



NRCS Alabama Current Developments

What's Inside:

Pages 2-3

- From the State Office
 - Musser and Manning Honored
 - AFC Presented Longleaf Poster
 - Deloris-Relay for Life
 - Landowner/NRCS TV Segments
 - Landowner Receives Award
 - Flat Stanley Visits Alabama
 - Soil Planning Conference

Pages 4-5

- From the CRAC
 - Black History Month
 - Earth Day Celebrated
 - Civil Rights Training
 - Women's History Month
 - Cultural Diversity Event at SO
- Earth Team Volunteer Program

Pages 6-7

- From the Field
 - Moulton 4-H Fun Day
 - Earth Day Celebrated
 - Cullman Co Teacher Workshop
 - 2014 Touring Farms for Kids
 - Arbor Week in Dallas Co
 - Land Judging in Lawrence Co
 - Lawrence Co Outreach Meeting

Pages 8-9

- From the Field (con't)
 - Athens DC Pleads Guilty
 - Livestock/Cattle Producer Mtg
 - Changing Faces of Ag Tour
 - Madison Co Loves Volunteers
 - Madison Co Port Boat Tour

Pages 10-11

- From the Field
 - Outreach Meeting in Blount Co
 - New Watershed Partnership
 - Mobile Co Landjudging Field Day
 - Mobile Co 6th Water Festival
 - Mobile Co Forestry Field Day
 - Dubose Outreach Field Day

Pages 12-13

- From the Field (con't)
 - Mobile Co Women in Ag Day
 - Solar Well in Pickens Co
- AL SWCS Holds Annual Mtg
- RC&D News

Pages 14-15

- Outreach News

Page 16

- NRCS Farmer Honored
- Personnel Actions
- For Retirees

From the Acting State Conservationist - Ben Malone



As many of you know, Dr. William Puckett has taken a detail to serve as the NRCS Acting Director of Hawaii and the Pacific Islands for 120 days. We expect him to return to Alabama in October. In the meantime, I was selected as the Acting State Conservationist for Alabama during his absence.

This detail has been an exciting experience and has given me a different perspective on our agency's operations and administration. I would like to thank my co-workers and conservation partners for their support in making this a seamless transition.

In June, I had a chance to meet Chief Jason Weller who was the keynote speaker at the National RC&D Conference awards luncheon in Mobile. He talked about a new era in conservation with a focus on public-private partnerships through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). RCPP will competitively award funds to conservation projects designed by local partners. Eligible partners include agricultural organizations, conservation organizations, private companies, universities, non-profit organizations, local and tribal governments and others. These partners can leverage their technical and financial resources with federal funding to target specific resource concerns with an added benefit for our producers. The RCPP priorities in Alabama include water quantity, soil health, energy, longleaf pine, and wildlife habitat.

Alabama was highlighted during two of RFD TV's "Out on the Land" segments with former Texas NRCS State Conservationist Dr. Larry Butler. Featured in the two separate episodes were the conservation endeavors of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians(PCBI) and Dr. Salem Saloom's longleaf pine restoration efforts which aired during the 5th anniversary celebration of "America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative."

I am proud to announce Joe and Patty Lambrecht as the 2015 Alabama Small Farmers of the Year. The Lambrecht's operate Oakview Farms LLC in Elmore County. Oakview Farms is a very diverse small farming operation that has acres of fruits and vegetables, hydroponic vegetables, honey bees for pollinators, and also chickens for fresh eggs. Always applying sustainable, environmentally friendly growing methods, their u-pick operation and crops are in high demand.

Congratulations to Shawn Manning and Steve Musser who were awarded Honorary State FFA Degrees from the Alabama FFA for their contributions to the organization. It is good to see our employees honored for what they are passionate about -- conservation.

We look forward to moving into our next fiscal year although we know there will be some challenges. Through those challenges we will continue to remain steadfast and work with our partners to Help Alabamians Help the Land.

News from the State Office

Musser and Manning Honored

Shawn Manning and Steve Musser were awarded Honorary State Future Farmer of America (FFA) Degrees from the Alabama FFA for their contributions to the organization. Shawn, NRCS District Conservationist (DC) in Guntersville, was recognized for coordinating the land career development event for several years for the north district. Steve, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs at the State Office, was honored for leading the effort when he worked in Coffee County to convince ag teachers to have all the county contests in one day. A tradition that continues today.



Jacob Davis, Education Specialist with the Alabama Department of Education (sponsor of the FFA), presents Steve Musser (l) and Shawn Manning (r) Honorary State FFA Degrees.

Longleaf Poster Presented to AFC

Dr. Bill Puckett presented a framed print of longleaf pine trees to Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) State Forester Greg Pate. Alabama has led the region in acres established to longleaf pine. The AFC has been, and continues to be, a partner in this effort to help private landowners establish and manage longleaf pine.



Well-managed longleaf forests can provide high-value forest products, excellent wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty, all on the same property with little or no trade-offs. These unique southern forests will benefit Alabamians for generations to come.

In recent years, the Longleaf Initiative has established more than 75,000 acres to longleaf pine on private lands. Good partnerships, like the one between NRCS and the AFC, are worth celebrating.

