Dan Andrews, W-P ag teacher shows off the new equipment gifted to the W-P ag program through the Nebraska Ag Education Soils Project. The equipment was funded with grant dollars from the Nebraska FFA Foundation and the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

By Sheri Hink

The Wauneta Breeze

Ag students at Wauneta-Palisade Schools have new soil testing equipment, thanks to the Nebraska Ag Education Soils Project.

Ag teacher Dan Andrews attended the Excellence in Ag Sciences Day 2012 in North Platte on June 14. There he received various soil testing equipment and instructional materials. Funding for the equipment and materials was provided by the Nebraska FFA Foundation and the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

The Excellence in Ag Day was a joint project between the University of Nebraska Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Nebraska FFA Foundation and the

Nebraska Environmental Trust.

The project invested approximately $75,000 into Nebraska ag programs this year and $15,000 last year.

The vest Andrews is wearing in the photo is a field-ready soil testing kit. It includes test strips to check phosphates, nitrates and nitrites as well as an electronic soil tester used to test soil electrolysis. The vest also contains a vial, scoop and distilled water to preform testing.

He said the vest is designed to allow students to perform tests on site as well as back in the classroom.

The big white bucket pictured contains materials to perform soil glue tests and water infiltration tests.

Other items he received in North Platte include an electronic scale for weighing and testing samples and several books to aid instruction. Andrews felt two books in particular will be very useful for W-P students, one on field crop ecology and another on the soils of Nebraska.

The kit he received also includes a book that details the uses of the included equipment, how to use it in the classroom or in the field and where the equipment was purchased so it can be replaced as needed.

While Andrews was in North Platte he and other ag instructors were able to try out several items included in the kit he brought home.

Andrews said the equipment, valued at $400, will be utilized in several of his classrooms including the crops and soils class, natural resources class and the measuring wheel will be used in the ag mechanics class too.

According to Andrews, 110 of the 160 ag teachers in the state have taken advantage of this program so far.

“The Nebraska Ag Education Soils Project is a great way to bring equipment into our school without having to use tax dollars. All the funding is provided through grants,” said Andrews.

Currently, ag teachers are being surveyed on equipment that may be needed in the future. Andrews plans to request water testing equipment on his survey.

Ag teachers’ inservice

Andrews was on the road again Tuesday, June 26 when he attended the Nebraska Ag Educators Association District 11 Ag Teachers Summer Inservice in Eustis.

During the inservice Les Roggenkamp, Southwest ag teacher, gave a presentation on marketing in the classroom. He showcased ag marketing teaching techniques utilized in his classrooms. He provided details on a hands-on activity where students buy and sell commodities using fake money by watching the markets and buying/selling during class.

Jon Lechtenberg of Southern Valley presented on strategies used in his school for the ag communications contest. He provided information on how he gets students involved in the contest and ways they work on the project.

Both ag teachers provided websites and resources relating to their presentations.

“The ag teachers’ inservice gives us new ideas and makes us better teachers,” said Andrews.

“District 11 ag teachers get together regularly. Our district is competitive but we’re willing to help each other out too,” he said.

District 11 consists of 11 schools in this area: Chase County, Dundy County-Stratton, Cambridge, Arapahoe, McCook, Medicine Valley, Southwest, Southern Valley, Eustis-Farnam, Wauneta-Palisade and Hayes Center.

The inservice also included a tour of the new Lone Wolf Würst Meats plant which recently opened in Eustis. The plant has been up and running for the past month making polish sausages, brats and summer sausage. Since 1971, the meats have been made through the grocery store in Eustis.

Now, owner Gregg Wolf has partnered with Doug, Deb and Megan Breining to increase production from 500 pounds per week, as done through the store, to the goal of 2,000 pounds per week.

The plant would like to work with area FFA chapters by offering their products for sale during the annual FFA fruit sales. Andrews says he’ll consider it for next year’s offerings.

Andrews also enjoyed seeing another entrepreneurial business grow in the small town of Eustis, population 401. Eustis is also home to The Village Pie Maker which markets frozen pies throughout the state, if not beyond.

“These two businesses show it’s possible to do something in a small town, you just have to find your niche,” said Andrews.