



NRCS Alabama Current Developments

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From the State Conservationist - Gary Kobylski

"Every day you may make progress. Every step may be fruitful. Yet there will stretch out before you an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to the end of the journey. But this, so far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the climb." - Winston Churchill



It has been a great journey for me, especially over the last four years which I have spent as State Conservationist for Alabama. I have been given the opportunity to work with an outstanding staff that has continually impressed me during my time here.

As you probably already know, this phase of my journey is very near its end and the next will begin with my retirement on April 3. I have enjoyed leading NRCS staff in promoting conservation and serving the citizens of Alabama.

While I am sure to enjoy my retirement years, parting is still bitter-sweet. I have every faith that NRCS in Alabama will continue to excel as it has during my tenure.

Good luck, and God bless!

Kobylski Receives Forest Stewardship Award



Gary Kobylski was presented the 2008 Forest Stewardship Award for the East Region by the American Forest Foundation. This prestigious award recognizes NRCS state conservationists and their staff for outstanding technical and financial assistance to private forestland owners on forest conservation activities. Kobylski was honored at the National Association of Conservation Districts Meeting in New Orleans.

Alabama SWCC Watershed Assessment Online

From the Alabama Soil & Water Conservation Committee, Montgomery, AL

The Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee (SWCC) announced January 27 that the 2007 Statewide Watershed Assessment has been added to the Alabama SWCC website. This is the first time the assessment has been made available online. The announcement was made at the Joint Legislative Committee on Water Policy and Management Meeting.

The watershed assessment covers all 707 watersheds in Alabama's 67 counties and provides government agencies, private individuals, and political entities the ability to view watershed data in each county. NRCS and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) partnered to develop the watershed study which details the affect of water quality by land activity. The report highlights 16 activities which include animal, crop, cultural, domestic, erosion, forestland, general, land usage, mined land, pasture land, public water, resource, soil, streams, urban, and wildlife, as well as other interest.

"The assessment is the perfect example of how government agencies and the community can accomplish its goals by working together," said Senator Kim Benefield of Woodland, Legislative Water Policy Committee Chair. "We can identify so many critical water issues with this information."

Funding for the watershed assessment was provided by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM). ADEM contracted with the Alabama SWCC to administer the program at the local level. The watershed statistics webpage data and maps were constructed by the State's Information Services Division.

"This may be the most comprehensive watershed study in the entire country and we need to take advantage of all information to move forward in crafting water policy in Alabama," said State Rep. Greg Canfield of Vestavia Hills, Legislative Water Policy

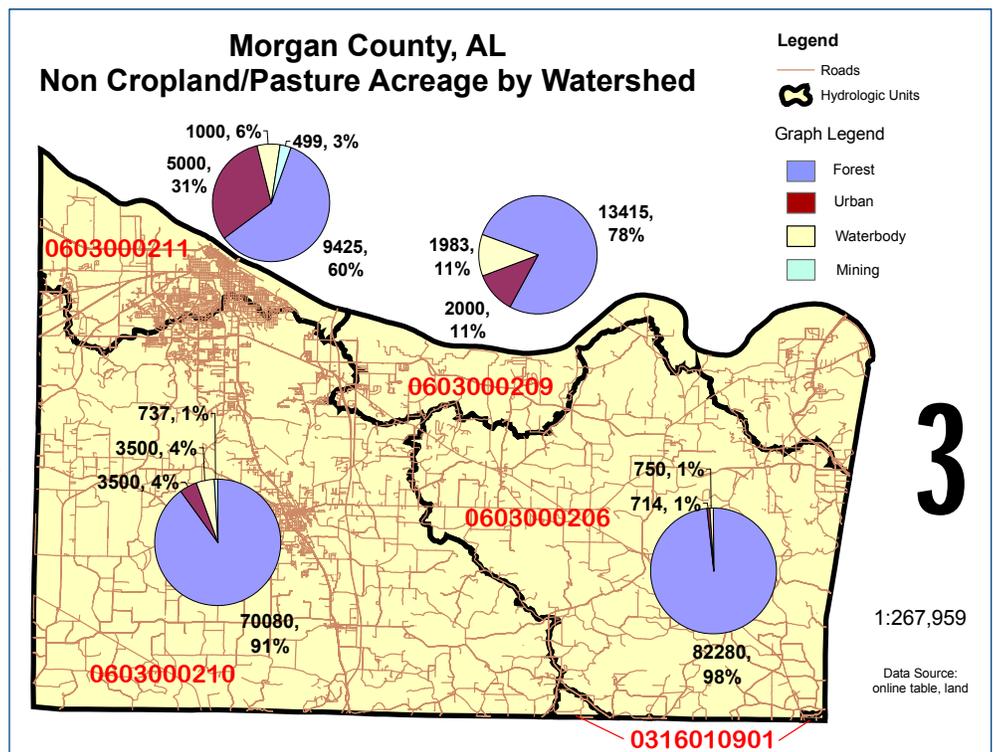
Committee Vice-Chairman. "I think we would all agree that we need to be equipped for another water emergency or drought condition in Alabama."

