



NRCS Alabama Current Developments

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From the State Conservationist - Dr. William Puckett



Field Office of the Future is Bright

Congratulations on a great year in conservation. You and the conservation partnership have contributed significantly to an improvement in Alabama's natural resources. With your efforts, Alabama's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners have applied conservation practices on hundreds of thousands of acres and pumped tens of millions of dollars into local rural economies. Each dollar is said to change hands seven times, thereby magnifying the impact where it is most needed in rural Alabama.

Because of you, Alabama's citizens have more acres of healthy soil, cleaner rivers, lakes and streams, purer air, more wetlands, abundant wildlife and more diverse forest ecosystems. Because of your can do attitude, several special projects involving longleaf pine, gopher tortoise, water quality and the Gulf of Mexico have provided additional conservation opportunities that otherwise would have not been available to Alabama. Your compassion was evident in the effort to help communities and individuals recover from one of the largest outbreaks of tornadoes in the state's history.

You helped introduce new technologies, such as precision agriculture, which has reduced the amounts of fertilizers and pesticides applied and also reduced energy cost. Thousands of acre-feet of water have been saved due to more efficient irrigation technologies which has helped during the current prolonged drought.

The amount of locally grown food has increased due to the many hoop houses that have been installed across the state. Increased outreach has resulted in more participation by new and beginning and underserved farmers and ranchers. Congratulations to Mr. Richard Smith and his wife Prentella in their selection as NRCS' 2013 Small Farmers of the Year. The Smith's are from Marengo Co. and exemplify hard working families across the state that are making great strides in locally grown agriculture.

Another milestone was achieved this year with the completion of the first generation soil survey by the Alabama Cooperative Soil Survey Partnership. The citizens of Alabama now have 24/7 access to soils information via the World Wide Web.

NRCS and its partners have made tremendous strides in conservation over the last year. Each of you should take great pride in your accomplishments and make sure to thank the district staff and others that have made us all successful.

Celebrating the Completion of the First Generation of Soil Survey

NRCS is proud to announce the completion of its first generation soil survey that identifies soil conditions in Alabama. To mark this historic event, members of the Alabama Cooperative Soil Survey Partnership gathered in Montgomery, Alabama, as Governor Robert Bentley signed a proclamation celebrating the next generation of the Alabama Cooperative Soil Survey Partnership.

This is a collaborative effort between NRCS, Alabama A&M, Auburn and Tuskegee Universities, as well as federal, state, and local partners such as the Alabama Association of Conservation Districts (AACD) and Alabama State Soil and Water Conservation Committee (SWCC). NRCS State Conservationist Dr. William Puckett said this group is committed to delivering science-based soils information to help people protect and maintain Alabama's valuable resources. "Soil health is important to all of us. It supports plant growth, recycles nutrients, regulates and filters water flow, supports buildings and roads, and provides habitat for many plants and animals. It is vital to our existence," said Puckett. The proclamation noted the importance of promoting the conservation and wise use of Alabama's soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources. "The



Alabama Governor Robert Bentley (center) l-r: Harold McCool, Retired Executive Director SWCC James Plaster, NRCS MO-15 Leader Charles Love, Pickens Co. Soil and Water Conservation District Chair Diane McCool, Alabama SWCC Executive Director Steve Cauthen, NRCS State Conservationist Dr. William Puckett, AACD President Dr. Carol Knight, William Cosby, and Drayton Cosby.

Alabama Cooperative Soil Survey Partnership has worked together for over a century to investigate, inventory, document, classify, and interpret the soils of Alabama," said MO-15 Team Leader Charles Love. A general soils map for Alabama was completed in 1929 and a comprehensive and detailed county level soil survey was completed in 2012.

Multi-agency Hardwood Workshop

by Tim Albritton, State Staff Forester, NRCS, Auburn, AL

In April, personnel from NRCS, Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC), Alabama Department of Natural Resources, US Army Garrison-Redstone, and private consultant foresters attended a two-day hardwood workshop at the Huntsville USDA Service Center in Madison Co. and a field trip to Jackson Co.

Topics covered in the workshop included intermediate stand treatments, fire in upland hardwoods, corridor thinning, and various hardwood management options. The second day of the workshop included a tour of a local hardwood saw mill and a visit to a research site where various hardwood species were planted for a riparian buffer.

