

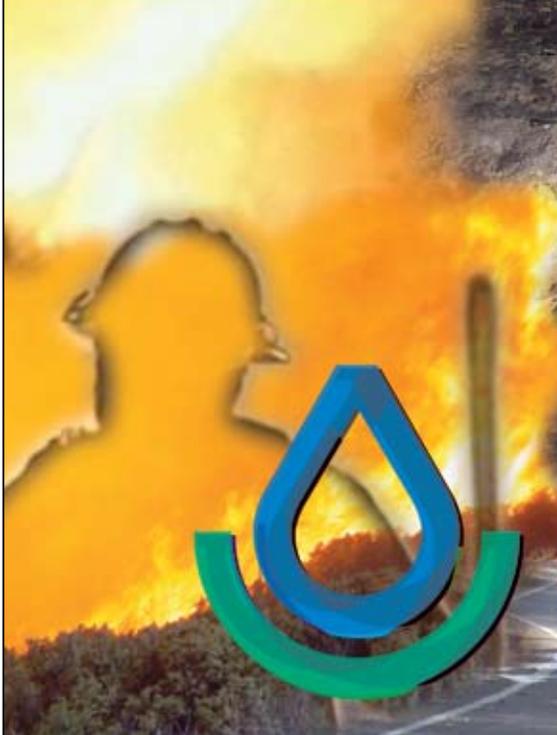


# California

WINTER  
2008

## CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE



# NRC

POST-FIRE RECOVERY  
CONTINUES IN  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



with Ed Burton

State Conservationist

**W**e are coming off of a “grand” year, one full of accomplishments that all of us should be proud of statewide. What especially comes to mind is the response in the aftermath of the fires, the great **EWP support** that went to Southern California. Thank you all for that, you make me so proud. It’s just remarkable to me how busy and engaged we are on a daily basis, yet how we can still help each other. That’s admirable and heart warming! This is a very strong family.

In mid-October, the state-level **Leadership Team** met for a three-day retreat in Woodland to reflect on our accomplishments over the last year and how best to direct our energy to meet the shifting needs of our Agency in California.

Many issues were discussed and prioritized with the assistance of a facilitator, but the top four priorities that we agreed needed our full attention were: 1) Maintaining our technical excellence; 2) Being proactive on recruitment and retention of quality employees; 3) Continuing to broaden our partnerships to reflect California’s diverse population; and 4) Prioritizing our workload for better efficiency.

Of these “**Top 4**” issues, one in particular dominated our discussions, and that was the task of prioritizing our vast workload. While there are other issues we might prefer to bump to the top of the “to-do” list for our Agency in California, there may be no other more important issue that we need to work on right now.

Folks, this is a time when we need to do some fine-tuning, to re-focus what we have on our already too full plate, so to speak. As you know, we have the **new Farm Bill** coming soon too, which will be a lot of work that we need to prepare for. The **DCs** and others have spoken loud and clear about streamlining the Farm Bill program—and I’ve heard you. I’ve charged **Alan**—with **Carlos** as the sponsor—to put together a field team so we can take this issue head-on and

identify what we can fix internally and what we need to get **NHQ’s** assistance to resolve.

What I’ve committed to do this year is concentrate on making things easier and better for the Field. We also need to take care of some in-house priorities first—some housekeeping, if you will—before launching into more initiatives.

Sometimes we need to look closer to our feet instead of over the horizon, to take care of current business in order that we can reach those bigger goals that we’d like to tackle.

Now, this doesn’t mean we’re taking a “timeout.” I want us to stay focused on where we are; I don’t want us going backwards. We need to stay on track with the good work that we’ve achieved and our productivity; stay with our “planning first, programs second” approach—our **Conservation Planning** initiative.

So, our “horizon” objectives need to stay out there for the time being so we can focus on the current in-house things we need to do to make our jobs easier, better, and to make us all happier. That’s the theme and objective this year. I’ve heard you and agree with you. We are going to fix all of the things we can in-house before moving on to bigger, “grandier” issues.

### Did You Know? Local Partnership Office Moved From Greenville To Quincy

The Local Partnership Office (LPO), formerly located in Greenville, moved to their new office building in Quincy in March 2007. The U.S. Forest Service generously offered free space in their Watershed & Fisheries Resources building, adjacent to the Plumas National Forest supervisor’s building. District Conservationist **Dan Martynn** says that besides eliminating rental fees, the move is advantageous to the LPO since it gives greater accessibility to landowners and partners in Plumas and Sierra counties. The new location also enhances the LPO’s ability to collaborate with the Forest Service on their range and forestry projects.

