



## Note from Bonnie

FY06 was another outstanding year for the Earth Team. Over 38,000 volunteers donated approximately 995,000 hours worth more than \$17.9 million. Earth Team volunteers continue to help accomplish the NRCS mission "Helping People Help The Land".

The Earth Team was given the responsibility to manage the "Walk A Mile In My Boots" program. This is a work-exchange program developed by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The program was expanded to include the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 2006. To date, nine exchanges have been completed. To learn more about this program or how you can participate go to [www.walkamileinmyboots.org](http://www.walkamileinmyboots.org).

October 2006 was an exciting time for me personally, as I married Dennis Allely on the 21st. Thanks to all of you who remembered us with your best wishes, cards and gifts. Your kindness and generosity was overwhelming, but definitely appreciated.

So, as I start 2007 as Mrs. Bonnie Allely, I look forward to working with all of you. Some things you will see coming in FY 2007 are:

- A 3-Year Business Plan For Earth Team
- Improved changes and updates to the Earth Team Database
- Student Brochure
- Updated Earth Team Fact Sheets

Needs Assessment – The Place To Start  
Volunteers – A Vital Part of the Team

Definition of a Volunteer  
How To Use the Earth Team Group Form

As the holidays are fast approaching, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the National Earth Team/LANDCARE staff to thank all of you for your support of the Earth Team – the volunteer arm of the NRCS and LANDCARE – the NRCS publications and forms distribution center. We wish all of you a safe and happy holiday season!

Bonnie Allely  
National Volunteer Liaison

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## Idaho

### Gettin' Down an' Dirty in Idaho

By **Leah Juarros**  
Resource Soil Scientist

and

**Bonnie Long**  
Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator

Each year the Idaho FFA and 4-H clubs compete in a Land and Soil Career Development Event. This event consists of five regional competitions. The top two teams in each region then go on to the State Finals in Burley, Idaho, with the top two state teams competing at the National Soil and Land Judging event in Oklahoma.

FFA and 4H members compete with each other in their ability to identify soil properties such as soil texture, soil depth, water movement and nutrient or organic matter needs. Five pits are dug for each competition; one is used as a practice test before the real competition begins. Another is represented as a home site



See Judging, page 2

## Judging (from page 1)



and students must determine if the soils would support a home-  
stead. Two pits represent irrigated land and one as dry cropland  
or rangeland.

In an effort to prepare all the test sites, coordinate with  
school schedules, and minimize travel time for the students  
across the state we often need assistance that the field offices  
can't supply. Earth Team Volunteers continue to respond to  
that need and get the test sites ready for the students.

These volunteers measure the test area, 100' square, and  
pound in stakes at each corner. Slope stakes are placed and  
the measurements recorded on the answer sheet. All of these  
activities take place the day before the competition, and when  
the students arrive in the morning everything is ready to go.  
The competition continues to be a success and something the  
students look forward to every year. Earth Team Volunteers  
make this event possible.



## Walk-A-Mile Goes to Washington



Through a unique partnership with the National  
Association of Conservation Districts, the Walk-A-  
Mile in My Boots program has resulted in a number of  
exchanges between producers and NRCS. One of the  
most recent provided an opportunity for two ranchers  
from Utah to visit and work with NRCS National  
Headquarters leadership in Washington, D.C. Paul  
Leishman from Wellsville, Utah, and Dee Alan Wal-  
dron from Morgan, Utah, talked to NRCS Chief of  
Staff Gary Mast about conservation issues as well as a  
variety of other subjects with NHQ specialists.

Walk a Mile in My Boots provides government  
employees and producers with substantive, on the  
ground work experiences in each other's respective  
professions. Any producer or service employee may  
participate in the program.

More details at:

[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/volunteers/  
walkmile/walkamile.html](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/volunteers/walkmile/walkamile.html)

## Wisconsin

# Fox Valley Technical College Students Mark Storm Drains to Curb Water Pollution

*By Betty Stibbe*  
Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator

Fox Valley Technical College Natural Resources students from Central America participated in a community service project in Menasha near Appleton, Wis. The students worked September 6th, 13th and 18th to mark approximately 200 storm sewer inlets on city streets with "No Dumping, Drains to River." Their effort was part of an ongoing project to mark all the storm drains on Doty Island in Neenah/Menasha.

