



ConservationNews

Harrison County Soil and Water Conservation District

Vol. 34, No. 1

Winter 2017

Agriculture Conservation Easement Program

The United States Department of Agriculture / Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). ACEP provides financial and technical assistance to landowners and Native American Tribes with conservation efforts on agricultural lands and wetlands. The application deadline to be considered for fiscal year 2017 funding is February 24, 2017.

ACEP consists of two separate components, the Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) option and the Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) option. These options are tailored to benefit different land types that meet specific qualifications and are cost effective.

The ALE component is geared to protect agricultural lands devoted to food production from conversion into non-agricultural uses. The WRE component aims to

restore, enhance and protect wetlands through the purchase of a wetlands reserve easement. Both programs assist in improving wildlife habitat.

Applications for all NRCS financial-assistance programs are accepted on a continuous sign-up process, however specific sign-up deadlines are established to rank, contract and fund qualified tracts of land. The final deadline for consideration in the fiscal year 2017 funding period for ACEP is February 24, 2017.

Landowners, Non-Government Organizations, and Native American Tribes interested in participating in ACEP should visit the nearest USDA Service Center for more information. In Harrison County, contact Tyree Harrington, District Conservationist with Natural Resources Conservation Service, at 831-0881, ext. 3 or come by the office at 12238 Ashley Drive, Gulfport.

Robert "Toobee" Johnson, Rest in Peace

Brigadier General Robert G. Johnson, retired. A life and legacy of service to God, family, and country. Among his many military awards, Robert received the Honorable Order of St. Michael Medal and the Major General Francis S. Greenlief Award of Aviation Excellence.

A few of the projects that Robert was most passionate about as a Commissioner were his years of work on cogongrass control, District having a grain drill and litter spreader available to farmers, and the District's yearly Arbor Day tree giveaway. He and his beloved wife Linda together took a leadership role in distributing tree seedlings to the landowners of Harrison County.

The District honored Robert's decade of service as a Commissioner in January 2017 by inducting him into the Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts President's Club, for faithfully serving the landowners of Harrison County by being a good steward of the land.



Karen Brown, Robert Johnson, and his beloved wife Linda working at the District's Arbor Day Tree Giveaway.

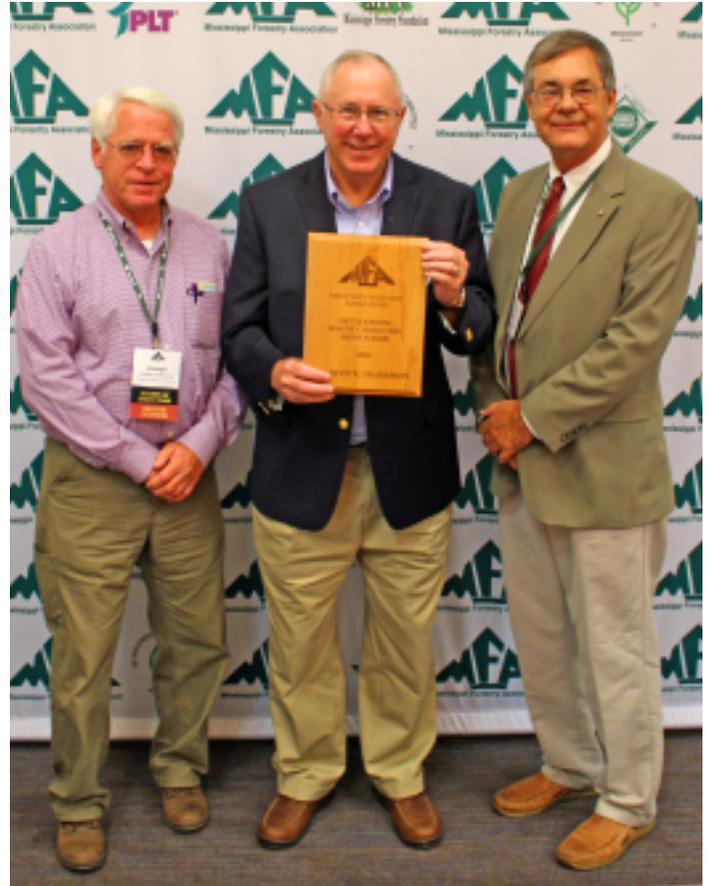
Hancock/Harrison County Forestry and Wildlife Association

The Hancock/Harrison County Forestry and Wildlife Association (CFWA) won the Mississippi Forestry Association's (MFA) 2016 Outstanding County Forestry Association of the Year award, presented at the MFA Annual Meeting in Jackson.

