



VolunteerVoice

"The voice of the Earth Team"

USDA--The Natural Resources Conservation Service

Fall 2004

Don't fear the data

Change is good

by Sonja Coderra

Growing up in a military family and later joining the U.S. Air Force, I am not just accustomed to change. "I love it." So when I was asked to help with the Volunteer Database, I thought "this is awesome, change is good."

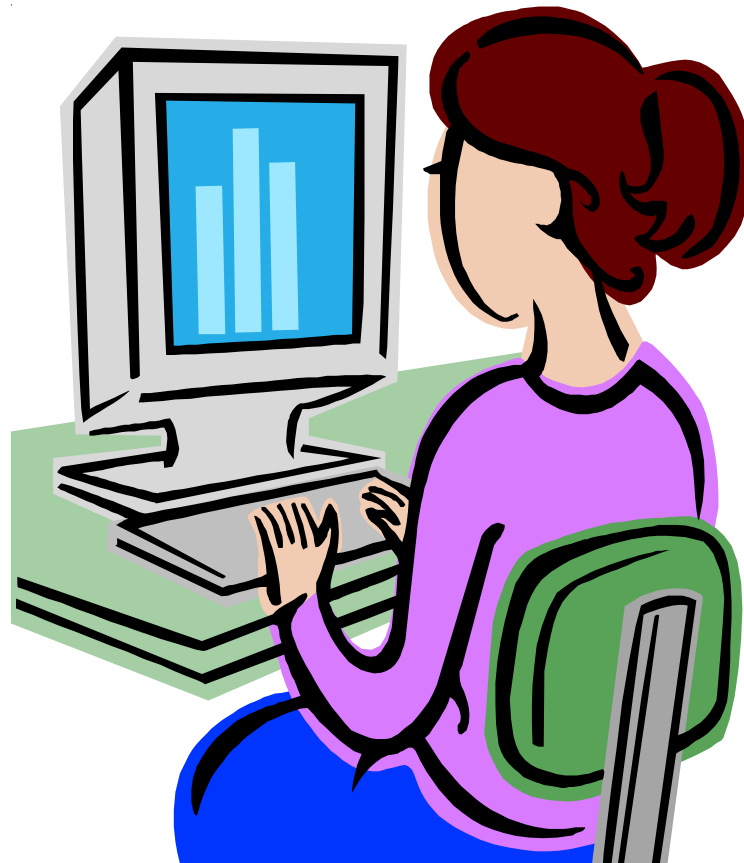
Change allows us to reconsider our priorities, reevaluate our paradigms, and renew our commitments.

The Volunteer Database is changing the way the Earth Team conducts business. From those of us with neatly organized files to those with scraps of paper stuffed in folders, the Volunteer Database will change us all into Internet-using, data-hungry, look-what-I-can-report people. Just wait. It's coming.

When Michele Eginoire and I began working on the Volunteer Database project, we told the contractors what our "inputs" were – information collected from application forms. And we told them what our "outputs" were – the annual National Status Report. If they could automate that, we knew we'd have a product

everyone could USE.

Well, with a little change here, and an innocently asked question



there, we changed into data-wanting fools. Can we link that into TCAS? How about RSNOE (race, sex, national origin, ethnicity)? Can we get an inactive report? Can we integrate with Word's Mail Merge? How about e-mail? Can we hotlink to

volunteer's email addresses?

You can see how it gets started. And there's no end in sight. Changing to the Volunteer Database has allowed us to reevaluate how the Earth Team

fits into the NRCS mission as a measurable element of NRCS operations. And it's not just about numbers. We've reconsidered our current process of reducing our volunteers into numbers. We need to understand the contributions Earth Team volunteers make but we have to do that through *simple* data collection and

reporting. We found that if we match our volunteers to the appropriate TCAS code, we capture the numbers and also gain an under-standing of their contributions.

It's time the Earth Team
(cont'd on pg. 2)



R.E. Gallman stands next farm equipment on his farm.

