

NRCS Alabama

Current Developments



March 2008

From The State Conservationist - *Gary Kobylski*

Greetings! Congress continues to work on the passage of a new Farm Bill which could revitalize farming and change the face of Alabama's agriculture. NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster recently met in Alabama with agricultural leaders to discuss state water resource issues. One important feature of the new Farm Bill is the Regional Water Enhancement Program which could be administered by NRCS under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). If passed by Congress, this would provide drought relief to farmers by awarding funds for on-farm reservoir and irrigation systems.

I thank you again for all you do for conservation. I am proud of your efforts. Working together with farmers, ranchers, and our partners has resulted in the continued wise conservation and protection of Alabama's natural resources.

We now have an opportunity to celebrate our enthusiasm for conservation across the country as we kick-off of a national campaign: "Conservation—Our Purpose, Our Passion." The campaign shares our success stories with a world-wide audience as it highlights the success of projects and the "passion" we all have for what we do.

While we have all chosen our careers for different reasons, I know we have all had those moments when we are proud of what we do and feel that "passion" for the path we have chosen. We know farmers and ranchers who feel this way about the land they work and love. This campaign is an opportunity to celebrate that.

Share your story with others. Contact Public Affairs Specialist [Julie Yates](#), and let her know how you feel. Share a story about a successful project or what you do that means the most to you. We are posting stories about Alabama NRCS employees and farmers on our website to celebrate our enthusiasm for conservation, and our passion for natural resources. Check out the [Alabama NRCS website](#) to read about the current highlighted farmers and employees.

Thank you again for being part of the conservation effort in Alabama. I hope you share your story and your passion with others as we celebrate our conservation purpose in what we do on a daily basis.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary".

Oakes Receives Engineering Award

Alabama State Conservation Engineer Perry Oakes received the USDA-NRCS 2008 Federal Engineer of the Year Award sponsored by the National Society of Professional Engineers. Of the 91,000 federally employed engineers, only 34 were nominated, and Perry was one of the top 10 finalists selected to compete for the national award held in Washington, D.C. in February 2008.

We are very proud of Perry and congratulate him on being recognized as one of the best in the engineering profession.

Perry Oakes (l) receives recognition from Dr. William Puckett, NRCS Deputy Chief for Science and Technology, Washington, DC.



Special Events

NRCS Chief Lancaster Visits Alabama

Alabama State Conservationist Gary Kobylski met with NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster and others in February. The Chief addressed the news media at the Alabama Farmers Federation headquarters. The meeting brought together lawmakers, scientists, and leaders of Alabama's agricultural community to promote better use of the state's water resources and ensure agriculture's voice is heard as state government discusses water management policies. A farm reservoir cost-share program, to be administered by NRCS if it passes, was discussed (see front page).

"Our primary mission is helping people help the land," Lancaster said. "We are trying to find ways to mitigate drought. We must make sure, as we are looking forward, that we are implementing those conservation practices and those techniques so that the next drought won't hit as hard, and so that we will continue to have a robust agricultural economy."

For more information about the Chief's visit to Alabama, visit: <http://www.alfafarmers.org/headlines/headline.phtml?id=5227>



l-r: NRCS State Conservationist Gary Kobylski, Senator Jeff Sessions, NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster, Congressman Terry Everett, and ALFA President Jerry Newby.

Monroe County Celebrates FAWN

By Joyce Nicholas, District Conservationist, NRCS, Monroeville, AL

Several agencies and many volunteers provided 5th graders from across Monroe County the opportunity to celebrate FAWN (Facts about Wildlife



Monroe County DC Joyce Nicholas and Soil Scientist Angela Warden provide lessons during the FAWN event.

and Nature)—a day of learning forestry activities that provides awareness lessons.

I love a good partnership, one where each group contributes to the accomplishment of a shared goal, especially if it involves conservation education and the possibility to have fun. This is just what we did in Monroe County.