Throughout the year, the Hancock/Harrison CWFA provides programs designed to promote the forestry industry including programs for those who are either new to the industry or those who have grown timber for some time. In addition to forestry, there is a large focus on maintaining wildlife habitats, which can be a byproduct of understory management, as well as other wildlife programs that benefit many in our area.

CFWA started the Burn Mentoring Program in 2016 to match up members that have an interest in learning more about burning with experienced burn managers. We share the contact information for the members with the burn managers and when they plan to burn, they contact the members to see if they'd like to come watch or help, to gain knowledge and experience.

CFWA recently purchased an incubator to incubate neonate possums and squirrels in the coming baby season. Each adult possum can eat about 5,000 ticks per season. If you are interested in forestry and wildlife, we encourage you to become a part of the Hancock/Harrison CFWA. CFWA meets the first Wednesday of each month at 11:00am at Sherry's Catfish House on Hwy 53 in Gulfport. For more information, contact Misty Sigler with the Mississippi Forestry Commission at 228-831-3359.



Members of the Hancock-Harrison County Forestry & Wildlife Association Joe Pettigrew and Jim Currie receive the Mississippi Forestry Association's 2016 Outstanding County Forestry Association of the Year award, presented by MSU Dr. Glenn Hughes (right).

Pathways2Possibilities



NRCS Wildlife Biologist Barry Pessoney shows the students a siphon pipe to control the water level in a pond, and also showed how to use his wildlife scope camera to look in burrows for gopher tortoises.



MS Farm Bureau Trey Pope shows participants at the Pathways2Possibilities Agriculture/Natural Resources Pathway how cotton is made. The District is a proud sponsor of this event, attended by 8,000 eighth grade students.

District Provides Grants for Community Gardens



MSU Dr. Christine Coker and Mary Tell with Back Bay Mission, discuss the community garden at Back Bay Mission in Biloxi.

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 over thirty-five gardens to date. In the Spring, we will tour several of these gardens to see what they may need. It is especially gratifying to see gardens that have succeeded.

The District has recently worked with Gorenflo Elementary garden in Biloxi, Back Bay Mission garden in Biloxi, Feed the Seed community garden in Gaston Point, Gaston Point Elementary garden and 28th Street Elementary in Gulfport.

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'Aquila at 831-1647 or beth.daquila@ms.nacdn.net.



MSU Dr. Christine Coker and Lucas Schmermund with Gorenflo Elementary School look over the gardens in place at the school.

Cogongrass - The Battle Continues



John Threadgill with Helena Chemical took along Harrison County Supervisor Angel Middleton while spraying cogongrass on Harrison County property.

The Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District spent almost \$20,000 on cogongrass control in Harrison County in Fiscal Year 2017. 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 has three forms to sign-up for cogongrass control: District's contract spraying, MS Dept. of Agriculture cogongrass chemical form, and MS Coastal Plains RC&D cogongrass chemical form. Contact us at 831-1647 or stop by our office at 12238 Ashley Drive in Gulfport. Forms are available at <http://hcswwcd.co.harrison.ms.us> or email Beth D'Aquilla at beth.daquilla@ms.nacdnet.net



NRCS Tyree Harrington, John Threadgill with Helena Chemical and Harrison County Supervisor Angel Middleton discuss cogongrass control.

Seed Grain Drill Available For Lease

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.

District Receives Recognition at the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts



Harrison County SWCD Commissioners Greg Crochet and Buck Johnson received the Outstanding District in Woodland Conservation award from MACD President Gary Blair, along with Deputy Commissioner Leonard Nahlen.



