Area Public Affairs Specialist/Fresno

Residents in North Fork could have a new place to hold community events if the North Fork Rancheria is successful with its plans to build an amphitheater and farmers market there.

The Tribe wants to capture tourist traffic driving through town and has asked NRCS for assistance in stabilizing a hillside next to Road 222.

The hillside is part of the Tribe's 65-acre housing development. As many as 30 houses will be built there according to **Bill Hussmann**, the Tribe's housing director.

To control erosion at the housing development, water is being diverted down what Hussmann calls "Muddy Falls." Water flows into a holding basin, but a large amount of sediment is washing down with it.

The Tribe's environmental director, **Mary Adelzadeh**, and Hussmann met with Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations **Curtis Tarver**, Resource Conservationist **Sharon Nance**, and Public Affairs Specialist **Brian Ziegler**—all from the NRCS Fresno Area Office—to discuss the Tribe's needs. Then, Area Engineer **Dave Krietemeyer** and Soil Scientist **Edd Russell** were brought in to study the site and devise a plan that addresses the Tribe's concerns.



NRCS has been asked to help prevent sedimentation from hindering plans to erect hillside seating next to a site for a proposed amphitheater. *Photo: Brian Ziegler*

Soils & Conservation Boot Camp

By Terry Aho

NRCS West National Technology Support Center

Jennifer Foster, Resource Conservationist, Merced Field Office, Soil Scientist **Terry Aho**, West National Technology Support Center, **Steve Campbell**, MLRA Pacific Northwest Soil Survey Region, among others, conducted a soil instruction in August at the Conservation Boot Camp in Corvallis, Oregon.

The first day of field exercises was conducted to provide participants an opportunity to experience doing soil texture, color and looking for redoximorphic features.

The second day of field exercise was conducted on the Kenagy Farm used during Boot Camp. Students were provided with a pre-generated soil map for the farm, several soil interpretative maps created with Soil Data Viewer, and several soil reports for the soils on the farm.

Using a soil auger, students observed and recorded soil texture and depth of textural change. They also watched for and recorded depth to redoximorphic features, if found. They compared their observations with the data from the soil survey. This provided an opportunity to further discuss soil survey maps/data, major/minor soil components and natural variability, and how they should temper the soil survey information with field observations in their conservation planning and resource concern evaluations.



Instructors at each of three soil pits (above) provided minimal guidance while students worked through recording their observations. *Photo courtesy of Terry Aho*



Aslan Honored By USDA Awards

"This is what we do," Sam Aslan (left) says modestly of his achievements. Aslan is pictured here standing in a grove of date palms in the Coachella Valley. Photo: Paul Laustsen

enhanced environmental protection of California date palm production.

Both the Beltsville and Mid-Atlantic Awards are prestigious in their own right. But the Mid-Atlantic Regional Federal Laboratories Consortium Technology Transfer Award holds the particular distinction of including all federal research laboratories from all departments of the federal government that are stationed in the Mid-Atlantic states in the competition. Some of these include the Army, Navy, and the Environmental Protection Agency, all organizations that are performing outstanding research.

Among the many compliments Aslan and Dr. Abdul-Baki received, Dr. Harry Danforth, head of the Beltsville Area Technology Transfer Office said, "Every time I read what you have done

for the date and grape farmers of California, I am amazed at your accomplishments and grateful that you are such exemplar ARS Scientists."

Aslan met Dr. Baki six years ago, when he started looking for ways to assist the ailing date industry in the Coachella Valley by improving soil health. Aslan was impressed by a sustainable no-till system that Baki had developed for vegetable crops in the East, and invited Baki to California. Baki took a six-month sabbatical and worked with Aslan to design the no-till system, which uses cover crops to add nitrogen to the soil.

The initial research was completed on a 200-acre orchard, which saw date production rise by 20 percent while fruit quality rose 30 percent. The resulting no-till system is also completely organic.

True to nature, Aslan remains modest on his achievements that have benefited California's \$100 million date industry. "This is what we do: We help farmers produce better crops while encouraging them to conserve natural resources."

