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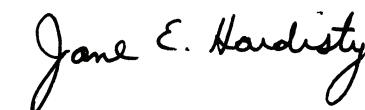
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## Heart to Heart ... with Hardisty

 Time is marching on, and we are wrapping up 2010, another successful year for conservation in Indiana. With over 39,000 conservation practices implemented, we are definitely addressing Indiana resource concerns. We are ready for 2011 and are in good shape with our initial budget in place in order to assist farmers with program applications. In addition, we have identified our NRCS priorities and the Indiana Conservation Partnership priorities for 2011. I look forward to what the new year brings and to the work we will do together for conservation in Indiana.

 We are in the midst of a special time of year. During this Christmas season, please think about the gifts and blessings you have received and be thankful for them. I encourage you to give a special gift to someone less fortunate.

You, our NRCS family and partners, give so much of your time and efforts in conserving our precious natural resources and caring for the land. I am truly thankful for you and wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



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

**Deb Knepp,  
District Conservationist**

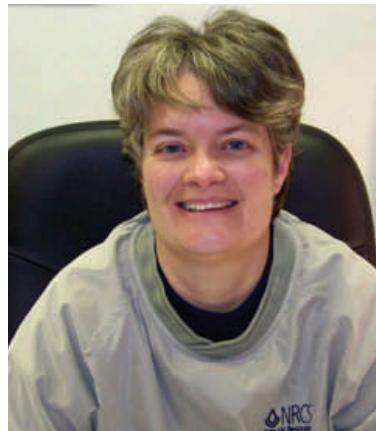
**Q:** Deb, you've been with the agency for quite some time. Please tell us when and how you began working for NRCS.

**A:** I started with the agency right after graduation from Purdue University in June of 1983. My interest in conservation began when I was pretty young. I lived in Lake County right along Lake Michigan. I loved the outdoors and was familiar with many groups working on conservation projects along the lakeshore. While working on my Natural Resource and Environmental Science degree at Purdue, my advisor told me that the USDA, Soil Conservation Service (SCS) would be hiring a record number of employees the year I graduated. Consequently, I started taking courses dealing with soils and conservation planning to put myself in a position to qualify for the positions that would be available. In the spring of 1983, SCS did hire one of the largest groups of new employees that I have ever seen. I feel very fortunate to have been one of them!

**Q:** Your work with the Pokagon Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) project has been impressive. Would you tell our readers about this conservation partnership?

**A:** In 2001, the Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi Indians, headquartered in Dowagiac, MI, approached me about developing a wetland area through the WRP program. At that time, they had purchased about 175 acres in the former Kankakee Grand Marsh area. This area was the winter hunting grounds of their ancestors. Their goal was to restore the area as close as possible to its pre-settlement condition. For the next three years, I worked with Tribe members in the field, attended a Tribal council meeting to explain the program to the leaders, and developed a restoration plan that met their objectives. During that time, the WRP application increased to 1,140 acres. In 2004, NRCS entered into a WRP contract with the Tribe. The final restoration work was completed in 2009. Now, over 800 acres are restored wetlands with the balance planted to native grasses. Over the last nine years, I developed a wonderful working relationship with the Tribe. This allowed me to act as a liaison and coordinator between the Tribe and the government—balancing the Tribe's cultural needs with the agency's standards, processes, and deadlines.

**Q:** Would you say this has been your most interesting work for NRCS?



**A:** This was definitely one of the most interesting and complex conservation planning projects I have been involved with—and one of the most gratifying as well. Early in the planning process, the Tribe's cultural liaison identified plants and trees already on-site that have medicinal and cultural significance. Our plan then needed to incorporate the cultural liaison's findings so we did not alter the habitat where those plants were located. Additionally, we incorporated native plants into the restoration that were important to the Tribe, such as sweet grass (basket weaving), green ash (canoe building), and wild rice (ceremonial food). Last spring, Tribe members expressed their approval of the restoration and stated that the wetland restoration exceeded their expectations.

**Q:** Is it true that you've trained several students in conservation work?

**A:** Yes, I have been training employees since 1990. To date, I have trained six soil conservationists and two SCEP students for NRCS, six county conservationists, seven summer interns (1 or 2 who now work for NRCS), two high school work program students for the St. Joseph County SWCD, and four erosion control technicians when that position was a part of IDNR. I really enjoy helping new employees build the foundation they need to be successful in their career.