Welcome Back Ben

We welcome Ben Malone (r) back to Alabama as Assistant State Conservationist (Field Operations) – Central Team and look forward to working with him in his new position.



TSP Work Group

Steve Musser chaired a work group to review distribution of Technical Service Provider funds to Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The first meeting was March 12, 2008, in Bessemer, AL. Team members are: (l-r) Richard Collier, J.O. Norris, Ben Malone, Steve Musser, Chair; Anthony Hudson, Bill Hughes, District Supervisor Eric Smith, and Julie Yates (not pictured).

NRCS Holds Prescribed Burn Training

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

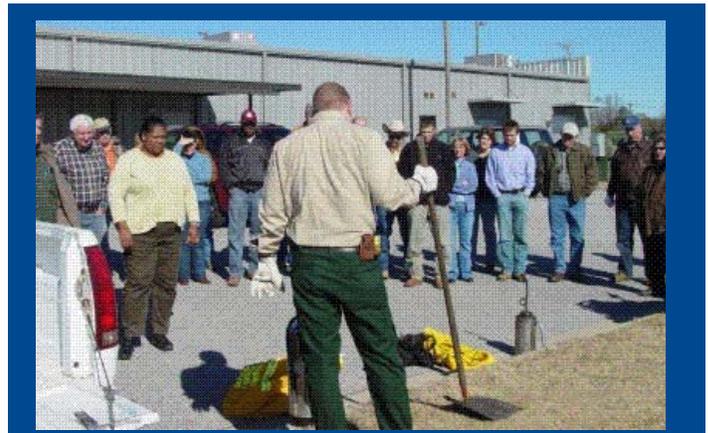
Alabama NRCS recently held three, one-day prescribed burning training sessions across the state. The sessions covered topics such as NRCS policy, fire behavior and effects, fire ecology, Alabama policies and laws, and smoke management. The participants reviewed selected burn plans and saw some of the latest prescribed burning equipment.

This training is required by NRCS for all Conservation Planners. The attendees received the 16 hours of prescribed burn training needed to write NRCS conservation plans that include prescribed fire as a component.

In order to get this training without placing hardship on each individual or field office, the attendees were allowed to complete the process through several phases of training at their own pace.

The first phase was to watch a CD entitled "Introduction to Prescribed Burning." Developed by NRCS, it takes about 4.5 hours to view the CD.

The next phase included a meeting with a representative of the Alabama Forestry Commission or any other Certified Prescribed Burn Manager to discuss a basic overview of what goes into writing a prescribed burning plan. Participants were



Karl Byrd with the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) describes some of the various tools used in prescribed burning.

encouraged to ask questions during the prescribed burn training. They also reviewed two prescribed burn plans with a Certified Burn Manager and discussed how changing certain elements could change the outcome of the burn.

For the last phase, participants attended a one-day training session in December 2007. Each person had to pass an exam at the end of the training session to be certified.

Over 90 NRCS employees participated and successfully completed the "Introduction to Prescribed Burn" training.

Leadership Team Tours Lumber Company



The Alabama NRCS Leadership Team, along with some DCs, toured the East Alabama Lumber Company in LaFayette, Alabama. I-r: Charles Love, Bill Hughes, Ben Malone, Elijah Moore, Charlie Ramsey, Andrew Williams, Brian Potts, Gary Kobylski, Merry Buford, Tim Albritton, Judy Hill, Eddie Jolley, Perry Oakes, Betty Walker, Richard Collier, Greg Dansby, Steve Musser, and Jason Gardner.

