

CONSERVATIONNews

Harrison County Soil and Water Conservation District

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2010 Annual Report Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District

It is with great pleasure that the Harrison County Soil and Water Conservation District is able to present its' 65th Annual Report in *ConservationNews*, which has been most helpful over the past 28 years in relaying vital conservation information to the citizens of Harrison County. This award-winning quarterly newsletter is printed and emailed to individuals, organizations, and schools, and distributed to businesses and libraries. *ConservationNews* is also on the District's web site: <http://hcswd.co.harrison.ms.us>

The coordinated efforts of the District and working partner, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), provided assistance to landowners on resource conservation planning and application, "Helping People Help the Land".

The District and NRCS surveyed Harrison County for possible Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) projects. One criteria for EWP projects is 4" of rain in 24 hours, with public or private structures being endangered by erosion.

The District provides technical assistance with soil maps, aerial photographs, flood plain maps, topographic maps, digitized soil survey, and quad maps of Harrison County. Technical assistance is also available on cogongrass control, soil erosion, stormwater runoff, surface mine reclamation, pond layout and renovations, dry fire hydrants, healthy forest, agriculture, among others.

The District was actively involved with MS Coastal Plains Resource Conservation and Development (MCPRCD) which worked closely with the Harrison County Road Department in their effort to control cogongrass, which is the 7th worst weed in the world. Nearly 590 acres of cogongrass on county roadsides were treated at a value of \$29,857. Harrison County Board of Supervisors dedicated a \$20,000 grant for this project. Fifty private landowners received chemicals to spray nearly 190 acres from MCPRCD with a value of over \$4,700. MCPRCD provided contract spraying on 71 acres for a total value of \$5,800. The District has a 20-gallon cogongrass sprayer available to landowners and has cogongrass chemical application forms.

The District has available to landowners a 7-foot seed grain drill, which is also available to the county and cities. We appreciate Supervisor Kim Savant and the staff at the Lyman Work Center for storing and maintaining the grain drill. The grain drill has been tremendously popular with the landowners, and is certainly a benefit to Harrison County.

The District held an Agriculture Field Day which featured information on Cogongrass and Chemicals, Pasture Production for Grazing Land, Hayland Practices, Grain Drill, Equine Nutrition and Maintenance, and Landowner Assistance Programs. Over 65 landowners took part.

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Harrison Central High School's Envirothon Team placed 1st in the 2010 Mississippi Envirothon.



The District's 7-foot seed grain drill has been put to good use by Harrison County landowners.



The District distributed over 5,000 free hardwood seedlings for Arbor Day, always the second Friday of February.

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The District attended the MS Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting, and received recognition for their contributions to the conservation of our natural resources. Awards the District received include: MACD Outstanding Newsletter, MACD Outstanding District in Woodland Conservation, and NRCS Chief's Earth Team Field Award. It took a lot of teamwork among the District, Earth Team Volunteers, and NRCS to receive these state awards.

Mississippi's Arbor Day-always the 2nd Friday of February, proved to be quite busy. Arbor Day tree seedling distribution started with 5,000 hardwood seedlings being distributed free to landowners at the District Office. The District also donated trees to cities, county, and schools.

The District sponsored a Farm Field Day for the 2nd and 3rd grade students of Quarles Elementary at 7L Farms. The 170 students learned about Soils, Wildlife, Livestock, Dairy, and Water Cycle.

The District sponsored Envirothon Teams from Harrison Central High School and Biloxi High School in the South Area Envirothon, with qualifying teams able to participate in the Mississippi Envirothon. Harrison Central High School won the State Envirothon! The District sponsored the team's training while in Fresno, CA to prepare for the Canon Envirothon. The Envirothon competition tests students' knowledge of aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and current issue.

"Conservation Habits = Healthy Habitats" was the national theme for the NACD Soil and Water Stewardship Poster Contest. The District received over 500 posters from students in categories 2nd/3rd grades and 4th-6th grades. Each participant received a certificate and stewardship bookmark. Many thanks to our Earth Team Volunteers who sorted, judged, and made certificates for each participant.

