

*Natural Resources Conservation Service
National Employee Development Center
Fort Worth, Texas*



The NEDC Basic Field Course delivered recently to students at Shepardstown, West Virginia is undergoing changes for the better.

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Director's Corner

Charles Adams

The year is 2008 and Alfred Curry, GS-9 Range Conservationist has completed his Individual Development Plan. The last course, "Prescribed Burning 1005", in the National Employee Development Center's Plant Series, was where he gained first hand experience in the design of prescribed burns and the actual application of prescribed burning.

Curry's supervisor acknowledges his accomplishment. He reports that the employee has also now earned an Associate Degree through a skillfully developed process whereby NEDC, in cooperation with several national

universities, provided both Continuing Education Units and college credits for selected courses offered through the National Employee Development Center.

This scenario will more likely become a reality as the National Employee Development Center embarks on a new endeavor in FY-05 to array all 96 courses offered at the center into the six SWAPA- Soil, Water, Animals, Plants, Air plus Human areas. Training specialists along with course technical coordinators will determine the order in which each course should be taken. Each course will have clearly defined prerequisites except the introduction courses.

The Center will announce in early FY-05 those universities and colleges participating in this new program.

In addition, Alfred may enhance his career through other educational opportunities offered by NEDC such as the Education Grants Program. Through the Education Grants Program Alfred may have taken two college courses that helped him achieve a Bachelor of Science Degree that he achieved through his own efforts.

Alfred may be able to compete for a spot in the NRCS Graduate Studies Program now open to GS-9 and above employees in the technical arena, and GS-13 and above in the management arena. Learning assessments will help Alfred identify areas of weakness that he can work on using NEDC course material.

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All of the training Alfred received through NEDC can now be monitored to insure the training is the absolute best by initiating a Level 4 evaluation process.

This means Alfred's supervisor will be contacted to determine if the training Alfred received is actually being applied on the job. Other learning opportunities include on-line web-based training classes and self-study programs.

Where did Alfred go to obtain all of his training? It could be at one of the new 18 training locations identified by NEDC across the country to provide the best learning environment possible. He received this training through highly professional NEDC certified instructors because in the future all of our trainers will go through a training certification process.

Water Quality Training a Big Hit Overseas

*by Dave Drennan
Training Specialist*

NEDC's Introduction to Water Quality Training Program is popular with students overseas. So far, students in ten foreign countries have completed the self-study course and have passed the post test. Students in Romania, Canada, Philippines, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Indonesia, Australia, India, and Belgium have passed the course.

For the period of September, 1998 through June, 2004, 3835 students nationwide and overseas have taken and passed the Introduction to Water Quality course. Students in 58 states and territories have taken the course.



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ONE Again!

by Jerry Williams
Training Specialist

Yes, we are changing back! “Basic Field Conservation” (BFC) is being re-named to its original title of “Orientation for New Employees” (ONE).

Hopefully this will reduce the confusion that was created when the name was changed. ONE much better describes what the course is about, which is to give new and slightly used employees an overview or big picture of NRCS. The course strives to demonstrate the vast diversity of NRCS customers, partners, and the work NRCS and our partners are involved in to carry out the NRCS mission.

Conservation planning is the center piece; however, the course is not about improving your skills as a conservation planner. And, perhaps more importantly, ONE makes a much better acronym than BFC!



ONE course students gather around a soil pit at a recent session in Shepardstown, West Virginia.

TSP Training

by Jerry Williams
Training Specialist

NEDC is involved in an agency effort to assist in providing training for technical service providers (TSP's). NEDC's primary role is dealing with the TSP training issues.

These include determining the training needed by the TSP's, inventorying the training available that meets the needs, and assisting in providing the training needed but not currently available. NEDC is working closely with Angel Figueroa, National TSP Coordinator as well as a national training coordination group for TSP's consisting of a cross section of sources representing trainers outside the agency that could mobilize training needed by TSP's. NEDC expects to staff up to meet the new need as efforts move forward.

Travel Tips

by Brenda Moore
Training Specialist

The best way to avoid jet lag when you travel, according to experts, is to exercise when you arrive at your destination before you retire to bed. A long hard walk, a 20-30 minute swim, running in place on a treadmill, or any exercise that will increase your heart rate will overcome jet lag. That's because your body generates endorphins, which are natural chemicals that help your brain and body relax.

Another tip is before retiring to bed the first night, buy a bread roll or other light snack and a bottle of water. Put them next to your bed so that if you wake up hungry, you can snack and then fall back to sleep without leaving your bed.

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Management Tip: Communicating to Persuade and Influence

The most common obstacles to getting your point across involve using words that you should avoid:

“You” -This simple pronoun, when overused, is the same as pointing a finger at the other person. That’s why “I” statements are so important when you negotiate. Studies have shown that the more a person used the pronoun “you,” the more upset the other person became. Structure your sentences with comments like, “I feel we need to talk about this,” instead of “You never listen to me.”

