

# NEWS

## ***Furious Floyd Hits North Carolina***

by Cynthia M. Valles, Southeast Public Affairs Specialist; and Warren Hepler, District Director, District 5, North Carolina

**O**n September 16 and 17, Hurricane Floyd slammed into eastern North Carolina, carrying with it 100 mile-per-hour winds and up to 20 inches of rain. Record floodwaters rose to 20 feet in some areas. In a grizzly scene of Biblical proportions, hundreds of thousands of chicken, turkey, and swine carcasses piled up on farms throughout the flooded areas. North Carolina officials are working to abate the health risks posed by this and by the floodwaters swirling with chemicals, bacteria, and gasoline. President Clinton has declared 67 counties disaster areas. And, subsequent storms like Hurricane Irene have not helped, dumping even more rain on the saturated state.

Agricultural losses from the hurricane are up to \$800 million and rising every day as the waters recede and more damage is discovered. Estimates place livestock losses at 2.4 million chickens, 500,000 turkeys, and about 25,000 swine. Farmers had to abandon their homes, equipment, and livelihoods to save themselves and their families.

North Carolina's State Executive Director, Phillip Farland, visited flooded farms, businesses, and homes. He also met with farmers, local officials, and FSA county office staffs to assure them that USDA is addressing the needs of the agricultural community.

"We're doing everything we can to help people who were affected," he said. "To date, we have requested more than \$16 million in Emergency



Flooded church in Greene County.

photos by Cynthia M. Valles

Conservation Program (ECP) funds for farmers in 19 counties, and we expect to receive requests for additional counties," Farland said. So far, USDA has approved over \$5 million in ECP funds for some of the hardest hit counties — Beaufort, Brunswick, Carteret, Columbus, Craven, Duplin, Halifax, Hertford, Martin, Pamlico, Pender, Wayne, and Wilson. The ECP funds can be used for debris removal from farmland, fence rebuilding, grading, shaping, releveling, and restoring conservation structures.

Farland has also met with Vice President Al Gore, North Carolina Governor James B. Hunt, and Secretary Glickman to seek cash grants to help farmers with the cost of repairing damaged structures and other losses. FSA

is also working on getting direct payments to farmers and providing other relief through emergency farm loans and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program.

Not just North Carolina suffered the effects of Hurricane Floyd. Virginia, Maine, South Carolina, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, Connecticut, and Massachusetts also sustained heavy agricultural losses. In response to the damage, Secretary Glickman has formed a task force to expedite delivery of emergency disaster assistance to farmers with crop, livestock, and equipment losses. The task force will pool USDA's relief efforts and will seek information from state and industry sources to make

See **FLOYD**, continued on page 4

## ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN

### USDA's FY 2000 Appropriations: Is it Enough?

**W**e've been given some good news and some bad news with the passage of the new appropriations act by Congress. The good news is that we now have something to work with in providing aid to farmers hit hard by both natural and economic events beyond their control. The bad news is that it doesn't address the inadequacy of the safety net for farmers and ranchers.

The 1996 Farm Act gutted much of the protection we provided farmers — protection from damaging swings in commodity prices and the economic effects of nature's wrath, and a place to go when conventional credit was not available. This Administration had deep reservations when the act was passed, but we've done our best to serve our customers with the tools provided. Unfortunately, the past two years have shown us that those tools weren't up to the task.

Congress has already had to provide supplementary assistance two years in a row to make up the shortfalls

created by the 1996 Act. In doing so, they have as much as admitted that the new system has serious defects. With the new law, an additional \$8.7 billion is earmarked for direct assistance to farmers: \$5.5 billion to double the Agricultural Market Transition Act payments to grain and cotton farmers and \$1.2 billion for emergency loans and other disaster programs.

Unfortunately, the amount authorized for disaster assistance may not be enough to cover the losses already suffered by farmers and ranchers. We're also forced to take a step backward with provisions that will disproportionately benefit larger farms — those most capable of withstanding the current difficulties. The new act will allow some producers to receive multiple payments for different crops on the same acreage, or on crops they are no longer planting. At a time when many smaller farmers are facing financial ruin, this is a serious misuse of vital resources.

Also, while demand for farm loans continues to increase, the new act provides only \$3 billion in loan making authority — \$2 billion less than we need. We're asking Congress to address this issue in a supplemental bill.

