



New Mexico

Insider

NRCS NM Celebrates 2nd Annual Diversity Day

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A crowd gathered outside the NRCS state office to watch a group of *Aztec Danzantes* perform a traditional dance

Vibrant costumes, traditional dances, intriguing stories, and a delicious variety of food—these were all present at NRCS New Mexico's second annual Diversity Day event. This year's event welcomed speakers

from various backgrounds who had many interesting experiences and information to share.

First up was James Sperry, an NRCS District Conservationist from Silvercliff, Colorado.

Sperry spoke on the experiences and challenges he faced after losing his leg to bone cancer at age 12.

Sperry said he was encouraged by his grandfather to adapt to the circumstances and was able to overcome the challenges posed by his disability, even working out in the field and on the family ranch.

Next, two speakers discussed immigration and assimilation to New Mexico. Rick Hendricks, PhD and State Historian from Santa Fe, shared the history of Anglo immigration to NM.

Monika Ghattas delivered a presentation about Syrian and Lebanese immigration to the state. Both speakers shed some light on non-Hispanic immigration to the Land of Enchantment.

Members of PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) were also present to talk about their experiences and provide a brief explanation of PFLAG and what the organization does.

Katherine Palmer, State Coordinator for the New Mexico chapter of PFLAG, shared her personal experience and offered assistance to anyone looking to begin a chapter of PFLAG in their local community.

Jean Genasci, a mother, long-time member of PFLAG, and advocate for equal rights, spoke about her personal experience of having a gay son and how that led her to become involved with PFLAG.

Also at the festivities were the *Aztec Danzantes dancers*.

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NM State Conservationist Dennis Alexander

State Conservationist's Notes



2011 has been noteworthy on several fronts but it will probably be most memorable, as a nation, for the bitter budget battles, and as a state, for the persistent and historic drought conditions. While these circumstances have at times fostered an epidemic of pessimism, I marvel at the ever-present optimism I still encounter on a day-to-day basis from our New Mexico NRCS employees as well as our conservation partners and clients.

In an environment filled with agricultural trials and tribulations – the unpredictability of weather and the unreliability of markets – the presence of sincere optimism in our farmers and ranchers impresses

upon us deeply. However, optimism is only part of the story. Our conservation family has the joy of knowing that our chosen profession is making a difference. We have the honor of recognizing that the work we do will ensure that generations to come will be able to produce food and fiber in a sustainable manner, hopefully in perpetuity.

As we move toward 2012, all government entities will continue to experience budget challenges and NRCS will be no exception. While both the House and Senate Agricultural Budget Committees have proposed reductions in conservation funding, they still demonstrate strong support for conservation. I encourage you to not get lulled into the paralysis of pessimism that can persist when tough issues are debated and decided at the national level. We need to continue to move forward with the confidence to make a difference out on the land and the dedication to do our part for a sustainable future. We must all take satisfaction in the portrait of conservation we helped shape on the landscape. The legacy we leave on the land will be appreciated by generations to come.

This is my last State Conservationist message and I wish to convey how proud I am to have been a member of the New Mexico NRCS family. The professionalism and optimism you exhibit on a daily basis inspires admiration and aspiration. Always hold on to that ever-present positivism and know that the mission you support and stand for is the county's most valuable.

Good-bye and God bless.

Dennis



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Navajo Nation Hosts its Third NRCS Sustainable Agriculture Workshop

The Navajo Nation recently hosted its third New Mexico NRCS Sustainable Agriculture Workshop.

Two Navajo Nation colleges, Diné College and Navajo Technical New Mexico College, jointly sponsored the latest NRCS workshop in Crownpoint, NM. The two previous workshops held on the Navajo Nation were in Shiprock, NM and Chinle, AZ.

The NM NRCS State Office sent soil data quality specialist Clarence Chavez, and state agronomist Rudy Garcia, to promote the “soil health” concept for farmland and rangeland in the arid southwest. The core belief of the Sustainable Ag Workshop is that not all soils are the same and soil management may vary from one farmer or rancher to the next.