“But” -This conjunction is negative. It negates whatever came before it and automatically sours the communication process. If you say, “You are a valued employee, *but* I want to talk to you about being late,” you’ve negated the value of the employee. However, you can substitute the conjunction, “and” for “but” and say, “You are valued employee, *and* I want to talk to you about being late.” This statement gives equal value to both phrases and doesn’t negate what was positive.

“Can’t” -This little word implies failure and the determination not to change. When you say to another person, “I just can’t understand you,” you’re in effect saying, “I don’t want to try to understand you.” Substitute “don’t,” which implies a need to know more. Contrast, “I *can’t* understand you” with “I *don’t* understand you.”

“Always” or “Never”
Generalizations like these imply that something happens 100 percent of the time. “You never show up on time.” But rarely, if ever, is a person, thing, or fact “always” or “never.” Avoid these two words and stick to the facts. “You showed up late this morning.”



“Man does not live by words alone, but sometimes has to eat them.”

Adlai Stevenson

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TRAINING OFFICER PROFILE

Paul Swenson Alabama



*by Julie A. Best, Public Affairs Specialist, NRCS,
Auburn, Alabama*

Paul Swenson has been the Training Officer in Alabama since 1979. He's seen a lot of changes in the training program in those 25 years. "In the early days, most of the training was formal, classroom training coordinated by the Employee Development Center," says Swenson. "Today, primarily because of budget restrictions, our training program has a broader mix of on-the-job, in-state, and the traditional formal, classroom training. When you look at what we have done recently, you will notice that we are doing more to provide training within state. Our technical specialists have identified technical training that is needed and have developed

courses to prepare employees for new programs and technologies."

According to Swenson, the biggest change came about as a result of the I-CAMS program. In the past, everything was done with paperwork. Now, the training needs are identified through the electronic training needs inventory. Each employee and supervisor is responsible for inputting the training courses needed for the coming year. "That's the way we get the greatest bulk of our training identified and scheduled for the coming year," says Swenson. "Training needs that come up during the course of the year are dealt with on a case-by-case basis."

"Training is high priority in Alabama. Even in tight budget years, we just do not cut training. We take very seriously mandatory training, especially for new employees. We also are conscientious about scheduling management training as employees progress in their careers," says Swenson.

Not only does Swenson coordinate the Alabama Training Program, his knowledge and ability is recognized on a wider realm. He serves as a Human Resource representative on a national committee that is presently preparing a catalog of courses for RC&D coordinators. From time to time, he also serves as a trainer in other states.

The primary goal of the Alabama Training Program is to get people "up-to-snuff" so they can perform their jobs. That has been the goal for many years. Through the training program, all employees have the opportunity to develop the skills needed to perform their everyday tasks. "We have an excellent working relationship with the National Employee Development Center. That has been a great help to the success of our training program here in Alabama," says Swenson.

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“The Leader in You” Now Administered by NEDC

The Social Sciences Institute (SSI) and the National Employee Development Center (NEDC) have been the primary sponsors of The Leader in You series in recent years. The series' videotape lending library and live satellite seminar management has been transferred from the Social Sciences Institute to the National Employee Development Center.

The Leader in You series was developed in 1996 to provide cutting edge leadership programming to the Conservation Partnership. It has been managed for the past eight years by SSI's Grand Rapids, Michigan, office under the direction of Barbara Wallace, national community conservation relations manager. Wallace retired this summer. The Leader in You program coordinator, Becky Noricks, is completing her graduate degree.

The series has grown in popularity over the years with over 1,200 participant hand-out downloads for the April 2004 live seminar, "Leaders at All Levels" with Laree Kiely. The series' popularity has increased because of its accessibility to the live seminars and lending library and the series' relevance to

current issues facing the partnership in the areas of leadership, change, marketing, and communication. The Leader in You program is offered at no cost to staff and directors of NRCS, National Association of Conservation Districts, and the National Association of State Conservation Agencies.

The National Employee Development Center now manages The Leader in You's lending library. All videotape requests for the series should be directed to Georgia Spiller, 817-509-3254, or email: gspiller@ftw.nrcs.usda.gov.



HOT OFF THE PRESS, OR ROLLERS!

The Roller Compacted Concrete class scheduled for September, 2004 has been rescheduled to October 18 - 22, 2004. The class will be held in the NEDC Training Room at the Ft. Worth Federal Center.

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USDA eAuthentication Account ID

by *Dave Drennan*
Training Specialist

USDA eAuthentication account identification consists of a User ID, a password, and a customer profile that enables one to access a range of USDA applications. It provides the convenience of transacting business with USDA online, anytime, anywhere. There are two levels of access that can be used.

