



The Pearl Preview Area 2 Newsletter

WINTER/SPRING
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MESSAGE FROM AREA CONSERVATIONIST

Dear Area 2 Employees:

We are off to a great start with activities in the Area; and I’m sure this is only the beginning! Appreciation goes to the many employees, conservation partners, and Earth Team volunteers that bring all these efforts together.



From the articles, stories and pictures you will see in this issue, there’s no doubt that Area 2 has something special going on! We are busy providing excellent assistance to our customers getting conservation practices applied on the ground, and continuing to conserve and protect our natural resources.

Thank you for all that you do! Keep up the good work!

David Brunson
Area Conservationist

Area 2 Food Drive for 2015

Area 2 participated in the statewide Feds Feed Families Campaign with the following results (some offices may not have reported):

- Meridian and Quitman (all USDA employees): \$200 raised for the two families that faced hardships within their community. Each family was given a \$125 Walmart gift card.
- Canton (NRCS and RD)—4 pounds of food given to MadCAAP (Madison Countians Allied Against Poverty).
- Columbus and Starkville—33.25 pounds of food given to First Assembly of God Care Center in Columbus.
- Pearl Area Office raised 350 pounds of canned food and pasta meals from Kroger and given to Country Woods Baptist Church’s “Mission Byram” food pantry.

All recipients were very appreciative!!!

Right: Tammy Miller at Country Woods Baptist Church’s food pantry for “Mission Byram” received food from the Pearl Area Office.



Above: Kelvin Jackson (left) in the Lauderdale USDA Service Center with USDA employees in Meridian and Quitman offices.



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MACD ANNUAL MEETING, JANUARY 20-21, 2016 AREA 2 WINNERS *(Photos Courtesy of Deborah Logan)*



Stacy Broadhead of Simpson County received the Outstanding Livestock Environmental Stewardship Award.



Kurt Readus presented the Area Earth Team Coordinator Awards to Nancy Melancon and Julie Kent.



Paula Berry of Simpson County received the Overall Photo Contest Award.



Martha and David Barton of Hinds County received the MACD President's Award.



Partnership Award with Earth team Volunteers was presented to Debbie Smith, Nathan Tadlock, and Jim Overby of Smith County.



Wyvette Robinson presented Jeff Wilson an award in appreciation for his outstanding service and dedication to the Mississippi Association of District Employees.



Nancy Melancon presented Wyvette Robinson an award in appreciation of her two years of service as President of the District Employees Association.



Judi Craddock of Rankin County was a photo contest winner in the conservation practices category.



Rogerick Thompson accepted the Earth Team Award for David Brunson during the annual MACD meeting.

Choose Hardwoods

By Jason Keenan, NRCS Area 2 Wildlife Biologist

Sometimes we overlook perfectly good options when we address land management because it isn't mainstream. Throughout the central area of Mississippi, the loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*) reigns supreme. It is the most commonly planted tree due to a short stand rotation and quick growth. Within 25-30 years, a planted pine seedling can grow to be a harvestable lumber maker. Often landowners are searching for more wildlife friendly options while still maintaining a timber investment. Hardwood tree plantings should not be overlooked on the right sites and in some cases they are the better options. Most hardwood trees thrive more in wetter areas where pines will not. Although hardwoods are harvested on longer rotations than pines (typically 50+ years), the value of those trees typically are much higher (not accounting for fluctuating timber markets). There are many sites that are mixed pine and hardwoods that once cut, are replanted to only pines. Perhaps these stands should be planted back to hardwoods as well.



