



Winter 2015 Newsletter



CELEBRATE THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SOILS– 2015!

The 68th UN General Assembly declared 2015 the International Year of Soils (IYS). The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has been nominated to implement the IYS 2015.

On December 5th, 2014, World Soil Day was celebrated and the International Year of Soils was officially launched. Following is an excerpt from the opening statement by FAO Director General José Graziano da Silva:

Ladies and Gentlemen, we speak a lot of the importance of sustainable food systems for healthy lives. Well, it starts with soils. Soils constitute the foundation of vegetation and agriculture. Forests need

it to grow. We need it for food, feed, fiber, fuel and much more. Soils also host at least one quarter of the world's biodiversity. They are key in the carbon cycle. They help us to mitigate and adapt to climate change. They play a role in water management and in improving resilience to floods and droughts.

All this should illustrate the importance of soils. And why we should take better care of them. Generally speaking, we are not doing such a great job: one-third of our soils have already degraded. If the current trend continues, the global amount of arable and productive land per person in 2050 will be a quarter of what it was in 1960. The world will have over 9 billion

people in 2050, 2 billion more than today. And food production will have to grow by 60 percent to feed a larger population that will also be eating better. So there is no doubt the pressure on natural resources is bound to increase. And soils are not something we can simply fix if it breaks: it can take up to one thousand years to form one centimeter of topsoil.

Fairbanks Soil & Water will be promoting the IYS at many of our events this year, including the IABA Home Show, the Tree Sale, the Tanana Valley State Fair, and more!

If you have ideas about what FSWCD should do for the IYS, contact Jessica at 479-1213 x108.

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FSWCD REACHES HUNDREDS OF ALASKANS WITH NATURAL RESOURCE ASSISTANCE IN 2014

Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District (FSWCD) had a productive 2014 field season assisting dozens of co-operators with natural resource issues and was awarded a SARE grant to conduct hay field renovation tests. Elodea removal control trials in Chena Slough and Chena Lakes were ongoing and invasive plant surveys were conducted in Lake Minchumina, Birch Creek, Fort Yukon, and Stevens Village. White sweet clover control took place in Ft. Yukon and a local weed smack

down at the Fairbanks Dog Park yielded 1470 lbs. of pulled invasive weeds. A USFWS agreement for free soil testing for landowners along the Chena River continued as well as green infrastructure cost share and several riparian restoration projects. FSWCD supported the growing peony industry and provided over 60 soil analyses and recommendations to growers. The after school program, Alaska Agriculture in the Classroom, Youth Corps and schoolyard habitats involved hundreds of

youth in natural resource education. This included trail restoration, pollinator gardens, native tree and shrub plantings and outdoor playscapes in North Pole, Fairbanks, Nenana, Two Rivers, Minto, Tri-Valley, Cantwell, Ruby and the North Slope Borough. See inside this newsletter for more details on these and other projects. It was a great year and FSWCD looks forward to serving their cooperators and partners in 2015.

HAY FIELD RENOVATION PROJECT TESTS THREE TREATMENTS

Western SARE awarded FSWCD a grant to test the effectiveness of three different treatments to improve soil health and consequently hay production on overly compacted hay fields in Interior Alaska. These field trials will include the following treatments: (1) utilize an overseeder to seed brome grass, (2) renovate and overseed with radishes, and (3) broadcast radish seed.



Three farmers are assisting FSWCD with this study by
A "tillage" radish

allowing the use of a portion of their hay fields for plots, helping with equipment use, and managing the study area in a way compatible with the research.

During 2014, FSWCD set up plot boundaries at all three farms, completed initial soil testing, fertilized the plots, and began applying the treatments. Unfortunately the unseasonable rain stopped the research in its tracks by delaying hay harvests and causing other complications. The project will be extended an extra year to compensate for the partially-lost field season. Overseeding and seeding of rad-

ishes and brome will be done in spring 2015. For more information, call 479-1213 x108.



The overseeder used for this project

LOOKING FOR FARM LAND IN INTERIOR ALASKA?

