

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
ACTIVITY REPORT within the P-MRNRD
FEBRUARY 2004

CONSERVATION PLANNING/APPLICATION

- Burt County received 2 requests for HEL determinations and 1 request for a certified wetland determination. Burt County completed 6 conservation compliance plan updates for highly erodible land.
- Blair field office received 9 HEL/Wetland Determination/ASCS-569 requests for FY2004.
- 43 HEL determinations have been completed in Thurston County.
- A total of 14 tree orders, 1800 trees, have been received in Burt County; 3 orders will be machine planted.
- Blair field office has received 51 tree orders for 9950 trees to be planted in spring 2004.
- In Dakota County, 2475 trees have been ordered; 5 NRD tree planting projects have been scheduled to date.
- Blair field office has 3 conservation practices for spring 2004 construction.
- 4 spring applications for terraces were received in Thurston County.
- Conservation plan updates were prepared for two landowners in the Pigeon/Jones Watershed.
- A Technical Service Provider Level Two activation was completed in February in Dakota County.
- Technical assistance is ongoing on 3 wetland appeals in Thurston County.

EQIP

- Blair field office is working on 3 EQIP applications for grade stabilization structures.
- In Dakota County, 3 Pigeon/Jones Watershed structures, 3 grade stabilization structures and numerous applications for rotational grazing are being processed for EQIP.
- Burt County has received 4 new applications; 2 were for terraces and 2 for grade control structures in the Silver Creek Watershed, Sites 25 and 31. Two additional Silver Creek (structures 23, 24, 30) landowners have been contacted but have not yet returned applications. Also, 5 deferred applications will be resubmitted for cost share.
- Omaha field office is asking producers to submit new cost estimates for Ground and Surface Water Conservation applications as well as securing new signatures for all current applications.

WETLAND RESERVE PROGRAM (WRP)

- Tekamah has received 2 new applications for possible WRP projects. The bioengineering team and the landowners will convene this spring to evaluate the sites for possible restoration options.
- A WRP application, originally submitted in 2000 with an offer proposed to the owner in 2002, was resurrected with the request of a new appraisal. The application is located within the Lake Quinnebaugh area and encompasses a total of 41.6 acres of wetlands and 3.0 acres of upland to be restored.

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP)

- Blair field office has 10 applications for continuous CRP.

- Numerous eligibility determinations have been made for filter strips, waterways and wetlands in Dakota County.
- Soil Rental Rate adjustments for Dakota County have been requested in conjunction with the FSA office.
- A CRP contract located within a Wellhead Protection Area was completed in Thurston County.
- Burt County has 9 continuous CRP applications for grass filter strips that need to be reviewed for eligibility.
- 3 contracts in Burt County were reviewed in February to include wildlife food plots, prescribed burning and interseeding of legumes.
- 1 new continuous CRP contract/plan was written for 3.5 acres of grass filter strips in Burt County.
- Omaha field office completed 8 CRP contract revisions. Also, 1 continuous CRP contract consisting of 1.9 acres for a grass filter strip was approved.

SILVER CREEK WATERSHED

- Silver Creek Watershed Sites 15 and 19 pre-construction meeting was held at the Blair field office. Mike Munson (DNR), Lee Appleby, John Camden (Contractor), Mitch Keebler (NRCS) and Terry Schumacher (NRD) were in attendance.

PIGEON/JONES CREEK WATERSHED

- A watershed planning meeting was held at the Natural Resources Center at Chalco Hills in Omaha on February 3.
- Dean and Stockfleth (NRCS South Sioux City) met with a Dakota County supervisor and the Dakota County Road Department foreman to discuss cost share assistance for a roadway grade stabilization structure on February 23.

WATER QUALITY

- Douglas/Sarpy Counties has 10 applications pending.
- Washington County has 10 applications pending.
- Dakota County abandoned 3 wells; 5 applications pending.
- Burt County has 1 application pending.
- Thurston County has 7 applications pending.

