JUNE 1999

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS in California

United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Davis, California

50,000-ACRE MARK IN VIEW FOR RESTORED CALIFORNIA WETLANDS

See Page 5

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Photosphere...

Johnson Recognized

During the 14th Annual Black History Month Celebration on February 28, Contract Specialist **Ed Johnson** received a well-deserved Certificate of Appreciation from the Interagency Black Employment Program Council at the 14th Annual Black History Month celebration. The award was in recognition of Johnson's dedication in working on the IBEPC committee. Shown here, Johnson (far left) with Administrative Assistant **Virginia Lewis,** and Regional Civil Rights Manager **Johnnie Carter**.

Johnson is the Black Special Emphasis Program Manager for the State Office and participates regularly in local community programs, educating youth about the opportunities with NRCS and other agencies. Johnson wishes to thank State Conservationist **Jeff Vonk** for supporting the event, and all of the NRCS employees who attended the celebration.

Conservation Vehicle Debuts at South Coast RC&D Open House

On April 16, celebrants at South Coast RC&D's open house saw the debut of "Conservation on Wheels," a new mobile conservation education vehicle that the RC&D will use at schools, fairs, and civic functions. The vehicle was purchased and modified with a grant of $39,000 through NRCS's Resource Conservation and Community Development Division.

Shown above, a rather ordinary recreational vehicle before receiving its new paint scheme. At right, adorned with colorful conservation scenes, Conservation on Wheels looks ready for action. The original concept drawings for the artwork were done by **Tina Vander Hoek**, Soil Conservationist at the Templeton Service Center.

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CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS STAFF

JUNE 1999

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A Message from Jeff

I have been in California with you now for nearly a year. It doesn't seem possible to me–but it is true. It has been a time of meeting and greeting, of hard work and of good times. I have seen you all in San Diego in a conference setting (we need to do that again sometime!) and many of you in work settings. It has been a year of few complaints–either from you or me–and a year of much success for conservation in California.

Thank you all for all your contributions to this great conservation effort in this great state. I hear from our partners often, recognizing in a most positive way what NRCS brings to the table. They want only what we want–more of the same. More help and more resources to help private landowners get conservation on the ground. It doesn't appear likely that the budget will allow more staff next year, but continuing to work ever more closely with Resource Conservation Districts can help us achieve that bottom line of soil, water, air, and other natural resource conservation.

To that end, our Area Conservationists and Assistant State Conservationists, with CARCD concurrence, have come to me with a plan that we believe will help us achieve that goal. We have begun a process of realigning our areas and clusters to coincide with the ten CARCD Areas. We recently have advertised to fill a new position of Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, to be located in Riverside. This position will serve as coach, mentor, arbiter, and supervisor for the three clusters in Southern California. We will be moving to further empower our District Conservationists to work together and in concert with RCD Directors in directing operations for the entire cluster. These cluster leadership boards, which will include RC&D Coordinators, will share responsibility for technical assistance for the cluster area as opposed to a single district or a couple of districts.

I believe this modified structure offers several advantages over where we are today. It takes the job of Area Conservationist (now ASTC for Field Ops) and makes the area somewhat more manageable geographically. It organizes our line officers at the field level into management teams responsible for field operations and technical assistance along broad watershed boundaries. It parallels our organization closely with our core partners, the RCDs. This will improve our daily interactions with local district leaders at the watershed level and will allow for decision making to occur more frequently with RCD input. We have a strong and healthy working relationship with districts in California–this should help that grow even stronger.

I have asked the ASTCs to work with me in scheduling cluster meetings around the state so that I can come and meet with all of you personally on this and other important issues. I hope we can accomplish this by the end of August. I look forward to the dialog and wish you all a successful summer. Be healthy and safe!

Jeff

Shasta Livestock Auction Yard Tackles Water Quality Issues

By
Patrick Evans
Soil Conservationist
Redding Service Center

Before the Federal Clean Water Act of 1972, the negative impacts on natural resources were not always considered when designing and constructing agricultural projects. And water quality was not a priority in 1966 when the Shasta Livestock Auction Yard (SLAY) was intentionally constructed on a hill in Cottonwood to allow the animal waste to flow downhill into the Sacramento River.

