



VolunteerVoice

"The voice of the Earth Team"

USDA--The Natural Resources Conservation Service

Winter 2004

Volunteers provide millions

Another winning year for Earth Team

The Earth Team Volunteer Program concluded another successful year with more than 43,000 volunteers providing over 1 million hours of service, worth \$16.6 million dollars. "FY03 was another banner year for the program," said Michele Eginore, National Volunteer Coordinator. "The volunteers provided 483 staff years worth of service, at the return rate of \$66 for every \$1 invested, continuing to make the program a critical part of the agency."

In addition, Eginore also noted the Midwest Region continued to lead the agency with the highest number of volunteers and volunteer hours, while the South Central Region led the agency with the highest number of offices using volunteers. "I also want to commend the Southeast Region," said Eginore, "they were the only region who had an increase in the percent of offices using volunteers."

According to Eginore, this year saw an increase of 5,694 volunteer hours, continuing a trend started more than 20 years ago. "Since 1982, when the program began we have seen a steady increase in the program's performance," Eginore said. "We actually started with 327 volunteers in 1982 and now at the close of FY03, we had 43,834 individuals giving their time and services for conservation.

"I'm also especially proud of the diversity we have in the program in comparison to the national average," she added. "While volunteerism throughout the country does not have large participation by minorities, our Earth Team Program has a remarkably high representation from all ethnic groups, to include high participation by American Indians.

"We also attract volunteers from all age groups, with the largest number of volunteers coming from 26-55 year olds," Eginore concluded.

"However, there is always room to grow and we hope to continue increasing our numbers in all aspects of the program with the continued support of our NRCS employees."

Long time volunteer honored

Jim Wheeler was recently honored at a reception at the Kirkendall Public Library for his long time volunteer services to the community of Ankeny, Iowa and the Earth Team Program.

Wheeler started volunteering for the Earth Team more than 10 years ago with his wife Arlene, who passed away last year. Wheeler, a retired commercial artist, also gives generously of his time to Mercy Hospital, the Masonic Lodge and the Community Education Office.

In addition to volunteering, the Wheelers raised four

children, Roberta who lives in Arizona; Steve who lives in California; Terri who lives in Minnesota; and Al, who lives in Ankeny and manages Gilcrest/Jewett Lumber Co.



Ankeny Earth Team and Soil Water Conservation Society staff members help Jim Wheeler celebrate 10- years of volunteer service. L-R Tina Morris, Terri Barreiro, Jim's daughter, Bonnie Weller, Jim Wheeler, Michele Eginore and Linda Larson.

Arkansas

Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

by Pat Hoeffken,

Earth Team Coordinator, Arkansas

October 18, 2003, was World Water Monitoring Day and served as the focus for a large Earth Team Volunteer effort in Arkansas. This annual event serves as a platform for watershed leaders, educators and trained volunteers to help others better understand how the actions of individuals impact everyone. Changes in the social practices of every human connected to the watershed are critical to the successful protection and preservation of the global supply of fresh water.

Volunteers used this opportunity to educate friends, families, student groups, civic members, local officials and others about the importance monitoring plays in

protecting our water resources.

According to Pat Hoeffken, Earth Team volunteer coordinator for Arkansas, volunteers first had to register their monitoring site at <http://www.worldwatermonitoringday.org>

Then using World Water Monitoring Day test kits from Earth Team headquarters in Ankeny, Iowa, volunteers went to their designated monitoring sites to test for dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature and clarity. Then they entered the results in an international database. The reported results are available to anyone desiring to view the data and will be used in the final 2003 Summary Report. "We have a waiting list for potential volunteers who asked to

do this project next year," Hoeffken said. "Volunteer coordinators hope to expand this project next year so more Earth Team volunteers can have a role in helping ensure that Arkansas has a sustainable supply of clean, usable water," she added.

Melissa Johnson, Shirley Ball, Pat Perry, Joann Shaw, Susan Hunter, Amy Farris, Sandy White, Lannie Smith, Nolan Young and Carla Cowling collected the data. The website contains helpful information, resources and modifiable media material, brochures and web links to other resources. To place a name on the water monitoring list for next year, contact your area volunteer coordinator.

