



Hugh Hammond Bennett (right), first Chief of the Soil Conservation Service.

natural resources REPORTER

Published by the New Mexico Natural Resources Conservation Service - U.S. Department of Agriculture

Spring 2005

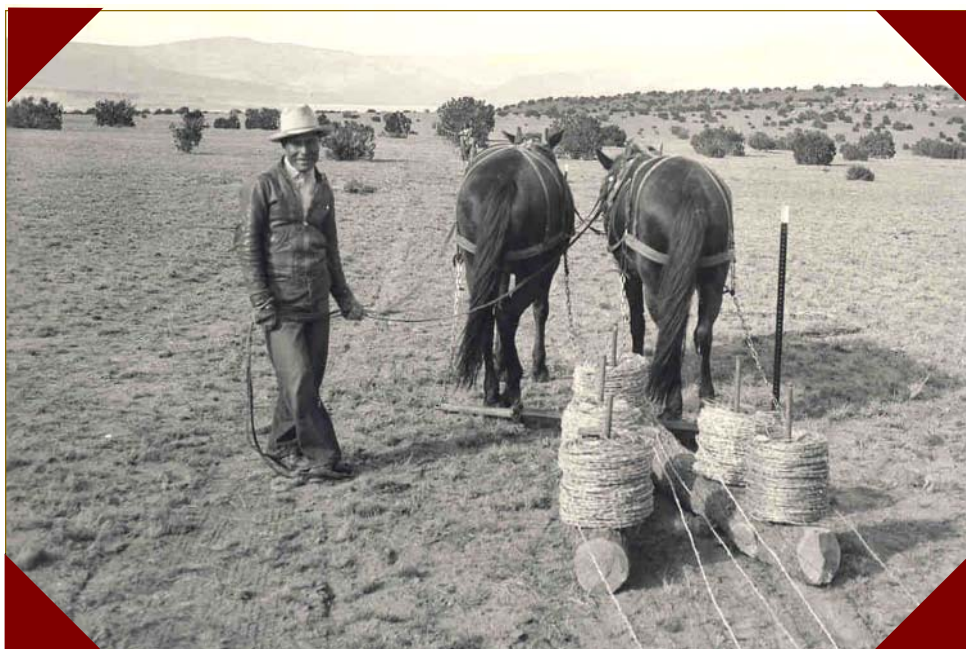


This Special Edition of the Natural Resources Reporter is dedicated to the rich history of the Soil Conservation Service/ Natural Resources Conservation Service in New Mexico on our 70th Anniversary.

This Special Edition contains articles from Southwest News, the agency's newsletter in the 1940s, and remembrances of our retirees. It includes pieces from Current Developments that were published in the 1970s and photos from our historical photo files.

The agency's history is a treasure trove of efforts to bring the best technology and science to New Mexicans to conserve New Mexico's soil, water, and other natural resources. It is the story of potluck lunches following field tours to demonstrate the best conservation techniques. It is entwined with the history of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps and, it is a history of horses, camping out, and being delighted to have a job that pays \$2,000 per annum.

We hope you enjoy this glimpse into NRCS' past and strong conservation legacy. It is testimony to the agency's continuing efforts to apply sound science and decision-making to better the land and prosperity of New Mexico.



Range management in 1936, two miles southeast of McCarty Village

SCS Southwest Region Opens (Author Unknown)

On July 30, 1935, the Southwest Regional Office in Albuquerque opened.

We had the entire Simms Building at 4th and Gold Avenue, and it was soon filled with agronomists, soil scientists, engineers, biologists, geologists, foresters, range specialists, and even anthropologists.

Our Region was the first SCS region established because it had so much Federal land. It was strongly oriented to the Forest Service and the Indian Service. The region included Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah. We had plant material nurser-

ies in Albuquerque and Tucson and a large number of CCC Camps. We also had a cartographic laboratory.