"The fact that the livestock yard was constructed on a slope has been one of our main obstacles in complying with the water quality standards," commented SLAY manager **Andy Peek**. "We have spent approximately a third of a million dollars in the last ten years to control the animal waste. During heavy rainfall of the past three years, the runoff has been enormous and difficult to deal with."

On open range, animal waste may be spread over hundreds of acres. SLAY, however, must deal with large amounts of waste in a very small area. With an average of 2,500 cattle per week on the lots for two or three days, each animal producing approximately 40 pounds of manure and 15 pounds of urine daily, SLAY must handle and dispose of more waste than the entire town of Cottonwood.

"Shasta Livestock had been cited for animal waste contamination in the Anderson-Cottonwood Irrigation Canal several years ago," said **Jim Rohrbach**, of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, a State agency that controls the discharge of waste into the water. "With an average cost of $700,000 to investigate and file charges against violators, we have found it best to work with the businesses to solve their problems, and use legal action only as a last resort," he said.

"Because of the low profit margins in the cattle industry in Shasta County," said Peek, "we were unable to see how we could afford to handle the waste and still abide by the regulations and restrictions related to water quality standards."

Shasta Livestock Auction Yard is the only large confined animal operation in Shasta County.

"While considering SLAY's options, Peek learned of USDA's Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and got in touch with **Bob Bailey**, NRCS District Conservationist in Shasta County. In April 1997, Bailey and **Gerry Hubatka**, NRCS Civil Engineering Technician for Shasta County, began helping SLAY control the waste. Through EQIP, NRCS provided technical support and funding for designing an irrigation system and to smooth the land for irrigated pasture that can be used as a temporary holding paddock. The project was completed last September.

SLAY's animal waste is now controlled by two methods. Solid waste is stockpiled and sold to developers as a soil amendment to mix into the clay soils found in Shasta County or to use as a mulch. The suspended solids and liquid waste that are washed away by rain are diverted into ditches and directed into holding ponds. As the solids settle, wastewater is pumped out and sprayed on land that has been smoothed and seeded to provide pasture for cattle. As the water percolates through the soil, nutrients from the waste are trapped by soil particles and thus are available as nutrients for the grass roots to absorb. Water that seeps out of the pasture area is cleansed of pollutants and does not have a negative impact on water quality.

"The Central Valley Regional Control Board is satisfied with the results of the Livestock Yard's efforts," says Rohrbach, "and (we) are glad that they corrected the discharge problem without...legal action."

"NRCS has been a great help," comments Peek. "The paperwork was minimal and the specifications were realistic. With the 75% cost share, the Livestock Yard was able to afford this project and avoid any violations of water quality."

NRCS Anticipates 50,000 Acre-Mark

During National Wetlands Month

By Anita K. Brown
State Information Officer, Davis SO

May was a big month for NRCS wetlands restoration in California. There was a record 5,000-acre parcel signed up in Sacramento County, a big NRCS-led partner celebration, a well-attended wetland tour with television coverage, an Associated Press article that ran in at least 10 newspapers—and, some controversy here and there as well. But then May is National Wetlands Month, so perhaps it was an appropriate time for all the buzz and attention.

Through the Wetlands Reserve Program and the Floodplain Easement Program, NRCS has restored (or is in the process of restoring) 42,876 acres of wetlands since 1992.

Below on the right, wetlands biologist Alan Forkey explains the practices adopted to restore a parcel of wetlands through the Wetlands Reserve Program.

"We expect to reach the 50,000-acre mark for restoring California wetlands by the year's end," says **Jeffrey Vonk**, State Conservationist for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in California. "With May being National Wetlands month we couldn't pass up the opportunity to celebrate a little with our partners." To that end, NRCS hosted an awards celebration on May 5 followed by a tour of WRP properties at the Butte Lodge and Behring Ranch on May 6.