CIVIL RIGHTS

- Don Atkinson (RC Walthill) and Ralph Arauza (SCT Blair) attended the monthly Civil Rights meeting in Lincoln.

INFORMATION/EDUCATION

- Andy Bohnenkamp (NRCS Tekamah) has nearly finished the WRP Targeting Program, an ArcView GIS model, for the 6 counties in the District. Remaining to be completed are Douglas and Sarpy Counties, along with one more command to run on every county in order to produce a final product. The entire Model should be completed and ready to be presented at the upcoming Missouri River Wetland Corridor Meeting on March 17.
- The South Sioux City staff provided new items and photos with captions for the NRD Share Page published in the *Dakota County Star* for the month of February. The news items were: Tree Seedlings Still Available, Backyard Wildlife, Lewis and Clark Scenic Byway Annual Meeting, and Household Hazardous Waste Collections Scheduled. The photos with captions were: Backyards Can Become Wildlife Habitat, Windbreak Benefits, and Lewis and Clark Scenic Byway Photography Contest Winner.

- NRCS, NDEQ, COE and NRD field offices located in the Omaha Service Center met with NDEQ (Nebraska Dept. of Environmental Quality) legal staff to answer questions pertaining to a completed wetland restoration site in Sarpy County.
- Don Doty, NRCS Omaha, assisted with organizing an Erosion & Sediment Control Seminar in Omaha that targeted engineers, consultants, contractors, developers, public and elected officials. The purpose of the seminar was to provide information on Federal, State, District and local agency responsibilities for storm water management and best management practices for controlling erosion and sediment losses. Mike Kucera, NRCS State Office Resource Conservationist, was a speaker and Steve Oltmans, General Manager P-MRNRD, was the Emcee.

DAKOTA COUNTY SERVICE CENTER

- Floor plan sketches have been developed by USDA staff for the proposed Natural Resources Center housing NRCS, FSA, NE Extension and NRD Rural Water offices in Dakota City.

WETLAND CORRIDOR PROJECT

- Initial contacts have been made and invitations have been extended to numerous partners and government agencies for a Missouri River Floodplain meeting to be held at the Natural Resources Center in Omaha on March 17. The objective of this effort is to coordinate wetland restoration efforts along the Missouri River between all the involved government agencies, non-government organizations and private groups.

TRAINING/MEETINGS

- Terry Schumacher, NRD Blair, attended the OPS Advisory meeting.
- Stockfleth (NRCS South Sioux City) attended a Wetland Reserve Program training meeting in Norfolk on February 5, a forestry workshop in Norfolk on February 10, and a Crystal Cove Lake restoration project meeting in South Sioux City on February 12.
- Don Atkinson (NRCS Walthill) visited with computer science professor at Little Priest Tribal College concerning the number of 1998 Dell laptops desired and about recruitment of students.
- The Walthill field office staff attended the following meetings during February: Denny Piper, Rod Kinning (NRD) and Dennis Cady (NRCS) attended a tree workshop; Blaine Gaer (NRCS) attended pesticide applicator training; Don Atkinson, Dennis Cady and Blaine Gaer (NRCS) attended a corn and soybean production workshop and a planned grazing systems workshop; Rod Kinning and Denny Piper attended a rural water training session.
- Jenny Sundberg, Andy Bohnenkamp and Steve Walker (Tekamah) attended a No-till Workshop in Tekamah. The workshop was sponsored by the University of Nebraska Extension and NRCS with refreshments provided by P-MRNRD and LENRD. Speakers were Extension Educator, Paul Jasa, and NRCS employee, Dan Gillespie; there were approximately 20 attendees.
- Jenny Sundberg and Steve Walker attended a forestry workshop in Norfolk. Jenny Sundberg also attended a grazing management workshop in Norfolk that was sponsored by the LENRD and NRCS.
- Jenny Sundberg is cooperating with the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D office to plan, promote, locate volunteers, and make arrangements for a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day to be held in Tekamah in March. The RC&D was allocated grant funding to accomplish this project in several local communities.