Moses Jones – Alabama 2007 Small Farmer

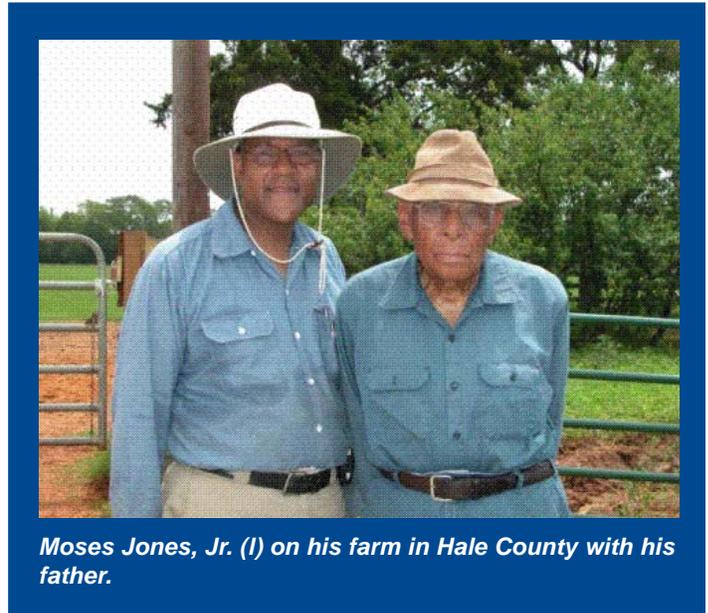
By Fay Garner, Public Affairs Assistant, NRCS, Auburn, Alabama

Amazing is a word that many people use to describe Mr. Moses Jones, a small scale beef producer in the Black Belt area of Alabama. At 90 years of age, Mr. Jones has successfully managed cattle and hay operations on three separate farms while serving as pastor of two churches. When most people his age settle into a sedentary lifestyle, Mr. Jones is up at dawn getting ready for a day of hard work.

Mr. Jones is the Alabama Lloyd Wright Small Farmer Award winner for 2007 that is presented by the Alabama Chapter of the National Organization of Professional Black Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees (NOPBNRCSE). Mr. Jones also received the 2007 Outstanding Conservation Work in Grazing Award given by the Marengo County Soil and Water Conservation District for his commitment to conservation and community. He is highly respected in his community as a cattle producer, a conservationist, and a spiritual leader.

Mr. Jones has been in the cattle business for over 70 years. He taught Social Studies and Math during 30 of those years and pastored a church for 53 years, once he pastored three churches at one time.

Mr. and Mrs. Jones own 275 acres in Marengo and Hale Counties. He and his wife have 185 acres in hay and pasture on their homestead where they



Moses Jones, Jr. (I) on his farm in Hale County with his father.

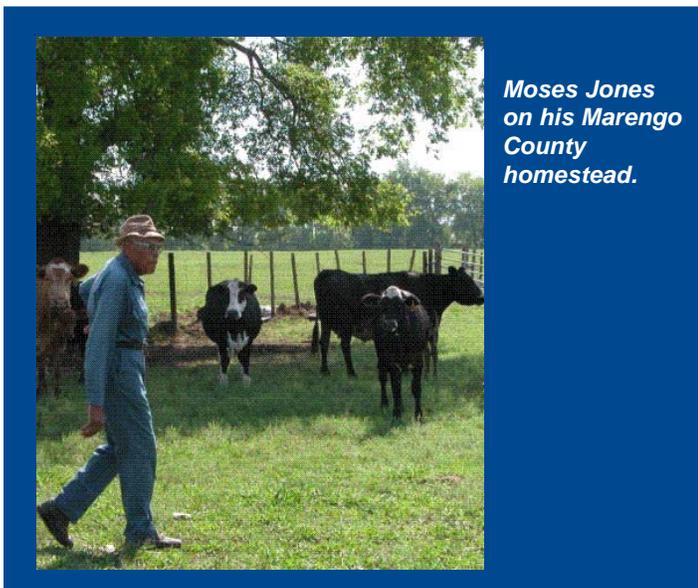
raise mostly mixed breed cattle and grow some hay; they have 30 acres in hay in Marengo County; and transfer young heifers and new mothers to 60 acres that Mrs. Jones inherited in Hale County. Mr. Jones also raises cattle and hay on 200 acres his son owns in Hale County.