There are approximately 41,000 pages of data provided on the Alabama SWCC website with an average of over 600 pages of data for each of Alabama's 67 counties. A map of Morgan County is currently available to view. The Alabama SWCC intends to provide a complete mapping system of each county this spring.

SWCC Executive Director Steve Cauthen acknowledges that the reports were collected by the Alabama Association of Conservation Districts (AACD) and SWCDs which were submitted to the SWCC and ADEM. He also feels that the local districts should be commended for delivering the information and helping identify concerns for water quality issues in each area.

"The Soil and Water Conservation Districts put a lot of time and energy in organizing and implementing the process," said Cauthen, "I give them the credit for this assessment as technical experts and for their work to gather citizen input."

The watershed assessment can be found on the Alabama SWCC webpage at www.swcc.alabama.gov. The data and mapping information is located under the programs link.



Basic watershed maps are available online for all 67 counties in Alabama. Maps by type are currently available for Morgan County only, additional counties will soon follow.

Staff and Friends Gather for State Conservationist's Send Off

Staff from the state office and friends gathered on March 3 to celebrate the 32 year career of Gary Kobylski. Attendees to the lunchtime event visited with Kobylski and were invited to share their thoughts on his tenure as State Conservationist and his career with NRCS. Several mementoes were presented to him, including a memory book compiled by NRCS staff.



Morris Retires After More Than 37 Years with NRCS



Ronnie Northcutt (r) with the Baldwin County SWCD presents DC Larry Morris with a plaque in appreciation of his service to the Baldwin County SWCD. Morris retired January 31.

Small Ruminant Training Sessions

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

Three small ruminant training sessions for NRCS field office and related staff were held in Hartselle, Clanton, and Greenville, Alabama. Alabama NRCS Conservation Agronomist Eddie Jolley welcomed the group. Southeast Regional Grazing Specialist Michael Hall discussed "What You Should Know About Small Ruminants" and presented a video on the subject.

Dr. Ann Wells, a nationally respected veterinarian from Arkansas, who works with producers and educators across the country to develop sustainable animal health management plans, discussed the



Hall (l), Jolley (c) assist in a demonstration on how to evaluate body condition of small ruminants.

basics of meat goat production. She covered items such as health, nutrition, reproduction, physical needs, parasite management, browsing and grazing management for plant and animal health, and stocking rates in woodland and pasture.



Dr. Wells demonstrates how to care for health and physical needs of small ruminants.

Jolley discussed fencing options and joined Dr. Wells, Hall, and Sandra Solaiman from Tuskegee University on the farm to inform the classes about goat body condition, and grazing management and plans.

The training provided NRCS personnel additional resources and tools to assist landowners interested in the special emphasis programs, including incentives for limited resource, socially disadvantaged, small-scale, or beginning farmers or ranchers.

NRCS, AFC, AACD, and SWCC Sign Memorandum of Understanding

On March 11, the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC), the AACD, the Alabama SWCC, and NRCS officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will provide more coordinated services to the state's forest landowners.

State Conservationist Gary Kobylski stated, "This MOU represents a concerted effort by the partners to deliver our services to the landowners of Alabama

more efficiently and in a more timely manner. Landowners need our technical expertise and together we can make this a very positive experience."

Over 440,000 forest landowners control 79 percent of forestland in the state. These lands not only support the forest industry and contribute to the state's economy, but also are an integral part of the quality



(From l to r) State Conservationist Gary Kobylski, AFC State Forester Linda Casey, AACD President Roy Kendrick, and Alabama SWCC Director Steve Cauthen sign the Memorandum of Understanding between the forestry conservation partners.

of life for residents of the state. Increasing assistance to protect privately-owned forestlands benefits both the environment and community.

Booker T. Washington Economic Development Summit

By Alice Love, Agricultural Outreach Liaison, NRCS, Auburn, AL

Tuskegee University recently held the 13th Annual Booker T. Washington Economic Development Summit, at the Kellogg Conference Center in Tuskegee, Alabama. The theme was "Creating a Culture of Entrepreneurs." Students from high schools, colleges, and universities across the area participated in the conference. The summit provided a variety of workshops and networking opportunities for attendees.