The students are here on a scholarship from Central America. They are sponsored in part by their country and the U.S. After their two year school program ends they must return home and perform two years of community service. All of the students are studying natural resources with many of them specializing in water management. Their skills will be very useful once they return home. District Conservationist Merrie Schamberger has been working with the students.



## **Earth Team Volunteers and Puppeteers Offer Lessons in Conservation**

**By James D. Wood II**

*ASTC (FO) and Newkirk Field Office/Kay County Conservation District*

Teaching school children the importance of conservation, not only in their own home and backyard, but how farmers are helping protect our natural resources, starts early in Kay County, by Earth Team Volunteers and several puppet helpers. Students pre-kindergarten through fifth grade are treated to puppet shows on topics ranging from wildlife habitat, pollinators, soil formation and reduction of soil erosion, no-till farming, the water cycle, water conservation and quality, and trees. The puppets' stories help keep the children connected to the farm, plus emphasize how even children can make a difference in protecting our natural resources.

The two original puppet plays, Kay Conservation and Willy Water Drop were written by Earth Team Volunteer Dianne Jeans. Four more puppets and scripts were created by volunteer Susan Henning, now District Manager for the Kay County Conservation District. Hopper the Frog, Wiggleworm the Earthworm, Big Drop and the Little Drops, and Woody the Oak Tree now round out the puppet repertoire. Ms. Henning serves as "straight man" narrator, while Earth Team Volunteers Dianne Jeans, Lynn Frazier, and Joanne Horinek, play the precocious puppet voices. Volunteers spend time reviewing and practicing the scripts, plus help set up and take down the puppet stage. This past year, the puppeteers gave 20 shows at schools, library story hours, herb festivals, and summer fun days at a water park.

The puppets take on "real life" in the children's eyes. Their favorite is Hopper the Frog, who believes a wild animal should dress crazy and dance to the song "Wild One." But parents tell that he must be getting the message across as their children remind them to turn off the water while brushing their teeth or want to plant wildflowers in the back yard for the butterflies and bees. Puppet shows always end with a hug or high five from the featured puppet.

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### **South Carolina**

## **Conservationists Build Dune Fence**

**By JILL COLEY**

*Charleston Post and Courier*

How long does it take 26 volunteers to build a 500-foot sand fence on the beach?

About 10 minutes.

Representatives from Earth Team converged Aug. 16 near Station 21 for a blitzkrieg of coastal conservation.

Earth Team's volunteer coordinators were in the Charleston area for their east region conference.

"A lot of the time we're behind a desk," said NRCS Public Affairs Specialist Amy Maxwell. "We like to do a hands on project (during the conference) and get our hands dirty." This year, the Earth Team crew threw its energy behind Charleston County's Project Impact initiative, Build-a-Dune Project. The fence, comprised of posts and netting, traps sand that builds up over time into a dune system. The fencing is installed in a pattern that is conducive to sea turtle nesting. Sea oat, a plant that stabilizes the dunes, will be planted in the spring.

So far, the effort has produced more than 2,600 feet of dunes on Sullivan's Island and Isle of Palms.

The site of the new sand fence at Station 21 is only yards in front of another sand fence, now encased by a sand dune. Only the tops of the weathered, grey fence posts poke above the sand.

Joni Rennhack, who coordinates Project Impact, said the enhanced dune system provides protection for barrier islands and inland areas against coastal storm-related flood losses.



Earth Team Volunteer Bill Wilkes, USDA Under Secretary Merlyn Carlson, NRCS S.C. State Conservationist Walt Douglas, and NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster visited the Earth Team dune restoration project October 19, 2006.