South Carolina

Remarkable Volunteer

by Wayne Henderson, SC Mgr,
Disabilities Emphasis Program

I recently had the opportunity to meet and talk with a unique individual from Union County, South Carolina. R. E. Gallman is a cattle farmer in the Kelly-Kelton area. He also raises goats and a llama. Gallman has been an Earth Team Volunteer for the Union Conservation Partnership for the past six years and also manages and services one of the Union SWCD's no-till drills. Over the last twelve months, he has completely overhauled the drill and it is now in excellent condition, considering its age.

One of the things that makes Gallman so unique is his name. When asked what his initials stand for, he always replies, "R and E." His father was named R. E. Gallman and so is his son and grandson. When asked why the initials "R" and "E", he replies that his father was born on his mother's birthday and her initials were R. E. which stands for Rapsey Elizabeth.

Gallman is a devoted family man and is very community-

oriented. It would not be unusual to see him on his *Massey-Ferguson* tractor plowing his neighbors' gardens or working in the hay fields. He cuts, rakes, and bales his own hay. With assistance from his sixteen-year old granddaughter, he maintains the grounds at his church where he also is an active member.

About a year after Gallman became an Earth Team volunteer, he was involved in a farming accident. While installing a fence, the wire became entangled in the auger on the tractor and wrapped around his leg, completely severing it above the knee. He lost several fingers in the accident and if not for the quick thinking of his neighbor, he would have bled to death. During his period of rehabilitation, Gallman admits that it would have been easy to have given up completely on farming. But giving up is not in his nature. To see him today, with the assistance of his tractor and golf cart, it's obvious he can manage his daily routine very well. He certainly has not let his disability disable him and he is an inspiration to all who know him.

(Change--cont'd from cover)

started talking the same language the rest of the agency speaks.

We've committed to making sure we do not place a burden on field employees. The Volunteer Database allows any employee to *easily* input volunteer time, track skill levels, and submit reports.

Earth Team volunteers often donate their time and talents to multiple offices over many years.

With the Volunteer Database, once a volunteer's information is entered, hours can be added for the volunteer by any office, eliminating duplicate information.

The Volunteer Database will eliminate the need to develop hard copy mid-year and annual status reports; identify the types of jobs our volunteers perform, and help NRCS staff understand the impact of volunteers on the NRCS mission; generate real-time scientific reporting data; simplify volunteer data and time and attendance collection; and allow field offices to run reports and ask specific volunteers to return for specific jobs.

The Volunteer Database is designed for use by each office. As soon as your volunteer coordinator makes the office logins and passwords available, every NRCS employee should become familiar with it by visiting the Earth Team Internet Page at www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/volunteers and clicking on "Earth Team Database." Contact your regional coordinator if you have questions.

Change is good!



Dan McCain (left) and Ed Gruber, co-chairmen of Delphi Historic Trails, display the National Recreation Trails certificate presented at the Volunteer Recognition luncheon.

Indiana

Hard work pays off for volunteers

by Nancy Manion, Earth Team Coordinator, Indiana

A volunteer recognition luncheon was held in Delphi's Canal Park for members of the Delphi Earth Team.

Team Leader Dan McCain presided over the luncheon that honored more than 100 volunteers who had donated their time and talents throughout the year to complete numerous projects.

One project that received special recognition was the ongoing development of the

Delphi Historic Trails system.

Recently, additional land had been donated along the abandoned Monon Railroad right-of-way with the purpose of expanding the system beyond the more than seven miles of existing trails.

To everyone's surprise, it was announced at the luncheon that US Department of the Interior Secretary Gale A. Norton had added the Delphi

Historic Trails to the National Recreation Trails system.

To the delight of all the volunteers, this announcement validated the hard work done by them and served to motivate them to continue what they had started.

In addition to a wonderful lunch, the volunteers received Earth Team shirts and hats and enjoyed the recognition for all their hard work.



“Together, We’re Making History” Celebrating 20 Years

Congratulations to Dimple Geesling from Tennessee and Pam Davidson from Indiana, who share the honor of submitting the winning theme for the Earth Team's 20th

Anniversary-- “Together We’re Making History” Celebrating 20 Years. This theme will be used throughout the year, especially during National Volunteer Week, and at the National PAS/Earth

Team Conference. The winning entry was selected by Earth Team Leadership and both Dimple and Pam will receive recognition for their winning entry.