Dr. Christine Coker received the MACD Auxiliary Distinguished Service award for her exemplary work in Harrison County working with the Harrison County SWCD on non-profit community gardens and school gardens.



Harrison County SWCD Commissioner Greg Crochet serves on the MS Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) board, and now also serves as MACD South Area Vice President. Melba Nipper serves as MACD Secretary-Treasurer.



Harrison County SWCD received the MACD Newsletter Contest award. Commissioner Buck Johnson receiving the award on behalf of Editor Beth D'Aquila from MACD President Gary Blair.

Lime - Litter Spreader Available For Lease

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.nacdnet.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.

Conservation Education Field Days at the County Farm



Barbara Viskup and Coen Perrott with MS Dept. of Environmental Quality teach the students about non-point source pollution. Our gratitude to Harrison County Sheriff Melvin Brisolarara for use of the Harrison County Farm. Field days of this magnitude take team work to be successful.



If this picture with Edward Galle and Lindsey Coleman, Jackson Co. SWCD, looks chaotic, that's because they are teaching boat safety. In a hurry to get their flotation device on, several students did not have proper fitting devices. Always insure before you get on a boat, that there is one just for you, or wear it while on the boat.



The District was proud to have several Seabees volunteer as tour guides again this year. They would lead each group of 4th graders through the dozen conservation education stops at the Sheriff's Dept. Harrison County Farm.



Jessica Eaves with MS Museum of Natural Science had a surprise for the students after her show and tell on Wildlife Biology, showing various wild animal pelts and skulls. The students got to touch a baby alligator.

Parmesan Baked Pork Chops

- 4 Boneless Pork Chops
- 1 T Olive Oil
- 1 cup Parmesan Cheese
- 1 cup Italian Bread Crumbs
- 1 tsp. Pepper
- 1 tsp. Garlic Powder

On a plate combine the last 4 ingredients. Rub the pork chops with olive oil and then dip (coat) each one in the cheese mixture. Press the mixture over the pork chops to make sure they are well

covered in it. Line a pan with tin foil and spray with cooking spray. Place the pork chops on the pan and bake at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes.

*Nancy Freeman,
Farm Families of Mississippi*

Three Basic Needs of Wildlife for the Backyard Habitat

by Tim Ray,
Mississippi State University Extension Agent

Creating a landscape to attract wildlife is a goal of many homeowners. As natural areas for wildlife have decreased because of urbanization, more and more homeowners are realizing there is more to a landscape than a sterile arrangement of plants. It can and should be a vibrant mix of elements in which critters, plants, and humans happily coexist. Many people envision gaily-colored butterflies and birds feeding and flitting about the yard. That is the more visible aspect of a backyard habitat.

Striving for biodiversity in the backyard that includes less noticed and less appreciated critters increases the sustainability of your habitat and your enjoyment of the area. Many insects, spiders, reptiles, amphibians, and even small mammals can keep habitat populations of pests in check. Letting these critters live together with the more showy butterflies and birds helps keep the “undesirables” like flies, mosquitoes, slugs, rodents, and other creatures balanced within your habitat. Designing a balanced habitat encourages a diverse population that provides a natural system of checks and balances.

Creating your backyard habitat can be very easy once you understand that wildlife, just like people, have three basic needs. These needs - food, water, and cover - promote use and provide the lifecycle needs of wildlife. A successful backyard habitat must include all three needs. It takes only a small investment of time to make your yard or garden “wildlife friendly” by adding these essentials.

FOOD: You can provide food in two ways. Artificial feeding—bird feeders, squirrel feeders, and such. Natural vegetation—planting a variety of native trees, shrubs, grasses, and flowering plants that provide nuts, seeds, nectar, fruit, and other sources of nourishment. Providing food through natural vegetation is preferred. It tends to encourage the “natural feeding mechanism” wildlife uses. It does not congregate animals, which leads to several problems, including spread of disease, and it provides a seasonal approach that is enjoyable from a gardening and recreational wildlife standpoint. This will encourage

a wider range of creatures already used to using these plants. Using natural vegetation, compared to providing artificial feed, is less costly over time and is easier to maintain. After all, you may forget to keep those feeders full of food! Remember, including plants that provide foraging opportunities in the winter offers an almost year-round supply of food.