"Although California lost over 90 percent of its wetlands to agricultural and urban development early in the twentieth century, we can now say that agriculture is a significant contributor to wetland restoration in California," says **Alan Forkey**, NRCS Wetlands Biologist. "And WRP is a major contributor to that successful turnaround," he adds.

State Conservationist Jeff Vonk gives a grateful handshake to Bob McLandress, partner on many of California's recent wetlands restoration projects.

Biologists Forkey and **Larry Norris** also teamed up with Public Affairs to help Associated Press feature a California landowner who is participating in the program. (Fortunately, the article didn't mention how Norris' retriever fetched a coot from the property.) They are also working together on an exciting new 3-D wetlands display and publicity program to tell Californians more about the many benefits of wetlands conservation.

The Wetlands Reserve Program has proven exceedingly popular in California, currently funding is only available for about 10 percent of those who voluntarily pursue the program. However, WRP will reach its Congressionally-mandated acreage cap in 2000. Congress is expected to discuss the program and its possible renewal next session.

***Deb Shlaufman**, partnering wetlands biologist for Fish & Wildlife Service, surveys the wetlands view toward the Sutter Buttes on a recent celebration tour.*

Civil Rights Update

By Mark Steffek
Civil Rights Committee Chair

The National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees Annual Training Conference will be June 14-18 in Las Vegas at the Tropicana. Two special newsworthy items are that **Oscar Hernandez**, RC&D Coordinator for Central Sierra is the National Natural Resources Committee Chair and California's own **Sammy Moore, Jr.** will sing the National Anthem at this conference. Contact **Tish Espinosa**, (209)727-5319 for more information.

MultiCultural Day will be held in five locations:

Tuesday	August 10	Redding
Thursday	August 12	Davis
Friday	August 13	Santa Maria
Monday	August 16	Visalia
Wednesday	August 25	Indio

The main focus for this year is Program Delivery: How to deal with different populations. The presenter is **Karen Williams** from Cleveland, OH. Williams, a diversity counselor/comedienne, will enlighten us about a difficult topic with a humorous approach. Contact **Brenda Sanden** at (530) 792-5681 for more information.

Another Harmony Workshop will be held October 4-7, 1999, in Idlewild, CA. The Workshop will be offered to district conservationists who could not attend last fall and to field staff who work directly with Indian Tribes. Contact Workshop Coordinator, **Marsha Gery**, at (530) 792-5604 for more information.

The next Civil Rights Advisory Committee meeting will be held September 14-16 in Fresno. Contact Chairman **Mark Steffek** (530) 233-8868, your Area CRAC representative, or any of the other members for more information or concerns to be brought before the Committee.

The Federally Employed Women (FEW) will have their 1999 National Training Program July 19-23 at the Phoenix Civic Center in Phoenix, AZ. Contact **Gwen Gilbert**, Federal Women's Program Manager for California at (805) 928-9269 Ext. 108 for more information.

The Civil Rights Advisory Committee concluded their summer meeting in Davis June 1-3. On Wednesday, June 2, the area conservationists and staff leaders from the State Office were present to develop a closer working relationship between the management team and the Committee. We spent about 2 1/2 hours discussing our roles and how we can cooperate to ensure equal opportunity and quality service to employees and customers. This marked a milestone in working relationships for civil rights that will be continued into the future.

In July, check the vacancy announcements for positions on the Civil Rights Advisory Committee. Two positions will be offered: Disabilities Special Emphasis Program Manager (now held by **Brenda Sanden**) and Black Special Emphasis Program Manager (now held by **Ed Johnson**). Feel free to contact either of these SEPMs regarding their duties. Also, discuss this collateral duty assignment with your supervisor and obtain his or her approval.

Congratulations to **Barbara Ammon**, Area I Administrative Assistant, for winning the National Individual Civil Rights Award. As you may recall, Barbara also won the California Individual Civil Rights award, presented to her at the all employee meeting in San Diego in January. Way to go, Barbara!!! A bulletin in August will request nominations for civil right awards for FY 99. Barbara has shown that California NRCS employees do outstanding work in civil rights. These people need to be recognized for their efforts.