Relay For Life American Cancer Society

Retiree Deloris Jones says thanks to Dr. Puckett for allowing her to hold her annual American Cancer Society's (ACS) "Relay For Life" luncheon at the state office.

The attendance was light, but the fellowship and luncheon was again a big success. Deloris appreciates the donations and gives a special thanks to those who gave above and beyond to help raise \$1,211 for her cause.

Proceeds from the luncheon were donated to the ACS "Relay for Life" overnight marathon walk that is held each year in April in Opelika.



Two Alabama NRCS Partners Highlighted in National Television Segments

NRCS and the Poarch Band of Creek Indians (PBCI) were featured on an RFD TV "Out on the Land" segment with Dr.

Larry Butler. Showcased was a wooden hoop house pilot project designed and built by officials from Tuskegee University and the Wiregrass RC&D Council on the PBCI reservation using NRCS EQIP funds.



"Out on the Land" host Dr. Larry Butler (l), talks to PBCI Perdido River Farms Manager John English about their NRCS EQIP projects.

View it online at: <http://outontheland.com/season-4-episode-41-poarch-band-of-creek-nation-conservation-activities/>

Landowner Dr. Salem Saloom's longleaf pine restoration efforts and NRCS were also featured on an "Out on the Land" that aired during the 5th anniversary celebration of "America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative."

The episode will air again in 13 weeks on these two stations: RFD-TV on October 21, 7 p.m. Eastern Time and FamilyNet on October 22, 9 a.m. Eastern Time. You can view it online at:

<http://outontheland.com/season-4-episode-43-award-winning-landowner-with-long-leaf-pine-ecosystem-restoration/>.

Alabama NRCS Landowner Receives Leadership Award

A productive NRCS participant, Dr. Salem Saloom, received the Longleaf Partnership Council's Private Landowner Leadership Award for his continued work on longleaf pine restoration at the Longleaf Partnership Council's 5th anniversary awards reception at USDA in Washington, DC. The celebration, highlighting the positive restoration progress of longleaf made in the past five years, was moderated by Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. A reception and awards ceremony was co-hosted by NRCS Chief Weller.

At the meeting Dr. Saloom served as a panelist for a discussion of "Progress and Promise: America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative."

Flat Stanley Visits Alabama NRCS

Flat Stanley visited the NRCS State

(l-r) NRCS Chief Jason Weller presents Dr. Salem Saloom the Longleaf Partnership Council's Private Landowner Leadership Award.



Dr. Salem Saloom (l) shows Indigo snake to "Out on the Land" host, Dr. Larry Butler.

Office. Diane Guthrie, State Conservation Engineer, invited Flat Stanley so her neighbor's grandson could learn about conservation. Flat Stanley found that NRCS helps farmers protect land and water so we will have "Food for the Future."

The Flat Stanley Project was started by a teacher to encourage student letter-writing as they document Flat Stanley's visits. Diane sent Flat Stanley back with some conservation goodies for the student's classroom and teacher.



Flat Stanley with his goodies.

Alabama Cooperative Soil Survey Work Planning Conference

Held in July at the NRCS State Office, the purpose of the conference, moderated by State Soil Scientist Lawrence McGhee, was to bring cooperators and other soil survey partners up-to-date on Alabama Technical Soil Services. NRCS Acting State Conservationist Ben Malone welcomed about 30 partners and cooperators across the state. Dr. Thomas Reinsch, Acting Director of the Soil Science Division in Washington, DC, and two Soil Survey Regional Directors--Charles Love, MO 7, Auburn, AL and Dave Kingsbury, MO-6 Morgantown, WV--also attended.

Topics discussed included ecological site descriptions, soil modeling units, technology for the future, and reports from resource soil scientists and MLRA project leaders. Challenges include maintaining existing partnership in light of dwindling resources and developing new partnerships to address emerging issues.

McGhee concluded the meeting by soliciting plan input to maintain Soil Survey and Technical Soil Services in Alabama for the future.



Lawrence McGhee moderated the Soil Conference.

From The Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC)

Black History Month

By Eddie E. Davis Jr, NRCS Soil Scientist, Black Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM), Normal, AL

In February, we paused to recognize Black History Month. In celebration of the accomplishments rendered by African-Americans, leaders such as George Washington Carver, Dr. Charles Drew, and Madam C. J. Walker were highlighted to represent achievements in agriculture, medicine, and in business.

The Alabama Chapter of the National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees (NOPBNRCSE) and I hosted the annual program at the NRCS State Office. The speaker was Bobby Hayden of Huntsville, AL, a respected U.S. military soldier who was one of the first seven black soldiers to integrate the White House Honor Guard under President John F. Kennedy's administration.

Mr. Hayden had a vast pictorial display illustrating his history while standing the first duty guard at the President's funeral service, at the grave site, and other events such as serving with the National Guard at the University of Alabama where Vivian Malone Jones, a former classmate of his, integrated the university.

The meeting concluded with a luncheon of southern delicacies sponsored by retired NRCS Soil Scientist Johnny Trayvick, NOPBNRCSE members and others.



Mr. Hayden's presentation was well received by the State Office group. He was also one of the speakers during the North Team's Cultural Diversity Day in June.



Pictured with other participants: John Curtis, Blake Garner, Renea Dyer, Merry Gaines and Wendy Smith from Alabama.

