

# Maine NRCS Conservation News

September 2012

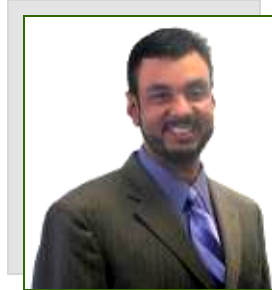
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## A Few Words From the State Conservationist



And the results are in! The grand total of Fiscal Year 2012 program obligations is \$16,658,759 through 954 contracts. A great job done by all employees!

Even though the field office employees are key in this accomplishment, it still could not be accomplished without the technical and administrative support of the State Office Staff, Soils Staff, ACES employees, and District employ-

ees assisting us through contribution agreements. So when I say "great job done by all employees", that's exactly what I mean.

For the breakdown by program for FY 2012 obligations, see information at the bottom of this page.

As for Fiscal Year 2013, Congress has not passed any full-year appropriations bills that fund Federal agencies. However, on September 28th the President signed a Continuing Resolution (CR) which provides funding through March 27, 2013. The CR provides funding for most Department programs to continue at a level that is equivalent to 0.6 percent above the amount provided for in FY 2012.

In addition, the 2008 Farm Bill expired on September 30, and the 2012 Farm Bill needed to replace it is bottled up in Congress. As of October 1, USDA's authority or funding to deliver many of these programs has expired, leaving USDA with far fewer tools to help strengthen American agriculture. However, EQIP, CSP, WHIP, FRPP, and AMA extend to 2014 as a result of the 2012 Appropriations Act.

We will keep you informed as we learn more about 2013 programs and the new farm bill.

Thank you again for a great 2012. I look forward to working with you and doing good things in 2013.

—Juan Hernandez

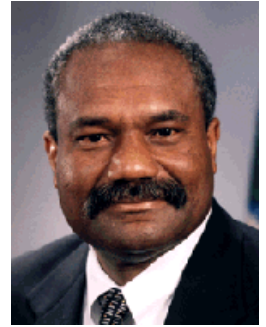
## Fiscal Year 2012 Obligations by Program

	Dollars Obligated	Contracts
Agricultural Management Assistance Program	\$ 277,223	13
Conservation Stewardship Program	\$ 29,283	11
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$14,663,930	910
Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program	\$ 1,300,000	9
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (Working Lands for Wildlife)	\$ 192,607	10
Wetland Reserve Program—Restoration	\$ 70,000	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$16,658,759</b>	<b>954</b>

## Retirement of USDA Official

Pearlie Reed has retired from the post of Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Administration, following nearly four decades of public service, to return home to Arkansas. Reed served in that position since May 2009.

Reed began his career at USDA as a student trainee with the Soil Conservation Service in Arkansas in 1968 while in college and rose to the position of the Chief of NRCS in 1998. He served in that position until 2002. In 2003, Reed worked as a consultant in his own firm based in Arkansas until his appointment to the Assistant Secretary position in 2009.



## New State of Maine Agency is Official

As of August 30, 2012 the Maine Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources merged with the Maine Department of Conservation to form the new Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (ACF). The new department has 732 full-time and seasonal employees.

Walter Whitcomb, former Commissioner of the Maine Department of Agriculture, serves as the Commissioner, and Ed Meadows serves as the deputy commissioner. Meadows most recently held senior executive positions with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and previously served as commissioner of the Maine Department of Conservation and director of the Maine Bureau of Public Lands.

Four public meetings/forums were held in Maine in July and August to give Mainers, including farmers and industry leaders, an opportunity to provide suggestions, comments and ideas about the merger.

*"I expect this new department will accomplish great things and ensure that Maine's natural resources, which are such an important part of our heritage, will continue to play a leadership role in our future prosperity."*

According to Governor Paul LePage, "The new ACF department is truly a department of Maine lands, which, for the first time, brings together agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation, conservation, public access and an array of land-use planning assistance. I expect this new department will accomplish great things and ensure that Maine's natural resources, which are such an important part of our heritage, will continue to play a leadership role in our future prosperity."