The District took part in "Sam E. Soil" programs at libraries and elementary schools, promoting soil conservation with soil character, Sam E. Soil, and distributing Sam E. Soil coloring books.

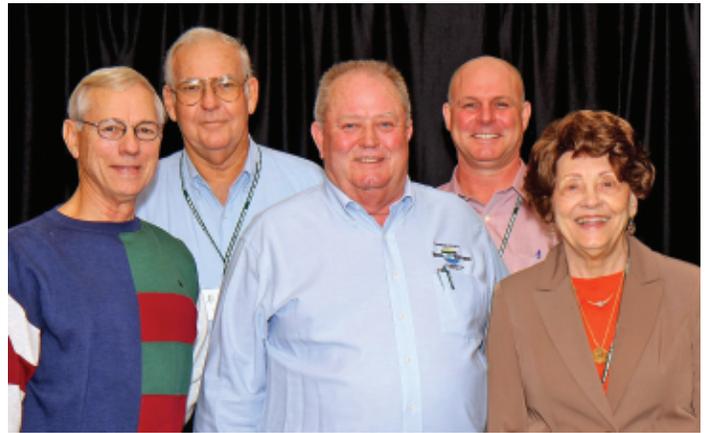
The District worked with a "Go Garden" concept, which makes container gardening at schools and assisted living facilities easy and fun. The District had a "Go Garden" on display at the Gulf Coast Garden Show, and co-sponsored with MCPRCD to provide two "Go Gardens" to Biloxi Community Homes, where residents tend the garden.

The District co-sponsored a Wildlife Workshop and Demonstration, which was attended by 100 landowners. Topics for this event included Deer Management and DMAP, Turkey Management, Cogongrass, Forestry/Burning, NRCS Programs, and a Food Plot Demonstration.

The District sponsored their Conservation Education Field Day for the 4th grade students of Harrison County at the Harrison County Sheriff's Department County Farm. Over 350 students enjoyed hands-on learning about the water cycle, soils, wildlife biology, urban forestry, recycling, natural resources, non-point source pollution, and marine debris. The students also enjoyed singing along to, "This Land is Your Land".

The District is grateful to each person who contributed to our success in Fiscal Year 2010. Special recognition is extended to the Harrison County Board of Supervisors for their continued support of District funding as well as the City of Biloxi, City of D'Iberville, City of Gulfport, City of Long Beach, and City of Pass Christian.

Fiscal Year 2010 Accomplishments in Technical Assistance - page 5



District Commissioners Buck Johnson, Paul McKay, Robert Johnson, Greg Crochet, and Edie Dreher represent over 100 years of combined conservation service to Harrison County.



District Conservationist Tyree Harrington taught students about Soils at the Farm Field Day held at 7L Farms. The 170 students also learned about Wildlife, Livestock, Dairy, and Water Cycle.



ETV David Peacock on guitar, Dave Schroeder on harmonica, and Commissioner Buck Johnson on banjo played, "This Land is Your Land" for 350 students at the District's Conservation Education Field Day.

While we try to teach our children all about life, our children teach us what life is all about.

- Angela Schwindt

Out and About the County

by *Dan Longino, Field Technician*

A farmer was leaning on the corner post of his pasture waiting with his children for the bus. His son said, "I have to do new things today. What do you do all day?" His father said, "I have to do the same two old things every day. I have to do things the right way or I have to do things over and over until I finally do them the right way."

Most of our farmers "do" pasture or tree "things" every day. I've been told that the single thing most tree farmers want is to leave their well-tended land to their heirs. They have to try to do the right thing when faced with fires, weeds, storms, invasive bugs and neighbors (including well-intentioned government workers).

Pasture farmers include all the livestock folk from cattle to horses to goats with the occasional emu or llama or red deer to keep things complicated. Their primary goal is good forage, and a shortage of hay or drought or plague of locusts can quickly put them out of business.

