



675 U. S. Courthouse  
 Nashville, Tennessee 37203  
 Telephone: 615/277-2531  
 FAX: 615/277-2577

Natural Resources Conservation Service



# Current Developments

*Helping People Help the Land*

April 2006



## From the office of the State Conservationist

Spring is finally here, and with the change of seasons, I think it is appropriate to reflect on an idea that Chief Knight shared with NRCS employees last month. He referred to the agency as having recently experienced "a season of change." He pointed out that with all the changes we have experienced in recent years, we now have a chance to consolidate those gains.

This year of "Consolidating the Gains" is an opportunity to catch up and clear away work items that have been piling up. It is our chance to assess where we are, how we got here, and where we are going next.

I want each one of us to take full advantage of the time to consolidate our own gains in Tennessee. We want to move ahead, serving more customers and putting more conservation practices on the ground. But if we are to do that, we must finish clearing the path we are on. That means completing old contracts and wrapping up unfinished business with customers.

Our unfinished business slows us down and keeps us from looking forward. We are consolidating our gains so we do not have to keep glancing backward. If we are all able to do a little Spring Cleaning and set our work affairs in order, we can all face a new season in which we are ready to move ahead!

Enjoy the new season, and thank you again for the important and meaningful work you do to promote and increase conservation in Tennessee.

James Ford

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## Upcoming Events

**8th Annual Cumberland Beef Day**  
**White County Fair Complex**  
**Sparta, TN**

**April 13, 2006**  
**9:00 am - 4:00 pm**

## Jeff Sanders Receives the Commander's Award for Civilian Service

Jeff Sanders, Hull-York Lakeland RC&D Coordinator, was presented the "Commander's Award for Civilian Service" by Colonel Owens, Commander of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade, the fourth highest award that a civilian can receive from the army. The fact that the army rarely presents this award, especially in a war zone, shows the significance of the work Jeff did in Afghanistan.

Jeff said, "This award is a reflection of the program that sent me there and supported me. I wish NRCS, FSA, and USDA could have all received recognition. There was a coordinated effort behind the scenes that allowed me to go and supported me for six months and I thank everyone who made this possible. I consider this *our award* for a job well done by the USDA team."

Paul Fulks, Area Conservationist, stated, "I want everyone to know that we have a true patriot that works for NRCS in Middle Tennessee. We have so many good people in this agency and this is just an example of the great work of one of our employees. Each of us in Middle Tennessee had a tiny part in this award. Remember:

Nobody can do everything  
 But everybody can do something  
 And if everybody does something,  
 Everything will get done.

We can all be proud of the work Jeff did in Afghanistan and the recognition he received."



Photo above: Jeff Sanders with the Commander's Award for Civilian Service

## Madisonville Employees to the Rescue

On March 9, Fred Walker and Jim Bedford left the Madisonville NRCS office in separate vehicles to go a SCD Board of Director's meeting in Blount County. Jim, who was traveling separately a few minutes behind Fred, was involved in an automobile accident in Maryville. Upon arrival at Blount Memorial Hospital, Jim asked the nurse on duty to call the Blount County SCD.

In the meantime, Fred Walker and Sandy Gregory, Blount County SCD Office Administrator, were wondering why Jim hadn't arrived at the meeting.

"As soon as they received the call, Fred came to the emergency room while Sandy called my wife and told her how to get to the hospital," said Jim. "It was sure good to see a co-worker and friend standing over me and asking if I was alright. Fred and Sandy deserve a big *thank you*. NRCS and soil conservation districts have the best people with *big hearts*."

## NRCS Employees Recognized for Work on Waterville Road EWP Project

NRCS employees Allen Morrow, Terry Horne, Carol Chandler, Richard Bryan, Joe Zimmerman, and Randy Franks, along with Eva Goodwin, Cocke County District Secretary, were all recognized by Jim Graham, Cocke County SCD Board Chairman, for their role in getting the Waterville Road EWP project in Cocke County completed. The EWP project took two years and nearly \$1 million to complete.