CAD Students receive Earth Team certificates with instructor Rick Knysz (L) and NRCS engineer Colleen Vasher (R).



CAD students working on an NRCS standard drawing assignment.

Michigan

Students make concrete contributions

by Chris Coulon, Public Affairs Specialist, Michigan

As a soil conservationist in 1997, Glenn Lamberg and the Newaygo Conservation District began working with students at the Newaygo County Career Tech Center, now called the Newaygo County Regional Educational Service Agency (NCRESA).

The students in the Computer Aided Drafting (CAD) class developed digital drawings for conservation engineering work. Over the years, DJ Bandrowski, a NRCS engineer stationed in Marquette, Michigan, began working with the students as Glenn moved on to become the NRCS-Michigan American Indian Liaison.

DJ and Colleen Vasher, NRCS engineers in Saginaw, Michigan, now work with these students each year, assigning NRCS standard drawings that have not been drafted into a computer. DJ and Colleen introduce the students to NRCS and the Earth Team, and encourage them to sign-up as volunteers. The

student volunteers benefit by obtaining real world work experience under the supervision of their instructor, volunteering their skills in a useful and meaningful way to NRCS, and at times seeing the finished structures of the drawings they produced.

The cooperation and enthusiasm of the CAD instructor has been the key to making this partnership between NRCS, the Newaygo Conservation District and the NCRESA flourish. Rick Knysz, the class instructor and himself an Earth Team Volunteer, provides a tremendous service to both NRCS and the Conservation District, and his students.

He has now volunteered with the Earth Team for seven years, worked with students to provide nearly 1000 hours of volunteer service and assisted in reproducing over 100 NRCS standard drawings in to digital CAD format for conservation engineering.

Working with student volunteers also presents an opportunity for NRCS to expose the students to the types of careers possible with NRCS.

In an introductory session with the students at the beginning of the semester, the students are told about the work NRCS does, the types of jobs available with NRCS and the importance of protecting and enhancing our natural resources.

With a sound set of technical skills and volunteer experience in their background, these students have an excellent opportunity to pursue careers in the natural resource field.

(Information submitted by DJ Bandrowski, conservation engineer, Michigan.)

Missouri

Military pitches in to help school

by Christine Elbert
ET State Volunteer Coordinator,
Missouri

On Saturday, April 3, 2004 nearly 30 Earth Team volunteers, including representatives from the United States Army, gathered at the Swedeborg R-III School to help construct an outdoor classroom for this small rural school. Much of the work involved the clearing of trails and removal of debris from an area of woods adjacent to the school. The outdoor classroom will feature hundreds of feet of trails with learning stations along the way, a council circle ring for group lessons, a small pond for water studies, tree identification signs, and a garden for plant studies.

Just a month earlier, Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Theisen from Fort Leonard Wood, contacted Chris Elbert, Missouri's NRCS State Earth Team Coordinator, looking for an Earth Team activity or project for his Non-Commission Officers Chemical Class to participate. Staff Sgt. Theisen indicated his class was looking for an opportunity to give something back to the community surrounding Fort Leonard Wood in Pulaski County, Missouri.

About this same time, Kassi Thompson, District Manager, and Kent Ledbetter, District Technician, who are employees of the

Pulaski County Soil and Water Conservation District, were working with Swedeborg School Principal Richard Crawford, in the planning of an outdoor classroom to give the students an opportunity to learn about nature and the environment.

Chris made a phone call to the local NRCS District Conservationist Dan Silberberg, who in turn, contacted Kassi Thompson and inquired if she needed some volunteers to help on her projects.

Volunteers from Fort Leonard Wood, Pulaski County SWCD, NRCS, and parents from the community were able to turn their plans to construct an outdoor classroom into reality in a single day.

"Children learn better outdoors," said Kassi Thompson, one of the volunteers on the project. "Here, they'll be able to actually see the environment they will be studying".



