

At a Pinnacle ... CSP Takes Center Stage

Assistant State Conservationist for Programs Greg Walker recently announced that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in North Carolina received 218 applications for the first Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) ranking period of the fiscal year. This level of interest is among the highest in the program's history in our state.

Nationwide, NRCS received 17,654 applications for CSP. NRCS expects to enroll a total of 10.8 million acres into the program in fiscal year 2012.

"Farmers in North Carolina who are deeply committed to being even better stewards of natural resources have proved once again that CSP is a program that works for them," Walker said. "We are absolutely thrilled at this great interest in CSP and look forward to working with those who are selected to bring the benefits of quality conservation to their operations."

CSP offers payments to producers who maintain a high level of conservation on their land and agree to adopt higher levels of stewardship. Eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, rangeland and non-industrial forestland. CSP is offered in all 50 states, tribal lands and the Pacific and Caribbean areas through continuous sign-ups. Administered by NRCS, this Farm Bill program provides many conservation benefits including improved water, soil, and air quality, decreased soil erosion, and enhanced wildlife habitat.



High Tech SOILS ON YOUR PHONE!



USDA NRCS is excited to announce that a new smartphone application, or "app," is available as a free download for both iPhone and Android users to access soil survey information. The app, SoilWeb, combines online soil survey information with the GPS capabilities of Smartphones. SoilWeb for the iPhone is a portable version of our online interface to USDA-NRCS digital soil survey data. The application uses the GPS built into the Smartphone to acquire your current location, and then submits an HTTP request to our server via the SoilWeb API. A graphical summary of the soils mapped at your current location is presented on-screen, with links to details through our online soil survey, or via the USDA-NRCS official series description (OSD) archive. SoilWeb for the iPhone can be downloaded free of charge from the iPhone App Store.

Helping People Help the Land



The UPDATE

North Carolina February - March 2012

United States Department of Agriculture . Natural Resources Conservation Service . North Carolina

A TRUE LEADER Landowner Success

PROGRAM UPDATE
Review of fiscal year 2011 programs and top practices

REBUILDING A NATION

SOILS GO CELLULAR
Soils information provided through "app"

AND MORE...

A cooperative partnership with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and
North Carolina Division of Soil and Water

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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REBUILDING A NATION

Sharing our Knowledge

NRCS International Relations

NRCS Employee Matt Duvall returns from one year assignment in Afghanistan

NRCS GIS Specialist Matthew Duvall of Raleigh, N.C. recently returned from a one-year assignment in Paktika, Afghanistan where he helped rebuild the country's agricultural sector.

Duvall used his expertise in forestry and geology to help revitalize Afghanistan's agriculture. He is one of more than 120 USDA employees who have deployed to Afghanistan since 2003 in support of USDA's efforts there. The growth of Afghanistan's agricultural sector, which employs more than 80 percent of its workforce, is a key component of the U.S. government's strategy to stabilize the country.

"The efforts of people like Matthew Duvall are crucial for creating a stable and economically viable Afghanistan," said Foreign Agricultural Service Acting Administrator Suzanne Heinen. "Whether their expertise is in marketing, forestry, soil and water conservation, agricultural extension and policy, or veterinary services, volunteers like Mr. Duvall are contributing their specialized skills to help Afghans rebuild their economy so that stability may take hold."

USDA's primary role in Afghanistan is helping to build capacity within the country's Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) so that it may deliver vital services to Afghan farmers and citizens.

Most USDA employees in Afghanistan serve as agricultural experts in units consisting of military force protection and civilians with expertise in agriculture, governance and other areas in need of attention. USDA agricultural experts work side-by-side with Afghan nationals and U.S. government and international partners in rural Afghan provinces.

At the provincial and district levels, USDA agricultural experts train local government representatives and Afghan extension workers in plant and animal health, natural resources management, and improved cultivation and production methods.

Other USDA employees working in Afghanistan serve within the U.S. Embassy in Kabul as Foreign Service Officers and as members of the Interagency Provincial Affairs (IPA) section, which is the office that coordinates the civilian-military units deployed throughout the country.

Following his service with USDA in Afghanistan, Duvall returned to his position with NRCS in Raleigh. Duvall is a native of Cheney, Wash. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1994 in geology from the University of Washington and a Master of Science degree in 1997 in forestry from the University of Minnesota.

