



Hugh Hammond Bennett (right), first Chief of the Soil Conservation Service.

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Contribution Agreement Means More Conservation State Joins with NRCS to Implement 2002 Farm Bill



Brian Greene, Chairman of New Mexico Soil and Water Commission, and Rosendo Trevino sign contribution agreement. Looking on (from left) are Eddie Vigil, President of the New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts (NMACD); Debbie Hughes, NMACD Executive Director; and Ken Leiting, NRCS.

NRCS New Mexico entered into a Contribution Agreement with the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) and the New

Mexico Soil and Water Conservation Commission (NMACD) September 17, 2003. The purpose of the contribution

agreement is to provide Technical Service Providers (TSP) and other services necessary to assist the USDA NRCS in the implementation and administration of the seven programs that are part of the 2002 Farm Bill.

The New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts (NMACD) and NM NRCS realized that in rural New Mexico there would be a limited number of Technical Service Providers available to assist New Mexicans who wished to participate in Farm Bill programs. NMACD worked with the State Legislature to secure funds to match the expected federal TSP funds. With the assistance of New Mexico's Governor the Association obtained \$1.2 million (\$200,000+ are recurring dollars) to assist USDA NRCS in providing Farm Bill programs to New Mexicans.

The Association is in the process of hiring local employees that will assist our field offices with the needed help in implementing the Farm Bill. NM NRCS will also train and improve on the employee's skills and abilities to create a cadre of New Mexican TSP's that will serve New Mexicans in conservation.

Issues Can Continue to be Addressed by 2002 Farm Bill



Rosendo Trevino III
State Conservationist

The tremendous drought continues to hold a tight grip on all of us here in New Mexico. Challenging our state's farmers and ranchers are the decisions they must make about water and our other limited resources. These issues can continue to be addressed by using some of the programs the 2002 Farm Bill provides.

We have had a banner year regarding the financial assistance available through the Farm Bill in New Mexico, and the number of farmers and ranchers who have crossed over into our NRCS offices. To these farmers and ranchers we say - thank you for thinking of us when you need to address your conservation concerns. We also want to thank the local workgroups and Soil and Water Conservation Districts for their fine efforts, and express our continued commitment to address the concerns they bring to us.

We wish the best for the agricultural operators in the upcoming year, and extend this same best regards to our

We have had a banner year regarding the financial assistance available through the Farm Bill ...

many partners. Together we hope to bring the best for New Mexico, today and throughout the year. New Mexico is a great state with tre-

mendous natural beauty and strong people. We at NRCS are privileged to work in this environment and are ready to do our part to ensure this land is protected through good conservation now and in the future.

Natural Resources Reporter

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Rangeland Sports Knee-High Grass in Drought of 2003

by Richard Montoya, Grants District Conservationist

The Acoma Indian Reservation hosted grass up to your knees during the drought of 2003. So, how did they do it?

The Acoma Bar 15 Ranch, Acoma Martin Ranch, Acoma Redlakes Ranch, Acoma Cattle Growers, and East Mesa Grazing Unit are all ranches located in the northwest quadrant of New Mexico in the Acoma Indian Reservation. The Acoma Indian Reservation is approximately 520,000 acres in size. With less than one percent being irrigated, most of the Acoma Reservation lands are used for grazing livestock. These ranches comprise approximately 265,000 acres or 51 percent of the lands on the Acoma Reservation and are under Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contracts.

In the past, programs, such as the Agricultural Conservation Program, were used to assist in the installation of a few water developments on these ranching units. EQIP has made it possible to plan for the long term and secured funding for many projects which, otherwise, would never be installed.

The great diversity of practices and materials, such as solar pumping units, fiberglass troughs and storages, pump jacks, pipelines, and intensive grazing management, are now becoming realities on these grazing units.



Al Grieve, Acoma Land and Cattle Company manager, shows knee-high grass during the drought of 2003 on a cow-calf operation that uses a rotational grazing strategy

The EQIP program has allowed them to be more flexible with their livestock and wildlife operations, while showing positive results to their natural resource base.