Civil Rights Training

By Wendy Smith, Chair, CRAC, Selma, AL

In April, five members of the CRAC attended a civil rights training course in Atlanta along with 24 other NRCS employees throughout the Southeast. The course was entitled "Civil Rights Compliance in Program Delivery."

This course contained six modules that emphasized responsibilities for program compliance, Title VI laws and regulations, discrimination and the importance of diversity, how to have an effective outreach program, and how to conduct compliance reviews.

Women's History Month

By Renea Dyer, Federal Women's Program Manager, Florence, AL

In March, Women's History Month events were held in two locations to give more employees an opportunity to attend. The first was held in Hartselle and the second in Clanton. About 30 participants enjoyed presentations on the 2014 inductees into the Women's History Hall of Fame, Women of Character Courage and Commitment highlighting women employees within NRCS, and some interesting facts about women in the workforce.

Open discussions were held about issues women employees face within NRCS.



Renea Dyer (l) presented a program on the accomplishments of women. (l-r) Teresa Paglione, Zona Beaty, Michele Wood, and Merry Gaines.

Cultural Diversity Event at State Office

A two-day event was held at the Alabama NRCS State Office. Planners for the meeting included the state office CRAC members Charles Love, Zona Beaty, Rita Johnson, and Allison Smith.

On May 21, Zona moderated the meeting that was opened with a welcome by State Conservationist Dr. William Puckett followed by remarks from the Chair of the Alabama CRAC Wendy Smith (Soil Conservation Tech from Selma, AL).

The guest speaker for the first day was Glenn Conklin, Acting Human Resources Strategy Team Leader/Human Resources Strategy and Accountability Division in Washington, DC. He spoke about

the USDA Cultural Transformation Initiative and “What is Cultural Transformation?”

A buffet featuring culturally diverse dishes like soul food, Mexican, Italian, Asian, Native American, etc., were served by the staff. After lunch, Assistant State Conservation Engineer Major Bill Smith, who had recently returned home after a military deployment in Afghanistan, spoke about cultural differences he encountered while there.

On May 22, Poarch Band of Creek Indian Preservation Officer Robert Thrower spoke to the group about Indian culture and background. He displayed artifacts including animal pelts, pottery, baskets, stone implements, and a turkey feather shawl.



Glenn Conklin from NRCS Human Resources Division, Washington, DC.



Staff members look at the Indian artifacts and crafts brought by Thrower.



Robert Thrower from the Poarch Band of Creek Indians in Atmore, AL.

Earth Team Volunteer (ETV) Program

By Alice Love, 2015 NRCS State Office Coordinator

In FY 2013, Alabama NRCS reported 55 percent of offices benefited from 18,543 service hours from ETVs. These hours were captured through employee's outstanding abilities to recruit, retain, and promote the program.

With the realization that many volunteer hours go uncaptured, below are a few tips to consider:

- Ensure all volunteers complete an Optional Form (OF) 301A, “Volunteer Services Agreement for Natural Resources Agencies.”
 - Capture volunteer hours you already have!
- Examples are friends, family members, conservation partners, students, board members, producers, and elected officials. They engage in many forms of service within our agency mission outside their regular work/elected duties. A range of activities include conservation tours, field days, conservation layout/implementation, planning an NRCS event, staff agency exhibit, etc.

- Develop a Field Office Needs Assessment. This team effort is designed to ensure all areas of responsibility are covered within the needs assessment. The assessment is a win-win outreach approach in placing volunteers based on office needs and volunteer skills. Alabama NRCS – Earth Team Coordinators for FY 2015 are:

- Rodney Goode** – State Earth Team Coordinator:
Bessemer, AL, 205-424-9990 ext. 106
- Alice Love** - State Office Earth Team Coordinator:
Auburn, AL, 334-887-4550
- Suzanne Baucom** – North Team Earth Team Coordinator: Huntsville, AL, 256-523-1696
- Norris Hudnall** – Central Team Earth Team Coordinator: Bessemer, AL, 205-424-9990
- Tammy Davis** – East Team Earth Team Coordinator:
Troy, AL, 334-566-2302 ext. 119
- Deborah Sloat** – West Team Earth Team Coordinator:
Grove, AL, 251-275-3185
- For more information, contact your Earth Team Program Coordinator.

From The Field

Moulton Field Office 4-H Fun Day

In June, the staffs of the Moulton NRCS Field Office Kathy Gotcher and Amy Moncus, and the Tuscumbia SWCD/NRCS Field Office, Matt Copeland and Etta Mask, assisted Colbert County 4-H with their Summer Fun Day at the RoundHouse in Tuscumbia. The events were Soil Profile, Watersheds, and Healthy Fun Snacks. Each year several days of summer fun is planned for local children.



Kathy Gotcher, Amy Moncus, Etta Mask and Jewel Campbell prepare healthy snacks.

Earth Day Celebrated

Brenda Hand and Etta Mask staffed a table for Lauderdale and Colbert Counties' SWCD at the Earth Day celebrations in April 2014. "We try and teach best management practices for protecting our soil," Hand said. "If you ate food today, thank a farmer."

The day included earth-friendly displays, food, children's activities, recycling, arts and crafts, speakers, music, and magic shows.