Currently, more than 50 USDA employees are living and working in Afghanistan, supporting agricultural revitalization there. To learn more, visit <http://www.fas.usda.gov/country/Afghanistan/us-afghanistan.asp>.
Provided by Karoline S. Newell, Foreign Agricultural Service

A LEADER

Mr. Harrison...Continued

As oil prices were increasing, Willie felt it. "Oil prices got so high that I could not afford to burn dead hogs, and burning brought buzzards and impacted soil and water quality," said Willie. "I heard about the Environmental Quality Incentives Program through NRCS and sat down with the folks in the office to talk or brainstorm about what I wanted to do. We started talking about the options to solve my problems and things started to happen."

The solution to increasing oil costs and environmental concerns was a composter.

With a smile, Willie proudly stated, "I went from about \$1,000 a month in diesel fuel to burn to about \$5.00 a month in electricity to run a composter."

Willie isn't just conserving natural resources; he is also sharing his conservation knowledge with others.

"Technology is out there to do conservation, save money and run things better, but people don't want to try it until they see if it works - I'm the type of person that will try it first and then show others that it will work on their farm."

As a farmer and conservation mentor, Willie has shared his knowledge with others by hosting a field day on his farm to educate others on composters.

His demonstration led other farmers to develop a conservation plan, apply for Farm Bill programs and even get approved for composters.

Furthermore, Willie is helping to shape the face of conservation in the community by becoming the first minority on the Soil and Water District Board in Nash County, completing District Supervisor training, and serving on the Water Resource Committee for the North Carolina Association of Soil and Water Conservation District.

When asked what advice he would give others he simply says, "When you stop learning, you stop living, and there is always something new to learn."

Mr. Willie Harrison is a husband, father, grandfather, US Veteran, retired police officer, farmer, district board member, conservationist, and a sagacious leader. For these reasons, NRCS and our partners are proud to be a small part of Mr. Willie Harrison's success.



Top Left: Mr. Harrison standing near his composter. A view of this eight hog houses. A view from inside on of his hog houses. Mr. Harrison on his farm.



Notes from the State Conservationist

We've looked at our forecast, and have spoken to the inevitable reality, but the importance of the message is worth reviewing. The global population reached seven billion in 2011. With increasing population comes greater need, not only for infrastructure, but for agricultural production and our dependence upon healthy and abundant natural resources. To meet the demand of the growing global population, it is projected that within 20 years, producers in North Carolina will need to triple production to meet sustained demand, while at the same time utilize four times less in resources to supply the demand. The technical, science based assistance as well as financial support provided under Title 2 of the upcoming Farm Bill has become more imperative for our agricultural and environmental industries' viability to meet the necessities of life and the economy.

But with the times that our Nation faces, it is evident that our methods for delivering and providing technical and financial services will meet new challenges. However, in North Carolina, we are not letting the perception of "challenges" be viewed as anything other than positive steps forward. We are working with our partners, landowners, employees and non-traditional sources to find new ways to utilize our collective technical and financial resources to have the greatest positive impacts on our natural resources, local economy, and for all us...for we all depend upon our natural resources.

As we face down the end of one expiring Farm Bill and jump-on-board of a new Bill, let us shore each other up, become a strong partnership, and help North Carolina meet the growing demand. If you would like to participate in our growing partnership, please contact our NRCS State Office and find out more about participating in our State Technical Committee, the Locally Led Conservation Process, outreach opportunities, and some of our advisory committees. We are stronger today because of our unique partnerships and will be stronger tomorrow because of our growth.

J.B. Martin Jr.
State Conservationist

It's in the Quote... in Honor of African American History Month

"Creative art is for all time and is therefore **independent of time**. It is of all ages, of every land, and if by this we mean the creative spirit in man which produces a picture or a statue is common to the whole civilized world, **independent of age, race and nationality**; the statement may stand unchallenged."

-Alma Thomas, 1970



The Update is distributed by email and published on our North Carolina Web-site at www.nc.nrcs.usda.gov. Limited print copies are available by request by emailing Stuart.Lee@nc.usda.gov or calling 919.873.2107

Program Update

NRCS began ranking all eligible and approved applications for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) on February 3, 2012 for initial funding. These federal programs, authorized under the 2008 Farm Bill, provide financial and technical assistance to farmers and forest land owners to protect soil, water and other natural resources.

