

NRCS Area 3 Newsletter

October 2012 - February 2013

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Agencies promoting Mississippi Blue Crab Aquaculture Consortium signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together to develop opportunities for the production of blue crabs in farm ponds. Participating agencies and universities are: The University of Southern Mississippi, Alcorn State University, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, and the Mississippi Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Right: Wesley Kerr, NRCS Area Conservationist; Dr. Dalton McAfee, Extension Administrator Alcorn State University; Dr. Eric Powell, Director and Professor Gulf Coast Research Laboratory; Mr. Joe Jewell, Marine Fisheries Department with the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources; and Dr. Franklin Chukwuma, Off Campus Centers Coordinator, signing the Memorandum of Understanding Agreement..



Harvested soft shell blue crabs.

Right: Greg Crochet, Research Associate with the Center for Fisheries Research Development at GCRL displaying recently harvested blue crabs and explaining the growth and production.



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (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). "

Outreach Meeting - Walthall County



Over 50 citizens from Walthall and surrounding counties attended and participated in the 1st Saving Rural America Conference Outreach Meeting on Saturday, February 2, 2013. Conference presenters were: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rural Development, Farm Service Agency, Cooperative Development 101, Alcorn State University Extension Program, Produce Marketing Consultant, Winston County Self Help Cooperative, and Mississippi Forestry Commission.

Pictured to the right is Frank Taylor, Winston County Self Help Cooperative Team Leader and Wesley Kerr, NRCS Area Conservationist, utilizing the Saving Rural America Talk Radio Show “Voice of Rural America”: live broadcasting designed to educate and inform listeners of various USDA, Extension, state and other non-governmental organization programs and technical assistance.



Pictured on the left is Michael Carr, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Field Office Operations, serving as the keynote luncheon speaker. Carr encouraged the participants to seek assistance and sign-up for the many Mississippi Conservation Program Initiatives and other USDA programs.

Outreach Meeting - Covington County



Kurt Readus, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, and Frank Taylor, WCSHC Team Leader, exchanging thoughts and ideas on improving outreach delivery methods and techniques.



Participants stopped by the display booth managed by Ms. Rachel Martin and Mr. Joshua Coleman, ASUEP, Business Management Training Officers, placing emphasis on "Taking Control of Your Finances".



Pictured to the left is Supervisory District Conservationist, Elvert Cole, and Soil Conservationist, Mitch Fulton, explaining the various conservation programs and participating requirements.

Pictured on the right is Area Conservationist, Wesley Kerr, introducing keynote luncheon speaker, Kurt Readus, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs. Mr. Readus acknowledged the outreach/conference participants for their interest and desire to be better informed and to utilize all available services and assistance.



Outreach Meeting - Wayne County



Above is Wesley Kerr, NRCS Area Conservationist, servicing as the keynote luncheon speaker. Kerr, presented to the group how financial assistance for Historical Underserved have benefitted from NRCS program assistance and the partnership with organizations like the Winston County Self Help Cooperative, Wayne County Self Help Organization, Cooperatives, and Alcorn State University. Kerr wrapped up his comments by encouraging citizens to get the youth involved in all aspects of agricultural production.

Over 80 citizens from the Wayne and surrounding counties attended and participated in the 3rd Annual Conference Outreach Meeting of the Wayne County Self Help Organization on Saturday, February 16, 2013. Citizens were granted opportunity to attend four sessions covering items from: loans, housing, money management, small scale enterprises, food preservation, estate planning, timber production to conserving and protecting ones natural resources.

Below is Supervisory District Conservationist, Kenny Caves, explaining conservation programs and eligibility.



Outreach Meeting - Jefferson County



Sheriff Peter Walker welcomes farmers and landowners to his farm to discuss and learn about USDA programs that are available.



Participants listen to USDA Rural Development Area Director Robert Harris give presentation on RD programs.



Soil Conservationist J.J. Smith talks with producers and landowners on the different conservation programs that NRCS has to offer in Jefferson County.



Earl McMillian, District Conservationist visits with participants about eligibility process and Historical Underserved funding categories.



Left: Frank Taylor with the Winston County Self Help Cooperation gets the crowd fired up about saving Rural America.

Area Training / Meeting

Shannon McCarty providing 2013 Farm Bill Training to the South Area Employees.



Due to the vast amount of changes to the 2013 Conservation Programs, area and state office personnel that assisted with the 2013 Farm Bill Roll-Out were Scott Coleman, Area Agriculture Engineer; Scott Culberson, State Engineer; Jay Osborne, Ag Engineer; and Jessica Watkins, Civil Engineer.