Introduction to Water Quality
Training on the Web

A self-paced course called *Introduction to Water Quality* is now available on the World-Wide-Web through National Employee Development Center. Using remote learning techniques, employees can receive water-quality training and earn a certificate of competency.

The course requires about 20 hours of home study for completion. Prospective students can register for the course right on the National Employee Development Center's homepage at <http://www.ftw.nrcs.usda.gov/nedc/homepage.html>.

To register, click on the introduction to Water Quality training program to receive program information and begin registration.

More than 469 participants from 47 states and territories have already taken advantage of this great opportunity. From September through January, 410 participants were tested. Of these, 250 (61%) were federal employees. Of the total number that have been tested, 167 have passed and 59 have passed with 80% or above.

Partnership to Provide Health Care Facility

By
Kate Simpson, Information/Education Tech. Weaverville FO

The Natural Resources Conservation Service in Eureka is participating in a creative partnership effort on a project to construct a health care facility to serve North Coast American Indian communities. The project is headed by the United Indian Health Services (UIHS), a nonprofit organization which has been providing health care to nine tribes and 13,000 American Indian community members for over 25 years. This singular facility will combine the medical clinic with a community cultural center and a restored environmental setting to become a modern realization of the American Indian integrated approach to health and wellness.

The UIHS Board of Directors (above) are pleased that the project is underway.

Through the Wetland Reserve Program, NRCS is helping restore an important wetlands area that is known to be a historic oxbow formation of the Mad River and is known to have been used by Wiyot Indians. Native grasses and plants important to the local American Indian culture as medicinal and basketry materials will be planted on the site. Student trainees from Humboldt State University's Indian Natural Resource Science and Engineering Program (INRSEP) will be incorporated into the native grass, wetland and upland restoration efforts.

*From left to right, UIHS Board Chair **Maria Tripp**, Executive Director **Jerome Simone**, and Health Village Project Manager **Mark Maldonado** provide background information on the project before the digging begins.*

Last fall a ground-breaking ceremony was held to initiate Phase One, which includes building the access road from James Road and the wetlands restoration of four acres of wetland.

"We are pleased to be working with a great partnership," said Jim Komar, District Conservationist at the Eureka Field Office. "We are just one piece of a larger picture that will blend health with natural resource values."

*NRCS District Conservationist **Jim Komar** (far right with shovel) helps to get things started during the ground breaking-ceremony last fall.*

New Digs for Endangered Ducks

By Lisa Woo Shanks, Resource Conservationist, Petaluma ASO

Zero to Eighty in Four Years

By day, **Bob Kiser**, with his brother Bill, farm 1,500 acres of hayland on Camp 3 in the delta of Sonoma Creek. By night, closer to home along Sonoma Creek, he hand feeds 80-90 wood ducks. These beautiful little ducks congregate just north of Schellville in the mature riparian habitat during the winter. Bob supplemental feeds them with grain (whole corn) during the winter, and tapers off the feeding in the spring, as the ducks disperse to find nest sites. In years such as the last, with a light acorn crop, he feeds a little more to offset the loss of the mainstay of the wood duck's diet.

Five years ago, Bob built four wood duck nest boxes from redwood barn-wood, and placed them along the banks of Sonoma Creek. Occupancy occurred immediately, helped along with past efforts of August Sebastiani, who populated the area with wood ducks in the 1960s. From Bob Kiser's efforts alone, an estimated 200 hatchlings have been produced!

One year, Bob saw 12 hatchlings leave the nest. "They had different ways of leaving the box," laughed Bob. "Some fell out, and others leapt out." Each year, the four boxes were occupied, and one year, a pair of Mandarin ducks (nonnative) used a nest box.

One of Bob's wood duck nest boxes was irreparably damaged by winter storms, so he will add one from Southern Sonoma RCD. With his luck, he'll be feeding more wood ducks this winter.

