



Conservation News-Maine

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service



January 2012

A NOTE FROM STATE CONSERVATIONIST JUAN HERNANDEZ

I can't begin to tell you how proud I am of our conservation accomplishments during FY 2011. The work that NRCS employees and conservation partners completed to obligate dollars and to put practices on the ground was outstanding.

In 2011, NRCS obligated 921 contracts (AMA, CSP, EQIP and WHIP) for approximately \$15.3 million, along with 431 Conservation Activity Plan contracts. Comparing this to 2010 in which we had 698 contracts for \$13.5 million (AMA, CSP, EQIP and WHIP) and 216 Conservation Activity Plans, this was a 32% increase in con-

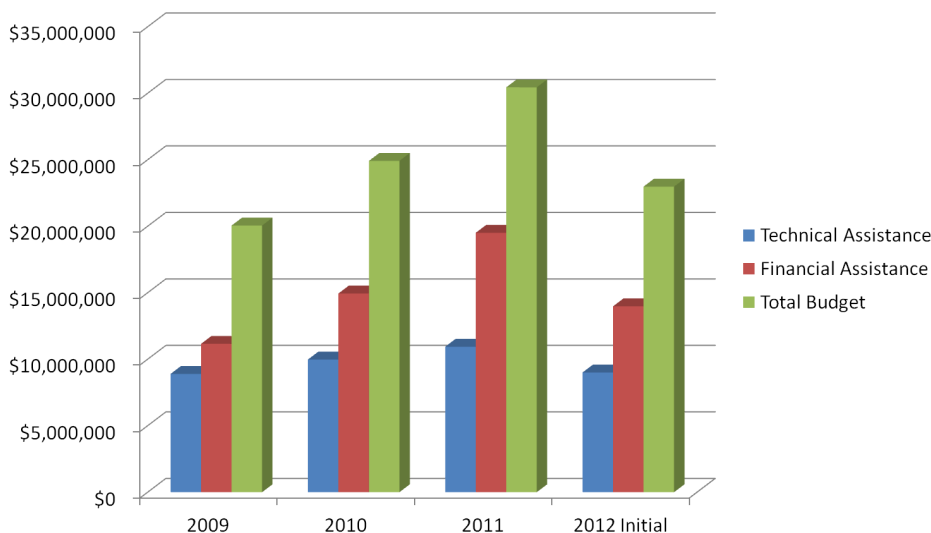
tracts and 13% increase in financial assistance dollars.

You responded very well to my challenges in 2011, and as a result we returned only .089% of financial assistance dollars to National headquarters. I am very impressed and pleased with your accomplishments and you should be too.

What does it look like for 2012? We know that the states will not have state initiatives for Certified Organic or Organic Transition, Seasonal High Tunnels, or On-Farm Energy. These will be delivered as National Initiatives and will have nationwide signup periods, the first of which we are going through now. Maine, will, however, have signups for a few state initiatives, including the New England/New York Forestry Initiative, the Salmon Falls River Watershed, and the Pleasant River sub-watershed.

The following chart shows you the total NRCS budget for Fiscal Years 2009-2011, and the initial budget for 2012. You can see that we are climbing the mountain... hopefully 2012 will continue the trend. I look forward to working with each and every one of you in 2012.

Total Budget – Fiscal Years 2009-2012



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At the National Level

- **USDA Marks 150th Anniversary**

USDA is commemorating its 150th anniversary throughout 2012, celebrating the Department's founding in 1862 by President Abraham Lincoln. As USDA commemorates 150 years of accomplishments, the Department is learning from past experiences and looking to the future. In the years to come, USDA must help address the changing needs of agriculture and rural America, while continuing to help provide a safe, ample food supply for the nation and the world. To meet those goals, USDA is working to make the Department a more modern and effective service provider that delivers the best possible results for all of the American people. The Blueprint for Stronger Service, announced by Secretary Tom Vilsack on January 9, underscores USDA's commitment to build a modern and efficient service organization that is closely timed with technological innovations and better suited to respond to 21st century agricultural challenges.

- **USDA Establishes Advisory Board for Native American Farmers and Ranchers**

Agricultural Secretary Vilsack has announced the establishment of a special advisory board to help USDA officials ensure Native Americans participate in and benefit from USDA programs.

"The Council for Native American Farming and Ranching will help Native governments, businesses, farmers and ranchers partner with USDA to create jobs, drive economic growth and strengthen tribal communities," said Vilsack. The Council will work

closely with other agencies to improve the success of Native farmers and ranchers who access USDA's entire portfolio of programs to build and achieve profitability in their business.

- **USDA Streamlines Access to Energy Investment Information**

USDA has launched a USDA energy website that will provide stakeholders fast and efficient access to USDA energy efficiency and renewable energy data.