The department will be organized into seven divisions:

- Division of Agricultural Resource Development
- Division of Forestry
- Division of Parks and Public Lands
- Division of Quality Assurance and Regulations
- Division of Animal and Plant Health
- Division of Geology and Natural Areas
- Division of Land Use Planning, Permitting and Compliance

To learn more about ACF, go to [www.maine.gov/acf](http://www.maine.gov/acf)

## NRCS Provides Grants to Four Maine Recipients

More than \$158,000 in Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) funds were recently awarded to four Maine recipients: Windependence dba Community Energy Partners, LLC; Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association; Maine Rural Partners; and Holly Miller of Hope's Edge Farm.

A component of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, CIG is a statewide competitive grants process to address some of the state's most pressing natural resource conservation needs.

**Windependence dba Community Energy Partners, LLC**, in Freeport received \$70,000 for "Advancing Farmer-Owned Wind Power in Maine". They will educate eligible producers on Net Energy Billing, conduct a

(continued on page 3)

## NRCS Provides Grants (continued)

feasibility study on a Small Wind Turbine Bulk Buy Program and conduct educational webinars on Community Wind. The demonstration project will be primarily focused on rural Maine.

**The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)** in Unity received \$44,000 to demonstrate “New Soil Health Building Techniques for Organic Farmers in the Northeast”. MOFGA will demonstrate and quantify the impacts of cover crops, crop rotations, tillage and/or soil amendments on soil chemical, physical, and/or biological properties and their relationships with nutrient cycling, soil and water availability, and plant growth.

**Maine Rural Partners (MRP)** in Orono received \$40,000 for the “Micmac Heat Pump Demonstration Project”. MRP will establish a demonstration project in Aroostook County for ductless air-to-air heat pump technology in the retail farm store and processing facility of Micmac Farms and Trading Company, owned by the Aroostook Band of Micmacs.

**Holly Miller**, Project Manager of Hope’s Edge Farm in Hope, received \$4,011 for “Hope’s Edge Conservation Initiative”. Miller will demonstrate and quantify the impacts of reducing on-farm electrical use by replacing old, highly-inefficient cooling and freezing equipment with new, energy-efficient equipment. This project proposes to reduce the carbon footprint of Hope’s Edge Farm in Hope by reducing on-farm electrical usage by 15% to 25%.

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## Ground Penetrating Radar



Ground-penetrating radar (GPR) is a non-invasive, high-resolution geophysical method used in the investigation of earthen materials. Ground-penetrating radars transmit short pulses of high to ultra high frequency electromagnetic energy into the ground to detect subsurface interfaces. Interfaces often correspond to major soil, stratigraphic, and lithologic layers or features.

*Ground penetrating radar (GPR) investigation recently took place on Houlton Band of Maliseet Indian land in southern Aroostook. (Left photo) Participating were Dave Hopkins, Consultant (left); Sue Young, Natural Resource Director; and Jim Doolittle, Research Soil Scientist and GPR operator from the National Soil Survey Center. (Below photo) Bob Evon looks on as Hopkins and Doolittle converse..*





Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food (KYF2) has become a well-known initiative launched by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan back in September 2009. It

strengthens the critical connection between farmers and consumers and supports local and regional food systems. Americans are interested in learning more about where their food comes from, a trend that benefits all of U.S. agriculture. Recent growth in the demand for locally- and regionally-produced food has opened up new market opportunities for farmers and food businesses. Associated NRCS initiatives include seasonal high tunnels, the organic initiative, and People's Garden.

To highlight results and success stories, the KYF Compass has been created...an interactive web-based document and map highlighting USDA support for local and regional food projects and successful producer, business and community case studies. The site emphasizes how local and regional food systems across the country create additional economic opportunities for farmers, ranchers and food entrepreneurs, expand healthy food access and meet growing customer demand.

"USDA works every day to strengthen American agriculture, drive job growth and support farm-family income,"

said Vilsack. "The KYF Compass highlights how USDA support for local and regional food systems has brought additional opportunities to our country's farmers, ranchers, processors, distributors and food entrepreneurs. The stories and maps in the Compass underscore how diverse and innovative American agriculture can be."