The Southern States Energy Board hosted the Energy of the Future workshop. Their mission is to enhance the development and the quality of life in the South through innovations in energy and environmental policies, programs, and technologies. Discussions included carbon sequestration and energy issues facing 16 states and two territories that comprise the Southern Region: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, U.S. Virgin Islands, Virginia, and West Virginia.

The Emerging Green Markets roundtable discussion focused on developing technologies and markets for biofuels, solar power, and alternative energy sources.

There were also several guest speakers who shared their business success stories, ranging from agricultural business to corporate America.

Farrah Gray, a self-made millionaire by the age of fourteen from the south side of Chicago, created the non-profit organization "The Farrah Gray Foundation," which focuses on inner city community-based entrepreneurship education



Summit speaker Farrah Gray (l) signs copies of his book, "Reallionaire: Nine Steps to Becoming Rich from the Inside Out."

and provides scholarships and grant assistance to students from at-risk backgrounds to help them attend historically black colleges and universities.

Larry Lee, Director of the Center for Rural Alabama, helped create the Wiregrass Leadership Institute, the state's only regional leadership development program. He also frequently writes about rural issues for the Birmingham News.

Daryl Williams, Director of Research and Policy at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation in Kansas City, is also the CEO and National Executive Director of the Urban Entrepreneur Partnership Gulf Coast, Inc., which helped create jobs in devastated areas along the gulf coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Sumter/Marengo 2008 Water Festival Held on UWA Campus

By Michael Gunn, District Conservationist, NRCS, Livingston, AL

Through careful planning and lots of hard work by the Sumter and Marengo County SWCDs, the Sumter/Marengo Water festival has grown to be a huge event that children and teachers have come to love.

Before the event starts, fourth graders throughout both counties are asked to submit a drawing, which if chosen would be the theme for the event and be printed on the t-shirts that are given out to participants. The 2008 winner was Brooklyn Bryan, a student at Sumter Academy. The theme she chose for her drawing was "Fix That Leaky Faucet, Water Makes A Splash." The t-shirt for each year's winner is also framed and placed in the ALFA building on the campus of the University of West Alabama (UWA).

As in the past, this year's event took place on the campus of UWA. The support from UWA, the university president Dr. Richard Holland, and education department instructor Linda Paparella goes a long way in helping make this event possible. The university gives the event access to its facilities and the talents and abilities of its brightest students. Students from the UWA Department of Education majoring in elementary education were encouraged to volunteer for the event. This provides the water festival students with excellent instructors and our future teachers with valuable, hands-on experience.



Brooklyn Bryan (c) with teacher Robbie Yeager (l) and Sumter County SWCD Chairman Micky Smith. Bryan designed the winning theme for the 2008 Sumter/Marengo Water Festival t-shirts.

After each student rotates through a group of lessons, they are given a very special treat -- a magic and comedy show put on by Steve Trash of Concrete Dream, Inc. Trash performs magic tricks with garbage and teaches the students about everyone's part in taking care of our environment.

Planning for next year's Water Festival is already under way. Sumter County SWCD DAC Mande Carrier spends countless hours planning, and it pays off on a day when over 600 kids are given the chance to participate in activities which will make the future brighter for us all.

Cottage House Strategic Planning Meeting

By Alice Love, Agricultural Outreach Liaison, Auburn, AL

Roy and Barbara Shipman of Barbour County have turned one of their dreams into reality through a place they own called the Cottage House. They envisioned having a community and resource center where youth and senior citizens could gather and participate in activities.

Gus Heard-Hughes of Heifer International met with partners at the Cottage House to begin developing a Strategic Plan for the center. Participants at the meeting outlined accomplishments which included formation of partnerships, creation of community educational activ-

ities, and establishment of economic growth in the area.

Individuals at the Cottage House work with youth to improve academic skills, provide training opportunities, and enhance entrepreneurial skills.



Partners discuss accomplishments and goals for the Cottage House. The session was lead by Gus Heard-Hughes of Heifer International.

CAWACO RC&D Assists in Beginning Steps For Renovation Project



The Thorsby Historical Committee in Chilton County now has a master plan including an artistic painting for the renovation of the old elementary school in Thorsby. CAWACO RC&D provided a grant to assist with the services of a registered architect to study the cost and feasibility of restoring the school. The hope for the 10,000 square-foot facility is to convert it into a community center complete with several meeting rooms and a large auditorium. Pictured is Mayor Dearl Hilyer with representatives from CAWACO RC&D and members of the Thorsby Historical Committee.