Rhode Island

A very special volunteer joins the team

by Jeanne Comerford,

Public Affairs, Rhode Island

Kelly Burdon, a Rhode Island Earth Team Volunteer, is a very special volunteer. As a result of an ad I ran on the Volunteers of Rhode Island web site looking for some office help, CranstonARC, a non profit organization for people with disabilities (formerly the Association for Retarded Citizens), called with an individual who was looking to volunteer a few days a week. At first, I was a little apprehensive because I had never worked with a person with Down's Syndrome and did not know her capabilities. I wondered if I would have to spend more time overseeing her work than actually having work get done.

Nevertheless, I agreed to have

her come in for an interview. The rest, as they say, is "history." It didn't take me long to learn all her



Kelly Burdon

capabilities and how loving she is. She has volunteered for our office since May 2003, two days a week, more than 120 hours. She is very

dependable, and "lights-up" the office with her wonderful smile. She independently performs all kinds of office work, and has been a great help to me and the rest of the staff.

Kelly has certainly opened my eyes to people with disabilities, and I also feel good knowing I help her. I believe she has gained greater independence from volunteering and I would recommend other State volunteer coordinators call their local ARC organization. It is an experience you will never forget.

Kelly competes on the RI Special Olympics and is an Olympic gold medal winner in swimming.

Arizona

Ponderosa Pines Get ET Attention

by George Couch,
Public Affairs, Arizona

With the help of NRCS Earth Team volunteers in partnership with other conservation organizations, the unique Ponderosa Pines of Summerhaven, Ariz became the focus of a unique rejuvenation and re-population project.

The Ponderosa Pines are distinctive to the Summerhaven area but became victims of this past summer's Aspen fire.

"Trees for Mount Lemmon" a non-profit group initiated the rejuvenation project in partnership with The Earth Team, Tucson Plant Materials Center, and Coronado Resource Conservation & Development, along with the Forest Service, Arizona State Land Department. Experts from Pima County also joined the non-profit group to help with the project.

Collecting cones

The project involves collecting Ponderosa Pine and Douglas Fir cones; transporting cones to the Plant Material Center (PMC); harvesting the seeds, planting trees at the PMC and finally planting new trees in Summerhaven.

Earth Team volunteers will do all the physical work. The PMC will provide expertise and use of its facilities, and the Coronado RC&D will write grants and offer support. All four districts that the RC&D serves are sponsoring this effort.

PMC provides support

The first cones were collected Sept. 12, with more collection times scheduled. Eight volunteers donated 28 hours of their time, and more volunteers are scheduled to help.



Volunteer collects pine cones used in harvesting the seeds for planting.

According to Ramona Garner, manager of the PMC, more than 100 cones were gathered and taken to the PMC and they should yield 400 seeds, with about 150 being viable. "The drought has made collecting good seed more difficult, but Trees for Mount Lemmon is hoping to collect enough seed to plant 7,000 Ponderosa Pine and 7,000 Douglas Fir," said Garner.

Garner sees the value in this project because of the unique genotype of Ponderosa Pine that exists in Summerhaven. "Hopefully, this will help prevent the planting of trees that originated in other areas of the country and thus preserve the unique genetic population of trees on Mt. Lemmon," said Garner. Trees for Mount Lemmon is the group where the vision for this project began and continues to grow.

Barbara Eisele, executive director for Trees for Mount Lemmon, has been actively involved in Summerhaven's fire recovery.

She met Ralph Ware, NRCS Tucson District Conservationist, during the Emergency Watershed Protection work that occurred immediately after the fire.

Eisele wanted to help revegetate and reforest her own community, and she quickly learned how NRCS resources could help her group accomplish those goals.

Scope of project

"Getting a sense of the scope of this project was my first challenge, said Eisele. "One or two volunteers could not take this on." Without the Earth Team volunteer program and the use of the PMC, we could not get this done.

The RC&D is making it possible for us to get our projects off the ground quickly, and the Mount Lemmon community is providing the volunteers.

Together, as a community, we will help in the recovery of the mountain and build a greater community spirit for Mount Lemmon."

Arizona

Partnership impacts Lake Hay project

by George Couch
Public Affairs, Arizona

The spirit of volunteering is very much alive and well in Arizona, as was demonstrated one crisp fall morning in Flagstaff, Ariz.

Men and women, young and old, representing federal and state organizations as well as environmental groups gathered for one thing—to help the environment by transplanting 100 vegetative plugs from Mormon Lake to Tremaine Lake, located near Hay Lake about 60 miles southeast of Flagstaff in the Coconino National Forest.