The KYF Compass organizes USDA's work on local and regional food systems into seven thematic areas. Among the themes covered on the map and in the narrative portion of the Compass are:

*"The KYF Compass highlights how USDA support for local and regional food systems has brought additional opportunities to our country's farmers, ranchers, processors, distributors and food entrepreneurs."*

Local Food Infrastructure  
Farm to Institution  
Careers in Agriculture  
Stewardship and Local Foods  
Local Meat and Poultry  
Healthy Food Access  
Local Food Knowledge

A large selection of USDA-supported programs and projects is also visible on the KYF Map, which can be displayed by theme, program, or recipient type. Both the KYF Compass and map will be regularly refreshed with new data and case studies.

For more information please visit the "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" website at [www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer](http://www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer).

## Deadline for EQIP Initiatives

NRCS accepts applications for financial assistance on a continuous basis throughout the year; however, applications received for the following initiatives by **December 21, 2012** will be considered for funding in Fiscal Year 2013:

- On-Farm Energy Initiative
- Organic Initiative
- Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative
- Irrigation Initiative
- New England/New York Forestry Initiative

For more information on these initiatives, go to [www.me.nrcs.usda.gov/progrms/EQIP2012.html](http://www.me.nrcs.usda.gov/progrms/EQIP2012.html).



## Agriculture Deputy Secretary Visits Common Ground Fair



Photo courtesy of USDA Rural Development.

*Photo (left to right): Rural Development State Director Virginia Manuel; Maine Congresswoman Chellie Pingree; USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan; NRCS State Conservationist Juan Hernandez; Farm Service Agency State Executive Director Don Todd; and National Agricultural Statistics Service Director Gary Keough.*

Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Kathleen Merrigan visited the Common Ground Fair on Sunday, September 23rd, as a part of her visit to Maine. She was hosted by Maine Congresswoman Chellie Pingree. While at the Fair, the Deputy Secretary met with leaders from four USDA agencies as well as numerous Maine organic farmers and gardeners. During her Keynote Address at the Fair, Merrigan discussed organic farming as well as the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative.

On Sunday evening Deputy Secretary Merrigan attended a Local Foods Reception at The Salt Exchange in Portland, hosted by Congresswoman Pingree. She finished her visit to Maine on Monday morning by visiting the Rieke Elementary School in Portland. She toured their school garden, learned about their Farm-to-School projects, and had lunch in their school cafeteria.

### NRCS Hosts Legislative Conservation Tour

Three of southern Maine’s legislative staff representatives had the opportunity to talk to farmers and private landowners in Androscoggin and Cumberland Counties as well as learn about NRCS’ programs and practices during a recently held Legislative Conservation Tour. State Conservationist Juan Hernandez hosted the tour on September 26th.

Andrea Quaid from Congressman Michaud’s Office in Lewiston, Kyle Molton from Congresswoman Pingree’s Office in Portland, and Carlene Tremblay from Senator Collins’ Office in Lewiston, all met at the USDA Service Center before climbing into a van for the six-hour tour. At the office they were offered refreshments provided by the Androscoggin Valley SWCD.

The morning consisted of two stops in Androscoggin County, the first being the Packard-Littlefield Farm where Cultivating Community leases 30 acres for use by its New American Sustainable Agriculture Project (NASAP). NASAP runs the site as an incubator farm where individual refugee and immigrant farmers as well as market gardeners produce vegetables on their own plots. NRCS has provided technical and financial assistance through EQIP to both Cultivating Community and the immigrant farmers to enable them to produce sustainable crops while conserving natural resources. They have also just received funding for a high tunnel.

The second stop in Androscoggin County was at the farm of Mike and Brittany Hemond. The Hemonds are the third generation owners of the farm and are beginning farmers who are rejuvenating the land and the farm. They raise piglets and have 40 female hogs on average and sell 250 piglets a year. The Hemonds milk dairy goats and have male goats for meat. NRCS assistance includes a heavy use area, animal trail, access road, grassed waterway, waste storage facility and a roof structure.