Brenda Hand and Etta Mask staffed a table for Earth Day.

Cullman County Teacher Workshop

The Cullman SWCD held its 18th annual environmental education teacher workshop in June. The 3-day free workshop was attended by 24 teachers/coordinators. Activities included raised bed gardening, making terrariums, a visit to the Alabama Mountain Rivers and Valleys RC&D Waterworks



Teachers learn about raised bed gardening.

Center for Environmental Education for a tour of the facility and canoeing down Flint Creek, a program on soils for outdoor classrooms and worm composting, designing soil buddies, making dirt cakes, and painting t-shirts.

2014 Touring Farms For Kids

Cullman County SWCD's hosted this annual event along with the Cullman Agriplex Committee. In two days in June, about 35 kids and 15 adults participated.

The first day they visited a working saw mill, learned how to do leaf pounding, visited Nature's Best Egg Company, and traveled to Fairview Park where they ate pizza and saw a disc golf presentation. The day ended with a visit to Goldvine Bee Farm where they learned about honey making and how to grow wheat and process it to make goodies.

On day two, they visited the Golden Rod Hatchery and went to the Festhalle Market where \$5



Students dig potatoes.

vouchers were given out to buy fresh produce. They visited a bakery and sampled fresh cinnamon rolls made from organic products and ate lunch at Rumors Deli. After lunch, they saw how potatoes were dug at Kress Farm and received a 10 pound bag of fresh-dug potatoes to take home. The next stop was at a tour of the North Alabama Horticulture Station where they ate fresh watermelon. The day ended with a visit to Keith Williams farm where they learned about solar energy.

Arbor Week in Dallas County

In preparation for the state's annual celebration of Arbor Week, the AFC offered a variety of free seedlings in the Valley Grande and Orrville communities in February. Attendees received up to two of each variety of oak and ornamental trees.

The seedlings provided in the giveaways were grown and purchased from Wallace State Community College's Hopper Nursery in Hanceville.

AFC partnered with NRCS to help give out the seedlings at both locations. The giveaway is an important chance for these organizations to share information about the work they do and provide guidance on how to take care of trees.



"This tree will be very special to him," said Wendy Smith as she selects her grandson Palmer Duncan a Shumard oak "They will grow up together and the next generation can begin to make our future a little greener."

Land Judging Workshop in Lawrence Co.

Last fall at a land judging contest, Ag teachers talked to Cullman County NRCS Soil Con Blake Garner about getting more direction on teaching concepts needed for the contest. They also wanted students to get more exposure and practice for the event. After a discussion, it was decided that training would involve a multi-county mock contest where students and teachers go through a normal land judging contest routine. Afterwards, NRCS employees

would discuss the correct answers and how they were derived. Different scenarios were added to see how thought processes would change if different boundaries were given.

The workshop was held in June 2014 in the Speake Community. Students from seven counties (Cullman, Lawrence, Marion, Morgan, Winston, Etowah, and Walker) and 18 schools were represented which included about 75 students and 19 teachers.

The workshop was setup just like a contest. The students and teachers judged each site, and then a leader at each pit went over the answers and explained how they were determined.

At the end of the day, the NRCS State Resource Inventory Coordinator Pam Mason from Auburn, AL discussed the day's events and solicited feedback and recommendations for changes to the official FFA Land Judging Handbook.

Every post evaluation form that was received indicated interest in making this workshop a regular event. We will work to make it happen again next year.

NRCS DC Wade Hill (r) discusses agronomic practices, and plant identification at the pasture site.



Lawrence County Hosts Outreach Meeting

In June, Lawrence County SWCD hosted an Outreach Meeting for producers in the Speake Community to inform them about USDA-NRCS and Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) programs. Representatives from the Lawrence County Farm Service Agency (FSA), NRCS, and Alabama NRCS State Resource Inventory Coordinator Pam Mason from Auburn, AL, attended with nine producers.



Athens DC Pleads GUILTY!

NRCS DC Joyce Lane knows all too well about busy schedules that keep us running in different directions. But she was able to pull away from her schedule and participate in a local Community Service Project Fund Raiser for the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA).

In April, a warrant was issued for Joyce and she was placed under arrest. She plead GUILTY as charged and was held until she could raise the required bail to benefit the MDA. Joyce said, "MDA affects the lives of many of our local children. I plead guilty as charged for having a big caring heart for children, guilty for being willing to step out of my comfort zone, and guilty for wanting to make life better for a child in need." Through the large support of NRCS, SWCD, and FSA staff, along with family and many good friends, bail was raised for her release during the allotted one hour jail stay. She says "many thanks" to those who helped make this mission successful.



DC Joyce Lane is handcuffed by a Deputy Sheriff, placed under arrest, and taken to the jail until the MDA bail was reached.

New and Beginning Livestock/Cattle Producers Meeting

Spring is a busy time for row crop producers in Limestone County, but raising cattle/livestock keeps you busy year round. Numerous chores need constant attention such as maintaining good fences to keep the animals confined, feedings, rotational grazing, spraying to keep the weeds to a minimum, fertilizing the pastures, etc.

In March, Regional Extension Agent for Animal Science and Forages Gerry Thompson was conducting a five-week workshop about Cattle/Livestock/Forages. He thought the group could benefit from receiving information about NRCS programs.