Work on private land, prior to the establishment of the Soil Conservation Districts, was done through demonstration projects. The Soil Conservation Districts Act was established in 1937, and in 1944 all demonstration projects were ended.

Those early days were great days for all of us. We were full of energy, enthusiasm, euphoria, evangelism, and confidence in what we were doing. Best of all, of course, were the bonds of friendship we forged among our group.

70th Anniversary Marks Time to Reflect by Rosendo Trevino III, State Conservationist

"Work for the Soil Conservation Service, and its predecessor, the Soil Erosion Service, is now in its eighth year in the Southwest. During that time many practices and techniques of soil conservation and land use have been tested, applied, abandoned or improved.

Natural conditions decree a certain type of land use if vital resources of soil, water and vegetation are to continue to support agriculture and the many thousands of people who live on the land. Factor climate, soil, topography, economics and social conditions have been studied in the light of adapting land use in the several phases of agriculture to these natural conditions.

On the range lands, in the irrigated valleys, in the dry-land farming areas, much has been done and much has been accomplished. Much more remains to be done."

(Excerpt from SOIL CONSERVATION, PRACTICES AND RESULTS IN THE SOUTHWEST, Hugh G. Calkins, Regional Conservator, USDA Soil Conservation Service, Albuquerque, New Mexico, Region 8-March 1, 1942, Richard L. Boke & D. Harper Simms, Information Division)

Sixty plus years have passed since Hugh G. Calkins voiced this opinion and assessment. Like then we have made much progress on the land and in applicable technology. It is also true that much more remains to be done.

Our agency, now called the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS),

will celebrate 70 years of service of those who manage America's working lands, on April 27, 2005. Hugh Hammond Bennett, soil expert and first chief of the NRCS, is known as the "Father of Soil Conservation." He came to believe that soil erosion was taking such a toll on the nations farmlands that if left unchecked, it would impair the nation's ability to produce food. Bennett's advocacy ensured that the Soil Conservation Service was made an official agency on April 27, 1935.

Bennett's legacy of stewardship and advocacy for the protection of our natural resources continues with all present and past employees of the SCS and NRCS. Our agency has evolved and taken a greater role in the arena of natural resources protection, management, and conservation.

In 1935 the new SCS had 40 conservation demonstration projects using Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) labor. The fifties brought the Small Watershed Program that linked the community approach to solving problems. In 1956 the Great Plains Conservation Program, borne out of the 50's drought, reaffirmed the need to look at conservation plans on the entire farm or ranch.

The Resource Conservation and Development program (RC&D), authorized in the 1962 Farm Bill, promoted the wise use and conservation of resources as a means to increase rural income. In the 1960's and 70's SCS programs received increased attention from the

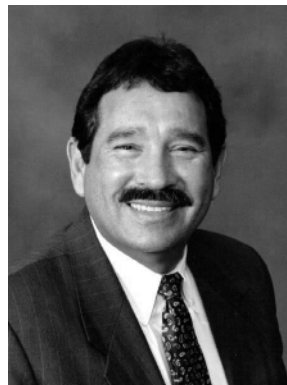
environmental movement.

The 1985 Food Security Act added a tremendous workload for SCS staff. The wetlands, highly erodible lands and sodbuster provisions, provided that if farmers did not comply that they were not eligible for USDA program benefits.

A big burden was placed on the shoulders of employees who worked with farmers and ranchers

who requested our assistance on a voluntary basis. The perception of a pseudo regulatory agency was attributed to SCS. The 90's and the 2002 Farm Bills provided the agency with the greatest resources ever with which to assist America's farmers and ranchers.

The workload has grown exponentially. Our employees have always risen to the call, and continue with Bennett's legacy of stewardship. Our celebration will not only recognize our accomplishments but will give us an opportunity to remember those SCS'ers and NRCS'ers that have given us a proud legacy.