The South Area Chairman's Meeting was held on November 1, 2012 in Prentiss. A detailed FY2012 Farm Bill Program/ Emergency Watershed Protection Program accomplishment report was presented to the board and other partners.



Health Fair

On Tuesday, October 2, 2012, the Area 3 Health and Wellness Committee hosted their fourth consecutive October health fair. Almost 70 NRCS and MSWCD employees along with commissioners and Earth Team Volunteers attended. Three health care professionals from the Hattiesburg medical community, Shirley Parham, Dr. Katherine Alexis, and Dr. William Waller made presentations to the audience.

Shirley Parham, Diabetes Program Coordinator from the LiveWell Center of Forrest General Hospital, spoke on diabetes, noting that Mississippi has the highest number of per capita cases in the United States. Mrs. Parham gave an overview of the physiology behind diabetes and the negative health effects that this chronic condition has on those battling the disease. She concluded her presentation encouraging everyone to adopt healthy lifestyle habits that in most cases lessen our risk of becoming diabetic.

Dr. Katherine Alexis followed with a presentation on upper respiratory care topics: sinus infection/colds, allergies, and influenza. In all three areas, Dr. Alexis talked about symptoms and treatment as well as possible prevention methods. She received a number of questions at the conclusion of her presentation most of which were influenza related, and it is worth noting here that she encouraged everyone to have an annual influenza vaccination.

Dr. William Waller III concluded the morning with a presentation on skin care. He showed pictures of the damage that exposure to the sun's rays can cause the skin. Dr. Waller talked about the different types of skin cancer, and he discussed the treatment options for treatment for each type. Throughout his presentation his theme was the importance of protecting the skin from sun exposure through the use of shade, clothing, and sunscreen.

The afternoon session consisted of 15 different health stations set up to provide information to those visiting the stations. Some of the screenings offered included blood pressure check, blood sugar check, grip strength test, and bone density scan. Many of the vendors who set up booths also brought door prizes to give away to participants. The afternoon was informal and enjoyed by those in attendance as they visited with and asked questions of the health professionals who came for the afternoon.



Wesley Kerr, Area Conservationist, welcomes everyone to the Area 3 Annual Health Fair.



Shirley Brumfield, SWCD Clerk in McComb, and Carolyn Hartfield, SWCD Clerk in Hattiesburg, check in all those attending the Health Fair.



Dr. Katherine Alexis, MD, Hattiesburg Clinic Family Practice, talks about the difference between a cold and an upper respiratory infection, what medications work best and why it's important to get a flu shot.



Shirley Parham, Diabetes Program Coordinator from the LiveWell Center of Forrest General Hospital, spoke on diabetes.

Farewell

David Smith, Lead District Conservationist for Pearl River and Hancock County, retired on January 1, 2013, after 36 years of federal service. Congratulations David, on behalf of the employees in the South Area!



Matleaner (Matt) Spann, NRCS State Administrative Officer, retired on January 3, 2013. Dr. Homer Wilkes, State Conservationist, presented Matt with a retirement certificate during a retirement celebration for Matt on January 7, 2013 at the New Hope Baptist Church in Jackson, MS. Congratulations Matt on behalf of the employees in the South Area.



Welcome New National Wild Turkey Federation Service Biologist for Mississippi



My name is Brandon Bobo; I am 27 years old and a native of Oxford, AL. I was raised on a farm working and in the woods hunting with my father and grandfather. I have a bachelor's degree from Auburn University ("War Eagle") in Wildlife Sciences. I have a beautiful wife named Ashley who I have been married to for almost two years now, and we have a 9 month old precious little girl named Karlie. I recently moved to Brandon, MS to serve as the Regional Biologist for the National Wild Turkey Federation, and I am excited to be in such a desirable position to serve all of you. I have had the privilege of knowing the career path I wanted to take since the time I was in high school, and I have actively pursued that aspiration ever since. It seems that my dream of becoming a Wildlife Biologist is finally being realized, and I cannot wait to get into the field and on the ground helping out where I can. Please do not hesitate to contact me for anything that you may need of me, and I am very optimistic about meeting and working with all of you in the near future.

Can you identify this person?

He was putting up fences at an early age!



Franklin County

EDUCATIONAL CONSERVATION DAY for 5th grade students was held on Thursday, October 18, 2012. 105 Students, 5 Teachers, Plus Assistants and Others were in attendance. MSWCC & NRCS staffed five stations. The SWCD's station provided conservation booklets and Water Cycle posters. A station was also provided by the U.S. Forest Service.

