



# ConservationNews

Harrison County Soil and Water Conservation District

Vol. 33, No. 1

Winter 2016

## Drakes: Living the Good Life Amidst Hurricanes, Tornadoes and Registered Purebred Brangus



**Commissioner Paul Drake, DVM, checking on some of his registered purebred Brangus cattle.**

Twenty-two miles from the Gulf of Mexico, in Lizana, you'll find Second Chance Farm, the home and 190-acre farm of Dr. Paul and Beth Drake and discover "ground zero" for two of the most devastating storms ever recorded in U.S. history.

The first one, Hurricane Camille (1969), was one of only three F5 hurricanes recorded in the 20th century. It caused 239 deaths throughout the South. Then came another F5 in 2005 – Katrina. This time she was accompanied by two F5 tornadoes, which stripped away 75 percent of the Drake home as Paul, Beth, family members and pets all crammed into a tiny half bath for four hours to wait it out. According to Beth Drake, "what the first tornado didn't take, the second one did."

From the original 20 acres they purchased in 1986 to the 190 acres they own today, along with their registered herd of purebred Brangus, the Drakes have carved out a nice niche at "ground zero." They plant and bale 92 acres of Argentine Bahia and rye grass, then leave the rest of it as pasture.

"The silage baling process has been great for our pregnant cows. I'm a strong believer in the theory 'what you feed is what you get.' The key is getting the wind rows set up properly. When you do that, the baling part is easy, whether you bale wet or dry," said Beth. "With the Vermeer 504 PRO baler, the only difference when harvesting one type of grass versus the other is the **continued on page 3**"

# Conservation Education Field Days at the County Farm



**Lance Middleton with MSWCC talks to students about snake safety.**

Nearly 700 fourth grade students from Harrison County took part in the District's annual Conservation Education Field Days to learn the importance of our natural resources. Students had hands-on presentations to learn about: This Land is Your Land, Urban Forestry, Wildlife Biology, Water Cycle, Recycling, Snake Safety, Water Conservation, ATV Safety, Watersheds, and the Sheriff's Department presented their B.R.A.V.E. anti-bully program.

The District is grateful to the Sheriff's Department for use of the Harrison County Farm. The beautiful acreage, ponds, and garden make it in ideal site to teach students about the great outdoors.

We also wish to recognize BU1 Shawn Monkress who organized Seabee volunteers to assist as tour guides. Thank you to Mereanda Weems who volunteered to provide 1st Aid both days, and the Earth Team Volunteers,

Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists who came to assist. It takes a village to carry out a successful program of this size, and we certainly appreciate NRCS, MSWCC, MSU Extension Service, MS Farm Bureau, and MS Museum of Natural Science for their expertise.



**The District was proud to have Seabees volunteer as tour guides this year, thanks to BU1 Shawn Monkress.**

## Pathways2Possibilities 2015

The District had the good fortune to be a patron sponsor of the hugely successful Pathways2Possibilities career days, which was implemented to engage, educate, and empower the 7,000 eighth grade students who

participated from the six coastal counties. The District coordinated with MSWCC, NRCS, and MSU to participate in the Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources pathway.

