



# Hoosier



# Headlines

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Indiana NRCS Newsletter

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Issue 29

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## Heart to Heart ... with Hardisty



Fiscal Year 2010 ended with more conservation on the land than ever before, thanks to our Indiana NRCS family and conservation partnership. The year held many opportunities, including the additional dollars that came to Indiana through special initiatives such as the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watershed Initiative and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Because of these special initiatives, our conservation partners keep coming to the table more and more.

In spite of all the additional initiative dollars, we were able to obligate 95 percent of our FY-2010 program funds, exceeding past years and setting the standard for the future.

Indiana NRCS employees continue to be the conservation leaders that partners and producers look to for sound scientific technology and quality conservation installed on the land. Truly, our greatest resource in Indiana is the NRCS employee. Thank you all for doing an outstanding job during FY-2010, another successful year for conservation.



*Jane E. Hardisty*

**\* \* \* \* Employee Spotlight \* \* \* \***

**Todd Bisner,  
Civil Engineering Technician**

**Q:** Folks across the state would like to know a little bit about you, Todd. Are you a Hoosier native?

**A:** Yes, I am a Hoosier native. I was born and raised in Warren/Tippecanoe counties. I've pretty much stayed around here other than the few years I spent in southeastern Illinois.

**Q:** How did you have a hand in erecting the Rensselaer office?

**A:** Wow, that goes all the way back to college. That's where I met Jeanie, a student, while I taught at Ivy Tech. She asked me to tutor her, and on the second day her significant other, Monty, asked me to work for his business which was a Construction Management-Design-Build firm. After 14 years of working my way through that "apprenticeship" with him, I took a three year break from the trade. After Monty passed away Jeanie asked me back. One of the last jobs I did for her was to design and help construct the Rensselaer office.

**Q:** Is the rumor true that you are into tractor pulls?

**A:** Oh, yes! I am a second generation garden tractor puller. My dad's first pull was in 1969 at the Benton County Fair, where he won first place. He used the same tractor that I mowed the yard with three days a week. (This might have a little to do with why I consider myself a true Hoosier redneck.) Before his passing, my dad pulled with the NQS, a professional pulling league. I actually started pulling at the age of eight. Later, I was invited to pull with NQS, too, and look forward to having two tractors to participate with next season.

**Q:** Why did you become interested in working for NRCS?

**A:** During the construction of the Rensselaer office, I was asked about a change order. The tech team leader wanted a door moved and noticed my name on the drawings. He then asked me if I knew how to run AutoCAD, so I told him I had a degree in it. He said, "And you're helping build the place?" I told him I was involved in every aspect of the construction from introduction to handing over the keys. Then, he asked

me if I was interested in a job, and I filled out the paperwork. A few months later I got a phone call asking if I was still interested in the CET position for NRCS, and I began working for NRCS on April 4, 2004. I took this opportunity as simply employment, but have since decided that what we do is very essential, significant, and self-rewarding...and that's just the beginning. I'm absolutely loving it and look forward to my next 20 plus years!

**Q:** We understand your first meeting with Jane Hardisty was eventful. Care to share?

**A:** Haha, I remember that very



first day of employment, orientation day if you will. Alyson Keaton took me to the state office for orientation and on our way out I was introduced to Jane Hardisty, our state conservationist (not really knowing what that meant but I thought it had to be some kind of a big deal). She asked me what my shirt said. I was wearing a partially buttoned up shirt over it, and I said, "Oh, it's nothing." She insisted on reading it. It was some joke about taking the time to read my shirt. She laughed and then invited several other people in to read it as well. I'm sure it left some kind of a first impression! Thanks, Jane! I enjoyed it.

**Q:** What have been your most enjoyable work experiences with NRCS?

**A:** First and foremost is learning what NRCS really is. It is amazing what we do for landowners in this country. I went to school with some of the landowners we work with, and then having this business relationship has been challenging, rewarding, and fun.

Also, I've enjoyed the opportunity to travel to other states and do detail work. The rewards are endless, both professionally and personally. And thank you Rensselaer Tech Team for having me as part of the family and for all the opportunities I've already had and will have in the future.

## **Hoosier Happenings**

### **KUDOS to...**

**\*\*Rob Miller** for submitting an article on the Northwest Indiana Community Garden, which was published in the Fall 2010 Volunteer Voice. The Garden produced over three tons of fresh vegetables this year, providing much needed produce to families in northwest Indiana. A partnership of community groups make up the Garden project, including the Northwest Territory RC&D, NRCS, Earth Team volunteers, and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Lake and Porter counties.

**\*\*Sycamore Trails Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D)** for 40 years of respecting nature, conserving resources, and developing communities. Congratulations!

**\*\*Lebanon Tech Team** for their role in a successful watershed project in Montgomery County. A much needed structure (pictured below) on the Caster farm will discharge directly into the Benjamin F. Remley Regulated Drain. The landowners in the watershed paid to re-route several hundred large tile so this waterway and structure could be properly constructed and placed. The work reflects a good working relationship with the Montgomery County Drainage Board and Surveyor, the SWCD, NRCS, and FSA.—Greg Woods, Montgomery County



### **Farmers Gather for Workshop**

A record crowd gathered in Newton County late in August for a Healthy Soil Quality/Cover Crop Workshop. Along with nationally recognized speakers, 45 farmers and about 30 NRCS and SWCD staff attended

the event. Speakers covered topics on soil quality, such as how to build soil tilth, reduce nutrient and chemical inputs, increase productivity and profitability, and use of cover crops.