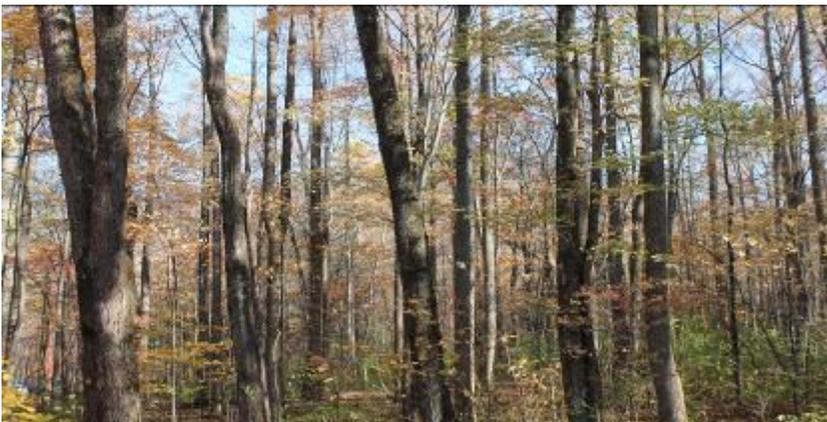
There are many wildlife friendly plant species that can survive within mature pine stands, but there is a period of time during a pine rotation where there is almost no habitat or food. That time is typically between years 6-15 after planting and is often referred to as a 'biological desert' since sunlight cannot reach the forest floor to promote the growth of more beneficial species. Hardwood stands do not have this issue and once they start producing mast they can provide food and shelter for a more variety of wildlife species than the pines. Mast is the fruit or nut portion of the tree. It can be classified as either soft mast such as persimmons (*Diospyros virginiana*) or hard mast such as oaks (*Quercus* spp.) and hickories (*Carya* spp.).

Besides the wildlife aspect of tree plantings, an assessment of the timber value should always be considered. Hardwood tree seedlings cost about twice as much as pine seedlings¹, but the per ton return on hardwood timber is up to 1.5-2 times the return of pine timber² for both pulpwood and sawtimber (depending on location within MS). So even if wildlife is not the priority, this is something to consider for investment purposes. Hardwood is more desired for custom wood products like furniture, cabinets, and craft projects. It is also more preferred for the cooking of wonderful food items like smoked meats and grilling! So next time landowners have the opportunity to replant a tract, perhaps they should establish hardwoods as a more diversified option within their land management goals. Sources: ¹SuperTree 2015-2016 product list, dependent on selected species.

²MS market bulletin, March 15, 2016.

Example list of bottomland hardwood species for Mississippi at right:

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Baldcypress | <i>Taxodium distichum</i> |
| Water Hickory (bitter pecan) | <i>Carya aquatica</i> |
| Green Ash | <i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i> |
| Overcup Oak | <i>Quercus lyrata</i> |
| Nuttall Oak | <i>Quercus nuttallii</i> |
| Cherrybark Oak | <i>Quercus falcate</i> var. <i>pagodifolia</i> |
| Swamp White Oak | <i>Quercus bicolor</i> |
| Southern Red Oak | <i>Quercus falcate</i> |
| Water Oak | <i>Quercus nigra</i> |
| Willow Oak | <i>Quercus phellos</i> |
| Shumard Oak | <i>Quercus shumardii</i> |
| Swamp Chestnut Oak (cow oak) | <i>Quercus michauxii</i> |
| Cottonwood | <i>Populus deltoids</i> |
| Sweetgum | <i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i> |
| Sycamore | <i>Plantanus occidentalis</i> |
| Hackberry | <i>Celtis laevigata</i> |
| Persimmon | <i>Diospyros virginiana</i> |
| Red Maple | <i>Acer rubrum</i> |
| Pecan | <i>Carya illinoensis</i> |
| American Elm | <i>Ulmus Americana</i> |
| Cedar Elm | <i>Ulmus crassifolia</i> |
| Water Tupelo | <i>Nyssa aquatica</i> |



**Holden Farms Agriculture Field Day
Sponsored by Mississippi Association
of Cooperatives Federation of Southern
Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund
Pearl, MS, September 30, 2015**

The Mississippi Association of Cooperatives held an Agriculture Field Day at Holden Farms near Pearl, MS, to discuss cattle and hay production, marketing, honey bee production, USDA programs and technical assistance available, plus a farm tour of Holden Farms.



Colonel Carl Holden (left), owner of Holden Farms that is presently in hay production, told the group, "The key to success is talking to somebody who knows from experience, and getting them to help you." He gave a lot of credit for his success to his friend, James Gregory, who has advised him over the years starting with soil sampling every year, writing down when you plant to compare it with the next year to see if you need to make changes, when to fertilize, etc. Also, whether it's hay, crops, or vegetable production, you need to know your chemicals. For a little marketing strategy, James Gregory stated, "Give a little away to get a lot (of customers). If the customers like what you have given them, they will come back for more!"

Charles Prater (right) presented information on honey bee production and taught the group about the cycles of the bees, what they need to survive, and an explanation about the purpose of each type of bee (queen, workers, drones).



Chris Spowles (left) with DeltAg discussed the importance of nutrients that can be added to improve crop health and yield—amino acids, enzymes and vitamins.