Duane Andrews, Marengo County NRCS Soil Conservationist, said, "Mr. Jones is a good steward to the land, he's a conservationist. People across the county grazing the same acreage as Mr. Jones, try to produce as many cows as they can, and they usually overgraze. Mr. Jones keeps his stocking rate lower so when there is a lack of rain; he is not under as much pressure for feed and water."

In talking with Mr. Jones, you realize he is also a philosopher. He uses his wisdom to guide people to consider life's lessons. He said, "You should be as close to the best as you can be. My aim is to do the best job I can. That is what I want to do."

As you look across his aesthetically pleasing and environmentally sound cattle farm, you can see that that is exactly what he has done over the years. Mr. Jones has taken his life-lessons and used them to help his family, his community, and his ministry.

The Jones' cow-calf operation is a shining example of what a small farmer can do with limited resources. The Jones' are doing what is important — **taking care of people and the land!**



Moses Jones on his Marengo County homestead.

Retired DC Receives Jerry L. Johnson Award

Ed Holley, retired NRCS District Conservationist from Clayton was recently honored as the recipient of the Jerry L. Johnson Award for excellence in public service through family, employment, profession, and community. Holley was selected for his contributions to community through volunteer work and church activities and for his leadership in soil and water conservation activities in Alabama. The award carries a stipend of \$1,000 which is donated to a charity of the recipient's choice in their honor.

Holley has been active in service to his country and the community by being involved in the National Guard, the Clayton Lions Club and the Barbour County Baptist Association. He was instrumental in helping to establish the Southeast Alabama Rehabilitation Services, an out-patient facility for drug rehabilitation. Ed is actively involved in the Clayton Baptist Church where he serves as a Deacon and Sunday School Teacher. Barbour County recently hosted an "Ed Holley Day" to recognize him for his contributions to the community.

Holley is a life-long conservationist and true steward of the land. The landowners and farmers in Barbour County have great respect for his knowledge and expertise. The fruits of his career are visible

throughout the county in the form of conservation and applied wildlife and forestry practices.

Much like former State Staff Forester Jerry Johnson, for whom the award is named, Ed Holley is a quiet man of integrity who makes a positive impact on those he comes in contact with. The Jerry L. Johnson Award was established in 2005 and is funded by the Bradley/Murphy Forestry and Natural Resources Extension Trust.



Holley was nominated for the Jerry L. Johnson Award by co-workers Jimmy Hatcher (l) and Carol Threatt (r) Ed and Ruth Holley (center).

Teaming Up to Better Serve Forest Owners

The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) and NRCS entered into an agreement in February 2008 to provide increased assistance to forest landowners in Alabama. This joint partnership will help promote forest management, advance conservation on forestlands, and improve delivery of technical assistance to private landowners in Alabama.

This is the first formal agreement between the federal and the state agency. Staffs from both agencies have worked together at the local level for many years. This agreement recognizes this cooperation, and lays the groundwork for more detailed agreements to share staff and financial resources.

This agreement will strengthen the relationship between the two agencies.



AFC State Forester Linda Casey (seated l) and Alabama NRCS STC Gary Kobylski sign joint partnership agreement to provide increased assistance to forest landowners in Alabama. Standing l-r: Steve Musser (NRCS); John Pirtle, Arthur Hitt, and Bill Baisden (AFC), and Tim Albritton (NRCS).

RC&D Council News

Northwest AL RC&D Promotes Native American Festival

By Charlie Meek, Northwest Alabama RC&D Coordinator, Tuscumbia, AL

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, but imagine the chance to experience a Native American encampment, a working blowgun, a flintnapper, traditional dancing, music from a hand-made wooden flute, and much more!