"Improving and modernizing access to USDA energy data and resources is essential in today's highly competitive rural business environment," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Farmers, ranchers and small businesses across the country will benefit from easier navigation and retrieval of energy and renewable energy investments data and funding opportunities."

USDA's energy website provides access to all USDA energy resources, including: agricultural, forestry, economic, and social data. This is done in part through a set of new complementary web-based tools, focusing on USDA's energy, energy efficiency and renewable energy investments and projects; provide information and data to a broad spectrum of stakeholders; and empower the user with the ability to easily navigate USDA's energy web resources. In addition, the site provides a link to all USDA state and local offices and energy resource coordinators.

Vilsack said this newly-designed tool is a great step in a more coordinated and efficient effort to increase public

awareness of USDA's energy research, commercialization of new technologies, program delivery, outreach, and education activities. It also provides a form of technical assistance to people thinking about adopting an energy project. To access the site go to: www.usda.gov/energy.

- **National Nutrient Management Standard Revised**

USDA has revised its national conservation practice standard on nutrient management to help producers better manage the application of nutrients on agricultural land. Proper application of nitrogen and phosphorus offers tremendous benefits to producers and the public, including cost savings to the producer and the protection or improvement of ground and surface water, air quality, soil quality and agricultural sustainability.

"Protecting America's supply of clean and abundant water is an important objective for USDA," Agriculture Secretary Vilsack said. "This precious resource is the foundation for healthy ecosystems and sustainable agricultural production. USDA provides voluntary technical and financial assistance to help producers manage their nutrients to ensure a clean and abundant water supply while maintaining viable farm and ranch operations."

The nutrient management conservation practice is an important tool in the NRCS conservation toolbox. This practice is used to help farmers apply their nutrients more efficiently. Proper management of nitrogen and phosphorus can save producers money. The nutrient management

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National Nutrient Management Standard (continued)

standard provides a roadmap for NRCS's staff and others to help producers apply available nutrient sources in the right amount, from the right source, in the right place, at the right time for maximum agricultural and environmental benefits.

The revised national standard is being released at a time when the agency is working with various partners to address nutrient management concerns identified in three recently released cropland studies. The revised standard will provide tools and strategies to help producers address the natural resource concerns relating to excess nutrients on agricultural land.

Key changes in the standard include expanding the use of technology to streamline the nutrient management process and allowing states more flexibility in providing site-specific nutrient management planning using local information when working with producers. NRCS offices have until January 1, 2013 to comply with erosion, nitrogen and phosphorus criteria for their state nutrient management standard.

Outreach on On-Farm Energy Initiative

- by Chris Jones, Assistant State Conservationist for Special Projects

On January 10 the Farm Energy Partners had sessions on Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy on the Farm at the Agricultural Trade Show in Augusta. Topics of sessions included Solar Heating, Solar Photovoltaics, Small Wind, Geothermal Heating and Financing Farm Energy projects. Chris Jones, Assistant State Conservationist for Special Projects, served on the panel that addressed Financing Farm Energy Projects and

explained the opportunities available for improving on-farm energy efficiencies through the EQIP On-Farm Energy Initiative and the Conservation Stewardship Program. Chris explained the availability of financial incentives for "Energy Audits", both for farm headquarters and landscape portions of farms. Chris also explained the availability of financial incentives for applying certain conservation practices.

On Jan. 11th Chris Jones also attended the "Making Financial Sense of Small and Medium Community Wind Projects" in Freeport and answered questions about NRCS' On-Farm Energy Initiative.



Cultural Resources Training for New NRCS Staff

—by Gary Shaffer, Cultural Resources Specialist



(l to r): Barry Southard, Bob Bills, Matt Dorman, and Jerry Barnes.

Nine new NRCS staff in Maine completed required training in cultural resources during 2011: Gerald Barnes, Robert Bills, Matt Dorman, Ben

Naumann, Philip Quint, Barry Southard, Alex Stace, Samuel Wright, and Alex Zetterman. The training included on-line instruction, readings, attendance at illustrated lectures, a tour of an archaeology exhibit at the Maine State Museum, and participation in archaeological fieldwork.

This program gives employees an overview of the importance of cultural resources. It also provides them with knowledge of NRCS policies and procedures to comply with federal historic preservation law during conservation planning. The NRCS General Manual, our State Level Agreement

with the State Historic Preservation Officer, and our Tribal Consultation Protocols require the training for NRCS employees. NRCS's Federal Preservation Officer oversaw development of the on-line instruction, while NRCS Maine's Cultural Resources Specialist, Dr. Gary Shaffer, prepared the remaining materials and provided the training.