(Photo courtesy of Dan Perkins, Jasper County SWCD Technician)

NRCS was represented well with State Agronomist Barry Fisher and Ray Archuleta, conservation agronomist from North Carolina, as presenters. Hans Kok with the Indiana Conservation Cropping System Initiative and Dave Robinson from CISCO Seeds also gave presentations. The workshop was a joint effort between Jasper, Lake, and Newton SWCDs.

### **TNC Transfers Land to Sycamore Trails RC&D**

In 1993, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) received 123 acres from Peter Froehde's estate, with the purpose of preserving the land for its natural qualities. With Mr. Froehde's intent in mind, recently TNC transferred the acreage to the Sycamore Trails RC&D Council to ensure that the land would be protected and serve as an educational resource for generations to come. As part of the agreement with the RC&D, a portion of the tract will allow for sustainable timber harvest, while the rest of the forest will remain unharvested. This will allow the RC&D to demonstrate best management practices in forestry and provide for a variety of habitats on the tract.

### **Indiana Takes 5th Place**

USDA set a goal of collecting 50,000 pounds of food for the summer food drive known as Feds, Farmers, and Friends Feed Families (F5). Amazingly, NRCS collected over 85,000 pounds of food, more than the

(more on page 4)

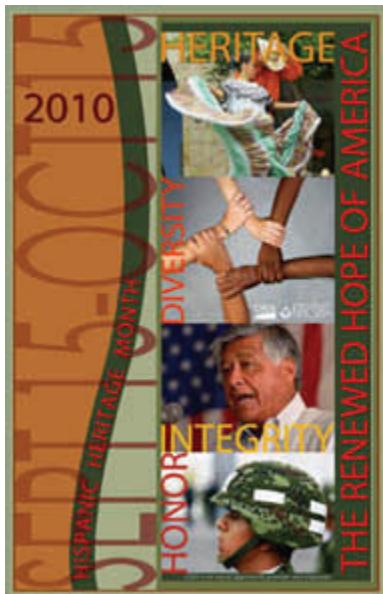
## Special Emphasis— Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15 to October 15 is annually recognized as Hispanic Heritage Month. This year's theme is "Heritage, Diversity, Integrity, and Honor: The Renewed Hope of America." Annually, this time is set aside to celebrate the history, achievements, culture, and contributions of Americans who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico, and the Spanish-speaking nations of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean.

According to a U.S. Census Bureau report, the Hispanic population of the United States (excluding Puerto Rico) as of July 2009 was 48.4 million, constituting 16 percent of the Nation's total population.

Recently, NRCS announced that Thomas Share, on the engineering design staff in Davis, CA, placed first in the 2010 Hispanic Heritage Month poster entry. His poster, shown below, can be downloaded from the national NRCS Civil Rights Web site from the 'About Us' tab.

Contact: Rafael Vega, Indiana Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager at 812.385.5033, ext. 109.



### PARTNERSHIP LINKS

- IN Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, *Weekly Updates*: [www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/index.html](http://www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/index.html)
- IN Conservation Partnership: [www.iaswcd.org/icp/index.html](http://www.iaswcd.org/icp/index.html)
- IN Dept. of Environmental Management: [www.in.gov/idem](http://www.in.gov/idem)
- IN Dept. of Natural Resources: [www.in.gov/dnr](http://www.in.gov/dnr)
- IN State Dept. of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation: <http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>
- Purdue University: [www.purdue.edu](http://www.purdue.edu)
- USDA Farm Service Agency: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

## Hoosier Happenings (cont.)

original USDA goal. Indiana NRCS weighed in at 11,936 pounds—taking 5th place among the states for NRCS. Thank you to all who contributed!

### Afghanistan Minister of Ag Visits Indiana

USDA representatives from NRCS, FSA, RD, and NASS in Indiana hosted Afghanistan's Minister of Agriculture, Mohammad Asif Rahimi, and his staff on October 12 in Tippecanoe County. The Minister was particularly interested in sustainability of the land, so he came to the right place. After presentations at the USDA Service Center in Lafayette, the group toured the Cox Farm. The Minister, farmer and District Conservationist Mark Eastman discussed the benefits of cover crops, improving the biological condition of the soil, and using less commercial fertilizer. He was also interested in how we provide direct assistance to a landowner.



Left to right: Guest staff member; RD State Director Phil Lehmkuhler, FSA State Director Julia Wickard, Minister Rahimi, NRCS State Conservationist Jane Hardisty, NASS State Director Greg Preston, and guest staff member.



Above: District Conservationist Mark Eastman of Lafayette and State Conservationist Jane Hardisty discuss conservation in Indiana with Minister Rahimi and Jim Butler, Foreign Ag Service.