Rick Miller, Regional Habitat Program Manager for the Arizona Game and Fish Department in Flagstaff organized the event that involved volunteers from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Earth Team Volunteer Program, the Forest Service, the Grand Canyon Trust, Audubon Society, Coconino Rural Environmental Corps and the Wildlife Society.

Approximately 35 volunteers met at the Arizona Game and Fish facility in Flagstaff and caravanned some 28 miles to Mormon Lakes, which is an ephemeral lake.

According to Miller, while Mormon Lake currently appears to be dry, it offers outstanding vegetation year round. “When the lake is dry it grows great plants that feed wildlife such as elk and antelope,” Miller said.

“**When the lake is damp** a different set of plants emerge. These plants feed wading birds and some ducks and when the lake has water in it, the plants then feed the fish and ducks,” he added.



Volunteers worked hard digging up plant plugs for transporting to Hay Lake.

Mormon Lake was selected because the vegetation is very similar to Hay Lake vegetation and contains a plant community that grows well, whether the lake is full or dry.

Hay Lake consists of approximately 6,600 acres with a 1,700 acre easement that was purchased by NRCS in 1999 from the Bar T Bar cattle ranch and sod farm. The easement was bought under the USDA’s Wetlands Reserve Program.

According to Miller, this is the first time a project of this scale has taken place. “In the past, it would take me and an assistant all day to transplant eight to 10 plugs,” Miller said.

On this day, it took the volunteers less than an hour to locate, dig up and load 100 plugs into hand pulled carts for transporting to Hay Lake.

After lunch, supplied by the Grand Canyon Trust, workers replanted the vegetative plugs

around the lake area. All in all, it took workers more than 10 hours to finish the job, but Miller believes the effort will pay off big time in the future.

“This endeavor will not only rebuild the edges of the lake but will also enhance the value of the lake,” Miller noted. “These transplanted plants will help catch water for the first time next spring and I believe that the lake could be growing riparian plants within a year.”

According to Miller, it was Chris Hoag from NRCS Plant Materials Center in Aberdeen, Idaho, who suggested moving the vegetation.

This project demonstrates that volunteers representing environmentally-minded people in partnership with state and federal organizations does work.

Many of the same volunteers continue to work together on other projects to improve the land using conservation tools and practices.

Ohio

Super recruiter

by Mitch Cattrell,
Earth Team Coordinator, Ohio

Barry Ganoë, founder and project coordinator of the Tuscarawas River Preservation Group, Summit County, Ohio is a busy man whose responsibilities include running this local organization and Earth Team Volunteer recruiter. Ganoë recruited 120 volunteers this summer to clean up and beautify the Tuscarawas River in his community.

Ganoë identified specific objectives for the project and then targeted areas for the clean-up effort. He started with orientation and information meetings for prospective volunteers convincing them of the importance of the effort and making sure they knew they would be making a difference.

Then on a spring afternoon in May, 120 volunteers hit the waterway in a coordinated effort that resulted in the collection of 100 bags of litter and miscellaneous junk pulled from the river. In addition, this group of volunteers planted more than 250 trees along with lots of wildflowers—all in just a little over two hours.

Ganoë also solicited the local media to cover the story providing opportunity for the volunteer recognition. The newspapers showed up and ran a story that listed the name of every volunteer, making the effort complete. The success of this project relates to the strong leadership of Ganoë, who focused on “value” for the project and the volunteers. With this formula Ganoë has laid the groundwork for future success.

Delaware

Helping “Make a Difference”

On October 25, 2003, the Delaware Earth Team Committee sponsored a project called Make a Difference Day at Brecknock Park in Camden, Delaware. The Earth Team committee worked with a representative from the park who provided them an opportunity to do a volunteer service project to benefit the park.

The project involved the cutting down of small invasive species of trees that were growing in the vegetated filter strips located in several areas in the park. The volunteers cut down the saplings and then sprayed the stump with a herbicide to prevent future growth of the unwanted woody growth.

Along with members of the Earth Team, other participants in the event included members of the



Volunteers work to eliminate sapling.

local Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

The project was completed in a few hours and many of the volunteers also had the opportunity to learn about tree health and maintenance from a park representative.

The weather cooperated making the project even more enjoyable. According to Jan Pertruzzi, Delaware Earth Team Coordinator, all the volunteers had a good time and were treated to lunch.

New York

Providing needed project muscle

Fifteen Earth Team volunteers from Westchester County, New York, donated time and “energy” to plant more than 500 trees and shrubs along a stream that flows through a 155 acre horse farm in the Town of Kent, NY, into a reservoir that is part of the New York City drinking water system.