Highlights of the training included piecing together sherds of inscribed historical pottery to experience a typical archaeological lab activity and to reinforce general concepts on the importance of cultural resources.



NRCS and the Maine Forest Service Provide Forest Landowner Training—by Ben Naumann, Fisheries Biologist

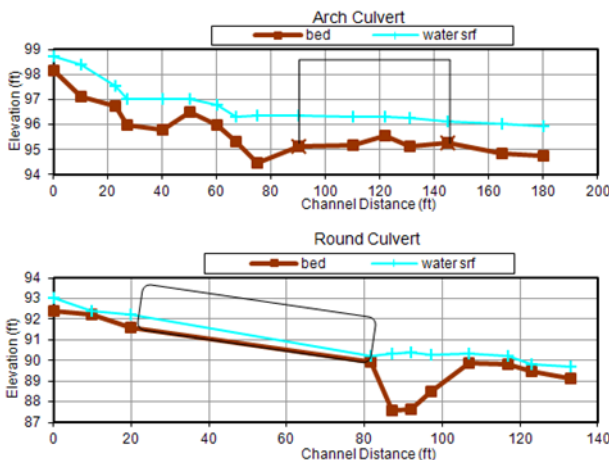
NRCS and the Maine Forest Service held a road stream crossing training for private forest landowners and managers in early November at the Maine Forest Service Office in Old Town. Individuals from three private forest land managers participated in the training. This training was designed for foresters and road construction crews who install road stream crossings on a regular basis. The goal of the training was to get the group to think about forest road stream crossings through a biological perspective instead of just passing water, while incorporating the Maine Forest Service “best management practices” (BMPs).

The training was broken up into a small classroom component and field tour. During the classroom component, NRCS’s Fisheries Biologist Ben Naumann discussed biological impacts to natural stream process and fish passage issues as a result of improperly designed or installed road stream crossings. Ben described the major types of barriers created by road stream crossings to fish and how these barriers can be created overtime. Keith Kanoti, Maine Forest Service, discussed Maine Forest Service BMP fundamentals, sizing and installing road stream crossings and design strategies to achieve fish passage.

The majority of the training took place in the field looking at and discussing topics identified in the classroom. The group visited five different road stream crossings and discussed an array of different issues and qualities ranging from severe plunge pools caused by undersized culverts to open bottom arch culverts with natural substrate. Positive and negative issues surrounding each crossing was discussed engaging the group by directing questions to them; for example: do you think this is a barrier to fish, what type of fish barrier is the culvert and how would you fix this problem?



Longitudinal road profiles were handed out at two different crossings—one at an arch culvert sized at stream width and the other at an undersized old



boiler culvert that was perched at the outlet. The intention of showing the two profiles was to show the group any changes in stream bed elevation caused by the different crossing types and culvert sizes. A major point that Ben and Keith expressed was that if a culvert is set at grade, but is not the right width for the stream, the culvert will most likely become perched overtime limiting fish passage. It was also discussed that in recent years Maine is receiving more severe storm events than recent past and having crossings able to pass flows from severe storm events will be more cost effective for infrastructure in the long run.

This training was part of the outreach strategy for the stream restoration/enhancement initiative within the Pleasant River watershed of the Penobscot River Basin. This multi-partner aquatic stream initiative is focused in getting stream restoration projects on the ground within the Pleasant River. The initiative goals are to: restore runs of diadromous fish that include, but are not limited to, the federally endangered Atlantic salmon; increase brook trout and other resident fish species habitat access; restore geomorphic characteristics and function of Maine’s rivers and streams; and enhance in-stream habitat complexity and connectivity to benefit aquatic species. The goals of this initiative will be realized through creating working relationships with private landowners and managers with outreach like the road stream crossing training.

21 Foresters Receive Training to Become TSPs

—by Chris Jones, Assistant State Conservationist for Special Projects

Maine NRCS held training for foresters that wanted to become Technical Service Providers on January 4-5 at the University of Maine. Previous NRCS policy prohibited the training of professionals seeking certification as TSP by NRCS. New NRCS policy allows NRCS to train professionals seeking certification as TSP in NRCS policy and tools. The training was held at the computer lab at the School of Forest Resources which allowed NRCS employees to assist the foresters seeking to become TSPs fill out their "applications" in TechReg website (TECHREG.gov) on the computers in the lab.

Presentations included TSP Orientation, Conservation Planning, National Conservation Planning Procedures and Field Office Technical Guide. NRCS employees providing this training included Jim Johnson, Gerald Barnes and Christopher Jones. Foresters were assisted with their Level 2 E-Authorization by Susan Arrants. As a result of these two training sessions, over 10 foresters have completed their applications and 40 are now certified in the Forestry Implementation and Forest Management Plan-Conservation Activity Plan categories.