**Q:** Do you have outside hobbies or special interests?

**A:** My family lives on a lake in Marshall County. We enjoy outdoor activities such as swimming, boating and canoeing. In addition to that, I enjoy reading and music. I'm very active in my church choir and can play three instruments (one of which is bagpipes).

**Q:** What advice could you share with NRCS employees who aspire to advance the conservation ladder?

**A:** First and foremost, each employee needs to know their job and then do it. Anyone who wants to move up the conservation ladder needs to take full advantage of any training that is offered, enroll in the mentoring program and apply for the leadership development program. Additionally, I would suggest volunteering for work details that broaden the employee's work experiences in their chosen career path. There is so much opportunity within NRCS for employees who wish to impact their communities, not only on a local level, but on the state and national level as well.

## Hoosier Happenings

### **NRCS Makes Impact at FFA Convention**

The National Future Farmers of America (FFA) Convention was held in Indianapolis again this year, and NRCS made an impact. A national NRCS exhibit drew many of the 55,000 FFA members and sponsors to learn about the agency, careers with NRCS, and Earth Team opportunities. Bonnie Alley from LANDCARE and six Indiana NRCS employees assisted with the exhibit set up, staffing, and tear down.

Indiana Civil Rights Committee members Jack Johnson and Asghar Chowdhery staffed the Saturday Career Expo, utilizing the new Indiana NRCS recruiting exhibit and handouts. Jack reported that he and Asghar spoke with a steady stream of students who wanted details of how and where to apply for the NRCS Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). He stated, "This was the first time that I have seen the students ask specifically about the SCEP program. They were more aware of our summer intern program, and many requested information of who to contact for information and application."

National NRCS held focus groups at the convention, where Indiana NRCS provided equipment and a speaker on careers. Also, several Indiana NRCS employees participated in judging at the Natural Resources and Environment Career event. Those involved felt their time was well spent connecting with the students.

### **Partners' Training Conducted by CIT**

The Princeton Conservation Implementation Team (CIT) provided "hands on" training in Warrick County in November for interested partnership employees to learn techniques on I&E for a Conservation Reserve Program request for waterways and structures. An actual request for five waterways with outlet structures was Inventoried & Evaluated (I&E) along with surveying those practices planned in the field. By the end of the day the team had successfully completed the request for I&E and survey.

NRCS District Conservationist Craig Farmer explained the information needed from partnership employees conducting an I&E in order to develop a conservation plan and contract. He displayed tools that he uses in the field to collect the needed information, and he discussed safety issues, as well. Field exercises were conducted by NRCS Engineering Technicians

Dave King and Mary Lee Smith, along with Resource Specialist Amy Steeples of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA).



*Pictured left to right:* Amy Steeples; Craig Farmer; Rafael Vega, NRCS soil conservationist; Dave King; Denise Held, NRCS engineer; Erica Burkemper, Pike County SWCD administrator; Judi Brown, Dubois County SWCD administrator; Amy Sims, Spencer County SWCD technician; Linda Powell, ISDA resource specialist; and Lindsay Martinez, NRCS soil conservationist. Photo by Mary Lee Smith.

### **Stewardship Award Nominations Due**

Since 1991, the Environmental Stewardship Award has been given annually to recognize outstanding stewardship practices and conservation achievements of U.S. cattle producers across the nation. Regional and national winners have been commended for their commitment to protect the environment and improve fish and wildlife habitats, while operating profitable cattle operations. The National Cattlemen's Foundation sponsor the award, along with Dow AgroSciences, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and NRCS.

A nomination packet for the 2011 Environmental Stewardship Award is now available at [www.environmentalstewardship.org](http://www.environmentalstewardship.org) along with information about past award winners. Applications are due by February 25, 2011. Any individual, business, or organization can nominate one individual/business who raises or feeds cattle.

### **NRCS Participates in Ripley Career Day**

South Ripley High School held a career day in November for about 400 high school students, and NRCS was well represented. District Conservationist Tim Schwipps worked at the partnership booth, speaking  
(more on page 4)

## Special Emphasis— American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month

American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Heritage Month originated in 1915 when the president of the Congress of American Indian Associations issued a proclamation. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan designated November 23-30 as “American Indian Week.” Since 1990, each U.S. President has proclaimed November as “American Indian Heritage Month.” We celebrate this month to recognize the intertribal cultures and to educate the public about the heritage, history, art, and traditions of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Each year, the NRCS creates a poster from a selected American Indian or Alaska Native artist to kickoff the heritage month celebration. A Confeder-



ated Colville Tribes artist's work is the featured illustration on this year's NRCS poster for the AI/AN recognition. Virgil “Smoker” Marchand's pen-and-ink illustration depicts the cultural significance of salmon. For many Tribes in the Northwest, salmon are a fundamental part of religion, culture, and sustenance.