One piece of good news is that there will be no need for RIFs in the coming year — in fact, we may be able to hire some additional help. It won't be enough to relieve much of the high workloads many of you are forced to deal with, but at least we won't be losing more slots. In the meantime, we haven't given up on asking Congress to let us hire the people we need to do our jobs right.



### Vice President Gore Presents Hammer Award

**D**uring September's FSA State Executive Director (SED) Conference in Washington, D.C., Vice President Al Gore met with SEDs and Committee Chairpersons to discuss the farm crisis. He also presented the prestigious National Performance Review Hammer Award to USDA's Field Gleaning and Food Recovery Team.

"FSA plays an important role in ensuring that Americans have the food and nutrition they need to be healthy, productive members of society," the Vice President said. "And the Community Food Security Initiative is just one more example of FSA people going beyond narrow line duties to support all aspects of the USDA mission."

"In 1997, I issued a government-wide challenge to increase the amount of food recovered by one-third by the year 2000, and you made that goal. Field gleaning programs are now operating in 47 states, which have collected and distributed nearly 6.5 million pounds of food. That's the equivalent of three meals a day for almost a million and a half people. And this was done without the benefit of any additional staff or funding."

Thanks to all FSA employees involved in this cause!

#### FSA NEWS

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## You Say Tomato, They Say Profits

by Tonya Washington, Farm Loan Officer, Lincoln County FSA Office, Ark.

**D**ale and Allison Pace certainly didn't spend their summer break from school glued to the TV. They had more worthwhile pursuits in mind — they grew and sold their own tomatoes.

These young entrepreneurs from Monticello, Ark. have been in the summer tomato business for three years. They sought FSA financing two years ago when they decided the time was right to expand their operation. They each received a rural youth loan in 1998 to plant a half-acre of tomatoes. They repaid that loan without a hitch. They returned to FSA in 1999 for another youth loan, which they also repaid right on schedule.

Allison and Dale's parents and their little brother Morgan help out with the tomato project, but Allison and Dale do most of the work. During the summer, these disciplined kids were in the field from sunup to sundown tending to

their plants. They sold their crop, which also included watermelons and cucumbers, at weekly farmers markets, co-ops, and curbside stands. The kids are sensible about their finances as they put most of their profit into a savings account for college tuition.

And, if maintaining their own business isn't enough, they also were active in other summertime activities, such as softball, baseball, and football.

Dale and Allison did an excellent job with their youth project this year, and they will be back again next year to



Dale, Morgan, and Allison Pace.

start again. They both told me that it's hard and serious work, but rewarding. "We earn triple the pay of most summer jobs," Allison said. "And it certainly beats working in a fast food restaurant," Dale joked.

## Team USDA at Work

by Will Francis, Agricultural Marketing Service, Dairy Programs, Albany, N.Y.

**L**ately, the halls of USDA have been abuzz with the "dairy debate." The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is reforming Federal Milk Marketing Orders as mandated in the 1996 Farm Act. They needed some high-class help, so they turned to their partner agency — FSA. One of FSA's Management Services Division (MSD) employees played an important role in helping policymakers understand complex dairy issues.

Janet Connelly of MSD's Forms and Graphics office worked closely with staff from the AMS Dairy Programs office in Washington, D.C. and its field office in Albany, N.Y., to produce large-scale high-quality maps. The maps show how U.S. milk prices relate to one another.

This team effort supported both agencies' missions to improve economic and marketing opportunities for production agriculture. Richard M. McKee, Deputy Administrator of AMS Dairy Programs says, "Janet was a joy to work with, and her efforts were timely, professional, and very much appreciated."

The spirit of inter-agency cooperation is a positive reflection on the exceptional service provided by FSA employees.



Janet Connelly with one of the maps she created for AMS.

photo by Eric Parsons

## FLOYD

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sure that those hardest hit by the floods receive assistance as soon as possible.

Local FSA employees responded to the disaster quickly, though with flooded roads and bridges, many had difficulty just getting to their offices. The floods caused interruptions in telephone and electrical service, and destroyed computers, files, and furniture, causing some offices to remain closed even after the waters receded. "We were only able to save the main computer, about five top drawers of files, and some of the larger aerial maps," said Kenny Johnson, Edgecombe County Executive Director. And, hazardous driving conditions impeded access to farms, making it difficult for FSA employees to assess crop and livestock losses.

Despite this, FSA employees are helping farmers any way they can. "Some of our employees suffered personal losses, but they are still out there working," said Farland. Not only are they accepting disaster assistance applications and providing guidance at FSA offices and local disaster assistance centers, they are donating and delivering food and other needed items to hurricane victims.