Casandra McCullough (below) with Farm Service Agency presented farm loans available such as Beginning Farmer.



Julie Bradford, Soil Conservation Technician with NRCS in Brandon (right); and Taharga Hart, Soil Conservationist in Yazoo City (below right), gave presentations on programs and technical assistance available from NRCS including developing a conservation plan, financial and technical assistance through EQIP and CSP, and conservation practices such as nutrient management and prescribed grazing.



Kanika Calvin, Risk Management Specialist with Risk Management Agency (left), presented information regarding crop insurance policies for livestock farmers, as well as other new programs.



A farm tour was held following the presentations as well as lunch for all participants.

Madison County Conservation Fair October 1, 2015

Photos by Judi Craddock

A cool and sunny October day at Brown's Landing on the beautiful reservoir was the perfect setting for Madison County's Conservation Fair with 225 third graders from Mannsdale, Luther Branson and New Summit schools. The students participated at several conservation stops including Wildlife—Jason Keenan, Pearl Area Office, NRCS; Litter and Recycling—Sarah Kountouris, Keep



Mississippi Beautiful; Archaeology—Cliff Jenkins, State Office NRCS; Water Quality—Lee Smith, MS&WCC; Agriculture Crops—Murray Fulton, Hinds County NRCS; Soils—Curtis Godfrey, Greenwood NRCS; Agriculture Crops—Jeff Turbville, Madison County FSA; Incredible Journey of the Water Cycle—Clay Burns, MS&WCC; Wildlife Safety—Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks officers; Littering and Recycling (Pollution)—DEQ; Water Quality—Phillip Archie, Madison County NRCS; and Soil Erosion (runoff)—Rogerick Thompson, Pearl Area Office.



**Smith County Youth Conservation
Field Day
Shongelo Lake
October 14, 2015**

Photos by Judi Craddock

On another bright and sunny October day, Smith County again conducted their annual Youth Conservation Field Day held at the serene Shongelo Lake and Recreation Area near Raleigh. Approximately 170 students and numerous teachers from several Smith County schools, and volunteers attended and participated at 12 conservation education stops throughout the park and lake area. Volunteers from U.S. Forest Service, Mississippi State University Extension Service, NRCS, Mississippi Forestry Commission, MS Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks; U. S. Military, and Smith County Earth Team assisted with the day's activities.





From left to right: NRCS Soil Conservation Technician Daniel Clanton; Terry Andress and Mary Ann Stroka; and NRCS Soil Conservationist Corey Ware at the “A Stroka Gene-Us Alpacas” Farm in Stringer, Mississippi, Jasper County. <http://www.astrokageneusalpacas.com/>

A Stroka Gene-Us Alpacas Farm— A New Beginning for New Yorkers in Jasper County

*Story by Judi Craddock
Photos by Jason Keenan*

Something very unique has come to Jasper County and to Mississippi—alpacas! Originating in upper state New York near Buffalo, Mary Ann Stroka and Terry Andress moved their alpaca farm to Mississippi just three years ago and began their new adventure in Jasper County and with USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Certainly you will take a second glance if you ride down their country road where you see a herd of 46 alpacas (more on the way), two rescued llamas, four beautiful Great White Pyrenees protector dogs (Thunder, Lightning, Snow and Ice), an assortment of chickens, ducks, guineas, goats, a pigeon that thinks he’s a chicken, one special Scottish Highland cow named Scotty, and, as Mary Ann sang, “a partridge in pear tree!” Yes, this is still Mississippi!

“Moving to Mississippi was more like a circus train,” stated Mary Ann Stroka. “We had to make two trips from New York using a special livestock trailer holding 40 alpacas.” The transition began when their son was sent to military training at Camp Shelby in Mississippi before being deployed to Afghanistan. While there, he met, fell in love and married a southern girl; then he decided to live in a nearby county. Soon afterwards, their daughter moved to Mississippi as well. So when Mary Ann and Terry decided it was time to move to be closer to their family, they luckily found an old farm for sale that was close to perfect for what they needed—plus it already had an extra room built on the back that would serve as their General Store where they could sell alpaca products.



Above: All the alpacas seem to have their very own personality—some love to be petted and some don’t!



Shortly after arriving in Mississippi, Mary Ann and Terry stopped by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office in Bay Springs and visited with Corey Ware, Soil Conservationist. Being very active in their community, several Rotary Club members who also had nearby farms had mentioned that they should visit NRCS about possible financial and technical assistance available for improvements on their land.

