



"Helping People Help the Land"

California

SPRING
2007

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS



Partners

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Spring issue feature:

"California Faces & Places of Stewardship Success"

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[see the faces of conservation!]

Others, are "Helping People Help the Land" to accomplish these goals.

high slopes of the San Gabriel Mountains.



with Ed Burton

State Conservationist

Spring is one of my favorite times of year. It's a time of renewal, optimism and generally an opportunity to look toward the future and what we can make it. And with the future we should never forget our past and what has brought us here to today. For us at NRCS, that means rejuvenating and strengthening partnerships and creating new bonds with those that want to join with us in helping landowners put conservation on the land. For nearly 75 years we have successfully done this, and I know all of us are proud of our history as an Agency and our conservation forefathers such as **Hugh Hammond Bennett**.

One important partnership I'd like to mention that NRCS is fully engaged in is the **Mountain/Forest Area Safety**

Taskforce (MAST/FAST) in Southern California that sets fuel management priorities and coordinates treatment efforts across the landscape, regardless of ownership. Just as with the MAST effort, NRCS needs to continue to cooperate with **California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)**, **U.S. Forest Service (USFS)**, **County Fire Departments**, **Fire Safe Councils** and **private landowners** to have healthy forest watersheds, and to do our part to support those organizations throughout the state to achieve common goals. The fire history in California and the watershed needs of the environment and ecosystems warrant healthy forests and watersheds—they need to be managed in a healthy and forward-thinking manner.

We've clearly demonstrated with our **Emergency Watershed** work that we can make the forests better environmentally, visually, and generally more ecologically viable than when we went into it. And that needs to be perpetuated in every watershed in the state within the authority of the appropriate local, state and federal organizations. NRCS is committed to supporting a strong partnership to help

implement healthy forests for California's future.

We are releasing a new publication that looks at our conservation future and explores current and upcoming conservation trends that we see in California. **Trends in Conservation: 21st Century Conservation by California Farmers & Ranchers in conjunction with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service** is the title, and it will be available soon. We've focused on five key conservation trends—which doesn't comprise a complete list of course—but it does provide a "snapshot" view of what is happening in the conservation community.

The trends covered are regulatory requirements; technical and financial assistance; building upon wildlife stewardship; market-based conservation options; and water conservation. A lot of work has been put into producing this lately, and I'm sure you will enjoy reading its insights into where California is going as NRCS sees it.

With pride in our Agency's past and a commitment to solving the challenges of the future, let's all continue to do our very best—as I know you do everyday—for our Agency and California.

Keep up the great work, folks! I wish all of you a **Happy Earth Day 2007**.

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On the Cover

"Spring Issue": Californians are protecting and enhancing our natural resources, improving the land, and making our state a better place to live. And NRCS, in partnership with the Resource Conservation Districts and others, are "Helping People Help the Land" to accomplish these goals. See the *Partners in Conservation* feature starting on page 5 to learn about some of these successes.

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

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Walking Wetlands Provide Habitat, Improve Cropland

Since the early 1990s, staff with the **Tule Lake Refuge** and the **Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge** have been working with farmers to temporarily use agricultural lands for wildlife benefits while revitalizing the productivity of crop fields that are later put back into production. The practice is called “Walking Wetlands”.

In 2006, an NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) was awarded to **Lava Beds–Butte Valley Resource Conservation District** (LBBV) to expand the “Walking Wetlands” concept onto private lands.

With Walking Wetlands, farmers intentionally fallow cropland with periodic flooding. Crops are rotated through adjacent fields and later returned to the previously flooded fields. The replanted areas show improved crop yields, better control of weeds and crop pests, and reduced need for pesticide use. Certified organic crops can be produced on the fields immediately after the field is rotated out of its flooded stage.



The National Wildlife Refuge has maximized the opportunities for Walking Wetlands on lands managed or leased out by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. The CIG grant will expand the program onto privately owned farm land.

Through the grant, LBBV will work with NRCS to evaluate the Walking Wetlands concept on three privately owned local farms. As more is learned, Walking Wetlands may prove to be another valuable conservation practice that will help stewards improve the sustainability of working lands in the Upper Klamath Basin.



“Walking wetlands” on Refuge land that periodically rotates between wetlands and cropland. In participating in the Refuge’s wetland/cropland program, growers have found that following wetland cycles, no soil fumigants are required at a savings of up to \$200/acre. In addition, yields of some crops have increased up to 25 percent. The technique is currently being evaluated on private farmland in California and Oregon.

