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*Heart to Heart
... with Hardisty*



 The new Farm Bill is in the reading/learning stage. Last month the House Ag Subcommittees began the “mark-up” process as they consider the issues in detail and make amendments to legislative language. The full House Ag Committee is expected to do their “mark-up” in mid-July. These proposals have a long way to go to pass the full House and Senate.

 As part of the Farm Bill deliberations, dialogue about a USDA Re-organization has been tabled and is not slated for further discussion within the Farm Bill process.

 I want to take this opportunity to thank the NRCS employees in Indiana who diligently worked to get all contracts obligated before June 1st. This required a concerted effort from field, area, and state office staff. Good work!

Jane E. Hardisty

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

**Teresah Caire
Assistant State Conservationist, SE**

Q: Teresah, will you tell us about your Mississippi roots?

A: I grew up in rural NE MS, one of four children. I was the oldest and the only girl. (My husband says that's why I'm so bossy!) My folks grew up working on farms literally hoeing and picking cotton by hand. They both continued to love and appreciate the land and the bounty it could provide even though it was a really hard life. They taught us that love and appreciation.



I was a bit of a tomboy as a teenager and the school system I was enrolled in offered Home Economics or Vo-Ag as required electives. I could already cook, so I was one of the first females in the school system to enroll in Vo-Ag. I was greatly impressed by the leadership skills FFA imparted, so I became a member, then on to be the first female officer my FFA chapter ever had.

After working around North MS as a technician, then soil conservationist, I moved to South MS as a district conservationist. That was another first as the county had never had a female DC. There, I met and married my husband, David, who was a farmer. I lived and worked around our dairy farm and helped raise two fine sons, James and Jason. I learned a tremendous amount about conservation through the eyes of a farmer, and farming through the eyes of a conservationist.

Q: A Magna Cum Laude graduate of Mississippi State with a degree in Agricultural Education, how and when did you migrate to social work and ministry fields?

A: When I graduated in 1983 the farm economy was not good and the agency was under a hiring freeze. I thought seriously about teaching Vo-Ag, but there were no openings near my home at that time. A good friend of mine was the daughter of the director of Human Services for Lee Co., MS. She had known me my whole life and thought I'd work out well for an opening she had on her staff. The position was as a social worker dealing with "abused and neglected children." I learned so much from that experience. It taught me about the fragility of the human psyche and how vital it is to respect people's dignity no matter their situation in life. I discovered that I was "a servant leader," of course that was long before the phrase was popularized in a best selling book. After spending several months as a social worker for the state, an opening for a WAE (non-career appointment) with the local SCS office was mentioned to me. I thought about it really long and hard and decided to work in the field I'd studied.

Through the 21 years I worked in field offices it was im-

portant to me to be a contributing member of the farm community and community at large. I am a Past-President for the Chamber of Commerce, have served on various Farm Bureau Committees, the local Cattlemen's Association and Forestry Association. I've also been a member of the NACD for a number of years.

Through the years I was also active in my local church. I attended lay ministry school for three years at night in the Diocese of Biloxi, and was the volunteer youth minister for two parishes near our home in Tylertown, MS. I coordinated the fundraiser for and headed up the Northern Deanery Mission Trip to Saltillo, Mexico for several years. I also served twice as the President of our Church Parish Council.

Q: Tell us about your encounter with Hurricane Katrina.

A: It was life changing. We suffered a lot of wind damage even though our farm is two hours inland from the coast. There was no electricity on the dairy for nearly three weeks and no phone service for three weeks. My husband had to operate the dairy barn with a PTO powered generator that whole time. In fact the second day after Katrina struck his generator quit! He was forced to search out and buy a new one immediately to keep the dairy operating. He had to drive to Elk City, Oklahoma to get the generator (not knowing if he'd be able to get gasoline and diesel to operate on). You see there was such devastation and interruption of services that thousands and thousands of folks needed generators and none locally were available immediately. We had trees down on almost two miles of fence and the roofs were severely damaged on all our buildings. Our house had a "blue roof" courtesy of FEMA for several months until we could get insurance settled and a qualified roofer to come do the work. In the midst of all this we had several elderly members of my husband's family from New Orleans staying with us for nearly two months.