Workshops begin with Chavez providing a hands-

on demonstration of soil organic carbon loss, soil infiltration, and aggregate stability. The demonstration is part of a discussion on heavily worked soils and no-till soils. Chavez uses the analogy of a puzzle as all the information provided fits to create improved soil health and quality.

The presentation includes discussion about dynamic soil properties, as well as the process and meaning of Soil Active Carbon and how the milligrams per kilogram numbers show producers how it could be used as an indicator to trends soil health.

Garcia introduces workshop participants to new methods of planning, developing, implementing and monitoring an Integrated Cropping System (ICS). The ICS consists of irrigation water management, cover crops, crop rotations, residue management, nutrient management,

and integrated pest management and conservation tillage.

The Sustainable Ag Workshops on the Navajo Nation have been well attended, providing information and field demonstrations to approximately 150 minority farmers and ranchers. Some producers travel more than four hours from various communities between Shiprock and Zuni, NM and Winslow, AZ to attend these workshops.

“For many of these farmers, the NRCS Sustainable Agricultural Workshops provide a great opportunity for them to learn about new methods and sciences that can benefit their production capability,” said Chavez.



Clarence Chavez explains soil demonstration

Since 2009, NRCS New Mexico has presented more than 50 Sustainable Ag Workshops across the state. “For some of these producers, travelling to larger venues to participate in these workshops is very difficult. We believe in bringing this information directly into their communities,” Garcia added.

The Land Office for Diné College and Navajo Technical College plan to continue these workshops and translate the information to their native language for the elders in the community.

Non-Perishable Food Items Collected for the 2011 Feds Feed Families Food Drive

Federal employees nationwide stepped up to help feed families in need this summer.

Feds Feed Families is a nationwide effort to feed those in need. It is led by the Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council, partnered with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

John Berry, OPM Director, said at kickoff that the need to feed families this year is even greater.

“The need has not gone away. In too many families, one or both parents are still searching for work.” Berry said.

Non-perishable food items were collected throughout the summer at various government agency of-



fices, including the USDA state building in Albuquerque.

Last year 1.7 million pounds of food were donated by federal employees across the nation. This year the bar was raised, with the goal set at 2 million pounds. Collection totals are currently being calculated.

The 2011 Feds Feed Families effort kicked off on June 1 and ran through August 31. For more information on the effort and to view collection results visit www.fedsfeedfamilies.gov.