Wood Duck Nest Boxes Available

Landowners interested in obtaining wood duck nest boxes for their property must have proper habitat and agree to install, maintain and monitor the boxes. Southern Sonoma RCD staff can assist with site recommendations, and a booklet with details on monitoring is available. Assistance to put up and monitor the boxes may also be available from volunteers at the Sonoma Ecology Center. Landowners will send their monitoring data to the California Waterfowl Association for inclusion in their statewide database.

The nest boxes are available to landowners along creeks in Sonoma Valley and the Petaluma River, with suitable habitat for wood ducks. RCD staff will assist in determining if your site(s) would be good wood duck nest sites. In the Sonoma Creek watershed, call **David Luther**. In the Petaluma River watershed, call **Paul Sheffer**. Phone (707) 794-1242, ext 3.

Southern Sonoma County RCD has joined forces with the Council of Bay Area RCDs to partner with an urban, multi-ethnic school in San Rafael, whose Industrial Arts (wood shop) class is building wood duck nest boxes. Davidson Middle School students are building nest boxes under the guidance of teacher **Peter Roodhuyzen**, who is using the project as a means where the students can help the environment. Funding for materials is provided by grants from Ducks Unlimited and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation.

With assistance from NRCS and Southern County RCD, eighth-graders at Davidson Middle School are making boxes that will become nesting sites for wood ducks, once abundant in Marin County and now increasingly rare.

What is SSURGO Anyway?

By Daryl Lund, State Resource Inventory Specialist, Davis SO

SSURGO...
This strange sounding word that you occasionally hear Soil Scientists and GIS folks throw around, does actually have a meaning. It stands for Soil Survey Geographic Database. We love acronyms, hence the word SSURGO.

What is a SSURGO dataset? SSURGO databases in their simplest form are referred to as digital soil survey datasets. If you think of them in terms of a published soil survey report, a SSURGO dataset would be comprised of the soil maps and the soil properties and interpretations tables.

In the digital world the soil map line work (delineations) and mapping unit symbols are referred to as spatial data because they represent a space or area on the land surface. Linked to the spatial database is a large relational database that contains attribute information about the soil properties and interpretations. Soil property information includes such things as soil texture, depth, permeability, pH, organic matter, and engineering properties. Soil interpretations includes such things as suitability for sanitary facilities, building site development, construction materials, yield data, and water management.

When the NRCS Soils Staff releases an official SSURGO dataset, it means that we are certifying not only the accuracy of soil line placement (spatial data) but also the accuracy of the attribute relational database information. We are also certifying that we are digitizing our soils data according to national standards established by the Soil Survey Division, the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) and the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). Our datasets are required to be consistent with industry standards and be compatible with other sources of geographic information. In the case of the NRCS, we most typically digitize our soils information to imagery that has been rectified and geo-referenced to the USGS 7.5" quadrangle format at a scale of 1:24,000.

SSURGO datasets are not complete digital soil survey reports. They contain no imagery or written soil survey text publication information. Imagery for SSURGO datasets is provided as a separate data layer. This data layer is referred to as Digital Orthophoto Quads (DOQ's). DOQ's are essentially digital, rectified, and geo-referenced aerial photography. SSURGO data can be combined with DOQ's in a GIS to produce standard soil survey atlas sheets but SSURGO and DOQ's should still be thought of as two separate data layers.

SSURGO datasets are primarily meant for use within Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in combinations with other digital datasets for resource planning and analysis purposes. SSURGO datasets have been constructed for import into most of the commonly used GIS software packages that are available today.

SSURGO datasets are not interactive soil surveys on CD ROM. They require a GIS software package and a working knowledge of software capabilities and analysis techniques. SSURGO datasets are the framework data that will be needed by the agency to start construction of some of the interactive soil survey products that are being planned for the future.

Invest in U.S. Savings Bonds!

THE 1999 SAVINGS BOND CAMPAIGN ENDS ON JUNE 18, 1999. ALL EMPLOYEES SHOULD ALREADY HAVE RECEIVED INFORMATION BROCHURES AND AUTHORIZATION CARDS.