The interaction between agency personnel and consultants has proven to be a valuable learning

experience. This is the fourth multi-agency hardwood workshop coordinated by Dr. Callie Schweitzer, US Forest Service; Jim Jeter, AFC; and Tim Albritton, NRCS. Plans are to continue the workshops every other year.



Group at riparian buffer site.

Employees in the News



Oakes accepts an Auburn University Alumni Award.

Perry Oakes Receives Two Awards

2012 Outstanding Alumni Award - The Auburn University (AU) College of Engineering named Oakes as Outstanding Alumni. Perry earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at AU in agricultural engineering. As State Conservation Engineer for NRCS, he provides engineering oversight for the agency's state engineering programs. In 2008, he was selected as the NRCS National Engineer of the Year.

2012 SWCS President's Leadership Award - As a member of the AL Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS), Perry received the National 2012 SWCS President's Leadership Award. This award was given in recognition of his exceptional support provided to the student chapters within Alabama, and specifically, his effort in starting the Tuskegee University Student Chapter.

Pennington Receives NRCS Top Honors

Carl Pennington, NRCS Resource Conservationist in Grove Hill, AL, received the NRCS Jerry L. Johnson Award in February 2012 for excellence in public service through family, employment, profession, and community. He was selected for community contributions through volunteer work and church activities, and for his leadership in soil and water conservation activities in Alabama.

In addition, Carl was named "Outstanding Young Man in America" for three consecutive years and has served his country for over 32 years as a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve. He is an advocate for the Boy Scouts of America serving as scoutmaster for 15 years. He also serves as a Board of Director for the White Smith Library in Jackson, AL.

The Jerry L. Johnson Award was established in 2005 and is funded by the Bradley/Murphy Forestry and Natural Resources Extension Trust.



Carl Pennington (center) was recipient of the Jerry Johnson Award. (l-r) AACD President Dr. Carol Knight, NRCS Acting State Conservationist Perry Oakes, Pennington, and SWCC Chairman Frank Nalty.

Pam Mason Receives FFA Top Award

Pam Mason, NRCS DC for Elmore, Tallapoosa, and Coosa Counties, received the highest honor given by the Alabama Future Farmers of America (FFA) Association--an Honorary State FFA Degree. She received the award at the 84th Annual State Convention in Montgomery in June. This degree is awarded to exceptional individuals who provide life-changing experiences for FFA members.



Jacob Davis, Education Specialist with the Alabama Department of Education (sponsor of the FFA), presents Pam the Honorary State FFA Degree in June 2012.

From the Field

Soil Scientists Probe For The Past

By Cooper Nichols, Soil Scientist, MLRA Soil Survey Area 15-4, Auburn, AL

On a hot and humid day in July, Teresa Paglione, Alabama NRCS Cultural Resources Specialist, encouraged a group of NRCS state office employees to visit a “dig” on AU’s E.V. Smith Research Center farm. The archaeological excavations at this site are directed by AU, but recently included students from Lehigh University (Pennsylvania) and Vermont.

Archeologists Dr. John Cottier, AU; and Dr. Cameron Wesson, Lehigh University, along with more than a dozen archaeology field school students from both Universities were also present.

This important prehistoric archaeological site was occupied by various Native American groups over thousands of years. Recent research suggests the largest occupation occurred during what southeastern archaeologists refer to as the Late Mississippian period.

NRCS Soil Scientist John Burns and I were asked back to the site in hopes of answering Dr. Cottier’s questions about the soils in the area. Using a fluxgate gradiometer (a magnetometer that measures soil disturbance through geophysics), Dr. Wesson had predetermined that a pasture area was thought to have an extension of some kind of defensive wall that ran around the perimeter of the village.

The site in question was flagged in ten meter transects. Borings were taken at one meter intervals to locate the exact location of this linear structure which contained artifacts, charcoal, and fired clay (daub). Burns and I used a Giddings Soil Exploration Probe to pull soil samples. We helped describe the soil profiles and discussed the landscape geomorphology of the area.

Evidence of the wall was confirmed on the fourth, fifth, and sixth holes where soil composition was changed and remains of daub and charcoal were found deep within the soil profile. This discovery proved that the gradiometer readings were extremely accurate in depicting soil disturbance.

This was an amazing experience. It really makes my job worthwhile to discover something new or make a science breakthrough.