Participants were able to do just that in September 2007 in Tuscumbia, Alabama, when they attended the Oka Kapassa Festival. Over 1,500 students from several counties attended the Friday session that was focused on cultural exchange for elementary students. The Saturday session was open to the general public. An estimated 5,000 people attended the two-day festival.

The Festival is a positive event and I am thankful for the dedication of the Planning Committee and the amazing community volunteer support. The quality of the exhibits and performers was a sight to behold.

Northwest AL RC&D Board Member Bill Taylor, said the Council was proud to show support for the event and appreciated the public's participation. The Council increased funding in 2007 to help support the growth and success of the Festival.

"Volunteers mark the calendar well in advance to give their time and talents to the Festival," noted Larry Gullet, Planning Committee Member. One volunteer drives from Maryland each year and is one of the first to arrive and the last to leave. Larry also noted that the conversations of the children in attendance and

the smiles on their faces are "payment in full."

Susan Stanley, a teacher in Lauderdale County, commented, "What a great hands-on and real experience for the students. Each year our students are made aware of the customs and the heritage of the Native Americans who lived in the Tennessee Valley."

Mark your calendar for September 5-6, 2008, for the 5th Annual Oka Kapassa: Return to Coldwater American Indian Festival.



Cawaco RC&D funds helped build this nature walk over wetlands. Even though the water dried up during the drought, it will be accessible when it returns to normal.

Cawaco RC&D Grant Helps Build Nature Walk

By Heidi Richards, Cawaco RC&D Coordinator, Birmingham, AL

A new wetlands walkway at Veterans Park in Alabaster offers visitors an up-close look at nature. The Cawaco RC&D provided a grant to help fund the 120-foot-long elevated walkway into the wetlands that gives students and others a chance to enjoy the natural habitats of the wetlands without having to wade into the muck.

The walkway is made from recycled materials and is designed to be accessible by people with disabilities. The walkway ends at an amphitheater that can be used as an outdoor classroom,

The walkway is only the first phase of the project. The second phase will involve extending the walkway and planting native plants. Identifying labels will be placed on flora and fauna in the surrounding habitat.

The park already has a bluebird trail and a butterfly/hummingbird garden.



Students listen to presentations at the Festival.

From Special Emphasis Program Managers

Black History Month 2008

By Herbert Ross, Black Emphasis Program Manager, Auburn, AL

February is designated as National Black History Month. The theme for 2008 is, “**Carter G. Woodson and the Origins of Multiculturalism.**”

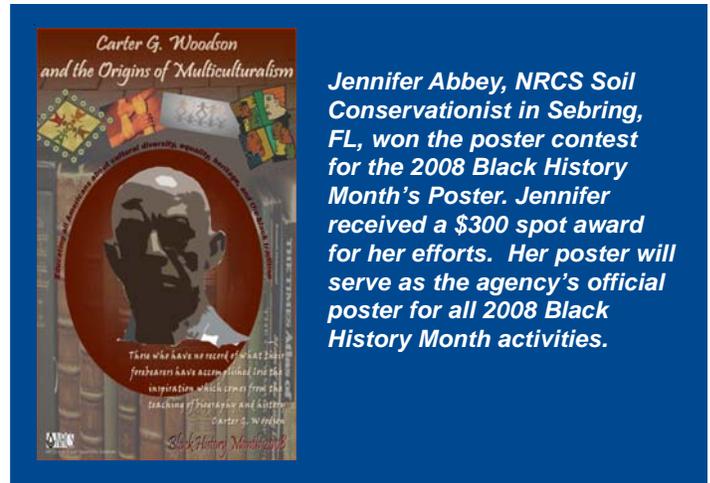
The main effort of this year’s theme is to show that the multiculturalism of today originated in the struggles of African Americans to have their cultural contributions recognized by American society. African Americans are at the foundation of multiculturalism in America. No one played a greater role in this effort than Carter G. Woodson. With the acceptance of black people and black culture, other cultures found a way of gaining acceptance.