EQIP has brought more intensive coordinated planning activities between agencies, the tribe, land managers, and landusers. As a result, there are better working relationships allowing individuals to plan for the long term and better understand the role of federal, state, and tribal

agencies involved.

Due to the intensive EQIP planning activities, cultural awareness and sensitivity issues have become very important to everyone involved. Landusers and land managers have become aware of potential environmental consequences, and the need to obtain necessary clearances on environmental matters from the respective agencies.

For further information contact Richard Montoya at (505)287-4045.

Small Farms Can Compete Well for EQIP

While we frequently think of the large landowner when we think of agriculture in New Mexico, our many small farmers benefit from improved conservation practices, too. The peach and apple orchards of Walter and Betty Lea in Lyden, New Mexico, eight miles north of Espanola, serve as an example of how a small farm can compete for financial assistance under the 2002 Farm Bill and realize conservation improvements.

The Leas had already seen a solid set sprinkler irrigation system when they approached Ed Romero, district conservationist, in Espanola during the fall of 2001. They thought it could bring to their operation needed improvements.

The Lea's existing surface irrigation system, close to the Rio Grande, was inefficient and had the potential of contaminating ground water. They needed to replace their surface system with sprinklers rather than a drip system because their orchard also carried a cover crop. The solid set sprinkler system with nozzles only two feet above the ground seemed to be the answer.

Because the Lea's proposed project called for conversion from a low efficiency irrigation system and subsequent water conservation, and would mitigate the potential of contamination of ground water, it competed well in the rankings under Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) in the 2002 go-round. It ranked high because irrigation efficiency for the site would go from 20 percent efficiency to 70 percent. Also, after 18 inches, the soil in the orchard turned to gravel which gave it a high potential of leaching close to Rio Grande, and the

surface system was over-saturating the land.

The Leas pieced together a new irrigation technology, that was the first of its kind in the Espanola Valley, with new techniques for planting fruit trees that were being introduced in Espanola by the Extension Service. Using these new techniques orchard trees were planted every six feet in rows that were spaced 12 feet apart. This resulted in some 600 fruit trees per acre. The Leas planted four variety of peaches and three varieties of apples. The peach varieties were selected so they would ripen on two week intervals; with China Pearls, a white peach, the last to

be harvested followed by the apples. The apples used were Honey Crisp, Gala, and Golden Supreme.

The orchard will reach its full potential in three years, and is expected to produce 800 bushels of peaches per acre and 1000 bushels of apples. Because of this high intensity farming, the Leas anticipate their investment will pay for itself in one-to-two years.

Small farms are viable in northern New Mexico, and elsewhere in the state. They are an important part of our agricultural picture here in New Mexico, and can carry their own in making conservation improvements.

For further information contact Edward Romero, Espanola district conservationist, at (505)753-3508.

Top photo at right: Walter Lea fruit trees that were planted as small whips in the spring of 2002. Bottom photo at right: Walter Lea shows small fruit trees planted the spring of 2003. The sprinkler system is a solid set system and only sprays water under the tree canopy. Each sprinkler sprays about one-third gallon per minute. The cover crop between the tree rows is New Zealand white clover.

The peach and apple orchards of Walter and Betty Lea ... serve as an example of how a small farm can compete for financial assistance under the 2002 Farm Bill and realize conservation improvements.



Plant Materials Joins in Bosque Restoration Project Investigation Assesses Impacts to Native Wildlife Species

NRCS's Plant Materials Center in Los Lunas is joining with other agencies to investigate ways to rehabilitate the bosque along the middle Rio Grande that best enhance the wildlife habitat. Planting the test sites is well underway, and early results will be reported in a later edition of the **Natural Resources Reporter**.

"Some land managers are asking what is the impact to native wildlife species when fire in the middle Rio Grande bosque or exotic species treatment occurs," said Gregory Fenchel, NRCS Plant Materials Center Manager. "We are joining as part of an interagency team to investigate this."