FSA employees in the State Office, organized by Kathy Barker, sent four truckloads and one van full of donated water, food, and other supplies to emergency distribution centers and shelters. County office donations from the Piedmont and western North Carolina poured into the State Office for distribution. And in Duplin County, one of the hardest hit counties with 80 square miles still under water, USDA Service Center employees sent a truckload of donations to the county's emergency center.

Employees are also donating cash to help other FSA employees who suffered losses and to add to the

Governor's Hurricane Floyd Recovery Effort fund. "Our main concern is to help farmers, but we want to help as many people as we can, however we can," said Farland.

For now, farmers are just trying to recover from the shock of it all. "If your house catches on fire, you'd be covered by insurance, but I wasn't prepared for this," said Steve Scott, a farmer in Pitt County. Floodwaters crested at 12 feet on his farm and destroyed about 47,000 pounds of tobacco.

"We woke up Friday to a disaster," said Scott, who farms 700 acres of tobacco, soybeans, cotton, corn, and peanuts. "Out of the ten vehicles we own, there wasn't one that was driveable. We were rescued by helicopter. I lost about 70 percent of my tobacco crop and about 50 head of cattle." Scott rode a jet ski across his peanut field to search for three missing propane tanks that had floated away.

Farmers like 38-year-old Ivan Williams of Duplin County are also concerned that the soil they farm on will not be fit for planting because of flooding with contaminated water that contained sewage and chemicals. "I believe this is the biggest loss I've ever had," said Williams, who has farmed for 20 years. Despite having lost 55 acres of



Farmer Steve Scott (left) shows SED Phillip Farland some of his harvested tobacco damaged by the floods.



Duplin County farmer Michael Parker in his mildew-covered living room.

crops and having his house, three automobiles, and his tractor damaged by flooding, Williams smiled and said he was thankful his wife, two daughters, and himself were able to survive the flood unharmed.

"We got out thanks to my tractor, the 'Big Rescuer,' which we used to get to my mother's house." Two days later the family was rescued by boat. "We just came home last night. I haven't been to work in two weeks. It's kind of tough, but there's so much support from folks around here," he said.

## **HELP, HELP, WE NEED HELP FOR A FLOODED OFFICE!!**

by Leroy Rohs, Telecommunications Division, Kansas City Management Office

**T**hat was the e-mail we at the Kansas City Management Office's Telecommunications Division received from Tarboro, N.C. on October 1. Hurricanes Dennis and Floyd dumped 5 feet of water on the 22-person Edgecombe County Service Center, and the staff had to relocate temporarily to an old hospital. Since the entire county was hit hard, the FSA staff needed to set up as soon as possible to start making emergency loans and disaster payments. CED Kenny Johnson and staff rescued a Windows 95 PC and the System 36 processor from the rising water, but that was the only computing/telecommunications equipment they were able to salvage. Their e-mail for help started the ball rolling.

The staff said they needed to be operational by October 12 at the latest. So, the LAN/WAN/Voice (LWV) Emergency Response Team — made up of Telecommunications Division employees Phil Jenkins, Wally Burkart, and me — sprang into action. We packed a rented van with a new communications cabinet, a new configured router, two new communications hubs, a modem, connectors, and 8,000 feet of cable. We also brought all the necessary tools and ladders to do a wiring job. We headed east the following Monday.

Lodging was a concern. Tom Shaw, the State LWV Coordinator, handled the Tarboro arrangements. He told us to bring blankets and pillows because "you'll be staying in jail!" This brought a little humor to a very serious problem. We really thought he was leading us on, but he assured us that lodging was nearly

impossible to find within 75 miles of Tarboro. He also advised us to bring flashlights and cell phones as the town was running on generators.

We arrived in Tarboro early Wednesday. By the time we turned off the generator at the old hospital that evening, we had pulled all of the wire (nearly 4,000 feet) and crimped some of the termination connectors to the wires. Then off to "jail" we went to bunk for the night. By that time we were just glad to have a place to lie down. The Edgecombe County Jail was serving as temporary quarters for law enforcement personnel, so we certainly were well protected! Two of the travelers complained about the third's snoring,

but we all survived to work another day.

By Thursday noon, we were waiting for the telephone company to bring in service so we could test our connectivity out to the world. After that was accomplished late Thursday, we departed Tarboro for a real bed.