#### On the Cover

“Post-Fire Recovery Continues in Southern California”: NRCS, along with county, state and federal partners, continue the post-fire recovery process in Southern California. See page 3 for a recovery update and look for a forthcoming **special edition of California Current Developments** dedicated to wildfire recovery in Southern California.

Photos: Courtesy of NRCS Riverside Area Office; Anita Brown | Design: Jim Cairns

Our Mission: “Helping People Help the Land”

Our Vision: “Productive Lands, Healthy Environment”

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# \$4.6 Million In EQIP Helps Southern California Farmers Recover From Wildfires

By Stacy Mitchell

Acting Public Affairs Specialist/Riverside

California NRCS State Conservationist **Ed Burton** allocated \$ 4.6 million of the state's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds to address the emergency needs of the agricultural community and help farmers in **San Diego and Riverside counties** recover from fire damages. The Program will help farmers protect newly exposed soil from severe erosion and to replace and improve certain types of agriculture infrastructure, such as irrigation systems destroyed in the recent wildfires.

Avocado and citrus groves and nurseries were especially hard hit by the 2007 fires. Farmers reported the loss of irrigation systems, mulch protecting the soil, cover crops, and the crops themselves. Many lost their entire crop. NRCS EQIP cost-share will help these farmers get the most important conservation measures on the land to save water and soil.

Local NRCS offices in **Escondido** and **Riverside** are working on contracts to address resource concerns such as soil erosion, downstream water quality impairments, and water conservation. While the fire was devastating, the contracts will allow producers to establish irrigation systems that are more efficient and effective.

San Diego County alone expected about **100 farmers** to sign up for EQIP. They were very pleased when **168 applications** were received. **Over 150** of those applications were producers that have never participated in NRCS or USDA programs. Long days and nights and the assistance of many teams of additional employees have resulted in the completion of the planning and contracting input. As eligibility is determined, contracts are now being signed. Based on the amount of funding, it is expected that all eligible applicants will receive contracts.

For more information on the Southern California wildfire damages and recovery work, watch for the upcoming **Wildfire Special Edition of California Current Developments**.



After over five years of negotiation, State Conservationist **Ed Burton** executes the State Level Agreement (SLA) between California NRCS and the California State Historic Preservation Officer. The SLA allows NRCS to streamline the cultural resources compliance process in various ways, which include the use of trained non-archaeological NRCS personnel. Photo: Jim Cairns



**Daniel Meyer** (center), Soil Conservationist in Bakersfield, is honored by DSTC **Carlos Suarez** (left) and STC **Ed Burton** (right) in October 2007, as winner of the NRCS national Disability Awareness poster contest. Daniel is currently the Disability Special Emphasis Program Manager for California. Photo: Jim Cairns



After 50 years of dedicated work in conservation, **Paul Sheffer** (right), Senior Engineering Technician and former NRCSer of 32 years, retired from Southern Sonoma County RCD in September 2007. **Charles Davis** (left), NRCS State Conservation Engineer, shares a few remembrances of Sheffer's many achievements during his retirement party. Photo courtesy of Susan Haydon, Southern Sonoma County RCD

## Siskiyou RCD Benefits Fish & Ranchers In Scott Valley

By Ayn Perry

Soil Conservationist/Yreka

The **Siskiyou Resource Conservation District** (RCD) has recently completed a large scale project to benefit fall flows for salmon in the Scott River. Known as the Sugar Creek Flow Enhancement Project, this endeavor improves irrigation efficiencies for five landowners, who in turn agree to allow the fish a portion of their allotted summer water. And NRCS has been involved from the start.

Sugar Creek, a tributary to the Scott River, serving the landowners' irrigation needs, also has high-quality fish habitat, described by Fish & Game Biologist **Dennis Maria** as follows: "Good habitat complexity exists throughout the stream system primarily in the form of cobbles, small boulders and large and small woody debris, which provides good juvenile salmon and steelhead rearing conditions."

