



Hoosier



Headlines

A Bimonthly
Indiana NRCS Newsletter

May/June 2010

Issue 27

In This Issue

- News from SZ
- Employee Spotlight—Mark Eastman
- Hoosier Happenings
- Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month
- Partners' Web Links
- Personnel Update
- Featured Web site — Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food
- Mark Your Calendar

News...from SZ



Since May 24, State Conservationist Jane Hardisty has been detailed to the NRCS National Headquarters in Washington, D.C. During her detail assignment, it is an honor for me to serve as the Acting State Conservationist for Indiana. Activities and activity levels are different, but I am thoroughly enjoying this opportunity. This is a great time to be in this role, as great things are happening for NRCS and our customers.

Details for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative have been released, and I'm excited to see the great conservation from this initiative. We're trying some new and unique approaches to maximize conservation through our Conservation Technical Assistance and other programs. If these approaches prove to be successful, we'll evaluate making them available to other parts of the state.

The Mississippi River Basin Initiative decisions are just being made at the national level, and Indiana should see some great partnership opportunities and conservation through this effort, as well. Thanks to all of the local NRCS employees who worked diligently to build the partnership support needed to make this initiative a success.

Another great opportunity on the horizon for Indiana was just announced last week by Indiana Governor Daniels. He committed to establish two of the largest wetland and floodplain restoration and protection efforts in the eastern United States along the Wabash and Muscatatuck rivers. NRCS is looking forward to working with our partners on this initiative to make it a success for water quality and wildlife benefits that will occur.

With these and other demands on your plates, please be assured that your Indiana and national leadership are working hard to build partnerships, efficiencies, and capacities to meet all of these demands, yet keeping NRCS employees focused on what we do best – conservation planning and implementation. Exciting times are ahead for how we'll be doing conservation business in the near future.

I'm proud to work right along with all of you, and I look forward to the successes I know will come. Have a good one!

SZ

Shannon Zezula
(Acting) State Conservationist

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

**Mark Eastman,
District Conservationist**

Q: Mark, are you a native Hoosier?

A: I like to consider myself as a native of Indiana, but not a “Hoosier.” I think there is a university or social club in the southern part of the state that has a hoosier as a mascot or something. On a happier note, I did grow up on a farm in Allen County. My parents taught me that “dirty hands and a clean mind” is not a bad way to live your life. So, I’ve had a natural attraction to Indiana dirt for a long time.

Q: You’ve been with the agency for quite some time. How did you get your start with NRCS?

A: I’ve worked for SCS/NRCS since 1983. Before that, I spent three years as an IDNR soil scientist in Lawrence and Jackson counties, working on their soil surveys. I was able to go directly from my soils duties in IDNR into a soil conservationist position in North Vernon. The soils experience was critical for me in understanding the relationship of soils to their use and management. I like to tell people that I was born to be a district conservationist (DC). It’s not just a career; it’s a lifestyle. I’ve been a DC for over 25 years, and it’s hard for me to imagine being anything different. Although the job has changed a bit in that time, the basic duties of the DC are the same as they were in Hugh’s time. It’s where everything starts for the agency.

Q: What stands out to you as particularly rewarding in your job?

A: I’m extremely pleased that our agency has the simple mission of “helping people help the land.” In 1862, President Lincoln established USDA and called it the “the people’s department.” Even today, as it was then, our mission is about helping people. It’s not about me or contracts or reporting or email. Someone once said... “soil conservation is not just an incidental bit of the mechanics of farming; it becomes part and parcel of the whole business of making a living from the land, and is the only way by which we may have permanently productive land for a permanent agriculture to support a permanent nation.” The real rewards

are when people make decisions on their land to make it better than before. It may be as simple as planting the right grass or completing a large engineered project. The reward for me is living in a community for long enough that I can see the changes on the land or in the water. It’s not what I do, but what landusers do with our help.



Q: Is it true you can quote Hugh Hammond Bennett?

A: A good DC can always quote Hugh! The things Hugh said and did 75 years ago still have meaning today (and I’m not just saying that because the Chief thinks so, too). I don’t think what he preached will or can become outdated as long as we are an agency. Those quotes and thoughts are the very principles our agency was founded on, and what we’re still about today. And if it’s not, it sure ought to be.

Q: On a personal note, would you tell us about your bicycling hobby?