# Arbor Day Tree Giveaway

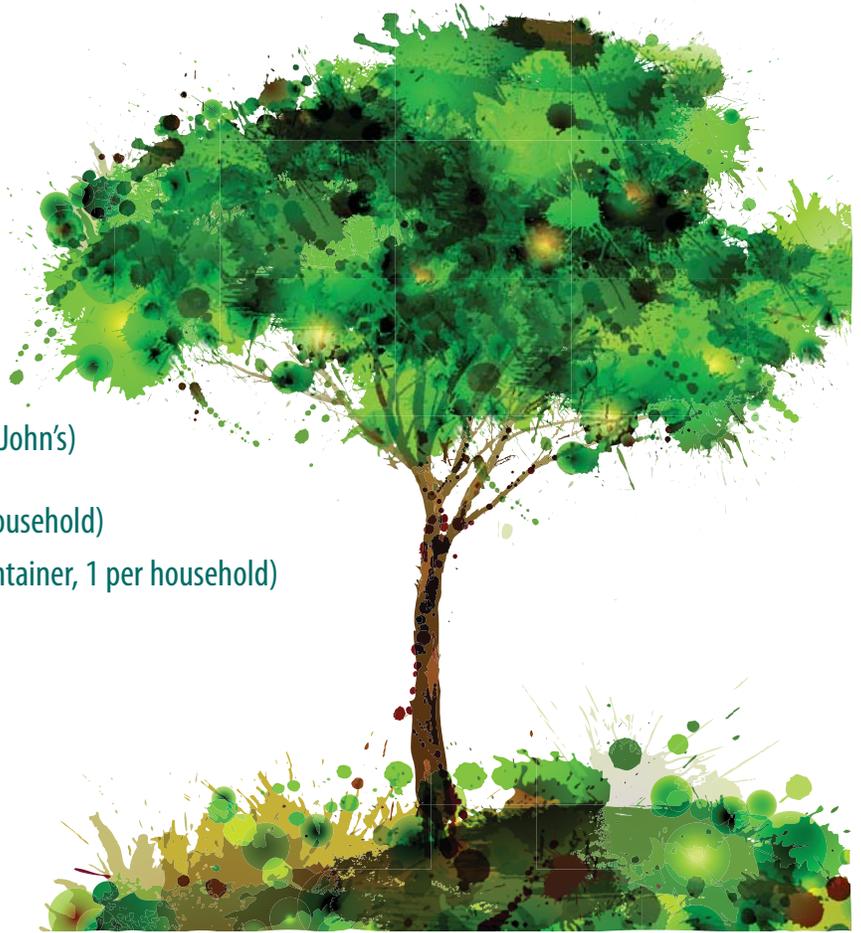
**7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
Friday, February 12**

(FREE while supplies last)

**Harrison County Soil & Water  
Conservation District office  
12238 Ashley Drive, Gulfport**  
(Hwy 49, two miles north of I-10; turn at Papa John's)

- **Live Oaks** (3-gallon container, 1 per household)
- **Southern Magnolia\*** (1-quart container, 1 per household)
- **Riverbirch**
- **Bitternut Hickory**
- **Live Oak**
- **White Oak**

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



## **Drakes: Living The Good Life . . . continued from page 1**

speed of the tractor. In fact, the product we feed is not only consistent, but consistently excellent."

"We take very good care of our wet bales and our pastures. Our hay is absolutely pure. Not a weed. Not a branch. Not a soda can to be found. We apply a lot of chicken manure, then supplement it with prescription applications of ammonia, lime for the acidity and potassium based on the soil sample results we get. Generally, every application happens the day before a rain."

"We really take care of the bales after they're wrapped. And, when we pull out those silage bales in the dead of winter, those momma cows act just like me at an ice cream parlor. They can't get there fast enough. And they can't eat enough of it. There isn't a lick of grass left on the ground."

*\*This article and photos were originally in Makin' Hay magazine, a publication of Vermeer Corporation. To see more articles please go to [www.makinhay.com](http://www.makinhay.com) The District appreciates use of the content on Commissioner Paul Drake, DVM.*



**Registered purebred Brangus cattle on Second Chance Farm, owned by Commissioner Paul Drake, DVM and his wife, Beth.**



***Supervisors Kent Jones, Angel Middleton, and Marlin Ladner joined Commissioners Buck Johnson, Paul Drake, Robert Johnson, and Greg Crochet for a power-point presentation at Café Climb to show the Board of Supervisors various projects the District is working on.***

## **District Provides Grants for Community Gardens**

The District has continued providing grants to schools and non-profits to implement or enhance People's Gardens, better known as community gardens. The District has had the pleasure of working with thirty gardens to date.

The District has recently worked with Pass Christian Boys & Girls Club, Keesler Air Force Base Child Development Center, North Woolmarket Elementary, and a Gulfport High Senior garden project located at New Testament Pentecostal Church. We look forward to working with Pass Christian Main Street Foundation as they strive to have a large community garden, with interested families able to have a small plot of land to garden. This would be the first of its kind on the Gulf Coast.

Earth Team Volunteer Dr. Christine Coker has been instrumental in touring and providing expert advice, along with Tyree Harrington, NRCS. If you have a school or non-profit that would benefit with a community garden grant, please contact Beth D'Aquilla at 831-1647 or [beth.daquilla@ms.nacdnet.net](mailto:beth.daquilla@ms.nacdnet.net).



