



# ConservationNews

Harrison County Soil and Water Conservation District

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Summer 2014

## Harrison County Receives Cogongrass Chemicals



*Supervisor Marlin Ladner and Asst. Road Manager Raymond Cuevas were on hand to receive cogongrass chemicals donated by the District and Coastal Plains RC&D from District Commissioners Robert Johnson and Paul McKay.*

In coordination with Coastal Plains RC&D, the Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District donated 60 quarts of Polaris AC (arsenal) and 7.5 gallons of Accord XRT (round-up) to Harrison County for use by the Road Department to spray on public right-of-ways to control cogongrass. The District will coordinate with Mississippi State University Extension Service and the Harrison County Road Department to provide a short training course for those using the chemicals.

Cogongrass is extremely 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. In the south, cogongrass has spread with

a vengeance, with each seed head producing as many as 3,000 seeds.

Harrison County Extension Service recently held a cogongrass workshop, with Dr. John Byrd, Weed Specialist with the MSU, providing information to help control the noxious weed. Some valuable information during the presentation: Prevent mowing while seed heads are producing in the Spring, multiple tillage is a means of control, applying a high percentage (41%-47%) of Glyphosate during the Spring to prevent seed production and dispersal and another application in the Fall for more control. Read all labels and follow instructions when using any pesticides.

# District Receives Recognition at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts



*(l to r) Comm. Paul McKay, Comm. Robert Johnson, NRCS Tyree Harrington, Rep. Caroline Crawford (MS), Comm. Buck Johnson, Rep. Patricia Willis (MS), Rep. Greg Haney (MS) and Comm. Greg Crochet attend the MACD Banquet.*



*Commissioners Greg Crochet and Buck Johnson receive the Outstanding Woodland award along with Deputy Comm. Leonard Nahlen from MACD President Steve Cantrell.*



*NRCS State Conservationist Kurt Readus presented ETV Christine Coker with the Outstanding Earth Team Individual award.*



*Harrison County received the ETV Chief's Field Award and ETV Group Award. (l to r) Comm. Robert Johnson, Dep. Ann Hudson, Comm. Paul McKay, NRCS State Cons. Kurt Readus, ETV Christine Coker, ETV Linda Johnson, NRCS Tyree Harrington, Dep. Leonard Nahlen, Comm. Greg Crochet, Dist. Coordinator Beth D'Aquilla, and Comm. Buck Johnson.*

*At this annual meeting in Jackson, District Commissioners and staff receive training, attend concurrent sessions on various conservation issues, and have the opportunity to tour the state capitol.*

# Community Gardens Receive Grants from the District

The District continues to provide grants to schools and non-profits to implement or enhance People's Gardens, better known as community gardens.

The District recently had the pleasure of working with: Café Climb CDC, Pass Christian Library Jr. Garden Club, Pass Christian High School, Harper McCaughan, Quarles, Reeves, Pineville, Pass Christian, St. Vincent de Paul and Coast Episcopal Elementary Schools, Long Beach and

Pass Christian Middle Schools, Tabernacle of Faith - Antioch Retreat Center, and Forest Heights Boys & Girls Club.

Earth Team Volunteer (ETV) Dr. Christine Coker has been instrumental in touring and providing expert advice, along with Jara Lee, Food Corps and 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.daquilla@ms.nacdnet.net](mailto:beth.daquilla@ms.nacdnet.net).



*The community garden at Reeves Elementary is the envy of many local schools. Jara Lee with Food Corps talks to teacher Jill Lipski about the gardens while NRCS Tyree Harrington and ETV Christine Coker talk with teacher Terrie Fisher (not shown).*



*Jara Lee with Food Corps (right) tours the Coast Episcopal School community garden with Principal Betsy Grant.*

# District Celebrates Arbor Day with Harrison County Landowners



*Deputy Commissioner Ann Hudson and Earth Team Volunteer Chris Williams-White help landowners identify tree seedlings on Arbor Day. This year's Arbor Day Tree Giveaway included bare-root seedlings - Sawtooth and Nuttall Oak, Mayhaw, Red Maple, a variety of oaks in 3-gallon containers, longleaf pines donated by U.S. Forest Service and Southern Magnolia seedlings donated by GreenForest Nursery in Perkinston.*



*Deputy Comm. Joe Buckley helps a landowner select a 6-foot oak during the District's Arbor Day Tree Giveaway.*



*ETV Ed Longino and Comm. Paul McKay assist Harrison County landowners sign-in and give planting advice.*

# Stewardship Poster Contest - "Dig Deeper: Mysteries in the Soil"

The District recently held their Stewardship Poster Contest, with nearly 450 entries in three categories. Each student received a "Dig Deeper" certificate and a "Dig Deeper" bookmark. Congratulations to our 1st Place Winners: Landen Richards, Ellie Diaz, and Raul Ibarra, who each also won 1st Place in the South Area (24 counties).