TO SIGN UP OR INCREASE YOUR ALLOTMENT, JUST MAIL YOUR COMPLETED AUTHORIZATION CARD TO JODI NIELSEN AT THE STATE OFFICE.

A website is available for more information at **www.savingsbonds.gov**

Caligrams...

National Monitoring Programs Annual Conference at Morro Bay

By Scott Robbins, Project Leader
Morro Bay Watershed Enhancement Project

Morro Bay is hosting the 7th Annual National Nonpoint Source Monitoring Conference from September 13- 17, 1999. The conference, to be held at the Inn at Morro Bay, will focus on detecting change resulting from the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs).

The National Nonpoint Source Monitoring Program Conference will bring together land managers and water quality specialists and offers a forum to share valuable information on the effectiveness of BMPs in improving water quality and habitat. The workshop will focus on the successes of section 319 watershed projects from across the country and address challenges in the treatment and monitoring of nonpoint source pollution. Effective techniques to monitor cropland, rangeland and urban stormwater BMPs along with the application of statistical analyses to document measurable changes will also be covered. Progress of the individual National Monitoring Program (NMP) projects will be highlighted, as will other innovative water quality monitoring techniques and projects.

Throughout the week, workshop attendees will participate in technical sessions focused on detecting water and habitat quality improvements resulting from the implementation of BMPs. Field tours of ranches implementing controlled grazing and restoration projects in the Morro Bay Watershed will be offered. The "paired watershed" site on Cal Poly rangeland will also be featured.

Mark your calendar today, and contact the conference through the link on the Morro Bay National Estuary Programs website at www.mbnep.org

While you are online you should also check out the new website of the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District located at www.coastalrcd.org.

Water Education Foundation Sponsoring Tour of the Bay-Delta

By Paul Laustsen, SCEP Intern, Davis, SO

The Water Education Foundation is sponsoring a tour of the Bay-Delta on June 16-18, 1999. The Bay-Delta, heart of California's surface water delivery system, is a vital habitat for fish, birds and wildlife. The three day trip will discuss major issues facing the region including, but not limited to, levee subsidence and flood control, Delta farming, water quality, water project operations and efforts to protect fish, and ecosystem restoration projects. Registration fee for one person paid before June 4 is $525, two person, double occupancy room is $950. Fee includes all meals, lodging, transportation while on the tour and background material. For more information contact WEF at (916) 444-6240 or check out their web site **www.water-ed.org/events.htm#Bay-Delta**

Central Coast RC&D Council Receives Two Grant Awards

By Lillian Phillips, CCRC&D Administrative Assistant

The Central Coast Resource Conservation & Development (CCRC&D) Council has received grants for two projects from the California Department of Fish and Game. The Pajaro River Watershed Salmonid Habitat Enhancement Planning Project (PRWSHEP) was approved for $43,265 and the Pajaro River Watershed Council Organization, Support and Assistance Project (PRWCOSA) was approved for $15,000.

PRWSHEP will prepare a salmonid habitat and restoration plan for tributaries of the Pajaro River. Species benefited will be steelhead trout and, possibly, Coho salmon. PRWCOSA will provide outreach and education to landowners and other stakeholders in the Pajaro River watershed. The focus will be on the need and methods for salmonid habitat restoration.

Both projects will begin in July of 1999. The focus will be on Corralitos, Pesadero, Llagas, Uvas, and Pacheco Creek drainages.

Water Supply Outlook in the Klamath Basin

By Marianne Hallet, Water Supply Specialist, Davis SO

The snowpack as of February 1 was 134 percent of average in the Klamath Basin, a 6 percent increase since the previous month. January precipitation was 131 percent of average, the greatest percentage in the state. Since the start of the water year on October 1, the precipitation in the basin has been 119 percent of average. Water stored in the major irrigation reservoirs was 134 of average at the end of January. The February through July streamflow forecast ranges from 121 percent of average for the inflow into the Gerber Reservoir to 135 percent of average at the Williamson River near Chiloquin. Adequate water supplies should be available to most water users in the basin this year.