NRCS/SWCD Personnel Visit Covington County High Schools

By Patricia Gable, Education Specialist, Covington County SWCD, Andalusia, AL

NRCS Soil Conservationist Josh Elliott and Patricia Gable, Covington County SWCD Education Specialist, visited ag classrooms at Andalusia and Opp High Schools. Elliot shared his experiences with the agriscience classes and encouraged the students to investigate agricultural careers. He discussed careers available with NRCS, explaining how his profession impacts lives in their community and throughout the country.

Elliot also explained existing practices implemented by the landowners of Covington County. Gable provided each of the agriscience teachers in Covington County with notebooks on soil related topics.



Josh Elliott and Patricia Gable visit a class at Andalusia High School.

COTR Training in Auburn



NRCS personnel from Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Missouri gathered in Auburn February 23-27 for a Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) training course at the Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center.

Sixth Annual Tri-State Farmer's Forum

By Alice Love, Agricultural Outreach Liaison, NRCS, Auburn, AL

On February 7, the Tri-State Farmer's Forum 6th Annual Meeting was held at the Houston County Farm Center in Dothan. Several organizations and agency representatives were available to educate and enhance the more than 40 participant's knowledge about federal, state, and local agricultural programs.

Miles Robinson, Director of Alabama Small Farm Rural Economic Development Center at Tuskegee University, discussed the center's function to develop partnerships to help farmers sustain farming operations. He also discussed the opportunity for producers to have on-farm research performed by university professors on projects relating to agriculture.

Don Wambles, Director of the Alabama Farmers Market Authority, talked about the farmer's market program, which began in 1999. Today, there are more than 100 markets in the state, and an additional nine counties have requested markets in



The forum heard presentations from federal and state agencies in their area. Alabama is the third largest state in the country with a Farmers Market Nutrition Program. Geneva County District Conservationist James Currington updated the participants on changes in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) as interpreted in the 2008 Farm Bill. A display was set up demonstrating successful conservation practices installed through Alabama NRCS EQIP funding.

Conservation partners that contributed to the success of the event included the Farm Service Agency, AFC, Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES), NRCS in Florida, and many others.

Currington Speaks to Farmers Conference About EQIP



Geneva County District Conservationist James Currington spoke during a session of the 117th Annual Tuskegee Farmers Conference. Currington discussed EQIP programs and changes brought about by the 2008 Farm Bill.

Choctaw County Holds Classroom in the Forest

By Michael Gunn, District Conservationist, NRCS, Livingston, AL

The Choctaw County Forestry Planning Council held its first "Classroom in the Forest" educational workshop for students from Southern Choctaw High School. The two-day event started with classroom instruction from forestry consultant O. M. Benton; Jennifer Miller; Sue Thompson, ACES; and Gary Fortenberry, Choctaw County SWCD Supervisor.

The second day of the "Classroom in the Forest" was held at Benton's farm in southwest Choctaw County. Students were rotated through several lesson stops which taught them about stewardship of natural resources and components of quality wildlife habitats.

The lessons were facilitated by Alex Brand of FSA and Chuck Quinn of AFC.



Alex Brand from FSA teaches the students about forest wildlife and their habitats.

Walker County SWCD Arbor Day Event Featured on Birmingham TV Station

The Walker County SWCD used this year's Arbor Day Celebration as an opportunity to teach Oakman High School students about conservation. The students were brought to the Reed Minerals' Nicholas Surface Mine in Walker County to help plant trees as part of the reclamation efforts.



Walker County SWCD Chairman Dorman Grace (left) watches as Oakman High School students plant trees at the Nicholas Mine.

WBRC Fox 6 out of Birmingham covered the event as part of the station's *Absolutely Alabama* series. The news clip, *Absolutely Alabama: Arbor Day*, is available online through WBRC's website:



Oakman High School students at the Arbor Day tree planting at the Nicholas Mine.

<http://www.myfoxd.com/>

Walker County SWCD Visit Elementary School

By Katherine Patton, District Administrative Coordinator, Walker County SWCD, Jasper, AL

Walker County NRCS District Technician Margaret Vandiver and SWCD District Administrative Coordinator Katherine Patton attended a career day at Curry Elementary School in Jasper.

Representatives participating in the career day had the opportunity to talk with each class at the school. A total of 40 tables were setup displaying career opportunities for each business represented. The Walker County SWCD in conjunction with the Walker County Forestry Planning Committee presented a longleaf pine seedling to each of the students that visited their table.



Representatives from the Walker County SWCD handed out longleaf pine seedlings and talked to students about potential careers in conservation.