By Paul Laustsen
Area Public Affairs
Specialist/Riverside

Indio NRCS District Conservationist Sam Aslan and Dr. Aref Abdul-Baki of the Sustainable Agricultural Systems Laboratory were recognized in September with a USDA Beltsville Area Technology Transfer Award and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Federal Laboratories Consortium Technology Transfer Award. The awards honored their efforts in developing and introducing a no-tillage, biologically-based management system, which has restored profitability and



Contest winners touring Pardee Dam learned that its water discharge is equal to a million garden hoses. Photo: Brian Ziegler

By Brian Ziegler
Area Public Affairs Specialist/
Fresno

As a reward for winning a poster contest that promoted the wise use of water, eleven grade school

RC&D Contest Winners Get Watershed Grand Tour

students from Calaveras and Amador counties were treated to a tour of a watershed around Lake Pardee in Ione last fall.

The tour was sponsored by the Central Sierra Resource Conservation & Development (CSRC&D) office through its Stewardship Through Education team. The outing included stops at Pardee Dam and Powerhouse, a cave filled with Native American pictographs, and a pioneer homestead.

The group learned that the water discharge from Pardee Dam, which supplies drinking water to most of the communities on the eastside of San Francisco Bay, is equal to a million garden hoses.

The East Bay Municipal Utilities District operates the dam, and also manages a cave on company land that contains rock paintings drawn 500 to 700 years ago. Along the walk to the site the youngsters learned about native plants and their uses.

The CSRC&D Stewardship Through Education team advocates environmental awareness of local watersheds among youth and is made up of semi-retired, retired, and part-time teachers.

'Round the State



Happy Retirement, Ed: STC Ed Burton (left) reads the inscription on a plaque commemorating Ed Johnson's 30-plus years of federal service at his retirement party in December at the Davis State Office. Ed's three favorite things he wanted to do in the immediate future were golf, golf, golf! Photo: Diane Blohm



Welcome, Kate & Greg: New members of the California Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) are Kate Simpson (Riverside) and Greg Norris (Davis). See Civil Rights Corner on page 11. Photo: Reina O'Beck



Great Job, Dave: Deputy STC Carlos Suarez awards Willows District Conservationist Dave Rose with a plaque for his outstanding one-year term as Chair of the California Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC). See Civil Rights Corner on page 11. Photo: Reina O'Beck

EQIP Funded Pipeline Keeps Klamath Rancher Smiling

By **Dave Sanden**
Area Public Affairs Specialist/
Red Bluff



"I thought we might as well get started," said Bob Smiley (left) as he worked on installing an additional half-mile of pipeline for the ranch. Photo: Dave Sanden

Bob Smiley, a Siskiyou County rancher, was all smiles. A new pipeline, funded through the **Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)**, has replaced the gravel push-up diversion dam and leaky ditch irrigation system that he'd used for years, saving him a lot of time and effort while also saving a tremendous amount of water.

In fall 2004, Smiley started working with NRCS and the California Department of Fish and Game to install the pipeline on Cottonwood Creek. "It's a win-win project for everyone," said former District Conservationist **Bill Gardiner** as the project got underway. "This is a good example of what our Local Working Group hopes to accomplish with our EQIP dollars."

Shasta Valley RCD District Manager **Richard Christie** brought NRCS' EQIP program to Smiley's attention. Through EQIP, Smiley was able to replace the gravel dam and

leaky ditch along Cottonwood Creek with 2,400 feet of 21-inch PVC pipe.

Designed and engineered by NRCS, the pipeline carries irrigation water from the creek to the fields without the leakage of the old system, resulting in more water for the fields and more water in-stream for fish. A fish screen keeps fish out of the pipeline. Funds from Fish and Game were used to rebuild an existing fish ladder at the diversion dam where the water enters the pipe.

Civil Engineer **Tom Benson** said that the new irrigation system is saving water at a rate of 4,500 gallons per minute. "Saved water is going directly into the Klamath River," Benson said. "The water savings is significant because this is the last diversion on Cottonwood Creek before the river. The project should greatly benefit steelhead and salmon."