Left: Terry takes a moment to talk to one of his friends. Is Thunder a little jealous?

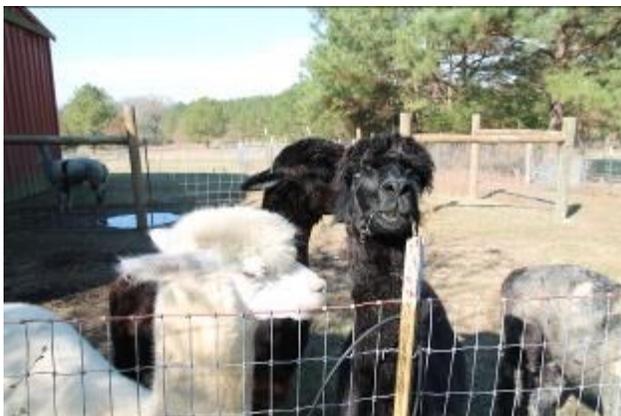


Above: Corey Ware, NRCS Soil Conservationist in Bay Springs Field Office, pets one of the many favorite alpacas on the farm. NRCS fencing is shown in the background.

Alpacas are gentle and friendly natured, and even allow children to hand feed them. Mary Ann compares the nature of alpacas to that of cats—“They won’t come when you call them by their names, and they will let you pet them when THEY want to be petted!” They are very independent in nature like a cat too.

Considered livestock ruminants, same as goats and sheep (not exotics), alpacas have only lower teeth at the front of their mouths (no incisors); therefore, they do not pull grass up by the roots but only bite off the grass. Due to this fact, they are a lot easier on the land than traditional livestock. They also don’t hurt the land with hooves. Rotational grazing is still important though, as alpacas have a tendency to graze an area repeatedly. Clean-up in the paddock is very easy since their waste droppings are deposited in usually one area where they don’t graze. Neat little critters!

Alpacas, first imported to the United States in 1984 from Peru, Chile, and Andes Mountains, are now being raised in many areas throughout the world. They produce a silky, lustrous natural fiber (Mary Ann and Terry call it fleece) that is three times warmer than wool, ten times lighter and softer like cashmere, with no itchy factor. The fleece comes in 22 natural colors (shades of white, silvery gray, charcoal gray, fawn, brown, and black) and can be dyed as well. The fleece is water resistant and hypoallergenic. At the A Stroka Gene-Us Alpaca Farm, only professional shearers are used annually to be sure no harm comes to the animals.



Indigenous to the highest regions of the Andes Mountains, they have evolved into extremely hardy, adaptable animals that can live up to 20 years. Only minimal sheltering and fencing are needed, and they can be pastured 5 to 10 per acre. Easy to raise, they require added vitamins from a daily dose of grain, but will get a few intestinal parasites (giardia) now and then. The alpacas’ three-chambered stomachs allow for extremely efficient digestion and their manure does not need composting—although gardeners in the area purchase the manure as slow-release fertilizer for their gardens. There’s very little odor to it and the pellets can easily be tossed around the plants.

Left: Alpacas are feeding in an area that will soon have a Heavy Use Area Protection (pads for heavy use), and a new watering facility scheduled for later in 2016.

At first, the herd was grazing on a small area in the back of 27 acres because only a small portion was fenced; and there were issues with water accessibility and heavily used feeding areas near the barn. Trees had fallen all over the old fences and heavily damaged them. Corey was able to sign them up for assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) which enabled Mary Ann and Terry to install several conservation practices including the following: Fencing, Livestock Pipeline, Heavy Use Area Protection (pads for high traffic areas) soon to be installed, and Watering Facility (three water troughs) scheduled for completion this year. According to Terry, since installing the fencing practice, they have now been able to open up more grazing areas for the herd which has cut down on the need for hay as well as provided rotational grazing benefits.



Above and below: The herd of alpacas inside a newly constructed fence and open pasture.





The General Store is where products made from alpaca fleece is showcased and sold to the public—yarn, rovings (a continuous sheet of the natural fiber that's produced by a carding machine, usually parallel to each other after being combed or carded, but not yet spun), clothing, and crafts. Their daughter, Dawn, raises goats next door and makes various organic herbs and spices, essential oils, natural cleaning and body products, and goat milk soaps. “It’s all about teaching beginners the use of alpaca fiber and how to make it a substantial business,” stated Mary Ann.

