

Current Developments

September 2004

From the office of the State Conservationist

From my perspective as I travel across the state I have viewed a tremendous increase in the amount of conservation applied to the land. As NRCS employees, we can be proud of our accomplishments.

The amount of conservation on the land can be attributed to...

Our landowners... be sure to commend landowners and let them know how much we value their stewardship and commitment in applying conservation on the land.

Our partners... thank our Conservation Partners at every opportunity. Their support is vital as we strive to meet needs of our customers.

This year, we have met many challenges and endured many frustrations, but it is all worthwhile when we can take pride in our accomplishments. Please remember our work is far-reaching and important. We must remain vigilant in our efforts for our customers, our communities, and the State of Tennessee.

I would like to share with you just a few of our accomplishments this year...

- Over \$13 million in Farm Bill funding was obligated and provided to Tennessee landowners in FY04.
- Through the EQIP Program, over \$9 million was obligated on 803 EQIP contracts.
- Over \$1 million was obligated for 84 rental agreements on approximately 7,400 acres through the Grassland Reserve Program.
- The Cruze Dairy Farm in Knox County was preserved as a “farm forever” with assistance through the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program and with the assistance of our Partners...Knox County Government, the Land Trust of Tennessee and others.
- Landowners have installed over 1,000 miles of Conservation Buffers thereby helping to bring back the Bobwhite Quail and other wildlife in areas where numbers had declined for several years.
- Mary’s Creek Dam Rehabilitation Project was completed and the lives of many citizens are being protected. Project funds were authorized in the amount of \$350,000 with \$187,000 local cost-share.

I hope each of you can experience pride in your accomplishments and look forward to new and exciting challenges in the coming year.

James W. Ford
State Conservationist



Inside This Issue....

	Page
Area 1 News	4, 5
Area 2 News	6, 7
Area 3 News	8
Beason Completes Training	2
Conservation Buffers	2
EWP	11
FRPP-A Farm Forever	12
Outreach & Education	9
RC&D	10

National Hispanic Heritage Month - September 15, 2004 - October 15, 2004
Hispanic Americans "Making a Difference in our Communities and Nation"

Conservation Buffer Ceremony Held to Recognize Landowners

by Lavonne Winters

A ceremony was held on August 24, 2004 in Somerville, Tennessee to highlight the efforts of landowners who have voluntarily applied over 1,000 miles of conservation buffers on private lands.

James W. Ford, State Conservationist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, praised the efforts of Tennessee landowners. He said “We have been pleased with the number of landowners in Tennessee who have established conservation buffers that included Native Warm Season Grasses (NWSG’s). NWSG’s, a wildlife friendly mixture good for Bobwhite quail and other wildlife species, have now become the most popular cover type for filter strips and field borders.”

The outdoor ceremony was held on Mark and Joseph McNabb’s Farm located 4 miles west of Somerville, Tennessee.

Cooperative efforts between the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and non-profit conservation groups such as Quail Unlimited have helped to increase landowner participation in USDA programs that favor wildlife friendly practices. These programs include the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), and others.

Mack Gray, Deputy Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment, attended the ceremony and presented research grants to representatives

from The University of Tennessee and Mississippi State University. These grants as well as several others in nine states were recently announced by Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman as part of a Bobwhite Quail Restoration Project.



Mack Gray, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, USDA, Washington, DC, is shown presenting grant checks to The University of Tennessee and Mississippi State University.

Beason Completes Phase 1 of Training

Darrell Beason completed his first phase of Warrant Officer training in the Army National Guard at Fort Rucker, Alabama and graduated on September 2. The training was rigorous with only half the people who began the training completing it. Trainees weren't allowed to have candy, soft drinks, burgers or fries...actually no extras at all and no free time except to sleep during the first phase of this training. According to Darrell, the first cheeseburger he ate after training “was better than Christmas.”

Darrell returned to work on September 7 and will work until his second phase of training begins. He will be stationed in Maryland for that three month phase of training.



Mike Hansbrough, NRCS Wildlife Biologist, is shown making a presentation about conservation buffers and the benefits they provide for Bobwhite quail and other wildlife species.



Photo above, l to r – James Ford, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service; Mack Gray, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment; Gary Myers, Executive Director, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency; and Bob Bryant, Quail Unlimited. Cooperative relationships between these partners have led to the successful participation in USDA programs and establishment of critical habitat for bobwhite quail and other wildlife.