The EWP project stabilized almost one mile of the riverbank along the Pigeon River. I-beams were placed in the ground by drilling about six feet deep and then pouring concrete around the I-beams to stabilize them. "After the I-beams were in place, steel guard rails were stacked on top of each other and then the roadway edges were backfilled to the retaining walls," said Allen Morrow, who was the Supervisory Civil Engineer on this project. "The repairs should help minimize damage during future flooding, and by backfilling to the walls, the road is now wider than it originally was which will allow easy passage for two lanes of traffic."



## 2006 Cumberland Beef Day

The eighth annual Cumberland Beef Day will be held on April 13, 2006 at the White County Fair Complex in Sparta, TN, from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. The event will again be co-sponsored by the White/Van Buren Cattlemen's Association, University of Tennessee Extension, and area Extension Agents.

The 2006 Cumberland Beef Day's theme will be *Competing in a Global Cattle Economy*, and will feature Troy Applehans of Cattle-Fax from Centennial, Colorado. "*Perspectives on the Effects of Globalization on Beef Production and Marketing in the US*" will be the title of Applehans presentation.

Troy Applehans is a native of Colorado and a graduate of Oklahoma State University. He is well-versed in the cattle business and has worked extensively with the cow/calf and seedstock segments of the industry. Applehans was previously employed by Cargill Animal Nutrition as a cattle mineral specialist, Future Beef Operations as a member of the cattle procurement team, and as a regional manager for the American Gelbvieh Association. His primary responsibility with Cattle-Fax is serving as a market analyst working with cow/calf and stocker operations.

Other topics will include: Comments on The Tennessee Beef Industry, Ken Givens, Commissioner of Agriculture; Using EID to Expand Opportunities – Dr Emmet Rawls, UT; Trace-back and Related Issues on EID – Dr Charles Hatcher, TN Department of Ag; Argentina, Our Growing Competitor - Dr. David Kirkpatrick, UT. In addition, there will be demonstrations on new innovations, practical applications, and answers to your concerns on EID.

Live demonstrations will include: Conducting a Beef Cow-Calf Herd Evaluation – Kevin Thompson, TN Livestock Producers. Kevin will use heifers and cows from a local herd to demonstrate what he looks for as he conducts an evaluation and how he determines the needs for improving the

## Jackson Farm Family Receives Excellence in Agriculture Award

Scott and Cher Woolfolk of Jackson, Tennessee won the Excellence in Agriculture Award recently. The Excellence in Agriculture award recognizes young farmers and ranchers who derive the majority of their income from their agricultural operation, and who actively contribute and grow through their involvement in Farm Bureau and the agriculture community.

Participants were judged on their involvement in agriculture, their leadership ability and participation in Farm Bureau and other organizations. The Woolfolks received a 2006 Dodge Quad Cab 4x4 pickup truck plus free registration to the 2006 YF&R Leadership Conference.

Scott and Cher have three active EQIP contracts which consist of sowing permanent grasses for hay, livestock water trough's, fencing, and heavy use area's. They have also participated in the CRP filter strip program.

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productivity of that herd. This program will assist anyone who wants to make progress in their breeding program, but is perfect for cattle producers participating in the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program.

The beef day will also feature an extensive trade show of products, equipment, services and beef cattle. A sponsored meal will be provided at noon.

For Information contact Scott Swoape (931-946-2435) or Bill Adcock 931-836-3348.

## Tennessee's first College of Small Ruminants held at Spring Hill

NRCS-TN partnered with Tennessee State University and the University of Tennessee for the first Tennessee College of Small Ruminants (better known as the Goat Conference.) Goat producers and agricultural educators from throughout Tennessee and the surrounding states participated in the March 30-31, 2006 workshop at the UT Research and Education Center at Spring Hill.

Tennessee has recently become the nation's second largest goat producer, following only Texas. While goats are used for meat, milk, and cheese, they are increasingly being recognized as an important conservation tool. Goats eat invasive species that cattle and other grazing animals won't touch. Rotational grazing that includes both goats and cattle can increase overall pasture utilization by up to 70-percent.

## Bear Creek Project in NBII Web Database

NRCS in TN has been asked to provide information on the Bear Creek Watershed Project in Scott County for inclusion in the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) web-based searchable database of Best Sustainability Practices in the southern Appalachians. This website is a resource designed for those involved in studying and managing the complex interactions between life forms - including human populations - and the environment. The website containing the current list of case studies can be found at: <http://www.nbii.gov/datainfo/bestpractices/appalachia/envirorestoration.html>

The Bear Creek plan continues to attract attention from across the US especially coal mine regions. NRCS continues to get calls and requests for copies of the plan, which has been reprinted three times to date.