Additional information is on the Alabama NRCS website at www.al.nrcs.usda.gov.



Dr. John Cottier (kneeling) talks to Alabama NRCS employees about the Elbert Canebrake archeology dig site.

Gopher Tortoise Shows Off in Mobile

Gopher tortoises are usually elusive creatures, but one recently allowed Mobile Co. Soil Con Tech Marshall Colburn a rare and up close moment as she laid her eggs in a freshly cultivated field.

“I was on a landowner’s property doing a site assessment for the Working Lands for Wildlife program, when I observed a gopher tortoise laying eggs,” Marshall says. “She had dug a nest about 20 yards away from her burrow in soft soil where the landowner had planted chufas the day before. I was able to stand and take photos about two feet from the apron of the nest. It was pretty cool!”





Students enjoy the "Read Across America" program.

2012 Read Across America Dedicated to the Memory of Karen Hayes

The 2012 Read Across America event was held in Madison Co. DAC Kathy Walker; Steve Morrison, Chief Deputy for Madison County Sheriff's Department; and Betsy Stine, Assistant to Madison Co. Chairman Mike Gillespie; read books and used puppets to act out the "Real Story of the Three Little Pigs" as told by Alexander T. Wolf...aka the wolf in sheep's clothing.

Students at Martin Luther King Elementary School enjoyed different books and the puppets that were used to encourage a "love of reading!"

Nothing comes without drama though. About 15 minutes into the presentation, the tornado warning sirens sounded and the kids reluctantly went to their safe place in the interior of the school.

The students were so excited about the program that we scheduled a return visit.

Read Across America in Madison Co. was dedicated to the memory of Marshall Co. DAC Karen Hayes. For five years, this was one of Karen's favorite projects. She was instrumental in its success in Madison Co. Karen was scheduled to help again this year, but she died unexpectedly in February 2012, at the age of 45.

Karen Hayes



Wiregrass RC&D Hosts a Farmer Workshop

The Wiregrass Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council in Ozark, went out of their way to help area farmers, especially small and limited resource farmers, learn about resources and programs available to help them succeed at farming.

The Council secured a national RC&D grant for the "Tri-State Farmers Outreach Workshop" that was held in February at Landmark Park in Dothan.

Over 200 people attended the event. Speakers from tri-state (GA, FL, and AL) universities and state, federal, and local agencies presented information about programs and services offered by their respective organizations.

Two breakout sessions were offered. One was a live demonstration on plasticulture with micro-irrigation that showed how a tractor with an attachment installs the practice. Another breakout session was an indoor presentation about small ruminant health.

Various demonstrations including cross fencing and solar energy were installed on the grounds of the park. Vendors and agencies set up displays inside to give information about their wares and programs. Outside, a large farm equipment vendor displayed tractors, implements, and other farming machinery. The attendees were able to inspect the items and talk directly with a representative.



In one breakout session, a live demonstration shows how a tractor with a specialized implement installs plastic and micro-irrigation on the ground.

Farmers Cooperative Outreach Meeting

The Wiregrass Farmers Cooperative hosted an outreach meeting for producers and youth at the Coop Building on Goat Hill Road in March 2012. Speakers and demonstrators included Adam Sconyers, NRCS, Geneva; James Currington, Wiregrass RC&D; Victor Khan, Plant Breeder and Horticulturist from Tuskegee University; and Janie Howell, DAC, Geneva Co. SWCD.

About 40 adults and youth learned proper installation and maintenance of Seasonal High Tunnels. Mr. Kahn gave a presentation on proper construction and versatility of tunnel house growing. He also showed how to properly plant directly in the tunnel house.

James Currington and Adam Sconyers shared opportunities available to producers through NRCS and the Wiregrass RC&D.

Representative Donnie Chesteen encouraged the attendees to learn new techniques and knowledge to take advantage of new agriculture programs that become available.

Janie Howell presented the Enviroscape to demonstrate what can be done to take care of our soil and water.

The youth seemed to enjoy a day of their spring break learning hands-on projects to help the environment. Thanks to all the adults who participated and helped make the meeting a success.



Janie Howell (r) uses the Enviroscape to teach soil and water conservation at the Wiregrass Farmers Cooperative youth day.