When "the Hurricane" (as Katrina is now called) hit, we had a handful of hard-working dairymen who lost their barns and electricity. Their problem had to be solved right away. All the good-intentioned local folks that usually show up after smaller storms were too busy this time patching holes in their own roofs. All the government farm agencies failed to help.

We now have one, I repeat, one dairy farmer left in the county. If we have another storm next year, he knows he can expect about the same assistance. So pasture farmers usually have less time to do things right than our tree farmers. They know that that patch of cogongrass will take up four times as much land next year and those armyworms will not march away as quickly as they attacked. Our pasture farmers have to be really motivated to do the right thing and those that have to do anything over and over again rarely last.

I write this to praise and admire the successful and lucky farmers. The decisions you make when you lean on the corner post planning your day affect all the rest of us greatly!

Call Before You Dig

By *Paul Rodrigue, NRCS Water Management Engineer*

The construction and installation of many conservation practices require some degree of excavation. If you are using mechanical excavating equipment, the MS One Call Law applies.

All persons preparing to dig must call Mississippi 811 or utilize the online E-locate system (www.ms811.org) two days prior to the beginning of any work. Underground facilities will be marked using the color code system and then work may proceed.

It is the intent of the One Call law to protect underground utility facilities and other underground facilities from destruction or damage, in order to prevent death of or injury to persons, property damage to public and private property, and loss or interruption of essential utility services to the general public.

This pertains to any excavation except:

- (i) the tilling of the soil less than twenty-four (24) inches in depth for agricultural purposes;
- (ii) excavation to a depth of less than twelve (12) inches on private property by the property owner without the use of mechanical excavating equipment;
- (iii) excavation without the use of mechanical excavating equipment to a depth of less than twelve (12) inches on private property by an excavator who is not the property owner, except when such excavation is in a clearly marked underground facility right-of-way.

The responsibility for complying with the One Call Law is placed upon the entity doing the excavation. Unless the excavator has fully complied with the One Call law, each person responsible for excavation that results in damage to an underground line or underground facility, shall be responsible for any and all costs and expenses incurred by the operator in restoring, correcting, repairing or replacing the damaged line or facility.

Becoming a Tree City

by *Donna V. Yowell, MUFC Executive Director*

- Encourages better care of community forests.
- Touches the lives of people within the community who benefit daily from cleaner air, shadier streets and aesthetic beauty that healthy, well-managed urban forests provide.
- Recognizes and rewards communities for annual advancements in urban forestry practices.
- Increases public awareness of the many social, economical and environmental benefits urban forestry practices.
- Provides education to improve current urban forestry practices.
- Builds cooperation between public and private sectors to effectively manage urban forests.
- Encourages, supports and strengthens effective urban forestry programs in diverse communities nationwide.
- Makes a strong contribution to community pride.
- Serves as a blueprint for planting and maintaining a community's trees.
- Puts people in touch with other communities and resources that can help them improve their program.
- Brings solid benefits to a community such as helping to gain financial support for tree projects and contributing to safer and healthier urban forests.
- Helps present the kind of image that most citizens want to have for the place they live or conduct business.
- Tells visitors, through signage, that here is a community that cares about its environment.
- Sometimes gives preference over other communities when allocations of grant money are made for trees or forestry programs.
- Provides a way to reach large numbers of people with information about tree care.

It is time to get your Tree City USA applications turned into our office. For more information on having your city become a recognized "Tree City USA" through the National Arbor Day Foundation, contact Donna V. Yowell, Executive Director, Mississippi Urban Forest Council, 164 Trace Cove Drive, Madison, MS 39110 or call (601)-672-0755. The application process is in an electronic format.

"WHEN TREES ARE PLANTED, COMMUNITIES GROW"

Winter Bird Feeding

by Mozart Mark Dedeaux, Pascagoula River Audubon

It is very important to feed birds in the winter because when night time temperatures fall, they have a hard time keeping their core body temperatures regulated. Birds have a very high metabolism and subsequently have high core temperatures (105 degrees on average.)

In severe cold weather, birds struggle to keep their temperature up.