## 2nd - 3rd Grade Winners

- 1st Landen Richards, Woolmarket Elementary
- 2nd Kirsten Ramirez, Woolmarket Elementary
- 3rd Molly Griffin, Crossroads Elementary

## 4th - 6th Grade Winners

- 1st Ellie Diaz, St. Vincent de Paul School
- 2nd Cynthia Arenas, Bayou View Middle
- 3rd Caleb Bergmann, Bayou View Middle

## Special Education 2nd - 6th Grade Winners

- 1st Raul Ibarra, Woolmarket Elementary
- 2nd Anna Moran, Woolmarket Elementary
- 3rd Ashley McClain, Bayou View Middle

A special thank you to our wonderful Earth Team Volunteers Calvinia Switzer, Wilda Switzer, Linda Johnson, Babe Buckley, Chris Williams-White, and Lynne Hill, who did an outstanding job of sorting 450 posters in three categories, judging the posters, and making a certificate for each student who entered the Stewardship Poster Contest. We had a fun day working together, and it couldn't have done it without your time and talent.

We also appreciate all of the teachers and students who participate each year to make this program a success.



*Kirsten Ramirez and Landen Richards from Woolmarket Elementary placed 2nd (left) and 1st in the Stewardship Poster Contest.*



*Cynthia Arenas, Ashley McClain, and Caleb Bergmann from Bayou View Middle School placed in their divisions in Harrison County.*



*Ellie Diaz from St. Vincent de Paul School, who took 1st Place in 4th - 6th grades, shows her "Dig Deeper" poster.*



*Anna Moran and Raul Ibarra from Woolmarket Elementary show their "Dig Deeper: Mysteries in the Soil" posters.*

# USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service Cost-Share Programs

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program administered by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). It supports production agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals. Through EQIP, agricultural producers may receive financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.

EQIP offers contracts with a minimum term that ends one year after the implementation of the last scheduled practice. Persons who are engaged in livestock or agricultural production on eligible land may participate in the EQIP program. EQIP activities are carried out according to a plan of operations developed in conjunction with the producer that identifies the appropriate conservation practice or practices to address the resource concerns. These practices are subject to NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) technical standards adapted for local conditions. Practices include watering facilities, heavy use areas, fencing, pest management, pasture and hayland planting, tree planting, transitioning to organic farming, organic farming, high tunnel systems, etc.

## *Seasonal High Tunnel System*

A seasonal polyethylene covered structure with no electrical, heating, and/or mechanical ventilation systems that is used to cover crops to extend the growing season in an environmentally safe manner.

## *Purposes*

- Extend the crop growing season
- Improve plant quality
- Improve soil quality
- Improve water quality from reduced nutrient and pesticide transport

## *Conditions Where Practice Applies*

This practice applies to existing cultivated cropland where extension of growing season is needed due to climate conditions and crops can be grown in the natural soil profile. Permanently raised beds may be installed to improve soil condition, fertility, and agri-ability access, but does not apply to crops not grown in the natural soil profile (i.e. tables/benches, portable pots, etc.).

## *National EQIP Initiatives*

The list below identifies the national initiatives supported by EQIP that may be available to producers engaged in specific kinds of agricultural activities, located in specific

geographic locations, or opportunities associated with agency approved initiatives.

## *EQIP*

Provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers through contracts up to a maximum term of ten years in length. These contracts provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns and for opportunities to improve soil, water, plant, animal, air and related resources on agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland.

## *Air Quality Initiative*

Provides financial assistance to implement approved conservation practices to address significant air quality resource concerns for designated high priority geographic locations throughout the nation.

Priority States are designated each fiscal year based upon Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designations of non-attainment for particulate matter and ozone pollutants. Legislation requires that \$37.5 million of EQIP be targeted to this initiative each fiscal year.

## *On-Farm Energy Initiative*

Enables the producer to identify ways to conserve energy on the farm through two types of Agricultural Energy Management Plans (AgEMP) for headquarters and/or for landscape, also known as an on-farm energy audit (headquarters and/or landscape); and by providing financial and technical assistance to help the producer implement various conservation practices recommended in these on-farm energy audits.

## *Organic Initiative*

Provides financial assistance to help implement conservation practices for organic producers and those transitioning to organic to address natural resource concerns

It also helps growers meet requirements related to National Organic Program (NOP) requirements and certain program payment limitations.

## *National Water Quality Initiative*

Helps farmers and ranchers implement conservation systems to reduce nitrogen, phosphorous, sediment and pathogen contributions from agricultural land in specific approved watershed. Contact your local NRCS field office to see if you are eligible.

*Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative.* Helps producers plan and implement seasonal high tunnels, which are steel-

framed, polyethylene-covered structures that extend growing seasons in an environmentally safe manner.