Arctic Roots Farm, Bed and Breakfast at 1293 Esro Road- 25 acres of brome grass, 30 acres of birch forest, a 1-acre moose-proof orchard/garden, a 20'x48' high tunnel and a 20'x48' greenhouse with drip irrigation. There are 3 homes on the property, a large shop, barn, chicken coop, root cellar, and corrals/pasture. Contact Chris Dubois at 907-750-1514 for more information. It is listed with Russo Realty (907-460-8555).

70 acres in Salcha— this land has Richardson Highway frontage and is near Mile-

post 315. There is a small stream on the property. \$42,000. Contact Ann Geise at 907-895-4466.

Farm for Sale in North Pole— a 9 acre farm/tourism lodge at 2100 Nelson Road in North Pole is for sale for \$299,000. Includes a 20'x40' insulated greenhouse, fully landscaped grounds, tree nursery, large vegetable garden, pasture, forest, and a 2-story lodge. The lodge has triple-pane windows, stainless commercial kitchen, 2-bed, 3-bath, covered porches, gazebo, and good well water. Two addi-

tional acres with airstrip access available. Photos are at Stars and Stripes or Madden real estate sites. Website: chenalakesfarm.com. Contact Tracy Pulido for info at info@chenalakesfarm.com.

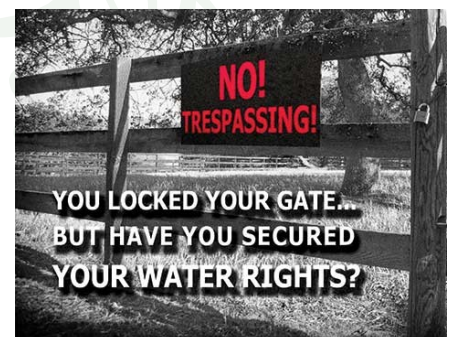
40 acres in North Pole— undeveloped forest with a mix of spruce, birch, willow, and grassland. East borders Chena Lake Rec. Area at the end of Repp Road in North Pole. Road access, power about 1/4 mile away. Owner financing available. \$99,000 obo. info@chenalakesfarm.com

PROTECT YOUR WATER RIGHTS

Across the U.S., there are real water wars with landowners battling for water usage. In Alaska, it's a legal right to use surface or ground water under the Alaska Water Use Act. (AS 46.15) When the right is granted, it becomes an accessory to the land as long as the water is being used. A person with water rights has priority to use water over persons who file later for water rights from the same source. Although Alaska has abundant water resources, there are some areas, espe-

cially in higher elevations that have water wells with slow recovery rates or in some cases could be depleted by neighboring uses. To protect your water rights, it is beneficial to register for them with DNR for a minor fee. Recently, NRCS has required landowners who have a contract with them to provide an official statement about their groundwater and/or surface water use. The Alaska Department of natural Resources (DNR) has all the information that you will need regarding water uses and permits on

your land. For more information, contact Kendra Geis at DNR in Fairbanks at 451-2790.



CHANGES MADE TO THE FARM BILL & NRCS PROGRAMS

BY JON OESTREICH, NRCS SOIL CONSERVATIONIST

It has been a busy year in the Fairbanks (North Hub) office. For those who have not heard, NRCS Alaska is currently organized into 3 Hub Offices. The North Hub is based in Fairbanks and serves the area covered by FSWCD, as well as an area stretching from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, up to Nome, and across the North half of the state to include Delta Junction and Tok. Joanne Kuykendall (District Conservationist) oversees operations in the Northern Hub, and other staff members include April Moore (Administrative Assistant), Jeff Oatley (Engineer), Ryan Maroney (Biologist), Mike Stephens (Soil Conservationist in Delta), Adam Clark (Soil Conservationist), Jon Oestreich (Soil Conservationist), and two ACES employees, Ann Rippy (Fairbanks) and Fran

Reich (Bethel).

The new Farm Bill, which dictates a large part of our operations, was enacted on February 7, 2014 and has a few notable changes. The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) merged into the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). For those interested in conservation easements, some of the previous programs have been merged into the new Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and the Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP). The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) continues to be available in the new Farm Bill and provides an opportunity to reward producers for their existing conservation efforts, while encouraging them to adopt new activities.

