

## Teeing Up Good Conservation Practices

Clackamas County Soil & Water Conservation District, Oregon City, Oregon

Golf Course Quality Lawns. The title itself creates vastly different impressions with different people. Most people conjure up images of an emerald green, well-manicured grass carpet covered with golfers swinging about in khaki pants. Others imagine chemicals oozing into creek-side wetlands. At least one of these visions is a common misconception, and it's not the one with the pants.

*Golf Course Quality Lawns*<sup>™</sup> is the brain child of Clackamas County Soil and Water Conservation District's Director of Rural Conservation, Clair Klock. A 30-year veteran conservationist, Klock knows landowners resist programs advertised to teach them how to reduce the use of pesticides, fertilizers and water on their trophy residential lawns. So Klock developed the 'bait and switch' technique to bring in the Thurston Howells of our world.

Landowners are attracted to the classes by the catchy name, and are then shown how to reduce the use of product and water and to reduce costs while producing lawns that make their neighbors turn green with envy.

According to Jeffrey Kee, Director of Community Conservation, it takes attention to detail to create the perfect golf course-like lawn. "Soil tests coupled with the proper application rates and frequency for water, fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides will create the desired results," says Kee. "Over-applying any of these materials is like throwing toxic money into storm drains."

Conservation District staff built community buzz for the concept by offering the course at multiple locations around the county and pro-



Clair Klock and Dave Phipps inspect a soil sample to test lawn health. Klock developed the *Golf Course Quality Lawns*<sup>™</sup> program for Clackamas County SWCD with input from Phipps, who is the superintendent at Stone Creek Golf Course.

ducing a video, "Golf Course Quality Lawns," which aired frequently on the local cable station for two years. DVDs may be ordered from Clackamas County Cable for \$20.25 including shipping. A take-away lawn ruler, highlighting northwest lawn care practices, was produced in collaboration with Arnie Kirkham of Ad Specialties of Oregon NW.

The effort impressed local municipalities as well. Engineers and natural resource planners

from the upscale Lake Oswego suburb would like to sponsor some lawn workshops every year as part of their regulatory requirement to reduce pollution from non-point sources in the city. And since many of their residents hire service-professionals to care for their lawns, it was requested that multi-lingual documents and a certification program for private landscaping firms be developed.

A local golf course superintendent, Dave Phipps, helped bring the idea up to par. Phipps achieved some impressive results on his course after using conservation management techniques developed by the Oregon Golf Course Superintendents Association — creek water leaving the course was cleaner than the water entering it. To achieve this, Phipps used Best Management Practices, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), wildlife habitat protection and water quality monitoring. Lessons learned by Phipps were shared with Klock and Kee, who incorporated the points into their educational curriculum.

Urban conservation is a new endeavor for many conservation districts. There are new customers to understand and to learn from. The Clackamas County SWCD has hit a hole-in-one by expanding resource protection to new non-traditional customers through *Golf Course Quality Lawns*<sup>™</sup>. For more information, call (503) 656-3499 or visit [www.cc-swcd.org](http://www.cc-swcd.org).

Jeffrey Kee is the Director of Community Conservation for Clackamas County (Oregon) Soil and Water Conservation District, an area of urban-rural interface southeast of Portland.

## Memorandums of Understanding Renew Education Partnerships

NACD is enhancing our education program by combining efforts with national conservation education groups. During the recent Annual Meeting in Reno, NACD signed updated Memorandums of Understanding with Project Learning Tree (PLT), Project WET and Envirothon.

While we are eager to continue enhanced collaboration on many upcoming projects ranging from joint workshops to materials development, the strengthened partnerships were already evident at the Reno conference. Envirothon participated in the Pack-a-Book service project and held a mini-Envirothon, PLT presented an interactive breakout session and Project WET participated in the Conservation Expo and NACD's stewardship breakout session.

NACD will be participating in the upcoming spring conferences for Project WET and PLT and working with state coordinators to identify additional opportunities for collaboration. NACD will also participate in the 2008 North American Envirothon competition in Arizona this summer.



At NACD's recent annual meeting, representatives from Project Learning Tree (PLT), Project WET and Envirothon, NACD Education Coordinator Susan Schultz and NACD President Elect Steve Robinson renewed MOUs to combine efforts to enhance NACD's education projects.

## NRCS Launches New Public Outreach Campaign

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) launched a new campaign in February called "Conservation: Our Purpose, Our Passion." The purpose of this new campaign is raise public awareness of natural resource conservation and the farmers who make conservation practices happen.

NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster introduced the campaign at NACD's national conference, showing attendees a five-minute video featuring eight agricultural families from across the nation, all of whom passionately believe that conserving the nation's natural resources to ensure the health and productivity of the land for future generations is not only a responsibility, but also a way of life.

These eight featured landowners are just a small portion of over 100 extraordinary stories and photos portraying conservation voluntarily undertaken by agricultural producers in every state in the nation. The stories of these often unsung heroes can be found at [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov).



NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster stands for a photo in front of a sign of NRCS's new public outreach campaign, called, "Conservation: Our Purpose, Our Passion." Lancaster launched the campaign during his speech to a general session audience at the NACD annual conference.