

NOPBNRCSE



"The Alabama Link"

April 2011

NEWSLETTER

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

From the President's Desk:

Greetings Everyone:

I hope everyone has had a great year so far! It's hard to believe that it is springtime already. With winter behind us, it is time to start looking ahead to some sunny days and moving forward.

I apologize for the failed attempts to get the newsletter out early. It is truly my goal to keep you updated on the most recent activities and headlines of our organization. No excuses, but our plates have been full.

This year, I would like to see our organization focus on "Embracing Change in the Workplace." We are hoping to accomplish new things and gain new members in the process. We are also making plans to improve our overall communication skills as we embark upon new goals and challenges for our agency (NRCS).

We will start preparing for our NOPBNRCSE Annual Meeting in the near future. We are also actively planning activities that will bring us together so we can build a new innovative grassroots movement of "Change."

NOPBNRCSE is accepting donations for our scholarship fund. We give a big thank you to all who donated to the **Les Hilliard/Sebastian Thomas Scholarship** fund. Remember, this is where we all can play a huge part and make a difference! Providing financial resources to a student can be a tremendous help while they obtain an education. They will be forever humbled and grateful for your support. It's never too late to give!

If you would like to donate to the **Les Hilliard/Sebastian Thomas Scholarship** fund, please contact Lawrence McGhee, Treasurer, 334-887-4559 or Lawrence.McGhee@al.usda.gov or Shirley Hall-Cole, Chair of the Scholarship Committee.

I encourage former and potential members to join the Alabama Chapter. We need your creativity and ideas!

Embrace change.

Craig B. Johnson

"We are not makers of history. We are made by history."

~ Martin Luther King, Jr. ~

Embracing Change in the Workplace

Each passing day, new careers, opportunities, and fortunes are created by people who don't just survive change, they embrace it.

Are you "just surviving" the changes at work, or do you embrace them?

Do you see yourself in a new career with new opportunities, or do you see yourself as someone who "still has a job"?

Do you possess the necessary skill set to make successful, positive changes, or are you struggling to endure and adapt?

Can you fully comprehend why your workplace is making changes, and how you can advance your career by embracing them?

MEETINGS

NOPBNRCSE Annual Meeting Oxford, AL August 5-6, 2010

The Alabama Chapter of the National Organization for Black Professional Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees held its annual meeting in Oxford, AL, on August 5-6, 2010. The theme was "New Challenges, New Tools."

The meeting was spearheaded on Thursday with two very informative field tours. The first tour stop was Noah Valley Farm in Jacksonville, AL. Simone Bastia, the tour guide, provided details on their Shiitake Mushroom operations. The Farm is a small, diverse, Certified Naturally-Grown Farm on a small acreage. They market produce locally, through a member-owned cooperatives, as well as selling directly to restaurants and farmers markets.

The second tour was to White Oak Vineyard, owned and operated by Randy Wilson, retired NRCS District Conservationist (30 years plus). White Oak is a state-of-the-art winery that grows its own fruits and produces its own wines. Mr. Wilson gave us a tour of this 100 acre vineyard and newly constructed winery facility.

Friday's technical session was moderated by Eddie May, RC&D Coordinator in Oxford, AL. Bruce Williams of the Alabama Forestry Commission presented a PowerPoint presentation on "Selling Your Timber." Joe Norris, GIS Specialist from Auburn State Office, demonstrated cutting-edge GIS applications available for public use. Greg Dansby, RC&D Coordinator, and Andrew Williams, retired NRCS Outreach Coordinator, updated the group on outreach activities. Lawrence McGhee, MLRA Project Leader, represented the State Soil Scientist Charles Love and reported on the Soil Survey Activities in Alabama. Ben Malone, Assistant State Conservationist-Field Operation Central Team, presented an update on NRCS Programs and Farm Bill activities.

The session was highlighted with a dynamic presentation from the keynote speaker, Dr. Robert White, a lawyer, historian, and professor at Alabama State University. Dr. White pointed out barriers that hinder some underserved groups from participating in USDA programs.

