

USDA Joins "Walk a Mile In My Boots" Five Western States Slated to Kick Off Program

NRCS HQ

Chief Bruce Knight announced on October 22, 2005, that NRCS has joined "Walk a Mile in My Boots," a work-exchange venture developed by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The program provides government employees and producers with substantive, on-the-ground work experiences in each other's professions.

"Walk a Mile in My Boots" will formally expand in February to include the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) and NRCS, upon signing of a memorandum of understanding with NCBA and FWS. Efforts have already begun to coordinate exchanges in five western states. NRCS' initial participation will involve 10 pilot exchanges in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah.

"These exchanges will be innovative experiences that give ranchers, farmers and our employees the unique opportunity to learn first-hand more about each other's responsibilities and daily challenges," said Knight.



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Note from Michele

As the holiday season approaches, I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your support of the Earth Team and your patience with the NRCS Publications and Forms Distribution Center – LANDCARE. During the 2005 calendar year, both programs experienced several changes as well as opportunities:

- The relocation of the National Earth Team and LANDCARE office.
- The loss of Tina Morris and Ed Szczutkowski due to the move.
- The addition of agency forms to the LANDCARE operation and web page.
- The arrival of Venessa Alvarado, Alan Bengue, and John Gilman to the team.
- The modification of the National Earth Team Awards.
- The opportunity to participate with the "Walk A Mile In My Boots" program.
- The loss of the Earth Team logo.
- The opportunity to create a new look for the Earth Team.
- The loss of the Regional Volunteer Coordinator positions.
- The opportunity to include more people in the management of the Earth Team.

For every change that was presented, it seemed as though an opportunity was also made available. I am anxious to welcome in 2006 and look forward to working with all of you. Have a wonderful holiday season.

Michele Eginoire
National Volunteer Coordinator

Walk a Mile, from Page 1

“Walk a Mile in My Boots” is expected to enhance the symbiotic relationship among government employees and agricultural producers through:

- Cultivation of relationships among government employees and producers that increase public awareness and support.
- Increased appreciation among government employees of rural lifestyles, agricultural production, and the economic pressures endured by agricultural producers.
- Increased understanding among producers of government agency and government employee conservation efforts and corresponding programs.
- Improved opportunities for producers, government agencies and government employees to voluntarily develop and implement effective conservation solutions that are viable alternatives to regulatory processes.
- Exploration of opportunities to increase the sustainability of lands, natural resources and agricultural livelihoods.

More information and the “Walk a Mile in My Boots” application is available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/volunteers/walkamile.html>.

Maine

NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Becomes NRCS Employee



Former Earth Team Volunteer Bill Voisine is now an NRCS Information Technology Assistant.

that he could receive additional class credits. Bill was a “can do” person, never saying “I don’t know” or “I can’t.” He became a valuable assistant on the three-person IT summer staff, assisting with the day-to-day computer support needs of the NRCS employees. He also assisted in creating customized programs for the UNIX operating system.

Information technology assistance soon became more than a two-person job in Maine, so when the vacancy went out the then graduated-and-experienced Bill Voisine applied and got the position. Already very familiar with NRCS technology, Bill stepped right in and pulled his weight right from the start. He came along just in time to assist with such projects as Windows XP conversion, the deployment of new computers, web page conversion, Toolkit deployment (two phases), server upgrade and Veritas. Bill also wrote a computer program, which received national recognition, that helped the NRCS employees use the Toolkit software.

Now that USDA IT staffs have moved to Information Technology Services, we can no longer claim Bill as a Maine NRCS employee. He has expanded his clientele from Maine NRCS employees to NRCS, Rural Development and Farm Service Agency employees, not only in Maine but in the six New England states. Multiple agencies and states will get to know the computer wiz that started out as an Earth Team Volunteer in Maine.

By Elaine Tremble
NRCS Public Affairs Specialist

Volunteering with NRCS not only benefited Bill Voisine by giving him class credits, it helped him get a job shortly after graduation.

During summer breaks from Husson College in Bangor, Maine, Bill, a computer information systems major, became an Earth Team Volunteer and assisted NRCS Computer Specialist Dick Hunter in the State Office so

FY06 Regional Earth Team Training Conference Planning Underway

Committees have been established to plan the FY06 Regional Earth Team Training Conferences.

Be on the lookout for more information about dates and locations!