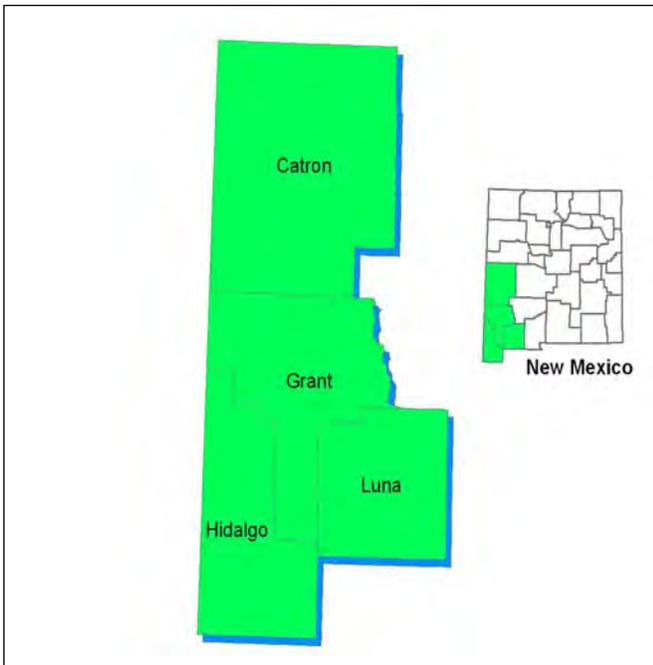
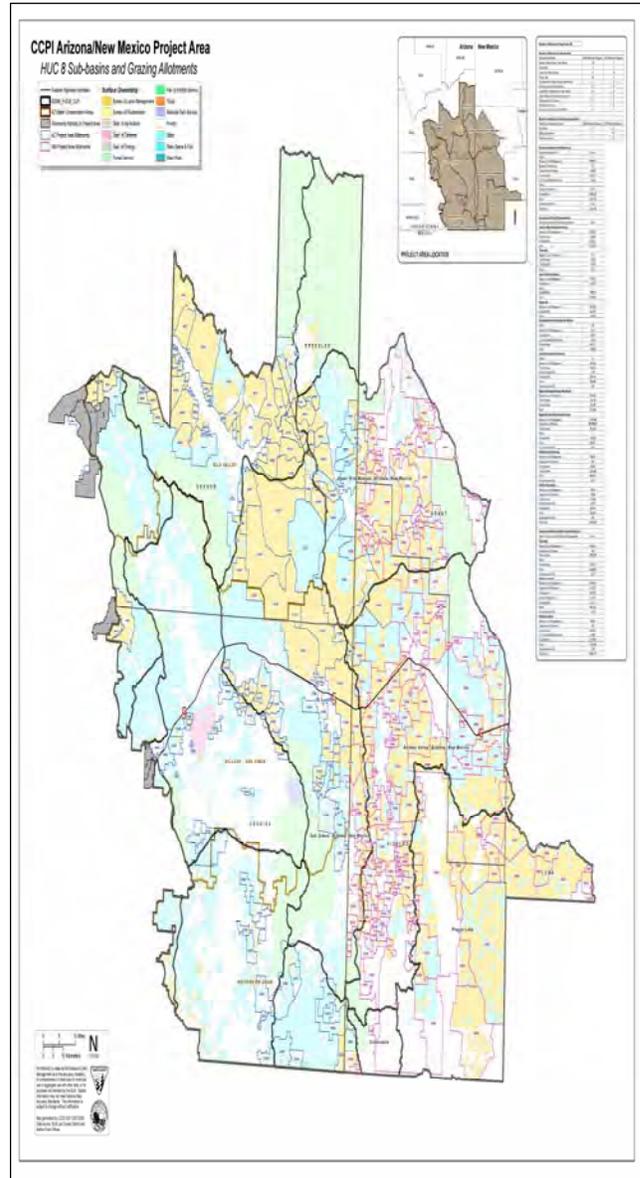
Resource Conservation & Development: An RC&D Success Story

Arizona – New Mexico Borderlands Initiative Benefits Both States

The Black Range RC&D partnered with the NM Association of Conservation Districts and the AZ Association of Natural Resource Conservation Districts to submit a successful proposal to the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative program (CCPI) in 2010 for the *AZ-NM Borderlands Conservation Initiative (BCI) CCPI*.

State, federal, and local agencies from both states came together to design this bi-state five year proposal for a rangeland improvement project. The purpose of the project is to address brush control, erosion control, water quality and wildlife habitat in the 8 million-acre area that involves three New Mexico SWCD's and three Arizona NRCD's. The AZ-NM BCI was awarded \$7.5 million in the NRCS CCPI program, which the Bureau of Land Management in both states is matching dollar for dollar. With the combined in-kind contributions of the State Land Offices and Conservation Districts in SW NM and SE AZ the funding will total \$16.5 million over a five-year period.

The goal is to keep the group functional beyond the life of this specific CCPI project so that future pro-



posals can be developed to benefit the bi-state area. CCPI EQIP contracts for \$500,000 in NM and \$300,000 in AZ were signed in FY2010 for nine rangeland improvement projects.

FY2011 CCPI funding for \$750,000 for NM and \$350,000 for AZ was released for 2011 EQIP projects. Review of the ranking criteria, application dates and contract deadlines were reviewed and released earlier this year.