## Volunteers -- Just ask and they'll lend a hand

*By Colleen McCleary*  
Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator



One of the toughest problems facing conservation districts and the conservation movement today is limited staffing. However, the solutions may be just a step away...or down the street...or in a neighboring town. **THEY ARE VOLUNTEERS!** So why don't districts use them? Many aren't sure how to find volunteers, and others suffer from the misconception that it's too much trouble. Here are some tips on finding and using volunteers and on how districts can use the Earth Team Volunteers to make the job easier.

Earth Team Volunteers can work on any project that supports the overall mission of NRCS. It does not have to be an NRCS project. It can be a district project or other conservation-related project. Volunteers can perform any job that an NRCS employee would, from data entry to soil mapping.

When searching for volunteers, there are many sources to choose from, including: high schools; scout troops; churches; media; prisons; retirement homes; courts; family, etc. Groups such as the United Way, and the American Association of Retired Persons are also good sources for volunteers. Volunteers must be at least 14 years old.

When recruiting Earth Team Volunteers, just asking for help usually works. If volunteers are going to serve on the Earth Team, they must be signed up using an NRCS personnel form (NRCS-PER-001). The following information must be obtained from each volunteer: name and age; address; signature; telephone number; social security number; position applied for. The form must also show the date the volunteer will begin work and give a brief job description. Then an NRCS representative must sign and date the form.

The rest is easy. Someone needs to keep track of each volunteer's time. This can be done with an office calendar, a district time sheet or an Earth Team Time and Attendance form (NRCS-PER-004). Hours volunteered can be estimated by NRCS personnel, district personnel, or by the volunteers themselves. Volunteer recognition is also important. Letters, certificates, plaques or other non-monetary awards are appropriate. That's all there is to it!

## Colorado Earth Team Welcomes ...

*By Katherine Burse-Johnson*  
Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator

Ron Gilberston, Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator, has been with NRCS since March 1996. He began his career as a WAE and now serves as a Soil Conservation Technician in the Center Field Office located in Center, Colorado. In the past, he has assisted on several Earth Team projects and has also received an award for Group Winner in 1998 for a Living Snow Fence Project.

Ron enjoys the outdoors, hunting, fishing, and being with his wife. He has two daughters, ages 28 and 21, and four grandchildren. For the past ten years, Ron has worked with several volunteers in the Center Field Office and feels that the Earth Team is a worthy cause for all aspects of NRCS.



List Your Volunteer Opportunities at:

[www.volunteer.gov/gov](http://www.volunteer.gov/gov)

Email [alan.benge@ia.usda.gov](mailto:alan.benge@ia.usda.gov) for more information

## Texas

# Barnhart Named 2006 Texas Earth Team Volunteer of the Year

*By Lori Valadez  
Public Affairs Specialist*

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) named Gwen Barnhart as its 2006 Texas Earth Team volunteer of the year. Barnhart was recognized at the annual state meeting of the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Districts held in Arlington, Texas.

Barnhart, executive director of the Moore County Development Corp., volunteers at the High Plains Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) office in Friona, Texas. RC&D is a program administered by NRCS.

“Gwen volunteered more than 250 hours for us this past year,” said High Plains RC&D Coordinator Thomas Reed. “Her invaluable time and resources have helped us accomplish goals not only in her home of Dumas and Moore County, but for the entire state.”

Barnhart currently serves as vice president for finance for the RC&D council, conducting financial business for the council and serving on the budget committee. Barnhart is also zone 1 director for the Texas Association of RC&D Councils. In this capacity, she maintains contact with state and local RC&D councils and serves as a liaison with NRCS. Barnhart attends meetings of the Wes Tex and North Rolling Plains RC&D councils, as well as High Plains, and reports to the Texas Association of RC&D Councils board of directors at quarterly state meetings. She also serves on the awards committee for both the Southwestern States RC&D Association and the Texas Association of RC&D Councils.



As the 2006 NRCS Texas Earth Team Volunteer of the Year, Gwen Barnhart is presented a plaque by Jerry Nichols, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation board member, at the annual meeting of the state's soil and water conservation districts in Arlington, Texas.