Volunteers include Jennifer Casillas, Treva Smith, Priscilla Atkins, Bernell Thomas, Eric Burns, Loisel Moore, Moses Ponce, Jarvas Thompson, Fernando Garrido, Oliver Pottinger, Jeremy S. Meadows, Aaron Hammond, Ben Adams, Jeffery Theisen, Ryan Moreno, John Waters all from CHEM BNCOC 02-04; Kent Ledbetter and Kassi Thompson from the Pulaski County SWCD; Richard Crawford, JoAnna F. Asano, and David Boyce from the Swedeborg School; Adam Reed from NRCS; other volunteers include Lonnie Krantz, Tiria Ousley, and Joyce Ledbetter.

Oklahoma

'Outdoor Classrooms' mark Earth Day

by Becca Redding, ET State Volunteer Coordinator, Oklahoma



The celebration of Earth Day has taken on special significance in Oklahoma as NRCS and the conservation districts join forces and help sponsor a day of outdoor classrooms.

However, this year because of a scheduling conflict, the 10th

Annual Outdoor Classrooms were held on May 5 in Sooner Park.

The Caney Valley Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) hosted all fourth grade students in Washington County.

For the two-day event in Sooner Park, 412 students enjoyed participating in nine learning stations.

It was most interesting to read the letters and comments received from the students who attended the two-day session.

The weather was beautiful and thanks go to the

many Earth Team volunteers who helped make the effort a total success.

Classes and presenters included:

- Wildlife--Terry Whittaker, US Fish and Wildlife Service;
- Cherokee Nation Indian Culture--Choogie Kingfisher;
- Basket Weaving--Kristin Snell-Smith;
- Trees--Ranger Debra Tautfest, Walnut Creek State Park;
- Masters Gardeners--Group representing Master Gardener Program;
- Oklahoma Grown--Sarah Sponsel, 4-H Agent;
- Water Quality--Valerie Keyworth, NRCS, Claremore Technical Office;
- Fire Safety--Bartlesville Fire Department; and
- Stream Investigation--Kristie Taylor, District Manager, Tulsa County Conservation District.

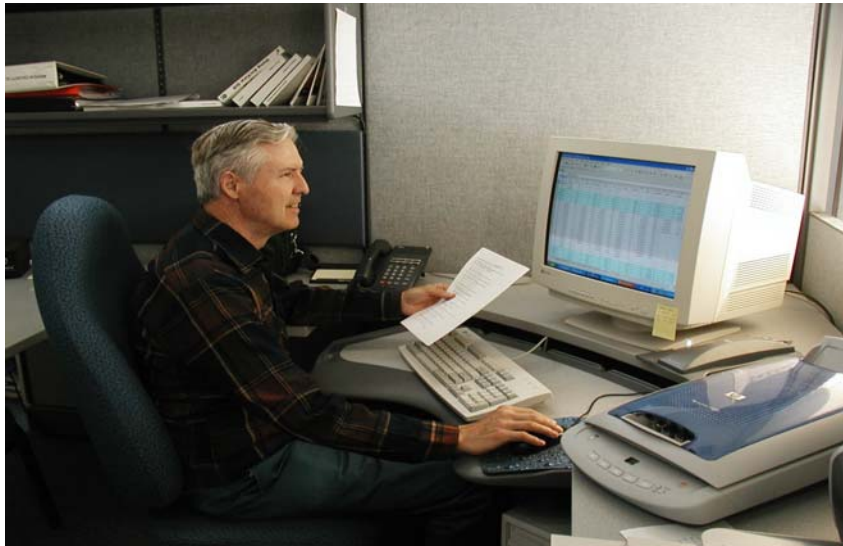


Photos: Top to Bottom

1. *Kristin Snell-Smith of the Cherokee Nation discusses basket weaving and its importance in every day Indian life.*

2. *Ranger Debra Tautfest, Walnut Creek State Park, talks about the importance of trees.*

3. *During stream investigation class, students identify small life forms living in streams.*



Gordon Fischbacher inputs data at Salem Service Center.

Oregon

Another great volunteer

*by Les Bachelor, District
Conservationist, Salem, Oregon
Field Office*

Earth Team Volunteer Gordon Fischbacher has a way of generating enthusiasm in the Salem Service Center.

“Sometimes we just get so bogged down in the everyday fast paced world we live in, we forget to say thank you. To have someone who loves their work and contributes by sharing ideas to our team is something everybody needs,” said Fischbacher.

