

FIVE RIVERS RC&D NEWS

Resource Conservation & Development
Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee,
Richardson & Saline Counties

Five Rivers RC&D spearheads collection of household hazardous waste materials

Spring of 2007 saw a repeat of household hazardous waste (HHW) collections in all eight RC&D counties. The first collections were held in 2004. Five Rivers RC&D coordinated grant applications and event planning and implementation. Once again, the collections were free to the public, thanks to grants from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality Waste Reduction and Recycling Grant Program to the Lower Big Blue Natural Resources District and the Nemaha Natural Resources District.

RC&D Council representatives for all eight counties were among the many local volunteers helping to empty containers of paint, stains, pesticides, solvents, used oil and miscellaneous chemicals. Batteries were also collected by local organizations to be sold for fundraising. In addition to labor, local businesses, individuals and organizations donated refreshments. RC&D Coordinator Howard McNiff praised everyone involved in the collaborative effort, noting that it “represents over 850 administrative, clerical and volunteer hours” across the RC&D area.

Approximately 77,000 pounds of materials were collected from over 900 households. The Red Willow County HHW Collection Team transported the materials to Kimball, NE, for incineration.



Alan Richard (foreground), Pawnee County representative to the Five Rivers RC&D Council, was one of the volunteers helping with the household hazardous waste collection in Pawnee City in May 2007.

435 tons of scrap tires collected

How high is a pile of scrap tires that weighs 435.275 tons? The Tire Cutters, Inc., of Centralia, Kansas, could probably answer that question. They hauled all those tires out of Johnson, Nemaha, Pawnee and Richardson counties last year.

The tires will be taken to Kansas and deposited in a “monofill” with the intent of preserving the rubber for a potential future use.

The collections were funded by grants to the counties from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality.

see “Scrap tires” on pg. 3

Project Report for
Year Ended
June 30, 2007

Our Mission:
*To educate
citizens, develop
leadership, and
revitalize the area
through coopera-
tive partnerships
and leveraged
resources.*

Inside this issue:

<i>President's Letter</i>	2
<i>Projects</i>	3
<i>Projects</i>	4
<i>Projects</i>	5
<i>Project Partners</i>	6
<i>Council Members</i>	7
<i>RC&D Q&A</i>	8

Five Rivers RC&D Staff

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Howard McNiff
Administrative Assistant:
Dottie Holliday

Volunteers

Office: Marge Rathbone
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Merri Johnson

Greetings from the Council President

Dear Friends,

There comes a time in a person's professional career when a change of pace and focus feels right. No, I'm not announcing a change in my own career. Rather, I'm acknowledging that that time has come for Howard McNiff, Five Rivers RC&D Coordinator.

Howard announced recently that he plans to retire effective September 3. Many of you know that Howard has been Coordinator since the inception of the Five Rivers RC&D Council back in 1991. He guided the Council through the process of becoming a federally recognized program under the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the United States Department of Agriculture, doing the job part-time for a number of years while serving as watershed project engineer in the Tecumseh NRCS field office.

The role of the Coordinator is many-faceted, and includes finding resources to help the Council accomplish its goals. Howard's experiences and insights have been invaluable to this Council as we have set program objectives and developed budgets over the years. The RC&D program is a grassroots effort—there's no unlimited pot of funds or big staff to rely on. But Howard's can-do attitude and his contacts with other agencies and organizations often made the difference in the Council's achieving success, rather than throwing in the towel when roadblocks seemed to signal the end of an idea.

I have been personally and professionally blessed to have served as Council President during Howard's tenure as Coordinator. Working with him has been an educational pleasure ride. While I can't speak for Howard regarding his retirement plans, I hope he will continue to share his refreshing candor and enthusiasm for the RC&D program with us in some way.

Sincerely,



Scott Kudrna
Council President

5 Rivers Weed Management Area (WMA) educates landowners

Five Rivers RC&D first began educating landowners about the invasive weed “*Sericea Lespedeza*” in 2001. As the weed gained a foothold in Southeast Nebraska, interest in combating it, as well as other invasive species, also grew. Today, the 5 Rivers Weed Management Area is a formal organization whose members include the eight counties in the RC&D area, plus Cass county, along with Five Rivers RC&D Council, Lower Big Blue and Nemaha NRDs, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and Pheasants Forever.

The WMA has received funding from the Nebraska Department of Agriculture to conduct landowner work-



Mitch Coffin, Noxious Weed Program Manager for the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, looks up a weed reference during a weed management field day. One of those looking on, second from right, is Randy Group, 5 Rivers WMA president.

shops, host educational displays at county fairs, produce informational brochures and create an educational weed management computer game. The game, and other information about the WMA, can be accessed

from the group’s web site, <http://ww.5riverswma.com>. Position the cursor (but do not click) on “Game” on the toolbar at the top of the web page, then move the cursor and click on the drop-down box “Play Weedman Game.”

