



September/October 2007

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Heart to Heart
... with Hardisty



 The Senate Agriculture Committee approved its version of the farm bill on Thursday, October 25. The Senate version may still see changes as it looks for passage on the full Senate floor sometime after November 5. Even after it's approved by the Senate, the farm bill language will still be debated at the House-Senate conference committee, chaired by Senator Harkin. Ultimately, the President will have the final say on the changes to be seen in the 2007 Farm Bill.

 I want to thank all the NRCS employees who graciously worked at the National Future Farmers of America (FFA) Convention in Indianapolis held October 24-27. Our employees not only worked at our NRCS booth, but also did recruiting at the Career Expo and judged some of the FFA events.

The convention provides us with a tremendous opportunity to interact with farmers and with young people who will be stewards of our land in the future. Giving them an overview of NRCS and our work is vitally important, not only for today, but for years to come.

 During this early EQIP sign-up period, NRCS has already approved \$534,000 in contracts; half of this amount is for cover crops. The success of the program is largely due to our hard working, professional NRCS employees here in Indiana. Thanks for doing a great job!

Jane E. Hardisty

*** * * * Employee Spotlight * * * ***

**Becky Ross
Area Conservationist, Northwest**

Q: Becky, we know you're not a native Hoosier from your accent, so where are your roots?

A: I was born and raised in north central Oklahoma.

Q: Please tell us about your history with NRCS and the many places the agency has taken you.

A: I started with the Agency in 1992 while I was a student. A friend of mine asked if I wanted a job that paid better than minimum wage. Well, DUH! So I filled out the incredibly long SF 171 and who knew that actually growing up around farming would get me a better than minimum wage summer job. For those of you who work in this electronic age, the technician I worked with that summer didn't like our laser level so we used the hand level and dumpy level to survey several thousand feet of terraces and a few acres of waterways. See in northern Oklahoma, Wheat is King and the Moldboard Plow for a while was royalty as well. So to meet HEL compliance, terraces were everywhere.

After that first summer working with SCS, I decided I liked what the Agency was doing and applied for the Summer Intern Program the following summer and was also able to work part time my last year of school. I must digress and tell you that when I started college, agriculture was not even a consideration in my pursuit of a degree. I was pre-Physical Therapy/Recreational Therapy my first four years. But, extra curricular activities and not quite a 4.0 GPA were going to keep me out of PT school. Besides, I had really grown to love what I was doing with SCS. So, I spent my last year taking my required Ag classes, which lucky for me, qualified towards my Biological Sciences degree. So I can proudly tell you today that I graduated from Oklahoma State University with a BS in BS!! I'll leave the translation to you!

After college, I spent the next 5 ½ years as a Soil Con, and most of that time was in Oklahoma City where I developed a love for urban conservation. From there I became a district conservationist in two offices in Oklahoma and took the opportunity to participate in the Midwest Leadership Development Program.

So at the ripe ole age of 32, I decided to spread my wings and started applying for area conservationist (AC) jobs in other states. Who knew that I would actually be accepted to become an Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations in Virginia? I spent two wonderful years in Virginia,

living in the Shenandoah Valley and covering the northern 1/3 of Virginia, including the DC metro area. Even though I had the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains in my view, I knew I was a flatlander at heart. So I started applying back west and was fortunate enough to be selected as the AC in NW Indiana.

Q: As an AC, what is your leadership philosophy?

A: This is actually a hard one. I guess that my philosophy is pretty similar to Jane's...."Do your job," and there have been times where I have told those I supervise that their job is to "make the AC look good!" Honestly, I try to lead by example and promote effective communication. Besides, I love my job (most days) and try to have a little fun at work. I hope that sets the tone for the rest of the area.

Q: We hear rumors of your sports involvement. True or False?

A: True. While a couple of bad knees have slowed me down, I am not completely out. This summer I convinced some of the ladies in the Lafayette office to join me in a horseshoe league. We were the first all women's team (even made the local paper) and were proud to hold down last place! I must say most of those men didn't want to be beat by a bunch of girls who had never played in a horseshoe league before! Other than that, I bowl and play volleyball. Bowling is definitely a good way to relieve the stress, and I suppose I don't do too badly with a 170 average. No, I have never thrown a perfect game, but I keep trying.