Our Annual Membership Meeting Dinner was held on November 13, 2012. Fifty-nine attendees were present. Entertainment was provided by Jordan Gilbert. MSWCC's Mr. Don Underwood was present.



Franklin County SWCD received approval to sponsor the **Blues Rangers** for the Franklin County Upper Elementary School's 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students (308 students), teachers and others. The musical conservation message program was Thursday,



2012 SW MS Grazing School was held on Friday, November 9, 2012 at SAGE Farms in Meadville.

109 were in attendance. This event was sponsored by: MSU Extension Service, NRCS Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, MSWCC, and NRCS.



Hancock County

Pond Management and Cogon Grass Clinic

Success and high interest were the impact the latest clinic sponsored by the Hancock County Soil & Water Conservation District and assisted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Information provided to the landowners allowed them to better understand the balance and needs to maintain their ponds and provide for more and better quality of fish. Participants also received information on the highly evasive species of cogongrass and how vital it is to control and maintain a spraying routine to eliminate this problem grass. A special thanks to the “Antlers and Wings” owners for the use of this beautiful property. Also to our partners in conservation for teaching those that attended. Speakers: Randy Browning, U.S. Fish & Wildlife; Barry Pessoney and Marty Fulton, USDA NRCS; and Kelvin Burge, Hancock County SWCD Technician.



Learning the wonders of nature and how to protect our natural resources.



Making learning a fun filled experience for students and teachers.



Providing the tools to make a better tomorrow.

Hancock County Soil & Water Conservation District - NEW HOME

18335 Hwy 603 Suite 10, Kiln MS

- New Storm Preparedness Facility Building
- Come by and let us help you with your conservation needs.
- Hancock Tax Assessor -Hancock Road Maintenance
- Emergency Management Agency- Ms. Forestry Commission
are being located in this building.

Hancock Soil & Water Conservation District has served Hancock County landowners since 1945. We look forward to continuing our relationship with our partners in state, federal and local government to better serve the people of Hancock County.



Harrison County

The Harrison County SWCD co-sponsored a fascinating children's book, "The Watershed and Me A-Z", which discusses the importance of the Pascagoula River Basin. The District worked with MGCCC Perkinston Campus and MS Dept. of Environmental Quality on this book, which is aimed at 3rd - 5th grade students. The book will inspire students to recognize the relationship we all share with nature, and be good stewards of the land. The lesson plan was prepared by Teaching Artists Kathryn Lewis and Althea Jerome and is aligned with Common Core Standards and Mississippi's Framework. A set of books is given to each school that participates in this wonderful free program. The District has been instrumental in scheduling classes to participate; to date 25 schools have participated in this inspiring program. (article and photos by Beth D'Aquila, District Coordinator)



Third grade students at Quarles Elementary show some of the plants and animals that inhabit the Pascagoula River Basin in, "The Watershed and Me A-Z".



The District is co-sponsor of, "The Watershed and Me A-Z" children's book. A student shows her favorite wonder question.

Conservation Education Field Days

Nearly 600 fourth grade students from Harrison County took part in the District's Conservation Education Field Days to learn about the importance of our natural resources. The District would like to recognize NRCS, who provided many expert staff members for speakers at the field day. We also commend the experienced staff of MSWCC and Jackson, Hancock, and Stone Co. SWCDs, local Earth Team Volunteers, and MACD Area Vice President Lewis Goins for their hard work. This was a terrific field day, and we appreciate the team effort.



DC Tyree Harrington gets the students going learning about the water cycle at Harrison County's Conservation Education Field Day.



Earth Team Volunteer David Peacock and MACD Area Vice President Lewis Goins take a break to fellowship.



Ralph Thornton gives an informative talk about soils to 4th grade students.



Jim Barnes gets students excited about forestry.



Barry Pessoney teaches students about wildlife biology.



MSWCC Lance Middleton teaches students about non-point source pollution.