We travelers want to express our appreciation for the consideration and kindness shown to us by the employees and staff in the Tarboro office, and to the State Office personnel who helped coordinate our trip. It was quite an experience and we were glad we could help.



Edgecombe County Service Center damage.

photo by Cynthia Valles

## Outreach Liaisons — A Strong FSA Presence on Montana Reservations

by FSA's Outreach Programs Staff

**F**SA and a Native American college in Montana have teamed up to keep the state's Native American population informed about FSA loan programs. In 1997, FSA's Outreach Programs Staff entered into a five-year cooperative agreement with the Stone Child College (SCC), a tribally-controlled community college of the Chippewa-Cree Tribe. The tribe, located on the Rocky Boy Reservation in Box Elder, Mont., partnered with FSA to reach out with FSA information and technical assistance for youth, beginning farmers, and other potential Native American loan applicants around the state.

To carry out the pilot project, SCC partnered with the Crow Reservation's Little Big Horn Community College and a private company (S&K Holdings) of the Flathead Nation's Salish and Kootenai tribes. The community college and S&K Holdings (which works with the Flathead Nation's college) each hired a full-time Native American liaison. These liaisons, along with the SCC's full-time liaison, coordinate and facilitate outreach on seven Montana Native American reservations. The community college, the Flathead Nation's college, and the SCC are all 1994 Native American Land Grant Institutions.

As this pilot has progressed, project staffers have identified outreach activities that work best on the reservations. During the second year of the project for instance, liaisons focused on guiding producers through the application process to loan closings. Liaisons used local newspapers to spread the word as each loan was closed. As a direct result of the outreach work, eight clients have now made it through the loan closing process. This represents a record-setting \$500,000 in FSA loan funds going to Native



Scott and Michelle Pease, beginning farm loan recipients.

photo by Mary Phalen

American producers participating in this outreach effort.

But success is not measured only by the number of closed loans. The outreach liaisons are stationed on the reservations to improve the access Native American producers have to FSA-related information and to provide technical assistance. The liaisons facilitate meetings among tribal councils, FSA state and county offices, and Native American producers. And liaisons accompany farmers and ranchers to county offices as needed and provide referrals to FSA staff and other USDA agencies.

And it's working — the project has produced many success stories, including a 10-year-old youth from the Northern Cheyenne Reservation who received a rural youth loan for a star quilt business. In another case, a rancher formed a partnership with his son to eventually take over the family

ranch. And Scott and Michelle Pease, Crow Reservation, got a beginning farmer loan to start utilizing their family's land for the first time in 112 years. Mike Hill, FSA's National Native American Liaison, points out that support from Montana SED Bruce Nelson and his staff has been a key element in making the project so effective.

The partnership and the outreach liaisons' presence on the reservations have improved interaction between FSA staff and Native Americans and is indicative of FSA's strong commitment to serving all its customers.



### ICE CREAM FACT

The International Ice Cream Association reports that in the average household, 66 percent of the ice cream is eaten by adults. No more blaming the kids!

Source: *The Food Files*

## Kansas FSA Builds a Partnership with Job Corps

by Trish Smith, State Outreach Coordinator, Kansas State FSA Office

**T**hanks to a flourishing relationship with our local Job Corps office, the Kansas State Office now has a capable new program technician, Travis Smith. Smith honed his office technology skills for his FSA job at the Flint Hills Job Corps Center in Manhattan, Kan., where the Kansas State Office is located.

Job Corps is the country's largest residential education and training program for disadvantaged youth ages 16 through 24. It helps young adults become responsible, employable, and productive citizens through vocational, educational, and social skills guidance. The program, created under President Johnson in 1964, is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Job Corps consists of more than 100 centers throughout the U.S. and Puerto Rico. It enrolls about 60,000 youths annually and has assisted more than 1.7 million young people nationwide since its inception. Job Corps is primarily a residential program, providing students with room, board, and spending money while they learn.

The local Flint Hills Center helps 250 students annually to secure long-term employment in careers such as carpentry, culinary arts, plumbing, and business and health occupations. After 12 to 18 months of training, graduates of the center go on to fulfilling careers, advanced training at other centers, college, or the military.

Smith, 21, took technology courses at the center for over a year and completed his training in April. During his time with Job Corps, Smith was a Student Government Association member, which helped him develop leadership skills and provided him with opportunities to meet the governor and Kansas mayors and senators. Smith was also a student mentor and spoke with children, young adults, and parents about his message of hope. "My generation and the ones to follow can change the world by fostering more positive and productive young adults and role models," he says.