Soils Activities

Small Excavator a Big Asset for Soil Survey and Technical Soil Services in Maine—by Tony Jenkins, State Soil Scientist

Employees of the Maine NRCS Soils Program have looked longingly at excavators and backhoes since the mid-1900's. Early in the 21st century we acquired one, and it is great! We are very happy to have a lovely John Deere 35D on staff now, which we have named **Ichabod II**, in honor of a recently reassigned coworker and renowned digger of great technical merit and kind demeanor. I will refer to it as **I-2** from here on.

Since March, 2010 we have used the machine in numerous inventory and investigation scenarios and it has proved to be a great asset. **I-2** went right to work in the County helping us sort out potential EQIP irrigation reservoir sites, due to the occurrence of bedrock at varying depths across the region. It paid for itself inside a month, as several proposed sites harbored insidious bedrock which would have ruined very expensive undertakings by causing reservoir leakage. We would not have found these without machine excavations. **I-2** later followed up with supplementary information at many of the sites as we attempt to meet cooperator objectives and environmental compliance criteria (e.g. wetland protection policy). We have used the excavator for conservation activity site investigations down-state as well, where deep soil descriptions yielded important information – which we would not have gotten otherwise.



(Continued on page 6)



Excavator (continued)

I-2, the friendly excavator, has been invaluable on soil survey duty as well. Soil scientists from the Presque Isle Soil Survey Office were able to describe and/or sample nearly three dozen pits to 2 meter or bedrock during only a few days – this was inconceivable in prior years. The Dover-Foxcroft crew has taken advantage of **I-2**'s ability to quickly excavate even the sandy, bouldery granitic tills that have broken many digging implements and caused many career changes over the years. I recall these soils prompting many expletives and blisters, even for our excavator's gentle namesake!



Anyway, as a point of reference – a couple of our best diggers could dig a 1.5 meter deep hole of sampling (grave) size in about 3-6 hours of hard labor using a mattock, Montana sharpshooter, and spade. Typically, somewhere around the end of the first hour—through eyes blurry with sweat—we would see that our excavation was yielding soil morphology that was unwanted and inappropriate – or hit a boulder that was beyond our capability to dig out/around.

Cheerfully and full of hope, we would fill in and start over digging a new hole. And, as you might guess, at temperatures above freezing there are usually bugs present at these adventures, *en masse* and voracious. So when a pit was finally dug, the sweaty, tired, irritable, itchy soil scientist still has the careful process of description and sampling to complete (and then filling in the pit). With **I-2**, we have a 2 meter pit dug within 15 minutes, we do better descriptions, and **I-2** fills it in another 5 minutes.

So, using the excavator; we get more, better, and cheaper data. With it we can do much more rigorous soil investigations for any purpose than was possible by hand digging or contracting. And by having it versus renting it we can dig when and where we need to – expediting conservation and mapping work for the Agency. It truly is a great addition to the soils tool kit.



A Caribou soil excavated to 2m in a few minutes by **I-2**. Note the illuminated specks (black flies).

Review of Soil Science Institute—by Mary Jo Kimble, Soil Scientist, Presque Isle Soil Survey

The National Soil Survey Center recently sent 16 soil scientists of various career positions to the Soil Science Institute. We arrived in Manhattan, Kansas, an area of Northeastern Kansas which falls primarily within the Flint Hills. It was a beautiful rolling hills area with crops, cattle and many school activities, as this is where Kansas State University (KSU) is located. KSU is where our classroom activities were held.

We began our stay with a small orientation of Throckmorton Hall Plant and Science Center which houses departments that include Agronomy and Soils. All of our classes were held in this building. Our core instructor was Mickey Ransom, professor of Agronomy. We had several instructors, and all were experienced in their field of study. We had an opening presentation from Michael Golden, director of the Soil Survey Division. It was very interesting to hear his thoughts on soil survey and its future.

Our first week was spent learning about soil fertility, soil testing, and pedology. We had two field trips during the week and were able to visit an archeological site that was active, and test the soils for Nitrogen on the N farm. On Saturday, we had an all day field trip to several areas in Kansas, and we were able to visit a Kansas castle called Coronado Heights. This is a hillside fortification thought by some to be the northern most limits of the explorations of the Spanish adventurer Coronado's search for gold in 1541. A small piece of chain mail body armor from that period that was found in the vicinity lends at least

(Continued on page 7)

Soil Science Institute (continued)



Students traversing the research plots on the N farm.

a little credibility to the story. The castle on Coronado Heights was constructed of native stone in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration. It sits high on a hill overlooking many acres of Kansas farm land, creating a fantastic view. We also went to several other sites that were equally as interesting.



