



# ConservationNews

Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District

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Winter/Spring 2020

## Harrison County Farm Floating Fishing Pier



The Harrison County Sheriff's Office had this fully accessible floating fishing pier built at the Harrison County Farm, 14572 County Farm Road, in 2019. It is impressive and will surely bring quality fishing time to families for years to come. The pier was built by local labor union members, the Union Sportsmen's Alliance, and Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation.

Sheriff Troy Peterson noted that this pier will be a perfect addition to the annual Youth Fishing Rodeo, which draws hundreds of children. Local residents can come out and fish year-round. To schedule your fishing trip, email [robin.weaver@harrisoncountysheriff.com](mailto:robin.weaver@harrisoncountysheriff.com) or call 228-896-0606. A signed waiver is required for anyone to get onto the Harrison County Farm.



## \$5,000 Conservation Scholarship

Michael Zarske, a graduate of Gulfport High School and currently studying Environmental Science and Wildlife Management at Delta State University, was the recipient of a \$5,000 academic scholarship from the Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts' Endowment Fund. The Endowment is an independent entity established by MACD to solicit and accept funding to promote educational and informational activities focused on natural resource conservation. Photo: Zarske receives his MACD Scholarship from Herman Dungan, MSWCC Vice Chairman and Jerry Smith, MACD President.

## Growing Lunch School Garden Grant

### **Mississippi Dept. of Agriculture**

Growing Lunch is a school garden grant program administered through the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce with the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Growing Lunch seeks to enhance Farm to School efforts across the state. It acts as an educational tool to enhance the knowledge of daycare and school-aged children on agriculture, healthy eating and how food arrives on their plate three times a day.

As society becomes increasingly removed from agricultural practices and the farm, it remains pertinent to educate students on the origin of their food. MDAC has designated a website for those interested in the Farm to School Program and educational resources and materials for Farm to School Week, [farmtoschoolweek.org](http://farmtoschoolweek.org). Farm to School provides locally-grown produce to our state's schools and also seeks to educate students on agriculture.

If you have questions regarding the cost-share program, please contact Susan Head, 601-359-1196 or [susan@mdac.ms.gov](mailto:susan@mdac.ms.gov).

## MDEQ Mobile Classroom

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality's Mobile Classroom is now scheduling events for Kindergarten through 6th grade performances of the Mobile Classroom including youth and teacher workshops. These programs are available to elementary schools, libraries, and civic and church groups, and would be funded by the MDEQ.

The MDEQ has renewed Bayou Town, located here on the Gulf Coast, contract for another year providing, even more funded events for Mississippi students for 2020-21.

Please visit our website to see videos, photos, and information about our fun and engaging presentations and workshops for Mississippi students and teachers or contact us today to schedule your event at [bayoutown.com](http://bayoutown.com). Click onto the MDEQ Mobile Classroom button. Bayou Town Productions [bayoutown@att.net](mailto:bayoutown@att.net).

# Edie Dreher Rest in Peace

Commissioner Emeritus Edie Dreher served on the Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District Board for 30 years. She was equally as active in the Garden Clubs of Mississippi. The project nearest and dearest to her heart was restoring the Clower Thornton Nature Area in Gulfport, located at 300 East Railroad.

The Clower Thornton Nature Area is a remnant patch of southern mixed hardwood forest tucked within the urban setting of Gulfport. It has long been a favorite site for coast birders, with more than 200 species recorded. A variety of common woodland birds can be found here throughout the year.



## Correct Pruning Provides for Thriving Landscape Plants

### *Tim Ray, MSU Extension Service*

There's been a lot of attention paid to the matter of pruning, especially with the crime against horticulture known as "crape murder." But we're also getting closer to early spring, when many gardeners want to tidy up their landscape plants.

First, why do we need to prune landscape plants?

The reasons can be condensed to a few purposes: to maintain a specific size and/or form, to remove growth that has become unruly or to prevent a plant from interfering with the home structure or utilities. And, pruning also encourages new growth so timing is essential depending on what type of plant you need to prune. The type of plant determines the pruning strategy.