Top left, right and bottom left: Mary Ann is producing rovings from the fiber, lining up the fiber in one direction using an electric driven carder. She then uses the spinning wheel to spin the fiber into yarn. She also hosts spinning classes and is a distributor of Babe spinning wheels.



The family also hosts the Stringer Alpaca Festival on the farm twice a year—usually the last Saturday in March and the Saturday before Thanksgiving in November.

Terry and Mary Ann are very pleased with all the assistance they’ve received from NRCS and highly recommend Corey Ware and his staff in Bay Springs. “Corey answers all our questions or steers us in the right direction. Not all government agencies have been so helpful,” they both stated. “Most said they had no information or available assistance for alpacas.”

Future plans include opening other pastures with more fencing and possibly enlarging the General Store. NRCS wishes them the best in all their future endeavors!



Left: A mama llama on the farm mixes with the herd of alpacas.

Top right: Scotty, the Scottish Highland cow, is a special character on the farm. His fleece is also used to make products.

Bottom right: Guineas help keep the farm free from ticks and fleas!



Clifford Twilley—Leaving a Legacy for His Children— A Lauderdale County Success Story

Story and Photos by Kelvin Jackson and Judi Craddock

A native of Pine Hill, Alabama, (just south of Selma) Clifford Twilley has learned from USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) how to effectively manage/improve his forestland while creating a legacy for his children.

Mr. Twilley is a participant in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). “Being a steward of the land is a good thing, and even better with incentives such as CSP,” added Twilley. Farmers and ranchers are important managers of our shared air, water, and soil resources; and CSP recognizes and rewards this critical role. CSP is an innovative program for working farms, built on the belief that we must enhance natural resource and environmental protection as we simultaneously produce profitable food, fiber and energy.

From a young age he has always been involved in farming. Mr. Twilley’s initial farming operations included cotton, soybeans and cattle; but starting in 1976, Mr. Twilley began his timber business.



Kelvin Jackson, Supervisory District Conservationist in Meridian; and Clifford Twilley, a successful tree farmer, examine reforestation of long leaf pine on his property in Lauderdale County.

He started transitioning his cropland and pastureland to forestland. Being the entrepreneur type, he began buying more property a little at a time, and select cutting trees and replanting as he could afford it. He gradually increased his forestland ownership acreage in the state of Alabama; and as time went along, he was able to acquire property in Mississippi (Lauderdale, Newton, Scott, Clarke, and Kemper Counties).

With the help of NRCS Supervisory District Conservationist Kelvin Jackson, in Meridian, Mississippi, and staff, Mr. Twilley signed up for CSP to improve his forestland. He chose to pursue enhancement utilizing electronically controlled or managed chemical spray application technology to more precisely apply agricultural pesticides to their intended targets under the Air Quality Enhancement Activity (AIR07) in CSP. To achieve this enhancement, Mr. Twilley selected a 40-acre pine plantation to be aerially released by the use of a helicopter equipped with a GPS system. This plantation had many undesirable woody species that he wanted to remove.

Mr. Twilley has worked with the NRCS staff in previous years with reforestation activities through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). His most recent completed contract was in 2012 funded through the EQIP program to establish 20 acres to longleaf pine. The conservation practices on this contract included Firebreaks (394), Prescribed Burning (338), Tree Preparation (490) and Tree Planting (612).



Left:
*Longleaf
pine tree in
its early
stage.*

**Above and below
on right:** *Portions
of Mr. Twilley’s 20-
acre property being
established to
longleaf pine.*

**Neshoba County SWCD Annual Meeting
October 20, 2015**

Photos by Judi Craddock



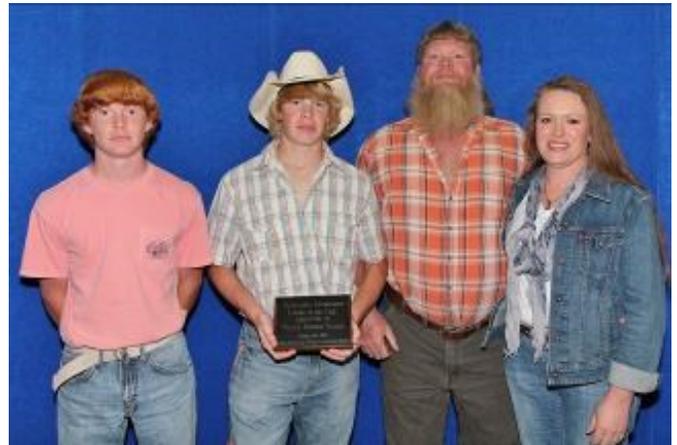
Above: Jerry Smith and Carl Mason presented Neshoba County SWCD Awards. Randall Allen, not pictured, received the Outstanding Wildlife Conservationist Award (Athens Alabama); and Rudy and Misty Lovern, not pictured, received the Outstanding Fishpond Management Award.