The **National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII)** and **CSA**, a leading bibliographic database provider, have developed a web-based searchable database of Best Sustainability Practices in the southern Appalachians. This project is a government/private industry project. Examples of environmental stewardship, growth management and sustainable development are provided in order to highlight key growth and environmental sustainability management strategies, foster collaboration among non-government organizations, and private companies dedicated to various dimensions of sustainable practices, and educate groups and individuals about possible solutions to their own growth management difficulties and ways to conserve and protect the environment. Partners in NBII include numerous federal agencies (including NRCS), state agencies, international, non-government, academic, and private industry partners.



*Photo at left: Greg Brann gives a demonstration on proper fencing at the Goat Conference.*

*Photo below: Attendees at the Goat Conference included goat farmers and producers and agricultural educators who will assist goat producers.*



## FWP Manager News



by Debbie Brasfield  
Federal Women's Program Manager

In honor of Women's History Month, I want to share the conference highlights from Sharyn C. Alvarez, National FWPM, on the Executive Women in Government's 2006 Summit & Training Conference.

Mary Fillmore, Founder & Director of Changing Work, talked to the group about showing appreciation for yourself, the people you work with and who work for you. She discussed the positive impact you can have on others when you make the effort to show appreciation often and sincerely. She is author of Women MBAs: A Foot in the Door.

Linda Combs, Comptroller, Office of Federal Financial Management, OMB, gave tips on good leadership: people are the most important asset to an organization, treat them well. You manage through leading people--respect them. Good leaders are humble, keep your ego in check. Have a sense of purpose, know where you want to go. Keep your eye on the ball and know where it's going. Have the courage to do the mundane, routine things that need to be done day after day, this is a part of leadership. Be consistent with your employees and consistently explain your decisions and the process you used to make them. Be candid, straightforward and direct without being cunning, cutting or spiteful. Use your intuition, ignoring it will only bring problems. Choose wisely the few things you want to accomplish, choose the right people to help you and let them do their jobs.

Anna Escobedo Cabral, U.S. Treasurer, was inspiring as she shared her background and

career path. She credited her family and a few key people in helping her change her destiny. She asked the audience, "What would you do if you knew you could not fail?" She believes that everyone can harness the power to make someone else's day good. She also spoke about the President's agenda as it relates to the economy.

Torie Clarke, Author, CNN Commentator, talked about her jobs with Sen. McCain and working at the Pentagon during and after September 11. She spoke of the voracity of the information era we now live in and its impact to society. She suggested that no matter how busy life is, it is important to find time everyday to be aware of what is happening in the world and become engaged in the issues of today. She is the author of Lipstick on a Pig: Winning in the No-Spin Era by Someone Who Knows the Game.

Keynote speaker Elaine L. Chao, Secretary of Labor, shared labor statistics on women in the workforce, noting that women are taking advantage of education opportunities which is having a positive impact on their earning potential. She talked about our knowledge-based economy. She talked about leadership qualities and how important it is to know the business of your organization. Understand the special culture of your agency, know and acknowledge who the movers and shakers are, understand the people in your organization because you work through people. Your ability to motivate, communicate, inspire and influence them will impact your ability to lead. Conduct your business with honesty, integrity and accountability. She challenged the senior women present to be good, positive role models and to mentor women.

Dr. Mary Catherine Bateson, Cultural Anthropologist, Author and founder of GrannyVoter.org, shared topics for policy development because of the extended life span of people. Policy makers need to create policies that inspire people who are approaching retirement and are able and have the energy to re-commit to their organization. She suggested leaders offer sabbaticals,



Women's History Month Poster Contest winner, 2006

training to learn new skills and encourage senior workers to stay on the job, perhaps in other areas of the organization, thus enabling the organization to continue using the experience and skills of their senior employees. She encouraged those present to begin viewing aging in new ways and to understand and appreciate the second stage of adulthood that takes advantage of the good health, energy and extended life expectancy many people will have. She is author of Culture and Generation in Transition: Full circles, Overlapping Lives.