A: I’ve had a history of riding two-wheelers (the pedal kind) ever since I can remember. Growing up in the country, we didn’t have much, but we had bikes. That’s how we got around. My first bike was something my dad found in somebody’s trash. It was actually a girls frame with huge balloon tires, and it weighed more than I did. But it would go over rocks, in fields, through manure, and over cats. It’s a borderline geeky activity, but a healthy kind of geeky. Today, I own more bikes than vehicles. Several current and former Indiana NRCS employees get together from time to time to ride together. I think Hugh rode a bike, too. He thought it was a good way to observe landscapes and farming techniques. I think I read where he actually laid out a set of terraces while on a bike. How can you not want to ride after hearing that?

Hoosier Happenings

KUDOS to...

****Tony Branam** for taking his Saturday to work at the Johnson County Garden Show on May 1, 2010. Tony spoke with nearly 50 attendees about various topics including backyard conservation, USDA programs, pollinators, invasive plants, wetlands, rain gardens, trees and shrubs, and the emerald ash borer. After Bob Eddleman's presentation on Plant A Million (PAM), Tony answered questions from several attendees on how to make their trees count.



Lunchtime was a “conservation carry-in” theme where employees were treated to such homemade items as peach WASCOBler, invasive species/garlic mustard lasagna, cow patties, EQIP apple(ication) crisp, conservation cover bars, and windbreak(ing) beans. Wow, what creativity!

After lunch, Dr. Darrell Schulze, also of Purdue, gave a presentation on technologies being developed using PC tablets, GPS receivers, soils, and geology data files for on-the-go soils/landform identification in the field. Hugh Hammond Bennett also made an appearance, as employees could snap a photo with the father of soil conservation.



Northwest Area Hosts NRCS 75th Anniversary Gala

On April 27, the Northwest Area celebrated the 75th Anniversary of NRCS at the Lilly Nature Center in West Lafayette. Otto Doering from Purdue University engaged the group with his presentation on the history

of the soil conservation movement in America. He also showed an original version of “The Plow that Broke the Plains,” while providing his commentary.



At the end of the day, employees were given handmade WWHD (What Would Hugh Do?) wristbands to help guide daily conservation decision making. And, of course, there was birthday cake!

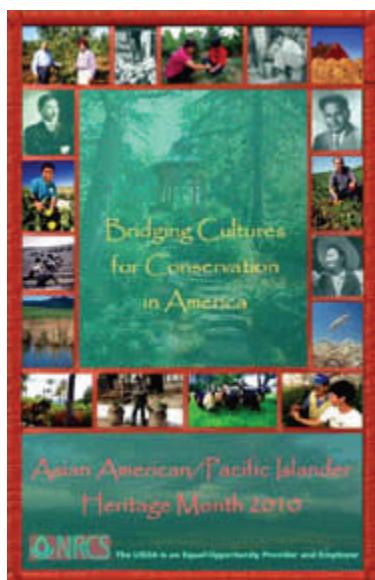


A huge thank you goes to Mark Eastman and his committee for putting this memorable event together.
(more Happenings on page 4)

—Special Emphasis—

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

May 2010 was proclaimed by President Barack Obama as Asian American and Pacific Islander (AA/PI) Heritage Month. This year's theme was "Bridging Cultures for Conservation in America." NRCS Chief Dave White encouraged all NRCS employees to participate in events held that focused on AA/PI heritage. Chief White stated, "Through these events we can all gain an understanding of the differences in each culture, and we can work together to improve service to our employees and customers."



Susan Wood, Budget Officer in New Hampshire, won this year's poster contest for AA/PI Heritage Month. Her poster (pictured at left) will serve as the agency's official poster for the 2010 AA/PI Heritage Month activities.

Contact: Asghar Chowdhery, Asian

American/Pacific Islander Special Emphasis Program Manager, at asghar.chowdhery@in.usda.gov or (317) 290-3200, ext. 374.

PARTNERSHIP LINKS

Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, *Weekly Updates*:

<http://www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/index.html>

ISDA, Division of Soil Conservation:

<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>

Purdue University: www.purdue.edu

Indiana Conservation Partnership:
www.iaswcd.org/icp/index.html

Hoosier Happenings (cont.)

Cox Receives Outstanding Alumni Award

Each year Purdue University's Agriculture and Biological Engineering (ABE) Department recognizes alumni who have achieved significant professional, community, educational, and social accomplishments in agriculture, engineering, and technology. This year Mike Cox, state conservation engineer, received an Outstanding Alumni award from the Department. He credited his success at NRCS to the diverse coursework in the ABE program and the emphasis on working with others in problem solving and projects at Purdue. Congratulations, Mike, on this honor!