To free up Sugar Creek water for the fish, the project improved irrigation efficiencies for the ranchers with the help of more than \$89,000 in grant funding. Four diversions were surveyed and 18 miles of piping was

engineered and installed, along with a monitoring system. Combined with sprinkler systems and various types of equipment and management, the system will allow these landowners to stay in business while contributing to the health of Sugar Creek.

The project directly benefits trout and anadromous species such as coho and chinook salmon in the Scott River watershed. The Scott River mainstem in late summer and fall is often lacking in cold water rearing habitat. Tributaries such as Sugar Creek offer refuge for these species.

The Sugar Creek project is part of a larger fish habitat effort in the watershed. To augment fall flows, the Siskiyou RCD has worked for 10 years to complete a series of projects designed to allow landowners to irrigate more efficiently and improve flows in Sugar Creek. NRCS has been providing technical and financial help to the five landowners since at least 1997.

Landowners are quite happy with the result, according to **Lorrie Bundy**, Yreka Field Office Engineer, and they are looking forward to tackling the really hard part of the project: managing an irrigation system together.



## From RC&D To PRT: Vancura Brings Conservation Goodness To The Front Lines In Iraq

Showing amazing volunteer spirit, our own **Jim Vancura** has taken a break from his job as NRCS Coordinator for Ore-Cal RC&D to try his hand at nation building in one of the world's most dangerous places.

After he read the USDA job announcement last May, Vancura knew he had to apply. Although he had planned to retire in 2008, leaving a federal career that began in 1975, he wanted to help his country and the Iraqis.

“People ask me if I’m scared and the only thing I can say is, ‘Heck yes,’” said Vancura. “But I hated the feeling of being a hypocrite and having my two daughters go into the military and possibly having to serve in a dangerous environment and not having to do it myself.”

Vancura got the job, and was assigned to the Foreign Agriculture Service. He is currently serving as a USDA Agricultural advisor and is part of one of the embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Iraq.

PRTs are military units of 50-100 personnel with two or three civilian advisors. Since 2003, USDA has detailed 37 volunteer agricultural advisors from nine USDA agencies on long-term PRT assignments. As of October 5, 2007, USDA had eight agricultural advisors in Afghanistan and Iraq, and 18 additional advisors, including Vancura, were detailed in November 2007.

Prior to deployment, these volunteer advisors participated in a rigorous two week military/civilian training program at Fort Bragg, N.C. This training included area studies, security awareness, and risk assessment.

Before leaving in October, Vancura said he was both excited and nervous about his coming year. “It’s going to be an interesting and challenging position. I’m really looking forward to it in some regards. I fear the worst, but I’m trying to prepare for the best.”



In Kirkuk, Vancura has adorned his CHU (Containerized Housing Unit) with many familiar NRCS items. Still trying to get into the swing of things, he is learning how to work with Iraqis and interpreters and planning many field trips to further get a handle on how things work and don't work. His initial focus is mainly on agricultural production (soil quality, fertility and management, and irrigation).



When Vancura first arrived in Iraq he spent only about a week in the Green Zone, the “Ultimate Gated Community,” protected with numerous armed checkpoints, coils of razor wire, chain link fences, and surrounded by “T-Walls” (reinforced and blast-proof concrete slabs).



Initially assigned to Baghdad, Vancura was soon at a new home away from home at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Warrior in Kirkuk with his PRT. Kirkuk, in northern Iraq, is approximately 240 kilometers north of Baghdad.



Vancura says he's mostly been working with Kurdish government representatives and still goes to the field only rarely. Field trips can be dangerous, and the farmers are reluctant to be associated with the USA for fear of being targeted by the insurgents.



*Resource Conservation and Development is a great American success story. RC&Ds are locally driven. Volunteers from cities, towns and communities come together as an RC&D council, and together they work to benefit the local economic and resource conditions. They do what's right for their communities.*

—Ed Burton, State Conservationist

“The anticipated benefits of these workshops include diversification of family farms and properties in economically depressed rural areas.”

— Robyn Smith



*Winemaker Kris Casto welcomes a tour group to her vineyard.*



*Organic produce can be had during “Weekend in the Country” in Mariposa County.*

## helping people help the land **Agriculture-Nature Tourism**

*The Yosemite/Sequoia RC&D has been working in partnership with local agricultural producers and other entrepreneurs to expand agriculture-nature tourism enterprise opportunities to diversify and sustain family farms and support economic stability in rural communities.*

A major accomplishment was developing a series of six mini-workshops to assist participants with the planning and launching of ag-nature tourism business ideas. These workshops were developed in partnership with the **Central Sacramento RC&D** through generous funding from the **U.S. Forest Service** Rural Community Assistance Program.