Jeff Davis County

Volunteer at Work – While the other students at Oak Grove went home to rest for a week at Thanksgiving Break, Sterling Cole, mentored by Barry Pessoney, NRCS Area Biologist, came to Prentiss to work on his Senior Project. Jefferson Davis County Soil and Water Conservation District partnered in the development of a Conservation Education Nature Trail in 1993 that was used to host Spring and Fall Conservation Carnivals to more than 3000 students over the years. The Trail was almost completely destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. The bridge rails were destroyed, tree identification signs were destroyed by fallen debris, boards on the classroom were broken and the trail itself did not exist anymore. Thanks to Sterling, a new nature trail has been reclaimed. The trail was flagged and cleared by a bull dozer. The Mississippi Forestry Commission provided that service to the District and the County Board of Supervisors provided a man with a chain saw to cut away all trees that could not be moved by the dozer. The bridges and the deck have been repaired and new wooden tree identification signs are being routed for more than 30 different tree species. The signs will be placed beside the trees that were identified by Barry Pessoney and by the County Forester, John Polk. More than 30 different tree species have been identified with a sign done for all. Tree identification signs include a laminated picture of the tree along with a summary of its uses. It will be placed on a 4 ft. high pedestal. Pictures will be placed under a glass on the pedestal next to the tree to help educate the visitors to this trail.



Sterling placing the flags.



Hope (mentor) supervising the routing.



The bridge in the nature trail.



Sterling removing the boards.



Sterling replacing the boards.



Checking out the finish product.

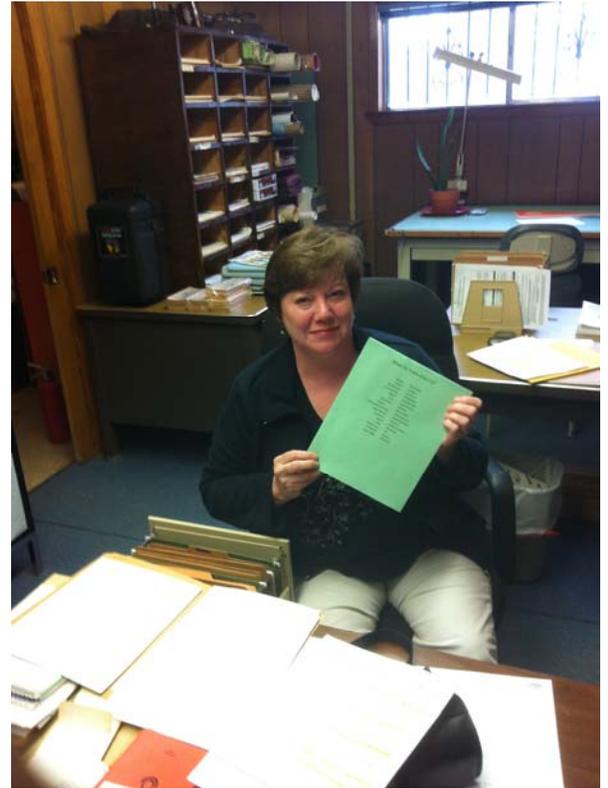
Jefferson County

On Friday February 8, 2013, Soil Conservation Technician (SCT) Mary Ditzler, Administrative Assistant Margaret Gray and J.J. Smith, Soil Conservationist, accompanied by Jefferson County Foresters from The Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) Rick Hollis and Gerald Shelvy, spoke to the fourth grade classes at Jefferson County Elementary. The agency spoke about the importance of trees and soil to our environment. A class participation exercise was held where the students named various items they used daily and they were shown how it could be traced back to the soil. Ms. Gray and Ms. Ditzler passed out various materials on beneficial products we receive from trees along with proper tree planting lessons.

Mr. Hollis expanded on the importance of trees in our daily lives, and the many products derived from timber stands. He engaged students by asking questions to reveal the importance of trees to human survival. He also explained the importance of prescribed fire in timber stands (especially long leaf pine), and the respect that they should all have for fire. It was reinforced that fire should only be managed by professionals. A question and answer session followed the presentation; giving the kids a chance to reflect on the lessons taught about trees, the soil, fire, and photosynthesis. The agency was invited back by teacher Treneice Conway to conduct a presentation on ecosystems when her class reached that chapter.



Margaret Gray, Soil Conservationist, J.J. Smith, Soil Conservationist, and Rick Hollis, Forester; and Gerald Shelvy, Mississippi Forestry Commission talk to students.



Mary Ditzler, Soil Conservationist, displays materials she created for the students showing common items we use from trees.

Jones County

The Jones County Partnership Meeting that was held on the 7th of November.



Wesley Kerr, Area Conservationist, greets Jones County partners. Participating in the partnership meeting is the Mayor of Laurel, Ms. Melvin Mack.



Elected Officials; State Conservationist, Homer Wilkes; Area Conservationist, Wesley Kerr; and other state and local organizations viewing the Jones County Annual Accomplishment report during a recently held partnership meeting in Ellisville at the Jones County Community College Technology Center.