List Your Volunteer Opportunities at:

www.volunteer.gov/gov

Email alan.benge@ia.usda.gov
for more information

FY05 National Earth Team Award Winners Announced

CONGRATULATIONS to the following award winners:



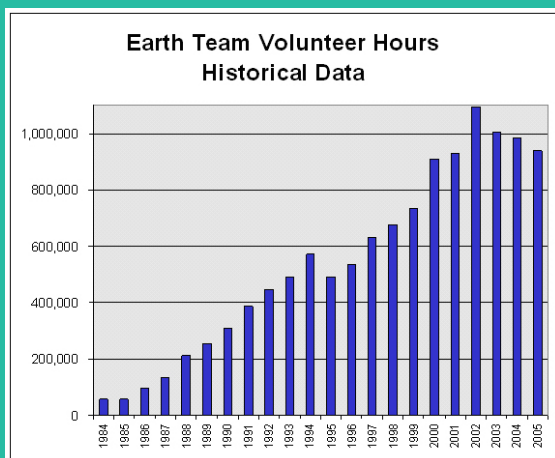
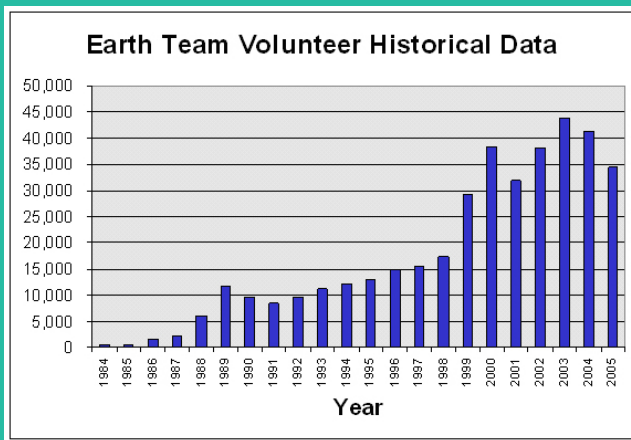
*Helping People
Help the Land*

Award items have been ordered and will be shipped to State Volunteer Coordinators in early January.

Chief's Cup	Kansas
NACD/NRCS	Edwards County Conservation District, Kinsley, Kansas
RC&D/NRCS	CAWACO RC&D, Birmingham, Alabama
Individual	Margaret Magruder, Clatskanie, Oregon
Group	Nature's Wild Adventure Outdoor School Group, Dallas, Oregon
Chief's Field	Dallas Service Center, Dallas, Oregon
NRCS Employee	Mike Patterson, Norwalk, Ohio

National Earth Team Status Report through FY05

Earth Team volunteers continue to serve as a resource for NRCS with a value of over \$16.4 Million to the agency and providing 451 staff years during FY05. The Earth Team did experience a 20% decrease in the number of volunteers and a slight decrease in the number of hours.



Idaho

Idaho Plant Materials Center Hosts Foreign Scientist

By Loren St. John and Bonnie A. Long
Idaho PMC Team Leader Idaho Earth Team Coordinator



The Aberdeen Plant Materials Center (APMC) hosted Dr. Tumenjargal, a visiting scientist from Mongolia during spring and summer 2005. Tumenjargal is a Professor of Agronomy at the Mongolian State University of Agriculture in Zaisan, Ulaanbaatar.

Rangelands of Mongolia and the Intermountain Region of the western United States are similar in climate, topography, and ecology. In Mongolia increasing human and livestock populations and associated problems with overgrazing are threatening plant cover in many areas. Tumenjargal received training at APMC that will allow her to help her country provide plant materials to Mongolian herders, develop alternative forage resources for subsistence operations, and help stabilize deteriorated Mongolian rangelands.

Earth Team Volunteers Enhance Water Quality Awareness on WWMD

*By George Couch
Arizona Earth Team Coordinator*

Arizona's Earth Team gathered water quality data and educated the public on World Water Monitoring Day (WWMD) October 18. WWMD is a yearly global event that positively impacts the health of our waters and watersheds. WWMD participants gather water quality measurements at any body of water. These results are then placed in a database and made available to the public.

World Water Monitoring Day is a global education and outreach event designed to promote personal stewardship and individual involvement in the protection of our world water resources. WWMD occurs every year on Oct. 18. From Sept. 18-Oct. 18, participants test 4 key indicators of water quality: temperature; pH; dissolved oxygen; and turbidity.

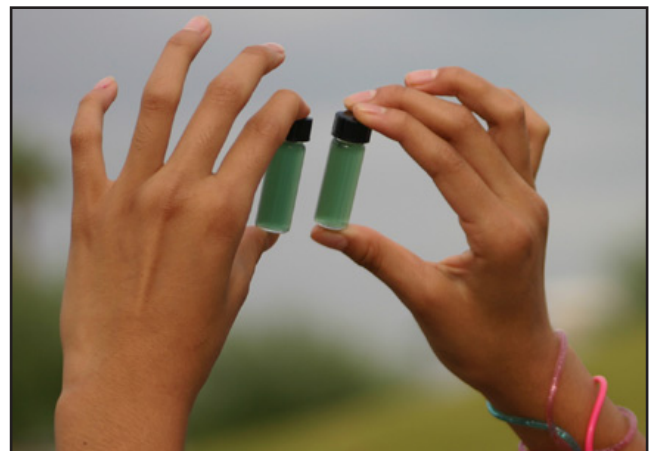
More information is available on the WWMD website at: www.worldwatermonitoringday.org.