Karen Evans, Administrator, E-Government & Information Technology, OMB, shared her life and career path story. She told women they cannot have it all at one time. She encouraged them to think, make decisions and then not feel guilty about them. When planning career moves, she never focused on the reason why she couldn't do something, only on if she would make a difference, how it would impact her family and if she could have fun. She ended with her mother's favorite statement to her: "You should be nice to the people you meet and work with on the way up because those are the same ones you could meet on the way down."

California has created a very useful tool--a guide to KSAs (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities) which has been posted on the California NRCS website (under the Employment link). The guide contains helpful tips and examples to make writing KSAs easier. You may access Know Your KSAs at <http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/about/employment.html>.

## Making Meetings Accessible to People With Disabilities

by Laura Lee Walrath,  
Disability Employment Program Manager

When setting up a public meeting or training session, there are a few accessibility requirements that need to be considered. Not only is it the right thing to do but it is also the law.

Public meeting announcements should include instructions for people who need accommodations, wheelchair accessibilities, interpreters, or materials in Braille. And remember that some facilities will say they are accessible, meaning they are accessible in certain areas only. Imagine being in a wheelchair and trying to get to a second floor meeting room only to discover that you cannot get to that floor or you cannot go inside the room.

Experts advise that meeting planners visit the facility being used and look at the physical and architectural accessibility of the meeting site. Ask yourself if the site is usable and navigable for someone who uses mobility devices or wheelchairs, or someone who is sight impaired.

Use your registration form to ask potential attendees about any access problems. If you have several people in wheelchairs attending, you should ensure there is plenty of space for them and especially at tables.

You need to determine if interpreters are needed or if materials need to be on tape, disk, or in Braille. A good meeting practice recommended is to have presenters read their overhead text first and then begin their explanations, so people who are visually impaired can obtain the information. Materials handed out should also be available in disk version so people can review them later with a screen reader or other assistive technology. Although sign language interpreting and Braille are probably the most cost prohibitive expenses, there are other ways to accommodate people. Have materials created in large print or provide computer disk versions of presentations.

Based on a task force recommendation from a national organization, real-time captioning on a large screen behind its speakers was used at large organization meetings. The feedback from

## Robertson County SCD holds 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Banquet

More than 100 people recently attended the Robertson County Soil Conservation District's 48<sup>th</sup> annual awards banquet. Following the meal, Phil Cherry, NRCS Agronomist, entertained the group with his music. Jack McCall, speaker/humorist, then amused the group by recalling childhood memories and relating them to life today.

The SCD then recognized the land judging winners from ERHS, the Bryant Family for Conservation Farmer of the Year award, and Josh Cook from ERHS received the Achievement Award.



the audience was that many people in the audience who were not hearing impaired enjoyed both listening to and reading the speeches. Most things you would do will benefit people without disabilities who do have human limitations that make it easier when people go out of their way to simplify a message, repeat things, and go at a pace that is easier to follow.

Recognize that the population of people with disabilities is quite diverse, and that even for those who are blind, deaf, or hard of hearing, what works for one person may not work for someone else.

For additional information regarding disability and employment issues, please contact Laura Lee Walrath, Tennessee Disability Employment Program Manager, at 615/277-2541 or by email at [laura.walrath@tn.usda.gov](mailto:laura.walrath@tn.usda.gov).



Photo above: Robertson County SCD Board of Supervisors. (Below left) Land judging winners recognized, (below right) Bryant family receives the Conservation Farmer of the Year award.



## EWP Project on Chickamauga Creek Completed

EWP work along the banks of North Chickamauga Creek in northern Hamilton County was recently completed. The project, consisting of 950 feet of 12' high gabion wall and more than 7900 tons of riprap, is one of the largest gabion structures designed and built by NRCS in Tennessee. Construction began in October 2005 and was completed in January 2006.

The EWP project actually consisted of two subprojects: construction of a low-flow channel and construction of the gabion wall/placement of riprap. The low flow channel was installed with hopes of diverting water from the construction area while at the same time establishing a "pilot" channel which was designed to carry the rain from a two year storm event. The gabion retaining wall was designed using an approach that considered different storm events and the "worse case" for stability. For more information on this project go to: <https://web-review.sc.gov.usda.gov/TN/technical/engineering/eng-index.html>