Each module includes self assessment tools to enable participants to decide if ag-nature tourism is truly for them. Upon completion of the six workshop series, participants had completed the majority of their business plan, and were then able to begin their enterprise within a year if they decided to do so. The Yosemite/Sequoia RC&D (Y/S RC&D) also obtained a grant from the **California Association of RC&Ds** and **NRCS** to send six minority and other under-served farmers to attend the ag-nature tourism workshops.

“The anticipated benefits of these workshops include diversification of family farms and properties in economically depressed rural areas,” says Y/S RC&D Coordinator **Robyn Smith**. “Also, support for associated businesses and communities, increased opportunities for visitors to our rural areas, and public education about farming techniques, technology, and food sources.”

A group of enthusiastic Mariposa County producers, artisans, agencies, and organizations came together for the first Y/S RC&D Ag-Nature Tourism workshop in 2005. This group became so excited about the potential for their businesses, that they have continued to work together to share ideas and develop ongoing opportunities. They have now produced trail maps and marketing materials, and have hosted three *Weekend in the Country* events featuring local wineries, herb gardens, livestock operations, artists, organic farms, nature walks, a unique coffee roasting business that also grows blueberries, iris farms, and many more attractions. This event now happens twice a year, and is bringing significant benefit to the Mariposa County area.

The Y/S RC&D also assisted several interested businesses in gaining scholarships to attend a Sierra Business Council conference, which focused on agri-tourism opportunities. They plan to hold another workshop series in Tulare County in spring 2008.



## helping people help the land

# West Rim Fuel Reduction Project

“By demonstrating the use of livestock as a vegetation management tool, it gained greater acceptance among forestry and fuels professionals.”

— Kay Joy Barge

*A project to extend and maintain an existing shaded fuel break between the north fork of the American River Canyon and the Placer County towns of Colfax, Weimar, and Applegate, is providing greater protection to these communities from fires originating in the canyon.*

The project is part of the larger West Rim Shared Habitat Project. It encompasses approximately 3,900 acres of public and private land on the west rim of the north fork of the American River (between the river and the town of Colfax).

The entire project area has historically been and remains working forest land. A portion of this land was impacted by the 2001 Ponderosa Fire. The area is a critical buffer zone between urbanized lands along Interstate 80 and the North Fork of the American River.

The West Rim Fuel Reduction Project was completed using a combination of hand cutting and piling, pruning, and thinning. Fuel break work was funded separately through an Environmental Quality Incentives Program contract between the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the landowner.

Existing fuel breaks were maintained using a combination of goats and sheep. Livestock was used to control the regeneration of brush and fine fuels and to process slash from fuel break construction activities.

The **High Sierra Resource Conservation & Development Council (HSRC&D)** evaluated the costs of using livestock compared to other techniques and produced a feasibility study describing the opportunities for using livestock. The HSRC&D also developed a draft business plan. “By demonstrating the use of livestock as a vegetation management tool, it gained greater acceptance among forestry and fuels professionals,” says HSRC&D Coordinator **Kay Joy Barge**. “It also increased local capacity for using livestock.”

The project included a biomass utilization component. The sheep and goats used converted biomass into meat products, which were marketed locally and/or regionally (ethnic markets for these products are expanding).

The project also included a substantial outreach and education component. The HSRC&D conducted workshops for the community, for regional livestock producers, and for forestry, fire, and range management professionals.

In addition to HSRC&D, partners in the project included **NRCS**, the **University of California, Davis**, **University of California Cooperative Extension**, and the **California Fire Safe Council**.



**Goats are used to manage vegetation.**



**Goats go about their business reducing the fuel load while being watched over by a guard dog.**



Property owner Alan Edwards in front of land that hasn't been managed since a fire burned there in 2001.



A portion of the fire break on top of a ridge between Colfax, Calif., and the American River canyon.