A Black History Month observance was held in the state office with an invitation to all employees. After a welcome from me and Acting ASTC-Administration Bill Hughes, retiree Rev. Clifford Jones gave an invocation and my daughter-in-law, Michele McKenzie, entertained the crowd with two songs. Lawrence McGhee introduced our speaker, Juan E. Gilbert, Ph.D, TSYS Distinguished Associate Professor in Computer Science and Software Engineering from Auburn University.

Dr. Gilbert spoke about some of the things that Carter G. Woodson did to forge an intellectual



Black Emphasis Program Manager Herbert Ross (l) and Acting ASTC-Admin Bill Hughes (r) present Dr. Gilbert a plaque for his participation in the state office Black History Month program.



Jennifer Abbey, NRCS Soil Conservationist in Sebring, FL, won the poster contest for the 2008 Black History Month's Poster. Jennifer received a \$300 spot award for her efforts. Her poster will serve as the agency's official poster for all 2008 Black History Month activities.

movement to educate Americans about cultural diversity and democracy.

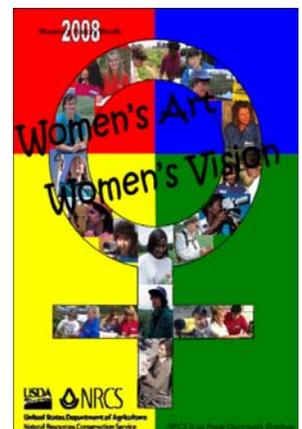
The meeting ended with a luncheon of catfish, slaw, chili, and various other fixin's that was enjoyed by all.

If you have any questions, concerns, or just want to share ideas about the Black Emphasis Program and activities within NRCS in Alabama, contact me at 334-887-4585 or herbert.ross@al.usda.gov.

Women's History Month

By Linda McGraw, Federal Women's Program Special Emphasis Program Manager, Bessemer, AL

March is Women's History Month. The 2008 theme, “**Women's Art: Women's Vision,**” honors the originality, beauty, imagination, and multiple dimensions of women's lives. The theme provides us a special opportunity to discover and celebrate women's visual arts in a variety of forms and mediums that help expand our perceptions of ourselves and each other. During the month of March, I will share more information about the contributions of women in history.



Achieving Results with the Cypress Creek Project

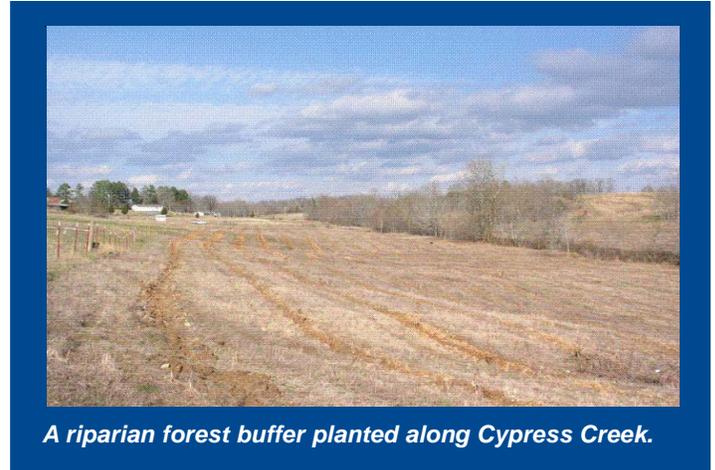
By Renea Dyer, District Conservationist, NRCS, Florence, AL

The Cypress Creek project began in July 2002 and continues to achieve great results. The project was initiated to help install practices such as riparian forest buffers that would help improve water quality and control erosion. Along with the buffers, several stream bank stabilization projects have been completed, aiding with erosion control and preventing sediment from entering the creek.

Using riparian forest buffers, the landowners planted trees along the banks of Cypress Creek. Landowners fenced the areas where livestock had access to the creek to ensure the survival of the trees and to enhance the water quality.