## Louisiana

# Lake Providence Volunteer's Service Hits 6 Year Mark

*By Vickie Fontenot  
Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator*

Lincoln Powell is an Earth Team Volunteer for East Carroll Soil and Water Conservation District, Lake Providence, La. He provides assistance on conservation educational materials at local schools as well as the East Carroll Library. A volunteer since 2000, he provides clerical assistance, answers the phone for a busy field office staff, and files correspondence, forms, and program worksheets. He also takes mail to the post office and articles to the newspaper. Lincoln is a regular handy-man when it comes to office maintenance. Along with his volunteering, Powell works at the local Delta Bank in Lake Providence, La.



## R.S.V.P. Volunteers Recognized

**By Cheryl Mathias**  
Cottonwood SWCD

Cottonwood Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service would like to express their appreciation to volunteers from the Retired Senior Volunteer Program. With their help, the office in Windom, Minn. has been able to implement numerous programs. Some of the projects they have helped with include bagging trees for Arbor Day, answering phones, producing newsletters, creating coloring books and delivering supplies to the exhibit hall for a water festival, mapping, filing, and recycling.



## Retirement Doesn't Mean You Stop Contributing...

**By Madeline Coco**  
District Secretary, Avoyelles SWCD, Marksville, La.

In Marksville, La., although you may retire from your career, this doesn't mean that you sit on the porch and watch the dust settle on the dirt road. If you are like Dave and Cynthia Flanders, you find a way to use your passion for gardening to contribute to the community.

Volunteering comes easy to this couple. Mr. Flanders retired from the Air Force (volunteering to serve his country) and Mrs. Flanders retired from the Marksville School System (volunteering her time to teachers and students). Both enjoy giving to the community. Over 100 hours were documented during the course of the project.



Earlier this year, Mr. and Mrs. Flanders assisted the Avoyelles Soil and Water Conservation District with the annual tree sale. Since all the orders had been filled and delivered, the mixed bag of trees that remained were brought home with the Flanders.

The couple repotted and nurtured these tender saplings through the winter and spring. In early spring, 2 truck loads of the green and flourishing trees were brought to Mr. Carlos Smith at the local LSU Agriculture County Agent Office. He is the advisor for the Cenla Master Gardeners Club.

Dr. Smith also challenged his students in the LSU Agriculture Department to pot other vegetation from their gardens to bring to New Orleans, La. to help other Master Gardeners there to replenish their destroyed area. Mr. and Mrs. Flanders took this challenge to heart. They delivered 87 River Birch, 40 Native Sweet Pecan, and about one dozen Saw Tooth Oaks.

Mrs. Flanders is fast to mention the generosity of others. She thanks Carla's Greenhouse in Moreauville, La. and Rist Nursery in Marksville, La. for their donation of containers for this project. The Earth Team, in turn, thanks the Flanders for their time and community spirit.

### Did You Know?

**55,477 Earth Team Volunteers donated 995,775 hours to NRCS during FY2006.**

**This time and talent is valued at more than \$ 17,983,000.**

**A big THANK YOU to all of the Earth Team Volunteers who donated their time and talents to NRCS in 2006!**

## Earth Team Volunteers Assist with Forest Conservation Research

*By Wayne Roberts  
NRCS Monroe, La. Area Office*

When Dr. Michael Blazier, Research Forester with the LSU Ag Center, and Wayne Roberts, Area Forester with NRCS, needed help with a special research project at the Calhoun Research Station in Calhoun, La., they knew they could count on NRCS Earth Team Volunteers such as Lee Jeter of Shreveport Green to help get the job done. The project was completed in February of 2006 with 23 volunteers and 210 volunteer hours.

This project was not a normal planting job either. The tree planting was in research plots on 12 acres that consisted of mix pine/oak planting at various spacing. Several subplots were within the given area.

To accomplish this task, the Earth Team Volunteers broke up into teams, with foresters as team leaders to help with the hardwood planting in each research plot. Surveying chains marked with ribbons were used to keep the exact spacing with each student planting trees at a given distance. The fields were subsoiled and the students planted the trees in the subsoiled areas using dibble bars.