## helping people help the land **Pit River Watershed Alliance**



**“The effectiveness of the Alliance is based on the effectiveness of its stakeholders.”**

—Mark Steffek  
North Cal-Neva RC&D Coordinator

*The Pit River Watershed Alliance is a collaborative, non-regulatory group working to strengthen individual stakeholder efforts through enhanced coordination.*

The **Pit River Watershed Alliance** (Alliance) was formed in December 1999. Since that time, a variety of stakeholders have participated in the Alliance and identified priority projects and resource issues. The forum created from regularly held Alliance meetings and activities enable private landowners and stakeholders, and local, state and federal agencies to share ideas, skills, and leverage funding opportunities to complete projects.

“The effectiveness of the Alliance is based on the effectiveness of its stakeholders,” says **Mark Steffek**, North Cal-Neva Resource Conservation & Development coordinator. Many of the stakeholders have been actively addressing resource issues before the Alliance was formed. Those stakeholders participating in the Alliance believe improvements to the watershed can best be solved by those living and working in the watershed.

Priority projects of the Alliance are to conduct a watershed assessment and water quality monitoring program. The Upper Pit River has been identified as an “impaired waterbody,” as defined in the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA) 303d list by EPA and the State Water Resources Control Board. Water quality parameters named in the 303d listing include temperature, nutrient loading and low dissolved oxygen.

Although not listed, sediment and turbidity are also suspected of being at unacceptable levels. Causes and extent of these suspected impairments to the Pit River have not been well documented in the past. The Alliance seeks, for the first time, to put real numbers on these suspected non-point-source pollutants.

Stakeholders, including the **Central Modoc, Pit and Fall River Resource Conservation Districts**, private landowners, and state and federal agencies, are working on projects that address water quality and agrarian lifestyle issues.

The Alliance provides a forum where these efforts can be coordinated so that important work is addressed and duplication of effort is avoided.

The Alliance has completed a watershed assessment, funded by **CalFed** and administered by **California Department of Water Resources**, concurrent with existing stakeholder projects.

The assessment identifies historic and current resource conditions, and provides real data to decision makers so that activities can be focused to ensure the most efficient and effective use of effort.

The Alliance received another CalFed grant in October 2006, to develop a Watershed Management Strategy and to implement the Adopt-A-Watershed curriculum in the schools within the Pit River Watershed.

For more information, contact the **North Cal-Neva Resource Conservation & Development Council** at (530) 233-8868 or on the Internet: <http://www.NorthCalNevaRCD.com>.



**Perry Converse (from left) explains a method for determining dissolved oxygen content to Ann Francis and Todd Sloat.**



**The Upper Pit River Watershed, located in northeastern California, is outlined in red.**



## Profitable Central Coast Ranch Maintains Conservation Tradition



*NRCS Engineer Mark Barnett (left) and Rancher Dave Alford (right) discuss streambank stabilization and other conservation practices.*



*Rancher Dave Alford opens a gate in his pasture cross-fencing. Cross-fencing permits more efficient grazing and increased profits.*

**T**he **Turri Ranch and Cattle Company** of San Luis Obispo County maintains a tradition of conservation on the land, which has been in their family since 1900. **Dave Alford** works the ranch in partnership with other family members and remembers his grandfather speaking about conservation. Alford's grandfather told him, "Never take more off the land than you can put back into it."

Alford explained the history of the ranch and how his family's practice of conservation sustains the land's resources, while meeting modern production challenges. "There are different families involved in the ranch today, but we still run it as one piece. My cousin is my partner, although he is no longer working on the ranch. We are fortunate that everyone is in agreement and still wants to keep farming. As the younger generation started taking over, we wanted to make improvements. We wanted to become more efficient and the driving force was that we wanted to make more money," he said.

During the days of Alford's grandparents, cattle were allowed to graze anywhere they wandered on the pasture. This type of grazing is known as "free choice" and results in cattle selecting the most palatable plants for grazing, while ignoring others. Free choice grazing fails to maximize a pasture's productive capability and can reduce the overall quality of grazing plants on a pasture over the long run.

Dave said, "We recognized that if we started doing cross-fencing that it would be much more advantageous. With cross-fencing you can force cattle to eat areas and utilize grasses more efficiently. If you just let them go free choice, then they'll only take the good stuff. So, we started experimenting around with a little bit of cross fencing."

They began cheaply with electric fencing and considered it to be somewhat beneficial, except that their cows were continually breaking through it. Eventually they decided that a more durable type of fencing was needed.

