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*Heart to Heart
... with Hardisty*



 Recently, USDA's Secretary Mike Johanns announced the Administration's 2007 Farm Bill Proposals. I am excited about the proposed increase in funding for conservation, which represents \$7.8 billion. The proposals recommend consolidating and simplifying our conservation programs to better assist our customers. They also emphasize better outreach and assistance for socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers. A Farm Bill Proposals page, linked to the USDA homepage, offers quick access to various information tools. We eagerly await the finalization of this new Farm Bill that directs how we help our customers put conservation on the land.

 On the budget, the President's FY 2008 Proposed Budget has been announced, which begins a time of discussion and debate. As for FY 2007, we are operating under a continuing resolution through February 15. We will keep you posted on any final decisions that Congress makes on the FY 2007 budget and the impacts on our operations.

 As a reminder, the District Conservationists' Talking Points will be issued each month. These Talking Points provide a valuable tool to assist district conservationists as they work to keep our conservation partners informed.

 I am looking forward to being well informed on the emerging Farm Bill and Budget discussions during my detail in Washington, D.C. I'll be sure to keep in touch as these issues develop, and look out for the best interests of our Indiana landowners!

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

**Roger Kult,
Assistant State Conservationist
(Operations)**

NRCS Indiana has a new Assistant State Conservationist for Operations, Roger Kult. We congratulate Roger on this promotion and welcome him to the state office! Roger is well known to many, but to some he's the new kid on the block.

Q: Roger, will you give us a little background of your roots?

A: I was born in Lafayette, Indiana. We moved to the farm where my mother was raised in Benton County when I was in first grade. Upon graduating from THE Ball State University, I married a wonderful woman from Dubois County. We have been married for fourteen years and have three children. I am the only one in my family that “flew the coop”. My parents, brother (and his family) reside in Benton County.

Q: What led you to a career with NRCS?

A: That's an easy question NRCS employees. As an IDNR District Biologist I developed some good friendships with NRCS employees in the counties I served. I saw the positive impacts these individuals had on the natural resources and the relationships they developed with landowners. I wanted to be part of such a strong conservation agency that had great people enjoying their work!

Q: How did your job with IDNR, Division of

Fish and Wildlife help prepare you for employment with NRCS?

A: I started as an Assistant Property Manager of a State Property where I learned a lot of general life lessons. I had a good manager that gave me a lot of flexibility and responsibilities. This grew into a District Biologist position that exposed me to conservation planning on a regional level and

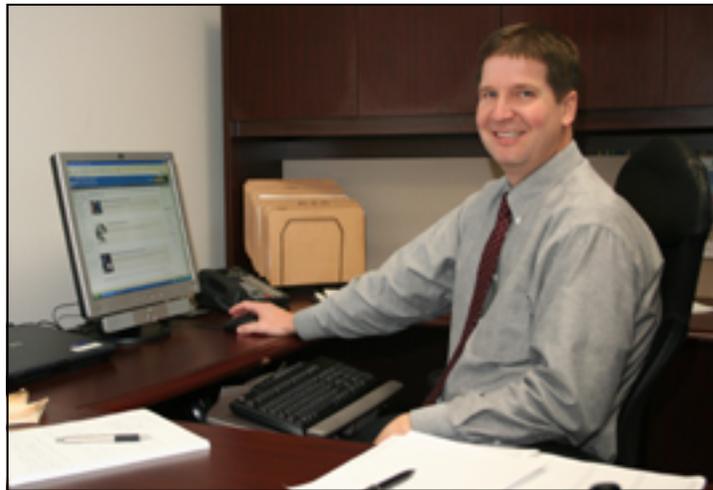
how to work with landowners to accomplish common goals. There was a steep learning curve that comes with learning the business of a new agency, but the day to day planning work was a smooth transition for me.

Q: Do you have any hobbies or other interests that occupy your time outside of work?