Northwest California RC&D Ready To Serve

The North State recently gained a much more extensive Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area, and **Trinity RC&D** got a new name. In late November, the official name change, from the “Trinity RC&D” to the “**Northwest California RC&D**” and the expansion of the RC&D area to include Humboldt and Del Norte counties was approved.

Trinity RCD was a key player in the establishment of Trinity RC&D in 1993. And they again provided a major thrust in the expansion of the RC&D into the neighboring counties.

Over the years, Trinity RCD, Trinity RC&D, and NRCS have forged an highly effective partnership in Trinity County. The many relationships and the credibility of this partnership will benefit the entire northwest region of the state. And the expanded RC&D will act as a unifying force, enabling three conservation districts and three service centers to have closer lines of communication and interaction on issues and concerns common to the whole area.



The area served by the RC&D has increased from 2,034,560 acres to 4,965,760 acres.

Area Office Farewells

Nearly 85 years young, Earth Team Volunteer **Alyce Simms** (below) completed her 15th year with SCS/NRCS when she retired in December. As an ETV Simms helped to create databases and reconcile PCMS transactions at the Area Office in Red Bluff. **Thank you Alyce!**



Amidst shredded records and documents **Barbara Ammon** (above) follows the principles of “Leave No Trace” conservation before retirement. But the effort failed. Barbara left an indelible mark of outstanding service to the field in her 30+ years of federal service. **Thank you Barbara!**



Leafy Greens grow in “America’s Salad Bowl” in Central Coast California.

The fresh produce industry works hard to deliver a healthy, top-quality product. With the recent outbreak of **E. coli 0157** the industry quickly responded with GAPS—good agricultural practices—designed to help growers spot and address problems and maintain their product’s reputation with consumers.

Food Safety & Environmental Protection

Finding the best way for conservation and food safety to complement each other is a learning process for both the industry and the conservation communities and highlights the complexity and interdependence of agricultural and environmental issues in the Golden State.

NRCS has been working cooperatively for years with local farmers on water quality and wildlife protection practices such as vegetated borders that filter sediment and absorb nutrients from rainfall runoff.

Now the challenge is to find the best way to fold these and other conservation practices in with the essential food safety guidelines that will protect consumers and maintain the economic viability of the industry. Towards this end, NRCS is working with the agricultural and research communities to determine the risks and benefits associated with specific conservation practices on the Central Coast.

Food safety challenges all involved in California agriculture to a collaboration of the highest order of importance using the best science available. NRCS intends to partner fully in this effort to move food safety—and conservation—forward.

Proactive Support For Growers



Drip irrigation conserves water and reduces runoff in a San Joaquin vineyard.

By **Daniel Mountjoy**, Area 2 ASTC-FO

On the Central Coast voluntary proactive workshops on water quality have been a joint undertaking by Agriculture, NRCS, and the **University of California’s Cooperative Extension Service** (UCCE) since 2000. The Farm Water Quality Planning (FWQP) short course was designed to help farmers voluntarily get in front of water quality mandates.

The FWQP provides 15 hours of training over five days. NRCS instructs producers in areas such as soil erosion,

sediment management, and riparian management; UCCE sessions focus on wise management of pests, nutrients and irrigation.

However, mid-way through this voluntary compliance approach, the historical waiver for agriculture (for runoff containing fertilizer, sediment or pesticides) was challenged. The **Regional Water Quality Control Board Region 3** (RWQCB), replaced the standing waiver for agriculture with new requirements.

The Board chose to use the FWQP course (or an equivalent) as the basis for the new procedures. After taking the course, farmers are required to develop a water quality plan, apply the plan, report progress, and participate in a water quality monitoring coalition. As a result over 1,500 farmers (60 percent) in the seven-county area are participating in the water quality effort.

In the Central Valley (RWQCB Region 5), Resource Conservation Districts took leadership in helping farmers comply with new RWQCB Region 5 monitoring requirements. The **San Joaquin County RCD** (SJCRC) is overseeing a 4,700 member coalition of irrigated landowners operating 490,000 acres of irrigated cropland in three counties.

For \$1.50 an acre SJCRC conducts water quality testing, compiles test results, and conducts outreach meetings with the county Agricultural Commissioner. SJCRC and NRCS target identified problems with cost-share funding and technical assistance.



See the faces of conservation!