Smiley said that the pipeline allows him to irrigate with more control and flexibility than ever before and to receive his full diverted flow. He can easily turn water back to the stream if he's not using it all, during a wet spring or while haying, for example.

"There are other benefits," said Smiley. "It used to take an hour and-a-half for water to get to the fields. Now, it doesn't take 15 minutes. I can also get water to the fields six weeks earlier. Since I don't need to build the dam in the spring, I can catch the snow melt early."

Smiley is so pleased that he has signed up for a new EQIP project that will replace additional ditches on the ranch with 4,500 feet of pipe. While waiting for funding, he is so enthused by the success of the first EQIP project that he is already installing a half-mile of pipe on his own.

Area 3 Employees Offered Career Advice



Motivational speaker **Ray Ledgerwood** (front row, far left) poses with NRCS Area 3 mentors and mentees during a conference in Fresno last fall. Some 20 NRCSers attended and heard Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations **Curtis Tarver** tell them about employee development plans and how they can get promoted. Photo courtesy of Brian Ziegler

SWCS Meeting To Highlight Conservation Programs

The California Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (CA SWCS) will hold its annual conference in San Diego on March 22-24.

The conference will offer several training sessions for conservation professionals, including Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control certification, storm water management, and instruction critical for delivering Natural Resources Conservation Service programs related to Confined Animal Feeding Operations, Animal Feeding Operations and the Conservation Security Program.

The California Chapter will hold an awards ceremony at the annual business meeting and install officers for the next year. Conference attendees are encouraged to participate in the poster session. Additional

conference details are available at www.caswcs.org.

SWCS is a non-profit scientific and educational organization founded in 1943. It serves as an advocate for conservation professionals and science-based conservation practice, programs and policy.

Worldwide, SWCS has over 7,000 members. They include researchers, administrators, planners, policymakers, technical advisors, teachers, students, farmers and ranchers.

The California Chapter is a multi-disciplinary scientific and educational organization dedicated to natural resource enhancement. The Chapter achieves its mission through its members using mutual cooperation and understanding to create opportunities for improving soil and water conservation in California.

PUTTING CONSERVATION PROGRAMS TO WORK

California Chapter Conference
Red Lion Plazas Hotel, San Diego, California
March 22-24, 2006

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

MORE INFORMATION
COMING SOON



SOIL
AND WATER
CONSERVATION
SOCIETY

Earth Team Volunteers: Making History & Celebrating 20 Years



By **Jenny Gabor**
Soil Conservationist/Madera

The California Team: During a break at the national Earth Team and Public Affairs conference, the state team did a little sightseeing in downtown Philadelphia. From left to right, (back row) Jeff Raifsnider, Beth Lessick, Jenny Gabor, Tiffany Reiss; (front row) Barbara Helton, Anita Brown and Jim Cairns. *Photo courtesy of Jenny Gabor*

Increased workloads got you down? Not enough time to help partners with conservation projects? The Earth Team Volunteer Program can help!

Who wouldn't want to be surrounded by individuals that like to have fun and enjoy working together to sustain our natural resources? Many people want to help the land and achieve what we do as an agency through volunteerism. All you need to do is ask!

NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Coordinators and Public Affairs Specialists from across the nation came together for a national conference in Philadelphia last August. Our natural resource issues and concerns in NRCS over the

next 10-20 years was the focus.

During his keynote speech that opened the conference, Chief **Bruce Knight** told the attendees that "Earth Team is a key force for cooperative conservation." Chief Knight encouraged everyone to get more volunteers back into the field, fully supporting our range of programs.

The purpose of the Earth Team is to expand NRCS services by using volunteer time, talent and energy to help meet agency needs.

Now is the time to turn over a new leaf and seek opportunities in "Helping People Help the Land."

People—in the— News

All Hail the King & Queen of CSP!