Covington County SWCD Holds Annual Youth Event

Students from across Covington Co. were honored in April at the Annual Youth Event for their achievements in several area-wide conservation contests. Over 100 parents and teachers shared in the fun, food, and fellowship at the Oakwood Lodge.

This year's theme, "Soil to Spoon" was illustrated by posters made by participating 3rd graders.



A highlight of the event was a hamburger-hot dog dinner with an amazing chocolate cake decorated with real fruits and vegetables.

The event was co-sponsored by the Covington Co. Commission, Farmers Federation, and Forestry Planning Committee, and the City of Andalusia.

Forestry Field Day Held in Epes

A Forestry Demonstration Workshop was held in April at the Federation of Southern Cooperatives in Epes, AL. About 25 people attended, including two landowners from Mississippi.

The NRCS forestry and wildlife display was visited by many. All of the landowners appreciated the available program information.

NRCS was well represented with State Staff Forester Tim Albritton, Agronomist Eddie Jolley, Soil Conservation Technician Wade Williams, and Soil Conservationist Codie Yelverton.



Dale County SWCD Creates New Soil Tunnel

Amid shouts of “Soil Rocks!” and “Soil, you gotta dig it!”, Wiregrass area children are learning the importance of soil in their daily lives. The Dale Co. SWCD visited area schools and youth organizations recently with their newest environmental education tool, the Soil Tunnel.

The fun activity simulates a trip underground to illustrate the important functions of soil. Using a flashlight, students crawl through the tunnel to view images and objects on the soil tunnel’s walls and ceiling. The activity also includes a separate PowerPoint demonstration to enhance the activity and teach students about the importance of soil in our daily lives.

Five functions of soil are addressed: water purification, plant growth, materials for humans, habitat for organisms, and waste recycling.

Creating the three by six foot wooden structure was a cooperative effort and was funded by an education grant through the Wiregrass RC&D.

G W Long High School’s agri-science teacher, Mr. Jack Harris and his students built the wooden structure. Carroll High School teachers, Ms. Linda Dees, environmental science; and Pamela Nolin, art;



Standing l-r: Dale Co. NRCS DC Joshua Elliott, Wiregrass RC&D Council member Kurt McDaniel, Executive Director James Currington, and Council member Estus Walker; State Representative Steve Clouse, and District Education Specialist Janet Benton. Camp Oz students are also pictured.

and their students participated in the tunnel’s design and creation.

Janet Benton, the district’s education specialist commented, “This experience has been an excellent educational experience for the high school students as well.” The Dale Co. SWCD thanks the teachers and students for sharing their expertise. With their help, the high quality educational tool is available for use in our schools for years to come.

Farm Day Held in Cullman County

The Cullman Co. SWCD participated in the Vinemont Elementary School Farm Day. Over 500 students were present as the staff covered programs such as “Where Does it Grow”- discussing how farmers play a large role in our everyday lives, and “Where Our Milk Comes From” - where each student got the chance to milk a pretend cow.

There was also a demonstration of a cotton gin that taught students how cotton plays an important part in our everyday lives.



Celebrating Earth Day 2012



Polly Morris and Mark Butler talked with students about dissolved oxygen testing and how it relates to water quality and a healthy aquatic ecosystem.

Blount County

Earth Day was a great day to get outdoors and learn about the environment and how things are all connected and function together. Cleveland High School invited the Oneonta SWCD/NRCS staff to teach Water Testing and the Enviroscape to 7th–12th grade science classes.

At the Water Testing station, the students were instructed on how to test for dissolved oxygen using a simple test kit provided by the SWCD.

The Enviroscape presentation taught students about the drinking water cycle in a city setting to show the difference between Drinking Water Treatment Plants and Waste Water Treatment Plants and how they function. In a rural setting students saw that water testing is important to make sure the well water people use is clean and safe to drink. The students also learned how septic systems function and when they need to be cleaned out and inspected.

Earth Day is a day to reconnect with the environment. It is a day to remember that drinking water doesn't just come from a faucet and it doesn't just disappear when it goes down the drain. The students at Cleveland High School learned that their actions will have either a positive or negative effect on the environment.



7th-12th graders view the Enviroscape presentation.

Colbert and Lauderdale Counties

Colbert and Lauderdale Counties SWCDs joined forces to participate in the 5th Annual Earth Day event on the grounds of the Colbert Co. Courthouse.

The day-long event featured environmental magician Steve Trash and many local performers.

