

# *Social Sciences Institute*

## Accomplishments FY 2003



## *A Message from the Director*

The Social Sciences Institute (SSI), established during NRCS's previous reorganization in 1995, is home to a diverse team of interdisciplinary professionals. Science-based but practical, we strive to blend science with the art of science to develop useful tools, analysis, and procedures that conservation planners at all levels of The Conservation Partnership can depend on.

This publication summarizes the accomplishments of the SSI staff for fiscal year 2003. The SSI reached over 300,000 people this year through the SSI Web site, product distribution and reproductions, satellite downlinks, training, media outlets, meeting and conference activities, and direct contacts. This publication shows that we have accomplished a tremendous amount of work in just one year. To these accomplishments, the Institute staff should be proud to have served.

The areas that I am most satisfied with are the diversity and outreach work that we have done and continue to do, the services we provide to our customers, and the research we conduct that is done quickly, accurately and without a great deal of fanfare. Whenever possible, our work is transparent by being freely available on our web site. Easy access to information has been SSI's policy since the beginning of the Institute. Our role in the agency continues to be one in which customer service is first and foremost.

Change is in the air and another reorganization is planned. It would be easy to become sentimental about the loss of the palpable bond that exists among members of the SSI. But, rather than dwell on this divestiture, we can be content in the knowledge that we applied our skills to a good end, which are revealed in this document. I am confident that all the Institute staff will continue to apply their numerous skills, no matter what type of organizational structure they work within. Since this is likely the "swan song" of the SSI, I need to say "thanks" not only to SSI's immediate staff, but also to Peter Smith, our boss, as well as the support staff throughout the country for all the help and support they provided us.

**FRANK B. CLEARFIELD**

**Director**

**Social Sciences Institute**

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# New Products and Publications

## Locally Led Conservation



- PPC18 - *Understanding Non-Profit Organizations* - Gives a general overview of non-profit organizations and provides suggestions for local partnerships.
- PPC21 - *Understanding Community Power Structures* - Explains how a basic understanding of social power and power actors can enhance conservation initiatives.
- PPC25 - *Rebuilding Your Local Work Group*- Discusses ways to renew interest and sustain momentum in accomplishing group tasks.
- T025 - *Barriers and Strategies Influencing the Adoption of Nutrient Management Practices* - This report focuses on how social barriers impact nutrient management and suggests strategies useful in overcoming these barriers.

## Diversity



- PPC9 - *How to Improve Diversity on Your Team* - Provides a definition of diversity and specific recruiting and retention strategies to diversify your work group.
- PPC26 - *Working with People of Different Cultures* - A definition of culture and practical suggestions to improve cross-cultural communication are provided.
- T026 - *Evaluating Resource Needs of Native American Tribal Governments in the Midwest Region* - This survey identifies tribal familiarity and utilization of USDA agencies and NRCS programs and services. It also includes current and future natural resource concerns.
- *Available Tools for Outreach and Diversity Efforts* flyer - Itemizes specific SSI products and tools for reaching underserved audiences.

## Stress and Change Management



- *Available Tools for Responding to Change* flyer - Itemizes specific SSI products and tools for facilitating and responding to change.



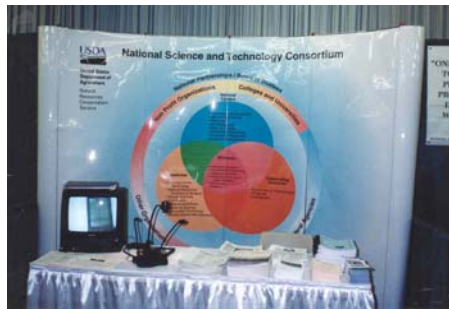
## Interactive Tools



- T020 - *Adding Up Social Capital: An Investment in Communities* - Measures the level of social capital in a community and provides results that can be used to raise awareness of whether social capital may be an obstacle in conservation.
- T024 - *Leadership Assessment Instrument* - Evaluates the user in multiple dimensions of leadership including focused drive, emotional intelligence, building trust/enabling others, conceptual thinking, and systems thinking.

*Note: Both procedures are available as interactive tools on the SSI Web site.*

## Marketing



- M001 - *Marketing for Conservation Success* workbook- Divides marketing into seven phases. This workbook helps a participant develop his/her marketing plan to address issues in their community or workplace.
- PPC31 - *Exhibiting: A Tool to Achieve Technology Transfer* - Explains how to effectively facilitate the people aspects of professional exhibits. Discusses how the exhibits are an effective means for communicating conservation messages, whether at a county fair or other venue.