Applications are ranked based on greatest environmental benefit. For an application to be considered complete for ranking, the following criteria apply:

1. All land and producer eligibility requirements must have been met.
2. A conservation plan identifying conservation practices to be included for proposed funding must be finalized for the enrolled land.

Though the first batching and ranking period is under way for all applications, there are additional opportunities for funding.

"Applications that are not complete by the first application ranking period will be deferred to the next ranking period, which is anticipated to occur on March 30 and June 1, 2012," said JB Martin, NRCS State Conservationist for North Carolina. "We strongly encourage farmers to work with their local NRCS field office early to be sure that they don't miss any opportunities."

Farmers can submit applications for programs anytime throughout the year. Applications are ranked based on greatest environmental benefit.

Farmers should visit their local USDA Service Center today to apply for available funding for Farm Bill programs and initiatives. For more information on application ranking and eligibility, please contact your local NRCS Field Office.

FARM BILL FY 2011

FUNDING UPDATE

Programs	\$ Obligated	# of Ease/Con.
Conservation Stewardship Program	\$ 1,883,653	98
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$17,218,920	629
Agricultural Water Enhancement Program	\$83,311	9
Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program	\$2,391,303	12
Wetlands Reserve Program	\$7,285,033	7

TOP FIVE PRACTICES

FY 2011

Practice	# of Con.	Planned Amount	\$ Obligated	\$ Paid
Critical Area Planting	212	142 ac.	\$115,075	\$26,100
Pest Management	173	34,658 ac.	\$475,648	\$126,937
Heavy Use Area Protection	164	3,565 ac.	\$433,098	\$129,858
Trough or Tank	153	153 no.	\$274,069	\$99,804
Fence	137	409,815 ft.	\$481,002	\$79,706
Pipeline	135	309,498 ft.	\$632,002	\$245,731

**Financial Assistance (FA) is provided directly to producers. Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) funding is used by NRCS for professional planning and expertise to help carry out conservation activities. Data source: Foundation Financial Information System Status of Funds Report October 2011.*

A LEADER

From the Battle Field to the Streets of DC to Farming...A True Leader



Mr. Willie Harrison in one of his ten hog houses.

Not many of us could imagine what it is like to live most of our professional lives with one hand on a trigger and our minds constantly focused on protecting ourselves and those around us. Mr. Willie Harrison knows all too well the dangers of fighting in war and protecting the streets of Washington, DC. The son of a sharecropper and raised in Dunbar, North Carolina, Willie grew up in agriculture but wanted to see the world. One of his first opportunities would come in 1965 while serving in the Marine Corps and fighting in Vietnam for two years. Upon leaving the armed services, he moved to Maryland and became a Washington, DC police officer. For 27 years, Willie protected the streets of the District, and he, his wife and two sons traveled the world.

Before retiring from the police force in 1995, Willie thought about the words his father taught him. "He told me, before you retire think about what you are going to do next...have a plan," said Willie.

He had an interest in farming and coming back to North Carolina. "I wanted a hobby, and compared to being a police officer in DC...this is a hobby," said Willie. "This is the first time in my life that I get up in the morning and go to work and no one is trying to kill me."

Willie and his wife established a home and farm in Nash County. Originally interested in poultry production, Mr. Harrison quickly changed his plans and focused on hogs.

"It's hard becoming a farmer on your own. You need to know everything before you start...the business of being a farmer," said Willie. "I started talking to other farmers to learn about the business of being a farmer, found a producer willing to help teach me the business, and that is what helped me get started."

Once he learned the business, Willie put all of his energy into the farm and he excelled. He has ten hog houses and about 9600 hogs at any given time. Not only has he thrived as a farmer, but also as a leader in conservation and as a mentor to other farmers.

"Soil and water quality is important for the farm and life...they are our backbone, and you cannot live without them. When you protect them you'll be able to live off of them forever," said Willie. "This is why I work with NRCS and the [Soil and Water Conservation] District, and they have been great."

Independently, and with the technical and financial assistance of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Soil and Water Conservation District, he has installed a dry stack, irrigation system, lagoon and a composter, all of which are part of his comprehensive natural resources conservation plan.

Continues on Page 6....



Top: Mr. Willie Harrison stands in front of his Composter, which he implemented through EQIP and the assistance of NRCS and the District. Bottom: Smoke rises from compost.