Even though the weather was cool, the town square was abuzz with activities and displays from many conservation groups.

DACs Brenda Hand (Lauderdale Co.) and Etta Mask (Colbert Co.) staffed a booth.



Teachers and others appreciated the posters and other hand outs that the SWCD/NRCS provided.

Water Festivals

Lee County Water Festival

The 9th Annual Lee Co. Water Festival was deemed a success by the more than 1,700, 4th grade students and their teachers who attended this year's free event in May at AU's Haley Center. Participating students, teachers, and volunteers received a "Make Every Drop Count" t-shirt that was designed by 4th grader Lisa Park from Yarbrough Elementary School.

Within the classrooms of Haley Center, the students rotated between three educational activities to help them understand the importance of clean water. In one activity, students learned about the water cycle by making bracelets with beads representing the perpetual chain of evaporation (and transpiration), condensation, precipitation, and collection. They learned that the same water has been on Earth millions of years and the limited amount of water keeps going around and around in what is called the "Water Cycle."

In another class setting, students made edible aquifers. Using ice cream, clear cola, and sprinkles to represent the aquifer (underground water source), and straws to simulate a pump, the students created a tasty, hands-on illustration of how various contaminants pollute the water source.

In a third session, the students layered sand and other items to simulate the natural water filtration system.

The event was topped off by the Environmental Magician Paul Cash.



(l-r) Yarbrough Elementary teacher Ms. Kaye, John Wild (A-O Tourism Bureau), t-shirt winning designer-4th grader Lisa Park, Liesa Simpson (City of Auburn), and Paul Cash (Environmental Magician).

Madison County Drinking Water Festival

Madison Co. DAC Kathy Walker said the 15th annual Drinking Water Festival in Huntsville was a complete success. "For once," she said, "there was no drama." She also indicated that the weather participated and was gorgeous for a change.

The festival was held in May at the University of Alabama in Huntsville in the Spraggin's Hall Gymnasium where 22 schools with 1,600 students participated. Sixty-six volunteers helped register, teach, and guide students through the activities. When teachers registered their class they chose three activities for their students from five different activities: Cave Shrimp, Filtration, Wetlands Metaphors, Watersheds, and Well in a Cup.



Students listened and learned as instructors talked about soil and water conservation at the Madison Co. Drinking Water Festival.

Alabama Earth Team Volunteers Shine

Cash Promotes Conservation

The Paul Cash Environmental Magic Show has been an exciting addition at the Lee Co. Water Festival for years. Children can barely contain their glee as they watch the show.

This spring he made it even more exciting—he performed additional shows as an Earth Team Volunteer (ETV) along with Lee Co. ETV Anne Miller. Paul Cash took his show to Beauregard Elementary School, Lee Co. Development Center in Opelika, Horseshoe Bend Elementary School in New Site, AL, and D.C. Wolf Elementary in Shorter, AL.

Beauregard Elementary was the only Lee Co. school that could not attend this year's water festival, so Paul and Anne took the Water Festival to them. The 4th graders were given Water Cycle Bracelets to put together and Ann talked to them about the conservation meaning of the bead colors.

It is a great opportunity for students to learn about the environment and water cycle, and how to protect the world they live in. They take home information about conservation to their parents—daily household things they can do themselves to conserve water.



Paul Cash (r) developed his magic show about 15 years ago when he performed for WorldFest, Los Angeles' largest Earth Day festival. The purpose of the show is to educate children about beneficial environmental practices while entertaining them.

Lee Co. NRCS/SWCD was proud to have Paul as an ETV to promote his conservation message through his magic show.

ETVs Honored in Madison County

Senior citizens are valuable assets as volunteers. The Madison Co. SWCD/NRCS local office reaps great benefits because of two ETVs: Bertie Weitzel, 86 years of age, and Inez Whiddon, 77.

Weitzel said she enjoys the time she gives as an ETV. She helps other seniors at Agape Assisted Living Facility with one of Kathy's, Madison Co. DAC, signature conservation crafts, the soil baby. Weitzel shares her conservation concerns and makes sure that all of the residents, including those in wheel chairs, are able to participate.

Whiddon and her husband assists with teacher workshops and the annual "Changing Face of Agriculture" tours. Whiddon said, "It makes me want to be young again so I can farm. It is amazing to learn what can be done and what the Madison Co. staff does to help the environment. I learn while I am volunteering."