## Miscellaneous



- PB001 - *2003 Product Catalog* update - Itemizes all products and offerings of the Social Sciences Institute.
- PB002 - *The Leader in You Training Tapes* brochure update - Itemizes all 34 titles available for for two-week loan.
- PB003 - *Developing Your Skills to INVOLVE COMMUNITIES in Implementing Locally Led Conservation* brochure update - Itemizes program components including nine training modules, self-evaluation CD, video, and relevant fact sheets.
- *Social Sciences Manual* - Contains guidelines and procedures for conducting social evaluations.
- *The Leader in You* 2003 flyers - Promotes the spring and fall live satellite seminars in the program.

# Training



## *Developing Your Skills to INVOLVE COMMUNITIES in Implementing Locally Led Conservation*

The Social Sciences Institute continues to provide technical assistance for this training initiative. It was developed in cooperation with Michigan State University and Michigan State University Extension. This nine-module customized training program is designed to help you and your organization acquire or improve skills to implement locally led conservation programs.

Formerly provided as a three binder set, the complete nine-module curriculum has been consolidated in 2003 into one binder containing introductory information, a CD, and 3.5 inch floppy disks. Other components include a self-evaluation CD and a video overview.

In FY 2003, the Social Sciences Institute provided direct assistance to over 15 states and partners with customers ranging from soil scientists to training officers to district conservationists, to RC&D coordinators. The National Association of Conservation Districts also requested the program. In 1998, the SSI trained over 40 people nationally who are still conducting sessions in their states and regions with these materials. The program is also being applied and utilized in other training initiatives. For example, this year the sociologist in the Northern Plains Region applied multiple components of the program in the “Outreach Pilot to Hispanics and Latinos in the Northern Plains Region” course. The program continues to be a useful tool in implementing the locally led conservation aspects of the Farm Bill.



## *Consultation with American Indian Governments*

This training course emphasizes effective and appropriate government-to-government relations with the sovereign Indian nations. The cultural, social, legal, and historical background of the government-to-government relationship is discussed and used as a context for establishing sound consultation between NRCS and Indian nations.

SSI has continued this program over the fiscal year. The program was presented in its entirety twice over the course of the year and portions of it were presented five additional times. SSI trained over 175 people nationwide, including the entire national civil rights staff and Missouri field personnel.

## *The Leader in You*

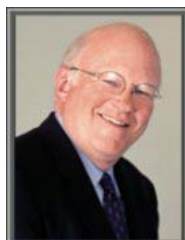
The Social Sciences Institute sponsors *The Leader in You*, a self-paced leadership development opportunity designed to support the President’s Management Initiatives and the locally led conservation aspects of the the Farm Bill. It has been in existence since spring of 1996 and has grown substantially. In May of 2003, 1066 people downloaded seminar handouts. SSI manages a lending library of 136 copies of 34 historic seminars in five categories including: communications, collaborations, and community building; negotiation skills; leadership development; managing change; and marketing. There were over 150 requests for tapes in the first three-quarters of the fiscal year.

The program is co-sponsored by the NRCS National Employee Development Center in cooperation with the National Association of Conservation Districts, National Conservation District Employees Association, and National Association of State Conservation Agencies. In addition, the NRCS Federal Women’s Program, and Earth Care Connection, USA will be cooperating sponsors of “Power Tools for Women!”.

The following live satellite seminars were sponsored:



***Leaders Teaching Leaders:  
Accelerating the Pipeline***  
Andrea Zintz  
Thursday, November 14, 2002



***Excellence in Management  
and Leadership***  
Ken Blanchard  
Wednesday, September 24, 2003



***Leading Change***  
John Kotter  
Tuesday, December 10, 2002



***Give ‘Em the Pickle!***  
Bob Farrell  
Wednesday, October 15, 2003



***FISH!Sticks: Keeping the  
Vision Alive***  
Stephen Lundin, Ph.D.  
Thursday, May 15, 2003



***Power Tools for Women!***  
Joni Daniels  
Wednesday, December 10, 2003



***Leading Through  
Influence***  
Laree Kiely, Ph.D.  
Tuesday, June 3, 2003

**Coming Soon in FY 2004!**  
- *Good to Great* with Jim Collins, May 2004

# Technology Transfer

The Social Sciences Institute transfers technology in a variety of ways. In addition to providing one-on-one assistance and training to field staff, the Institute has reached customers through the SSI Web site, at national meetings, and in internal and external publications.