The Limestone County DC Joyce Lane talked to about 25 attendees about financial benefits offered through NRCS programs. The attendees received information about the importance of getting a Farm and Tract number before applying for financial assistance. The NRCS staff wants to inform as many people about NRCS programs as possible to spread the word to others who may not be able to attend the workshop.



"Changing Faces of Agriculture" Tour and Teacher Workshop

The sixth-annual Madison County "Changing Faces in Agriculture" Tour and Teacher Workshop were held on two days in June.

A group of about 50 area business people, educators, and elected officials loaded two buses on the 17th for a tour of Madison County farms and historical sites showcasing the importance of agriculture. Participants saw firsthand how farming and farm equipment have evolved over the years. The group toured Butler & Sons Farm, Poplar Ridge School, F & W Farm, J. Sparks Hydroponic Farms, Mann Farm, and Historic Downtown New Hope.

The teacher workshop followed on the 18th at the Huntsville Utilities Water & Gas Department. Sixteen educators attended the one-day workshop featuring several ag related hands-on activities that could be presented to students. Speakers included



2014 Ag tour group stops for a photo at the Butler & Sons Farm.

Dr. Doug Phillips, Discovering Alabama; Jeannie Reeves Director, Ag Research Cotton Inc.; Rick Terry, Decatur Transit; John Hasenbein, Bunge Corp; Rex Vaughn; Jason Thomas; Stewart McGill; Think Like a Farmer; and Jay Grantland, WaterWorks Discovery.

This year's events were sponsored by the Madison County SWCD/NRCS and Farmers Federation, ServiceFirst Bank, Discovering Alabama, Cotton, Inc., Woodall Grain, SWDA/Covanta, Madison County Schools, Huntsville Utilities Water and Gas Department, A&M Agribition Center, and Alabama Mountains Rivers and Valleys (AMRV) RC&D.

Madison County Loves Volunteers



(l-r) Kathy Walker, DAC, Madison Co; Laurie Gibson, DAC, Jackson Co.; Suzanne Baucom, North Area Administrative Coordinator, Huntsville; and Ray and Inez Whiddon.

Not many folks have such great Earth Team Volunteers as we have in Huntsville with Ray and Inez Whiddon! In late winter, when it was 27 degrees with a wind chill of 12 degrees, the Whiddons showed up to help with the Martin Luther King Elementary School "Read Across America Program." What troopers! We had 180 students in grades K-2. For this kick off to an art contest within their school, we read "Flap Your Wings" in honor of Dr. Seuss' birthday. The book is about an alligator egg that got put into the wrong nest, but the birds felt a responsibility to take care of it until it hatched. Even when the birds discovered that it was the "strangest bird that they had ever seen (actually an alligator)", they still cared for it until they found its right home.

The students were challenged to draw anything that was talked about in the book. Prizes were awarded to one student in K-2 and their teacher!

Mr. Whiddon will be 82 this year and Mrs. Whiddon will be 80. They are already scheduled to come back to judge the art contest. Kathy Walker says, I wish I had more ETVs like these wonderful folks!



The Whiddons are holding a measuring tape to show just how long an alligator can get...19.2 feet...and it can weigh as much as 2,200 pounds! Kathy Walker (c) opened the egg which held an alligator puppet that hatched at just the right time!

Madison Co Tours Port by Boat

Madison County SWCD organized a boat trip in July to tour the local port of Decatur where much farm products are shipped down the river to the port of Mobile. Area One SWCD DACs, 17 teachers, sponsors, and an Earth Team Volunteer were on board. The water and weather were perfect. Decatur Transit's VP of Marketing Rick Terry and Boat Captain Larry Pack were hosts for the day.

Everyone learned about conservation, culture, commerce, and history of the port. This event was held as part of the RiverWorks Discovery Program that Madison County DAC Kathy Walker and several other DACs are presenting in workshops in their respective counties. RiverWorks Discovery is a coordinated effort which brings together the for-profit industry, community leaders, museums, nature centers, educators, and the general public to recognize the role rivers play in our nation's future.



Kathy said, "A day like this makes it easy to work at a job that I love!"

Outreach Meeting Held in Blount County

The Blount County SWCD/NRCS hosted an outreach meeting at the USDA Service Center in Oneonta. They discussed conservation programs in the new Farm Bill that are available to help area producers reduce soil erosion, protect water quality, and enhance other conservation needs.

The meeting attendees also visited the Ag in Action Trailer. This 26-foot learning lab on wheels is taken to schools and events to enable Alabama's elementary and middle school students to experience farming through simulators, hands-on computer games, and other audio visual technology. Using the lab, the students learn where their food and fiber grows and how it is produced. The lab is available for use in the 7-county area where cooperating agencies made the simulator come to life.



(l-r) Jimmy Tucker, NRCS Conservation Technician; Mark Butler SWCD watershed coordinator; Polly Morris, DAC, and Merry Gaines, NRCS DC.

A New Watershed Partnership and Project

By Sam Sandlin, Watershed Coordinator, Madison County SWCD, Huntsville, AL

The Limestone County SWCD started a new watershed partnership with stakeholders interested in improving water quality in two local streams — French Mill and Piney Creek. Conservation Planning is being provided to implement approved conservation practices in the watershed to treat grazing land, animal waste, or erosion issues.