A number of agencies are joining together to better understand the best ways to rehabilitate the bosque. In addition to NRCS, the project is being supported by the U.S. Forest Service - Rocky Mountain Experiment Station in Albuquerque, Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge, Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, City of Albuquerque Open Space, Bureau of Land Management, and New Mexico Department of Environment. The study was designed by the U.S. Forest Service - Rocky Mountain Experiment Station.

Four 50-acre test plots have been identified at three different locations for a total of 12 test plots altogether. The locations are at the Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge, the village of



Joe Aragon, Mary Cloven, and Joel Lee plant tall-pot shrubs in understory of the bosque

Bosque, and in the Albuquerque area. Three of the test plots at each location will be given different treatments, and the fourth plot will be left untreated as a control to the study.

The three treatments that will be used include: (1) mechanical removal of exotic shrubs and trees, and dead and downed wood, (2) partial removal of exotic shrubs and trees, and dead and downed wood followed by light prescribed fire, and (3) mechanical removal of exotic shrubs and trees, and dead and downed wood with re-vegetation of native plants.

The Plant Materials Center is designing and installing the vegetation treatments at the three locations.

"We are using ten common native tree and shrub species," said Fenchel.

"The native tree and shrub species being used are either dormant pole cuttings that are being planted down to water-table depth, or tall pot containerized plants that will be sub-irrigated twice for the first two years of establishment."

Several soil and water conservation districts are getting involved in restoration projects of their own. The Guided Soil and Water Conservation District in Albuquerque, for example, is working on revegetating sites at the Rio Grande Nature Center, Hispanic Cultural Center, and privately owned land that burned this past summer.

For more information about these efforts or other Plant Materials Center projects, contact Gregory Fenchel at (505)865-4684.

Carlsbad Promises Year-Around Field Work Garth Grizzle Shares Vision for Carlsbad Office



Garth Grizzle, Carlsbad district conservationist

The Carlsbad area welcomed a new district conservationist this past summer who sees his fieldwork as a year-round venture. The mild winter weather there lends itself to fieldwork throughout the year.

"It is kind of a year-round deal down here with work on ranches, such as brush control, in the summer; and land leveling, surveying pipelines and ditches, and other farm work during the winter," said Garth Grizzle, Carlsbad's new district conservationist.

Grizzle, an NRCS 25-year veteran, started his career with the agency as a trainee in Alpine, Texas followed with a four-year tenure as a range conservationist in Odessa,

Texas. He became an area range conservationist in 1988, and accepted a position as a district conservationist in Artesia in 1999. His work now will cover both the Artesia and Carlsbad area.

Of his work in Artesia, Grizzle said, "Water is driving everything. We have been in a drought since 1995, and it has been pretty rough. There is a lot of interest in converting from flood irrigation to more efficient center pivot and drip systems."

Grizzle anticipates the interest in conversion to more efficient irrigation systems will continue to be the direction in the Artesia area for several years.

With respect to ranching, he sees a continuing trend toward diversification. The landscape in his service area around the bootheel of Chavez County lends itself to hunting, fishing and camping - and the area has a high percent of private deeded land. Grizzle notes that by contrast there is very little deeded rangeland in the Carlsbad area.

The Carlsbad area, where Grizzle is working, also poses a different set of irrigation problems for area farmers. Because of the salinity in the water and shallow water tables, flood irrigation is preferable because it washes the salts through the soil. Farmers are not able to use pivot or drip systems because the salts there

accumulate on the surface destroying the land. To conserve water in the Carlsbad area, the focus is on making the flood irrigation systems more

"Water is driving everything. We have been in a drought since 1995, and it has been pretty rough."

efficient by land leveling, lining ditches, and making other water conserving improvements.

"In the winter around Carlsbad, I can get out and take shots for surveys, take surveys for pipelines and ditches, and do ArchView surveys," said Grizzle.

Grizzle brings to Carlsbad a vision based on sound scientific science, and a good familiarity of the area. Carlsbad brings to Grizzle a diverse area that offers many pleasant, fruitful days in the field.

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