Meet the Royals: Dennis Moore, Napa Area Resource Conservationist, and Hue Dang, Oroville District Conservationist, *rule*, as it were, for their efforts in the 2005 CSP sign-up. With scepter in hand, Dang proclaimed she would "rule benevolently" when crowned for having the most sign-ups during the Davis CSP de-briefing meeting last summer. Moore was later crowned King at an Area 1 meeting. *Photos courtesy of Helen Flach*



Congratulations, Alan!

Alan Forkey has been selected Assistant State Conservationist for Programs effective March 5, 2006. Alan was formerly State Wetlands Biologist at the Davis State Office. *File Photo: Jim Cairns*

Butte County Soil Survey Data Available

By **Susan Southard**
Soil Data Quality Specialist/Davis

The spatial and digital soils data for Butte County was posted to the Soil Data Mart and Web Soil Survey, the new NRCS delivery systems for soil survey information, in September. The Soil Data Mart provides access to spatial and tabular data for downloading to GIS, whereas the Web Soil Survey allows viewing of soils maps and generation of reports.

This soil survey provides new soils information for 920,000 acres of previously unmapped ground. The Soil Survey was completed by **Dean Burkett**, Project Leader and **Andrew Conlin**, Soil Scientist, both located in Chico. **Susan Southard**, Soil Data Quality Specialist in Davis, has been the survey's review team leader for the past 10 years.

The NRCS Soils staff has already received favorable comments from users and cooperators. **Toby O'Geen**, Cooperative Extension Soils Specialist at UC Davis, has already been using Butte County data downloaded from the Internet. "It's amazing... just looking at the spatial data on my computer, it all makes sense. I don't even have to be physically there to understand their map unit concepts," he noted. The UCD researchers are using the Butte County Soil Survey to study rice fertility management.

The Butte County Soil Survey data can be downloaded from Soil Data Mart at <http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov> or viewed on the Web Soil Survey at <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>.

Get To Know Your Earth Team Coordinators

State Coordinator:

Jen DeLorenzi,
Davis State Office

Area 1 Coordinator:

Tiffany Reiss, Weaverville

Area 2 Coordinator:

Julie Irinco, Salinas Area Office

Area 3 Coordinators:

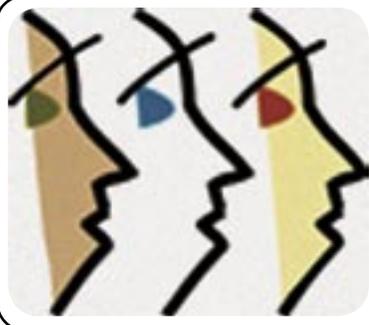
Jenny Gabor, Madera
Barbara Helton, Retired NRCS

Area 4 Coordinator:

Elizabeth Lessick, Blythe

Web Site:

www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/volunteers



CIVIL RIGHTS CORNER

By **Cindy Montepagano**
California Civil Rights
Committee Member

On June 21, 2005, a presentation on diversity was held for all District Conservationists in Area 4. The meeting included viewing a video by Schorr Communication entitled “Destination: Diversity.” The video’s purpose was to further inform Area 4 employees about diversity within the agency and workplace, and included topics on race/ethnicity and gender identity, associated stereotyping and prejudice, and the nature of interpersonal relations on acceptance of diversity.

All attendees—including **Dave Heilig**, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, and other District Conservationists from Area 4—were extremely positive and responsive to the presentation. Many felt diversity plays a major role in our workforce and modern business environment. The presentation’s enthusiastic response encouraged Area 4 to coordinate similar diversity presentations on a yearly basis.

For further information on diversity training, we encourage you to view “Destination: Diversity” in your Area. The video is available from the State Office by contacting **Tanya Robles** at (530) 792-5698, or e-mail Tanya.Robles@ca.usda.gov.

California CRAC Update

Selections were recently made to fill two vacant positions on the California Civil Rights Advisory Committee (California CRAC). We’d like to welcome new members **Kate Simpson**, Area Administrative Manager (Riverside), and **Greg Norris**, Hydraulic Engineer (Davis).