Walker County Woody Biomass Workshop

By Katherine Patton, District Administrative Coordinator, Walker County SWCD, Jasper, AL

On February 19, the Walker County SWCD hosted an informational workshop on woody biomass. Partners for the workshop were AFC, ACES, NRCS and the Walker County Forestry Planning Committee. The goal of the workshop was to provide information and business opportunities to landowners on Alabama's largest renewable energy source.

A grant from the Bradley Murphy Forestry and Natural Resources Extension Trust enabled the 100 participants to attend the workshop free-of-charge and earn three continuing education credits.



NRCS State Staff Forester Tim Albritton spoke to biomass workshop participants about pre-commercial forest stand thinning financial assistance.

Personnel News

Promotions

Detra Boutwell, District Conservationist,
Brewton, Alabama
Wade Hill, District Conservationist, Hamilton, Alabama
Annette Spivey, Soil Conservation Technician,
Alexander City, Alabama
Rory Stephens, Soil Conservation Technician,
Montgomery, Alabama

Accessions

Jeremy Edmonds, Soil Conservation Technician,
Scottsboro, Alabama
Joseph Forrest, Agricultural Engineer,
Bessemer, Alabama
Brandon McCray, Soil Conservationist,
Athens, Alabama.
Joshua Reed, Soil Scientist, Jackson, Alabama
Wendy Smith, Soil Conservation Technician,
Selma, Alabama

Reassignments

William E. Puckett, Deputy Chief for Science and
Technology, Washington, DC to
State Conservationist, Auburn, Alabama
Rory Stephens, Soil Conservation Technician,
Tuskegee, Alabama to Montgomery, Alabama
Stephen Stone, District Conservationist,
Wedowee, Alabama to Soil Conservationist,
Oxford, Alabama

Retirements

Gary Kobylski, State Conservationist,
Auburn, Alabama
Larry Morris, District Conservationist,
Bay Minette, Alabama

In Sympathy

Fred Morris Bass of Evergreen, AL, passed away on February 4, 2009. Bass retired in March 1994 as a Soil Conservation Technician out of the Evergreen FO. The home address of his wife, **Patricia Thames Bass**, is:
**301 Travis Avenue
Evergreen, Alabama 36401**

Calendar Notes

• ASWCS Annual Meeting

The Alabama Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (ASWCS) will hold its Annual Meeting **June 10-12 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Birmingham.**

Information is available on the ASWCS website:
<http://www.alchapterswcs.aces.edu/>

The deadline for hotel reservations is **May 22, 2009.**

• Alabama AITC Summer Institute

The Alabama Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) Summer Institute will be held **June 16-18 at the Marriott at Capitol Hill in Prattville.**

The application, selection criteria, and additional information on the Summer Institute is available online:

<http://www.alabamaaitc.org/summer.html>

The application deadline is **April 15, 2009.**

• Next Issue

The deadline for items for the next edition of *Current Developments* will be in May. **Early submissions are encouraged and appreciated, and potential online success stories and news releases are welcome for submission anytime.**

The Communications, Marketing, and Outreach (CMO) staff may be contacted with questions or submissions by email at AL-nrcs-publicinfo@one.usda.gov.



Current Developments

Spring 2009

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NRCS Celebrates Black History Month

By Matthew D. Collins, Communications Specialist,
NRCS, Auburn, AL

Dr. Paulette Patterson Dilworth was the guest speaker for the Black History Month commemoration at the NRCS office in Auburn. Dilworth, Auburn University Assistant Vice President for Access and Community Initiatives, spoke about the history of black farmers from the Reconstruction to the present day. Dilworth touched on the obstacles, struggles, progress, and successes of African-Americans in agriculture.

“We appreciate Dr. Dilworth’s program not only for its insight into African-American history but for its retrospective on American agriculture,” said Zona Beaty, Assistant State Conservationist for Operations and Administration. “The two have a common background which those of us working in and around agriculture should never forget.”

During her presentation, Dilworth mentioned how much of the information she quoted was available through USDA

resources, such as the USDA National Agricultural Library (<http://www.nalusda.gov/>). Dilworth thanked the NRCS staff for their time and attendance and she thanked Herbert Ross for giving her the opportunity to discuss common ground of American agriculture and Black history.



(r-l) Herbert Ross, Black Special Emphasis Program Manager, presented Dr. Dilworth a Certificate of Appreciation for her presentation. Zona Beaty thanked Herbert for his hard work in coordinating the program and for organizing the luncheon that followed.

National Wear Red Day

On February 6, Americans worldwide took women’s health to heart by wearing red to show their support for women’s heart disease awareness.

NRCS employees were encouraged to wear red on National Wear Red Day to show their support for the event.



Oneonta Field Office



Tuscumbia Field Office



State Office



Alexander City Field Office



New Brockton Field Office