

# Horizons

Natural Resources Conservation Service - Arizona Internal Newsletter

1st Quarter 2013

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF PENNY DAYE-DRISCOLL

Ed Curry, green chile producer, with FFA students as they accept their award at the 2nd Annual Chile Field Day.

## Investing in Our Future

*NRCS, Conservation Districts, & Local Producers work with FFA Students*

BY: PENNY DAYE-DRISCOLL, WILLCOX DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

"Future Farmers of America" (FFA) was founded by a group of young farmers back in 1928. Their mission was to prepare future generations for the challenges of feeding a growing population. They taught others that agriculture is more than planting and harvesting, it's a science, a business, and an art.

rise up to meet those challenges by helping its members to develop their own unique talents and explore their interests in a broad range of career pathways. While today they are still the Future Farmers of America, they are also the Future Biologists, Future Chemists, Future Veterinarians, Future Engineers and Future Entrepreneurs of America, too.

The National FFA Organization continues to help the next generation

Throughout the year Arizona NRCS, conservation districts, and agricultural





**Art Meen holds students' attention as he demonstrates soil nutrient management.**



**Rob Wilson in soil pit explaining soil profile, texture, color etc. to students.**



**Ed Curry explains the Scoville Heat Scale of peppers to students.**

producers come together to help educate these future leaders at the local level through a variety of different events and activities. On November 16, 2012, the 2nd Annual Chile Field Day was held in Pearce, AZ and hosted by Ed Curry, a local green chile producer.

Ed Curry is a chile breeding specialist that supplies the majority of the plant seed for the green chile industry. His education and expertise in genetics is bar none and is very well respected. Approximately seventy FFA students, from seven surrounding FFA chapters, participated in the annual event.

The morning began with a presentation on Soil Fertility and Management by Art Meen, NRCS Area Crop Specialist. He demonstrated to students nutrient, pest, and crop production management tools. Rob Wilson, NRCS Soil Scientist, followed with a presentation on soils. He taught students how to look at a soil profile, texture the soil, and about the different properties soils have. Ed Curry educated students on plant breeding, genetics, and food processing.

After the presentations, students took a soils and food processing test based on the information that was provided throughout the morning. The field day also consisted of plant and seed quality testing. Students judged four rows of different varieties of chile plants, as well as cotton, for quality. Students also judged chile and bean seeds for quality as well.

The Willcox/San Simon NRCD donated the plaques, ribbons, and trophy awards for the contest winners.



At the Soil Health Theatre, you can see and hear from some of America's top soil health experts and innovative soil health farmers. From video demonstrations on soil health to videos featuring the men and women who are farming with Soil Health Management Systems, see for yourself why there's a growing movement to "Unlock the Secrets in the Soil."



## AAS 2012 Professional Archaeologist Award

*Presented to Allen Dart, AZ NRCS State Archaeologist*

FROM NOVEMBER 2012 ISSUE OF AAS NEWSLETTER



Allen Dart, AZ NRCS State Archaeologist, was presented with the 2012 Professional Archaeologist Award by Arizona Archaeological Society (AAS) State Chair, Paddi Mozilo, during dinner at the AAS Annual State Meeting in Wickenburg on October 13, 2012.

During the presentation, Mary Dahl, Vice President of the Santa Cruz Chapter, read the wonderful nomination letter they had written, nominating Allen. The award is a beautiful belt buckle created by Hopi silversmith, Duane Tawahongva of Second Mesa.

Allen has contributed to many of the AAS chapters for over 16 years as a speaker, instructor and advisor. He has also been a major supporter of the Santa Cruz Chapter.

"We feel very privileged to be able to honor him in this way," said Paddi Mozilo, State Chair.

**Congratulations Allen!**

# NRCS & White Mountain Apache Tribe Field Day

*Field day held to discuss soil and rangeland issues*

BY JAN PERTRUZZI, WHITERIVER DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

On October 23, 2012, NRCS and the White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT) Land Operations Department held a joint field day that included discussions on soil, rangeland issues and a tour of an Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) site.

To kick off the field day, a brunch was supplied by the WMAT Land Operations Department. The brunch was set up at the People's Garden located at the Canyon Day Farm and included a typical brunch menu and fry bread made in one of the outdoor ovens located at the farm.

While at the farm, Greg Anderson and Andy Casillas from the NRCS Globe Soil Survey Office provided a description of the various soil layers in a soil pit the farm staff had excavated. Judging by the amount of questions the field day participants asked of Greg and Andy, they enjoyed learning about the layers and soil textures and how these various types of textures can influence soil erosion.

After the lively discussion on soils, there was a tour of the seasonal high tunnel system located on the farm that was installed with EQIP financial assistance. Farm staff showed off the vegetables inside the system that will be harvested and sold locally in Whiteriver.