Coronado Heights castle .

The second week we had soil quality measurements, soil chemistry, and soil biology. We were able to grow our own Fungi, Actinomycetes, and Bacteria on a growth medium in the laboratory. We observed thin-sections of soil through the microscope and were able to identify different minerals. It was amazing to see the variety of colors and shapes of minerals not normally seen by the naked eye. Mickey has done extensive studies of soil micromorphology and had several thin slices of soil for us to look for minerals and pores; much more can be described by careful description of thin-sections made of the soil with the aid of a petrographic polarizing light microscope. The soil can be impregnated with an epoxy resin, but more commonly with a polyester resin and sliced and ground to 0.03 millimeter thickness and examined by passing light through the thin soil plasma. I thought Quartz was the most fascinating of them all. During the second week we went to an original grass prairie called The Rannell's Pastures where the prairie has been studied and managed in different ways for the past 60 years. It was fascinating to learn how the prairie reacts to fire and the different grasses and forbs that grow in a natural prairie area. To this day they purposely start controlled fires each year to bring back the native grasses.

The third week we studied soil physics, heavy metals in the soil, and hydric soils and their properties. We went to a Nature Conservancy area called The Konza. It is a representative site of the native tall grass prairie in the Flint Hills of eastern Kansas. This was another fascinating place. They have Bison roaming and cattle grazing in some areas. Part of the management research on The Konza involves the study of grazing by native herbivores. To that end, one of the research units has ~300 bison on it. It is also used as a research area for numerous projects and it is still guarded as a native tall grass prairie. It is a wonderful area and has given KSU an awesome place to research many of the concerns and problems of our changing atmosphere.



Research area on the Konza.

We had a delicious dinner there and enjoyed the atmosphere of the West before returning to Manhattan. We learned about land applications of manure, Phosphorous, and Nitrogen. We did several exercises on figuring the amount of these nutrients needed to be applied under different conditions. We viewed many open pits and saw many different calcic and gypsic horizons. We were also able to view widespread, deeply buried paleosols that formed in terrace fills of large-stream alluvial fans, and in draws. During our last week we were fortunate to have Larry West from the National Soil Science Center come and speak with us about the Rapid Carbon Assessment project and other projects that may be in the future.

During our evening hours, we often gathered and did group homework assignments and networked among ourselves. This was also a good learning experience as we were able to establish new acquaintances and learn how soil survey is going in other states. All in all it was a great experience, one that I think all soil scientists would appreciate attending.

2012 Application Deadlines for Farm Bill Programs



- ◆ **Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)** - Approximately \$294,000 will be made available to both large- and small-scale irrigators. The deadline for applications is **February 10, 2012**.
- ◆ **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)** - Producers who maintain a high level of conservation on their land and agree to adopt higher levels of stewardship are eligible for CSP payments. The application deadline has been extended to **January 27, 2012**.
- ◆ **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**
 - **General and Irrigation Assistance**—Application deadline for 2012 funding was July 1, 2011. Field offices are now taking applications for 2013 funding, with a deadline date of **July 1, 2012**.
 - **Conservation Activity Plans (CAPS)** - CAPS currently being offered: Agricultural Energy Management, Comprehensive Nutrient Management, Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition, Fish and Wildlife Habitat, Forest Management, Grazing Management, Nutrient Management, and Pollinator Habitat Management. Applications will be funded as requests are received and eligibility has been determined, as long as Fiscal Year 2012 funds are available, but no later than **July 1, 2012**.
 - **National Initiatives**—These include the On-Farm Energy Initiative, Organic Initiative, and Seasonal High Tunnel Pilot Initiative. There will be three ranking periods for the three initiatives, all ending on February 3, March 30 and June 1, 2012. At the end of a ranking period, NRCS will rank all submitted proposals for funding consideration, notify all applicants of the results of the rankings, and begin developing contracts with selected applicants.
 - **New England/New York Forestry Initiative**—To assist forest landowners with forest land planning and management. Application deadline for 2012 is **April 6, 2012**.
- ◆ **Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)** - Funds will be used to purchase conservation easements to limit conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Applications submitted by **March 23, 2012** will be considered for funding this fiscal year.
- ◆ **Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)** - Funding is available to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands through WRP. Applications received by **March 30, 2012** will be considered for funding in 2012.



Fish Passage Project Completed at Pullen Mill


- by Xandy Brown, Soil Conservation Technician, Augusta Field Office

← *Before* - This was the site before construction. The stream is not visible from this area.

