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Issue 32

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## Heart to Heart ... with Hardisty

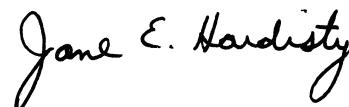


As you know we are still in the middle of final budget decisions for fiscal year 2011. I want to extend my thanks to everyone who has stepped up to get the job done while under pressure of a possible shutdown.



As of today, we have seen some of the preliminary numbers of proposed cuts. Hopefully, over the next week we will hear the final impact on NRCS. As soon as we know the outcome of the budget, we will relay that information to you.

I appreciate the efforts of our Indiana Leadership Team who have helped us manage within our means. Because of their good management skills and all of your hard work, we will be better prepared to continue our job of getting conservation on the land.



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

### Ben Zuercher, District Conservationist

**Q:** Ben, we understand that you have a diverse background. Please tell us about your private sector job experience.

**A:** I started my paid work experience in the private sector as a hand gatherer of chicken eggs in small poultry operations (20,000-30,000 layers) in Adams County. As these operations lost their production contracts to larger producers, I was asked if I would work for a larger grower (80,000 layers) who had automated egg gathering equipment. I gladly accepted the offer. Throughout high school and the first two years of college I continued working with this producer as a farmhand for both his poultry and grain operation. As a farmhand, I worked as a laborer, manager, and supervisor of other high school students. After graduating from Purdue University with a B.S. in Agricultural System Management, I went to work for Cargill AgHorizons as a farm service center manager in their grain handling operations. I started out as more or less an assistant manager at the Linden, Indiana facility. Within four months, I started filling in for other managers at other locations when they went on leave. About six months into that job, I took on the role of replacing managers that left the company. In this role, I managed the operation until a new manager was hired, trained the new manager for two to four weeks, and then moved to another location. I did everything from employee management to grain storage, handling, and transport; customer service; employee safety; and human resources coordination.

**Q:** After that, you moved on to the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in Lafayette. What did you do at ARS?

**A:** At the ARS National Soil Erosion Research Laboratory (NSERL), I started as an engineering technician in the SCEP program while I worked on my master's degree. While working as a student at the lab, I lead the Annualized Agricultural Non-Point Source Pollution computer modeling efforts for the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative. I evaluated the model's ability to predict atrazine runoff and conservation tillage's impact on the transport of sediment and pesticides. If you ever have a hard time sleeping, please read my thesis, it is bound to solve the problem! After completing my master's degree, I became a support scientist with an emphasis on watershed modeling, Geographic Information Systems, and database management. I assisted

with publications for scientific journals, provided geospatial analysis to scientists, and managed the meteorological, stream discharge and analyte data for 12 watershed monitoring sites.



**Q:** When did you begin working for NRCS, and how does this work compare to your previous positions?

**A:** I started working for NRCS in August 2010. Although the goals of the organizations are different, work as a district conservationist is very similar to working as a manager at Cargill; the key to both jobs is interacting with customers and managing multiple projects. My work with ARS gave me the scientific theory behind the conservation we do, while NRCS provides me the opportunity to implement practices that have been evaluated or developed by ARS.

**Q:** Do you have any hobbies or special interests you would like to share?

**A:** My hobbies include hunting, shooting, fishing, and spending time with family. These hobbies work well with my wife, since she too enjoys all of them. I actually met my wife while we were both shooting on Purdue University's Trap and Skeet Team.

**Q:** What are some goals you have set for yourself?

**A:** My goals include learning all of the practice and form codes so that I can converse with other district conservationists without having to ask what practice or form they are talking about. One of my biggest goals is to get Wetlands Reserve Program enrollment started in Bartholomew County. With the new flood inundation mapping, there is a potential to have a large, long-term impact. My goals also include increasing the number of participants in conservation and increasing the number of acres that have conservation implemented on them.