Below: Priscilla Williamson, Supervisory DC, helps to register attendees.



Above: Outstanding Poultry Producer Award and Outstanding Livestock Producer Award were presented to Devon Sharp (shown in light blue shirt in back), pictured with family.

Right: The Wayne Rogers Family received the Outstanding Conservation Farmer of the Year Award.



Right: Erica Fortenberry with her daughter, Evie, who was her helper at the Neshoba County SWCD Annual Meeting.



Left: Outstanding Woodland Conservationist Award was presented to Keith Bostick.



Right: Ronnie and Michele Jones of Sonic received the Friend of Conservation Award.



Goat (Small Ruminant) Boot Camp Leake and Neshoba County Soil and Water Conservation Districts

*Submitted by Erica Fortenberry
Pictures by Russell Singleton*



Above: Mrs. Dott McArthur, Chairwoman of Leake County SWCD; Erica Fortenberry, Neshoba County District Administrator; and Priscilla Williamson, Supervisory District Conservationist.

In recognizing the growing interest in goat production within the surrounding areas along with the Small Ruminant Farm Initiative through Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Neshoba and Leake County Soil and Water Conservation Districts along with NRCS hosted a Goat (Small Ruminant) Boot Camp that was held at the Neshoba County Coliseum on July 18. Specialists from Mississippi State University and Alcorn State University presented information on herd health, meat goat management, forage production/management, marketing/start-up of small farm operation, and USDA programs for fencing and water facilities. This Boot Camp served to educate small farmers and new farmers of some misconceptions of goat production and management.



Above: Participants get first-hand experience with hoof trimming.

Over 170 were in attendance and everyone enjoyed the lunch! We would like to thank the following sponsors: Gold—Neshoba County SWCD, Leake County SWCD, Leake Forestry Association, Neshoba County Gin, First Financial Bank, The Citizen's Bank, SunSouth LLC Carthage, MS. Silver—Wilbanks Oil Company. Bronze — Commercial Bank, Nance's Northside Short Stop, Kemper County SWCD, Lauderdale County SWCD, Trustmark Bank, and Wal-Mart. We would also like to thank the following exhibitors: Neshoba County Gin, StayTuff Fencing, Tractor Supply, White Hills Farm, Dewayne Smith Farm and Farm Service Agency.

Door prizes were contributed by the exhibitors and also by the following contributors: Covenant Creek Farms, Neshoba County Co-Op, Leake County Co-Op, Eastside Pawn & Gun, State Farm Insurance, First Financial Bank, Briar Patch, Dr. Jim Anderson and Leake County Farm Bureau.



Above: Two very hard workers—Erica Fortenberry and Leake County District Clerk Beverly Shelton.



Read Across America/Dr. Seuss 112th Birthday Celebration at Raymond Elementary School



Students at Raymond Elementary School were giggling with excitement as Wyvette Robinson of the Hinds County Soil and Water Conservation District read “*The Lorax*” to Miss Smith’s class as part of “Read Across America” Day on March 2, 2016. The appearance of Cat-in-the-Hat, The Grinch, Ernie Eagle (Hinds Community College mascot), Thing One and Thing Two, Chick-Fil-A-Cow, and volunteers that read to the other classes filled the day with fun. Among the volunteers were Hinds County SWCD’s Earth Team that made a special impression on all the children.

Above: Wyvette is pictured with Miss Smith’s very active and responsive class. This is their silly look!



Above: Ann Cox, Hinds County Earth Team Volunteer, read *The Lorax* to a class at Raymond Elementary.



Above: Margie Sasser gave an enthusiastic reading and answered questions in class.



Above: Wyvette Robinson and Hinds County Earth Team Volunteer member, Margie Sasser, during the Dr. Seuss “Read Across America” day at Raymond Elementary School.



Left: Mayor of Raymond Isla Tullos (pictured on far right) read the Proclamation to honor the day. RES staff and partners welcomed visitors.