## Hoosiers Honored by Department of the Interior

The Indiana Soils/Prime Farmland Team received high honors from the Secretary of the Interior on October 6 in Farmersburg, Indiana. The team received the U.S. Department of Interior's *Partners in Conservation* award for outstanding contributions in promoting coordination among government agencies to help farmers protect and manage soil resources affected by coal mining in Indiana. The unique long-term partnership has leveraged knowledge from a diverse group of agricultural and coal mining experts to provide farmers with information that allows them to achieve maximum productivity from lands that were mined for coal and then reclaimed for agricultural uses.

The team has been in place since 1996 with over a dozen partners and includes three Indiana NRCS employees: State Soil Scientist/MO Leader Travis Neely, Soil Scientist Rick Neilson, and Resource Soil Scientist Steven Wade. They were significantly involved in developing the handbook, *Farm Management Practices for Reclaimed Cropland*, and have assisted with mine tours to explain best practices with agricultural producers in Indiana and surrounding states.

The tours help ensure increased productivity from and sustainability of the reclaimed cropland.



Left to right: Travis Neely; Steven Wade; Joseph Pizarchik, Director of the U.S. Dept. of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement; Rick Neilson; Jane Hardisty.

## 2nd Annual Cultural Awareness Day Held in Indiana

NRCS in Indiana held the 2nd Annual Cultural Awareness Day on September 16 at the Falls of the Ohio State Park. The event, hosted by the Indiana NRCS Civil Rights Advisory Committee, began the day with speaker Dr. J. Blaine Hudson, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Louisville and author of the book, "Fugitive Slaves and the Underground Railroad in the Kentucky Borderland." Other speakers for the day included Margaret Porter Wright, the first African American valedictorian of Jeffersonville High School and the daughter of long-time principal of Taylor High School, Corden Porter. She capti-



vated the audience as she talked about her experiences attending segregated schools in Indiana. Lastly, Antia Fields, professional diversity specialist, spoke about living and working as a minority in Indiana.

Conference participants were transported by bus along the African American heritage trail in Clark County, starting at



an historic marker on 2nd and Main Street in Louisville where slave auctions were held. The tour continued to a cabin near the site of the George Rogers Clark family cabin and similar to one that housed two African American early Indiana settlers, Ben and Venus McGee. Next stop was to an historic marker on Riverside Drive in Jeffersonville that where attendees learned about Hannah Toliver who was imprisoned for allegedly helping enslaved persons escape to freedom in Indiana. The tour continued on to the 1891 Taylor High School where African Americans were educated in Jeffersonville until 1952, and lastly to the Depot, formerly an 1870's segregated restroom that has been adapted for reuse as a welcome center for the African American heritage trail and as a minority training site.

## **Personnel Update**

### Selections:

Adam Conklin, Agricultural Engineer, Rensselaer Tech Team, 09/12/2010  
Trevor Shepard, Agricultural Engineer, SW Area Office, Vincennes, 09/12/2010  
Andrew Pursifull, Agricultural Engineer, Huntington Tech Team, 09/26/2010  
Jeffrey Turner, Field Office Assistant, NE Area Office, Fort Wayne, 09/26/2010  
Genny Helt, Soil Conservationist, Salem Tech Team, 10/10/2010  
Eamonn Ertel, Soil Conservationist, Salem Tech Team, 10/24/2010  
Sharon Pace, State Office Assistant, Indianapolis, 10/24/2010  
Debra Smith, State Office Assistant, Indianapolis, 10/24/2010

### Reassignment:

Deb Montgomery, Human Resources Assistant, State Office, Indianapolis, 10/24/2010

## **Featured Web Site —**

**<http://www.indianawildlife.org/phosphorus.htm>**

The Indiana Wildlife Federation (IWF) is promoting Phosphorus-free lawn fertilizers, which should help landowners with fall applications. Indiana NRCS employees, Barry Fisher and Tony Bailey, met this summer with IWF representative Marija Watson to discuss NRCS standards for phosphorus in agriculture use and application. They learned that IWF has a good fact sheet available for the public, as well as other information about phosphorus on their Web site at <http://www.indianawildlife.org/phosphorus.htm>.



## **Mark Your Calendar**

### October

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 10/20-23/10 | National FFA Convention, Indianapolis           |
| 10/22/10    | Ask the Secretary Session, 9:45 a.m.-11:00 a.m. |
| 10/26/10    | NW Area Meeting, Lafayette                      |
| 10/27/10    | SW Area Meeting                                 |

November

- |          |                               |
|----------|-------------------------------|
| 11/10/10 | SE Area Meeting, North Vernon |
| 11/11/10 | VETERANS DAY                  |
| 11/16/10 | NE Area Meeting, Wabash       |
| 11/30/10 | NW Area Meeting, Lafayette    |

December

- |          |                               |
|----------|-------------------------------|
| 12/07/10 | NE Area Meeting               |
| 12/15/10 | SE Area Meeting, North Vernon |

January

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 01/10-12/11 | IASWCD Annual Conference, Indianapolis Marriott Downtown |
|-------------|--|

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

*Helping People Help the Land*