Contact: Kelley Barkell, AI/AN Special Emphasis Program Manager at [kelley.barkell@in.usda.gov](mailto:kelley.barkell@in.usda.gov).

### **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.)

to students about SCEP and job opportunities with NRCS. Ripley County SWCD employees Kim Jolly and Steve Franklin, along with Steve Thurnall of FSA, also helped staff the booth—proving to be a great partnership effort.



Pictured above: Tim Schwipps and Steve Thurnall talk to eager high school students.

Many students showed an interest, and Tim hopes to get some student trainees as a result. The high school anticipates expanding the career day in the future to include all of the Ripley County schools.

### **Sweet Corn Project--Not ‘Slim Pickens’**

Late summer, NRCS employees Scott Mynsberge and Randy Maggart joined a conservation partnership group to participate in a sweet corn project in Randolph County. Twenty-three FFA members from two counties also helped. In three days the group picked 740 dozen ears of sweet corn (4,440 pounds), which was donated to 19 organizations in six counties. Nancy Best, of Randolph County Farm Service Agency, and Jeff Boyer, with the Davis Purdue AG Center, organized the project. They appreciate all who helped and are planning another garden for next year.

### **FYI-New Pub Available on Web**

A group of six organizations released a new publication, “Conserving Habitat through the Federal Farm Bill: A Guide for Land Trusts and Landowners.” Visit [http://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/FarmBillGuide10\\_9910.pdf](http://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/FarmBillGuide10_9910.pdf) for this guide that provides information on each of the conservation programs in the 2008 Farm Bill, practical tips and recommendations for landowners and land trusts, and case studies on Farm Bill successes.

## **Earth Team Volunteer Recognition**

### **SW Area Earth Team Volunteer**

Indiana NRCS recognizes Earth Team Volunteer (ETV) **Ginger Korinek (Sycamore Trails RC&D)**.

Ginger has the “can do” attitude that we love to see in volunteers. If there is a job to be done that she can handle, she jumps right in. Ginger is a hydrologist and has used her knowledge and skill to assist two watersheds. For the Busseron Creek/West Central Indiana Watershed Alliance (WCIWA) in Sullivan County, she has assisted with water sampling and analysis. She was working on her Master’s thesis during this time-frame, and tailored her thesis so the watershed group could use the information on cost/benefit analysis. For the Plummer Creek and Richland Creek watershed groups, she is helping the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District gather data and write an application for an IDEM 319 Grant.—Submitted by Michelle Phillips, SW Area ETV Coordinator

### **SE Area Earth Team Volunteer**

ETV Coordinator names some accomplishments of ETV **Mitchell Strobl (Switzerland County)**.

Mitchell became an ETV for Switzerland County in January 2010. His goal for joining the Earth Team program was to gain a view of NRCS as he is working on a degree in Biology/Environmental Studies at DePauw University. Since his inception with the Earth Team, he has logged over 150 hours and accomplished the following: learned the nine-step planning process, completed a timber survey on a wooded farm tract, completed a grassed waterway survey, developed a wildlife habitat management plan focusing on quail habitat restoration, identified resources concerns on livestock grazing operations, and assisted in developing local ranking criteria for EQIP and WHIP for Dearborn and Ohio counties.—Submitted by Kris Vance, SE Area ETV Coordinator

## **Thank You, Michelle!**

Area Earth Team Volunteer Coordinators do a great job for the Earth Team program in Indiana. In this issue we want to thank Michelle Phillips, our SW Area ETV Coordinator, for her accomplishments.

Michelle was first recruited by the State ETV Coordinator Becky Fletcher in 1997, when Indiana was organized in regions. She was assigned to the Covered Bridge Region, which encompassed about the northern half of what is now the SW Area. She worked with Lisa Faulkenberg, who had the other half of the southwest, until Lisa left NRCS in 2005. At that point, Michelle covered the entire SW quarter of the state.