Kathy hopes the effort of these ladies will encourage others to sign up as volunteers. She said, "We enjoy working with our Earth Team Volunteers. They are vital to the Huntsville field office. They tell me they look forward to helping and always get more back than they give."

Anthony said, "Teaching the importance of soil and water with lots of hands-on activities is a challenge without extra hands to help. We appreciate the help that these two individuals give the conservation effort."



Madison Co. SWCS/NRCS is honored to recognize these ETVs, not because of their age, but because of their commitment and dedication to volunteering. (l-r) Madison Co. DC Anthony Hudson; ETVs Bertie Weitzel and Inez Whiddon; and Madison Co. SWCD DAC Kathy Walker.

Outreach News from Alice Love

Tuskegee University Scholar's Program



Dr. Walter Hill, Dean, College of Agriculture, Environment and Nutrition Sciences (CAENS) at Tuskegee University signs a Cooperative Agreement Extension (Scholars Program) between Tuskegee University and Alabama NRCS.

This program targets students within CAENS majoring in natural resources, agriculture, or other closely related science. Alice Love serves as the Technical Liaison for this agreement which has been in effect since 2008.



Locally grown watermelons were a part of the Black Belt Community Foundation 2012 Extravaganza – “Taking What We Have, To Make What We Need!” Alice Love participated in this event as part of NRCS outreach.



Demetris Johnson participated in the Scholar's Program. He is instrumental in promoting the program and sharing his NRCS summer work experiences with fellow classmates. He recently gave a presentation entitled, “The Effects of the 2010 Oil Spill on Migratory Birds.”

Demetris now works full-time as a Soil Conservationist with NRCS in Ozark, AL.

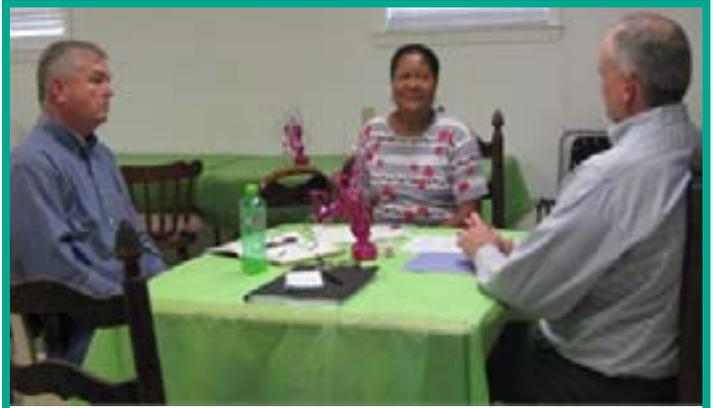


Tuskegee University and conservation partners welcomed new and returning students to the College of Agriculture for the Fall 2012 Semester.

Alice Love staffed a display during registration where interested students received information about NRCS career opportunities.



Assisting Farmers. (l-r) Khalia Giles, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician, Macon Co., AL, helps New and Beginning Farmer Kathy Nelms enroll in USDA financial assistance.



(l-r) ASTC-FO Richard Collier, Mrs. Shipman, and Alabama NRCS STC Dr. William Puckett talk about community outreach.

Alabama NRCS Reaches Out to Community-Based Leader

NRCS STC Dr. William Puckett and ASTC-FO East Richard Collier met with Barbara Shipman, at the Cottage House in Barbour Co. The group talked about rural communities, outreach, and how to enhance services to customers.

One thing mentioned by Ms. Shipman was the need for a system to install micro-irrigation plasticulture in her area. Many producers find it hard to locate the equipment needed to install the practice.

The NRCS agency leaders informed Ms. Shipman of the assistance available through the local NRCS field offices and local partners.

Ms. Shipman thanked the leaders for meeting with her and for the opportunity to address concerns in her community.



Alabama NRCS State Conservationist Dr. William Puckett meets with summer interns after their presentations to the state office staff prior to their return to designated universities for the 2012-13 academic school year.



Alabama Women In Agriculture Chapter hosts their quarterly meeting in Tuskegee, AL. Tammy Steele, Executive Director from Oklahoma City, (3rd from left in white shirt) attended. Alice Love is an NRCS outreach advisor to the chapter.