Natural Resources Reporter

Permission is hereby granted to reprint all or any portion of this publication. Credit to NRCS is requested for any material reprinted. Barbara Garrett, Editor - Albuquerque (505)761-4406

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (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 or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited basis 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 326-2, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202)720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

For more information about NRCS conservation services and programs contract your local NRCS Service Center or go to www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov

Joe Jolly Remembers Gallup, Sheep Dip



Left: Hand shearing sheep in May 1962 at Shiprock, New Mexico. Right: The largest known juniper in at the head of Cameron Creek the Grants area in 1937. Approximately six feet in diameter and 65 feet high.

When I was transferred to Gallup, I had charge of a small office handling administrative work for the Navajo Reservation and the Little Colorado Area.

Gallup had about 3,000 population, and there were 37 bars in the town. Every bar had some sort of gambling. Alone in New Mexico, there was no conformance to laws on liquor and gambling. I lived in the El Rancho Hotel, acknowledged as the best in Gallup. The district judge stayed there on a circuit basis. On his stays, the hotel suspended gambling and the gamblers, in black suits like undertakers, wandered the lobby with bored expressions.

Next door to our office was a bar that we called "The Annex." I found out that on Sunday, the Annex, like every other bar on Sunday, simply closed its front door and opened its backdoor.

Annual Leave for the Horses

While I was in Gallup, an order came down that temporary employees who worked a straight 90 days or longer had to be paid accumulated annual leave the same as regular employees.

We had to go back on our records and prepare supplemental payrolls for those eligible. Some on our payroll were owner-operators with a team of horses with a combined rate, so much per operator and so much per horse. After quite a bit of work doing this, I examined some of the payrolls, and I found to my amazement that on one payroll we had paid the combined rate, and had, in other words, paid the horses annual leave.

Sheep Dip

Sy Fryer, the superintendent of the Navajo Reservation had a problem. The Navajos didn't trust the sheep dip program he was trying to get them to use. At a large meeting with them, he said he would prove the dip was harmless and called for a cup of it to be poured and given to him. He promptly drank the cup of dip, but later, privately threw up the contents.

He had no more problems with the program.

Flood, Fire and Soil Surveys Occupy Staff in Early Years

SCS Personnel, Equipment Thrown into Flood Work As May Brings Heavy Flows in Region: New Mexico Suffers Much Damage in Rio Grande, San Juan, Pecos Valleys: Most Storage Reservoirs Now Full as Runoff Lessens

(Southwest News, June 1, 1941)

May was a month of heavy precipitation, high runoff, and floods throughout much of the Region, with New Mexico receiving a heavy share of damage in the Rio Grande, San Juan, and Pecos valleys.

Although all major reservoirs, except Elephant Butte, in the state were full and spilling, the runoff was dwindling in most drainages at the end of the month. The Rio Grande, reaching a peak of about 25,000 cubic feet per second, destroyed or seriously damaged six major bridges, broke dikes, and inundated an estimated 20,000 acres of land in the middle valley.

Lower temperatures brought slower melting of the snow pack in Colorado and at the end of May the Rio Grande was dropping gradually. Many workers were still repairing damage caused by the earlier sustained high flow. Abnormal spring rains in many parts of the state aggravated the flood problem and brought flash flows which caused considerable damage in several localities.

Nearly 1,300 CCC enrollees were brought in from camps all over the state at the height of the emergency to cut and haul brush to reinforce dikes being cut or threatened by the whipping current. SCS personnel and equipment were thrown into the emergency and the Service was given responsibility for dike protection and patrolling on a major section of the river below Albuquerque.

Despite serious damage caused by the flood, engineers pointed out that with a peak of not more than 25,000 second-feet the flood could scarcely be classed as one of major proportions. Flows of nearly twice that volume have been known in the Rio Grande, it was pointed out.

