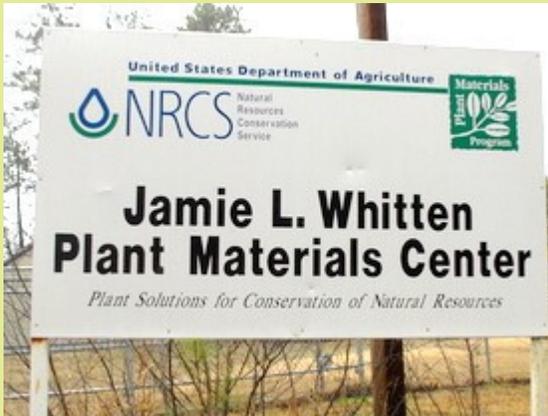




United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Helping People Help the Land

Mississippi



Conservation Kudos: Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center

Improving Conservation Practices Across the State of Mississippi and the Southeastern US



Employees at the Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials pictured (l to r) Jon Allison, Delon "Dock" Price, Tommy Moss, Terry Turner, Alayna Jacobs, and Lane Kimbrough.

The Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center (PMC) located in Coffeeville, Mississippi is a jewel to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of Mississippi. Located on 250 acres of the Holly Springs National Forest, the center plays an important role in evaluating vegetative conservation practices, so that NRCS can provide beneficial conservation advice to farmers and landowners.

The PMC is one of 25 in the nation and is the only site in Mississippi. They partner with other centers in the southeast to meet the demands of producers in the region. Each PMC focuses on one or two resource concerns. The Jamie L. Whitten PMC specializes in developing vegetative solutions to protect and enhance water quality on cropland. The other two PMCs in the southeastern region include the Jimmy Carter PMC in Americus, Georgia (specializing in soil quality on cropland and also grazing land health), and the Brooksville PMC in Brooksville, Florida (specializing in soil health).

The center's staff work to evaluate NRCS conservation practices through studies and demonstrations, which include soil sampling, establishing pollinator habitat, and planting and managing different species of cover crops. The PMC is participating in an exciting nation-wide evaluation of 21 different cover crops such as daikon radish, annual rye, and crimson clover. Plant Materials Centers across the nation will plant the same species to determine the best places to plant each species. The Jamie L. Whitten PMC currently has 250 cover crop plots.

Another new study, the Long Term Soil Health Evaluation, explores the effect of tillage and cover crops on crop yield. The PMC is testing the effect of no-till and cover crops on soybean and corn yield over time. The study will track changes in soil properties, economic cost, and a variety of other factors to assist farmers in making real-world management decisions.

In order to share information tested at the center with field staff, the PMC hosts informational workshops. Most recently, the "Field Staff Cover Crop Planning Workshop," featured presentations which provided tips and testimonials to field staff on ways to encourage producers to implement cover crops.

The Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center could not operate without the help of dedicated NRCS employees. Alayna Jacobs serves as manager at the center, while Tommy Moss, Terry Turner, Delon "Dock" Price, Jon Allison, and Lane Kimbrough complete the team. The staff is supported both locally through the State Resource Conservationist and nationally by the National Plant Materials Program.

Alayna Jacobs enjoys the work she does at the PMC and strives to inform NRCS field staff as they help producers with their land operations.

She stated, "Plant Materials Centers provide hands-on vegetative information to NRCS field staff. We design studies to help field staff get their jobs done better, faster, and easier. Plant Materials Centers represent the only farms in the nation devoted to solving the plant materials needs of private landowners and NRCS staff. The Jamie L. Whitten PMC proudly focuses on delivering publications, workshops, and training to field staff to accomplish our primary goal of improving water quality on cropland in the southeastern region."

Landowners and NRCS staff are always welcome at the PMC. Make your appointment today to tour new studies, look at different cover crop species, or ask questions about any NRCS vegetative conservation practice. The PMC gathers input on an annual basis from NRCS staff to design study priorities. The PMC encourages all staff members to forward plant materials needs, questions, and ideas to the MS State Plant Materials Committee (led by the State Resource Conservationist).

Story by Candace Chambers, NRCS Public Affairs Intern

Photo Spotlights



Alayna Jacobs pours crimson clover seeds into a seed counter to determine seeds per pound of coated and uncoated seed.



A field at the Plant Materials Center with cover crops plots. Deer are frequent visitors at the PMC.



Dock Price and Lane Kimbrough wash roots from soil samples using a root elutriator.



Jon Allison and Terry Turner demonstrate the process of thrashing using seed cleaning equipment.

Want to be featured in "Conservation Kudos?"

Conservation Kudos is an internal newsletter that highlights the successes of NRCS employees and field offices. If your field office would like to be featured or spotlight an employee, contact the NRCS of Mississippi Public Affairs staff.

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