Besides eating, they have evolved to do physical things that help them stay warm. Feathers themselves are insulated with air pockets to help warm them at night; they can reduce the blood flow to their extremities, and tuck their heads and bills into their wing feathers. What really zaps our feathered friends of needed energy is shivering. They will shiver to keep their body temperatures elevated, thus reducing their energy.

Bird foods such as Suet that contain high amounts of protein, help the birds produce the energy necessary to shiver and stay warm. Many species of smaller birds such as chickadees and titmice are at a higher risk of freezing to death because of their size. Many birds in the wild die during hard freezes because they may not have had enough protein prior to low temperatures occurring.

My favorite suet receipt is called "Marvel Meal". It consists of basic kitchen ingredients and most importantly contains lard or animal fat. This fat is what gives the suet its high energy content. Mix the following in a large bowl until it has reached a cookie dough consistency.

3 Cups of Corn Meal

1 Cup of Lard

1 Cup of Peanut Butter

1 Cup of Flour (non rising)

Store this in an air tight container in the refrigerator and keep using it as the birds consume it like candy!

Another great way to recycle food scraps (besides composting) is to save all your stale bread or crackers (wheat products), meat scraps, and fruit. Freeze these materials and add it to the suet recipe above in equal parts. The birds will love you for it. Suet will often attract different species of birds to your feeders that don't normally eat seeds, but you can add nuts or seeds to your mixture if you would like.

Suet feeders are easy to make, and one simple way is to create a suet log. Just find an old hard wood branch (oak, or pecan) that is at least 3 inches wide, and drill 1 inch diameter holes, 1 inch deep. Space these holes out across the surface area of the log and hang it from a tree or from your feeding station. Use an eye hook in the top of the log and attach wire or rope to hang it. Smear the suet into the holes and watch the birds go crazy!

Always keep your feeders stocked in the winter and clean them at least once a month. Many bacterial diseases can spread from bird to bird through contaminated feeders during cooler months. Clean feeders help keep birds healthier. Happy winter bird feeding!

For more information visit: www.pascagoulariver.audubon.org

Spring Garden Workshop

Wednesday, March 23, 1:30 p.m.

Handsboro Community Center

1890 Switzer Road in Gulfport

Topics include:

Vegetable Gardening in Containers

by John Monroe, Lamar County SWCD

Vermicomposting

by Mozart Dedeaux, Pascagoula River Audubon

Soil Testing

by Dr. Chris Boyd, MSU Coastal Research & Extension

Registration begins at 1:00 p.m. for this free workshop.

Sponsored by:

Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District

Bonnie Plants Cabbage Program

Thousands of children across America are growing, and some are earning, a lot of "green" participating in the National Bonnie Plants Cabbage Program. This year, more than 1.5 million third graders in 45 states have gotten hands-on gardening experience growing colossal cabbages with hopes to win "best in state" and receive a \$1,000 scholarship.

Teachers can register their classes for the 2011 contest and get more information on this free program at www.bonnieplants.com.

Certified Wildlife Habitat

David Mizejewski, National Wildlife Federation

The winter months are no holiday for local wildlife. Abundant food, unfrozen water and a toasty home can be hard for birds and other wildlife to come by. They need your help to survive this season!

1. Provide winter fuel for wildlife with native plants that offer nuts, berries and seeds or offer a feeder.
2. Anchor your old holiday tree in a secluded part of your yard for wildlife to use as shelter from harsh weather.
3. Clean and fill your birdbath on a regular basis. If you live in an area where temperatures freeze water, use a birdbath heater as a simple way to keep water accessible.
4. Create a cozy winter home for birds. Clean out your spring nest boxes or provide a warm winter roosting box. Also, evidence shows roosting birds prefer winter homes placed up high about 10 feet or more.

For more information, contact the National Wildlife Federation at www.nwf.org or call 800-822-9919.