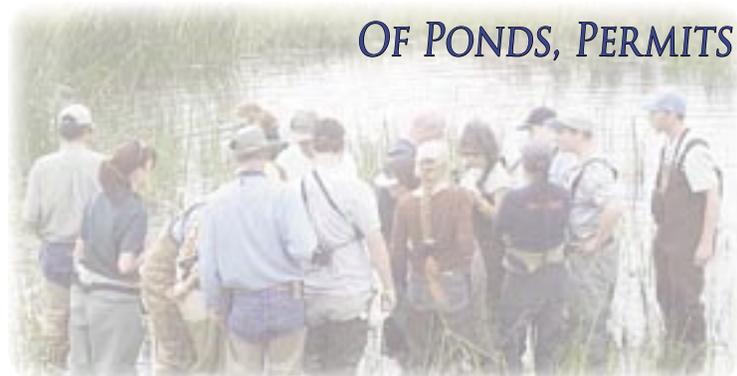
Learn about the successes!

Find them at www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/news/stories/

Big and small, thousands of conservation successes are being realized in California each year. Through hard work and ingenuity, Californians are protecting and enhancing our natural resources, improving the land, and making our state a better place to live. And NRCS, in partnership with the Resource Conservation Districts and others, are “Helping People Help the Land” to accomplish these goals.

Though critically important, most of these achievements occur in the background on the landscape, invisible to all but the people involved. So now, take a peek behind the policy and program to meet the Californians working with NRCS to achieve conservation success. Here is a sampling of our stories from a new feature on our Web site called “California Faces & Places of Stewardship Success.” Take a look. You might find someone you know!

OF PONDS, PERMITS AND A POWERFUL CONSERVATION ETHIC



*Why would ranchers in Alameda County bother to invest thousands of dollars to fix old, failing livestock ponds when there are modern watering alternatives available? According to NRCS District Conservationist **Terry Huff**, it turns out that wildlife depend upon the ponds and can’t operate the modern livestock alternatives. And so the ranchers are restoring the ponds out of what Huff calls “a powerful conservation ethic and a love of the land.”*

Some of these wildlife—like California Red-legged frogs and Tiger salamanders—have threatened or endangered status. Ironically, such status has created substantial red tape for those, who like the ranchers, want to help the wildlife. The Alameda County Permit Coordination Program is working to cut that tape and aid both the ranchers and the species.

To secure permits for the ponds ranchers agree to manage them as “wildlife friendly,” which means grazing in specific ways, protecting the ponds, and keeping them full whenever possible. Huff says ranchers “are lining up out the door” to participate.

Huff attributes this success to a special ingredient that has been gradually blended into the mix: mutual respect. “When the agencies are assured that the landowners are willing to restore and manage the resources for the critters—and when the landowners are assured they are not going it alone, that they have someone they trust by their side—then the program is easy,” he says.

Pond repair doesn’t come cheap. The average cost is just over \$30,000 and ranchers often repair multiple ponds. NRCS pays 50 percent through EQIP. Other sources can then offer additional reimbursement and in Alameda the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is paying 40 percent, leaving the rancher with 10 percent of the cost—about \$3,000 per pond.

“We’re not alone in this kind of effort,” says **Karen Sweet** of the Alameda County Resource Conservation District.

The California Rangeland Coalition has recognized this same Conservation Ethic and is bringing ranchers, environmentalists and regulators together on a much larger scale to restore ponds and to benefit habitat, water quality and the conservation goals of the ranchers.”

To learn more, visit the Alameda County RCD Web site at www.acrcd.org/.



Alameda County’s RCD Executive Officer **Karen Sweet** (above left) and NRCS DC **Terry Huff** attend California Red-legged frog habitat training for conservation partners. This training is sponsored by the Alameda County Conservation Partnership (NRCS & RCD), and the Contra Costa Water District-Los Vaqueros Reservoir and Watershed.



NRCS Ecologist **Jackie Charbonneau** (above) holds a California Red-legged frog at a restored and frog-friendly, livestock watering pond on an Alameda County ranch.



NRCS incentives to reduce particulate matter released into the air attracted Hanford, Calif. dairyman Dino Giacomazzi to try conservation tillage.

Conservation Tillage in Kings County

Jeff Mitchell, University of California Cooperative Extension vegetable specialist, defines strip tillage as a management system “that only disturbs the top 6 to 8 inches of the soil surface.” He notes that in California strip tillage is most often used for forage crops but is also being introduced in vegetable crops and cotton.



Conservation tillage systems include an array of methods to improve water and air quality.

Adoption of conservation tillage in general has been slow in California, but some Kings County corn growers are enthused with results as they take a closer look at one element of the practice, strip tillage.