A: Currently my time is taken up with our three kids. They are 10, 8, and 6 years old. Activities such as basketball, soccer, coaching baseball, dance, and various church activities consume a lot of our evenings and weekends. However, we do leave time to relax, visit extended family, and take an occasional vacation. Growing up in Purdue country, graduating from Ball State, and now living in Bloomington, my fear is our kids will become Hoosier fans!!!

Q: Finally, what excites you most about your new position?

A: The new challenges. I enjoy working along side people and seeing results accomplished. This position provides those opportunities to work with conservation leaders to positively impact our state's natural resources.



Hoosier Happenings

Earth Team Award Comes to Indiana

The Cass County Soil and Water Conservation District (winners of the 2006 Indiana Earth Team Award) is the 2006 recipient of the national NACD/NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Award. Jane Hardisty received the award on the District's behalf at the NACD National Conference. Assistant STC Becky Ross will present it to Cass County on February 26th at the Cass County 60th Annual Meeting.



The District began to build a comprehensive conservation program, utilizing Earth Team Volunteers, 20 years ago in Logansport, Indiana. Today, a group of volunteers continue to expand the District's and NRCS' programs through the following.

- An incredible education program that targets elementary and high school students.
- Workshops designed for small farm cooperators.
- An Outreach Workshop that allowed people to view conservation equipment and provided great technical information to help land users put conservation on the land.
- Operating a Turn Key Conservation program that implemented 100+ acres of quality Upland Bird Habitat and Wetland Restoration with buffers.
- Holding Earth Day contests where students collected thousands of pounds of plastic shopping bags, which were loaded into a truck and transported to a certified recycler.

This SWCD logged over 500 ETV hours in 2006 and exemplified a model conservation partnership.

Digital Soils Information Now 100%

On January 19, 2007, 105 years after the first soil survey was published in Indiana, NRCS crossed another

threshold by posting a digital copy of the soil survey for Warren County to the Soil Data Warehouse on the Indiana NRCS internet site. This brings digital soils coverage for Indiana to 100%. The 1902 Posey County, Indiana soil survey report was the first soil survey published in Indiana. It was published by USDA's Bureau of Soils, an early predecessor of the Soil Survey Division in NRCS.

Digital soils information for all 92 Indiana counties is now available through the Soil Data Mart <http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/> and the Web Soil Survey <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/>. For those without a computer, Soil and Water Conservation District offices continue to be the primary provider of important soils information.

"We maintained a status map of digital soil surveys in Indiana since we made the first one available in 1998," says Mike Wigginton, Soil Quality Data Specialist. "It took us 8 1/2 years to get 92 counties on that map. And, now that we have all the data in digital format, our process of updating is faster and easier, so the end product is better."

In the past, soils information was available in soil survey reports which cover an entire county or in some cases multiple counties. Now, in addition to full county coverage, an "area of interest" may be identified, and soils information for only the selected area is included in the map and report that is created on demand.

SEPMs Play Vital Role in Indiana

Indiana's Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) have an important role in Indiana NRCS operations. Some of their key areas of focus include:

- Providing awareness, training, and networking opportunities
- Identifying and recruiting students for employment
- Identifying underserved clients for program delivery

In 2006, some of the SEPM accomplishments in Indiana included:

- Hosting luncheon events during special emphasis months
- Participating in national conferences
- Attending career fairs to recruit students
- Hosting field days to educate minority youth

—Special Emphasis—

February—Black History Month

We annually celebrate Black History Month in February, when we bear witness to the progress, richness, and diversity of African American achievement. This year's theme, "From Slavery to Freedom: The Story of Africans in the Americas," recognizes the struggle from slavery to freedom, one of the major themes in the history of the African Diaspora in the Americas.

Under and against the rule of various powers, Africans experienced emancipation during the course of the 19th century. In some places, freedom came peaceably, in others it was accompanied by hard struggles. No matter the path to freedom, African peoples in the New World had to continue to struggle for liberation.



Between 1500 and 1900, about four million African slaves were transported to island plantations in the Indian Ocean, about eight million were shipped to Mediterranean-area countries, and about 11 million were taken to the New World. Their descendants are now found around the globe.