Alford said, "We run a cow-calf operation and once they had their calves, or it happened to be less of a feed year, they'd start pushing against it, even with the electricity in it. Eventually, they'd break it and they'd go right through. We thought we'd like to do some hard fencing. At the same time there was talk about rotational grazing and better utilization of your ground. So, we wanted to try an adaptation of that; so we came up with this idea of cross-fencing."

When the Turri Ranch partnership decided to maximize their profits on rangeland, they received technical and conservation program assistance at the local field office of the **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** office and **Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District (RCD)**. They have used this assistance to install fencing, an irrigation water conveyance pipeline, and a watering facility, which includes a tank and gravity flow water troughs.

They also conduct annual clearing and snagging on the creek that runs through their property, utilizing crews from the Civilian Conservation Corps. Conservation practices on the ranch were funded by NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and supplemental funds provided by the Coastal San Luis RCD's Project Clearwater.

Alford expressed satisfaction in his relationship with the local NRCS and RCD staff. He said, "We are very fortunate. We have a very good and strong relationship with NRCS and the RCD. It's beneficial for everybody. What is really key to me is that they include me in the planning process. It makes me feel like I know something and that they care about my concerns."

The ranch spans over 1,000 acres, with about 600 acres in farming and about 400 acres of pasture. Alford said he grows vegetable and flower seed crops on his farm, although beef cattle are taking an increasing role in his program. He grows hay and keeps a small amount for his cattle and sells the rest. Alford also grows garbanzo beans, which can be canned or sold green as a niche crop for the local Hispanic market.



## Solving the Mystery of Princess Mariposa

A Merced County cattle rancher wasn't sure what kind of bones were sticking out of a stream bank on his ranch when he asked NRCS Range Specialist Dennis Dudley and Resource Conservationist Jennifer Foster to take a look at them. Dudley and Foster were



Jennifer Foster photo

there to see about enhancing wildlife habitat in the stream. "Dennis and I went down to take a look," Foster says. "I told him they didn't seem like cow bones because they were too small." So the landowner

contacted a forensic archaeologist who determined they were human. When the county coroner ruled out foul play, the archaeologist went to work to learn more about the skeleton. Tests indicate the remains are those of a female who lived about 2,100 years ago. She was dubbed Princess Mariposa by the landowner's granddaughters in honor of the creek she was buried next to. Mariposa had given birth at least once before she died at between 30 and 40 years of age. Native American authorities have been contacted to see if they wish to rebury her remains.



State Conservationist Ed Burton honored Merced District Conservationist Malia Hildebrandt (right) and Laura Westerfield, Farm Service Agency County Executive Director, for the Merced Service Center's excellent working relationship. Paul Lake photo

## Planning Effort Packs 'Em In

It was standing room only at a recent meeting in the Placerville field office to discuss the Conservation Planning Initiative. How did the staff get such a big turnout?

"We sent a news release to the Georgetown Gazette," says District Conservationist Hue Dang. "We also aired a public service announcement on a Georgetown radio station."

Dang made presentations and provided information to local farm groups. A workshop flyer and self-assessment workbook were posted on partner web sites. Flyers were placed inside Ag Commissioner, Placerville Fruit Grower, and Co-Op Extension offices. El Dorado County resource conservation districts did a direct mailing to 275 members of their ag watershed group.

The planning initiative is an attempt to help landowners prepare to apply for NRCS conservation programs.

## A Solution to Pollution

USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Mark Rey (left) studies new spray technology with Rich McVaigh, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (center), and Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations Curtis Tarver.

NRCS now provides cost-share funds to San Joaquin Valley growers who reduce the amount of pesticide or herbicide they use by employing "smart sprayers" to eliminate weeds and pests.

The one shown here uses sonar to spray only when there are objects to hit and automatically shuts off when it exits an orchard.



Brian Ziegler photo



Paul Lake photo

## Getting the Word Out

The support that's available from NRCS to beginning and limited resource farmers is what Soil Conservationist Erin Foreman (left) talked about at the recent Small Farms Progress Days in Grass Valley.

The event promotes small-scale farming and forestry in the Sierra Nevada region through education, networking, and equipment demonstrations.



Placerville Soil Conservationist Amber Till schedules an appointment with a landowner during a Conservation Planning Initiative meeting. Hue Dang photo

## LoFreso's Outstanding Performance

*By Paul Laustsen  
Former Public Affairs Specialist/  
Riverside*

[This was Paul's last contribution to *Current Developments* before going on to explore new opportunities with U.S. Geological Survey in October. Thanks, Paul, for all of your great work and dedication. Best of luck!]