Michelle stated that in addition to Becky Fletcher’s excellent training, she was fortunate enough to attend several regional and national Earth Team conferences, where she picked up valuable information. The conferences also gave her a great opportunity to network with coordinators from other states who shared ideas.

Some of her accomplishments are listed below.

- Written articles published in the *NRCS Volunteer Voice* and *Hoosier Headlines* newsletters
- Helped offices work on applications for individuals, groups, and students
- Promoted ETV program by working at exhibits
- Distributed Earth Team information to offices

Michelle has seen changes in the volunteer hour tracking database, but feels the current system is working well. During her tenure, she has seen the ET logo change once, a turnover of three State ETV Coordinators, and various Area Coordinator changes.

According to Michelle, “I have seen things come and go over the years, but the value of volunteering has never changed. I work with fantastic volunteers in my job as an RC&D Assistant, help the Conservation Partnership use volunteers to accomplish its mission, and am a volunteer in many aspects of my own life. I believe in the philosophy of volunteering, and I think the Earth Team is a great way to help NRCS get the job done. I hope it’s here to stay long after I’m gone!”



## **Personnel Update**

### Selections:

Toni Endres, Sr. Regional Soil Scientist, MLRA, Indianapolis, effective 11/21/2010  
Edwin Sprunger, Soil Conservationist, Huntington Tech Team, effective 11/21/2010  
David LaLiberte, Budget Analyst, State Office, Indianapolis, effective 12/5/2010  
Keela Deaton, District Conservationist, Brownstown, effective 12/5/2010  
Tammy Swihart, District Conservationist, Bloomfield, effective 12/5/2010  
Rafael Vega, District Conservationist, Bloomington, effective 12/19/2010  
Hilary Barnhart, Soil Conservationist, Salem Tech Team, effective 1/2/2011

### Retirements:

Gary Maners, Asst. State Conservationist-Quality Assurance & Evaluations, State Office, Indianapolis, effective 12/3/2010  
Richard Lyles, Engineering Technician, Greensburg Tech Team, effective 12/3/2010

## **Length of Service Awards**

This impressive list reflects the culture of the agency and the longevity of its employees.

### **40 Years**

Doug Daggy, Soil Conservationist

### **35 Years**

Mike McGovern, Public Affairs Specialist  
Jim Schwanke, District Conservationist  
Gary Struben, Soil Data Quality Specialist  
Charles Vansickle, Engineering Technician

### **30 Years**

N Fay Earnhart, Soil Conservationist  
Andy Ertel, Tech Team Leader  
Richard Neff, District Conservationist  
John Pepper, Human Resources Manager

### **25 Years**

Teresah Caire, Assistant State Conservationist  
-Farm Bill Programs  
Cathy Deal, RC&D Assistant  
Bill Harting, District Conservationist  
Jerry Perkins, Grazing Land Specialist

### **20 Years**

Scott Clupper, Engineering Technician  
Sherman Liechty, District Conservationist  
David Stanley, District Conservationist

### **10 Years**

Stephen Ball, Cultural Resources Specialist  
Tim Bomba, District Conservationist  
Sandra Buening, Ag Engineer  
Kenny Marshall, Engineering Technician  
Tyler Martindale, Ag Engineer  
Deb Montgomery, Human Resources Assistant

### **5 Years**

Catherine Burget, Engineering Technician  
Keela Deaton, District Conservationist  
Rafael Vega, District Conservationist  
Mary Wilkinson, RC&D Assistant  
Benjamin Zuercher, District Conservationist

The milestones were reached and recognized at the end of year meetings this fall.

## Mark Your Calendar

### December

- 12/09-11/10 Indiana Farm Bureau Convention, Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis  
12/13/10 NE Area Meeting, Wabash  
12/15/10 Indiana NRCS Leadership Team Meeting, Indianapolis

### January

- 01/10-12/11 IASWCD Annual Conference, Indianapolis Marriott Downtown  
01/12/11 SE Area Meeting, North Vernon  
01/17/11 **Martin Luther King Jr. Day**  
01/18-20/11 Indiana Horticultural Congress, Wyndam Indianapolis West  
01/18-20/11 Fort Wayne Farm Show  
01/25/11 NW Area Meeting, Lafayette  
01/26/11 SW Area Meeting  
01/27-28/11 LICA Annual Meeting  
01/28/11 Indiana Livestock, Forage & Grain Forum, Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis  
01/30/11 through 02/02/11 NACD Annual Conference, Nashville, TN

*Helping People Help the Land*