

For Immediate Release

Date: Friday, November 21, 2008

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Southwest Nebraska RC&D Annual Banquet

Southwest Nebraska RC&D hosted their annual banquet, Tuesday, November 18, 2008 at the Chief Motel in McCook, NE. Southwest Nebraska RC&D used this time to recognize "Hidden Treasures of Southwest Nebraska". Keynote speaker for the event was Les Hosick from Dancing Leaf Lodge in Wellfleet, NE sharing "World Class Treasures of the Medicine Creek" Tim Smith, Project Coordinator for the Western Republican River Riparian Improvement Project also gave a presentation of the project for the past year and a half. Ted Tietjen, Co-President of SW Nebraska gave an overview of the year in review with presentations from Bob Rhoads, Southwest Weed Management area; Bill Elliot, Red Willow County Waste; Steven Grams, Chase County Representative; and Roger Stockton, Southwest Nebraska RC&D Coordinator.

Rick Hedke, Hitchcock County Weed Authority, was awarded the Southwest Nebraska RC&D's "Volunteer of the Year Award." Jennifer Rittenhouse-ten Bensel, Southwest Nebraska RC&D Executive Administrator presented the award to Hedke saying, "One board of directors has really stood above the rest during the past year and a half. He has donated many hours during evenings and weekends. His ideas are innovative and he finds a way to get everything done. An organization like SWWMA and Southwest NE RC&D could not take on the big projects without volunteers like Rick Hedke."

Co-Chairpersons Lynne Wilson recognized Bill Zahl as Council Member of the year for his commitment to Southwest Nebraska RC&D since its organization. Former Board Member Frank Potthoff helped Lynne with this award recalling the founding members and how they organized the RC&D. Bill Zahl has served as treasurer for since the RC&D was started in 1994.

Southwest Nebraska RC&D also acknowledged BSB Construction, Inc. of Curtis as "Outstanding Project Sponsor of the Year". "BSB Construction, Inc. has made us look like heroes this year," Rittenhouse-ten Bensel said during their presentation. "They have went above and beyond their duties as a contractor and worked to ensure everyone stayed compliant with state and federal regulations. Southwest Weed Management Area and Southwest Nebraska RC&D are excited to work with a company like BSB Construction, Inc. who are passionate about the project and want to do the best job possible for the residents of Nebraska and the state agencies."

Marla Smith founder of S.C.O.R.E. and T.A.C. was also recognized as a "Hidden Treasure of Southwest Nebraska RC&D". S.C.O.R.E. alternates camp curriculums by emphasizing physical science/chemistry, earth science, or life sciences. They include conservation, and ecology, and a community payback project which have included starting a recycling program in Imperial, NE, tree and nature trails, built 2 butterfly

gardens, planted numerous trees & shrubs, and have conducted point source pollution studies.

Another organization receiving mention for “Hidden Treasure of Southwest Nebraska” was Furnas/Harlan Partnership. The Furnas/Harlan Partnership started out as a project of the SWRC&D and has been legally organized for five years and they have had a paid director for a little over three years. Their Mission Statement tells of an economic development partnership, working to ensure the future of our region. The Partnership is working to build a unified vision for economic development in Furnas & Harlan counties.

Larry and Bruce Peterson was another “Hidden Treasure of Southwest Nebraska” recognized at the annual banquet. Peterson’s started raising Boer goats in 2006, shortly after they formed the business now known as Peterson Boer Goats. They started with a herd of 300 and have increased the herd over the last 2 years to about 700 head. Peterson’s have designed custom grazing for landowners in an attempt to remove invasive and noxious weeds. They have done grazing in and around rivers and streams, also in upland areas. Bruce is very active in doing research work in developing strong and healthy goat herds in SW Nebraska.

The final recipient of the “Hidden Treasures of Southwest Nebraska was Dr. Weldon Sleight of Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis, NE. Dr. Weldon Sleight is the Dean of the College in Curtis Nebraska. Dr. Sleight instituted a program called the 100 cow plan which is to promote entrepreneurship in the agriculture industry. This program is designed to persuade young farmers to stay in Nebraska.

Southwest Nebraska RC&D is a non-profit organization serving the counties of Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Perkins and Red Willow.