Q: What else takes up your time outside of the office?

A: There's time for anything else? Kidding. I have three dogs who like to be walked and played with regularly. I like to travel, so often I pack up for the weekend and drive to visit friends in various places. Of course with the holidays coming up, I am now in search of the perfect gifts for my niece and two nephews. Aunt Becky spoils them rotten.

Other than that, I enjoy working in the yard and flower beds, reading, visiting state and national parks, hiking, camping, and just about anything else you can do outdoors. And in previous states, I volunteered to coach youth basketball and softball and was a softball umpire.

Q: Any last words for our readers?

A: Actually, I will close with my life philosophy...I only have one shot at this life and I want to make sure I do all I can so that when I am older I won't look back and wonder "what if" or "why". Life is a journey and for me some of the best parts so far have been the detours along the way.



Hoosier Happenings

Fall Forage Day Draws Amish Farmers

The Fall Forage Day in LaGrange County has become an annual event for many grazers in the area, and this year was no exception. On October 9, a group of 85 grazers (including 70 Amish farmers), SWCD staff and NRCS staff met at a field planted in brown mid-rib sorghum Sudan grass in Steuben County to learn about “Supplemental Feed in a Dry Year.” At this first stop the group learned how the land owner planned to use forage to supplement the feed for his 200 dairy heifers.



(Right: NRCS Grazing Lands Specialist Jerry Perkins pulling silage samples)

Grazers learned about a different breed of grazing animal at the second stop, Cook’s Bison Ranch in LaGrange County. Bison, also called buffalo, do not need as much protein as cows, so a grass diet of high sugar and carbohydrate content hits the spot. Rancher Peter Cook told the grazers that he has supplemented the feed with a mineral pellet which offsets the costly corn prices. He plans to feed the bison on corn stalks and bean stubble this fall and baylage and oats throughout the winter. Just before the participants moved on to view a warm season grass field, they were treated to a bison burger lunch!

The group traveled to the Marvin Kauffman farm in Elkhart County for the final destination. The farm is the site for a monthly Pasture Walk where grazers share their ideas of how to manage rotational grazing lands. Marvin, his wife and their children have participated in the progress of their organic dairy farm. Marvin uses the “plan ahead” method of farming. He had various fields planted to alfalfa, triticale, and forage peas, rye-grass, clover and chicory. Turnips and oats will be used for late grazing, and corn will be used for silage for feed over the winter.

Purdue Names New Extension Director

Charles Hibberd was named the director of Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service and associate dean of Purdue Agriculture. He replaces longtime partnership friend Dave Petritz. Hibberd, currently district director of the Panhandle Research and Extension Center and Panhandle Extension District for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, will assume his Purdue post on November 1.

Governor Proclaims RC&D Week

The Indiana League of Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Councils worked hand-in-hand with NRCS and the State Department of Agriculture to bring National RC&D Week to the forefront in Indiana this year. On September 15, Governor Mitch Daniels signed a proclamation declaring the week of September 23 to be RC&D Week in Indiana. The proclamation was announced by Lt. Governor Becky Skillman before a group of Indiana Conservation leaders. Skillman said, “Understanding the great gift we have in our land, we strive to find a balance between growth and conservation, technology and preservation. Our 10 RC&D Councils throughout Indiana help us achieve that balance.” Last year Indiana’s RC&D Councils completed over 100 projects.



(Above, left to right: Jerod Chew, Indiana State Dept. of Agriculture, Div. of Soil Conservation; Marshall Nuckolls, Indiana League of RC&D Councils (Sycamore Trails); Lt. Governor Becky Skillman; Jane Hardisty, NRCS State Conservationist; Andy Miller, Director, Indiana State Dept. of Agriculture)

—Special Emphasis—

**October—National Disability
Employment Awareness
Month**

President George W. Bush proclaimed October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month; an opportunity to recognize the contributions and accomplishments of Americans with disabilities and to underscore our Nation's commitment to advancing employment opportunities for all our citizens.

Americans with disabilities strengthen our workforce. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 helped to ensure that all are better able to engage in productive work and participate fully in the American life. We need to continue this process by eliminating the barriers and false perceptions that hinder Americans with disabilities from joining the workforce. Since 2001, the New Freedom Initiative has helped promote the full participation of people with disabilities in all areas of society, including education, training, and employment. The 'Ticket to Work' program and One-Stop Career Centers have also helped improve access to employment training and placement services.