Mobile Surveyors Reassigned to Southern Work Areas, Isaacson Cites Figures On Conservation Surveys

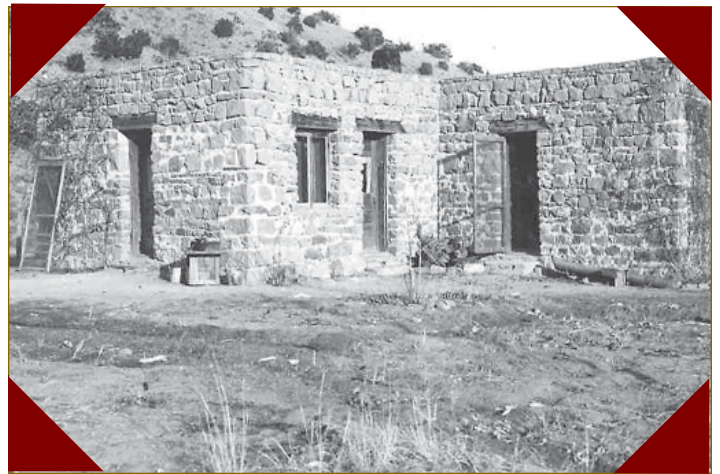
(Southwest News, December 15, 1941)

Twenty-three members of the Soil Conservation Service mobile survey staff in Region 8 will be transferred by December 1 from Colorado and Utah to other assignments in Arizona and New Mexico, according to M.R. Isaacson, Chief of the Physical Surveys Division.

Four men will give special attention to alkali and drainage problems in a detailed survey of the San Juan Soil Conservation District in northwestern Mexico, Isaacson said. Another four-man party will complete the reconnaissance survey of the Rio Grande watershed lying between Caballo Dam and the Mexico Border.

"No two farms or ranches have exactly the same kinds of soil," Isaacson said. "For that reason, survey maps must be studied carefully before conservation treatment can be undertaken. . . . This information is widely used by soil conservation districts, CCC camps, SCS technicians, and other government agencies in planning conservation programs."

During the summer and fall, 320,288 acres of land in Region 8, which includes Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah, were covered by detailed surveys at a cost of 3.7 cents per acre, Isaacson said. Reconnaissance surveys on 2,123,993 acres of range and woodland cost only four-tenths of a cent per acre.



Top Left: Government owned car that was in an accident December 2, 1938 eight miles east of Mosquero, New Mexico.

Bottom Left: Cars belonging to farmers and business men who made a tour of inspection over a project. The ladies of the Thomas Community Club served dinner.

Top Right: Threshing *sporobolus airoides* at the Albuquerque Nursery. Noted were the screened in pulleys and belts for safety purposes.

Bottom Right: The headquarter residence of Under Range Aide stationed on the Borrego Grant.

EEO On The Move

(Current Developments, July 1973.)

Mrs. Jerline Carothers of SCS Budget and Finance Section attended the Thirteenth Annual Management-Labor-Public Interest Conference.

The conference was held at the University of Oklahoma at Norman on May 3 through May 5, 1973. The theme of the conference was "Challenge of the Seventies – Equal Employment Opportunity." The conference was planned for the purpose of taking a fresh look, a re-examination, of some of the current efforts to achieve a new level of equality of opportunity in employment, training and promotion.