Dairyman **Dino Giacomazzi** was pleased enough with his two years of strip tillage to share his experiences at a recent field day at his family’s dairy outside Hanford, Calif.

Conservation tillage systems include an array of equipment and methods intended to improve water and air quality, curb soil or wind erosion, increase water filtration, reduce labor and fuel, and increase soil organic matter.

Giacomazzi says he was first attracted to strip tillage by Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) incentives aimed at reducing particulate matter released into the air.

Last year he tried strip tillage on 25 acres of corn and harvested 36 tons of silage to the acre, more than any of his conventional fields that season. Strip tillage cuts costs, he says. “We reduced passes by 80 percent, we reduced diesel fuel use and emissions, we used less equipment and labor, we got more tons per acre, and because it was quicker, we got in three crops per year.”

Giacomazzi says he believes California farmers have been slow to take up strip tillage because the technology wasn’t available until recently. “Strip tillers were in other parts of the country but they hadn’t made their way out to California. Twin row planters are relatively new here.”



ABOVE: High Sierra RC&D Coordinator Dan Macon (left) enters ultra-sound data while Dr. Allen Williams scans a steer.

BELOW: High Sierra Beef, Inc. steers were finished in mountain pastures near Quincy, California. (Dan Macon photos)



Steaking A Claim In Local Sustainability

If consumers could be confident of getting local beef that is grass-fed, hormone-free and has consistent quality, flavor, and tenderness would they pay extra for it? According to a study conducted by the High Sierra Resource Conservation & Development Council (HSRC&D) the answer was an enthusiastic, “Yes.”

Thus was born **High Sierra Beef** (www.highsierrabeef.com), a business corporation that promises customers beef that is of the highest quality, locally produced, and 100 percent grass-fed and hormone-free.

Animals sold to High Sierra Beef observe protocols that reflect respectful treatment of both animals and the environment. The company markets locally and customers know

that the product is both top quality and protecting the surrounding watersheds’ and the open spaces they value.

“To have healthy animals, producers must maintain healthy grass which means controlled grazing that protects the grass and the soil it covers—and a good vegetative cover is the basis of a healthy rangeland ecosystem,” says **Dan Macon**.

“This kind of marketing system closes the loop. The health of the environment and the economic success of the rancher are finally linked in the marketplace,” says Dan Macon.

“I hate to say that happy cows make better steaks, but cows are made to be on grass,” says Macon. “When animals are stress-free, in an environment that is stress-free, it’s better for everyone.”

“This kind of marketing system closes the loop,” says Macon. “The health of the environment and the economic success of the rancher are finally linked in the marketplace.”



ALTERNATIVE ENERGY INNOVATION

Tehama County Residents Enlightened at Energy Workshop

"I haven't paid an electric bill in 25 years!" — Scott Jackson

The Tehama County Resource Conservation District (RCD) recently hosted an alternative energy workshop for farmers, ranchers, and other landowners who want to become more energy independent.

The workshop was held at Elk Flat Ranch, west of Red Bluff. Topics included biodiesel fuel solar power, and 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 rancher and farmers to learn how they can use alternative energy systems on their property," said NRCS D.C. **Larry Branham**.



Scott Jackson stands by a solar panel holding a Grundfos livestock watering pump that can operate using solar or wind generated power.



O'Keane's alternative fuels pickup truck engine has been modified to run on both biodiesel and SVO.

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 of vegetable oil, with a little methoxide added (made with methanol and lye). He said that 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 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."



NRCS District Conservationist Larry Branham (left) with renewable energy advocate Scott Jackson (right).

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.



Alternative fuels advocate Devin O'Keane holding up a jug of homemade biodiesel fuel that he made from waste cooking oil. His pickup truck runs on this fuel.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (RC&D) PROJECT

Biomass Gasification Demonstration Phase I

Ore-Cal RC&D's Scott Valley Biomass Gasifier Demonstration Project demonstrates the economic viability and sustainability of a biomass gasifier system for Combined Heat and Power (CHP) at one site and space heat (SH) at another: CHP at Etna High School/Scott Valley Community Pool and SH at Cal-Forest Greenhouse, a commercial tree nursery.

Both are located in rural Scott Valley, in far northern California. Although, the system at Cal Forest Greenhouse will initially demonstrate benefits of an alternative heat source, it may ultimately produce heat and power as well.