Lewis Goins, Jones County SWCD Commissioner, presented a comprehensive Accomplishment and District Activity Report to the elected officials and other key conservation partners in Jones County. Many of the elected officials present were unaware of the accomplishments and services provided by the local district.

Lincoln County

On November 29, 2012, Lincoln County Soil and Water Conservation District and NRCS participated in the Brookhaven/ Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce Christmas Parade. Those riding in the truck were our post-er contest winners and employees and their children.



On February 12 & 13, 2013, Dennis Jones, the Lead District Conservationist in Lincoln County, spoke to a group attending the: Farm Foundations: at the Program: Farm Foundations: Risk Management Planning for Success for Beginning Farmers about the NRCS Conservation Initiative for Specialty Crop Growers and High Tunnel Programs. 21 people were in attendance.

Lincoln County

The Annual Banquet for the Lincoln County Soil and Water Conservation District was held on October 23, 2012. We were honored to have Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce, Cindy Hyde-Smith as our guest speaker.

Commissioner Hyde-Smith described the duties and obligations of the office of Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce. She also spoke about the rise of Agri-Tourism in Mississippi, the rise of popularity of farmers markets across the state, and how she plans to promote and support these efforts. We are appreciative of her time in coming to our meeting.



Annual Conservation Poster Contest Winners

Lincoln County Annual Meeting –Cindy Hyde-Smith the key note speaker was elected Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce by Mississippi voters in November 2011, following a 12-year career as a Mississippi State Senator for District 39. With her election, Hyde-Smith made Mississippi history as the first woman to ever be elected to the statewide position. She succeeds longtime Commissioner, Dr. Lester Spell, Jr., who did not seek re-election for a fifth term in office.

Earth Team Volunteers

On behalf of the South Area Earth Team Committee, we would like to thank each of you who so generously donated a toy at the All Personnel Meeting. Thanks also to the Hattiesburg Field Office who teamed together to purchase a child's bike. It is great to work with so many generous and caring colleagues. Congratulations to the Marion/Walthall cluster. The children in those counties will have a brighter Christmas.

Earth Team Volunteer Committee

Beth D'Aquilla, Debra McGee, Norma Dore, Nikesha Wells, Ondine Rudolph



Each year, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), holds a South Area All Personnel Meeting around Christmas. All employees are asked to donate a toy to be used for a Christmas charity. At the end of the meeting a drawing is held, and the winning office specifies the charity to receive the toys. This year, the Marion/Walthall Cluster won the drawing and requested the toys be given to the Walthall Adopt-a-Family program. Pictured are some of the toys to be distributed. Pictured left to right: Ryan Bruhl & Josie Ratcliff, Walthall County Adopt-a-Family board; Joseph Daniel, NRCS Soil Conservationist; Jennifer Stringer, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician; and Stephanie & Presley Miller, Adopt-a-Family.

Welcome New Earth Team Volunteers

1. Martha Galle, Jackson County
2. Amanda Calaway, Lawrence County
3. Lance Calaway, Lawrence County
4. Carter Bridges, Jeff Davis County
5. Lynn Hill, Harrison County
6. Brytnee Johnson, Hattiesburg Area Office

New Arrivals!

Congratulations to Lead District Conservationist, Chad Waldrup and his wife, Cherie, on the birth of their first child. Chandler Maxwell Waldrup, who arrived February 20th at 10:17 p.m. weighing 7 lbs. and 10 oz. and 21 inches long.



Upcoming Events:

- March 4 - Gulf of Mexico Program REACH - Coastal Research Center, Biloxi
- March 11 - Terrace Presentation w/ MGCCC
- March 18 - Gulf of Mexico Habitat Conservation and Restoration Team Meeting, Biloxi
- March 19 - Outreach Meeting, 9:00 a.m.
- March 20 - Firewise Workshop, Marion County
- March 20 - Piney Woods Advisory Team Meeting, Hattiesburg
- March 21 - Cogongrass Roundtable @ Lyman Community Center
- March 25 - Alcorn State University Extension Service Small Farmer Conference, Greenville
- March 28 - Pathways Outreach Program, Brookhaven
- March 28 - Farm Safety Day, 7L Farms
- April 2 - MACD Board Meeting, Jackson
- April 6 - Trash Bash, U S Forest Service
- April 16 - Landscaping with Wild Flowers Clinic, Hancock County
- April 18 - Wild Hogs Workshop, Alcorn State University
- April 26 - Kindergarten Farm Day, Tracey and Shep Batson's Farm
- May 5 - Environmental Field Day, 8th Grade, Flint Creek Water Park