The SWCD board and staff, NRCS DC Joyce Lane, representatives from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), the Limestone County Commission, the Limestone County Cattleman's Association, Alabama Water Watch (AWW), and Alabama A&M University in Huntsville have taken an active role in implementing the watershed program.

Alabama A&M University students are tracking progress for the life of the project with monthly E.Coli sampling on French Mill Creek through the AWW volunteer water monitoring program. The Data sent to the AWW database will hopefully show that the

installed conservation practices in the watershed are working.



Dr. Wubishet Tedesse, Cedric Williams, Dr. Dawn Lemke from AAMU, and Sam Sandlin with Limestone County SWCD discuss stream sampling and the French Mill watershed project.

Mobile County Land Judging Field Day

In February, a land judging field day was coordinated by the Mobile County SWCD/NRCS. Mobile FSA Office also participated to help students learn about soils in addition to protecting and conserving the land, water, and environment. About 40 students from Bryant Career Technical Center, as well as Foley and Gulf Shores High Schools from Baldwin County, tested the soils by feeling and rubbing soil between their fingers. They judged depth, erosion, slope, and permeability. Each school had teams that went out to the field and judged forestland, pastureland, cropland, and home site. Land improvements and Best Management Practices were recommended based on the conditions and slope on each site. Special thanks to Driskell Farms for providing our site. Thanks to NRCS Soil Conservation Tech Brian Coaker from the Jackson FO for judging the holes and providing tutorials to students.



Mobile County 6th Annual Water Festival

The 6th Annual Mobile County Water Festival was held in March at the Bishop State Community College. About 750 fourth grade students from area schools were in attendance. Hands-on activities included Water Filtration, Model Watershed, and an Edible Aquifer. The day's activities concluded with a group presentation by the famous Fishin' Magicians.

Baker High School and Bryant Career Technical Center provided valuable leadership with learning station activities.

This event was made possible by Gulf Coast RC&D, Mobile County SWCD, and ADEM. Other partners included the Mobile County Public School System, Mobile County Commission, City of Mobile, USDA's FSA and NRCS, ACES, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Coastal Alabama Clean Water Partnership, Alabama Coastal Foundation, Alabama Power - Barry Steam Plant, GulfQuest, and the AFC.



Kelsey, Nebraska college student volunteer, teaches the Model Watershed activity.

Mobile County Forestry Field Day

Over 70 folks turned out for a Forestry Field Day in Mobile County. Mike Delaney and his family were the gracious host of the day's event.

Sponsors included Mobile County SWCD, USDA's FSA and NRCS, Mobile County Farmers Federation; AFC; Alabama Ag Credit; ACES, Delaney Properties; and Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR).

Brief updates and/or welcomes were given by Mike Delaney, Delaney Property; Larson McGowin—overview on the history of the land; Andy Grant with Alabama Ag Credit; Bob Pittman, Mobile County Farmers Federation Forestry Chairman; and Darrell Driskell, Chairman of the Mobile County SWCD.

Presenters included Mark Hains from the LongLeaf Alliance - Natural Regeneration of Longleaf;

Jeff Thurmond, Wildlife Biologist from NRCS - Wildlife Plantings; Jim Jetter of the AFC - Hardwoods; P.J. Waters from ACES - Ponds; Roger Clay, ADCNR - Threatened and Endangered Species; Jason Walley, Perry Malone Forestry Inc.; and D.J. Landrum, Landrum Landco.



Jeff Thurmond, Wildlife Biologist, discusses the use of various forages available for wildlife

Dubose Field Day Outreach/Demo

An outreach field day for micro-irrigation plasticulture event was hosted at the farm of Alphonse Dubose in Mobile County. Mr. Dubose invited several of his neighbors and fellow farmers to the micro-irrigation field demonstration for fruit and vegetable production. The equipment is available for use through the ACES office by landowners and producers in Mobile and surrounding counties. Sponsors for the demonstration include Mobile County SWCD, USDA's FSA and NRCS, and ACES.

Mr. Alphonse Dubose (r) demonstrates the use of the specialized equipment.



Mobile County Women in Agriculture Day

USDA's FSA and NRCS and the Mobile County SWCD hosted its second Annual Women in Agriculture Day in March at the Jon Archer Ag Center. A luncheon was held in honor of Mobile County women. About 35 people heard guest speakers Andy Grant with Ag Credit, Debbie Freeland with the Farmers' Federation, and Ellen Huckabay, Penny Smith and Amelia McGrew with ACES discussed subjects important to women.

This day was about recognizing and celebrating the important contribution of the women in agriculture in our everyday lives. All too often a woman's role in agriculture is overlooked, but we know that these contributions are essential and should not go unnoticed. No matter what her level of involvement, it is important that our gratitude be shown to these women.

We had a very diverse group of women present who were involved in livestock production, row crop production, timber, turf, dairy, fruit and vegetable production, gardening, agricultural insurance and agriculture education.



(l-r) April Griffin, Mobile SWCD; Amanda Ryan and Jenni Colquitt, FSA; Joyce Nicholas, NRCS; and Lashannda James, FSA.