Students attend a program at Steele Indian School Park in Phoenix on World Water Monitoring Day, October 18.



Above: Earth Team Volunteer Elizabeth Boettcher explains World Water Monitoring Day test results to students during a program at Steele Indian School Park.



Left and Above: Students examine water samples collected by Earth Team Volunteers. Earth Team Volunteers collected the samples between Sept. 18 and Oct. 18, tested the samples for four key water quality indicators and shared their results with the public on WWMD.

Alexandria Volunteer Group Tops 7,000 Hour Mark

By Vickie Fontenot
Louisiana Earth Team Coordinator

Since 1994 the Louisiana Special Education Center (LSEC) has been an active participant with the Earth Team Program at Alexandria, La. The center is a residential facility with a 12-month school program which includes activities that enable the client to be an active member of the community. Clients at the center have orthopedic and mental disabilities.

The countless hours donated by these special individuals have been very beneficial to NRCS and encouraging to both the volunteer and agency. The clients and job coaches have provided over 7,000 hours since joining the Earth Team Program. Throughout the years the clients of this center have typed, edited and distributed newsletters highlighting volunteer program efforts; prepared envelopes for daily/weekly mail outs to more than 75 NRCS offices in Louisiana, Texas and Washington D.C.; and operated computers, copiers, electronic mail machines, and other office equipment. Clients helped public affairs specialists sort and file photographs and slides. Safety is also a top issue in the field. LSEC clients were instrumental in revising and typing a newer version of a safety booklet needed by all NRCS employees and volunteers.

In a state office atmosphere where large mail outs are daily routine, the assistance provided is worth gold. Not only has the group helped NRCS, but through the Earth Team Program several participants have worked with Rural Development.

This affiliation has given the clients a feeling of worth and made them feel part of the organization. They feel the work accomplished is needed and important to both facilities. The program is very successful for the Center and NRCS. The products produced are of high quality and accomplished with pride.

Several participants have remained in the program while others have gone to group homes to become part of the community.

Becky Elliot, LSEC Transition Coordinator, reports that the Earth Team helps students from the center develop job skills, social skills, increase self esteem and have a sense of purpose, plus they enjoy getting out of the center to do actual work.



LSEC Transition Coordinator Becky Elliot, Louisiana State Conservationist Donald W. Gohmert, Louisiana Earth Team Coordinator Vickie Fontenot, LSEC Superintendent Walter Gatlin, volunteer Kim Gotte and volunteer J. J. Wiley at an event recognizing the contributions of LSEC Earth Team Volunteers.

California

Blythe Volunteers Partner to Improve Wildlife Habitat



California Area 4 Earth Team Coordinator Elizabeth Lessick works along side volunteers Justin Olmsted, Kody Downs, Karys Downes, and Alyssa Whitson to load discarded Christmas trees onto a truck. Lessick and the volunteers partnered with the California Department of Fish & Game in an effort to turn discarded Christmas trees into wildlife habitat.

Bits and Pieces

Properly Identify NRCS and the Earth Team



In an effort to achieve a clearer agency identity across the wide span of NRCS activities, all individual organizational unit logos, including the Earth Team logo, were discontinued in April 2005. The standard NRCS logo is to be utilized wherever the Earth Team logo has been previously used.

Working with NRCS NHQ, the National Earth Team Office has developed artwork to properly incorporate the NRCS logo when identifying the Earth Team Program.

The artwork is available in JPEG format via email request to: john.gilman@ia.usda.gov

Look for the artwork to be made available soon for download at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/volunteers/>

Additionally, look for information on-line and in the next issue of *VolunteerVoice* regarding new Earth Team floor model and table top displays currently being produced.

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 ...

"You make a living by what you get, but you make a life by what you give."

-- Winston Churchill

Submissions to VolunteerVoice

Articles and photographs for publication should be e-mailed, via your State Volunteer Coordinator, to 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 2006 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.

- Spring 2006--Distribution April 2006. Deadline to submit: 3/15/06
- Summer 2006--Distribution July 2006. Deadline to submit: 6/15/06
- Fall 2006--Distribution October 2006. Deadline to submit: 9/15/06
- Winter 2006--Distribution December 2006. Deadline to submit: 11/15/06

For information about the Earth Team and the VolunteerVoice, go to 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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