Seasonal High Tunnels continue to be a popular practice and the opportunity for financial assistance under EQIP is expected to continue. As we continue to support the Agency Mission of "Helping People Help the Land" we encourage land owners to contact our office with any resource problems they notice on their land, or if you have interest in any of our programs.

Ranking deadlines for 2015 are January 16 and March 20— so get your applications in soon!



A high tunnel in Alaska

APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Green Infrastructure is a way of building or landscaping that provides the "ingredients" for solving challenges of dealing with stormwater pollution and management. Thanks to a USFWS agreement, Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District is NOW accepting applications from homeowners and business owners in the Fairbanks North Star Borough to be reimbursed up to \$500 (for

homeowners) or \$1,000 (for businesses) matching costs for constructing a green infrastructure project on their property. Submit your application by June 30, 2015. Successful applicants will be notified on or before July 10, 2015.

Contact Mel Sikes at 479-1213 x105 for more information



Rain barrels funded through the FSWCD cost-share

ELODEA REMOVAL CONTINUES



A diver suction dredging Elodea

This season 55 volunteers worked for 250 hours to remove approximately 1.34 acres of *Elodea* in Chena Slough by suction dredging and raking. On August 23rd Fairbanks Soil & Water Conservation District hosted an "Elodea Rakedown", a community event to increase awareness and draw attention to the problem of *Elodea* infestation in Chena Slough. Participants raked *Elodea* in Chena Slough, and watched a demonstration of how suction dredging works.

In September FSWCD sent staff to the Kenai Peninsula to learn about aquatic herbicide application as a means to eradicate *Elodea*. During the upcoming year, plans include learning more about aquatic herbicides and if it is possible to use them in conjunction with suction dredging to eradicate *Elodea* in Chena Slough and Chena Lakes.

Contact Aditi at 479-1213 x104 for more information.



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COOPERATOR INPUT NEEDED

Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District strives to serve its 485 cooperators by offering technical assistance and conservation planning in natural resource areas of concern: soils, water, forestry, invasive weeds, agriculture, affordable

energy, and education. FSWCD needs cooperator input to continue their work and to know what is most needed by the cooperators. In 2015, the board of supervisors hopes to reach out to all of you through assistance, surveys, workshops,

education, and a fun cooperator picnic to kick off the summer season. Please contact us with your suggestions and questions and keep watching for upcoming events!

WORKING COOPERATIVELY WITH INTERIOR PLACER MINERS



Interior placer miners are very similar to interior farmers and other landowners/leasees; they work hard in the summer months to produce something valuable from the land. Many of them are family owned and operated, and they struggle against the natural elements in Alaska while appreciating those very elements for the freedom and beauty they offer.

FSWCD hopes to offer these miners some practical assistance related to land and water resources as they struggle against tightening restrictions and regulations. This last year, staff has been attending mining workshops and conferences to learn just how we can offer our knowledge of natural resources to assist the mining community.

AG IN THE CLASSROOM LENDING LIBRARY NOW OPEN!

AITC has a wonderful lending library and Ag Literacy resources now available at the FSWCD office. A full list of books can be found at

http://www.fairbankssoilwater.org/user-files/pdfs/Book_List2014.pdf . A list

of Ag resources such as education

kits, cd's and DVD's, and other resources can be found at

<http://www.fairbankssoilwater.org/user-files/pdfs/AITC%20Resources.pdf>



UPCOMING EVENTS

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| Alaska Peony Conference | January 30-31 at the Westmark Hotel |
| National Invasive Species Awareness Week | February 22-28 |
| Sustainable Agriculture Conference | March 4-5 |
| IABA Home Show | March 20-22 |
| Alaska Society of American Foresters Meeting | March 24-26 |
| Alaskan Soils 101 for Homebuyers Workshop | April 11 |
| Improve Your Backyard Wildlife Habitat Workshop | April 11 |
| FSWCD Tree & Shrub Sale | May 30 |