REDUCE • REUSE • RECYCLE

Fiscal Year 2010 Annual Report

Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District

Accomplishments in Technical Assistance Fiscal Year 2010

Customers Benefited by Technical Assistance
Technical Information, and Conservation Education . . . 18,000

Units of Government Assisted 30

Individuals, Groups, and Units of Government
Applying One or More Conservation Practices 45

Land Benefited by Practice Application

Cropland Benefited 324 acres

Grassland Benefited 1,599 acres

Woodland Benefited 953 acres

Wildlife Habitat Benefited 80 acres

Urban Land Benefited 11,000 acres

Assistance on Locating Hydric Soils 90

Topo and Aerial Photo Site Assistance 100

Projects Funded and Completed

Forest Heights Subdivision Levee Restoration \$ 836,339

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Projects . . . \$ 18,800

Efforts to Control Cogongrass on Public Lands \$ 29,857

Efforts to Control Cogongrass on Private Lands \$ 10,500

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) . . \$ 30,079

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) \$ 7,570

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) \$ 3,414

NRCS Support

Through the District, NRCS Provided

2 Conservationists, Office Space,
2 Vehicles, Office Equipment/Supplies \$ 200,000

Conservation Planning

Farmland Conversion Impact Rating Reports 25

Special Land Use Plans 10

Conservation Plans 40

Total Acres Planned 8,600



NRCS Project Engineers and contractors inspect the Forest Heights Subdivision Levee Restoration EWP project.



This rip-rap bank stabilization completes the Forest Heights Subdivision Levee Restoration EWP project.



The District works with other agencies to control cogongrass on public and private lands in Harrison County.

Arbor Day Tree Giveaway

Friday, February 11

7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. *(while supplies last)*

Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District

12238 Ashley Drive, Gulfport (Hwy 49, two miles north of I-10; turn at Rug Decor and come straight back)

FREE Seedlings Include: Live Oak, Sawtooth Oak, Native Pecan, *Southern Magnolia

Each household will receive a variety pack; schools and nature areas also welcome.

No need to call to reserve trees; first come, first served basis.

**Southern Magnolia seedlings donated by GreenForest Nursery in Perkinston.*

CONSERVATIONNews

Published by

**The Harrison County Soil & Water
Conservation District**

**12238 Ashley Drive • Gulfport, MS 39503
(228) 831-1647**

Commissioners

Buck Johnson, Chairman

Paul McKay, Vice Chairman

Gregory V. Crochet, Secretary-Treasurer

Edie Dreher, Member

Robert Johnson, Member

Deputy Commissioners

Lawrence Milner

Regina Lawrence

Paul Drake, DVM

Staff Assisting the District

Beth D'Aquilla, Editor/Information & Education

Tyree Harrington, District Conservationist

Dan T. Longino, Field Technician

The Harrison County Soil and Water Conservation District holds a regular monthly board meeting on the first Thursday of each month.

This meeting is open to the public and held at the District Office, 12238 Ashley Dr., Gulfport, at 11:30 a.m. This board meets to administer the program of soil and water conservation in Harrison County. An equal opportunity employer.

Visit the Harrison County
Soil and Water Conservation
District website at

<http://hcswcd.co.harrison.ms.us>

Consomme Rice

- 1 Stick Butter
- 1 cup Uncooked Rice
- 1/2 cup Chopped Onion
- 1 cup Beef Consomme
- 1 small can Sliced Mushrooms,
with Juice
- 2/3 cup Water

Melt butter in skillet. Add rice and brown. Add onion and cook five minutes. Place in casserole, add consomme, mushrooms, and water. Bake at 350 for 30 minutes or until done.

Cogongrass Sprayer

A 20-gallon cogongrass sprayer is available to Harrison County landowners. To lease the sprayer, a lease agreement and refundable equipment deposit must be in the District office prior to use. Rental fee is \$5 per day. Please contact the District office for more details, schedule use or to report infestations of cogongrass, at 831-1647.

Seed Grain Drill

A 7-foot seed grain drill is available to Harrison County Landowners. To lease the grain drill, a lease agreement and refundable equipment deposit must be in the District office prior to use. Rental fee is \$5 per acre based on acre meter reading plus \$10 per day. Please contact the District office at 831-1647 for further details and to schedule use.