Kansas State Office employees are fortunate to partner with the Flint Hills Center. In 1994, President Clinton signed the School-To-Work Opportuni-

ties Act, providing funding to establish partnerships between Job Corps and local businesses. The School-To-Work Program involves structured work experiences with supervised mentors at job sites. Smith was one of two students who completed the School-To-Work Program with the Kansas State Office, where he worked for six weeks in a nonpay status. He was then hired last February as a program technician in a full-time temporary position. Smith hopes one day to be selected for a permanent position with FSA.

Smith praises Job Corps for giving him a step up to his current position. "It gave me a jump start to succeed in life as a well-respected individual, and to communicate with people of all ethnic backgrounds," Smith says. "I now have many opportunities because of my hard work, the faith of my family, and the center."

"I recommend Job Corps for struggling teens who want to advance themselves," says Smith. "You get the chance to do and see things that you never thought possible. Many of the classes, such as workforce preparation and social skills training, would not be offered in a regular high school." In fact, Smith has become an expert in the new software the State Office is using. Employees ask Smith quite often for assistance!

Kansas FSA has long been successful in mentoring Job Corps students and providing work experience. Other states are encouraged to build partnerships like these in their areas. To find out about Job Corps in your state, call the National Job Corps at (202) 219-5556 or visit their website at <http://www.jobcorps.org>



Travis Smith staffs the FSA booth at the first annual Flint Hills Job Corps Center career day. Other Job Corps students have been strongly encouraged by Smith's success with Job Corps and FSA.

photo by Trish Smith

## A CRP Legacy

by Patricia D. Sorensen, Program Technician, Jefferson County FSA Office, Fla.



Clenten Wooten's CRP-protected land.



Wooten's tobacco storage barn with his land beyond.  
photos by Patricia D. Sorensen

**T**hroughout his lifetime, Clenten Wooten saw American agriculture and, in particular, his farm go through a history of changes. No surprise, for the man was born well over a century ago.

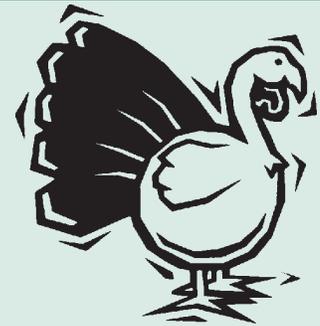
Wooten was born in 1894 in Jefferson County, Fla., a 598-square-mile county with a population of about 14,000 (and much less at Wooten's birth). After serving in World War I, Wooten returned to the rural community in the late 1920s to put down roots, starting with the purchase of a farm. Back then, cotton, peanuts, and corn were his primary row crops, but eventually flue-cured tobacco became his main cash crop.

As farming became less profitable, Wooten decided at age 91 to enroll his farm in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). You can imagine the thoughts the Monticello office was having when a 91-year-old enrolled in a 10-year program. But Wooten cared deeply for the long-term welfare of his land. Amazingly, he was once again back at the counter at age 102 to re-enroll his land in CRP for 10 more years.

Wooten passed away in January of this year at the age of 104, but the benefits of his foresight live on through his land.

### Answers to October's Puzzle

	B	C	O	V	E	R	C	R	O	P
P	A	O	I	A	I					
U	D	D	E	R	N	N	S	A		
M	L	E	V	E	R	G	R	E	E	N
P	E	A	R	O	E					D
K	N	M	I	N	E	R	A	L	S	
I	D	C	A	N	O	R				
N	E	S	T	L	E	R	I	D	D	



### HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Where better to celebrate "Turkey Day" than in one of the three incorporated places in the U.S. actually named Turkey? Turkey, Texas, with 478 residents, is the most populous, followed by Turkey Creek, La. (population 298), and Turkey, N.C. (population 279).

Source: "The Washington Post"

## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Location	Event
Month of November		National American Indian Heritage Month
November 6	Choteau, Mont.	Administrator Kelly to attend Outstanding Young Farmers Conference
November 11		Veterans Day
November 15-18	Kansas City, Mo.	Vicki Hicks, Deputy Administrator for Commodity Operations, to attend DACO Managers Meeting
November 16	Abilene, Texas	Larry Mitchell, Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs, to attend USDA Service Center demonstration of Geographic Information Systems software
November 25		Thanksgiving Day

Note: The above is subject to change.