*Small Farmer Program (SFP)* for Mississippi Purpose  
The purpose of this initiative is to improve technical service and program participation in all USDA programs through improved outreach efforts to Small Scale Farmers. The target audience is defined as small farmers who have historically not participated in nor ever ranked high enough to be selected for a contract. We must be innovative in allowing small farmers to select practices that are best suited for their particular operations while at the same time low enough in cost to be effective and practical for small farms to implement and maintain.

*The Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)* is a voluntary program established for the purpose of restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems to: 1) promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species, 2) improve biodiversity; and 3) enhance carbon sequestration.

*Longleaf Pine Initiative (LLPI)*. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) unveiled an initiative to improve the health of longleaf pine forests in nine southeast states, including

Mississippi. Using an integrated landscape approach, this initiative restores longleaf pine forests on private lands and improves plant and animal habitat.

*Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW)* NRCS has formed a new partnership with the Department of Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) called Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) to accelerate wildlife conservation for targeted at-risk or listed species. NRCS is geographically unique; we have a broad delivery system to put conservation on the ground at the local level, across the entire country. With nearly two thirds of all species federally listed as threatened or endangered with populations on private lands, the ability to work with private landowners and target our conservation efforts can have a tremendous impact.

For more information and applications on any of these programs, visit [www.ms.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ms.nrcs.usda.gov) or contact the NRCS office at 12238 Ashley Drive, Gulfport, MS or call Tyree Harrington at 228-831-0881 ext.3. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## Why Soil Testing is Important

Plants differ with respect to their soil pH and nutrient needs. Soils vary considerably in their capability to meet a plant's nutritional needs depending on factors such as soil parent material, soil texture and structure, the amount of organic matter, biological activities, regional climate, and current growing conditions. Taking a soil test and using the recommendations that come with it will help plants receive adequate amounts of nutrients needed for plant growth. Other benefits, such as minimizing fertilizer runoff into the environment and cost savings from applying only what your plants need, are also good reasons for taking a soil test.

### *Soil Sampling*

The results of your soil test will be only as good as the sample you collect. Follow the four steps below to take a good soil sample.

#### *Step 1*

Take a small amount of soil from the top 4- to 6-inch depth and place in a bucket. Repeat process 5 to 10 times from different places in the area or plot you are sampling.

Mix the soil and transfer it to a pint size zip-lock bag (fill bag completely). Label the bag with a five digit code. Use

a separate sample bag for each area; for example, one sample bag for the side lawn, one sample bag for the front lawn, and one sample bag for the vegetable garden.

#### *Step 2*

If you are sampling the area around your home divide your home area into different plots, according to use.

#### *Step 3*

Bring your soil samples to the county Extension Service office. Make sure you bring a check or money order to pay for your soil test. The fee is \$6.00 per sample.

#### *Step 4*

The Extension Service staff will help you fill out a soil testing form and package your sample to be mailed to the soil testing lab. You should receive your results in about 10 days.

If you have questions about your soil test results, contact the MSU County Extension Service office at 865-4227 or come by the office at 2315 17th Street. As a convenience to those living closer to I-10, the Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District office keeps a supply of soil sample testing kits that you may pick up at our office at 12238 Ashley Drive, Gulfport.



## 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.

# ConservationNews

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### Commissioners

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### Staff Assisting the District

Beth D'Aquilla, *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.

## Mississippi Blueberries

Approximately 50% of Mississippi blueberries are sold wholesale through marketing cooperatives. The remaining blueberries are sold on a pick-your-own basis or sold independently through farmers markets, small stores, etc. There are approximately 2700 acres in blueberry production in Mississippi with the majority of blueberry acreage in the Southern half of the state. Fresh blueberries are available in the market place from May through September with June and July being the peak harvest season.

Blueberries can be enjoyed daily fresh or frozen to enjoy year round. For best results when freezing, do not wash the berries. Freeze them dry in plastic freezer containers. Blueberries will freeze individually and will be easy to use in recipes. Wash them right before using them in your favorite recipes. Check out our website at [www.growing-mississippi.org](http://www.growing-mississippi.org) or follow us on Facebook by searching for Farm Families of Mississippi.

## Blueberry Crunch

- 1 20 oz can chunk pineapple, un-drained
- 3 cups blueberries
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 18 oz yellow cake mix
- 1½ sticks melted margarine
- 1 cup chopped nuts

Place pineapple in 10 x 12 inch buttered baking dish.

Place blueberries over pineapple.

Pour sugar over blueberries.

Sprinkle cake mix over blueberries.

Pour melted margarine over cake mix.

Sprinkle nuts on top.

Bake at 350° for about 45 minutes until brown.

MS Blueberries and Blueberry Crunch provided by Nancy Freeman, Consultant, Farm Families of Mississippi.

**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>.**