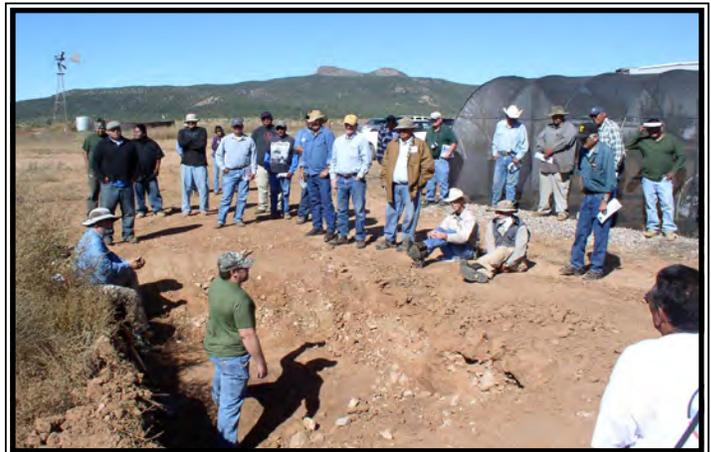
The group then traveled to a pasture within Canyon Day Livestock Association where Dave Womack and Sisto Hernandez (NRCS TSP) gave a presentation on invasive weeds, state and transition models and prescribed grazing. Handouts were distributed among the attendees that demonstrated the benefits of prescribed grazing. In addition, an identification key of typical invasive plants found in the area was also handed out to the participants.

The last stop was at the Cedar Creek Sewage Lagoon site where two revetments and four stream barbs were installed to help armor the bank of the lagoon. This project was funded by the EWP to keep the lagoon's bank from continued erosion which would threaten the community of Cedar Creek and water quality in downstream watersheds. Rick Di Valentino (WMAT Land Operations Program Manager) and Jan Pertruzzi presented the history of the project.

By the end of the day, there were a lot of positive comments about the field day and a request for more in the future. Besides members and employees of the WMAT in attendance, there were members of the Hopi Tribe that also attended.



**Guests touring the seasonal high tunnel system located on the farm.**



**Guests learned about soil while getting to investigate a soils pit illustrating the different soil layers.**



**Attendees learned about invasive weeds, state and transition models, and prescribed grazing.**

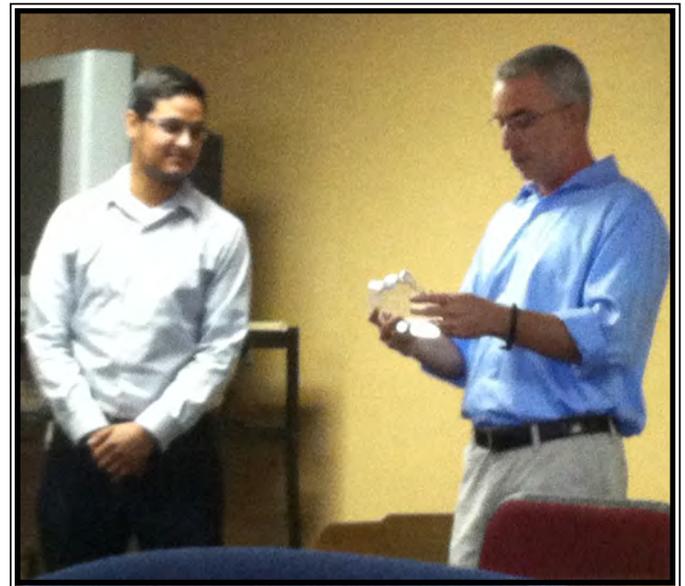
## Coming to an NRCS Office Near You!

BY KEISHA TATEM, NRCS STATE CONSERVATIONIST



In November, I attended the Area 1 All-Employee meeting in Flagstaff. I enjoyed seeing our Area 1 staff and assisting in presenting awards for all your hard work and efforts this past year. Later in the month, I attended the Arizona Farm Bureau Statewide Conference. In December, I had the pleasure of attending the Area 2 All-Employee meeting and awards presentation. Again, thank you for all that you have achieved over this last year! The week before Christmas found me in St. Michaels for a meeting of the Navajo Conservation District Executive Board, and in Flagstaff for a video teleconference with the Arizona Association of Tribal Conservation Districts.

As you may already know, as part of my Senior Executive Service Development Program, I am required to complete a four-month developmental assignment outside of the agency, which I will begin in February. However, I will not be too far away, because I will be taking a temporary position with the Arizona Department of Water Resources in Phoenix. In my absence, from February 11 through May 31, 2013, Curtis Elke, Assistant State Conservationist in South Dakota, will be the Acting State Conservationist in Arizona. Please help in providing him a warm welcome!