Over 150 landowners attended workshops held at Twin Oaks Wildlife Management Area last year and in Gage, Johnson and Pawnee counties earlier this spring to learn about *Sericea*. Attendees learned to recognize the weed and view the effects of various chemical treatments. The WMA is also active in the control of other weeds such as phragmites and purple loosestrife.

Scrap tires, con’t from pg. 1

Five Rivers RC&D prepared the grant applications for the counties, while county commissioners and local volunteers coordinated the collections.

Pawnee county volunteers keep the scrap tires rollin’. Over 54 tons of tires were collected in Pawnee County alone.



An Afghani child hugs his treasures close. He is one of many beneficiaries of clothes, toys and other items donated by RC&D Councils, including Five Rivers RC&D, which collected several dozen stuffed toys.

The RC&D gift drive was initiated by retired New Jersey RC&D Coordinator Steve Quesenberry, whose son is serving in the military in Afghanistan and requested toys and other items for local children there.

Wine school becoming an RC&D tradition

Five Rivers RC&D sponsored its fourth wine school in October 2006, drawing 22 students from five states and bringing the total students to date to over 80. Alan Dillard, owner of Limestone Creek Winery in Jonesboro, Illinois again taught the popular class in the basics of making wine. As has been the case each year, there is already a waiting list for the next class.

Many thanks are extended to

Ron Heskett, wine-maker at Whiskey Run Creek Winery in Brownville, for his assistance in hosting all four of the two-day classes at the winery.

Five Rivers will miss working with Bob Curtwright, founder of Whiskey Run Creek Winery, who passed away in June 2007.



Five Rivers RC&D Council President Scott Kudrna, third from right, is flanked by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns and Associate Duty Chief for Programs Anthony Kramer during the February 2007 RC&D Leadership Forum in Washington, D.C. The Nebraska delegation met with Johanns and Congressional leaders to discuss agriculture concerns and federal support for the RC&D program. Kudrna is vice-chair of the Nebraska RC&D Association. Other Nebraska RC&D Association delegates pictured are Mike Williams of North Bend, Dan Hruza of Burwell, Association chair, and Cliff Welsh of Brule, Association secretary.

McNiff to retire Sept. 3

Five Rivers RC&D Coordinator Howard McNiff has announced his retirement effective September 3, 2007, ending a 16-year career as Coordinator and a 36-year career with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Greetings may be sent to the RC&D office. **A reception honoring McNiff will be held on Friday, August 24th, from 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.** at the St. Andrew's Parish Hall at 561 Jackson in Tecumseh.

Upcoming Events

Weed Workshops

Watch your local newspapers for information announcing additional weed identification and control workshops sponsored by the 5 Rivers Weed Management Area this fall.

Used Computer Collections

Get ready to free up some space in your home office. Five Rivers RC&D will again conduct used computer collections around the area this fall.

Five Rivers helps Deer Creek Sodbusters obtain marketing funds

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. The second attempt proved successful for a tourism marketing grant application submitted by Deer Creek Sodbusters, Inc. of

Sterling, NE, and their partners, the Rae Valley Antique Show at Petersburg and the Old Trusty Antiques and Collectors Show at Clay Center. Five Rivers worked

with the three groups to prepare a winning proposal and will also help administer the \$6,000 grant awarded by the Nebraska Division of Tourism.

2007 EDGE business planning class conducted in Auburn

Ten business owners and prospective entrepreneurs took advantage of the opportunity to improve their chances for business success by taking the EDGE class this past spring. Classroom space was generously donated by Nebraska Public Power District at the Cooper Nuclear Training Facility in Auburn.

Businesses and business ideas represented in the class included service businesses, sporting businesses, art gallery, non-profit agricultural development, and gift and other retail shops.

Karen Fritschle, Marketing Officer for Otoe County Bank in Nebraska City, coordinates and teaches the class, which takes students through a 12-



2006 EDGE graduate Molly McNeely, in white, visits with guests at the December 2006 ribbon-cutting for her dental clinic in Nebraska City. She shared her first year's business experience with the 2007 class at Auburn at its graduation dinner in May.

session process of researching and preparing a business plan. Each session includes a guest speaker and time for

assistance or homework preparation.

NxLevel™ training curriculum and partial funding are provided by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln through the Center for Applied Rural Innovation, and through local contributions to the Southeast Nebraska EDGE Coalition. New financial contributors for this year's class include Auburn State Bank, Otoe County Bank, Auburn Rotary Club, and Peggy Kuser, CPA.

Small business owners and entrepreneurs interested in taking the next class are encouraged to contact Five Rivers RC&D or Karen Fritschle at 402-209-0808 (evenings).

RC&D recognized for service to anti-drug group

Five Rivers RC&D was recognized by the Nemaha Against Drug and Alcohol Abuse (NADAA) Coalition last December for having representation at all NADAA meetings and programs, as well as for handling NADAA's meeting notices and correspondence.

RC&D Councils across Nebraska have committed to working with local organizations and law enforcement agencies to educate the public about illicit drugs and alcohol abuse. In addition to NADAA, Five Rivers has

made presentations or otherwise assisted drug prevention groups in Johnson, Richardson and Saline counties.