After - This is a shot taken from the same location as before. As you can see, fish now have a viable route for migration. →

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Pullen Mill (Continued)

Pullen Mill, located in the Sheepscot River Watershed in Kennebec County, had an old mill foundation that was an obstruction to fish migration. When the mill was constructed rocks and boulders were brought in to create an impoundment for the water-powered mill and to direct water flow over a section of ledge. When the mill impoundment blew out from natural causes it created a large area of rock debris that impeded fish passage.

To resolve this issue, the contractor, using all low-impact methods, removed all the debris in the area and created a new area for fish to pass outside of the existing stream channel. The work involved using hand tools to remove several large rocks and trees along the side of the stream. A larger amount of smaller debris was removed and placed further away from the stream. Once the ledge was exposed outside of the stream channel a concrete saw and hand tools were used to create pools and weirs within the ledge.

NRCS partnered with the Sheepscot River Watershed Council, Army Corp of Engineers, Maine IF&W, Maine DEP, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and NOAA on this project. Partial funding for this project was through the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.

River of Dreams Project Completed in Knox County - by Mary Thompson, Resource Conservationist, Belfast Field Office



Four adjoining landowners and the Town of Union came together to restore flow to a stream channel that had been silted in and flow was diverted to adjoining pasture/hayland. Completed in the fall of 2011, conservation practices included:

- ◆ the installation of two stone fords used as animal crossings,
- ◆ 95 feet of riprap to stabilize the stream bank,
- ◆ a riparian forest buffer created by natural regeneration and a few native plantings for 700 feet,
- ◆ 1,800 feet of stream fencing on both sides where this is pasture, and
- ◆ the stream habitat improvement practice was used to reshape the original channel bed for 583 feet.

The Town of Union extended the length of the road culvert and removed accumulated debris at the outlet of the culvert. This work was done upstream of the project area.

Permits were obtained from the Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and ESA consultation was received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Financial assistance totaling approximately \$20,000 was funded through the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.



Restoring More than Just the Land—

by Seth Jones, Soil Conservationist, and Carol Weymouth, District Director, Skowhegan

NRCS is one of the many Federal, State, and private partners collaborating with the 750-acre Owen's Marsh property restoration in Concord Township. For a decade, NRCS staff from the Somerset County Field Office has worked with landowner John Sferazo, providing technical and financial assistance through the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) and the Conservation Security Program (CSP).

The focus of Sferazo's project is twofold: to improve and restore the wildlife habitat on what once was the site of an asphalt plant; and offer emergency responders, law enforcement, military service personnel, and volunteers an opportunity for outdoor adventure therapy.

During a recent open house event, District Conservationist Kevin White said, "The passion that John shows for human and environmental restoration is the reason that nearly 30 entities have come together for this common goal." Among those attending the open house were representatives from state and local governments, wildlife and environmental groups, private contributors, and University researchers and educators.

Also in attendance were veterans, law enforcement personnel, and 9/11 first responders who have benefitted from the outdoor experiences. Retired Lt. Commander USAR Dave Giampetruzzi told the attendees at the event, "John Sferazo and the Howes are providing a selfless service...not for personal gain, but to serve people

who have given so much of themselves to this country."

Bob and Andrea Howe, owners of Pine Grove Lodge, a four-season guide and outfitter service, joined with John Sferazo to create American Greenlands Restoration, Inc. (AGRI). This non-profit organization works to achieve their mission: *Healing Our World One Forest, One Creature, One Person at a Time.*

As one of the partners in this project, NRCS is living up to its mission: *Helping People Help the Land*, by working to heal environmental scars. At the same time, NRCS is assisting AGRI and its partners with their goal of helping the land help the people by working to heal mental and physical scars.

More information on American Greenlands Restoration, Inc. can be found at their website

www.americangreenlands.org.



DC Kevin White and Robin Dyer, APHIS.



Retired Lt. Commander USAR Dave Giampetruzzi (right) addresses event attendees.



(l to r): Tom Sands, Charleston Correctional Facility; Soil Conservationist Seth Jones, and Forester Carl Bickford.

Note: Some of the ash and pine harvested on the Owen Marsh woodlot are purchased by the Charleston Correctional Facility. At their facility and throughout the Maine prison system the inmates use the pine for woodworking and the ash is used to make frames for snowshoes and snowshoe furniture. The frames are then sent to Togus for the veterans to string, giving them a trade through which they can earn money.



New Farmer Workshop Series to be Held

In response to the educational needs of new farmers, a group of agencies have joined forces to develop a comprehensive workshop series to be held every Tuesday beginning January 31 and ending March 13, 2012.