Fischbacher became an Earth Team Volunteer in November 2002. Prior to that, he had been a 15-year veteran of the Agricultural Research Service (USDA).

He began his career studying high mountain forage in Gunnison, CO; then moved to the “banana belt” in Grand Junction to help in salinity research of the Colorado River. After three years Fischbacher transferred to Pendleton, Oregon as a member of the support team to quantify soil erosion and develop a wheat model.

He has worked with computers since the '60s, watching them become important statistical tools for data reduction.

Gordon has been volunteering for forty years, and libraries and office filing are his joy.

After leaving government service he moved his family to Arizona to work with Navajo Gospel Mission in their camping program. With the children grown and on their own, Gordon and his wife, Priscilla began “state-hopping;” ending up in Salem, Oregon.

Now retired, Fischbacher volunteers his time with the Earth Team and the Pudding River Watershed Council doing data entry for water quality testing and filing. He also volunteers at the library of Western Baptist College.

Hats-off and thank you from all the staff at the Salem Service Center. Volunteers truly do make a difference.

Management Tips

Do What's Fun

All too often, newly enlisted volunteers are understandably assigned to jobs based on their professional background and experience. A teacher, for example, is assigned to work with children. An attorney is called on to assist with legal matters. A plumber is assigned to the building and grounds committee. The result may too often be: “I’m really not enjoying this. It’s too much like what I do for a living.”

If the volunteer truly wants to use their talents in their volunteer job, that is great, however ask about their hobbies so you can incorporate those interests into a volunteer job. Or perhaps, the volunteer would prefer to do something totally different from their every day duties.

Delegation Rules

Three delegation rules that will help when turning over jobs to volunteers.

1. Put it in writing.

Provide an outline on what is to be done that includes a description of expected outcomes.

2. **Confirm that the assigned project is fully understood.** Ask the volunteer to describe, in detail, what it is she/he will be doing from the beginning to end.

3. **Ask for update reports.** Ask the volunteer for regular reports stating what’s been accomplished.

Bits and Pieces

Office Move

The National Earth Team and LANDCARE office, currently located in Ankeny, Iowa, will be moving to a new location in Des Moines, Iowa by the end of 2004. The 1-888-LANDCARE number will not change, however, office phone numbers and e-mail addresses will. No long break in service to publication distribution is expected. Official notifications and updates containing specifics will be sent out on the E-list soon as all the arrangements are finalized.

Deadlines

The following are the submittal deadlines for Volunteer Voice articles for the 2005 editions. Please remember to submit the stories as Word files and the photos as separate JPG or TIFF files. Photos that are imbedded in a word document or are part of a webpage present printing problems because they are not high enough resolution to reproduce

well. The deadlines are as follows:

- Winter 2005--Distribution January 2005. Deadline to submit: 12/15/04
- Spring 2005--Distribution April 2005. Deadline to submit: 3/15/05
- Summer 2005--Distribution July 2005. Deadline to submit: 6/15/05
- Fall 2005--Distribution October 2005. Deadline to submit: 9/15/05

Mark Calendar

Reserve Aug. 8-11, 2005, dates on your calendars to attend the next National Earth Team/Public Affairs Conference in Philadelphia, at the Marriott Hotel and Convention Center. Lots of great workshops, guest speakers and some new ideas are planned. The agenda is almost finalized. So be looking for information in early 2005.

Reminder

All those who participated in the World Water Monitoring Event are reminded to register their sites and send in their feedback forms to Tina Morris.

Think about it!

Looking to boost morale among volunteers? Why not hold a "what's right" meeting?

Have no agenda other than sharing what's going well with the volunteer program, what people are noticing as working correctly and what people are feeling good about. This type of meeting not only improves morale but may lead to the exchange of ideas about how to make things work better.

Happy Thanksgiving

Everyone at the Earth Team Office extends their best wishes for a Happy and Safe Thanksgiving Holiday.

Note. . .

"Hard work spotlights the character of people... some turn up their sleeves some turn up their noses and some don't turn up at all."

Sam Ewig

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.

Please remember to include photographs to illustrate the article. JPG 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."

An Equal Opportunity Employer and Provider.