**A**t the 2007 California Association of Resource Conservation and Development Council's annual conference in Morro Bay in October, Area IV NRCS employee **Carolyn LoFreso** was honored with the "Outstanding Performance by a Coordinator" award. The award is the highest honor the association can give a coordinator. LoFreso's name will be forwarded to the Pacific Rim Association of RC&Ds for consideration of the regional award.

LoFreso was nominated for the award by the **Mojave Desert-Mountain**

**RC&D** (recently renamed **Desert Mountain RC&D**) where she has served as the council's coordinator for nearly two years. The nomination outlines many outstanding achievements, including work putting together the Small Business Development Workshops, coordination of the Rancho Seco Dust Mitigation Project, oversight on the work plan for the Watershed Coordinator for the Upper Kern and South Fork Kern River watersheds, and work coordinating the working landscape conservation easement project on the Smith Ranch along the South Fork of the Kern River.

Including her achievements in coordinating projects, LoFreso is also revered as a spokesperson for the Council and the RC&D program. She has worked hard to communicate with various community groups, government agencies and corporations in the area to include and solicit support for the council. In the closing of the nomination, Council



Carolyn LoFreso receives her award from Gary Freeman, then-president of the California Association of RC&D Councils. Photo: Jim Cairns

President **Donna Thomas** stated "Carolyn LoFreso has earned the respect and genuine friendship of our Council members through her professionalism, her hard work on our behalf, and her enthusiasm for the RC&D program." **Congratulations Carolyn!**



*By Robert A. Pearce, Ph.D.  
District Conservationist/Bishop*

**N**NRCS Staff and partner organizations attended an exceptional hands-on Streambank Soil Bioengineering workshop in Adobe Valley during early November. **Jon Fripp**, from the NRCS National Design, Construction, and Soil Mechanics Center in Fort Worth, Tex., and **Chris Hoag**, from the Plant Materials Center in Aberdeen, Idaho, provided excellent classroom instruction and field applications in their Stream Restoration Course. The class was sponsored by the **Bishop NRCS**

## Streambank Bioengineering In Adobe Valley

**Field Office** and **Greenbridges, LLC**. **Ken Franzen** (Area 4 Resource Conservationist), **Julia Grim** (State Geologist), and **Diane Holcomb** (State Resource Conservationist) were all instrumental in organizing the class.

NRCS has a 1,600-acre Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) easement in Adobe Valley, which is located about one hour north of Bishop, Calif. Part of the restoration plan on the WRP land calls for installation of several stream restoration practices along with wetland restoration. Bishop District Conservationist **Rob Pearce** had contacted Jon and Chris about teaching the class in Bishop, and having the students install some of the restoration practices. The class was a perfect fit to combine implementing WRP practices

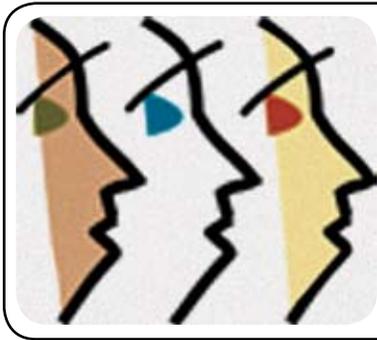
with an educational opportunity.

Jon Fripp designed the stream restoration project, which included stream drop structures, fish lunger, live clump plantings, willow pole plantings, a brush mattress, and a fascine.

During the classroom portion of the workshop, Jon and Chris presented material on a variety of topics, including principles of streambank bioengineering, fluvial geomorphology, stream mechanics, and bioengineering treatments. Biologist **Casey Burns** from the Somis Field Office presented material on riparian vegetation.

The class was attended by staff from a variety of agencies and groups, including **NRCS, California Dept. of Fish & Game, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, University of California Cooperative Extension, U.S. Forest Service**, various consulting firms, and the land owners.

The land owners provided an evening barbecue for the class, which added greatly to the overall experience.



# CIVIL RIGHTS CORNER

By *Reina Rogers & Jerry Reioux*  
California Civil Rights Committee Members

Secure, top secret, and rapid communications are essential for effective operations on the battlefield during wartime. Military forces constantly work to develop communications systems, methods, and techniques—known as **cryptography**—to ensure the enemy does not gain access to vital information.

