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NRCS Celebrates 75 Years

TEMPLE, TEXAS, April 22, 2010 – USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will turn 75 on April 27, 2010.

“For the past 75 years, the NRCS has led the nation in protecting our natural resources,” said Don Gohmert, NRCS state conservationist for Texas. “We have followed the lead of the first chief of our agency, Hugh Hammond Bennett, who envisioned the agency’s soil conservationists working one-on-one with producers on private lands and walking the land to develop a conservation plan with private landowners,” he said.

In Texas, approximately 90 percent of the land is privately owned. Gohmert said that means that the quality of our Texas land, water, air and habitats are dependent on the stewardship decisions that thousands of private landowners make every day.

Although programs and technology have provided many changes in the way NRCS delivers its services, Gohmert said working with the private landowner and getting conservation on the ground remains NRCS’s number one priority.

“That priority is reflected in our agency’s mission - Helping People Help the Land,” he said.

Conservation practices carried out by farmers, ranchers, and other landowners in Texas have improved the quality of life and built stronger rural communities in the state. The state’s natural

Helping People Help the Land

resources have improved because of conservation practices such as crop rotations, terraces, waterways, windbreaks, wetland restoration, no-till farming, buffers, watershed dams, rangeland management, ponds, nutrient and pest management, to name a few.

“The 75 years of success of NRCS can be attributed to dedicated producers, agency employees, local soil and water conservation district supervisors and staff, and partners, all of whom worked together to accomplish the goal of protecting our natural resources,” Gohmert said.

“This agency’s rich conservation legacy has resulted in many benefits to the state’s citizens—abundant food and fiber, clean water, clean air, productive soils, and open spaces to use and enjoy,” he said.

NRCS was created as the Soil Conservation Service within USDA on April 27, 1935, in response to the devastation of the Dust Bowl on the nation’s agricultural land. The agency’s primary mission then was to conserve soil on agricultural land. It became the Natural Resources Conservation Service in 1994 to better reflect its expanded role of servicing other natural resources such as water, air, plants, and animals on private lands.

For more information about NRCS in Texas, visit <http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov> or stop by your local county USDA Service Center.