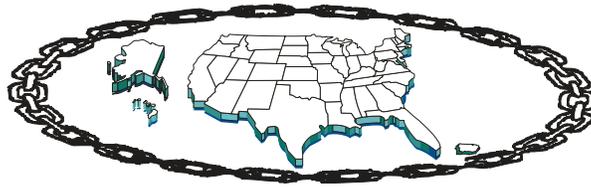


NOPBNRCSE



"The Alabama Link"

May 2008

NEWSLETTER

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

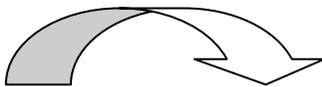
Greetings again to all,

I would like to take this opportunity to show my appreciation to you, members of the National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees in Alabama, for your continued support of the Organization throughout 2007 and into a new year. In the previous newsletter, I praised the idea of everyone working together to succeed. I believe that encouraged us to maintain enthusiasm and continued to support our agency leaders, national committees and national chapter. Remember, never quit, for time never grows old it just continues.

*Phillip Slater, President
Alabama Chapter NOPBNRCSE*

CHAPTER GOALS

To achieve development opportunities through networking, education and training for Black employees within NRCS and thereby enhancing community development in natural resources management.



Inside
Meetings
Spotlight
Black History Observance
Scholarship Program
Membership

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

LES HILLIARD SCHOLARSHIP

The Scholarship Committee of the Alabama Chapter of the NOPBNRCSE is pleased to announce the 2007 "Les Hilliard" scholarship recipient.

Branden D. Tolver, a native of Starksville, Mississippi, and a student at Tuskegee University majoring in Forestry, was awarded \$500.

The Les Hilliard Scholarship program is designed to provide a one-time monetary payment to a student pursuing a degree in agriculture, natural resources, and related sciences.



Presenting the scholarship – L-R: Dr. Walter Hill, Dean of School of Ag & Environmental Science, Tuskegee; Scholarship recipient Branden Tolver; and Lenora Haynes, USDA Liaison.

Congratulations to Branden and keep up the good work!

Anyone wishing to make a donation to the scholarship fund should contact:

**Shirley Hall-Cole, Chairperson
Les Hilliard Scholarship Program
USDA-NRCS, Auburn, AL**

MEETINGS

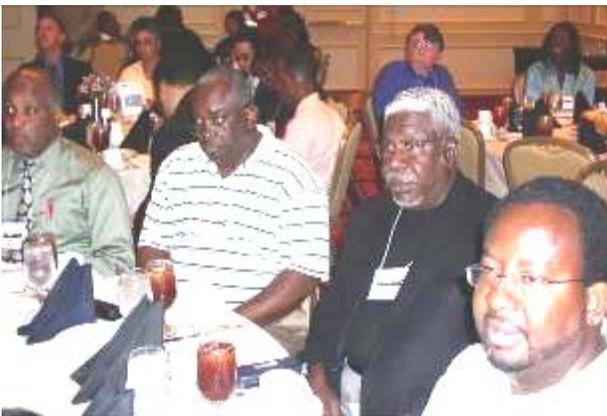
ANNUAL TRAINING CONFERENCE New Orleans, Louisiana December 2007

In case you didn't attend, I must inform you of what you missed. The conference held in the Marriot Hotel located downtown New Orleans was a resounding success thanks to the sustained support of our agency leaders, national committees, and state and regional chapters. Emphasis was placed on each member renewing their commitment to the Organization, realizing that our resources are becoming scarcer each year.

Members of the Alabama Chapter attended training courses and several award ceremonies, including the Lloyd Wright Small Farmers Awards luncheon and the Pearlle S. Reed Awards banquet. They also toured remnants of Hurricane Katrina.

We are already looking forward to the 2008 conference planned for December 8-12, 2008, at the Hilton Hotel downtown Atlanta, Georgia.

The 2008 theme is "Conservation as a Public Policy: One Purpose, One Passion – Sustaining Our Natural Resources."



Members of the Alabama Chapter attended the Lloyd Wright Small Farmers Awards luncheon and the Pearlle S. Reed Awards banquet.



Meeting attendees participated in training and enjoyed a time of fellowship at the conference in New Orleans.

**Submitted by:
Phillip Slater, Soil Conservst., Talladega, AL**

SPOTLIGHT

FEATURE EMPLOYEE



BENJAMIN W. MALONE ASTC-FO (Central), Bessemer, AL

Ben Malone was born and raised in Monroeville, a small town in southwest Alabama. He grew up enjoying hunting, fishing, and playing sports. During his senior year in high school, Ben had a tough time trying to determine what career field he wanted to embark upon.

He considered going into the military, since he was so "gung-ho" at the time, but eventually made the choice to go to college and pursue a field that would remind him of the things he enjoyed so much growing up. Forest Management ended up being the field of choice for Ben.