Los Lunas High School Expands Ag Education with Hands-on Experience

by Edwin Kitzes

Students at Los Lunas High School are excited because they are about to get a real working farm.

With collaboration between the Valencia County Farm and Livestock Bureau and the school administration, the plans to construct a fully functioning livestock barn with 6 animal pens, a hay barn, and an indoor feed storage with water access has begun. The project also includes putting into production about 9 acres of oats and peanuts in flood irrigated cropland adjacent to Highway 6.

Leading this three year project is Janet Jarratt, of Valencia County Farm and Livestock Bureau, with cooperation from the USDA-NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service) Los Lunas Field Office, NMSU extension office, the FFA, 4-H, private businesses, Farm Bureau members, and engineering students from 'Project Lead the Way'. The support and assistance of the School District and legislature, along with start-up donations from local Farm Bureau members and the Old Mill Farm and Ranch Supply has been critical to getting the project off the ground.

"This will be an excellent opportunity for our current and new Ag students to see what it is really like to have an operational farm," said Janet Jarratt after participating in a land leveling demonstration with a group of students. "There is so much more a student can learn by seeing and working on a farm than textbooks can teach alone."

One of the most exciting aspects of the project is the plan for Los Lunas High School engineering students involved in 'Project Lead the Way' to engage in a design competition for the construction of the new animal barn facilities. The winning group will



Los Lunas High School students putting their knowledge on ditch irrigation practices to use

have their designs used, and construction will be done by the Ag students themselves with help from the high school shop class. As the project begins to blossom, students will start selling the crops and livestock to help support future Ag programs and activities.

Current and new Ag students will use this new project opportunity to learn about current farming practices such as integrated water, nutrient and pest management; cover crop applications; conservation tillage and residue friendly harvesting. Students who are also interested in animal livestock production will learn about animal health, grazing management, husbandry and the economics of buying and selling for the market.

A riparian buffer zone is also planned, which will enhance wildlife viewing opportunities for the entire community, and provide a hands-on educational opportunity for students interested in biology and wildlife.

This project is one of the first in the Los Lunas Area and is already generating excitement amongst its contributors and students. Future plans include acquiring more land for the school and increasing learning opportunities for all its students.

Diversity Day...continued from cover page

Complete in traditional wear and headdress, they danced and headdress, they danced and played music for NRCS onlookers...and the fun did not stop there.

The celebration would not be complete without something good to eat. There was a potluck with a variety of ethnic and cultural foods, along with a salsa contest.

The winner of the contest was Pearl Armijo, District Conserva-

tionist from Los Lunas. She took home a gift certificate to *Sadie's* and bragging rights!

The event took place on June 29, 2011 at the USDA state office building.



(Pictured left) NRCS staff attends Diversity Day celebration



(Pictured right) Members of PFLAG give a presentation. Jean Genasci (left) serves as a PFLAG board member & Katherine Palmer (right) is the PFLAG state coordinator in NM



(Pictured from left to right) James Sperry, NRCS District Conservationist from Silvercliff, Colorado; Rick Hendricks, PhD and State Historian from Santa Fe; and Monika Ghattas, NM resident and historian.

(Pictured below) Aztec *Danzantes* performing a traditional dance



National Bulletin Gives Guidance for Nursing Mothers Who Express Milk in the Workplace

When the health care reform bill was passed in March 2010, all employers became responsible for providing breastfeeding employees with reasonable break time and a private, non-bathroom place to express breast milk during the workday.

President Obama gave the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) the authority to establish guidance to agencies to support nursing mothers in the workplace. The U.S. Department of Agriculture accepted this concept in January 2011.

Through the publication, "Ways for NRCS Employees to Express Milk in the 'Field' Workplace," NRCS is providing specific guidance for employees who are nursing mothers, co-workers, and their supervisors.

Employees are more likely to return to work after childbirth if the workplace is a supportive environment.

