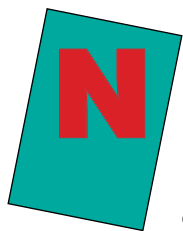


Confidence Is Off-Shoot of ARS Programs



Norm Fausey taught Dennis Finnegan what it's like to be a federal water quality scientist. Finnegan learned his lessons well and has just recently become one himself, sampling streamwater and studying aquatic habitats in the Lake Erie-

Lake St. Clair watershed for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

As a part-time research assistant in the ARS Soil Drainage Research Unit at Columbus, Ohio, Finnegan paid his dues. He spent hours entering field data into computers and helped lay thousands of feet of drainage pipe, move tons of dirt, irrigate countless research plots, and prepare plant and soil samples. And when he wasn't doing that, there were always farm chores, like baling hay and mowing pastures.

From 1990 to 1992—during his sophomore and junior years at Ohio State University (OSU) in Columbus—Finnegan worked with Fausey, who heads the soil drainage unit. Finnegan majored in agronomy, with an emphasis in soil and water conservation and a minor in geology. He had gotten a late start at school, entering Ohio State at age 22 after a stint with the U.S. Navy.

Fausey's tutelage and the geology minor combined to help Finnegan achieve his recent rating as a physical scientist for USGS at age 29. He joined USGS during his senior year at OSU.

"ARS gave me my first exposure to working scientists," Finnegan says. "I was in the dark about how scientists actually earn a living. I learned the ins and outs of how a scientific organization works.

"I saw firsthand the amount of preparation that is behind running a research project. I also learned a lot about

computer data entry. Norm gave me a lot of responsibility, trust, and respect—along with the keys to the lab—even though I was a new guy. I gained confidence because of this," he says.

Among other things, Finnegan participated in Fausey's research showing that crop yields can be raised considerably while improving water quality by pumping irrigation water through underground drainage pipes during dry summer days. Columbus is in central Ohio, where soils tend to get waterlogged.

All of this was good training for Finnegan, who is now traveling hundreds of miles to sample streams from New York to Michigan, collecting data for the USGS National Water Quality Assessment Program.—By **Don Comis**, ARS. ♦

BOB NICHOLS



Dennis Finnegan

Dennis Finnegan's experience with ARS water quality scientists has led to a career with the U.S. Geological Survey. (K7399-16)