Ben decided to attend his dad's alma mater, Alabama A&M University in Normal, Alabama. After one year of college, Ben was offered a scholarship from the U.S. Forest Service. Ben accepted the scholarship and traveled each year to intern in such states as New York, Maine, and New Hampshire. This internship opened many doors and allowed him to gain valuable experience through networking each summer. After graduating from Alabama A&M University, Ben accepted a job offer with the U.S. Forest Service as a Forester in Vermont.

Ben worked in Vermont for two years and then transferred to Mobile, AL, as a Soil Conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). He worked a year and a half in Mobile and transferred to Jasper, AL, as a Soil Conservationist. Two months later, he became District Conservationist in the Jasper Field Office, and remained there for three more years. Ben then moved back to Mobile, AL, and worked as the District Conservationist for two and half years.

Climbing the career ladder within NRCS, and broadening his horizons, he wanted to gain more insight into Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) and the implementation of projects. Ben was accepted as an RC&D Coordinator in Hammond, LA where he worked for about a year and a half before Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast.

After the hurricane, Ben transferred to the Madisonville Emergency Operations Center (EOC) as a Manager of the Emergency Watershed Protection Program. These positions helped Ben to obtain invaluable experience in working with non-traditional customers and, at the same time, exposed Ben's leadership potential and skills. He spent two years working at the EOC and returned to RC&D duties for a few months until he accepted his present position as Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (ASTC-FO) - Central Team. Ben is the first Black ASTC-FO hired in Alabama.

What's next for Ben? Well, only time will tell. For now he says, **"My goal is to become the best ASTC-FO that I can be. But personally, I think my future aspirations will focus more on my family. I have two boys that need some good country training such as becoming good hunters and fishermen. I think I'll work on that for a while."**

The Alabama Chapter would like to welcome home Benjamin W. Malone!!!!

*Submitted by:
Christopher Ford, RSS, Decatur, AL*

BLACK HISTORY OBSERVANCE

**State Office – Auburn, AL
February 28, 2008**

The Alabama NRCS State Office sponsored a Black History Month Program on February 28, 2008. Each year we attempt to raise awareness by making the observance more relevant and meaningful.

As part of the observance, a pictorial gallery and other reading material about Black History were displayed that highlighted some of the achievements and contributions of African Americans. The main effort of this year's theme was 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

Lawrence McGhee introduced the guest speaker, Juan E. Gilbert, Ph.D., TSYS, Distinguished Associate Professor in Computer Science and Software Engineering from Auburn University. He was named one of the nation's top African-American Scholars by *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* and he was the recipient of the Black Engineer of the Year Special Recognition Award. Dr. Gilbert spoke about some of the things that Carter G. Woodson did to forge an intellectual movement to educate Americans about cultural diversity and democracy.

Dr. Gilbert's presentation was well received. We all regained a full appreciation of the history that was never taught, but impacted us all in a direct or indirect way.

In 1926, Woodson initiated the annual February observance of Negro History Week. He chose February for the observance because February 12 was Abraham Lincoln's birthday and February 14 was the accepted birthday of Frederick Douglass. By the 1970s, Negro History Week had expanded to become Black History Month.

Dr. Carter G. Woodson was truly a great man; a dedicated soldier in the cause of African freedom and redemption. We proudly salute and praise him. We dedicate ourselves to extending Black History Month to the entire year and the unending and unceasing celebration, recognition and commemoration of the global history of African people.

From Woodson's best known book "The Mis-Education of the Negro," he stated, "When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his 'proper place' and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary."

After the presentation, everyone enjoyed a southern-style lunch that was provided.

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.

COMEDY CORNER

"Pearly Gates Story"

A man dies and goes to heaven. Of course, St. Peter meets him at the pearly gates.

St. Peter says, "Here's how it works. You need 100 points to make it into heaven. You tell me all the good things you've done, and I will give you a certain number of points for each item, depending on how good it was. When you reach 100 points, you get in."

"Okay," the man says, "I was married to the same woman for 50 years and never cheated on her, even in my heart."

"That's wonderful," says St. Peter, "That's worth three points!"

"Three points?" he says. "Well, I attended church all my life and supported its ministry with my tithe and service."

"Terrific!" says St. Peter, "That's certainly worth a point."

"One point? Well, how about this; I started a soup kitchen in my city and worked in a shelter for homeless veterans."

"Fantastic, that's good for two more points," he says.

"TWO POINTS!!" the man cries, "At this rate the only way I'll get into heaven is by the grace of God!"

"Come on in!"

**Submitted by:
Herbert Ross, SRIC, Auburn, AL**

MEMBERSHIP

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

Remember – membership is open to all persons.

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

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

**Herbert Ross, Chairman
Membership Committee
USDA-NRCS, State Office
3381 Skyway Drive
Auburn, AL 36830**

BIRTHDAYS

"Happy Birthday"

*Alabama Chapter Members
January - June 2008*

April

12th Herbert Ross

15th Christopher Ford

24th Charles Love

June

27th Deloris Jones



If you have articles for the newsletter, please send them to Sarah Walker and Deloris Jones at sarah.walker@al.usda.gov.