It was at this point that my husband decided maybe he was ready to consider tree farming rather than dairy farming for a living. Last fall, he sold the cattle and equipment.

Q: You have received numerous awards, including the Governor's Power of One Award and recognition as one of "Mississippi's 50 Leading Business Women." Of your awards which one do you hold in the highest esteem?

A: That's tough! I suppose the "Mississippi's 50 Leading Business Women." I remember feeling proud that a public servant was being recognized by the business community. Too many folks feel that government employees can't be good business people. I disagree. The major reason I wanted to work in Indiana is because we have a State Conservationist that tries diligently to be efficient, effective and timely and expects the same of all her management staff.

Q: What has helped with your transition to Indiana?

A: The open, friendly manner of the people here has helped greatly. Also, this job as area conservationist is a dream come true!

Hoosier Happenings

IPS Students Enjoy Outdoor Classroom

The Third Annual Indiana NRCS Conservation Education Field Day was held this year on May 10th at the Indianapolis Airport Environment, Conservation & Wildlife Management site. The event was originally started to dispel the negative stereotype of agriculture that is common among young urban African Americans. It was also begun to introduce them to NRCS, the work we do, and challenging careers in agriculture. The event has grown from 12 participants the first year to 90 Indianapolis Public School (IPS) students this year.



Pictured above: Gary Struben (left) and Mike Wigginton (right) instruct students at a soil pit.

IPS students from STAR Academy, New Horizons Junior High School, and Cold Springs and McFarland Middle Schools learned about conservation practices, ag cropping systems, soils, GIS, forestry, wetlands, wildlife & endangered species, engineering, and horticulture at seven hands-on stations. NRCS's Gary Struben, Mike Wigginton, Bennie Clark, Jr., Barry Fisher, Ken Collins, Chris Ritz, and Bruce Nielsen instructed the students, along with Master Gardener and Hoosier Heartland RC&D Council Member Kathryn Mascaro.



ETV Tribute

An Earth Team Volunteer (ETV) has left the program, but leaves a legacy. Patrick J. O'Donnell (1915-2007) wasn't just an Army veteran, accountant, Toastmaster, Lion, Knight, or Cubs fan. As a farm owner/manager, he was a conservationist

and had many management practices installed on his farm. He left the farming to his sons, with a desire to maintain the land for future generations.

After raising a family of six children and retiring from his job in town, he became the first ETV in the award-winning Cass County SWCD/NRCS office. His volunteer duties included administrative and technical field assistance. His son, Joe O'Donnell, said, "He was a real 'people' person and liked to help out with field days and similar events." Joe is the NRCS district conservationist in Delphi, as well as an ETV. Patrick died on April 28, 2007. Volunteering...what a legacy to leave to your family and community.

—By Nancy Manion, Indiana ETV Coordinator

Web Soil Survey 2.0 Up and Running

The Web Soil Survey (WSS) 2.0 has been released and went active on-line on May 29. In a user survey last fall, NRCS gathered input on changes that would improve access and use of the WSS. Several changes that were requested have been incorporated in the new version to make it operate better and be more valuable to users.

BMPs Improve Water in Cass County

Water quality in Cass County has greatly improved thanks to the conservation partnership efforts in the Twelve Mile Creek Watershed.

In 1998 water sampling in the watershed to provide "before treatment" information showed only 55 percent of sediment-intolerant animals. The water assessment was funded by IDNR's Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) program. The biological communities of the tested sites were characterized with excessive nutrient and sediment inputs. Between 1998 and 2005, Cass County SWCD allocated \$260,000 to fund best management practices (BMP) to address nonpoint source runoff problems. Practices included grassed waterways, water and sediment control basins, tree planting, filter strips, hay and pasture planting, windbreaks, and manure management practices. USDA's Farm Bill programs, including EQIP and CRP, helped put some of these practices in place.

After final testing of the same sites in the watershed, the number of sediment-intolerant animals increased to 98 percent. The BMPs and partnership approach successfully improved the water quality.

—Special Emphasis—

May—Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month

In 1978, a joint congressional resolution established Asian/Pacific American Heritage week. The first 10 days of May were chosen to coincide with two milestones in Asian/Pacific American history: the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants in the U. S. (May 7, 1843); and contributions of Chinese workers in building the transcontinental railroad, completed on May 10, 1869. In 1992, Congress expanded the 10-day observance to a month long celebration.