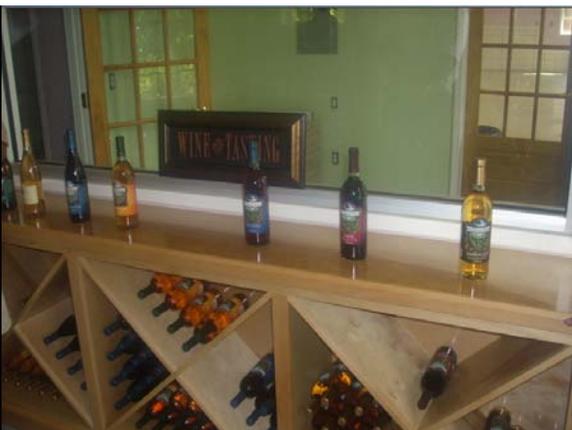
Special thanks to Craig Johnson, President of the Alabama Chapter; Eddie May, Andrew Williams, and Elijah Moore for their special efforts in organizing a great Annual Meeting.

PICTORIALS FROM ANNUAL MEETING

Shiitake Mushroom Operation



White Oak's Winery Facilities



Bruce Williams, AFC Forester



Keynote Speaker, Dr. Robert White



Submitted by:

**Lawrence McGhee
Craig Johnson**

THE LES HILLIARD/SEBASTIAN THOMAS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Les Hilliard/Sebastian Thomas Scholarship Program is designed to provide a one-time monetary payment to a student pursuing a degree in agriculture, nature resources, or related sciences.

This year's scholarship was awarded to Jamie T. Keith, a junior attending Tuskegee University majoring in Environmental Science. She is from Alpine, AL, and a 2008 graduate of Talladega High School. She has a cumulative grade point average of 4.0 and is captain of the Tuskegee University Softball Team.

Jamie worked as an NRCS summer intern in South Carolina (May-August 2009) and in Alabama (May-August 2010).

Congratulations Jamie T. Keith!



Donations for the Les Hilliard/Sebastian Thomas Scholarship are always welcomed and accepted. Anyone wishing to make a donation should contact:

***Shirley Hall-Cole, Chairperson
Lawrence McGhee, Treasurer
USDA-NRCS, Auburn, AL***

OUTREACH

Ala-Tom Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D)

Alabama: Ala-Tom RC&D Council partnered with Alabama NRCS through a Cooperative Agreement to support outreach activities throughout the state. This agreement provided Ala-Tom RC&D the opportunity to sub-contract with local community-based organizations and other RC&D Councils to expand outreach efforts targeting the underserved.

In collaboration with local community-based organizations, Ala-Tom RC&D has hosted over 50 workshops/outreach informational meetings targeting conservation initiatives offered through USDA-NRCS programs including the Organic Initiative and Seasonal High Tunnels.

Seasonal High Tunnel System - Outreach Success

In November 2009, USDA-NRCS established a pilot program to address agricultural producer concerns in relation to High Seasonal Tunnels or hoop houses, to be included in USDA programs. Alabama NRCS was one of 38 states in the nation to be selected to participate in this pilot program.

Ala-Tom RC&D worked diligently to bring about awareness and to educate underserved producers about these initiatives and the availability and criteria of USDA-NRCS programs. This is being achieved through workshops/outreach informational meetings and providing technical expertise through local NRCS staff.

To assure the success of the pilot program, Ala-Tom RC&D arranged follow ups with approved participants regarding timely conservation practice implementation as outlined in their Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) contract.

Based on approved FY2010 contracts, Ala-Tom RC&D has assisted with the installation of 12 Seasonal High Tunnels in the state. This also opened avenues for 5 unemployed individuals to learn new skills and provide needed services to USDA nontraditional customers.

Hoop House Pictorials – Thomasville, AL



Submitted by:

Alice Love and Gregory Dansby

MEMBERSHIP

The Alabama Chapter is extending an invitation for you to become a member of our State Chapter of the NOPBNRCSE.

Remember – Membership is open to all persons.

You must be a member of the National Organization to become a member of the State Chapter. National dues are \$45 and State dues are \$35.

Membership applications are available online under the Alabama Chapter's website, or you may contact:

***Herbert Ross
Chairman, Membership
Committee, NRCS Retired***

NEWSLETTER INFO

If anyone has an article(s) of interest and would like it in the next newsletter, please send it to Sarah.

NEWSLETTER TEAM

***Sarah Walker, USDA- NRCS,
Auburn, AL;
Deloris Jones, NRCS Retired; and
Winford Andrews, NRCS Retired***