Solar Well Installed In Pickens County

Thanks to good work by Erika, Mac, Terry, and Pam a solar well with a large tank was installed at Cow Creek Ranch in Pickens County. Not only does it look good, the landowner will have drinking water for cattle in pastures that never had it before.



SWCS Annual Meeting

The Alabama Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) held their annual meeting in Huntsville in June. The meeting entitled "Our Changing Landscapes." Chapter President Gary Banks; Dr. Lloyd Walker, Dean at Alabama A&M University, and Shane Davis, the Director of Urban development for the city of Huntsville made welcoming remarks.

Dr. Gary Lemme, ACES, Auburn University (AU), AL, gave the keynote address. He talked about "Changing Landscapes in Alabama" and compared past and present agriculture and forestry products and trends.

Other speakers on Wednesday included Dr. Eve Brantley, ACES, AU, who spoke about urban development with minimal environmental consequences; Dr. John Fulton, AU, on feeding a growing world; and Falguni Patel from Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments who spoke about the history and future of transportation in northeast Alabama.

Thursday the attendees loaded a bus for a field tour. Stops included:

1. Irrigation project at Bridgeforth Farms in Tanner
2. Water Works Center in Hartselle.
3. AL Department of Transportation (DOT) site on I-565.
4. Lunch at Alabama A&M University Research Station, the Water Wheels Outdoor Water Lab, and information on research being done on carbon and the ecosystem.
5. Bragg Farms in Toney to view a crop irrigation system using a large reservoir.
6. Tate Farms in Meridianville.

On Friday, at the business meeting, the outgoing president Gary Banks received a plaque and welcomed the incoming president Dr. Monday Mbila.

Speakers included Athena Clark from the US Geological Survey in Montgomery who spoke about tools for planning landscape changes; Dr. Edzard van Saten from AU who examined the role of GMOs in Agriculture; and Dr. Stephen Enloe, ACES, AU, who talked about herbicide resistant plants.

Silent auction proceeds totaled \$250. The next



meeting will be held in south Alabama in June 2015.

Group learns about irrigation from an AWEF pond at Bragg Farms.

RC&D News

National RC&D Conference in Mobile

The National Association of Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils held their biannual meeting in Mobile in June. "Exceeding the Vision" was the theme which drew over 300 conservationists from across the nation.

Alabama RC&D Council Chair William Hodge moderated four concurrent sessions on USDA programs and participation of RC&D Councils. Ben Malone and Steve Musser spoke about "Historically Underserved Populations for Meeting Conservation



NRCS Chief Jason Weller was the keynote speaker at the awards luncheon.

Challenges through Technology and Partnerships" and "Partnering with NRCS to Get Conservation On the Ground." Four Alabama RC&D Council Executive Directors (Alabama Mountains, Rivers, and Valleys-Mike Roden, Northwest Alabama-Charlie Meek, Wiregrass-James Currington, and Coosa Valley-Eddie May) discussed how RC&D could explore new opportunities for funding by blending federal programs with local needs to produce results.



Mobile Co builds float for the Mardi Gras Parade.



The NW AL RC&D received the Outstanding RC&D Project for "In Harmony with Nature," and Renona Seibert, Program Manager of the AL MRVs RC&D, received the McCarty Award for Outstanding Council Employee.

Promoting Locally Grown



Charlie Meeks, with the Northwest Alabama RC&D, spoke at the first annual "Lamb by the River" event in Florence, AL, hosted by the Food Bank of North Alabama. He explained RC&D goals of seeking local solutions to local problems using financial assistance from Alabama RC&D. Also on the program was Kathryn Strickland, of the Food Bank of North AL.

Held in conjunction with annual W.C. Handy Music Festival, the event was held to promote lamb to help keep locally grown food and dollars at home. A chef and his staff cooked lamb in different ways with side dishes. It was the first time that some of the folks had tasted lamb.

News From The Tombigbee RC&D

Edgar Pruitt, Pickens County land owner (r), speaks at a workshop hosted by USDA/NRCS and Tombigbee RC&D about the benefits of tunnel house crop production.



Tombigbee RC&D Board Member and Hale County Soil and Water Board Member Roland Perry, welcomes guests to an outreach meeting hosted by USDA/NRCS and Tombigbee RC&D.



Dr. Joe Kemble with Auburn University speaks at a workshop hosted by USDA/NRCS and Tombigbee RC&D at the James Child's Farm in Greene County.



Outreach News from Alice Love

Partnerships Helps Prepare Next Generation of Conservationists

Tuskegee University's (TU) College of Agriculture, Environment, and Nutrition Sciences (CAENS), and USDA Liaisons recently held a career outreach event. Alice Love, AL NRCS Agricultural Liaison, and Rodney Stone, TU-USDA Liaison, (both have offices in Campbell Hall) informed students of their roles as national and state USDA Liaison representatives.

Students learned about USDA services available as they seek higher education and career paths. These services consists of, but not limited to, working closely with the university staff to ensure academics and the USDA discipline's criteria are compatible; the USDA Pathways Internship Program application process; overview and description of USDA General Pay Schedule; USDA Scholarship Opportunities; along with other information relating to career opportunities within USDA.