The U.S. Census Bureau in 2005 estimated that 14.4 million U.S. residents were of Asian descent, totaling about five percent of the population. The Asian descent population in Indiana is estimated at 74,000.

Contact Asghar Chowdery, Asian American/Pacific Islander Special Emphasis Program Manager at asghar.chowdery@in.usda.gov for assistance in working with Asian/Pacific American customers.



Hoosiers Celebrate



Indian-born architect, artist, author, and community advocate K. P. Singh delivered this year's keynote address to NRCS employees at the Indiana state office on May 7, 2007. Mr. Singh eloquently spoke on this year's theme, "Pursuing Excellence Through Leadership, Diversity, and Unity." He passionately relayed his views on how to find an untapped wealth of ideas and energy in our diversity, the need to discover the unmistakable common threads in our diversity that highlight and inspire unity, and how leadership can transform this resource into unimagined excellence at work and in the community. Some of his points of interest included:

- People are a resource
- Create a welcome environment
- Recognize our growing diversity as a new frontier of opportunity
- Be open to growth in a changing culture and world

Singh noted that answers to our common problems may emerge by combining and interfacing our strengths and spirit with each other at many levels and with mutual respect and friendship, as fellow Americans and world citizens.

PARTNERSHIP LINKS

Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, *Weekly Updates*:
<http://www.iaswcd.org/WeeklyUpdatesJan07.htm>

ISDA, Division of Soil Conservation
<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>

Purdue University - www.purdue.edu

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

PERSONNEL UPDATE

Selection: Tandy Easler, Civil Engineering Technician, Lebanon Tech Team, effective 6-24-2007

Retirement: Marla Sparks, Contracting Specialist, State Office, effective 4-28-2007

Relocation:
Xavier Montoya, as State Conservationist for Wyoming, effective 4-22-2007

NRCS coworkers and conservation partners shared in farewell wishes at a luncheon in Xavier's honor at the state office on June 1st. E-mail congratulatory notes to Xavier at xavier.montoya@wy.usda.gov.



Featured Website—2007 Farm Bill Issues & Analysis

<http://www.agecon.purdue.edu/farbill/>



Check out Purdue University's website on the 2007 Farm Bill issues. Purdue is analyzing these issues and has developed a web site to inform the public. The above web site includes links to a series of overviews on specific topics of the Farm Bill Proposals, the first one being 'Conservation'.

Mark Your Calendar

June

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| 06/21/07 | Purdue Forage Day, Lawrence County Fairgrounds, Hwy 50
Info at http://www.agry.purdue.edu/forageday/ |
| 06/26/07 | NW Area Meeting |
| 06/27/07 | SW Area Meeting |
| 06/28/07 | Prime Farmland Reclamation Field Day, Bicknell, IN |
| 06/28/07 | Tech Guide Committee Meeting, State Office, Indianapolis |

July

- 07/04/07 **Independence Day Holiday**
- 07/10/07 State Soil Conservation Board Meeting, Indianapolis
- 07/10/07 NE Area Meeting
- 07/11/07 SE Area Meeting
- 07/19/07 State Technical Committee Meeting, Indianapolis
- 07/19/07 State Soil Scientists' Meeting, Indianapolis
- 07/31/07 NW Area Meeting

August

- 08/01/07 SW Area Meeting
- 08/07/07 NE Area Meeting
- 08/08/07 SE Area Meeting
- 08/08-19/07 Indiana State Fair
- 08/09-11/07 INLICA Field Day, NEPAC Farm, Whitley County
- 08/14/07 State Soil Conservation Board Meeting, Indianapolis

September

- 09/03/07 **Labor Day Holiday**
- 09/6-8/07 Farm World Expo, Terre Haute
- 09/11/07 State Soil Conservation Board Meeting, Indianapolis
- 09/11/07 NE Area Meeting
- 09/12/07 SE Area Meeting
- 09/25/07 NW Area Meeting
- 09/25/07 State Technical Committee Meeting, Indianapolis
- 09/26/07 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