For information on Indiana's Black Emphasis Program, click on the Indiana Civil Rights link on the Indiana NRCS homepage, then scroll down to the Black Emphasis Program Manager link.

Hoosier Happenings (cont.)

- Contacting targeted minority audiences to recruit and share information
- Maintaining relationships with local and national minority organizations
- Sharing information on events and items of interest with NRCS staff
- Providing training to NRCS staff

In addition, SEPMs are members of the Civil Rights Committee and assist in developing the Affirmative Employment Plan and Recruitment Plan each year. Please take time to get to know our Indiana SEPMs, and work with them to promote diversity throughout the state. For contact information, see the Indiana Civil Rights page, available under the 'Quick Access' links on the Indiana NRCS home page.

Ash Seed Collection Initiated

The NRCS Rose Lake Plant Materials Center initiated a collection of Ash Seed in response to the death of Ash trees caused by an insect called the Emerald Ash Borer. The Emerald Ash Borer has killed more than 25 million Ash trees in Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana. The purpose of the seed collection is to prevent the Ash species from being lost forever.

NRCS is asking volunteers in Indiana to collect Ash seeds and send them to the Rose Lake Plant Materials Center, 7472 Stoll Road, East Lansing, Michigan 48823. Submit a completed Ash Seed Collection Form with the seed. Go to <http://www.ashseed.org> for the form and additional information.

Seeds can be collected from the following species: Green Ash, White Ash, Blue Ash, and Black Ash. Volunteers should collect the Ash seed when it is ripe and mature, usually July to December (depending on the species).

LINKS FOR PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTERS

Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, *Weekly Updates*:
<http://www.iaswcd.org/WeeklyUpdates06.htm>

ISDA, Division of Soil Conservation, *Cultivating Connections*:
<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/news/index/html>

Purdue University - www.purdue.edu

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

PERSONNEL UPDATES

Selections:

Roger Kult, Assistant State Conservationist (Operations), Indianapolis State Office, 02-05-07

Featured Website—Hoos-Your Grazing Network Newsletter

<http://www.blueboniff.com/winter2006.pdf>

The Indiana Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative has published a newsletter for grazers that is worth checking out. Editor Ed Heckman will also add you to his email list to receive the newsletter if you so desire. You can find his contact information within the newsletter.

Mark Your Calendar

February

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|-------------|--|
| 02/19/07 | Presidents' Day |
| 02/21-22/07 | Silvah Oak Training in Ecology & Silviculture of Mixed Oak Forest, Abe Martin Lodge, Brown County State Park. Contact Hoosier Heartland RC&D at (317) 290-3250 for registration info |
| 02/27/07 | NW Area Meeting |
| 02/28/07 | SW Area Meeting |
| 02/28/07 | Tri-State Conservation Tillage Expo, Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum, Auburn
Contact St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative at (260) 484-5848, ext. 120 to register |

March

- 03/06/07 NE Area Meeting
- 03/07/07 SE Area Meeting
- 03/18-24/07 National Agriculture Week. See <http://www.agday.org>
- 03/27/07 NW Area Meeting
- 03/28/07 SW Area Meeting

April

- 04/03/07 NE Area Meeting
- 04/04/07 SE Area Meeting
- 04/24/07 NW Area Meeting
- 04/25-26/07 New Beginnings...with 20 Years of Traditions (formerly Camp Gallahue Environmental Education Workshop), Waycross Camp & Conference Center, Brown County. Contact Hoosier Heartland RC&D at www.hhrcd.org or 317-290-3250.
- 04/26/07 SW Area Meeting
- 04/29-05/06/07 NACD 2007 Stewardship Week, “Today is the Day to be Part of Conservation’s Power”. See <http://stewardship.nacdnet.org/>

May

- 05/01/07 NE Area Meeting
- 05/02/07 SE Area Meeting
- 05/22/07 NW Area Meeting
- 05/23/07 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