Many thanks and much appreciation for their excellent work and dedication serving on the committee to outgoing members **Diane Abbott Blohm**, Management Assistant (Davis) and **Tanya Robles**, Human Resources Assistant (Davis). Best wishes, we’ll miss you!

California Students Attend Youth Range Camp In Nevada



California youth gather for a group photo during a break at Range Camp. Photo: *Sandy Higa*

By **Dave Sanden**
Area Public Affairs Specialist/
Red Bluff

Five students from Modoc County joined 22 students from throughout Nevada in attending the 45th annual Nevada Youth Range Camp near Austin in central Nevada.

Each year, students from around Nevada and northeastern California gather for one week to learn about the management of natural resources in the Great Basin. Campers learn the importance of range plants, how to identify them, and their usefulness to livestock, wildlife, and watersheds. They also learn Native American ways, how to make crafts using local plants, and bow making. Some former range camp attendees traditionally return to share how attending range camp influenced their choice of a career in natural resources.

Sandy Higa, District Conservationist in Alturas, again served as Camp Director, as she has for the past eight years. “The week is filled with fun and many valuable learning opportunities,” said Higa. “We usually have 25 to 35 kids. Many former campers go on to manage natural resources for their families, communities, or agencies. I wouldn’t miss this for the world.”

This year, the Trail Boss award went to two campers, **Leah Estill** from Surprise Valley and **Morgan Davis** of Alturas. Estill and Davis will attend the Society for Range Management convention in Vancouver, British Columbia, next year.

Modoc County students attend the Nevada range camp because the California range camp is held in southern California, and has little relativity to the Great Basin ecosystem of northeastern California. The range camp is sponsored by the Nevada chapter of the Society for Range Management. Other support comes from a variety of government agencies, organizations, landowners, parents and retirees.

New Farmers Learn To Relish Trellises

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

Grape growers have been using trellises for years to prop up their vines. Trellises help protect grapes from disease and makes harvesting easier.

Now, Southeast Asian farmers new to California’s San Joaquin Valley are learning to use trellises to grow their vegetables, too.

At a recent workshop co-hosted by NRCS, Fresno Soil

Conservationist **Sam Vang** demonstrated how specialty crops like sinqua, fuzzy squash, and bitter melon can all be trained to grow on trellises.

Up to now the practice to grow these crops has been to plant them in rows close together. But using trellises and adding more space between rows allows a tractor to drive between them. “We placed the rows to run north and south which will help protect against sun burn, improve vegetable quality, and hopefully increase the yield,” Vang says.

Vang told growers gathered at the workshop that using a trellis can also enhance soil fertility and improve air quality. “Farmers won’t have to make as many passes through the field which will save money and labor costs and reduce the amount of dust released into the air.”

The workshop also included Fresno Soil Conservationist **Brook Gale**, who spoke about soil fertility, and Fresno Ag Engineer **Jon Chilcote**, who discussed conserving irrigation water and efficient water use.



Southeast Asian farmers new to California’s San Joaquin Valley are learning to use trellises to grow their vegetables. Photo: *Brian Ziegler*

By William Reed
Santa Clara Soil Survey
Project Leader

I had the pleasure of working with **Ricardo Velarde** at the Humboldt Soil Survey in the late 1990s when he was a SCEP while attending Humboldt State University. We had a good group of students then from HSU working on the Northern Humboldt Soil Survey. Ricardo was a hard worker, very intelligent, easy to work with in the office, and always eager to go to the field.

Ricardo had talked several times about Alaska and how he would like to go there again. That should have given me a clue as to what was ahead for him. When he was younger, he had worked in a cannery in

the Aleutians. Apparently, that experience only whetted his appetite for Alaska again. He applied for and was selected as a soil scientist for the Chugach National Forest, south of Anchorage. Off he went to Alaska, and everybody at the Soil Survey in Humboldt was sad to see him go.

I kept in touch with Ricardo and hoped he would someday get his fill of Alaska and return to his home state and, hopefully, NRCS. Even though I had been Ricardo's supervisor, I now unofficially assigned myself as his mentor. My ultimate goal was to encourage Ricardo to return to California.

