



CONSERVATION News

Harrison County Soil and Water Conservation District

Vol. 28, No. 3

Winter 2010

Conservation Education Field Day

The Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District held their Conservation Education Field Day on September 29 & 30 at the Harrison County Farm for 4th grade students of Harrison County. 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 appreciates the tremendous amount of support from our fellow conservation agencies and volunteers to make this field day happen. This team effort between the Districts, Harrison County Sheriff's Department, MSU Extension Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, MS Soil & Water

Conservation Commission, MS Forestry Commission, as well as volunteers from the NRCS Earth Team and Master Gardeners, made it a tremendous success.

Special recognition to Harrison County Sheriff Melvin Brisolara, Bob Chandler, and Kurtis Owen who had the County Farm looking terrific, and worked with us in planning and carrying out the field day. Special thanks to Commissioner Buck Johnson and our Earth Team Volunteers Carrie Jones, Chris Williams-White, Ed Longino, David Peacock, and Liz Cox for their efforts in making this field day an enjoyable learning experience; Doris Kistler for providing first aid; Chris Lagarde for his expertise; and Dave Schroeder for playing the harmonica with gusto!



Lance Middleton, MS Soil & Water Conservation Commission, demonstrates the Enviroscope showing non-point source pollution to the 4th grade students.



Randy Wilson, Mississippi Forestry Commission, teaches the 4th grade students about Urban Forestry as tour guide Misty Sigler, MFC (standing left) supervises her group.

Arbor Day Tree Giveaway

Friday, February 11, 2011

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.*

Wildlife Workshop and Demonstration

The Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District recently co-sponsored a Wildlife Workshop and Demonstration, held at the Red Creek Wildlife Management Area. Topics included: Deer Management and DMAP, Turkey Management, Cogongrass, Forestry/Burning, NRCS Programs, and Food Plot Demonstration.

Sponsors: George, Harrison and Stone County Soil & Water Conservation Districts, MS Dept. of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks;

National Wild Turkey Federation; Coastal Plains RC&D, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and MS Dept. of Agriculture.

The District would like to recognize Kenny Fazzio of Fazzio's Home and Farm Center who generously donated a Fence Wire Stretcher as a door prize. There were nearly 100 participants in attendance for this informative workshop.



NRCS Area Forester Jim Barnes (center) instructs District Commissioner Buck Johnson (in maroon) and other Wildlife Workshop participants on Forestry/Burning.



There were many door prizes, but Chris Lagarde was the lucky winner of the Fence Wire Stretcher, donated by Fazzio's Home & Farm Center for the Wildlife Workshop and Demonstration.



Cogongrass (foreground) is a tremendous problem in the coastal counties. Here, Keith Pouncey with MS Dept. of Agriculture (center) discusses cogongrass control.



Harrison County was well-represented at the Wildlife Workshop and Demonstration. Adam Butler with MS Dept. of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (left) gives a presentation.

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 at 831-1647 for further details and to schedule use. To report infestations of cogongrass, contact the District office.

SOIL - There's an APP for That

Delaney Johnson, NRCS State Soil Scientist

There is an app you can download (for free) to the iPhone that will provide access to SSURGO data in real time using the phone's GPS capabilities. In other words, you have instant access to soils information wherever you are in the lower 48 states. I encourage you to try it. It's very user friendly.

Mississippi Farmer of the Year

Dan Batson of Perkinston comes from a family steeped in horticulture and his GreenForest Nursery has become a model for the industry.

As a result of his success in the nursery business, Batson has been selected as the 2010 Mississippi winner of the Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year award.

Batson started 27 years ago with 1.5 acres in horticultural production on 80 acres of owned land. He expanded and now has 140 acres in production. He owns 600 acres and grows pines on land not in nursery production. "Our major crops are ornamental trees," he says. "These include southern magnolia, holly, oaks, crape myrtle and others."