## **Hoosier Happenings**

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

**\*\*Scot Haley** (pictured below at center) for working at the Miami County meeting on cover crops and soil health on a rainy, cold morning. —Rick Duff, District Conservationist, Peru



**\*\*Tony Bailey** for providing interactive training at the Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy covering planning principles, such as how to identify resource concerns and how to choose the best conservation practices to address them. Watershed coordinators and others now better understand what NRCS does and how to incorporate conservation on agricultural lands in their projects. —Shannon Zezula, State Resource Conservationist

### **Cooperator of the Year**

Each year the LaGrange County Soil and Water Conservation District supervisors and staff recognize an individual or business who has taken that extra step to assist the District. For 2010, the LaGrange County SWCD recognizes Fay Earnhart, NRCS soil conservationist, as their Cooperator of the Year.

Earnhart worked with Dave Hague before Dave retired to familiarize himself with landowners in the county who were involved in Farm Bill programs and had projects pending in the Little Elkhart River 319 Grant Project area. In the beginning, Earnhart was scheduled to work out of the LaGrange office two or three days a week, but learned quickly more time was required to complete all of the conservation activities in the county. Between Farm Bill contract workload and projects needing surveying and design in the



(Above: LaGrange SWCD Board Chairman Richard Yoder presents award to Earnhart, pictured at right.)

Little Elkhart River watershed, Fay ended up spending nearly five days a week in LaGrange. As soil conservationist on the Albion Tech Team, Earnhart continues to help District Conservationist Derek Thompson with various workload activities.

### **Warring Receives Award**

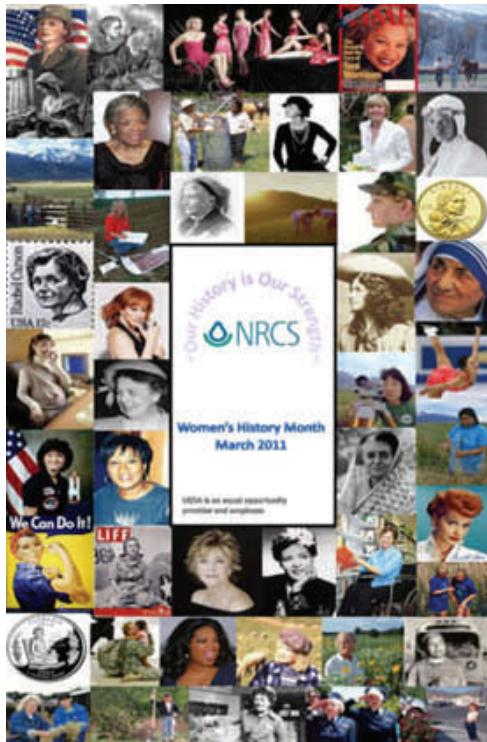
The Indiana State Department of Agriculture recently held their 2010 Photo Contest and received nearly 700 entries from the general public, agriculture and conservation organizations. Judges chose 12 winners, with 1st through 3rd places given in four categories. Categories included Agritourism, Conservation, Faces of Agriculture, and On the Farm. We congratulate Gary Warring, area program specialist for the NW area, for his 2nd place award in the conservation category. His award winning photo is pictured below.



## Special Emphasis— Women's History Month

March marks the Women's History Month each year. This year's theme, "Our History is Our Strength," highlights past and present contributions women have made to American history.

NRCS holds an annual poster contest for this special emphasis. This year, Amanda Pangburn, a soil conservationist from Idaho, was awarded first place for her 2011 Women's History Month poster.



We congratulate Ms. Pangburn for her award winning poster, which was chosen from 37 entries.

Challenge: see if you can identify the women in the poster pictured here.

Contact: Kamara Holmes, Federal Women's Special Emphasis Program Manager, by email at [kamara.holmes@in.usda.gov](mailto:kamara.holmes@in.usda.gov) or phone 317/290-3200.

### **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.)

### Grazing Specialist in Print

A recent issue of the *Hobby Farm* magazine got Todd Ames' attention as he read through the Q&A section. In this section, a farmer asked what animals he could graze on his 10 acres.

