

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Written Report To
Papio-Missouri River NRD Board
April 14, 2022
Andy Bohnenkamp, District Conservationist

Field Office Staff Update:

I am happy to report that we have officially offered **Robyn Byl**, a current Nebraska NRCS Pathways Intern, a Soil Conservationist position in the Walthill Field Office. This position is part of her conversion from a Pathways Intern after graduation from college to a full-time permanent career with NRCS. Robyn is currently studying at Iowa State and expects to graduate with a BS in Agronomy and Animal Ecology. The Pathways Internship Program provides paid work experience to students currently enrolled in high school or an accredited college or university (this includes Home-Schooling, Certificate Programs and Community Colleges). Interns may work during the summer, fall, spring, or year-round. Should Robyn accept the permanent position she would start sometime in late May or early June as our newest addition to the Papio NRCS/NRD team. I will provide an update to this position at the next meeting in May.

Another opportunity that we have in-regards to staffing is a new program being utilized by NRCS Nebraska to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce. To steal a quick blip of the program description: *“The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has entered into a partnership agreement with key Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and Affinity Organizations as part of the broader Diversity Recruitment Initiatives administered by the FPAC-Human Resources Division, Workforce Planning and Recruitment Section. The purpose of these agreements is to further develop diversity-focused partnerships and continue strengthening the USDA-NRCS diversity recruitment mission by supporting the Natural Resource Career Development Program (NRCDP). The NRCDP is designed to put aspiring students on a career path towards permanent employment with NRCS. The program includes educational and developmental components organized by the partner institution and the HRD-National Program Managers. Focused outreach centers primarily on diversity and underrepresented students and intended to create a pipeline of student talent for the NRCS permanent workforce.”*

NRCDP students receive direct guidance in the areas of NRCS career fields, course requirements to meet NRCS key job series; the Pathways Program; resume building and navigating USAJOBS when applying for Pathways internships and/or entry-level positions. Additionally, a central program component offers these students a third-party summer internship with NRCS to gain practical work experience, which again, is fully designed towards guiding students towards the Pathways Program. We refer to this third-party internship program as the Natural Resource Career Development Program (NRCDP).”

Through this program we were able to submit an offer to prospective students signed up for the program to work out of our Dakota City Field Office. We were recently notified that **Elias Cortez III** was selected to be our summer intern in Dakota City. Elias is currently studying at Texas A&M University- Kingsville TX with the hopes of graduating in 2023 with a degree in General Animal Science. Elias’ start date will be the first week of June and we plan to have him get involved in a range of projects to give him a good feel for the work that NRCS and the NRD do to conserve natural resources and serve the great producers and landowners of our NRD. I have included an additional handout that more specifically describes this new program that we have agreed to for your information.

NRCS Programs update:

Staff have been very busy writing EQIP contracts, CRP management plans and CSP assessments this past month. We have yet to receive any additional EQIP financial incentive dollars to fund more EQIP applications, but I expect to get word on that additional funding here in the weeks to come. My initial request was for at least \$200,000 more dollars which would bump our total EQIP allocation to just over \$800,000.

We are also currently gearing up for our busy compliance review season where we review HEL and Wetland compliance on randomly selected FSA farms/tracts in each of the 6 counties of the NRD. Through a combination of field reviews after crops are planted and soil loss calculations, we will manage to review compliance on nearly 80 to 90 farms on over roughly 3000 acres.

Respectfully,

Andy Bohnenkamp
PMRNRD NRCS District Conservationist

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