The Lauderdale County NRCS/SWCD, with cooperation from ADEM and Florence Utilities, assisted 18 landowners in planting 538 acres of riparian forest buffers. Due to the reduction of erosion along its banks, Cypress Creek was removed from the state's 303 D list of impaired waters.

Other major practices performed along Cypress Creek were stream bank stabilization projects. Landowners who had eroding property or surrounding facilities along the creek that had eroded, or had a high possibility of erosion, could apply for this project. The main goal of the stream bank stabilization project was to maintain the flow of



the creek. The secondary goal was to stop creek bank erosion to reduce the amount of sediment in the creek and, ultimately, to help improve the fish and wildlife habitat.

At the present time, two landowners have completed stream bank stabilization projects and two others are obtaining the necessary permits.

The stream bank stabilization projects were completed by the Lauderdale SWCD/NRCS in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fish America, Northwest RC&D Council, Lauderdale County Highway Department, FLW Outdoors, and Wal-Mart FLW Tournament.



Before and after photos of a stream stabilization project along Cypress Creek.

Personnel

Promotions

Jamie Carpenter, Soil Conservationist, Moulton, AL to District Conservationist, Tusculumbia, AL
John Curtis, District Conservationist, Phenix City, AL to Resource Conservationist, Auburn, AL
Randall East, Resource Engineer, Grove Hill, AL
Shane King, Agricultural Engineer, Troy, AL to Resource Engineer, Troy, AL
Ben Malone, RC&D Coordinator, Alexandria, LA, to ASTC (Field Operations), Central Team, Bessemer, AL
Trent Mathews, District Conservationist, Mobile, AL
Eddie May, District Conservationist, Talladega, AL to RC&D Coordinator, Oxford, AL
Annette Spivey, Soil Conservation Technician, Alexander City, AL
David Stewart, Soil Conservation Technician, Marion, AL

Change of Duty Station

Reuben Hyde, Soil Conservation Technician, Monroeville, AL to Evergreen, AL
Lawrence McGhee, Soil Scientist, Alexander City, AL to Auburn, AL
James Mason, Soil Scientist, Hayneville, AL to Auburn, AL

Reassignments

Robert Beaty, Resource Soil Scientist, Opelika, AL to Resource Soil Scientist, Auburn, AL
Zona Beaty, State Resource Conservationist, Athens, GA to ASTC-Operations, Auburn, AL
John Burns, Soil Scientist, Alexander City, AL to Soil Scientist, Auburn, AL
Jason Gardner, District Conservationist, Opelika, AL to District Conservationist, Auburn, AL
Rod Goode, Urban Resource Conservationist, Vestavia Hills, AL to Urban Resource Conservationist, Bessemer, AL
Amber Johnson, Soil Conservationist, Vestavia Hills, AL to Soil Conservationist, Bessemer, AL
Craig Johnson, Soil Conservationist, Carrollton, AL to Soil Conservationist, Scottsboro, AL
Joseph Koptis, Soil Scientist, Jackson, AL to Soil Conservationist, Bay Minette, AL
Shane King, Agricultural Engineer, Ozark, AL to Agricultural Engineer, Troy, AL
Randy Martin, Resource Engineer, Ozark, AL to Wiregrass RC&D Coordinator, Ozark, AL
Linda McGraw, Area Administrative Coordinator, Columbiana, AL to Area Administrative Coordinator, Bessemer, AL

Charlie Ramsey, Assistant State Conservationist (Field Operations) Central Team, Columbiana, AL to Assistant State Conservationist (Field Operations) West Team, Grove Hill, AL

Lee Stanfield, Procurement Technician, Auburn, AL to Transportation Assistant, Gunter Air Force Base, AL

Julie Yates, Program Analyst, Auburn, AL to Public Affairs Specialist, Auburn, AL