As Todd read the answer he thought, "This is good; this person really knows their stuff." At the end of the answer he saw that it was written by Susannah Hinds, NRCS Grazing Specialist. Great job, Susannah, on a well written article and for NRCS exposure!

### Jasper County Serves as Pilot for On-Farm Network

Jasper County SWCD is involved in a nationally funded Mississippi River Basin Initiative Conservation Innovation Grant, awarded to the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA). Last July, ISDA's Division of Soil Conservation contacted the SWCD, wondering if they could gather several producers for some guided corn stalk nitrate testing (CSNT) as part of the On-Farm Network. The Jasper County SWCD board had just discussed the barriers of advancing water quality goals in the county in light of production agriculture. This seemed like the perfect opportunity to start addressing water quality issues related to nitrogen management in a way that would benefit all involved.

Training was held last fall for ISDA and SWCD staff for specific CSNT sampling protocol, with NRCS staff and Purdue Extension agents present. Aerial photography was taken of 40 fields and tissue samples were taken by ISDA staff and volunteers. A winter meeting was held for the 16 producers involved to discuss the results with each other and with consultants, researchers, Extension, and others familiar with the tests. Additional producers are involved this year and a total of 50 fields are included.

### Dave Stanley Hosts Baby Shower

A large crowd gathered at the Crawfordsville Service Center on March 30th to celebrate with father-to-be Chris Torp. In April, Chris and his wife, Lila, will travel to an orphanage in China to bring home their twin 18-month old girls, Jailee and Claire. At the party, Chris was surrounded by pink clothes and bows. Party guest and NRCS retiree Harold Thompson stated that he had not seen anything like it in his 40 years with NRCS. Congrats to Chris and Lila!

## **Personnel Update**

Retirements:

Bev Stevenson, District Conservationist, Goshen, effective 4/2/11  
Mike McGovern, Public Affairs Specialist, Indianapolis, effective 4/2/11

Reassignments:

Kamara Holmes, Soil Data Quality Specialist, Region 11 MLRA Staff, Indianapolis, effective 3/27/11  
Gary Struben, State Soil Scientist, Illinois State Office, effective 4/10/11

Resignation:

Debbi Smith, State Office Assistant, Indianapolis, effective 3/13/11

## **Featured Web Site — Cover Crop Selector Tool**

**[www.CCSIN.org](http://www.CCSIN.org)**

The Midwest Cover Crop Council has developed a cover crop selector tool that is available on the Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative Web site, sponsored by the Indiana Conservation Partnership. The cover crop selector tool allows you to choose your county, cropping system, soil conditions and drainage type. It will return recommended planting dates for suitable cover crops. It also allows the user to select cover crops based on goals: nutrient production, nutrient scavenging, forage, crop rotation, etc. Find the tool at [www.CCSIN.org](http://www.CCSIN.org) by clicking on the **Cover Crop icon** at the bottom of the page; then choose **Cover Crop Selector for Indiana Counties**. Other resources are also available on this Web site.

## **Mark Your Calendar**

### April

04/11-15/11	NW Area Program Review
04/13/11	SE Area Meeting
04/22/11	Earth Day
04/26/11	NW Area Meeting
04/26/11	Prime Farmland Tour
04/29/11	SW Area Meeting

May

05/03/11            NE Area Meeting  
05/11/11            SE Area Meeting  
05/30/11            MEMORIAL DAY  
05/31/11            NW Area Meeting

June

06/01/11            FOTG Committee Meeting  
06/02/11            Civil Rights Committee Meeting  
06/07/11            NE Area Meeting  
06/07-09/11        Soil Quality Training  
06/08/11            SE Area Meeting  
06/14/11            State Technical Committee Meeting, Indianapolis  
06/27-7/1/11        Engineering Boot Camp, Marion, Indiana  
06/28/11            NW Area Meeting