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Cultivating Community



Hemond Hog Farm





**2012 Legislative Conservation Tour (continued)**



Everett Towle Woodlot

In the afternoon the participants visited two sites in Cumberland County, stopping first at the 225-acre woodlot owned and operated by Everett Towle. He is a retired forester with the U.S. Forest Service and is the sixth generation on the land in and around Buxton. Towle is now cutting timber on the same lot his father logged in 1941. NRCS has worked with Towle for more than five years planning and implementing Forest Management Plans.

The last stop was at Rick Grant's farm, consisting of 150 acres of cropland. NRCS provided financial assistance through EQIP for a new irrigation system. Grant converted more than one mile of aluminum portable pipe formerly set up by hand labor each year that supplied water to a 55%-efficient traveling gun, to a new permanent-buried irrigation pipeline 4,025 feet long, three new center pivot sprinkler irrigation systems and a certified diesel pump plant. This system is 90% efficient.



Rick Grant Irrigation System

Thanks to Lance Gorham, former DC in Lewiston; Wayne Munroe, DC in Scarborough; and Adam Cattrell, Agricultural Engineer in Lewiston, for their assistance in this effort.



## Pleasant River Initiative Update — by Ben Naumann, Fisheries Biologist, Bangor Field Office; Dave Power, DC, Dover Field Office, and Jeff Norment, Biologist, State Office

The Pleasant River Initiative began in 2011 with the specific goals to restore runs of diadromous fish that include but are not limited to the federally-endangered Atlantic salmon, and to restore geomorphic characteristics and connectivity to benefit resident and diadromous fish, eastern brook trout, and other native aquatic species at a landscape scale. In just a year and a half NRCS and partners are starting to achieve our goals by completing eight projects that have reconnected close to 20 miles of stream habitat and over 1,000 acres of lake habitat. Below are some of the specific projects that took place during 2011 and 2012, which is just the beginning of the connectivity projects that will take place for this initiative in the future.

In the head waters of the Pleasant River drainage, important spawning, cold water refuge, and rearing habitat for brook trout has been cut off by aging road stream crossings. On tributaries to Mountain Brook in Piscataquis County the NRCS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) collaboratively removed three undersized culverts during 2011. In 2012 three additional undersized culverts were removed on the same tributary system that were impeding or eliminating fish passage. Two of the crossings were perched by over two feet and one crossing was severely plugged with debris. Based on aerial photography of the road system these problem crossings have been in place for approximately 35 years. The crossings were replaced with concrete bridge abutments and bridge decks that the landowner did on their own. All the projects together total over ten miles of reconnected stream habitat.



*The above photos show the before and after construction of the first culvert that was removed on a tributary to Mountain Brook in 2012. The pre-existing culvert was a 4-foot round boiler pipe, it was replaced with bridge abutments with a 14-foot span.*

Man-made obstructions have confined alewives to a small percentage of their ancestral spawning area in the Penobscot River Basin. Mattamiscontis Lake, which means a fishing place for alewives by the Penobscot Nation people, has a limited spawning alewife population due to a remnant log drive dam that has been in place prior to the 1880's. This 1,000-acre lake has the potential to support an alewife spawning population of approximately 240,000. This structure during low flows reduces the number of alewives able to gain access to the lake to spawn and traps juvenile alewives during their downstream migration. The remnant dam structure was removed and a series of rock weir step pools were installed to serve as resting places during migrations and to maintain the current lake level. This project is not only important for Penobscot Nation traditional culture but the overall ecological health of the Penobscot River, and was labeled by the Maine Department of Marine Resources as a priority alewife restoration lake. Partners included the Penobscot Nation, USFWS, Maine Department of Marine Resources, and Atlantic Salmon Federation.

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### Pleasant River (continued)



*The above photos show the before and after construction of the fishway at Mattamiscontis.*

A remnant log drive dam on Roaring Brook in the Pleasant River drainage was confirmed in late June of this year by Ben Naumann, NRCS Fisheries Biologist, and was removed in August which was an amazing start to finish turnaround time for a stream connectivity project. The dam held back over a half mile of deadwater habitat creating a thermal barrier for cold water fish species like brook trout and Atlantic salmon. The removal of the dam has reduced the half-mile impoundment above the dam site and has re-connected an additional 7 miles of stream habitat. NRCS provided the coordination, land owner contacts and technical assistance for this project. Partners included Elliotsville Plantation Inc., USFWS, Maine Department of Marine Resources, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and Trout Unlimited. The dam was removed by 15 individuals using hand equipment and hoist system type technologies.