There will be seven workshops. Androscoggin Valley SWCD is partnering with NRCS, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Maine Department of Agriculture and Maine Department of Conservation. In addition to resource specialists from government agencies, local farmers, organizations and business representatives will participate in the workshops. There



Photo courtesy of UMCE

will be a full-day workshop at a local farm on the last day. Participants can attend as many of the seven workshops as they wish. Topics of the

seven workshops are:

- ◆ Farm Business Basics
- ◆ Crop Management
- ◆ Nutrient Management
- ◆ Pest Management
- ◆ Water Management
- ◆ Energy Management
- ◆ Farm Safety

For more information, contact Jane Heikkinen at the Androscoggin Valley SWCD, 207-753-9400, ext. 400.

Partial funding for this workshops has been provided by NRCS.

Salmon Falls Watershed Workshops Held

The Salmon Falls River is fed by an ecologically diverse land area shared by the state of Maine and New Hampshire, and drains into the Great Bay Estuary, a coastal ecosystem of national importance. Approximately 28,000 people currently rely on the Salmon Falls watershed to provide clean drinking water. The watershed is threatened by increases in polluted runoff resulting from rapid population growth and conversion of forested land to developed areas. The Salmon Falls Watershed Collaborative (SFWC) is an action-oriented partnership between local, state and federal partners working to protect and sustain high quality drinking water in the Salmon Falls River watershed.

Three Salmon Falls Watershed Workshops were held in late 2011—one in New Hampshire and two in southern Maine—for landowners to learn how to enhance and protect their drinking water, recreational areas, property values, and fish and wildlife habitats to reduce watershed pollution. Local landowners, foresters, and staff from State and local conservation organizations, including Wayne Munroe from NRCS (photo), discussed practices that can protect the water quality of the Salmon Falls Watershed and the types of financial and technical assistance programs that are available to implement them.



The two workshops in southern Maine were co-sponsored by the York County SWCD, the Three Rivers Land Trust, Acton-Wakefield Watershed Alliance and Great Works Regional Land Trust.



Civil Rights Corner

◆ Potato King of the World -

- ◆ By Jade Gianforte, Black and Hispanic SEPM/NRCS Soil Conservationist, Farmington Field Office and Brad Hansen, Civil Rights Committee Member/FSA Farm Loan Officer, Presque Isle Office

According to the 1900 Census of Agriculture, Aroostook County produced more potatoes than any other county in the United States, planting nearly 42,000 acres in 1899. It would seem logical, then, to assume that the man proclaimed as the Potato King of the World came from Aroostook County. However, the crown was held in Kansas by a former slave, Junius George Groves.

Groves was born in Kentucky in April 1859 as a slave. After the ratification of the 13th Amendment outlawing slavery, he made his way to Kansas and settled in the Kaw River Valley west of Kansas City. In 1879, he began his new life as a farm laborer making 40 cents per day.

In 1884 Groves was able to purchase 80 acres with a small loan and \$2,200 of savings. Land purchases continued so that by 1896 he owned over 500 acres of cropland that included apple, peach, apricot, cherry, and pear orchards, and 300 acres of potatoes.

How did he become known as the Potato King? Head of the Tuskegee Institute, Booker T. Washington, explains - "Last year he (Groves) produced upon his farm 72,150 bushels (1 bushel=60 lbs) of white potatoes. So far as reports show, this

was 12,150 bushels more than any other individual grower in the world. And besides the potatoes raised on his own

farm, Mr. Groves buys and ships potatoes on a large scale. Last year he bought and shipped away 22 cars of white (Irish) potatoes." (Source: May - August 1904 edition of "The Outlook".) Other sources have stated that on several occasions he exceeded 100,000 bushels of potato production in a year.

Groves was an early innovator in doing soil classification and sampling and applying fertilizer accordingly. This knowledge and concern for the wellbeing of the soil allowed his business to grow even larger. His business was so successful that the Union Pacific Railroad worked with him to build a private spur on his property in order to handle all of the shipments.



Junius & Matilda Groves



Potato harvest around 1900

In addition to his farming interests, Groves was also a strong promoter for the black community in Kansas. He established a golf course for African-Americans, and an all-black community named Groves Center (one of a number of all-black communities at the time in Kansas). By 1915, his net worth was estimated at \$300,000- over 6 million dollars by today's standards. As one of an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 freed slaves who made their way to Kansas before 1900, Groves' accomplishments were extraordinary by any standards.

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Potato King of the World (continued)



Junius Groves was just one of many successful black farmers of his time. Other success stories include brothers Frank and Dow Reid of Alabama. The Reid brothers owned and/or rented over 2,000 acres of land, and constructed a store, gin mill, and blacksmith shop. Also, Albert Carter of Indiana and his sons who developed a lucrative hay business. They purchased standing hay in the field, baled it and shipped it to many major cities including Indianapolis, Louisville, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York City.