***John Monroe and Commissioner Kelly Soberoski with Lamar County SWCD, take a tour of Coast Episcopal Elementary community garden with NRCS Tyree Harrington and MSU Extension Service Dr. Christine Coker.***

# District Provides Equipment For Lease



## Lime - Litter Spreader

The Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District now has available to landowners a CL-HYD-PUL Adams 16-foot pull-type litter spreader with lime baffle and 4" center double bar kit. This equipment will be available to lease by Harrison County landowners by coming to the District office at 12238 Ashley Drive, Gulfport, to sign a

lease agreement and make a deposit. Please contact the District office at 831-1647 or [beth.daquilla@ms.nacdn.net](mailto:beth.daquilla@ms.nacdn.net) for further details and to schedule use. The spreader will be picked-up and dropped-off at Second Chance Farm, 16241 Northrup Cuevas Road, in Lizana.



## Seed Grain Drill

The District has a 7-foot Sunflower Seed Grain Drill for lease to Harrison County landowners. To lease the grain drill, a lease agreement and 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. The grain drill will be picked-up and dropped-off at Second Chance Farm, 16241 Northrup Cuevas Road, in Lizana.

# Stewardship Poster Contest



Congratulations to Dustin Bui of River Oaks Elementary, who entered the District's Stewardship Poster Contest and won at the county, south area, and now the state level. The national theme was Local Heroes: Your Hard-working Pollinators. Dustin's poster will now be entered into the national stewardship poster contest.



Landen Richards was in Shirley Hardman's Gifted Program at Woolmarket Elementary when he won at the county, south area, and state level, before coming in 2nd Place this year in the national stewardship poster contest. Clay Burns, MSWCC presents Landen his national award with the theme Dig Deeper: Mysteries in the Soil.

## Spotlight on Earth Team Volunteers



Long-time Earth Team Volunteers Joe Buckley (also a Deputy Commissioner) and Chris Williams-White can be counted on every year to work a couple of the District's very busiest events. For several years both have worked at distributing trees for the District's Arbor Day Tree Giveaway, and both work the District's Conservation Education Field Days at the Harrison County Farm. The District is fortunate to have other Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists that volunteer with us as Earth Team Volunteers. Thank you for sharing your time and talents with us.

## Lemon Blueberry Biscuits

- 2 cups All-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup Sugar
- 2 tsp. Baking soda
- 1/4 tsp. Salt
- 8 ounce Carton lemon yogurt
- 1 egg Lightly beaten
- 1/4 cup Butter, melted
- 1 tsp. Grated lemon peel
- 1 cup Blueberries

In a large bowl combine dry ingredients. Mix together yogurt, egg, butter and lemon peel. Stir into dry ingredients just until moistened. Fold in blueberries. Drop by spoon onto greased baking sheet. Bake at 400 degrees for 15 minutes or until lightly browned.

- Glaze:
- 1/2 cup Confectioners sugar
  - 1 tsp. Lemon juice
  - 1/2 tsp. Grated lemon peel

Combine glaze ingredients and drizzle over warm biscuits. Makes about two dozen.  
*Farm Families of MS*

# Cogongrass - The Battle Continues



**Contract sprayer working on a patch of cogongrass in Harrison County. Cogongrass is one of the worst weeds in the world.**

The Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District spent \$20,000 on cogongrass control in Harrison County in 2015. The District determined that contract spraying is the most effective way to control cogongrass, and continued servicing landowners who had signed up through the District in the past year.

Cogongrass is difficult to control due to its growth habits

and spreading rhizomes. It has no natural enemies in the U.S. and has no nutritional value to livestock.

The District office has forms to sign-up for cogongrass control through contract spraying, and the MS Dept. of Agriculture cogongrass forms, in which they provide chemicals to landowners on a one-time basis. Call 831-1647 or stop by our office at 12238 Ashley Drive, Gulfport.

## Flowers Attract Butterflies to Your Home

Do you want to lure butterflies to your yard but are worried it'll be difficult or too expensive?

Don't be. It's neither.

