

Executive Update



Helping People Help the Land

A special update for Idaho conservation leaders ♦ Fall 2007

Special Feature

Successful Conservation Partnership Tour

On September 20, approximately 15 partners, congressional representatives and state legislators visited four conservation sites in the Treasure Valley during a conservation tour hosted by the Idaho Association of Conservation Districts (IASCD).

The first stop brought participants to the Moo-Riah Dairy operated by the DeWinkle family in Canyon County. Utilizing financial and

technical assistance from NRCS and the Canyon Soil Conservation District, the family signed an EQIP contract to install an animal waste composting facility on their 355-acre operation. The DeWinkles have also utilized the local district and NRCS to install a wheel-line irrigation system to improve water efficiency on their cropland.

The second stop included a constructed wetland project on 1.3 acres in Ada County. This urban wetland offers benefits to residents by storing stormwater runoff, filtering out pollutants for improved water quality, and enhancing wildlife habitat. Other stops included the

Wetland project in Ada County is a demonstration and educational site where the public can learn about the value of wetlands.



NRCS Urban Conservationist Skip Vetten explains benefits of Boise flood control structure to tour participants.

following: a potential site for an infiltration trench project designed to decrease flooding potential from stormwater runoff, and a flood control structure designed to prevent flood damage to Boise's North End in the event of heavy rainstorms.

Kent Foster, Executive Director of the IASCD, credited the partners for their role in these successful projects and challenged legislators to continue to support Idaho's conservation efforts.

Farmer Evaluates Manure Application Methods

by Cindy Snyder, TSP public affairs specialist

Kimberly, Idaho- Kimberly farmer, Dave Roper, received a \$395,000 Conservation Innovation Grant from NRCS to find an efficient way to apply dairy effluent. That grant allowed him to purchase manure injection equipment and partner with the USDA-Agricultural Research Service in Kimberly to evaluate the system against two other application methods and assess resource concerns.

Since the fall of 2006, Roper has used the equipment to apply dairy

lagoon effluent from six different dairies on six different farms. Scientists collected manure samples but also used cutting edge ultraviolet technology to measure gas concentrations in the air above the fields.

So far, the data indicates that using the injection system reduces ammonia levels in the air by half compared to applying the effluent to the surface or using an Aerway system that provides some mixing of manure and soil in the top 3 or 4 inches.



Roper's new manure injection system pumps effluent through the hose to the injection shanks.

"This system is basically the newest technology and it has enormous advantages over the old tanker-honey wagon system both in terms of time and compaction," Roper said. "Plus it's environmentally friendly and good for the producer."

Conservationist's Corner



Richard Sims
State Conservationist
Idaho NRCS

Wrapping up 2007

Well it's over. No, not the World Series but the Federal fiscal year - and it has been a whirlwind of a year. This has been my first year to operate under a continuing resolution for the entire year and it has created different challenges than in previous years.

I am celebrating the amount and type of services we provided to our customers. We have developed conservation plans for nearly 500,000 acres of rangeland, forestland, and cropland. Through farm bill programs, NRCS in Idaho brought in \$24.2 million to farmers and ranchers to implement conservation practices in our watersheds. This is the highest amount since I came to Idaho in 1999. Another proud moment was the completion of a nutrient management software tool for commercial fertilizer. This tool was designed to help producers apply the appropriate amounts of fertilizer, and it has already saved them thousands of dollars.

Watch out fiscal year 2008! There is a new farm bill around the corner along with pending litigation on zoning issues. Other activities we will be working on include restoring grazing land from wildfires and the urban versus rural interface conflicts. Whatever the challenge--NRCS staff will be ready to assist!

Water Supply Outlook by Julie Koerberle, Hydrologist

The outlook for the new water year and next year's water supply appears optimistic; most Idaho SNOTEL sites have already received above normal precipitation in the first half of October. The mountains have started receiving rain and snow and the weather forecast calls for more wet weather across the Pacific Northwest! Soil moisture sensors at SNOTEL sites are responding to recent precipitation. However, with one of the driest summers on record, the soils will need more rain to satisfy the soil moisture deficit before the

onset of the winter snowpack. If this scenario fails to happen, some of the snow-melt water next spring will be consumed by the underlying soil matrix before flowing into streams and reservoirs.

The Climate Prediction Center has confirmed La Nina conditions in the equatorial Pacific, which is usually associated with a wet pattern for the Pacific Northwest. It is too early to count on La Nina to fulfill all of our water demands. However, if the current weather patterns hold, the outlook will be much more promising than in 2007.

Snapshots from the Field



Mark Addy, District Conservationist in Coeur d'Alene, works with landowner Rose Frutchey to repair damaged stream banks alongside her livestock operation. Continuous speedboat traffic has caused them to cave in rapidly. Frutchey and her husband are receiving cost-share through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to repair the banks over a three-year period, which will involve planting willows for bank stabilization.

A huge partnership project in northern Idaho, designed to benefit steelhead habitat, is set for completion this fall. NRCS, the Latah Soil and Water Conservation District, Idaho Department of Fish and Game and other partners have provided financial and technical assistance to remove a 200-foot culvert that blocked fish passage through Corral Creek. Once completed, the project will open up 18 miles of steelhead habitat. Restoration of native plants is expected to be completed next spring.

