

VOLUNTEER SHOWCASE

April 2013, Alaska

College Student Helps Complete Hay Land Growth Project

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office in Homer, Alaska was fortunate to have the help of student, Katie Schmidt as an Earth Team Volunteer. Schmidt volunteered her time with Rangeland Management Specialist, Karin Sonnen, to complete fieldwork for a hay land study.

“Having another set of hands in the field helped us get our work completed more efficiently, but it also opened Katie’s eyes to NRCS and what we do.”

-- Karin Sonnen,
Rangeland Management Specialist

Schmidt helped take hay clippings every two weeks and develop hay land growth curves for the state. The process involved cutting the current year’s growth into small piles, weighing the clippings, allowing them to dry for two weeks and weighing them a second time to determine the percent of dry matter.

In addition, a sample of the hay was sent to a lab to determine its quality. This information is incorporated into Alaska’s Ecological Sites, showing the kind of production that can be expected on developed hay land with any given soil.

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Schmidt is currently at the University of Idaho, earning a degree in Range Management. After college graduation, Katie will recognize NRCS as a potential employer and likely apply for a position with the agency.



Earth Team Volunteer Katie Schmidt and Rangeland Management Specialist Karin Sonnen weigh a hay land samples as a part a data collection project for the Homer Field Office in Alaska.



The Earth Team is the volunteer component of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a USDA agency. For more about NRCS and the Earth Team, visit www.usda.nrcs.gov.

If you are interested in volunteering, call (888) 526-3227 or visit your local NRCS office to learn about volunteer opportunities.