RC&D Protects Farmland in Indiana

The Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D now holds the largest conservation easement in its history with the latest donation of a 7,634-acre farm in White County

Juanita Waugh managed the farm for many years and desired her farm to be protected in the future. She placed the farm in a trust and chose Saint Joseph's College (SJC) and Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D as the entities to preserve and protect the farming legacy of the land maintained by her family for over 100 years. Currently, there are 19 operational wind turbines and plans for 13 more. When completed, the 32 wind turbines will make SJC the largest private landowner with the most wind turbines east of the Mississippi River. The annual income generated from the farm will provide scholarships to students in memory of Ms. Waugh.

Cover Crop Workshop

The Jasper County Soil and Water Conservation District hosted a cover crop workshop on June 3 at the Jasper County Fairgrounds with about 30 attendees. The workshop provided sessions to help producers manage cover crops and maintain soil quality. Julie McLemore, district conservationist for Jasper and Newton counties, spoke on NRCS programs, how to acquire a contract, and the importance of the land-owner staying on schedule. Hans Kok of the Conservation Cropping System Initiative explained how cover crops, no-till, and soil quality complement each other. Other presenters included Dave Robison of CISCO Seeds, Purdue Extension's Bryan Overstreet, and representatives from Townsend Aviation. Four local farmers shared their stories on how they have successfully used cover crops.

Auditors Tour Southwest Indiana

On April 14, 2010, seven auditors from KPMG and two national headquarters staff toured southwest Indiana, beginning by visiting waterways in Putnam County with Matt Jarvis. Matt then took them to Owen County to show them flood damage from June 2008 and a cover crop site that was seeded by plane. The group then met Dan Luczynski to visit a turkey farm with a dry stack and animal mortality facility. After

lunch at the Triple H Gun Club, they toured Goose Pond. The day ended in Clay County where Doris Scully showed them a rotational grazing dairy farm, EWP levee sites, and WASCoBs. Highlights included learning how a levee worked, eating homemade ice cream, and learning that a cow will lay down in the same spot that it just used as a restroom!



Leadership Development Program Members Visit DC

In May, members of the Indiana Leadership Development Program visited Washington, D.C. They had opportunity to meet with legislative staffers for Senator Richard Lugar and Congressman Brad Ellsworth, and with various NRCS and USDA officials, beginning

with Chief Dave White. The group toured National Headquarters, as well as the White House, People's Garden, Capitol, and the House Chamber. And, of course, with State Conservationist Jane Hardisty along, they found time for some fun!



Personnel Update

Appointment:

Scott Crist, Contracting Officer, Indianapolis, 07/04/2010
Derek Thompson, District Conservationist, LaGrange, 06/20/2010

Appointment from SCEP:

Wesley Bryan, Ag Engineer, Greensburg Tech Team, 06/06/2010

Reassignment/Promotion:

Kelley Barkell, Soil Conservationist, Huntington, to District Conservationist, Bluffton, 06/20/2010
Jo Hodgett, District Conservationist, Winamac, to Area Program Specialist in Juneau, WI, 06/20/2010

Resignation:

Brook Rieman, District Conservationist, Bloomington, 06/04/2010

Retirements:

Barry Bortner, Resource Management Specialist, Fort Wayne, 07/02/2010
Jerry Lish, District Conservationist, Bedford, 07/31/2010
Randy Moore, RC&D Coordinator, Winamac, 06/30/2010
Pat Ross, Field Office Assistant, Fort Wayne, 06/30/2010

Featured Web Site—Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food

<http://www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer>

The USDA has launched a ‘**Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food**’ Web site that features social media tools to help focus the public conversation about farming and food, while engaging American agriculture and linking producers to customers. The Web site is part of the ‘Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food’ initiative, which promotes local and regional food systems by stimulating community economic development and ensuring equitable access to affordable fresh and local food.

Mark Your Calendar

June

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| 06/23-24/10 | Indiana Farm Management Tour (Boone/Hendricks Counties). Information at http://www.agecon.purdue.edu/extension/programs/farm_tour.asp or contact Alan Miller at millerwa@purdue.edu |
| 06/30/10 | SW Area Meeting, Terre Haute |

July

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| 07/05/10 | INDEPENDENCE DAY HOLIDAY |
| 07/14/10 | SE Area Meeting, North Vernon |
| 07/18-21/10 | Soil and Water Conservation Society Annual Conference, St. Louis, MO |
| 07/27/10 | NW Area Meeting, Lafayette |
| 07/28/10 | SW Area Meeting |

August

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|-------------|---|
| 08/02-05/10 | Soil Quality Training, Evansville |
| 08/06-22/10 | Indiana State Fair, Indianapolis |
| 08/11/10 | SE Area Meeting, North Vernon |
| 08/24/10 | NW Area Meeting, Lafayette |
| 08/24/10 | NE Partnership Employee Meeting, location TBA |
| 08/25/10 | SW Area Meeting |

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

Helping People Help the Land