WATERSHED RECOVERY PROJECT

When District Conservationist Bob Hewitt of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was invited to a Riverside County **MAST** meeting at the end of 2002 to discuss the possibility of utilizing the **Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)** to address the tree mortality problem, he was cautious not to promise what he knew would be a challenge to obtain. The stakes were very high as three California counties were well into the early stages of a severe tree mortality problem that threatened mountain communities with devastating wildfires due to the dead trees and excessive fuels.

“Nothing like this had ever been done before,” said Hewitt, “the program was traditionally employed after an emergency, typically a natural disaster such as a fire, flood, earthquake or windstorm, this was a proactive attempt to reduce the likelihood of devastating destruction to life and property before it happened.”

In collaboration with EWP program specialist **Bill Ward** and county sponsors, Hewitt drafted up the first of three damage survey reports that would be prepared by NRCS. These damage survey reports identified a significant threat from devastating wildfires to over 100,000 people in a three county area impacted by this severe tree mortality emergency. The state of California had already declared this problem to be an emergency situation. The cost estimate to provide this protection was approximately \$120 million and the investment was predicted to reduce potential wildfire damages by as much as \$8 billion. This certainly sounded like a worthy investment.

It wasn't long after the request was submitted that Southern California suffered the devastating wildfires of October 2003, called by outgoing **Governor Gray Davis** “probably the most expensive, widespread and most devastating” wildfires the state has ever seen. These fires ultimately burned 800,000 acres and caused 22 deaths. These wildfires came dangerously close to taking off in the tree mortality area. Recognizing the threat if this were to happen, **Senator Diane Feinstein** and **Congressman Jerry Lewis (CA-41)** led the effort to approve funding and provide special authority and direction that enabled NRCS to address this threat and do what they do best, help people help the land.

With funding for the unique utilization of the EWP program approved, and additional funding to address the erosion issues associated with the 2003 fires, NRCS got to work with their partners making site visits and planning for needed action. The result of the planning and hard work resulted in over 350,000 dead, dying or diseased trees being removed in less than two years. Over \$111 of the \$120 million allocated for the project has been obligated, with the full obligation anticipated by August 2006. Although the money will be obligated, on the ground NRCS projects will be completed sometime in the summer of 2007.

“Thousands of hours and millions of dollars have gone toward reshaping and improving the health of the watershed and the transition has been nothing short of monumental,” said **Ed Burton**, NRCS State Conservationist. “Such impressive changes can be achieved when agencies and communities partner together for the good of the land.”

Burton emphasizes that as the project winds down and the work transitions to a state of dynamic watershed maintenance, NRCS will return to its historic role of working with people and communities to put science-based solutions on the land.

“NRCS's assistance has benefited everyone involved in this project, including the public and the cooperating government agencies,” said Pre-Fire Division **Chief Kevin Turner** of the **CDF/Riverside Fire Department**, “As NRCS's involvement tapers off, CDF, **U.S. Forest Service**, **Riverside County Fire Department** and the **Idyllwild Fire Department** will continue their roles as the experts in fire prevention, fuels treatment and forest health.”

“It is important that we go forward from here to work with landowners on a voluntary basis to provide options and, where needed, technical and financial assistance,” said Burton. “Their land is under their care and we will work with them to understand its needs and respond to them.”



From left to right: District Conservationist Bob Hewitt, National EWP Project Manager Victor Cole, CDF Forester, and California EWP Project Manager Bill Ward discuss the prospect of removing dead and dying trees in 2003.



Extensive tree mortality created dangerous living conditions for residents in southern California mountain communities.

As of October 2006

Riverside County has

- Removed 53,347 dead and/or dying trees
- Treated 4,015 acres for erosion control measures and wildlife protection
- Obligated 100% of \$20 million

San Bernardino County has

- Removed 276,974 dead and/or dying trees
- Treated 19,247 acres for erosion control measures and wildlife protection
- Obligated 99% of \$70 million

San Diego County has

- Removed 108,966 dead and/or dying trees
- Treated 14,402 acres for erosion control measures and wildlife protection
- Obligated 96% of \$70 million



MANURE HAPPENS TO BE PROFITABLE... to Area Engineer Dave Krietemeyer (left), who proudly displays a new exhibit promoting NRCS assistance offered to dairies. It was unveiled at the World Ag Expo in Tulare, Calif.

All photos: Brian Ziegler



ABOVE: Fresno Soil Conservationist Ken Grimes (left) explains NRCS career opportunities to a couple attending the Hmong National New Year Celebration at the Fresno Fairgrounds.