Nefarious Night Creature Attacks Service Center Worker

By Paul Laustsen, SCEP Intern, Davis, SO

Great Scott, Batman! We have bats in our building!

A USDA employee at the Richard E. Lyng building in Davis must have been feeling a little batty after discovering a bat on the first floor of the Service Center on March 17. **Al Irvin**, Compliance Investigator with USDA's Risk Management Agency, decided to capture and release the bat, which he did, only to notice that he had been bitten by his fanged friend. Irvin underwent treatment for the bite, including rabies shots. Animal experts, called in to determine whether other bats were inside the building, were unable to find more of the flittering invaders.

BENGEN

Techno-tool for a Locally Led Process

By Madalene Ransom, State Economist, Davis SO

Calculating the benefits of a proposed flood-control project can be time consuming and frustrating, but with BENGEN help is just a mouse click away.

BENGEN is a BENefits GENerator written as a Microsoft Excel workbook that I created to estimate the benefits from a potential PL-566 project in the East Santa Maria Watershed. BENGEN estimates the average annual agricultural and nonagricultural benefits from a flood-control project. It could potentially be used in a locally led process to help local leaders evaluate any policy or project that changes the outcome of a flood.

How BENGEN Estimates Agricultural Benefits

Using appropriate interest compounding, BENGEN integrates the following information:

- Number of agricultural acres flooded
- Depth of flooding (both with and without the project)
- Proportional distribution of typical crops in the area
- Crop budget for each of the typical crops
- Logical links between the crop budget and the damage equations

How BENGEN Can Support a Locally Led Process

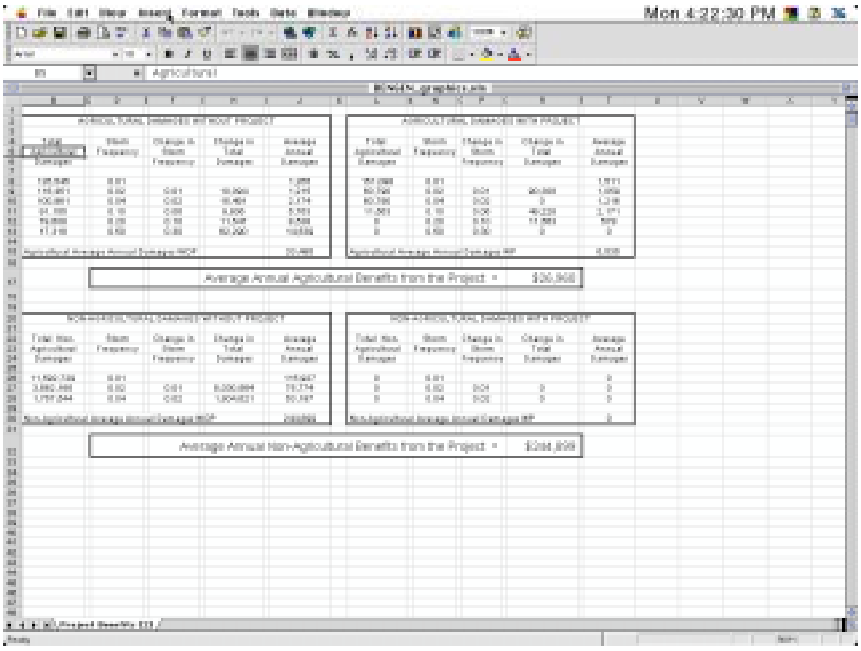
Having all the necessary components, BENGEN is a complete benefits generator. All parts of a flood damage conversation are represented in the program. And, because BENGEN is contained in an Excel workbook, it can easily be transported to a locally led meeting. Also, the benefits information can be projected on to a wall or screen in the meeting room, structuring the group's conversation about flood management alternatives. For example, if hydrology information is missing, local experts could provide acreage estimates and flood depths. If crop budget information is missing, local experts can quickly summarize agricultural practices of the local area. If agricultural experts are discussing flood damages, relevant information can be entered into the program as logical links between crop budgets and damage equations.

