

Executive Update



Helping People Help the Land

A special update for Idaho conservation leaders ♦ Spring 2006

Special Update

Idaho Experiencing Best Water Year Since '99

Farmers and ranchers, hydropower companies and the tourism industry can breathe a sigh of relief this year. Much of Idaho is experiencing the most positive water year since 1999.

While above average streamflows are causing flooding in some areas, water users such as farmers, irrigators, river runners and hydropower producers, will have plenty of water to meet their needs this year.

“This is a change from the last seven years where water users weren’t necessarily receiving all of their allocation,” says **Ron Abramovich**, NRCS water supply specialist. “We could easily be there again next year, depending on precipitation and snowpack.”

All of Idaho’s basins

reached 100 percent of average snowpack this year and many reached 125 percent or more. Streamflow forecasts range from 100-170 percent of average, with only the Spokane Basin areas below average. Additional releases are being made from most of Idaho’s reservoirs to provide room for the high runoff.



That’s a Wrap (Kind of): CSP Sign-up Ends

The 2006 Conservation Security Program (CSP) sign-up drew to a close March 31 in the Malad, Lewiston, Moscow, Grangeville, Orofino and Nezperce NRCS offices.

If you ask the offices about “wrapping things up,” they’ll tell you they’re “still knee deep in CSP.” The contracts have to be completed and payments made by June 30.

And speaking of contracts: Idaho NRCS is leading the West in the number of CSP applications.

“Idaho is awesome,” says **Lisa Cole**, NRCS soil conservationist in Lewiston. “We’re so happy we’ve had so many producers come through the door here.”



Nez Perce SWCD Board Supervisor Denny Dan and his wife **Mary** locate their property on the Clearwater watershed map with **Lisa Cole**. Denny says he is very pleased to see superior conservation being rewarded.

Lt. Gov. Risch Joins RC&Ds for Planting



Idaho Lieutenant Governor Jim Risch (left) plants the Champion White ash tree with **Kent Rudeen**, IRCDA president, and **Dave Stephenson**, Idaho Community Forestry coordinator.

Idaho Lieutenant Governor Jim Risch joined the Idaho Resource Conservation & Development Association (IRCDA) for a Champion Tree ceremonial planting April 4 in Boise.

Risch spoke about the importance of trees to Idaho communities. **Kent Rudeen**, IRCDA president, and **Jerry Stallsmith**, City of Boise forester, also spoke.

The planting featured offspring from a special White ash Champion Tree. A Champion Tree is the nation’s largest tree of its species. The national Champion Tree Project works with private and public tree owners and nurseries to produce Champion Tree clones.

Idaho’s seven RC&Ds helped communities across Idaho plant over 90 Champion Trees this year in celebration of Arbor Day.

NRCS is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Conservationist's Corner



Richard Sims
State Conservationist
Idaho NRCS

Snow Survey: A Good Investment for Community Preparedness

What a difference a year makes. Last year, the front-page headlines lamented drought. This year, with some of our basins boasting record-level snowpacks, the media stories are about flooding. In some areas, such as Gooding County, the Governor has declared disaster areas due to flooding.

From every corner of our state, water users are monitoring stream-flow forecasts to determine irrigation levels and, now, to assess potential flood damage.

Where does this day-to-day, even hour-by-hour, data come from? The NRCS Snow Survey Program provides mountain snowpack data and streamflow forecasts for the western U.S. This data is used for water supply management, flood control, climate modeling, recreation and conservation planning.

Here in Idaho, we have a competent staff of hydrologists and over 150 measuring sites for monitoring snowpacks. Farmers, irrigation and power companies, and a long list of others regularly rely on this data.

If you don't think this information is crucial, just ask the people who live and work along the Boise River, which is now at flood stage.

NRCS has asked an economist to determine the return in dollars our Snow Survey Program provides to the general public. I have no doubt he will find the public is receiving an exceptional "bang for their buck." I'll keep you informed as the results become final.

The Park Family Enrolls in CSP

The Sign-up from the Producer's Perspective

In Malad, winter lingers. Planting is set to begin at the first sign of dry ground. In addition, a pay check may be coming if **Max and Noreen Park** and others are accepted into the Conservation Security Program (CSP).

The Parks say the application process kept them busy this winter and, at times, the record keeping was tedious. With a public meeting, a workshop, a one-on-one interview

eligible for the program," Noreen says. "The questions guide you and help you find the correct answer for your operation."

Max considers himself a good record keeper. However, compiling his haying folder, his tractor notebook and the calendar at home took time.

"Then going over it a few times, just to be sure," Max says. "Maybe I did more than I needed to."

Noreen stopped at Farm Service Agency and gathered maps with field numbers needed for the application. The office could also tell her in a moment whether their fields were Highly Erodible Land (HEL).

When USDA announced the sign-up, the Parks scheduled a workshop with the NRCS office.

"The workshop offered a lot of information," Noreen says.

"There were a lot of details about the program that we learned and might have missed had we not gone."

Max was able to get answers to the specific questions he had about the application too.

"If I say I did it on my application, I'd better be able to show I did it. My calendar saved me," Max says.

His efforts should pay off says the Malad office. However, the Parks will have to wait to find out.

In the meantime, the Parks are working with Pheasants Forever to rehabilitate two and a half miles of stream bank for wildlife. The Parks must come up with the cost share for the large number of trees they'd like to plant.



The **Park Family** visits with **Kyle Tackett**, the new district conservationist in Malad.

and a final interview, the Parks are surely now regulars at the Malad NRCS Service Center.

"The process has gone well," says Noreen. "We started a bit skeptical. With the higher standards for readmission to CRP concerning many of us in Oneida County, it seemed we were all contemplating, 'Oh no, here we go again with another program.'"

She also remembers thinking the name "Security" was scary and wondered if they would have to relinquish private property rights.

Some concerns were put to rest at the first public meeting.

"The workbook was very helpful! We started on page one, and shortly after, we were able to tell if we were



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