During the first two years I received little assistance from Alaska's weather as it basked in some of the warmest temperatures on record. But

then came the third winter. Ricardo said he just about froze and described the weather as "life threatening to go to the store to buy some milk." Finally, he was ready to return to sunny California and asked if I knew of any available jobs.

I mentioned to **Dave Smith**, State Soil Scientist, that Ricardo was interested in returning to California. I referred several soil scientist job openings to Ricardo over the next several months. He successfully applied for the Wetland Soil Scientist at the Elk Grove Service Center, and started in November 2005.

As all of our jobs at NRCS become more complex—such as conservationists struggling with new software or conservation programs



and soil scientists dealing with GIS or an ever-growing soil database—we need to hire and retain employees that are highly educated and highly motivated.

With many of our best and most-experienced staff approaching retirement, now is the time to retain the best graduates so they can learn the work of the agency and tap the knowledge of the older employees before they ride off into the sunset. Fortunately, we were able to accomplish that with one NRCSer.

Welcome back, Ricardo!

HR Personnel Actions

Name	Position	Action	Grade	Location	Date
James Kjelgaard	Ag Engr	CC Appt	GS-11	Half Moon Bay	11/27/05
Andrea Souther	Soil Consvst	Promo to DC	GS-11	Crescent City	10/13/05
Daniel Mountjoy	Res Consvst	Promo to ASTC-FO	GS-13	Salinas	11/13/05
Bruce Gordon	Dist Consvst	Promo to DC	GS-12	Eureka from AZ	12/11/05
Robert Valch	Rangeland Mt Spc	Reassign	GS-9	Willows	12/25/05
Darrell Ferguson	Farm Bill Prg Asst	Appt in DOD	GS-5	Placerville	11/12/05
Kate Symonds	RC&D Coord	Transfer to FWS	GS-12	Santa Rosa	12/11/05
Mary Jane Nelson	Soil Consvst	Promotion to MI	GS-11	Modesto	11/12/05
Samara Iodice	Civil Engr	Resignation	GS-11	Somis	12/14/05
Carol Horne	Forester	Resignation	GS-9	Mariposa	11/26/05
Kevin Healy	Cons Agronomist	Resignation	GS-11	Hollister	12/10/05
Nicole Porter	Farm Bill Pro Asst.	Resignation	GS-5	Ukiah	12/10/05
Jesse Willor	Soil Con Tech	Resignation	GS-5	Eureka	12/24/05
Keli Christopher	Civil Engr	Resignation	GS-11	Victorville	12/24/05
Daniel Macon	RC&D Coord	Resignation	GS-12	Auburn	12/24/05
Robert Hesterberg	Soil Con Tech	Resignation	GS-5	Lakeport	01/07/06
Marcela Baptista	Soil Con Tech	Resignation	GS-5	Modesto	01/07/06
Stephen Jewett	Dist Consvst	Retirement	GS-12	Somis	09/03/05
Ernest Paschke	Dist Consvst	Retirement	GS-12	Yuba City	09/03/05
Robert Albers	Ag Engr	Retirement	GS-11	Napa	12/24/05
Clemente Avitia	Farmer	Retirement	WG-8	Lockeford	01/03/06
Robert Calabsi	Area Engr	Retirement	GS-12	Petaluma ASO	01/03/06
Mark Cocke	Civil Engr	Retirement	GS-12	Davis-WSP	01/03/06
Helen Flach	Asst STC- Progrms	Retirement	GS-14	Davis - STC	01/03/06
Ed Johnson	Contract Splclst	Retirement	GS-11	Davis - ASD	01/03/06
Patricia Kelly	Area Adm Asst	Retirement	GS-6	Salinas AO	01/03/06
Dennis Moore	Area Res Consvst	Retirement	GS-12	Napa	01/03/06
Lillian Phillips	Adm Asst	Retirement	GS-6	Cent. Coast RC&D	12/31/05
Carroll Rabner	Area Adm Asst	Retirement	GS-6	Escondido ASO	01/03/06