Auburn FBLA assists Five Rivers RC&D

In a turn-about, Five Rivers RC&D was on the receiving end of assistance this year from the Auburn High School chapter of Future Business Leaders of America. The FBLA members and their teacher Teresa

Hahn tallied over 500 surveys completed by area residents as part of the RC&D's process of updating its five-year plan.

The Chapter selected Five Rivers as its Business of the Month for March 2007. As a result, RC&D Coordinator and Council representatives Mary Kruger and Scott Kudrna visited the class and explained to the students how the RC&D helps area towns and businesses.

Project Partners

On-going and New Projects and Activities

Project Name	Project Partners & Sponsors	Grant Services--Five Rives RC&D assisted with the development of several grant proposals, administered grant funds, and advanced funds (pending grant reimbursement) for several projects this year. Following is a list of the grant services.
Drug Prevention Abuse Coalitions	Johnson, Nemaha & Saline County Coalitions, Region V Services	CDBG Drug Grant Application - pending
Duck & Buck Creek Drainage Control	Nemaha Natural Resources District, Peru Drainage District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nebraska Game & Park Commission	
Five Rivers Weed Management Area	County Weed Superintendents, Natural Resource Districts, Nebraska Dept. of Agriculture, UNL Extension, Dow AgroSciences, DuPont, Kansas State University, Farm Service Agency	\$6,000
Regional Water Supply Study	USDA Rural Development, Nemaha Natural Resources District, County Governments, Municipal Governments, Nebraska Environmental Trust	\$110,000 - not funded
Rulo Bluffs Conservation Plan	Nebraska Game & Parks and NRCS	
Southeast Nebraska Tourism Promotion	Southeast Nebraska Tourism Council (SENTC), Nebraska Division of Tourism	
Heritage Highway Tourism Promotion	Heritage Highway/Byway 136 Association, Dept. of Econ. Development - Tourism Division, Homestead National Park	\$7,000
Deer Creek Sodbusters Grant - Assistance with 25th Anniversary Promotion	Nebraska Department of Tourism	\$6,000
Southeast Nebraska Grassland Assoc.	Southeast Nebraska Grassland Assoc.	
Wine School IV	Whiskey Run Creek Vineyard & Winery and UNL	
EDGE Business Planning Course	SE Nebraska EDGE Coalition, UNL -Nebraska EDGE Program, River Country Economic Development Corp., Federal Home Loan Bank	\$9,000
Enhancing Retail Birding Products	Nebraska Partnership for All Birds Conservation	
Household Hazardous Waste Collections	Nemaha NRD and Lower Big Blue NRD, Neb. Department of Environmental Quality	\$33,300

Five Rivers RC&D Sponsors and Council Members

Council members may be appointed by the Council as at-large representatives or may be appointed by one of our sponsors: Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson and Saline Counties and the Lower Big Blue and Nemaha Natural Resources Districts (NRD). Sponsors support the Council with annual dues of \$200.

Members bring expertise to the Council from their professional experience and from service on other community development projects or boards. When possible, they also supply manpower for RC&D projects. In return, the members' communities benefit from what the Council members learn through their service.

Scott Kudrna, *President*

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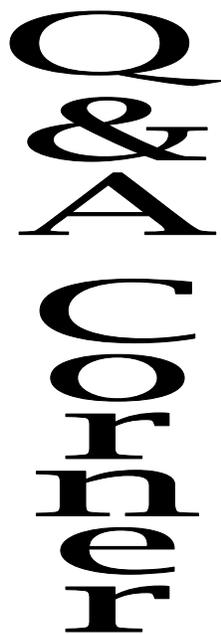
Five Rivers RC&D works with individuals and groups to improve the social, economic and environmental conditions in their communities. We help citizens gain access to a network of public and private services and financing to accomplish community projects.

Besides contribution to job creation, many projects focus on the protection and improvement of natural resources or community facilities. Still others work on improving a community's way of life. All are designed to make rural communities more viable places to live.

Five Rivers is one of 12 RC&D Councils in Nebraska and 375 nationally. All RC&D's serve multiple-county areas and are organized as non-profit corporations. They receive administrative support from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, but are governed by a volunteer Council. For more information, contact the RC&D office at 402-335-3347.

The Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) program is sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th & Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD). The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Q. What can RC&Ds do that other organizations can't?

A. Although they receive governmental support, RC&Ds are not entities of government; therefore the usual policies and constraints of local, state, and federal government programs do not limit them in the kinds of issues they decide to address, or in how they decide to do it.

Q. Can anyone be involved in RC&D activities?

A. Yes. RC&D offers many opportunities for you to get involved and make things happen. It doesn't matter if you live in the city or the country, or if you are a business owner or a homemaker, there's always a place for you in RC&D.

Just contact the RC&D office in Tecumseh or your county representative to find out more.

Q. How are projects selected?

A. Anyone can approach the RC&D Council with a request for project assistance. If the project fits the objectives of the Council's Plan of Work, and if the help requested can be provided, the project is accepted.