To confound the enemy, American forces in both World Wars used Indian personnel and their unique languages to guarantee secure communications.

In France during World War I, the 142nd Infantry Regiment had a company of Indians who spoke **26 different languages or dialects**, only four or five of which were written languages. Two Indian officers were selected to supervise a

communications system staffed by **Choctaw Indians**. They were used in the regiment's operations in October 1918, transmitting over radios in their native tongue a variety of messages related to troop movements, which the enemy—completely surprised by the actions—could not break.

After WWI, the concept of using **Navajo** for secure communications came about from **Philip Johnston**, the son of a Navajo missionary. Raised on the Navajo reservation, he was one of the few non-Navajos who spoke their language fluently. He was also a WWI veteran who knew of the military's search for a code that would withstand all attempts to decipher it. He was also aware that Native American languages—notably Choctaw—

## Code Talkers: Native American Veterans' Contributions To Military Intelligence

had been used in WWI to encode messages.

During World War II in Europe and the Pacific, the U.S. Army used Indians in its signal communications operations. A group of 24 Navajos was assembled to handle telephone communications, using voice codes in their native tongue, between the Air Commander in the Solomon Islands and various airfields in the region. The U.S. Marine Corps also used Navajo code talkers extensively in the Pacific.

In Europe, the 4th Signal Company of the Army's 4th Infantry Division was assigned 16 **Comanches** as radio operators to transmit and receive messages in their own unwritten language.

Once Navajo code talkers completed their training, they were sent to a Marine unit deployed in the Pacific. The code talkers' primary job was to talk, transmitting information on tactics and troop movements, orders

and other vital battlefield communications over telephones and radios. They also acted as messengers, and performed general Marine duties.

Praise for their skill, speed and accuracy accrued throughout WWII. At Iwo Jima, **Major Howard Connor**, 5th Marine Division signal officer, declared: "Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima." The Japanese, who were skilled code breakers, remained baffled by the Navajo language. The Japanese said they never cracked the code used by the Marines.

By the end of WWII, more than **400 Navajo code talkers** had served in the Marines. Navajo remained potentially valuable as code even after the war. For that reason, the code talkers, whose skill and courage saved American lives and military engagements, have only recently earned recognition.



Name	Position	Action	Grade	Location	Date
Garrett Liles	Stud Tr Soil Sci	Conv To Exc Appt	GS-09	Chico	10/14/07
Crystal Biddle	Ag Engr	Career-Cond Appt	GS-05	Hanford	10/28/07
Christina Smith	Agrom	Term Appt Nte	GS-11	Lockford	11/11/07
Cindy Montepagano	RC&D Coord	Career Promotion	GS-12	Riverside	10/14/07
Kendra Moseley	Range Mgt Spec	Career Promotion	GS-12	Davis	10/14/07
Elizabeth Palmer	Area Biologist	Career Promotion	GS-12	Fresno	10/14/07
Desideria Ramirez	Ag Engr	Career Promotion	GS-11	Salinas	10/28/07
Evan Smith	Forstr	Career Promotion	GS-09	Redlands	10/28/07
Erin O'Farrell	Ag Engr	Reassignment	GS-11	Ukiah	10/14/07
James Vancura	RC&D Coord	Reassignment	GS-12	Fgn Ag Service - Iraq	10/19/07
Edward Burns	Biolgst	Reassignment	GS-11	Dixon	10/28/07
Jake Sneider	Soil Scntst	Reassignment	GS-09	Huntington Beach	11/11/07
Steven Hill	Natural Res Mgr	Reassignment	GS-12	Davis	12/23/07
Brooke Valente	Soil Consvst	Resignation	GS-09	Stockton	10/19/07
Kelli Camara	Soil Consvst	Resignation	GS-11	Salinas	10/26/07
Katherine Morphis	Soil Consv Tech	Resignation	GS-06	Blythe	10/26/07
Wm Cunningham	Biolgst	Retirement	GS-12	Davis	10/26/07
Linden Brooks	Soil Consvst	Retirement	GS-14	Red Bluff	01/03/08
Beverly Kienitz	Admin Asst	Retirement	GS-07	Petaluma	01/03/08
David Robledo	Ag Engr	Retirement	GS-12	Salinas	01/03/08
Katherine Wold	Human Res Spec	Retirement	GS-11	Davis	01/03/08