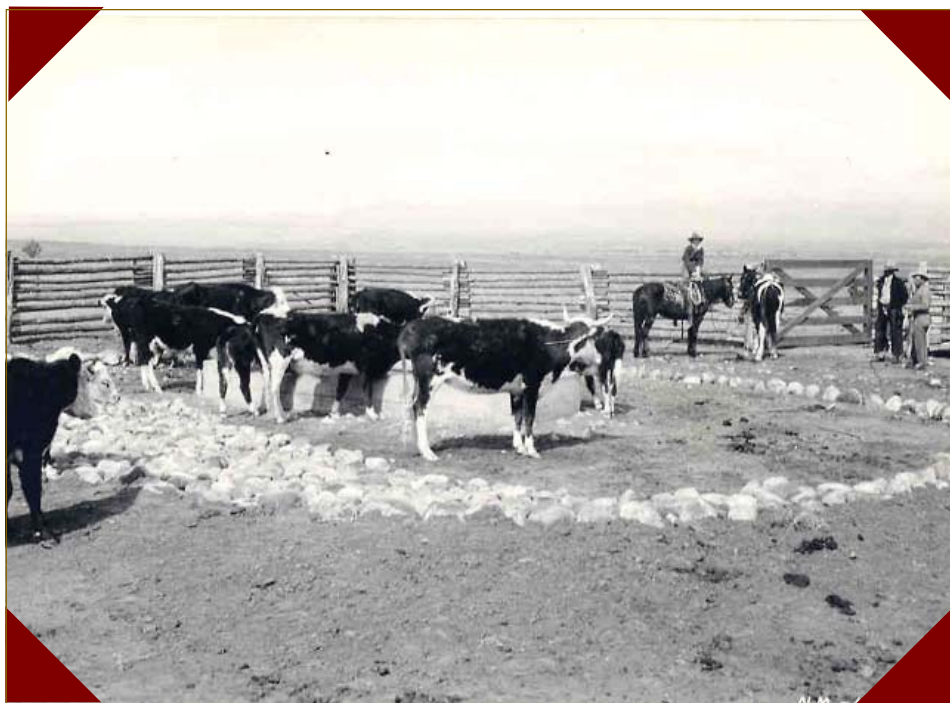
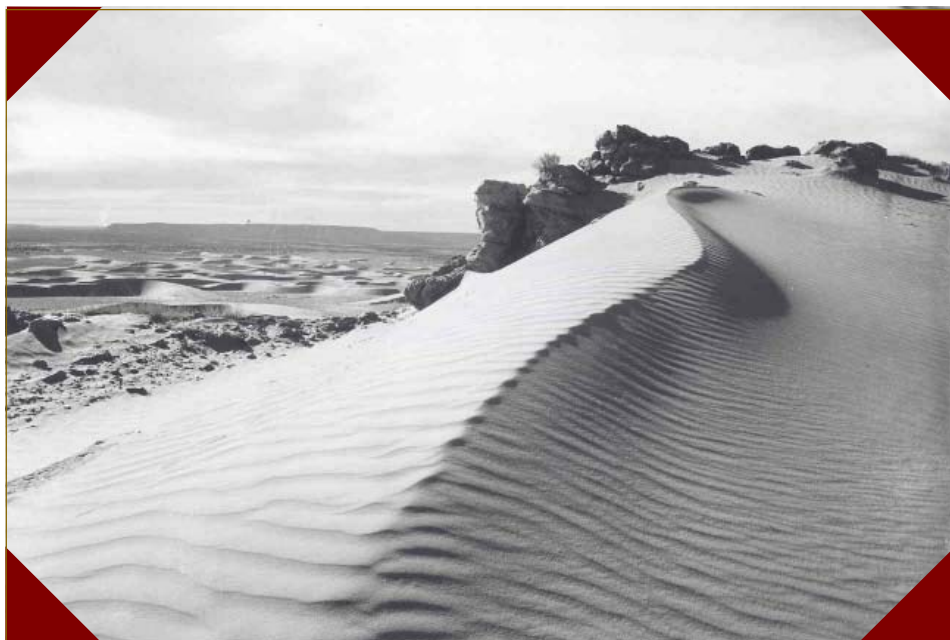
RC&D Formed

(Highlights, January 14, 1976.)

Ten additional RC&D Projects were recently authorized for planning in the Nation. New Mexico's South Central Mountain area was one of the ten. This is the third consecutive fiscal year for New Mexico to receive RC&D planning authority for a new areas.

The South Central Mountain area covers Lincoln and Otero Counties. Sponsors include five NRCD's, two county governments, nine city commissions, and eleven state agencies.