## National Meetings

During FY 2003 SSI provided speakers for 10 of the 12 following national meetings, and hand-out materials for all the meetings in an effort to achieve effective customer service and technology transfer.

- National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees Conference
- Western RC&D Conference
- National Association of Conservation Districts Expo
- Agricultural Outlook Forum 2003
- National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees Conference
- Federally Employed Women Conference
- National Association of Resource Conservation & Development Conference
- Soil and Water Conservation Society Conference
- Earth Care Connection, USA meeting
- American Agricultural Economics Association Meeting
- National Volunteer Coordinator's Training Conference
- NRCS Asian Pacific Islander Organization Training Conference

## New Products and Information Poster

SSI created a poster for display at NRCS national headquarters in Washington, D.C. and for exhibits at national meetings to promote awareness of SSI products.

## National Publications

SSI products and information were featured in three *NRCS This Week*, 19 *NRCS Technology News*, and two *NACD e-Notes* articles. Additionally, a number of all NRCS employee e-mail news releases were distributed featuring SSI products and information.



# *e-Government*

The Social Sciences Institute Web site includes all 76 SSI products and training information appropriate for the Internet. It links to other SSI sites maintained by Institute staff including: Social and Economic Data Site, Applied Environmental Psychology site, Ecosystem Valuation, and Cost Effective analysis.

Web site activity for FY 2003:

Number of visitors: 51,900

Number of unique visitors: 29,100

Number of hits: 340,400

Number of documents downloaded: 47,700

## **New Web-based Products**

- Released a pilot of an on-line economics program (EconDocExchange)
- Developed a web data program that estimates the number of limited resource farmers (LRF) and beginning farmers by county. This procedure is being used to target counties that likely have a high percentage of LRF.

# *Technical Assistance*

## **Surveys**

SSI staff worked with the NRCS Strategic Planning Division to develop three web based surveys: (1) customer satisfaction with technical service providers (TSP), (2) TSP satisfaction with the certification process, and (3) TSP satisfaction with the reporting system.

## **Focus Groups**

SSI staff conducted or coordinated over a dozen focus group sessions:

- One with representatives from the conservation districts to assess support for marketing conservation through The Conservation Partnership.
- Nine sessions assessed the interest of industry, commodity, wildlife, and environmental representatives regarding the new Conservation Security Program.
- Four with nutritionists from the swine, poultry, dairy, and beef industries to assess how NRCS can work more closely with the livestock industry.

## **Research Activities**

SSI staff conducted a study of the WebTCAS system. Qualitative phone interviews were completed within a one-week time frame and the report was presented to the Chief and shared with the strategic planning staff. It is being used as one of the baseline measures to improve the WebTCAS system.

## **Demographic Analysis**

SSI staff delivered training on demographic analysis to the Southeast Regional Outreach Working Group.

# Partners

The Social Sciences Institute works with a variety of partners and customers in product development, training, and technology transfer related to community conservation. They include, but are not limited to:

## *Internal:*

- Asian Pacific Islander Organization
- Conservation Communications
- Federal Women's Program
- Field Offices
- National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils
- National Earth Team Program
- National Employee Development Center
- National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees
- National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees
- National Plant Data Center
- National Plant Materials Program
- State and Regional Offices
- Strategic Planning Division
- Wildlife Habitat Management Institute

## *External:*

- American Agricultural Economics Association
- Aquinas College
- Auburn University
- Calvin College
- Canton Community Foundation
- Earth Care Connection, USA
- Eastern Michigan University
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Federal Training Network
- General Federation of Women's Clubs
- Grand Rapids Foundation
- Grand Valley State University
- Habitat for Humanity
- Michigan State University
- Michigan State University Extension
- National Association of Conservation Districts
- National Association of State Conservation Agencies
- National Conservation District Employees Association
- National Easter Seal Society
- Native American Tribal Governments in the Midwest Region
- North Carolina A&T State University
- Soil and Water Conservation Society
- University of Arizona
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development
- US Homeland Security
- USDA Food and Consumer Service



In the first nine months of FY2003, the Social Sciences Institute partnered with the Earth Team Volunteer Program and seven men and women documented over 310 hours of volunteer time.

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**Web site for social sciences products:**  
**[www.ssi.nrcs.usda.gov/](http://www.ssi.nrcs.usda.gov/) or**  
**[www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/RESS](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/RESS)**

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