WATER: Providing water for both drinking and bathing is vital to wildlife. You can include it by having birdbaths, drippers, or small ponds. Garden ponds that are large enough to include water animals (fish, frogs, toads, salamanders, snails) as well as water plants add beneficial elements that complement most backyard habitat settings. Surrounding the pond with plants adds to the attraction for wildlife. Be sure the water source is dependable year-round.

SHELTER/REPRODUCTIVE AREAS: Nesting and shelter areas where wildlife are protected from the weather and predators is essential. Various species require different landscape features for these needs. Providing a diversity of plant material that includes evergreen and deciduous trees, vines, shrubs, herbaceous plants, grasses, and ground covers lets wildlife select the right areas for their feeding, nesting, and shelter needs. Ideal habitats include plants of various sizes, densities, and types. Evergreens are particularly valuable for winter cover. Grouping plants close to sources of food and water provides the cover wildlife need to feel safe while feeding or drinking. Of course, proper selection of plants includes those that provide food as well as good cover and nesting. Living plants are only one way to provide shelter and nesting areas. Using bat houses, bird houses, toad houses, and other artificial shelters is an easy way to meet this basic need. Providing shelter areas is especially valuable if you have a new landscape where trees and shrubs are not large enough to provide the necessary habitat. Old tree stumps, fallen logs, and brush and rock piles can also provide a great habitat for wildlife. Learning to appreciate these features (the dead tree snag or the pile of brush) for their natural artistry and wildlife benefits is helpful when creating the backyard habitat.

EVERY DAY IS EARTH DAY

ConservationNews

Published by

Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District

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

Commissioners

Gregory V. Crochet, *Chairman*
Paul Drake, *Treasurer*
Buck Johnson
Ann Hudson

Commissioner Emeritus

Edie Dreher

Deputy Commissioners

Leonard Nahlen
Thad Anderson
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://hcswcd.co.harrison.ms.us>.

Forest Management Plan

By Jim Barnes, Area Forester

Natural Resources Conservation Service

A forest management plan is a site specific plan developed for a client, which addresses one or more resource concerns on land where forestry-related conservation activities or practices will be planned and applied. These management plans are funded through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program and must be developed by certified technical service providers. A list of these providers can be found at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/technical/tsp/>.

The purpose of these plans is to offer private landowners an opportunity to receive a comprehensive forest management plan from a professional forester. These plans will address existing conditions and practices, identify resource concerns and evaluate stands based on past harvest history. This information will be generated from a forest inventory of the property, (timber cruise). The inventory typically includes forest management unit and stand boundaries, site index, basal area, species, size class, wood product potential, soil conditions, slopes, topography, aspect, natural and cultural features, roads, wildfire risk (surface and crown fires), risk of insect and disease infestation, fish and wildlife species and habitat elements, noxious and invasive species, water quality and other important features as applicable. The information derived from the forest inventory will assist the landowner in planning for certain goals. Stocking, basal area, species composition, wildlife, pollinator habitat and protection, recreation, are examples of these goals. Recommended NRCS practices should be included in the plan to assist the landowner with planning for future cost-share opportunities.

Soil Testing for the Homeowner

MSU Extension Service provides the boxes and paperwork to have your soil tested at the Soil Testing Laboratory at Mississippi State University. Procedure for taking soil samples:

1. Soils that are distinctly different in appearance, crop growth, or past treatment should be sampled separately, provided that area is such size and nature that it can be fertilized separately.
2. When sampling fertilized fields, avoid sampling directly in the fertilized band.
3. Take a topsoil sample by securing a tablespoonful of soil at 15 or more different places from the top six inches of soil for each field up to 10 acres in size.

For more information or to get your soil boxes, contact MSU Extension Service at 865-4227 or stop by their office at 2315 17th Street in downtown Gulfport.