Human Resources Specialist Tanya Robles (left) and Fresno Soil Conservationist Hugo Calvillo talk to a prospective intern about class requirements during a USDA Networking Fair at California State University, Fresno.

Workshops co-sponsored by NRCS were recently held to brief San Joaquin Valley dairymen about new state air quality rules. Air Quality Specialist Johnnie Siliznoff (left) discusses the changes with a producer at a workshop in Hanford, Calif.



Morris "Red" Martin (left) receives a plaque from Hanford Soil Scientist Kerry Arroues to mark the completion of the soil survey of West Fresno County. Martin was the Area Conservationist in Fresno when Arroues began the survey in 1981.

Streambank Bioengineering & Riparian Restoration Tour

By Casey Burns, Somis Field Office

Employees from the NRCS office in Somis, Ojai Valley Land Conservancy (OVLC), and the California Conservation Corps (CCC) hosted a half-day streambank bioengineering and riparian restoration project site tour on January 22. Tour organizers (**Casey Burns**, NRCS, **Stevie Adams**, OVLC, and **Jennifer Becker**, CCC) showcased completed streambank bioengineering projects and encouraged others to consider bioengineering when working on eroding streambanks.

The tour's first stop was an EQIP funded project on the Ventura River. This project included willow baffles, which are dense willow and rock spurs aligned perpendicularly to the top of the bank. The baffles are designed to slow and redirect water and drop sediment to reestablish the bank. The second tour stop was a CTA

project on Lion Creek, which included a rock toe, a willow brush mattress, a 2:1 bank with sycamores and mulefat and an erosion control blanket, and a top of bank acorn planting.

The value of streambank bioengineering varies by project and practice, but in general, benefits include long-term stability, wildlife habitat, water quality improvements, and low costs.

Some of the tour topics included site history, reasons for the project, project design options, site survey, project installation, monitoring, and permitting.

The tour was well received and disseminated information needed to get others to consider bioengineering practices on their eroding streambanks. A second tour was scheduled on March 19.

The event attracted a wide variety of people from Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. The 42 attendees represented private landowners, consultants, land managers, city and county employees, regulatory agencies, and non-profits.



Casey Burns conveys the value of streambank bioengineering.

Keeping A Heritage Alive

By Rudy Perez, Riverside

With widespread tree mortality in Southern California threatening the **Santa Rosa Band of Mission Indian's** life and property, NRCS EWP crews are working closely with the tribe to protect sensitive cultural sites while removing hazardous fuels.



The tribe descended from the **Cahuilla Native Americans** in Riverside County who inhabited California more than 2,000 years ago and have a rich heritage that produced some of the finest basketry in the world. The tribe still lives on a reservation in Riverside County and strive to uphold their heritage. With the help of NRCS, the tribe has been able to identify not only known collection sites, but discover forgotten sites once used for plant collection. **Donna Largo** appreciates the NRCS archeological assessments and conveyed the reputable image NRCS now holds with the tribal members.

Donna continues to collect plants from traditional gathering sites to construct baskets. The plants Donna uses for her basketry have other applications as well, including those for medicinal use.

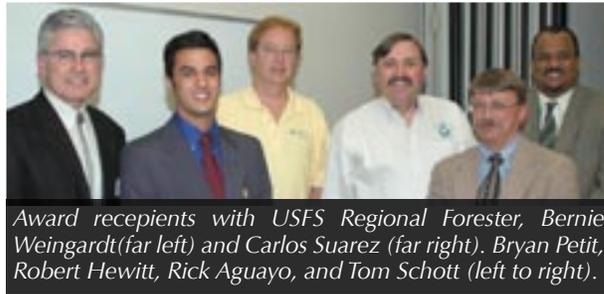
Donna teaches the traditional basket weaving methods at a local school and is proud of the Cahuilla heritage, but wishes that younger members would become more interested in their cultural heritage. With NRCS's assistance and Donna Largo's persistence and patience, the Cahuilla heritage has an opportunity to continue for future generations.

"Two Chiefs" Award

By Karla Vega, SD EWP Office

On February 13, the first ever Two Chiefs Partnership Award was presented to the **USFS, NRCS, CDF and County sponsors from San Diego, San Bernardino and Riverside.**

Nominees from around the nation are considered for this award which honors government agencies working together in a partnership. This cooperative effort focuses on conservation by reducing fuel hazards associated with drought, beetle attacks and tree mortality in the aftermath of the 2003 Southern California Wildfires. Sharing a common goal has resulted in the formation of **FAST** and **MAST** so that the agencies can coordinate their efforts; set project priorities share resources and alleviate conflicts. **Carlos Suarez**, NRCS Deputy State Conservationist, and **Bernie Weingardt**, USFS Regional Forester, presented the awards to each agency representative. Though this successful partnership has reduced fuel hazards in various areas throughout Southern California, "the job is not over," says **Tom Schott**, EWP Program Coordinator.



