

By Tim Linscott

Managing Editor

A government shutdown is over and USDA officials are busy back at work.

Claudia Stevenson, resource conservationist for Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), explained that the crew at the Grant USDA office was eager to get back to work and have been diligently getting things back up to speed.

“Morale is back to normal. We are happy to be here. We have a great group here and we all like working with the public,” Stevenson said. “We are all busy people and we like to do what we love daily. It is good to be back to work.”

On Oct. 1 the federal government went into a furlough with many government employees, including those from Perkins County, staying at home waiting for the shutdown to end.

On Oct. 17 Stevenson received text from her supervisor on her personal phone relaying, ‘Report to work tomorrow at regular time.’

Now that things are functioning again at the USDA office Stevenson and the rest of the crew is working hard to catch up on projects delayed by the furlough.

“Depending on the project, there could be a delay of up to two weeks,” Stevenson said.

USDA officials are trying to catch up on conservation projects, especially getting them paid out to people who have projects finished.

“Some were submitted in September and we are now getting to the field to check. We are trying to beat the snow,” Stevenson said.

With things on regular track Stevenson and other employees have now circled Jan. 15, 2014 as the next end date for the continuing resolution. If that resolution runs out, another government shut down is likely. Raising the debt ceiling, which is what started the furlough earlier this month, has a deadline of Feb. 7, 2014.

The second level of sequester cuts are also due in January, 2014. The sequestration is the provision of the Budget Control Act that imposed automatic across-the-board cuts around 8-10 percent in government spending.