**Right: An award presented by Curt Clark to Carlos Joya for his efforts in representing NRCS in working with a contractor to complete land improvements at the Tucson Plant Materials Center.**



**Above and Right: Area 1 staff met at the Flagstaff Area Office for an all employee meeting. Awards were also presented.**

# Acting AZ State Conservationist

Welcome to Arizona NRCS, Curtis Elke!



NRCS Arizona is pleased to welcome Curtis Elke as the Acting State Conservationist while State Conservationist Keisha Tatem is on detail with the Arizona Department of Water Resources.

Curtis, a native from the small town of Cavalier, North Dakota, comes to Arizona by way of South Dakota, where he is the Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations. In November of 2011, Curtis accepted a 4-month detail to Washington, D.C. to work with the national conservation initiatives team. Curtis continues to serve on National and multi-state committees related to wetland compliance within the Prairie Pothole Region.

Prior to his time in South Dakota, Curtis was the Assistant State Conservationist for Operations in Massachusetts. In addition, Curtis served as a District Conservationist and Civil Rights Representative in Oklahoma for several years. His work there included forestry, pastureland management, water quality, livestock management, pecan plantations, nursery tree farms, sod farming, and waste management systems. Curtis enjoyed working closely and in harmony with the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Curtis started his career with USDA as a GS-3/5/7 Soil Conservation Technician in Cavalier, North Dakota from 1985 to 1991. After graduating from North Dakota State University in 1993 with multiple degrees in Horticulture and Landscape design, Soil Science, and coursework emphasizing Civil Engineering, Curtis decided to experience corporate America by working for several years as National and International Sales Manager for Concord Soil Exploration and Environmental Drilling Equipment, a subsidiary of Amity Technology and Case International.

Curtis comes to us with multi-state experiences and a very good agricultural background, having been associated with farming and ranching all his life. He and his family grew sugar beets, hard red spring wheat, pinto beans, and sunflowers on their 1,300 acre farm. Curtis has a strong appreciation for wildlife management and is an avid outdoorsman. Some of Curt's other accomplishments have included assisting with the design of an executive 18-hole golf course in Dallas/Ft. Worth in 2005 and helping invent and patent a laser alignment system for the utility, commercial, and recreation trailer industry as well as a small drilling rig for indoor/outdoor environmental test drilling.

Curtis has two children, Joshua, who lives in Rolla, North Dakota, and Carlee, who lives in Hazen, North Dakota. Both Joshua and Carlee work for NRCS as Soil Conservationists in North Dakota. Curtis has one granddaughter, Laney, who has been known to steal his heart a time or two.

Besides spending time with his family, Curtis has many hobbies that he enjoys such as hiking, golfing, fishing, downhill skiing, weight lifting, landscape design, community involvement, and encouraging others.

# Give, Eat, and Give Some More!

*Celebrating National Service Day*

BY JANELLA CRUZ, FLAGSTAFF SOIL SURVEY OFFICE SOIL SCIENTIST



**From left Shai Schendel, Janella Cruz, Harry Hosler, Dan Perkins, Russell Plumb, Daniel Vernon and Jim Harrigan at the Flagstaff Shelter Services in Flagstaff, Arizona.**

On a crisp sunny Tuesday morning, January 15, 2013, the Flagstaff Soil Survey Office volunteered on USDA's National Service Day in remembrance to Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. Our volunteer services started in the morning with Shai Schendel, Rangeland Management Specialist from the Flagstaff Field Office, Russell Plumb, Project Leader, and Dan Perkins, MLRA Soil Survey Leader from Flagstaff SSO. They went to the Flagstaff Shelter Services for the Homeless and prepared and served breakfast, followed by cleaning and organizing donations received from Jim Harrigan, Soil Scientist, Daniel Vernon, Earth Team Volunteer and Janella Cruz, Soil Scientist also from the Flagstaff SSO. At the shelter we were warmly greeted by the volunteer staff and homeless individuals from Coconino

County. The people served were primarily chronically homeless, clients that have long term disability, veterans, and people who have experienced domestic violence. In addition to volunteering at the shelter, Shai Schendel and Harry Hosler, Soil Scientist from the Flagstaff SSO, donated 32 lbs of buffalo, deer, and elk meat to the Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry organization. Our time and service has been a welcoming experience and an appreciation shared from both sides. Giving back to the community was a great way to spend National Service Day.

## Passing of Larry Ellicott



Larry David Ellicott of Gilbert, AZ passed away on January 18, 2013 in Gilbert, AZ at the age of 68. Larry was born December 9, 1944, in Grand Junction, CO to Leslie Don and Elaine Ellen Borky Ellicott.

Larry graduated from Central High School in Clifton, CO, served in the U.S. Navy during the Viet Nam War and was a graduate of the University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ. Larry spent 30 years working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service as a Range Management Specialist designing farm and ranch plans to help agricultural producers conserve their natural resources.