Visit <http://www.DisabilityInfo.gov> to learn more about the Federal Government's disability-related programs.

Contact: Jack Johnson, Disability Emphasis Program Manager for NRCS Indiana, at jack.johnson@in.usda.gov

Hoosiers Happenings (cont.)

Hoosiers Fired Up About Invasive Plants

Invasive plants don't respect property boundaries, making it nearly impossible for a single landowner to control invasive plant species on his/her property unless surrounding owners do the same. It was this understanding and a desire to control the escalating problem of invasive plants that motivated a group of southern Indiana folks to attend a workshop in August 2007 on CWMA (Cooperative Weed Management Area). After the meeting, White River RC&D Coordinator Kitty Perkinson was bombarded with inquiries from newspapers, extension agents, and the public wanting to know about CWMA and how they could be involved. Perkinson said, "It seems like people came out of the meeting fired up and must be telling everyone they know because the word has sure spread!"

CWMA is a local weed management organization, led by a steering committee and organized under an agreement that integrates invasive plant management resources across boundaries. The group works together to detect, prevent, educate, monitor, and control or eliminate invasive species in southern Indiana.

The workshop was sponsored by White River RC&D, Lincoln Hills RC&D, Historic Hills RC&D, Four Rivers RC&D, Hoosier National Forest, The Nature Conservancy, and the Midwest Invasive Plant Network.

National Energy Awareness Month

October is National Energy Awareness Month, which offers an opportunity for all citizens to learn more about making wise energy choices that can save money, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and protect the environment and natural resources. The USDA website at <http://www.greening.usda.gov/> has info on energy awareness activities that are beneficial to all.

PARTNERSHIP LINKS

Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, *Weekly Updates*:
<http://www.iaswcd.org/WeeklyUpdatesJan07.htm>

ISDA, Division of Soil Conservation
<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>

Purdue University - www.purdue.edu

Indiana Conservation Partnership Strategic Plan Information
<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/icp/index.html>

PERSONNEL UPDATE

Selections:

Ruth Montgomery, Technical Services Team Leader, Lebanon Tech Team, effective 11-11-2007

Jeremy Palmer, Soil Conservationist, Technical Services Team, Albion, effective 11-11-2007

Brook Rieman, District Conservationist, Bloomington, effective 11-11-2007

Colt VanNatta, Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program Coordinator, Terre Haute, effective 11-25-2007

Resignation:

Elizabeth Young, Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program Coordinator, Terre Haute, effective 10-26-2007

Featured Website—IFEC Indiana Field Employees Council

<http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/IFEC.html>

Attention NRCS Employees!! You can learn about the Indiana Field Employees Council by going to the new IFEC website. IFEC provides a two-way feedback between the Indiana Leadership Team and field staff through the State Conservationist. Check out the site to get to know the IFEC members, and contact one of the members to carry forward any concerns, ideas, and issues to the State Conservationist.

From the Indiana NRCS homepage, click on ‘Information For: Indiana NRCS Employees’ on the right. Then, look for the new IFEC link.

Mark Your Calendar

October

10/30/07 NW Area Meeting

10/31/07 SW Area Meeting

November

- 11/06/07 NE Area Meeting
- 11/11/07 VETERANS DAY
- 11/13-15/07 CNMP Provider’s Course, The Centre at 601 Main St., Bluffton, OH. Contact Greg LaBarge, Ohio State University Extension at labarge.1@osu.edu or call 419-337-9210
- 11/14/07 SE Area Meeting
- 11/22/07 THANKSGIVING DAY

December

- 12/04/07 NE Area Meeting
- 12/05/07 SW Area Meeting
- 12/07-08/07 Indiana Farm Bureau Convention, Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis
- 12/10/07 NW Area Meeting
- 12/12/07 SE Area Meeting

January

- 01/09-12/08 16th Annual National No-Tillage Conference, “Gaining the No-Till Edge”, Cincinnati Hilton, Cincinnati, Ohio
- 01/14-16/08 IASWCD Annual Conference, Indianapolis Marriott-Downtown

Note: For a listing of Natural Resources Education Center workshops, go to www.in.gov/dnr/nrec

Helping People Help the Land