Touring the campus were incoming freshman from the Raising Agriculturally and Technologically Literate Rattlers (RATLR) program administered through Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) enrolled in the 2014-15 Academic Year with majors within the TU CAENS.



Dr. Uma Karki, TU Assistant Professor/State Extension Livestock Specialist, demonstrates how to trim goat hooves at an outreach information meeting in Randolph Co.



Kalauna Carter, TU College of Agriculture major and NRCS Scholar, visits with Alabama Senator Billy Beasley.



RATLR freshman from Florida visit a TU classroom.



2014 TU representatives welcome AgriTREK Summer Program participants and parents. USDA Liaisons Alice Love, Rodney Stone, and Gwen Lewis gave a brief overview of their function as an on-campus USDA Liaison.



Terry Cosby, Ohio NRCS State Conservationist (standing), and other USDA representatives play an informative role at the National Women in AG Association Annual Symposium.

Nutrition Program in Macon County

The USDA Nutrition Program helped fill empty tables with healthy meals for many children in Macon County and surrounding areas.

This program was implemented through a cooperative application process between local representatives consisting of USDA Liaisons, TU-CAENS, and Booker T. Washington High School.

Antonio Hamilton is the site supervisor of the program which started in March 2014 and ended in May. On an average, the program fed over 200 participants in a span of three weeks. The program averaged feeding about 75 participants per day; Monday-Friday from 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm. Targeted were ages 0 to 18 years.

Meals are prepared at Tuskegee University and picked up by site staff daily. Site supervisors keep a daily log of all participants. The program does not limit participation based on household income.

Other sites in Macon County consisted of Notasulga High School, DC Wolfe Middle School, and Washington Chapel Church.



Pollinating Crops with Bumblebees

Alabama small farmers are using bumblebees to pollinate crops such as watermelon. Purchased QUAD units are light weight, easy to handle, and can be moved between crops.

According to a supplier's website (Kepper at www.abetterbee.com), bumblebees have several biological advantages that make them much more efficient pollinators than honeybees. Here are some facts from the website:

- One hive of bumblebees can do the same if not more work than a hive of honeybees.
- Bumblebee extracts pollen from blossoms hundreds of times faster and much more efficiently than a honeybee.
- Bumblebees are active at lower temperatures.



Bumblebees are purchased in Quads.

- Bumblebees are more active on cloudy, foggy, rainy and other low light days.
- Bumblebees fly in winds of up to 40 mph.
- Bumblebees pollinate flowers in a single visit. A honeybee typically needs to visit a flower between 7-10 times before it is fully pollinated.
- Bumblebees are attracted to flowers with narrow corolla tubes, such as blueberries and cranberries.
- Bumblebees are much more efficient pollinators than honeybees. They mainly forage for pollen rather than nectar and transfer more pollen to the pistils with each visit.
- Bumblebees promote higher rates of cross-pollination as they forage between plants more randomly than honeybees.
- Bumblebees visit many more blooms per minute than honeybees.
- Bumblebees work more hours - earlier in the morning and later into the evening hours.
- Bumblebees are non-swarming and much less aggressive than honeybees.
- Bumblebees can be used in conjunction with honeybees to enhance pollination.



Alabama NRCS Farmer Honored at the White House

Alabama farmer Billy Bridgeforth was honored at the White House in Washington, DC in July. He was among 15 people recognized from across the U.S. as "Champions of Change" which recognizes outstanding local leaders in the new generation of American agriculture. He is the Chairman of the National Black Growers Council.

Bridgeforth is a fourth-generation farmer in Tanner. His family farm participates in USDA-NRCS Farm Bill programs on almost 10,000 acres in Limestone, Madison, Morgan and Lawrence Counties. They grow cotton, corn, wheat, soybeans and canola.



Personnel Actions

New Appointments

William Carson, Soil Conservation Aid, Auburn
Jacqueline Martin, Soil Conservation Aid, Huntsville
Kayla Ware, Soil Conservation Aid, Montgomery

Reassignments

Delta Bell, from AL to MS, St TR Soil Scientist,
Normal/Tupelo, MS
Kaluana Carter, to SSD, St. TR Soil Conservation,
Loxley

Retirement

Jean Sparks, Contract Specialist, Auburn

Separations

Matthew Allen, Resignation, Student Soil Con,
Florence
Edith Hester, Expiration of Term Appt, Legal Instru-
ments Examiner, Auburn

Promotions

Frank Cochran, District Conservationist, Auburn
Daniel Collins, Soil Con Tech, Andalusia
Aaron Friend (New permanent employee),
Promotion, Soil Scientist, from Frederick, MD
to Auburn

Zackery Hayes, Soil Scientist, Huntsville
Darnae Hopkins, Soil Scientist, Auburn
Norris Hudnall, Office Automation Asst, Bessemer
Demeteris Johnson, Soil Conservationist, Troy
Erika Justiniano-Velez, Ag Engineer, Grove Hill

John Lewis, Soil Con Tech, Camden
Brandon McCray, District Conservationist, Wedowee
Charles Ogg, Soil Scientist, Auburn
Adam Sconyers, District Conservationist, Ozark

For Retirees

An electronic copy of the Alabama NRCS Newsletter is posted on the Alabama NRCS website and is available at all times:

https://prod.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/al/home/?cid=nrcs141p2_022992

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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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