Conservation and Natural Resources Camp—Camp Binachi Lauderdale County Soil and Water Conservation District March 17, 2016

Photos by Judi Craddock

Over 250 fourth grade students from Poplar Springs and Northeast Elementary schools learned the importance of being good stewards of the environment while participating at the Lauderdale County Soil and Water Conservation District's very first Conservation and Natural Resources Camp. The event, held at Camp Binachi (Boy Scouts of America), featured topics including Watershed, Forestry, Fisheries, Wildlife, Soils, Air Quality, Cultural Resources, Electrical Safety, and Hunter's Safety. Volunteers from the following agencies and/or organizations served as facilitators and presenters: NRCS; Mississippi Forestry Commission; Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission; U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks; The East Mississippi Foothills Land Trust; Natural Science Museum; Liberty Fuels; U. S. Navy; and Mississippi Power.

Principal Lisa Shelly summed up the day in these words, "I'd like to add deep appreciation to all of you for providing such a great learning experience for our students. I had numerous conversations with teachers and students upon their return to campus yesterday. Teachers commented on how awesome the entire day was. When students come up to me and initiate conversation about things they learned, we know something wonderful is happening!"

The day ended with a fish fry for volunteers and pizza for all students, as well as lots of fellowship.

Well done, Lauderdale County SWCD, NRCS, and all those who partnered to make this event the first of many great events to come!!



**Area Envirothon
Chautauqua Park, Crystal Springs, MS
March 23, 2016**

Winners this year at the Area Envirothon were Hillcrest Christian School, Copiah Academy, Hillcrest Christian School, Purvis High School, and Yazoo County High School (not pictured). They will be competing in the upcoming Statewide Envirothon on May 6.



Left: Copiah Academy winners; **Far right:** Hillcrest Christian School winners.



Left: Purvis High School winners; **Right:** East Rankin Academy winners.



From left: Phillip Mikell, Cory Ware, and Mike Lilly assist at the Soils testing station.



We're sure lucky folks to have such good cooks in our area! Malcolm Lowe and Mark Scott make sure nobody goes hungry!



Left: Jason Keenan, LaDonna Crotwell and her son Eric assisted with Wildlife testing.

Right: Randy Kimble and Debbie Smith assisted with Current Events testing.



Random Pictures and Info from Around the Area



Soil fungus studied by the MSU Soil Microbiology class. **Photo by Joxelle Velazquez.**

[Digital photo album: MSU - Soil Microbiology Class](#) taken on the last field day to the longleaf sites in Lauderdale County. Left to right: Anna Davin, Drew Dygert, Skyler Smith, John Feller, Dr. Billy Kingery, Kelvin Jackson, Matthew Hock and Joxelle Velazquez. **Click on the link for additional photos by Joxelle Velazquez.**



The bright sun was something to get used to at the Area Envirothon! A bright sunny day after a lot of rain! **Shown above:** Lee Wilson and Regina Parker assisting with Area Envirothon.



Right: Special friends at the Area Envirothon.



Above: Jeff Wilson gets the students organized for Area Envirothon.



Above: Mrs. Edith Wallace and Brook Stuart assist with lunch at the Area Envirothon.

Employee Spotlight—Hope Collins studied agriculture at Hinds Community College and Mississippi State University. At the present time she serves as soil conservation technician in the Forest Field Office. She especially enjoys teaching small children about gardening and raising their own food. She volunteers with Raymond Community Garden and she's a member of the Springhill Christian Center, Raymond, MS. She's also a proud mother of two children and resides in Hinds County.





IN MEMORY OF

Left: Mr. Dick Hoy was featured in a recent Tribal success story, "Choctaw Fresh Produce," as the Farm Manager for this new enterprise with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. Sadly, he passed away on December 21, 2015. He was a native of Madison County. He is greatly missed by all who knew him!

Right: Celia Miller instructed Allen Curry on how to be a "mighty oak tree" at MACD during an outstanding educational presentation during the general session.

Random Pictures from Around the Area—

Photos by Judi Craddock



Above: Rogerick Thompson caught eating a "healthy" breakfast of donuts before assisting with the Madison County Conservation Fair.

Right: Jason Keenan shows Smith County students how to seine a pond to determine the health and population of fish, amphibians and invertebrates in the pond—all part of pond management.



Right: The photographer might be getting a little too close for comfort at the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge.



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USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-9410

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"Helping People Help the Land"

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