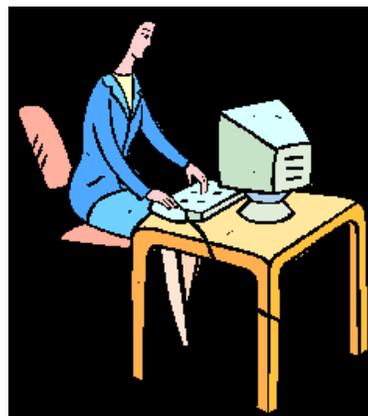
Level 1 access provides limited access to the USDA website and requires minimal security requirements. It does not allow conducting of official business transactions with the USDA via the Internet. To obtain a Level 1 access, a brief customer profile is completed. The user must have a valid email address. If an email address is needed, a permanent Internet Service Provider (ISP), online services such as Hotmail.com, provides free email accounts. If Level 2 access is desired, it may be obtained by simply logging into the profile and applying for the Level 2 access.

Level 2 access provides the ability to conduct official business transactions with the USDA via the Internet. The user must have a valid email address. A customer profile, user ID, and a password

are required to be completed. The user will receive a confirmation email that must be responded to within seven (7) days. Additionally, the user must prove their identity at the nearest USDA Service Center in person by presenting a government issued photo ID. USDA Service Center personnel will activate the account. Then the user will be required to update their account the next time they login for their Level 2 access.

Partners with USDA, particularly Technical Service Providers, will have to have a USDA eAuthentication Account ID to register for online training and conduct electronic business with USDA.

The web TCAS account user ID and password for NRCS employees is referred to as the USDA eAuthentication Account. See the website at: http://www.eauth.egov.usda.gov/eauth_WhatIsAccount.html for details.



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Introducing AgLearn-USDA's New Learning Management System

*by Tony Lovell
Training Specialist*

NRCS staff have been working with a team of USDA agency personnel to develop an enterprise-wide Learning Management System for USDA. The Agriculture Learning System, AgLearn, will allow USDA agencies to manage and deliver online training to employees and business partners. Through a partnership with GoLearn, which is part of the Presidential Management Initiative for eTraining, USDA is implementing AgLearn for all USDA employees.

All NRCS employees will now have access to AgLearn. Some activities that NRCS employees will have need to access AgLearn for include:

- Annual Computer Security Awareness Training. Mary Thomas, CIO will announce this training soon.
- Integrated Acquisition System: Management Services will require a number of employees to take training on this acquisition request system. Management Services will introduce this soon.
- Incident Command System -

USDA training for a standardized management plan creating a structure for federal, state and local incident response and recovery efforts, and outlining the ICS, a standard incident management structure related to emergency response needs.

- NRCS employees may view many free online courses that have been provided by GoLearn.
- NRCS online courses as they are moved to AgLearn.

AgLearn is integrated with eAuthentication. For access to AgLearn go to www.aglearn.usda.gov and use your eAuthentication ID and password.

At this time NRCS will use AgLearn for free online courses, and any department wide online training that is offered. Employees will continue to go to ICAMS for traditional NRCS instructor catalog led courses and non-catalog requests.

Direct login questions to your eAuthentication contact.



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Congratulations to Education Grants Recipients!

On May 12, 2004, 44 NRCS employees were selected nationwide to participate in the NRCS Education Grants Program.

The Education Grants Program is one component of the S.O.A.R. Program (Supplying Opportunities for Advancement and Redirection.) The Education Grants Program is a scholarship program which provides developmental opportunities for employees in grades GS 1-10. The program is designed to give highly motivated employees opportunities for career growth, development, and change.

Such developmental activities include, but are not limited to Government and non-Government training (college courses, USDA Graduate School, correspondence courses, training offered by various private organizations, etc.), developmental details and rotational assignments outside of the employee's geographic area. All training activities under this program are related to the mission of NRCS.

Congratulations to all of the recipients!

New Course Hits the Streets

*by Janie Wade
Training Specialist*

The new "Digital Soil Survey Mapping and Updating" course was piloted in February with two sessions taught in June and August of this year. This course provides training in the use of GIS software for onscreen soil survey mapping and editing. It focuses on enabling soil survey project offices to efficiently produce quality SSURGO (State Soil Survey Geographic Database) products. The training covers advanced features of the most current GIS software, such as ArcGIS 8.3 ArcInfo option and 3dMapper commercial version. Prerequisites include ArcGIS training and access to ArcGIS software.

Five course sessions are scheduled for FY 2005. Information about the "Digital Soil Survey Mapping and Updating" training is in the NRCS National Employee Development Center course catalog at: <http://www.nedc.nrcs.usda.gov/catalog/soildigit.html>.

For information about the prerequisite training, visit these Web sites: National Cartography and Geospatial Center GIS training at <http://www.ncgc.nrcs.usda.gov/branch/gdb/products/training/> or the ESRI online training Web site at <http://campus.esri.com/>.

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