Water conservation is a major emphasis at GreenForest Nursery. "We have land that we strictly use for water supply," says

Batson. "Rather than drill deep wells, we use that land to capture surface water from a stream." He worked closely with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service to slope his planting beds and to install water-holding areas to retain and recycle irrigation water. "NRCS is also helping us convert beds with overhead irrigation to drip systems," he adds. "This will help cut our water use to 25 percent of what we used with overhead irrigation."

Editor's note: Dan Batson has been a good friend to Harrison County landowners over the years, donating hundreds of Southern Magnolia each year to distribute free at Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District's annual Arbor Day Tree Giveaway. The above article is reprinted in part from Southeast Farm Press <http://southeastfarmpress.com>.

Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program

by Tyree Harrington, District Conservationist

The Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP) provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranch land in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with State, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market easement value of the conservation easement.

To qualify, farmland must: be part of a pending offer from a State, tribe, or local farmland protection program; be privately owned; have a conservation plan for highly erodible land; be large enough to sustain agricultural production; be accessible to markets for what the land produces; have adequate infrastructure

and agricultural support services; and have surrounding parcels of land that can support long-term agricultural production. Depending on funding availability, proposals must be submitted by the eligible entities to the appropriate NRCS State Office during the application window.

Mississippi will accept applications from eligible entities throughout the year. However, all applications received by December 31, 2010, will be considered for 2011 funding. Applications should be submitted to Al Garner, Assistant State Conservationist, Suite 1321 Federal Building, 100 West Capitol Street, Jackson, MS 39269. Application forms and information may be obtained at

<http://www.ms.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmandRanchLandsProtectionProgram.html>.

Out and About the County

by Dan Longino, Field Technician

Another tricky Fall for small pond owners as the dissolved oxygen fish kills have been averted by rainfall and cooler temperatures. The Cogongrass fighters, including leaders Patty Rogers and Keith Pouncey, have made a lot of progress fighting the invasive weed this year.

All other issues fade before the oil spill along our coast. All our local marine professionals say all is well. Obscure but respected teams from "Chicken Little College somewhere up North" keep reporting finding plumes of oil. Most coast residents seem to have put the oil in the worry bin with hurricanes as a perennial problem that most likely will go somewhere else.

I often have called to other agencies for advice or assistance. Through the decades the most consistently helpful, or honest in

explanations about why they were unable to help, have been the staff of Congressman Gene Taylor, and in particular, Chris Lagarde from Bay St. Louis

Really happy to see the restoration work of Deer Island with pipes dredging liquid sand into gaps where hurricanes since Camille have washed channels. I'm hoping for a low impact nature trail and small ferry/shrimp tour boat to the newly vegetated picnic island. Hope that Department of Marine Resources can put some good organizer and chief (like Jennifer Buchanan) in charge. We go to Tennessee to walk in the mountains; let them come here to explore on an island. Ship island would be great if it had some trees!



The Soil & Water Conservation Society took part in the Coastal Beach Clean-Up. (l-r) Tyree Harrington, Suzette Jetton, ETV Darnita Harrington, James Dillon, Melissa Russell, Allen Hughes, and Lance Middleton. (Beth D'Aquilla, photographer)



Bill Rushing of Woolmarket receives chemicals to spray cogongrass from Shane Rogers, MS Coastal Plains RC&D. Pre-approved landowners came to the District office to pick up the chemicals in an effort to fight this highly evasive weed.



Welcome back Earth Team Volunteer Carrie Jones! Carrie was a tour guide for the District's Conservation Education Field Day. Ralph Thornton, NRCS Area Soil Scientist, teaches the students many interesting facts about soils.

MS Sweet Potato Casserole

- 2 cups mashed MS sweet potatoes
- 1 stick margarine
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 cup coconut

Mix these seven ingredients and pour into long casserole dish.

Casserole Topping:

- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 stick margarine
- 1/2cup flour
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 cup chopped pecans

Mix topping ingredients and spread over sweet potatoes.

Bake 45 minutes at 350 degrees.

CONSERVATIONNews

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

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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>