

# VOLUNTEER SHOWCASE

October 2012, Montana

## Sixteen Years and Counting...A Dedicated Montana Volunteer

In 1996, a Soil Conservationist in the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Havre field office in Montana approached Don Zinn about becoming an Earth Team volunteer. Later that year, Don took his first readings of the saline seep monitoring wells located at the Great Northern Fairgrounds and surrounding area in Havre, Hill County, MT. Sixteen years later he is still going strong.

Don is quiet, unassuming and dedicated. He works as a para substitute teacher in Havre Public schools, but in his free time he faithfully reads the static water level of 24 monitoring wells at least once a month from March to November and more often if there is a significant precipitation event.

In 1990 the Montana Salinity Control Association drilled monitoring wells located on the fairgrounds and the surrounding area. The primary objective was to map the movement of groundwater and create a landscape design with salt-tolerant species that will aid in lowering the existing high water table, which is causing the formation of large saline seeps on the fairgrounds. High nitrate levels in the monitoring wells indicated the water table is locally recharged and not the result of a deeper regional groundwater flow system.

The water level data Don collects is used by the Montana Salinity Control Association to determine the underground hydrology of the area. The successes of this long term venture are a direct result of Don's commitment to Montana NRCS and the Earth Team.



*Don Zinn has been volunteering with Montana NRCS since 1996. He is seen here recording the static water level of a well.*



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](http://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.