Thus, although BENGEN was created for a PL-566 effort, the program's versatility presents many possibilities for spin-off uses in a locally led process of identifying or resolving potential flood control projects and policies.

For more information about BENGEN, contact Madalene Ransom via e-mail or call (530) 792-5670.

Using hydrology data and a description of an agricultural area in terms of representative crops, BENGEN can be programmed to represent damage that will result from flooding, both with and without a proposed project.

Because all of the data is contained in an Excel workbook, BENGEN can efficiently run what-if scenarios, allowing planners to easily explore alternatives.



Personnel Notes . . .

by Tracy D. McDermott, Admin. Asst.

Well the warm weather and long days are finally upon us, hardly the time to be thinking about ones demise but that is what the government has asked us to do when they provided us with an open season for the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI). FEGLI started an open enrollment for employees beginning April 24 through July 31. They are giving employees the opportunity to enroll, change and supplement their existing policy. We have already had many inquiries, if you haven't received a booklet outlining the changes and general questions regarding the policy please contact your area office. Also a reminder for employees who have had FEGLI for many years, make sure the beneficiary you have on your policy is up to date. If you did not designate a beneficiary it will automatically go to your spouse or children or surviving relatives. Please check out the website www.opm.gov/insure/life if you want more information.

Another open season we have right now is for the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). Beginning May 15 through July 31 you can make changes to your existing allocations. Check out the TSP web site <www.tsp.gov> for more information.

Life is full of changes and it is important to make sure your personnel information is current and to your liking. The easiest way to do this is through Employee Express. I know, I know, you lost your PIN number and you can't be bothered to look for it or get another one. Well, all you have to do is call 912-757-3030, it is an automated system and in 3 minutes you can get another code on its way to your home. It usually takes about 5 days to get there. Once you have your PIN you can initiate actions on allotments involving your checking or savings, your health benefits, TSP, federal and state taxes and address changes. All you have to do is call 800-827-6291 or www.employeeexpress.gov. Empower yourself and give it a try.

Another effort made to help employees, is the Work Number for Everyone. If you are applying for loans, and who hasn't had to do that, the USDA is offering a service to expedite the process. The Work Number for Everyone will quickly verify your employment and speed up your loan consideration. So call your area office if you do not have the brochure explaining more about this program.

Okay, onto another interesting topic - Violence in the Workplace. Everyone should have or is planning to watch the video about this subject. It is a mandatory watch and everyone needs to have viewed it no later than July 31, 1999. The areas have copies of the tape, so plan on grabbing some popcorn, putting your feet up and viewing this important broadcast.

Well, the folks in Human Resources hope this information will help you in the months to come. Enjoy your summer!

PERSONNEL CHANGES

NAME	POSITION	ACTION	GRADE	LOCATION	DATE
K. Arroues	Sup Soil Scientist	Promotion	GS-12	Hanford SSO	2/14/99
G. Gomez	Soil Consv Tech	Career Promotion	GS-07	Modesto FO	2/14/99
A. Perry	Soil Consv Tech	Temp Appt	GS-04	Auburn FO	1/17/99
S. Litman	Ag Engineer	Resignation	GS-09	Livermore FO	1/13/99
M. Bischoff	Admin Asst.	Term Appt	GS-05	Davis SO	3/01/99
T. McDermott	Admin Asst.	Term Appt	GS-05	Davis SO	3/01/99
S. Toor	District Consv	Promotion	GS-12	Sacramento FO	3/01/99
K. Bannister	St. Trainee Soil Sci	SCEP Appt	GS-05	Templeton FO	3/26/99
J. Rodriguez	RC&D Coord	Reassignment	GS-12	Morro Bay	4/11/99
W. Anderson	Range Con	Conv to CC/Promo	GS-07	Red Bluff	4/11/99
T. Tang	St Tr Engineer	Resignation	GS-05	Bakersfield	4/09/99

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS *in* *California*

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
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Davis, California 95616

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