As part of a voluntary water quality farm planning program in New York City’s Croton watershed, the riparian buffer was established as part of a Best Management Practice for a farm’s Whole Farm Plan. Whole farm plans had been developed for selected farms in the Croton Watershed by the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC). WAC is an upstate/downstate partnership between watershed

farms and NYC residents for the purpose of maintaining well-managed agriculture in a populated, rural landscape.

The riparian buffer was established as a means to further protect a high quality source of drinking water by filtering out potential contaminants such as nutrients, pathogens and sediment, as well as increase available fish and wildlife habitat and to further document the farmer’s positive stewardship.

WAC provided funding to purchase \$1,000 worth of plant material. In addition, through the local partnership established with the Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District, \$240 worth of bare root stock was donated through the Tree Program for stream stabilization.

Congratulations!

On behalf of the Earth Team staff, we want to thank everyone for all the outstanding submissions for the FY 2003 National Earth Awards Program. The judges had a difficult time selecting the winners; however, the selections have been made and the following information lists the categories and winners. Congratulations to all the winners.

2003 EARTH TEAM AWARD WINNERS

CHIEF'S CUP	Colorado
NATIONAL NACD/NRCS	Cullman County SWCD--Cullman, Alabama
NATIONAL RC&D/NRCS	Southern Maryland RC&D--Maryland

INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEER AWARD

EAST REGION	Jason Drake--Pennsylvania
MIDWEST REGION	Deborah Cavanaugh Grant--Illinois
NORTHERN PLAINS REGION	Sandy Patton--Nebraska
SOUTH CENTRAL REGION	Dorothy Deford--Texas
SOUTHEAST REGION	Mike Strunk--Kentucky
WEST REGION	David Henson--Arizona

GROUP VOLUNTEER AWARD

EAST REGION	Maplewood High School--Pennsylvania
MIDWEST REGION	Tiffin/Seneca Chapter Izaak Walton League--Ohio
NORTHERN PLAINS REGION	Coalition for the Upper South Platte--Colorado
SOUTH CENTRAL REGION	Curtis Mudford and Arkansas High FFA--Arkansas
SOUTHEAST	Raleigh High School Envirothon Team--Mississippi
WEST REGION	Eagle Valley Wildflower Project Group--Oregon

NRCS EMPLOYEE AWARD

EAST REGION	Cheryl Panciera--Pennsylvania
MIDWEST REGION	Jessica Engstrom--Illinois
NORTHERN PLAINS REGION	Loretta Cecil--Kansas
SOUTH CENTRAL REGION	Debra Crawford--Arkansas
SOUTHEAST REGION	Julie Bradford--Mississippi
WEST REGION	Jennifer Gabor--California

CHIEF'S FIELD AWARD

EAST REGION	Meadville Field Office--Pennsylvania
MIDWEST REGION	Pickaway County Field Office--Ohio
NORTHERN PLAINS REGION	Glenwood Springs Field Office--Colorado
SOUTH CENTRAL REGION	Wilburton Field Office--Oklahoma
SOUTHEAST REGION	Raleigh Field Office--Mississippi
WEST REGION	Dallas Service Center--Oregon

RC&D/NRCS REGIONAL AWARD

EAST REGION	Southern Maryland RC&D--Maryland
MIDWEST REGION	Interstate RC&D--Illinois
NORTHERN PLAINS	San Luis Valley RC&D--Colorado
SOUTH CENTRAL	Cross Timbers RC&D--Oklahoma
SOUTHEAST	Old Dominion RC&D--Virginia
WEST REGION	Coronado RC&D--Arizona



Students from Ferrum College, Ferrum, Va., worked as a group and volunteered for a project.

Management Tips

“One-Time” Group Service Works

*by June Hogg
Regional Volunteer Coordinator
Southeast Region and Va. State*

One-time group volunteer service is the trend today with volunteers. Some people question whether these types of projects are worth the investment of time. They are if you understand their purpose and how to make them work. Why do volunteers like short-term projects?

- Often their time is limited and they can give as little or as much as they wish.
- It gives an opportunity to socialize with others.

The good news is that there are benefits for NRCS as well as to the volunteer in such short-term assignments. Evidence shows that participants in successful one-day projects often ask, “What else can I do?” This gives us an opportunity to see the volunteer at work and to possibly gain new recruits for more intensive volunteer work.