*The above photos show the before and after deconstruction of a remnant log drive dam on Roaring Brook.*

## Hispanic Heritage Month 2012—By Jade Gianforte, Hispanic SEPM



The middle of September brought the start of Hispanic Heritage Month on the 15<sup>th</sup> lasting through October 15<sup>th</sup>. Hispanic Heritage Month was enacted into law on August 17<sup>th</sup>, 1988.

This month celebrates the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose heritages have ties to Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America and South

America. There are many days within this month that

are of significance to the Hispanic community. September 15<sup>th</sup> is the Independence Day from Spain for Latin American countries Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. September 16<sup>th</sup> is the Independence Day for Mexico, and September 18<sup>th</sup> is the Independence Day for Chile. Also, Dia de la Raza (Columbus Day) falls on October 12<sup>th</sup>.

The theme for this year's Hispanic Heritage Month is "**Diversity United, Building America's Future Today.**" Please take a moment during the next few weeks to learn about Hispanic Heritage and how, even though we all come from different backgrounds, we are still all Americans.

References:

<http://hispanicheritagemonth.gov/about/>

## Students from Puerto Rico Receive Training in Maine

Two students from the University of Puerto Rico had the opportunity to serve as student trainees at the Bangor Field Office this past summer. Laura Victoria Campos Maldonado, majoring in Civil Engineering, served as a Civil Engineer Student Trainee under the leadership of Mark Roskos and Heidi Bunn, Agriculture Engineers. Bianca Diaz Deliz, majoring in Livestock Industries, served as a Soil Conservationist Student Trainee under the leadership of Dan Schmidt, District Conservationist.

Prior to Laura's departure from Maine to go back to school, she offered the following about her internship in Maine.

"I am currently a civil engineer student trainee for NRCS-Maine and have enjoyed every minute of it. I have learned so much in such a short period of time, not only in the engineering area, but in construction, soil conservation, water restoration, environmental issues and how to help with its restoration, etc. Everyone in Maine has been more than nice to me during this internship. They have helped me to expand my knowledge in my concentration and have helped me with any doubt that I have concerning my job, their job or just any type of doubt that I have about anything. Thanks to both of my supervisors, Mark Roskos and Heidi Bunn, I am more than certain that I am doing exactly what I want to do for the rest of my life which is to help others help their land in any way I can."



Laura Maldonado learns about surveying while serving as a student trainee in the Bangor Field Office.



## Claims Filing Period for Hispanic and Women Farmers To Open 9/24/12

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced that Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA in past decades can file claims between September 24, 2012 and March 25, 2013.

“Hispanic and women farmers who believe they have faced discriminatory practices from the USDA must file a claim by March 25, 2013 in order to have a chance to receive a cash payment or loan forgiveness,” said Secretary Vilsack. “The opening of this claims process is part of USDA’s ongoing efforts to correct the wrongs of the past and ensure fair treatment to all current and future customers.”

The process offers a voluntary alternative to litigation for each Hispanic or female farmer and rancher who

can prove that USDA denied their applications for loan or loan servicing assistance for discriminatory reasons for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000.

The Department will continue reaching out to potential Hispanic and female claimants around the country to get the word out to individuals who may be eligible for this program so that they have the opportunity to participate.

Independent legal services companies will administer the claims process and adjudicate the claims. Although there are no filing fees to participate and a lawyer is not required to participate in the claims process, persons seeking legal advice may contact a lawyer or other legal services provider.

**Website:** [www.farmerclaims.gov](http://www.farmerclaims.gov)

**Phone:** 1-888-508-4429

**Claims Period:** September 24, 2012—March 25, 2013.



**NRCS...**  
***conserving,  
improving and  
sustaining our  
natural resources  
for future  
generations.***