An organization with excellent sponsor participation is already operating, with 151 project measures on the books. A preliminary work plan is expected in six months.



Top: Sand dunes in Valencia County, 1937.

Bottom: Stock cattle practice, 1939. Apron around water trough under construction. A ring of heavy stones is partly buried 12'-15' from the water trough. Smaller stones are used to pave up to the trough. About 1' of soil is spread on top of the stones. Some additional soil will be placed each year near the trough.

Ben Creighton on Rapidograph Pens

Just a few things I remember from earlier years beginning in 1969.

When we completed all the field inventory we went back to the office and drew the field data onto a copy of the aerial photo with Rapidograph pens. (I'm sure if the Declaration of Independence had been signed with Rapidograph pens we would still be under England.)

They used drawing ink and would dry and clog with a few minutes of non-use. They had to be kept in a closed jar with water or damp cotton to prevent them from clogging.

They would write part of the time, shoot out globs of ink on your map, get ink all over your fingers, clothes and anything else that came in contact.

You had to constantly clean the things by disassembling them, washing out all the ink, both liquid and dry, and refill with new ink.

\$2,000 Per Annum

I remember receiving a telegraph: "Your appointment, Junior Agronomist, approved effective March 10. Please reply when you can report to duty. \$2,000 per annum." I reported to SCS CCC Camp 10-C to Col. Joe Lowe at Farmington, March 12, 1938. R.C. "Dick" Clifford was the head of the Planning Party. (Richard Henderson)

Regional SCD Progress In Parallel To National Growth

(Southwest News, May 1941)

Alabama last month became the first state in the Union with every acre of farm land in soil conservation districts, according to word from Washington.

Farmers in 38 states have now formed 469 districts, covering some 87,437,798 acres. More than a million farmers live within these districts.

In Region 8, during April, the New Mexico committee approved petitions for four more soil conservation districts. The Penasco and Upper Hondo Districts in the southeastern part of the state are reported to have passed referendum successfully. Hearings were being held for many more proposed districts in nearly every portion of the state.

Harrison J. Maker Remembers

In the 1930's, at the height of the Depression, I wondered what the world had in store for me, no doubt true of others who had majored in soils. What we would do to earn a living and what kind of contribution we would make? We were fortunate in that we worked for the Soil Conservation Service that put our country on the road to conservation and the better use of one of our most important resources—the soil.

Plant Material Center Near Bernalillo

(C.H. Diebold)

From 1945 until 1951 I spent about 25 percent of my time at the plant material center at the Sandia Pueblo near Bernalillo. My job was to increase production of grass seed and seedling trees and bushes which were available to farmers to control erosion. When I began it was a custom to leave the residues of grasses from combining in the field. Most of the soils being cropped had less than 2 feet of soil over clean sand.

I began irrigation trials to measure the amount of water applied. I took soil samples by one-foot depths before irrigation and two days afterward. This resulted in about 30 holes being taken per irrigation. Although the borders were usually 300 to 800 feet long, more water was being applied than the soil could hold. Quick tests for both nitrates and ammonia showed that much of the 300 pounds per acre of ammonium nitrate was leached beyond the root zone.

So, I recommended burning to decrease the intake rate. Some people in the regional office were aghast. Burning sharply increased the yields of grass seed. It has become a widely accepted practice in the commercial production of grass seed. On our farm for the past 40 years, I have burned our fields of grass seed except Indian rice grass.

New Mexico NRCS Area Office Contacts

Norman Vigil

Northwest Area

2132 Osuna NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113
(505)341-0074

Ken Walker

East Area

918 Parkland Drive
Clovis, NM 88101
(505)762-4769

Hollis Fuchs

Southeast Area

409 Central Avenue
Carrizozo, NM 88301
(505)648-2941

Cliff Sanchez

Southwest Area

6200 Jefferson NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109
(505)761-4403

Public Affairs

Natural Resources Conservation Service
6200 Jefferson NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109