Even if the volunteer does not wish to give more than one day of

service, this is still a way to win friends for our agency – people who will feel some connection with us.

The most valuable aspect of one-time volunteer projects is that ideally, the work performed meets real needs. Volunteers will have respect for our agency if we are well prepared, get them involved, use their time well, and show them that they are appreciated.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Group projects should be planned well ahead. The project leader should be well prepared. The best work days may take more time planning than actually doing; however, the results can be great.

PLANNING AHEAD

Have enough people to manage the project. You might want to use volunteers from previous work days. If you contact groups, be sure you know how many and

what their abilities are. Be sure you have enough work for the volunteers to do. Break down the tasks to be done so that volunteers will not be overwhelmed.

ORGANIZE THE SITE

Have a volunteer check-in area, where volunteers are greeted and name tags distributed. Assure that all tools and equipment are available and operative. Have water and first-aid available (ice packs, insect repellent, etc.) Tell your volunteers what they need to bring i.e. sun screen, hat, gloves, etc. Also, it is always nice to have refreshments.

START WITH A WELCOME

It motivates volunteers if they can be part of the decision-making. Before the work even begins, welcome volunteers. Explain the mission of the agency and how this project relates to conservation.

Assign tasks and discuss safety issues and concerns. Work day achievements will be remembered by volunteers longer if they understand why and how it fits in with the bigger picture.

Volunteers want to know why they are doing something. Many volunteers come with a passion for conservation work and want to feel proud of what they are doing.

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

At the end of the workday, bring the volunteers together. Let them know what they have accomplished. Give the volunteers an opportunity for feedback and answer any questions they may have.

THANK THEM VIGOROUSLY!

If you have information, give them a “heads up” on future work days. Who knows, you may turn a one-time volunteer into a long-term volunteer!!!

Bits and Pieces



Norm Klopfenstein

“Thanks Norm”

The Earth Team Program is a true volunteer resource. Everyone who works with the Earth Team does so as a collateral duty. This includes the national coordinator, the regional coordinators, and the state and area volunteer coordinators. In addition to these people, the National Earth Team has had the privilege and honor of working with Missouri Public Affairs Specialist Norman Klopfenstein for the last ten years.

Norm has been a cornerstone in the continued success of the Earth Team by serving on the national leadership team and as the Earth Team Marketing Specialist. So it is

with great sadness that I announce the marketing responsibilities have been transferred to the Conservation Communications Staff in Washington, DC.

During Norm’s time with the Earth Team, he completed this work as a collateral assignment and thanks to the support from Missouri State Conservationist Roger Hansen, Norm was able to provide products that assisted both the volunteers and staff. It would be difficult to list all the various products, exhibits, public service announcements and training material that Norm developed over the last ten years.

I consider Norm one of my closest friends and a true professional. His presence will be missed as well as his talents.

Many thanks Norm for the hard work, dedication, and heart you put into the Earth Team!

Michele Eginore

Leadership Goals

The Earth Team’s recent leadership meeting established some pretty aggressive goals for 2005 based on the program’s

genuine desire to meet the needs of the agency.

With more and more emphasis being placed on conservation and the critical role it plays in agriculture, our staff numbers continue to decrease, so it was clear that the program needs to fill the gap.

As a result the following goals were established:

- 100% Office Participation
- 50,000 Volunteers by 2005
- An accountability system

that confirms the value of volunteer contributions to the agency.

National Conference

The 2005 National Earth Team Conference will mark the 20th anniversary of the Earth Team Program. Currently we are only in the early planning stages but it appears that Philadelphia, Pa., is the front runner for location and summer for the time of year. Stay tuned for the final decision. Our goal is to have the best conference ever.

Remember!

2004 National Volunteer Week is April 18-24. Start planning.

Submission to “*VolunteerVoice*”

Articles and photographs for publication should be e-mailed, via your State Volunteer Coordinator, to tina.morris@swcs.org. If you prefer, copy can be mailed or faxed to Tina Morris, Soil and Water Conservation Society, 945 SW Ankeny Rd., Ankeny, Iowa 50021, fax number (515) 289-1227.

Articles should be no more than 350 words. Please remember to include photographs to illustrate the article. JPEG images are preferred. Slides and prints are accepted. If you are using a digital camera, remember to set the camera to the highest quality resolution.

For information about the Earth Team and the *VolunteerVoice*, go to www.nrcs.usda.gov or call 1-888-LANDCARE, or your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office listed in the telephone directory under “U.S. Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture.”

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