Resignation

Angela Warden, Soil Scientist, Jackson, AL

Retirements

Ken Aycock, State Hydraulic Engineer, Auburn, AL
Ray E. Donaldson, Assistant State Conservationist, Auburn, AL

James Hinote, Soil Conservationist, Bay Minette, AL
Roger Hornsby, Soil Conservation Technician, Tuskegee, AL

Deloris Jones, Office Management Assistant, Auburn, AL

John Richburg, Assistant State Conservationist (Field Operations) West Team, Grove Hill, AL

Betty C. Walker, Secretary (Office Automation), Auburn, AL

Death

Douglas Clendenon, Soil Scientist, Normal, AL

In Sympathy

Doug Clendenon, Soil Scientist in the MLRA Soil Survey Office in Normal, Alabama, passed away on February 3, 2008, with complications from an unexpected illness. He was 46. The address of his family is:

Mrs. Darleen Clendenon
49 Hilldale Church Road
Fayetteville, TN 37334

Ben Gary, former District Conservationist in the Clanton NRCS field office, passed away February 22, 2008. Donations in his memory can be made to the United Methodist Church in Clanton. The address of his wife is:

Mrs. Betty Gary
116 Camille Circle
Clanton, AL 35045

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer

Saying Goodbye To Retirees

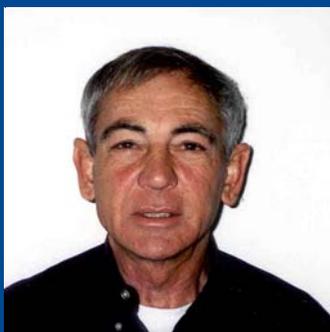
Ken Aycock, Hydrologic Engineer in the State Office, retired in January after 39 years of service. A reception was held for him in the State office on February 5.



Betty Walker, Secretary in the State Office, retired in January after 28 years of federal service. She was honored with a luncheon on December 11. Betty and her husband, Nelson, are moving to Florida to be with their children and grandchildren.



Deloris Jones, Office Management Assistant on the Resource Conservationist's staff in the State Office, retired November 30, 2007, after 40 years of service. She was honored with a reception on November 28, 2007.



Roger Hornsby, Soil Conservation Technician in Macon County, retired on November 11, 2007, after almost 32 years of service.



Jim Hinote, Soil Conservationist in Baldwin County, retired in January 2008. He was honored with a reception by West Team Employees on December 4, and the Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District on December 19.



On December 31, 2007, John S. Richburg, Jr., ASTC-FO, West, retired after 39 years of service. John was honored at receptions given by the USDA-NRCS Leadership Team on November 14 and West Team employees on December 4. John was also recognized for his contributions to Districts at the AACD Meeting in November.

Not pictured - Ray Donaldson, ASTC-Operations/Administration, retired January 2008.

Employees Participate in National Wear Red Day

National Wear Red Day is an annual event held on the first Friday in February. On this day, all women and men across the country wear red to unite in the national movement to give women a personal and urgent wake-up call about their risk of heart disease. Although significant progress has been made in increasing awareness among women from 34 percent in 2000 to 57 percent in 2006 - most women fail to make the connection between risk factors and their personal risk of developing heart disease.

Linda McGraw, Federal Women's Program Manager, encouraged NRCS employees in Alabama to participate in this event by wearing red to work on Friday, February 1st. Thanks to all the NRCS employees who participated in observing National Wear Red Day!



Pickens County Field Office Staff.



Bessmer Field Office and Central Team.



Anniston NRCS/SWCD Field Office and Service Center.



NRCS State Office Staff participate in National Wear Red Day.



Pike County FSA, NRCS, SWCD and East Team.



NRCS employees attending Supervising for Excellence Training in Perry, GA.



Civil Rights Advisory Committee wears red at their quarterly meeting.



Cawaco RC&D wears red at an Alabama Cooperative Extension System Reception.