This benefits both the agency and the employee, and so new working mothers at NRCS are encouraged to return to work.

A Message from Gregory Singleton, NRCS Civil Rights Director

Departmental Regulation (DR) 4300-010 establishes the Department's Civil Rights accountability policy and procedures for ensuring that appropriate disciplinary or corrective actions are taken when discrimination, retaliation, Civil Rights violations, or related misconduct occurs. DR 4300-010 is intended to strengthen existing Civil Rights policies within USDA and encourage agencies to work to resolve complaints at the earliest possible opportunity.

Retaliation against customers or employees for opposition to discrimination of any kind in contravention of this policy will not be tolerated. Agency officials, managers, supervisors and other employees shall be held accountable for discrimination, retaliation, Civil Rights violations, or related misconduct.

Agencies must provide notice of this DR to each of its employees. Accordingly, you may view DR 4300-010 at the following link: <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4300-010.htm>.

If you need assistance accessing the DR, please contact the Civil Rights Division at 301-504-2181: 866-NRCS395 (voice or TTY); or 800-877-8339 (Federal Relay Service – voice or TTY).



Personnel

Lost or Stolen LincPass? Notify your NRCS Security Officer Immediately!



NRCS would like to remind you what to do if your

LincPass has been lost or stolen.

Employees, contractors, partners, and volunteers must immediately inform their NRCS security officer within 72 hours if their LincPass is lost or stolen. If it is stolen, it must be suspended as soon as possible so no one can use it.

You must also inform your supervisor, so a temporary visitor badge can be requested for facility access.

If a LincPass is recovered by the Office of Security Services, they will identify and notify the LincPass owner's agency security officer within one business day.

Please make sure you contact Victoria Suazo-Chanza, Human Resources Manager and Security Officer for NRCS NM, at (505) 761-4409 if you have lost your Lincpass Smart Card.

NRCS Welcomes New Employees

Effective June 2011:

Arthur (Art) Ariaz selected as the District Conservationist in Taos

Amber Lynn Synatschk converted from a SCEP position to a Soil Conservationist in Clovis

Kiesha Yazzie converted from a SCEP position to a Rangeland Management Specialist in Tucumcari

Effective July 2011:

Peter Lefebvre was selected as the Range Management Specialist in Grants

Mike Standefer was se-

lected as the Civil Engineering Technician in Clovis

Effective August 2011:

Lisa Dennisson was appointed Soil Conservation Technician in Estancia

Hilary Bravenec, formerly with NRCS in TX, was appointed as the Soil Conservationist in Aztec

Jose Pino was appointed Soil Conservation Technician in Aztec

George Miller was appointed as the Property Management Technician at the state office in Albuquerque

Effective September 2011:

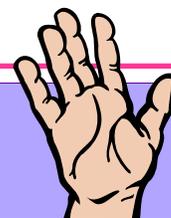
Chad Dunnahoo, formerly with NRCS in WA, was selected as the Northwest Area Resource Conservationist in the NW Area Office in Albuquerque

Travis Vigil was selected as the Soil Conservationist in Las Vegas

Kenneth Branch, current District Conservationist in Silver City, was selected as the Resource Conservationist in NRCS State Office.

Clinton Chisler was appointed Soil Conservation Technician in Lovington

Congratulations to all these folks!



NRCS Says Farewell to Great Employees

Retirements effective May 2011:

Deborah Scott, South Area Program Assistant

Retirements effective June 2011:

Danny Branch, Resource Conservationist, Programs

Linda Branch, GIS Coordinator, State Office

Danny Thomas, NW Area Resource Conservationist

Retirements effective July 2011:

Juan Gauna, RC&D Coordinator, Sureste RC&D

Eugene Adkins, RC&D Coordinator, Jornada RC&D

Retirements effective Sept. 2011:

Robert Hill, Soil Scientist in Resources Inventories and Assessments

Timothy Henry, District Conservationist in the Roswell Service Center

Good luck to all these folks!