Award recipients with USFS Regional Forester, Bernie Weingardt (far left) and Carlos Suarez (far right). Bryan Petit, Robert Hewitt, Rick Aguayo, and Tom Schott (left to right).

Ward Accepts Project Award

NRCS was honored for EWP restoration work at the Santa Paula Airport in Ventura County by the **American Public Works Association (APWA)**. The **Ventura County chapter of APWA** held their February meeting in Camarillo where the project was recognized as **2006 Project of the Year** in the category of Disaster or Emergency Construction. NRCS received the award as a co-recipient along with the project sponsor, the **Ventura County Watershed Protection District (VCWPD)**. Pictured: **Bill Ward**, State Design Engineer.



Chief Announces 2006 Civil Rights Awards

—Excerpted from the article that appeared in *NRCS This Week*, April 4, 2007, by Fred Jacobs, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist, NHQ, (202) 720-4772. Photo by Ron Francis, Utah NRCS.



Chief Arlen Lancaster (at left) recently announced the **2006 Civil Rights Award Winners** at the West Region Leadership meeting in Salt Lake City.

NRCS Area III in Fresno, California, led by California NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations **Curtis Tarver** (on right), received the **Civil Rights Award — Team** for their work with partners using grant

money from the California Association for Resource Conservation Districts to implement *Many Faces, Many Dreams, One Vision: The Pursuit of Conservation* that aimed to re-introduce the San Joaquin Valley Resource Conservation Districts to central California's minority producers through their preferred media outlets.

The group produced a 10-minute video, showcasing local Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, and African American producers, that was distributed to district directors and staff who shared similar conservation interests. Copies were translated into Hmong, Lao, and Spanish.

Tell Us About The Faces & Places Of Stewardship!

We all know that people like to hear about other people. Knowing that your neighbor had success with their conservation project can make it a little easier to tackle one of your own. Hence, the time-honored value of writing and sharing success stories.

If you have a story you think deserves more attention, consider sending us your ideas. Stories should demonstrate a success putting conservation on the ground in California. NRCS should be a key player in the story, and the Agency's role should be clear in the write-up. We have included a few hints to get you started in a handout, and to make it easier for you (and us) to put your idea into words and pictures. NRCS employees should submit stories to their Area NRCS Public Affairs Specialists. Others may submit stories directly to Anita Brown, Public Affairs Director at anita.brown@ca.usda.gov.

For complete guidelines, got to www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/news/stories/ and download the document **Submission Guidelines For Stewardship Success Stories**, located near the bottom of the page. We look forward to reading about your successes!

"Benefits of Precision Farming" Workshop To Be Held

A workshop entitled, "Benefits of Precision Farming," sponsored by **Southern California Edison**, in cooperation with NRCS, will be held from 9 AM to 3 PM on June 14, 2007, at the AGTAC Energy Center in Tulare, California.

The workshop, stemming from the **San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's** Rule 4550 (conservation management practices), will describe the methods of precision farming and how they reduce operating costs, improve farm management, and reduce environmental pollution.

Technology components to be described in the workshop include Geographic Information Systems, Global Positioning Systems, sensors, variable rate technology and yield monitoring. PCA credits have been applied for. Obtain more information and register by calling AGTAC at **(800) 772-4822**.

People—in the— News



Congratulations, Robyn: Resource Conservationist **Robyn Myers**, Davis State Office, won the Disability Awareness Month 2006 poster contest in October. Reflecting on her accomplishment she says: "I submitted the following statement with my poster because I wanted them to know how grateful I am for the support the Agency has given me as my disability developed over time: 'As a 20 year Federal Employee and disabled American in my 10th year with the NRCS, I have been supported by my Agency and my Office so that despite the challenges of my personal disability I've been able to continue working since I became disabled.'"