This type of tree planting gives the volunteers the opportunity to understand how forest research is a critical part of conservation work and working with landowners on private lands. The LSU Ag Center and NRCS appreciate the time the Earth Team Volunteers of Shreveport Green provided to help install this research project. Now that the trees are planted, Dr. Blazier is collecting long term research data on mix pine hardwood plantings. This is some of the first research in the southern United States evaluating the development of mix pine/oak stands.

## Volunteers Revisit, Re-vegetate and Restore Tarzan's Island

*By Mandy York  
District Conservationist, Franklin, La.*



Avoca Island is the location of the original Tarzan movie. This beautiful Louisiana swamp, just south of Morgan City, is in the heart of Cajun land. The area consists of organic soils with stately bald cypress trees in their natural environment. Restoring these grand and fragile wetlands is one of the annual vegetative planting projects of St. Mary Soil and Water Conservation District and the Franklin NRCS Field Office located in Franklin, La.

Earth Team Volunteers traveled in a boat through the canal systems in hot and humid conditions to reach a levee constructed with a Ducks Unlimited Grant. At the site, volunteers helped plant 600 gallon containers of Giant Cutgrass and California Bullwhips. The vegetation is also planted to prevent shoreline erosion protection as well as restoration of native species. These volunteers are to be commended for the dedication it took to get wet and dirty and work in the August heat at Avoca Island.

## **Wayne Community College Student Earns North Carolina NRCS/NCASWCD Award**

**By Tiffany M. Boyce**  
NC Earth Team Coordinator



Julie D. Hatchett, Earth Team Volunteer with the NRCS Field Office in Goldsboro NC, has been awarded the North Carolina NRCS/NCASWCD Earth Team Award in appreciation for her efforts in supporting both the NRCS and NCASWCD. Julie spends her volunteer time developing news articles for the Goldsboro Field Office's information program and has contributed to the development of several conservation plans.

In addition to helping with the information program, she has served in the role of receptionist by answering the phone and greeting customers while in the office.

Julie is a student at Wayne Community College. She is working toward a 4 year degree in Agricultural Business or Journalism with an agricultural emphasis. Julie's contributions to the Goldsboro Field Office conservation planning, contracting, conservation applications, conservation education and administrative duties were instrumental in the completion of many operational tasks and projects. The experience she has gained through her 269 volunteer hours will help Julie in her college studies and in seeking future employment after her graduation.

## **Subscribe to VolunteerVoice**

The VolunteerVoice is now an on-line publication that will be produced as an Adobe portable document (PDF) file residing on the NRCS Earth Team website. Beginning with the fall 2004 issue, mass printing and distribution of paper copies ceased.

An online subscription form to the VolunteerVoice is available on the NRCS news lists page at: <http://news-source.nrcs.usda.gov/>.

When the latest issue goes up on the NRCS Earth Team website, subscribers will receive an e-mail with a hyperlink to link directly to the publication.

## **Parting Shot ...**

***"Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on Earth."***

***-- Muhammad Ali***

## **Submissions to VolunteerVoice**

Articles and photographs for publication should be e-mailed, via your State Volunteer Coordinator, to [john.gilman@ia.usda.gov](mailto:john.gilman@ia.usda.gov). If you prefer, copy can be mailed or faxed to NRCS Attn: John Gilman, 5140 Park Avenue, Suite C, Des Moines, IA. 50321, fax number (515) 289-4561. 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.

Submittal deadlines for 2007 editions of the VolunteerVoice are listed below. Please remember to submit stories as Word files and photos as separate files in JPEG or TIFF format. Photos embedded in word documents or submitted as webpages present printing problems as they are not of high enough resolution to reproduce.

- Second Quarter 2007--Distribution March 2007. Deadline to submit: 3/1/07
- Third Quarter 2007--Distribution June 2007. Deadline to submit: 6/1/07
- Fourth Quarter 2007--Distribution September 2007. Deadline to submit: 9/1/07

For information about the Earth Team and the VolunteerVoice, go to [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov), 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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