Broadleaf evergreens like hollies, boxwoods, azaleas and camellias can tolerate everything from light pruning (like tip pruning) to very aggressive renovation pruning, because the branches have structures called latent buds that will generate new growth. Narrowleaf evergreens, such as junipers, arborvitae and pines, tolerate light pruning or shaping but won't recover if severely pruned. They don't have the latent buds to produce new growth. Deciduous shrubs, like the broadleaf evergreens, will tolerate light to aggressive pruning.

Many questions about pruning revolve around landscape shrubs that produce beautiful flowers. Pruning these at the wrong time can ruin the colorful show. We can distill the answer down to one question: Is this a spring-flowering or summer-flowering tree or shrub? Flower buds on spring-flowering plants like azaleas and Indian hawthorn are formed the previous year. This means any pruning done late in the year probably removes next year's flowers. Prune spring-flowering plants immediately after the colorful show ends. I like to use July 4 as the pruning deadline for spring-flowering plants. For summer-flowering plants, crape myrtle and landscape roses, such as Knockout or Drift, the flower buds develop on the current season's growth. Pruning these plants in the spring does not impact their flowering.

One type of plant that causes a lot of confusion is hydrangea. The bigleaf hydrangea, which has flowers that change colors depending on soil pH, and oakleaf hydrangea flower on "old wood" from flower buds formed the previous year. Prune these each year right after flowering by removing about one-third of the stems to control the plant size. For more information on pruning, see our publication, "*Pruning Landscape Plants*", at [extension.msstate.edu](http://extension.msstate.edu) or call your local Extension office.

# Conservation Education Field Day A Success at the Harrison County Farm



The Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District held their annual Conservation Education Field Day on September 25-26 at the Harrison County Farm for the 4th grade students of Harrison County. Students enjoyed hands-on learning about Wildlife Biology, Snake Safety, How Much Water, Earth as an Apple, Forest Firefighting, Urban Forestry, Sheriff's BRAVE Anti-Bully, MSU Recycle Relay, Watershed A-Z, This Land is Your Land, and Wildlife-Fisheries.

The District appreciates the tremendous amount of support from our fellow conservation agencies and volunteers to make this field day happen. Shout out to our US Navy Seabees! The students just love getting to spend the day with our military men and women, who serve as tour guides to the 300 students and teachers.

Special recognition to Harrison County Sheriff Troy Peterson, Lieutenant Robert Lincoln, and County Farm

Manager Kurtis Owen. The amount of work they put in hosting this annual event at the Harrison County Farm is huge. The students and teachers are always in awe of the beautiful scenery with the ponds and lake.

The District appreciates the work and dedication of the many individuals and organizations that made this field day a success. It takes a village, and we'd like to recognize: Natural Resources Conservation Service, MSU Extension Service, Earth Team Volunteers, Mississippi Forestry Commission, MS Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, MS Museum of Natural Science, Stone County SWCD, MS Soil & Water Conservation Commission, and National Wild Turkey Federation. We would also like to thank Harrison County for the use of benches and access to the Harrison County Soccer Complex, where students went to have a picnic each day.



# Buck Johnson Reaches 35 Years of Service

Buck Johnson has served on the Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District Board for 35 years. He has been steadfast in guiding the District to help implement farm and forestland conservation practices to protect soil productivity, water quality and wildlife habitat. Buck's most enjoyable District role is playing, "This Land is Your Land" and talking to the students at the District's annual Conservation Education Field Day about the importance of our natural resources. His hobbies include playing in the Hickory Ridge band, hunting, and attending Mississippi State Bulldogs sports. Buck currently serves as a Deputy Commissioner.

## The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup Program

Marine debris is defined as any manmade material intentionally or unintentionally discarded in the marine environment. Examples include trash, derelict vessels, single-use plastic products, and abandoned fishing gear and nets. Plastics, which make up the majority of marine debris, are hazardous to marine life and humans through entanglement, ingestion, toxicity, habitat destruction and more. Unfortunately, plastics are not biodegradable, so they accumulate in landfills, the natural environment, and into rivers and waterways. Public awareness on this issue has never been higher, and as a result, people across the coast are taking to the beaches to remove this debris.

