

# Executive Update



Helping People Help the Land

A special update for Idaho conservation leaders ♦ Winter 2006

## Special Feature

### Private Lands Conservation Success Stories Abound in Idaho

Travel rural Idaho and you'll be hard-pressed to find even the smallest of valleys untouched by conservation.

Farmers and ranchers from Bonners Ferry to Twin Falls, Salmon to Marsing are practicing conservation on their land. NRCS, Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Idaho Soil Conservation Commission, along with a host of voluntary programs, have contributed much to the private lands conservation success.

"All across Idaho, our employees have left their conservation signature on the landscape," says NRCS State Conservationist **Richard Sims**. "When I travel the state and see all our good work, I am incredibly proud to be a part of it."

Much of this voluntary success also can be attributed to 2002 Farm Bill conservation programs. Idaho

farmers and ranchers have utilized over \$40 million alone in cost-share through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and \$65 million overall.

Examples include:

- **Fort Hall:** The **Shoshone Bannock Tribe** is working with NRCS and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) to create wildlife habitat among hundreds of acres of cropland.
- **Burley:** **M&H Farms** planted 16 miles of trees and started strip-cropping through EQIP to reduce blowing dust and snow, helping make I-84 safer.
- **Filer:** **Roger Stutzman** utilized the energy conservation provision in EQIP to build a gravity pressurized pipeline.
- **Whitebird:** EQIP is helping several landowners battle yellow starthistle.

- **Genessee:** An EQIP contract helped **Eric Odberg** switch to direct seeding, improving his soil and his yields.
- **Coeur d'Alene:** Through EQIP and WHIP, **Ed Schneider** is planting trees and grasses, and creating wildlife ponds to reduce sediment pouring into Lake Coeur d'Alene.
- **Bonners Ferry:** 1200 acres of wetland habitat now exist thanks to a local working group, NRCS and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).

With such success, you'd think the job is about done, but with new resource issues cropping up, nothing could be farther from the truth.

"With a growing population, we're going to see newer resource concerns, such as urban sprawl and air quality," Sims says. "We're going to have to continually improve our conservation technology to keep up."

### Helping Producers Across Idaho...



**Les and Lavada Louck**, Marsing, developed a nutrient management plan for their cattle operation, and converted to pressurized irrigation on their cropland with the help of NRCS and EQIP.



The **Herbst Family**, Salmon, use best management practices on their cattle operation. They enrolled in CSP to help ensure the future viability of the ranch.



**Verl and Shirl Arnold**, retired ranchers near St. Anthony, enrolled their land into GRP to protect it from development. (Pictured with **Ken Beckmann**, NRCS district conservationist.)

## Conservationist's Corner



Richard Sims  
State Conservationist  
Idaho NRCS

### New Watershed Assessments to Help Prioritize Local Needs

I am pleased to announce a new resource assessment initiative that I believe many of Idaho's natural resource planners will find helpful when prioritizing local conservation needs.

As part of a national NRCS focus on watershed planning, Idaho is embarking on a goal to complete Rapid Watershed Assessments (RWAs) on all 84 eight-digit Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUCs) over the next three years. These assessments will provide an evaluation to determine the size, scope and value of resource concerns within each watershed.

Benefits of these RWAs include:

- Data for basing local decisions on conservation priorities, allocation of financial and technical resources, and funding for implementation activities.
- Sufficient detail for identifying actions without waiting on further long-term watershed studies.
- Data for developing immediate strategies and long-range plans to address specific resource concerns.
- Information on which to base proposals for obtaining future technical and financial assistance.

This initiative represents a major commitment of Idaho NRCS technical resources as we expect to develop each RWA in a three-week timeframe. However, I believe RWAs are one of the most important contributions we can make to the Idaho conservation partnership.

### Snapshots from the Field



This moose and her two followers were seen traversing a WHIP project near Coeur d'Alene.



### Idaho Ranks Top Ten for Performance Bonuses

Idaho NRCS ranks 9th in the nation for implementation of all 2002 Farm Bill programs. In addition, Idaho ranks third in the nation for management of EQIP.

NRCS Chief **Bruce Knight** recently announced that \$56.8 million in conservation program funding is being provided to 41 states for their high levels of participation and performance. Idaho received an extra \$2 million.

The performance incentives are awarded to states achieving a high level of program efficiency and optimizing environmental benefits.

**New rancher Frank Scarborough looks over a streambank restoration project on his property near Soda Springs. He received NRCS technical assistance and a higher EQIP cost-share rate to get started.**

### Farm Purchased for Plant Materials Research

The South Bingham Soil Conservation District (SCD) purchased the "Slaugh" Farm north of Aberdeen to expand plant testing research by the NRCS Plant Materials Center (PMC). The SCD also installed a new irrigation system on the farm to meet the increasing need for plant research and seed production.

Since 1939, the PMC has tested plants and new conservation technology in real-world situations and found solutions for a large variety of natural resource challenges in the Intermountain West. The SCD has been an important partner in those efforts. In 1955, the SCD purchased the "Home Farm" located two miles north of Aberdeen where the PMC's field operations are centered.

The additional farm ground will

allow the PMC to expand. Research priorities include developing performance-tested range, pasture and forestland grasses, forbs and shrubs, and developing and disseminating streambank bioengineering techniques for riparian areas and wetlands.

The PMC will begin establishing research and seed production fields at the new property this spring.



Research field at the PMC.



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Natural Resources Conservation Service  
9173 W. Barnes Drive, Suite C  
Boise, ID 83709  
www.id.nrcs.usda.gov