Follow these steps, and you will be well on your way to attracting the colorful insects to your yard.

First, you want to have the right plants. Butterflies need nectar flowers and host plants.

The nectar flowers are food for the butterflies, but they lay their eggs on host plants, which is the food for the caterpillars.

Caterpillars eat the leaves of the host plants. Do not get discouraged. This is part of the caterpillar life cycle. Common host plants include asters, legumes, parsley, milkweed and sunflowers.

Butterflies serve as pollinators, meaning they are an important part of the pollination process for plants. Butterflies and caterpillars are also food for birds and insects.

Adult butterflies do not have mouths, and they nourish themselves by sipping liquids, both water and nectar through a straw-like proboscis. The adults prefer flat, daisy-like flowers or tube-shaped flowers.

Mississippi is home to 145 different species of butterflies, and the state's official butterfly is the Spicebush Swallowtail.

Why care? Butterflies play an integral role in ecosystems.

Pollinators, like butterflies, are declining in population across the country, and the presence of ample butterflies is a good sign of a healthy environment.

Plus, butterflies are beautiful. Attracting them to your yard will be a good way to cherish a beautiful piece of nature.

# ConservationNews

Published by

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

12238 Ashley Drive • Gulfport, MS 39503

(228) 831-1647

### **Commissioners**

Gregory V. Crochet, *Chairman*

Paul McKay, *Vice Chairman*

Paul Drake, *Treasurer*

Buck Johnson

Robert Johnson

### **Commissioner Emeritus**

Edie Dreher

### **Deputy Commissioners**

Leonard Nahlen

Ann Hudson

Joe Buckley

### **Staff Assisting the District**

Beth D'Aquila, *Editor & District Coordinator*

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.

## Conservation Districts

Conservation Districts have been involved in delivering locally driven conservation across America for more than 70 years. Among other things, Districts help: implement farm, ranch, and forestland conservation practices to protect soil productivity, water quality, air quality and wildlife habitat; conserve and restore wetlands; protect groundwater resources; assist communities and homeowners to plant trees and other vegetation; guide developers in controlling soil erosion; and provide technical expertise to landowners to identify, apply for, and participate in conservation programs.

**For more information about the Harrison County Soil and Water Conservation District, or any District projects and services, please call us at 831-1647 or visit our website at <http://hcsxcd.co.harrison.ms.us>.**

## How To Have A FIREWISE Home

9 a.m. to 1 p.m. February 23

Lunch provided by RSVP

Orange Grove Community Center,

14416 Dedeaux Road, Gulfport

Landowners are invited to attend our FIREWISE How To Have A Firewise Home event to be held at the Orange Grove Community Center on February 23 at 9 a.m. This program is part of a new initiative led in our state by the Mississippi Forestry Commission to achieve fire safe planning and development in the wildland/urban interface ... that fringe area of our communities where homes are frequently damaged or destroyed by wildland fire. Evaluations for similar field days in other states indicated that the participants found the information and exercises very beneficial.

As our Mississippi public continues to build homes in areas that have traditionally been forests or wildlands, disastrous wildfires occur more and more frequently. We will likely continue to experience damaging wildfires in the wildland/urban interface until people begin to work together to solve basic community planning issues at the local level.

The How To Have A Firewise Home program is a half day event, bringing together citizens, business and community leaders involved in planning, financing, building, sustaining and protecting communities in the wildland/urban interface. Participants will learn about why homes burn, various wildland fuel reduction techniques and how to assess the fire danger of their own home. We believe that this program may have a significant impact on wildland protection in your area.

There is no charge for your participation and lunch will be provided. Pre-registration by February 17 is a must for the noon meal head count. Registration will begin at 9 a.m. The program will begin promptly at 9:30 a.m. and end at approximately 1 p.m. The Orange Grove Community Center is located at 14416 Dedeaux Road in Gulfport. If you have any questions, please contact the Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District office at 831-1647 or come by 12238 Ashley Drive, Gulfport, MS.

Registered Foresters attending the field day will be eligible for 2 CFE Hours Category 2, Loggers will receive 2 hours in Category II and Realtors will receive 3 hours of elective Real Estate Course (10181). Professional credits are not available for teachers and professional disciplines.