Since 1988, the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup Program has been responsible for organizing hundreds of thousands of volunteers to remove trash from our coastal environments. There are significant impacts made through Coastal Cleanup activities each year, including the removal of over 12 tons of litter from the coastal environment! The events that contribute to this include two large-scale cleanup events, the Star-Spangled Cleanup in July and the annual Mississippi Coastal Cleanup in October, and monthly beach cleanups. These cleanups take place at various locations across the coast and cover different waterways such as beaches, bayous, parks and wetlands. In 2019, the program had over 4,000 volunteers contribute to ridding the beaches and waterways of marine debris.

There is more to this program than beach cleanups though. Year round, the educators implement marine debris focused education, community engagement, and citizen science activities. These educational programs are designed to educate youth and adults through a variety of activities including, but not limited to: in-classroom visits, guest presentations, booths at events, group specific cleanups, teacher trainings, and more!

For more information or to get involved, please visit [coastalcleanup.extension.msstate.edu](http://coastalcleanup.extension.msstate.edu) or contact Mandy Sartain at [amanda.sartain@msstate.edu](mailto:amanda.sartain@msstate.edu).



# Prescribed Burning

*Jim Barnes, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Area 3 Forester*

Prescribed burning is the most economical tool available for managing timberland. Forest managers have learned to use prescribed fire to manipulate plant and animal communities to meet their management needs. First, let's look at a definition of prescribed burning and requirements to burn in Mississippi.

Prescribed burning is the application of fire in a knowledgeable manner to forest fuels on a specific land area under selected weather conditions to accomplish predetermined, well-defined management objectives. Prescribed fire is a tool that should only be used by those trained in its use. Knowledge of fuels and weather, along with proper planning for smoke management, are necessary to accomplish a safe burn. In the State of Mississippi, prescribed burning should only be accomplished when; (a) at least one certified prescribed burn manager is supervising the burn or burns that are being conducted;(b) a written prescription be prepared and notarized prior to prescribed burning;(c) a burning permit be obtained from the Mississippi Forestry Commission; and (d) be considered in the public interest and shall not constitute a public or private nuisance when conducted pursuant to state air pollution statutes and rules applicable to prescribed burning.

There are different reasons to use prescribed fire, so let's look at a few that would be applicable to Mississippi forests.

- **Hazardous fuel reduction:** Prescribed burning is the most economical way to reduce heavy fuel loads in southern pine stands. Heavy fuels can build up very quickly and pose a serious threat to the forest landowner. Prescribed burning reduces these fuels so that if a wildfire was to occur, the damage to valuable timber is reduced and the wildfire can be more easily controlled.
- **Site preparation:** Disposal of logging slash is necessary after harvesting, as the site must be readied for reforestation. Prescribed fire will also

recycle the nutrients back into the soil to make them available for future crops. Prescribed fire will improve access for tree planters, which will result in a better planting job. If natural regeneration is being used, then prescribed fire is used for seed bed preparation in advance of a good seed crop.

- **Improvement of wildlife habitat:** Periodic fire tends to favor certain understory species that require a more open habitat. Fire creates browse and legumes that animals favor. Deer, turkey, and quail are species that benefit from prescribed fire. Certain endangered species such as the gopher tortoise, indigo snake, and red-cockaded woodpecker also prefer habitat that is managed with prescribed fire. Prescribed burning also improves grazing opportunities for cattle.
- **Control of insects and disease:** Longleaf pine seedlings sometimes suffer from the fungal infection known as brownspot disease. This disease can weaken or even kill young longleaf pine seedlings. Prescribed burning is the best way to control this disease.
- **Control of undesirable species:** Unwanted vegetation and undesirable species can compete with crop trees for water, nutrients, and growing space.
- **Improve access and enhance appearance:** Prescribed burning improves recreation and aesthetics by promoting open, accessible stands. This also benefits the efficiency of timber cruising and harvesting operations. A clean managed, open stand can bring more lease revenue for forest land owners and also improve stumpage value at the time of harvest.