Larry enjoyed photography, woodworking and camping trips with his children and grandchildren. Larry was talented, hardworking, and a loving husband, father and grandfather. A true gentleman, who is remembered for always having a friendly smile and a willingness to help others.

Larry is survived by his wife of 40 years, Sherry Lynn Fuhrmeister Ellicott of Gilbert, AZ; sons, Terry (Meighan) Ellicott of Gilbert, AZ, Lauren (Luann) Ellicott of Mesa, AZ; daughter, Elizabeth Ellicott of Queen Creek, AZ; father, Leslie Ellicott of Clifton, CO; brother, Scott Ellicott of Houston, TX; sister, Janet Meadows of Colorado Springs, CO and 9 grandchildren. Larry's mother Elaine preceded him in death.

A Memorial service will be held at 2:00 PM, Saturday, February 2, 2013, at Falconer Funeral Home, 251 W. Juniper Ave., Gilbert, AZ.

Employee Updates

**Steve Barker, State Resource Conservationist, Phoenix State Office, has retired effective November 3, 2012.**

**Deborah Lauer, Management Assistant, Phoenix MLRA/Soil Survey Office, has retired effective January 3, 2013.**

**Jerry Gilmore, District Conservationist, Kayenta Field Office, has retired effective January 12, 2013.**

**Mark Jalving, Soil Conservation Technician, Flagstaff Field Office, has retired effective January 12, 2013.**

**George Couch has been selected as the National Public Affairs Specialist (Intranet) effective November 18th.**

**James Mellon has been reassigned effective November 4th, as the Administrative Assistant to Engineering and Technology.**

**Becky Creekmore has been reassigned effective November 4th, as the Administrative Assistant to the Administrative Section.**

## New Employee

Welcome to Arizona NRCS!



**ARNELIS CRESPO:**

I am a soil conservationist at the Yuma field office since December of 2012. Prior to my move to the state of Arizona, I worked for Iowa NRCS for over three years.

I moved to Iowa after I finished my graduate degree at the University of Puerto Rico in 2009. I have a BA in soil science and a MS in agronomy with specialty in tropical fruit crops. During my college experience, I was able to perform different internships with USDA-ARS and North Dakota State University. I assisted researchers and professors in their respective projects. Some of the projects involve testing new plant varieties for different traits and working with biocontrols. As part of my job at the tropical research station,

I performed the germplasm characterization of a banana and mamey sapote collections. The information developed has been published at the USDA national database and will provide information to plant breeders and germplasm curators through the world.

In my spare time, I enjoy traveling to new places, such as San Diego. I like to attend museums or historical landmarks, try new ethnic restaurants, watch movies, and hike in parks. My passion is to explore and go to as many places as I can, and in the future tell my children all about it!

## New Additions!



**Amanda Sutter and husband Ryan are expecting their first child! Baby Sutter is due June 26th.**

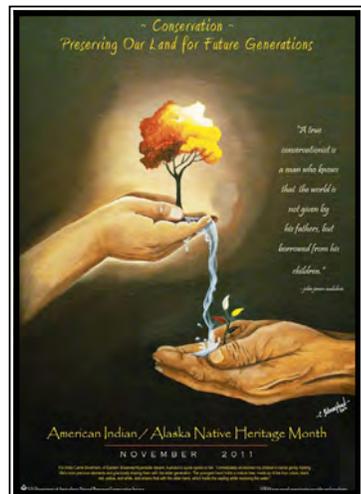


**Proud parents, Chase and Justine Skaarer, have a beautiful new addition to their family, Calder Phillips Skaarer. Calder was born on November 5th at 10:20 a.m. at 6lbs and 11oz. Congratulations!**

## Requesting Arizona Tribal Artwork

The Public Affairs staff is working on a banner display targeted toward Arizona Tribal audiences. We need your help! We are looking for Arizona Tribal artwork to feature on the display. The concept is similar to that of the American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month posters. If you know of a Native American artist who would provide us permissions to use some artwork please notify:

**Amanda Sutter**  
[amanda.sutter@az.usda.gov](mailto:amanda.sutter@az.usda.gov)  
 602-280-8778



## It's Ok....Just Laugh!



### Dates to Remember

- February 2: Groundhog Day
- February 14: Valentine's Day
- February 18: President's Day
- March 17: Saint Patrick's Day
- March 31: Easter Day

**Horizons** is a quarterly publication for Arizona employees of the NRCS

Questions, comments, and articles can be submitted to:

**Amanda Sutter, Public Affairs Specialist**  
 (602) 280-8778  
[amanda.sutter@az.usda.gov](mailto:amanda.sutter@az.usda.gov)