The theme for Disability Awareness month was "Americans With Disabilities: Ready For A Global Workforce." *Photo: Jim Cairns*

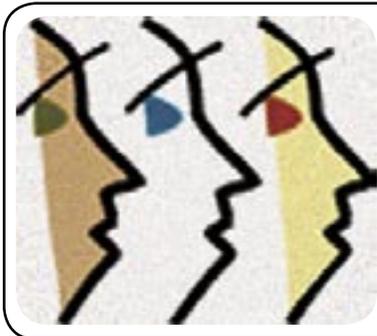
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CIVIL RIGHTS CORNER

By Jennifer Gabor
California Civil Rights
Committee Vice Chair
& Women's EPM

March 2007 National Women's History Month

Generations of Women Moving History Forward

Each year, March is designated as **National Women's History Month** to ensure that the history of American women will be recognized and celebrated in schools, workplaces, and communities throughout the country. The stories of women's historic achievements present an expanded view of the complexity and contradiction of living a full and purposeful life.

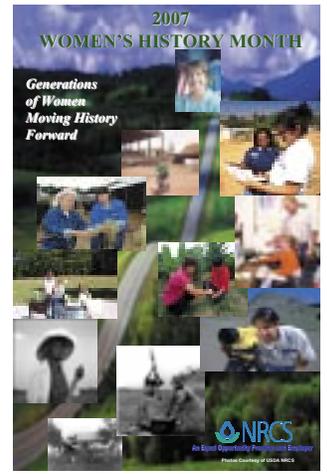
The knowledge of women's history provides a more expansive vision of what a woman can do. This perspective can encourage girls and women to think larger and bolder and can give boys and men a fuller understanding of the female experience.

The theme for Women's History Month 2007 is "Generations of Women Moving History Forward." This theme celebrates the wisdom and tenacity of prior and future

generations of women and recognizes the power and impact of generations working together.

Moving History Forward is a process of individuals coming together for the greater good of the society and confirming the idea that individuals working together can be effective in building a better, more compassionate

Information Courtesy of the National Women's History Project: www.nwhp.org.



Chief Visits Davis: NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster (center) visited the State Office on his way to Sacramento on March 28. The Chief, pictured here with members of the California Civil Right Committee that were attending a training session, talked with staff for over one hour. *Photo: Jim Cairns*

HR Personnel Actions

Name	Position	Action	Grade	Location	Date
Melissa Farkash	Soil Consvst	Conv to CC Appt	GS-7	Eureka	01/21/07
Pamela Nielson	Soil Consvst	Conv to CC Appt	GS-7	Visalia	02/18/07
Rachel Morgan	Soil Consvst	Conv to CC Appt	GS-7	Oroville	03/04/07
Danielle Hirsch	Forester	TERM Appt	GS-7	Escondido	03/04/07
Robert Smith	Soil Consvst	Career Promo	GS-9	Oroville	01/21/07
Pedro Torres	Soil Consvst	Career Promo	GS-11	Riverside	01/21/07
Jennifer Anderson	Soil Scntst	Career Promo	GS-9	Chico SSO	03/04/07
Stephen Case	Cont Splclt	Career Promo	GS-9	Davis-ASD	03/04/07
Sheri Fox	Resource Consvst	Reassign from Dixon	GS-11	Riverside	12/10/06
Lisa Hokholt	Soil Con-Outreach	Reassign from Concord	GS-12	Livermore	01/07/07
Daniel Taverner	Soil Consvst (DC)	Reassign from Oroville	GS-11	Elk Grove	03/07/07
Timothy Morin	Forester	Resignation	GS-11	SanJacinto	01/06/07
Jason Smith	Ag Engr	Resignation	GS-11	Escondido	01/06/07
Chris. Renado	Ag Engr	Resignation	GS-9	Eureka	01/06/07
Zoe Carson	Soil Con Techncn	Resignation	GS-5	Capitola	02/13/07
Patricia Grover	Adm Assist	Retirement	GS-7	Davis-WSP	01/03/07
Essie Johnson	Carto Techncn	Retirement	GS-9	Davis-Soils	01/03/07
Walt Sykes	Watershed Splclst	Retirement	GS-12	Davis-WSP	01/03/07
Edward Umbach	RC&D Coord	Retirement	GS-12	So. Coast RC&D	01/03/07
Barbara Ammon	Adm Assist	Retirement	GS-7	Red Bluff AO	01/29/07
James Hutson	Gardener	Retirement	WG-7	Lockeford	02/28/07
Donald Nielson	Dist Consvst	Retirement	GS-12	Madera	03/23/07
Judith Wells	Forester	Transfer to FS	GS-11	Eureka	01/06/07
Paul Schmidt	Adm Asst	Transfer to VA	GS-7	Davis-SAO	02/17/07
Joe Takai	Soil Consvst	Transfer to NRCS/Guam	GS-9	Concord	03/04/07