As you can see, there are many reasons why we use prescribed burning. There are also cost-share programs available to assist private landowners with this practice. For more information contact District Conservationist Tyree Harrington at the NRCS Gulfport field office 228-831-0881, ext. 3.



# Life in the Soil: Dig Deeper Poster Contest

Congratulations to Quinn Burns, a St. Vincent de Paul School student, for winning 1st Place in the 2nd/3rd grade category, in the Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts' Life in the Soil: Dig Deeper, Stewardship Poster Contest. The objective of the annual Stewardship Poster Contest is to recognize the students whose posters best illustrate the use and conservation of natural resources, with emphasis on making the earth a better place to live, work and play. The national theme for posters and essays changes annually and is established by the National Association of Conservation Districts.



## Lime/Litter Spreader Available for Lease

The District has available a CL-HYD-PUL Adams 16-ft pull type Lime/Litter Spreader with lime baffle and 4" center double bar kit for lease. Equipment is available to lease by Harrison County landowners by filling out a lease agreement and making an equipment deposit. Rental fee is \$5 per acre. Call 228-234-1779 to schedule use. Pickup and dropoff at Second Chance Farm, 16241 Northrup Cuevas Road, Lizana. Lease agreement form is available at [hcswcd.co.harrison.ms.us](http://hcswcd.co.harrison.ms.us).



## Seed Grain Drill Available for Lease

The District has available a 7 ft Sunflower Seed Grain Drill for lease to Harrison County landowners. To lease the grain drill, a lease agreement and equipment deposit must be made. Rental fee is \$5 per acre. For details and to schedule use call 228-234-1779. Pickup and dropoff at Second Chance Farm, 16241 Northrup Cuevas Road, in Lizana. Lease agreement form available at [hcswcd.co.harrison.ms.us](http://hcswcd.co.harrison.ms.us).

# Asian Beef & Noodles

1/2 pound	Lean ground beef (15% fat)
2 cups	Water
2 packages	Instant ramen-style noodles, broken into small pieces (use only one seasoning packet)
16 ounces	Frozen Asian-style vegetables, or any other frozen vegetables
2 Green onions	Thinly sliced
1 Tablespoon	Fresh ginger or 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
2 Garlic cloves	Minced or 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

1. In a large skillet over medium-high heat (350 degrees in an electric skillet), brown ground beef and cook until no longer pink. Drain fat.
2. Add 2 cups of water and ONE seasoning packet to cooked beef and mix well.
3. Add frozen vegetables, green onion, ginger, and garlic and bring to a boil over high heat.
4. Add ramen noodles, reduce heat to low, and simmer 3-5 minutes until vegetables are tender, stirring occasionally.
5. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

Natasha Haynes, host of MS State University's online educational video show, "The Food Factor."

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**Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District**

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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.

For more information about any District projects and services, please call us at 228-831-1647 or visit us at [hcswcd.co.harrison.ms.us](http://hcswcd.co.harrison.ms.us).

Follow us on Facebook: Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District Mississippi

# MS Soil & Water Conservation Youth Camp

High school students, learn how to manage our natural resources, acquire hands-on knowledge of Mississippi's soils, wildlife, agriculture, and forest resources through outdoor settings and tours. Become a conservationist and learn about the interaction of natural resources with water quality, climate atmospheric change, and the effects on wildlife and livestock ecology. High school students going into grades 10, 11, or 12 may register for the Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Youth Camp, sponsored by MACD with the support of MSWCC, NRCS and local Districts. This is our 35th annual camp, educating our state's youth about our natural resources.

The camp will be held at Hinds Community College in Raymond, MS, from June 7-11, 2020. The cost of the camp is \$100 per student; the Harrison County Soil & Water Conservation District will provide scholarships for student(s) from Harrison County to attend. The deadline for registration is April 30, 2020. One student that applies, who exhibits an outstanding interest and aptitude for natural resources, will be awarded a \$3,000 scholarship from the MACD Endowment Fund. Harrison County students, contact [beth.daquilla@ms.nacdnet.net](mailto:beth.daquilla@ms.nacdnet.net) or 228-831-1647, ext. 3.