Thomaston Conservation Partnership

By Alice Love, Agricultural Outreach Liaison, Auburn, AL

Alabama conservation partners sponsored a training workshop on Seasonal High Tunnels (hoop houses), a pilot program offered through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The workshop was at the Alabama Rural Heritage Center located in Thomaston, AL. Sponsoring partners included NRCS, RC&D, Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES), Tuskegee University, and Alabama Rural Heritage Center.

The program included hoop house design, watering devices, planting techniques, and disease control. NRCS personnel discussed financial assistance available through EQIP.

Attendees gained first hand knowledge of hoop house operations from Jean Miles and Carol Eichelberger, Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group members. They encouraged participants to learn about area markets and consider becoming a producer with Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).

Victor Khan, Tuskegee University Researcher/Plant Breeder, presented hoop house research that he started in the 1990s. He discussed the importance of the layout to gain maximum natural benefits (lighting and direct sun for heating purposes, etc.). He acknowledged that crops grown in hoop houses can be easily managed with improved crop quality and reduced use of pesticides. He also stated it is labor intensive, so it is important to plant crops to maximize income based on market demand.



John Lewis, NRCS Wilcox Co. Soil Conservation Technician, informs participants of EQIP incentive payments and hoop house design criteria.

James Miles, ACES, informed the attendees of essential elements to watch in hoop house productions such as soil temperatures, balancing pH levels, moisture methods (drip heads and drip tapes), fertilizers, and securing proper drainage of site.

The attendees visited a hoop house during the workshop. Contractors from the United Christian Community Association installed the hoop house for the workshop and were available to address construction inquiries.



About 60 participants attended the workshop.

National Women in Ag Association Symposium - Tuskegee University



Alice Love and Barbara Shipman.

The 2nd Annual New Generation Symposium for this national agricultural outreach association was held at the Kellogg Center on Tuskegee University (TU) in April 2012. The symposium targeted “Growing Character, Health, and Income from the Ground Up.”

l-r: Dr. William Puckett, NRCS; Dr. Walter Hill, TU; and Daniel Robinson, Farm Service Agency, spoke during the meeting.



Personnel

Accessions

Zackery Hayes, Soil Scientist, Normal, Feb 12
Darnae Hopkins, Soil Scientist, Auburn, Feb 12
Demetris Johnson, Soil Con, Ozark, Jun 12
Erika Justiniano-Velez, Ag Eng, Grove Hill, Jan 12
Steve Lloyd, Soil Con Tech, Evergreen, Jul 12
Jessica Mills, Ag Eng, Guntersville, Jun 12
Cooper Nichols, Soil Scientist, Auburn, May 12
Christopher Story, Soil Con Tech, Huntsville, Oct 11
Codie Yelverton, Soil Con, Livingston, Jan 12

Promotions

Alberto Atienza-Reyes, Ag Eng, Troy, Aug 12
William Bodiford, Soil Con Tech, Monroeville, Nov 11
Jessica Cleveland, Soil Con Tech, Athens, Sep 12
J. Frank Cochran, Soil Con, Linden, Feb 12
Luis Cruz-Arroyo, Dist Con, Jackson, Feb 12
Gregory Dansby, Asst State Con (FO), Decatur, Jul 12
James Dawson, Soil Con Tech, Autaugaville, Mar 12
Jeremy Edmonds, Soil Con Tech, Scottsboro, Jun 12
David Elliott, Prog Anal, Brewton/Atmore, Nov 11
Michelle Floyd, Soil Con, Jackson, Jul 12
Jason Forrester, Human Res. Asst, Auburn, May 12
Christopher Joe, Dist Con, Tuskegee, May 12
Alexander Johnson, Soil Con, Alex City, Aug 12
Robert Kerr, Soil Con Tech, Talladega, Mar 12
Jesi King, Soil Con Tech, Auburn, Jan 12
Joyce Lane, Dist Con, Athens, Sep 12
John Lewis, Soil Con Tech, Camden, Jan 12
Scotty Noles, Soil Con Tech, Wedowee, Oct 11
Kenneth Parham, Soil Con, Carrollton, Feb 12
Nancy Reagan, Human Res. Spec., Auburn, Apr 12
Adam Sconyers, Soil Con, Geneva, Jan 12
Jean Sparks, Contract Specialist, Auburn, Jul 12
Shea Strickland, Soil Con Tech, Abbeville, Jul 12
Adam Threatt, Soil Con Tech, Troy, Aug 12
Joshua Tilley, Soil Con, Vernon, Mar 12
Jared Worthington, Soil Con Tech, Greensboro, Jan 12