SEPM Update

Special Emphasis activities and support are an integral part of the Civil Rights Program at the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Within their respective programs, Special Emphasis Program Managers assist all NRCS employees to ensure that equal opportunity is present in all aspects of NRCS programs and services. This includes assisting the State Conservationist to provide leadership to identify under-representation and ensure positive actions are being taken to address any such problem areas. Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) work with the State Conservationist to provide advice and assistance to management officials in order to help them meet civil rights program goals and objectives. They also work to ensure effective communications among all persons and areas dealing with, or affected by, Agency civil rights responsibilities.

There have been some recent changes in Maine's Special Emphasis Program Managers. The current SEPMs in Maine are as follows:

- ◆ **American Indian/Alaska Native Emphasis Program**—*Seth Jones, Skowhegan Field Office, 207-474-8324*
 - ◆ **Asian American/Pacific Islander Emphasis Program**—*Helena Swiatek, 207-532-2087*
 - ◆ **Black Emphasis Program**—*Jade Gianforte, Farmington Field Office, 207-778-4767*
 - ◆ **Federal Women's Program**—*Helena Swiatek, Houlton Field Office, 207-532-2087*
 - ◆ **Hispanic Emphasis Program**—*Jade Gianforte, Farmington Field Office, 207-778-4767*
 - ◆ **Veteran Emphasis Program**—*Heidi Nelson, Machias Field Office, 207-255-3995*
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- ◆ **Disability Point of Contact**—*Stephanie Landry, State Office, 207-990-9502*

Out of the long list of nature's gifts to man, none is perhaps so utterly essential to human life as soil.

—Hugh Hammond Bennett



Personnel Update

Cathee Pullman Takes on Role of State Resource Conservationist



Soil Conservationist, Buffalo, OK, 1987.

Cathee began her career with SCS/NRCS in 1987. She capitalized on the agency's opportunity to work across the country and partnered with private land owners to protect the natural resources in Oklahoma, Colorado, Iowa, Georgia, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine and the National Headquarters Office. Throughout the course of her career, Cathee has served as a Soil Conservationist, District Conservationist, Resource Conservation and Development Coordinator, Assistant State Conservation-

ist for Field Operations, Area Conservationist, State Administrative Officer, Management Analyst and now her current position, State Resource Conservationist in Maine.

Cathee has served on several national teams, participated in six national pilots and completed multiple detail assignments. As the Maine State Resource Conservationist, Cathee looks forward to facilitating support for the field and sharing information between private landowners and organizations, Federal state, local and tribal governments, and other conservation partners.

Meet Peter Zuck, Soil Conservationist, Belfast Field Office



Peter Zuck came on as Soil Conservationist in the Belfast Field Office on November 22, 2011. Peter was born and raised in Wheatland, NY, a small town about 12 miles south of Rochester in the western part of the state.

At the age of 19, he moved to Bozeman, MT to study at Montana State University and to ski away the remainder of his youth. He received his bachelor's degree in Horticulture in 2000 and went to work on an organic potato farm in the Yellowstone valley for a short time. He then spent two and a half years in Vermont, where he trained

to become an organic farm inspector. A knee injury forced Peter to find other avenues of employment, and in 2003 he began working as a mobile DJ at weddings and other assorted events in the greater Burlington area. In 2005, he returned to Bozeman to start Fresh Tracks DJ Company. Another knee injury prompted his enrollment into graduate school, and the DJ business paid the way. In 2010, he received his master's degree in plant pathology, again at MSU-Bozeman, studying the effects of crop rotations on parasitic nematodes in dryland, no-till small grain systems.

After completing an internship with MSU Extension in Butte, MT, he was offered and accepted the NRCS job in Belfast. His parents have lived in Bucksport for the past seven years, so this position offered him a great opportunity to be closer to family. He is an avid outdoor recreationalist, having spent most of his "adult" life skiing, mountain biking, fly fishing, and backpacking around the greater Yellowstone ecosystem. "My knees and I are looking forward to enjoying more water-based activities here in Maine," said Peter.

Cathee is a native of Illinois. Her family still maintains a farm that has been in her family for over 100 years. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Economics and Ranch/Farm Management from Oklahoma State University in 1984. Go Pokes!

Cathee has three adventurous teenagers! She enjoys snow skiing, kayaking, traveling and gardening.

Chris Jones Takes on New Position

Chris Jones, former State Resource Conservationist, has taken on the new position of Assistant State Conservationist for Special Projects. In this position Chris will be responsible for the following:

- ◆ Serve as the State Energy Contact
- ◆ Technical Service Providers
- ◆ Conservation Activity Plans (CAPS) as it relates to Technical Service Providers
- ◆ State Technical Committee
- ◆ Conservation Innovation Grants