A Moment With Local Conservationist, Ann Rippy

By Jon Oestreich, NRCS Soil Conservationist

As the 2011 Fiscal Year came to a close for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), so did the career of one its most experienced and enthusiastic employees. Ann Rippy has retired after 26 years (and change) of service with USDA. During that time, Ann has held multiple positions with the agency including; Soil Conservationist, District Conservationist, State Agronomist. She retired as a Resource Conservationist and was responsible for providing technical guidance and overseeing program implementation for an area that roughly covers three quarters of the Alaska’s land mass. Ann holds a Bachelor’s degree in Agronomy from Montana State in Bozeman, a Masters in Natural Resources Management with an Agronomy Emphasis from UAF, and she is a Certified Professional Agronomist with the Agronomy Society of America.

Ann’s contributions to the mission of the agency will be missed, but all is not lost. She will be returning on a part-time basis to provide training to newer employees and ensure they have the technical guidance and tools necessary for conservation planning. Ann took a moment to answer a couple questions I had about things she has learned during her career.

Q) What advice do you have for folks that are interested in pursuing a career in Natural Resource Conservation?
A) My advice is to take control of your own career, choose the area you want to specialize in, and make sure you have a strong technical background within that specialty.

Q) Do you have any advice for beginning agricultural producers in Interior Alaska?
A) Yes, have a business plan and do a marketing study. It focuses your investments on something that can bring you a return, and I’ve seen a lot of beginning farmers give up because they could not focus on a profit making crop. You should focus on what you can do better or what you can do that no one else can.

Q) If you could be any vegetable grown in Interior Alaska, what would it be? And why?
A) I would be a carrot because they are long, slender, and sweet. Carrots are also one of those things that you can grow better in Interior Alaska than most places in the world.
Congratulations to this year’s TVSF Winners!

**Bucks for Bales:**

1st Place—Tori Tomsha  
2nd Place—Keith Clark  
3rd Place—Gail & Larry Mayo  
Honorable Mention—Jenny M Farms

**Giant Cabbage Contest Winners:**

Youth—Wendy Anderson  
Adult—Brian Shumski

**Farm & Garden Display Contest Winners:**

Youth—BJ Yanuchi  
Adult—Cheryl Wood

*These contests are sponsored annually by FSWCD*

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**“National action may be led and aided by government, but the soil must be conserved ultimately by those who till the land and live by its products.”** -Hugh Hammond Bennett, 1st Chief of the Soil Conservation Service

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**Alaska Association of Conservation Districts Awards**

A A C D  p r e s e n t e d  s t a t e - w i d e  c o n s e r v a t i o n p a r t n e r s h i p  a w a r d s  a t  t h e i r  f a l l  m e e t i n g .  T h r e e  F S W C D  p a r t n e r s  w e r e  p r e s e n t e d  w i t h  a w a r d s :

**A A C D  V o l u n t e e r  A w a r d :**  
D i a n n e  C l a a s s e n  
Diane has been a volunteer for the Fairbanks Cooperative Weed Management Area for several years and has helped plan events, teach lessons to kids, and been one of the most active members of the FCWMA!

**A A C D  P a r t n e r  A w a r d :**  
U S K H  
USKH has sponsored the Fairbanks Weed Smackdown for 2 years, supplying water bottles and team prizes, as well as participating in the event with a team of USKH employees!

**A A C D  L i f e t i m e A c h i e v e m e n t  A w a r d :**  
J e r r y  N o r u m  
Jerry Norum has served as a board member and chairman for the FSWCD, and a board member for the AACD since he first became a cooperator. He has been instrumental in promoting local and statewide conservation projects and encouraging private landowners to participate in their local district activities.
Last fall an invasive aquatic plant (*Elodea nuttallii*) was found growing in the Chena Slough. Over the winter a group of concerned citizens and agencies began meeting to form management goals. The biggest priority for 2011 was to survey the Fairbanks area and identify the distribution of *Elodea*. Knowing where *Elodea* is located and where it is not will help guide control decisions. A survey crew was hired and this invasive plant was found growing in the Chena Slough downstream of Plack Road to the mouth. It was also found in the Chena River downstream of the mouth of the slough, but at lower densities than found in the slough. A nearby borough park, Chena Lakes Recreation Area, was also found to have *Elodea* growing throughout the lake. Of the 245 data points taken at 29 water bodies, *Elodea* was found in the Chena River, Chena Slough, and Chena Lake. Several small control trials have been set up at Chena Lake to evaluate manual controls. It is very difficult to control aquatic vegetation, and each trial was set up using SCUBA divers. The Elodea Steering Committee will be working over the winter to plan control work for 2012; they are confident that we can control the plant in Fairbanks and keep it from spreading to new locations in Interior Alaska!

For more information, contact Darcy Etcheverry at 479-1213 x104.
FSWCD is producing a booklet to promote Alaska grown/made forest products vendors in interior Alaska. The finished booklet will be similar to the Alaska Grown Source Book only more specific in nature and will provide a more thorough listing of forestry businesses. The business categories include 1) Crafts, cabinetry, and furniture, 2) Trees, shrubs, and plants, 3) Miscellaneous, 4) Building materials, 5) Firewood, and 6) Other fuels. Thirty-seven businesses have participated so far. The booklet will be available for free at the FSWCD office starting in November!

For more information, contact Jessica at 479-1213 x107

The Natural Resources Showcase will be coming soon! The date is TBA for sometime early December. A postcard will be mailed to all cooperators with the final date & info. The Natural Resources Showcase is an educational forum to inform interior legislators and other key decision makers about local natural resource concerns and projects. Please RSVP to jonisc@gmail.com if you would like to participate.