Reassignments

Jeffery Allred, Ag Eng, Bessemer, Mar 12
Frank Cochran, Soil Con, Linden/Bay Minette, Jan 12
Charles McAlpine, Outreach Coord., Auburn, Oct 11

Resignations

Detra Boutwell, Soil Con, Brewton, Jun 12
William "Blake" Ray, Soil Con Tech, Auburn, Jun 12
Heidi Richards, RC&D Coord, Birmingham, Oct 11
Lydia Smith, Soil Con Tech, Mobile, Jun 12

Retirements

James Currington, RC&D Coord, Ozark, Jul 11
James Hyde, Soil Con Tech, Evergreen, Jun 11
Judy Hill, Asst State Con (FO), Decatur, Jun 12
Eddie May, RC&D Coordinator, Oxford, Jul 11
Larry McCray, Agrl Engineer, Tuscaloosa, Dec 11
Charlie Meek, RC&D Coord, Tuscumbia, Aug 11
Mike Roden, RC&D Coord, Decatur, Jul 11
Deryl Sharp, Soil Con Tech, Huntsville, Aug 11
Lynn Thomas, Contracting Officer, Auburn, Feb 11

Transfers

Jamie Carpenter, from Dist Con, Athens to ASTC-FO, Atlantic, Iowa, Jul 12
Josh Halpin, Soil Con, Andalusia to Rangeland Mgmt Spec, Montana, Jun 12
Gwendolyn Lewis, from Dist Con, Tuskegee to U.S. Forest Service, Jan 12

In Sympathy

Bob Thompson, retired head of the Water Resources Staff passed away, January 2012.

Jeffery Ethridge, former Henry Co. Soil Conservation Technician, died in May 2011 at his home in Houston, Texas. He was 52.

Karen Hayes, District Administrative Coordinator, in Marshall Co., died February 2012, at the age of 45.

Black History Month

Employees and guests met in the state office conference room in February to celebrate Black History Month. The theme this year was "Black Women in American Culture and History."

State Conservationist Dr. William Puckett welcomed the group, followed by Greg Dansby, Black Emphasis Program Manager. Others contributing to the program were Sylvia Long, Alice Love, Marty Bright-Rivera, Alden Harris, and Darnae Hopkins.

The event ended with a luncheon of soul food favorites that highlighted southern cooking at its best.

Guest speaker, Dr. Sophia Bracy Harris, Executive Director of the Federation of Child Care Center of Alabama, (FOCAL) spoke to the group about the contributions of black women in America.





Alabama Chapter of the SWCS wins the Outstanding Chapter Award

The Alabama Chapter of SWCS won the Outstanding Chapter Award for the third year in a row. Earl Norton was at the 67th Conference in Ft. Worth, TX, in July to receive the award that was given in recognition of accomplishments of the Alabama Chapter during 2011 to carry out the SWCS goals and objectives.

Norton gave a presentation at the Award Winning Chapters breakout session. He highlighted the Alabama Chapter's 30 Years of Activities 1982–2012. Items he mentioned included:

- the chapter's support of the Certified Professional Erosion and Sediment Control
- three student chapters (Auburn University, Alabama A&M University, and Tuskegee University)
- successful annual meetings
- the statewide erosion and sediment control program including handbooks and the Clear Water Alabama Seminars and Field Days
- brochures and information made available to those interested in soil and water conservation.

Alabama SWCD Delegation Attends Training

DACs Rhonda Bryars (Baldwin Co.), Chastity Pettis (Escambia Co.) and Etta Mask (Colbert Co.) attended Progressive Ag Day Training February 2012 in Wiggins, MS, on the 7-L Farm.

This training is required for all coordinators who plan to have a Progressive Ag Day in 2012. It was a great time of learning and sharing.



Rhonda Bryars (Baldwin), Chastity Pettis (Escambia) and Etta Mask (Colbert).



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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Next Issue

Submissions for Current Developments, potential success stories, and news releases are welcomed, and appreciated anytime.

Contact Communications, Marketing, and Outreach (CMO) staff with questions or submissions by e-mail:

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