Colin Loring Volunteers to Assist in Disaster Response to Hurricane Charlie and Ivan

On August 13 Hurricane Charlie hit the West coast of Florida about 60 miles South of Tampa. Charlie was a category 4 hurricane with winds of 145 mph, and left a wide path of destruction across central Florida from the West coast to the East. CNN reported that at least 27 deaths, many more injuries, and an estimated 11 billion dollars in damage and about 7 billion dollars of insurance claims resulted from Hurricane Charlie.

Hurricane Ivan, a category 3 hurricane, hit the NW panhandle of Florida near Pensacola September 16, 2004. Ivan caused at least 54 deaths in the U.S., and at least several billion dollars in damage according to CNN. The effects of both storms were felt well beyond Florida.

Colin Loring spent six days in central Florida after Hurricane Charlie, and four days in the Western Panhandle between Pensacola and the Alabama state line, after Hurricane Ivan. He went as a volunteer with the US Air Force Auxiliary/Civil Air Patrol, operating the SDIS system and conducting aerial photo damage assessments of affected areas. "We receive locations for assessment on the ground prior to flight and in the air by radio. I've always felt compelled to help in times of need, and serving as a volunteer with the Civil Air Patrol has allowed me to combine participation in Emergency Services/Search and Rescue operations, with an interest in aviation," said Colin.

Civil Air Patrol is a nonprofit organization with almost 62,000 members nationwide. CAP performs 95% of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center. Its volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief and counterdrug missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. The members take a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to the almost 27,000 young people currently participating in CAP cadet programs. CAP has been performing missions for America for more than 60 years, according to a CAP news release.

The SDIS (Satellite Digital Information System) consists of a 5 mega-pixel digital camera, tablet computer running Windows XP with outlook express, and a satellite modem, which enables digital images to be sent near real-time as e-mail attachments. GPS coordinates and any other pertinent information are sent with each image to multiple customers such as state emergency management agencies and FEMA. It takes about four minutes to transmit each image from the air.

Colin's group conducted air searches of rural areas for isolated locations showing damage that may not have received assistance. They would get lat-long coordinates from the onboard GPS for sites of interest, and if needed, guide ground teams in for a closer look.

Working in a disaster relief operation is a challenging, fluid situation, with rapidly changing plans and tasking that requires flexibility and improvisation, while maintaining organization. Nothing can be taken for granted other than to expect the unexpected. "While in Central Florida after Charlie, we landed at the Arcadia Airport for a short break. Arcadia was one of the areas most hard hit by the storm. The destruction was nearly indescribable and unlike anything I'd ever seen first hand. A young deputy I spoke with said he and other deputies had been sleeping in their cars for the past few nights," said Colin.

"My sympathy goes out to the people affected by these storms. This was an experience I'll never forget, and certainly makes me appreciate the simple things in life," said Colin.



Photo above, l to r: Tennessee volunteers Colin, Linda, Jim and Harry



Photo above: Flood isolation in northwest Florida



Photo above: Civil Air Patrol planes



Photo above: Rural areas received extensive damage



Photo above: Trees down in northwest Florida

Focus on the Field - Area 1

Current Developments

Crockett County SCD Tour Highlights Area Landowner Accomplishments

by Wray Pulliam

On June 8, 2004, NRCS and the Crockett County Soil Conservation District conducted a tour to highlight accomplishments by area landowners.

The tour began with a wildlife/CRP/bobwhite quail calling demonstration by NRCS Wildlife Biologist Mike Hansbrough. Mike was the 2001 National Quail Calling Champion. He has been very successful in working with landowners in West Tennessee and other areas in establishing wildlife habitat. The results are already visible with a huge increase in the numbers of Bobwhite quail and other wildlife.

The tour then proceeded to the Mark Wardlaw farm where a discussion of pond construction and water quality protection. Participants were also given an opportunity to see Wardlaw's Labrador retriever training facility.

At the next stop participants visited the Bobby Griggs Farm to observe a hybrid bermuda-grass hay operation. Included in the discussion were planting, harvesting, managing, and marketing of hybrid bermudagrass.

The tour concluded on the David Porter Farm where an entire "face lift" was performed utilizing the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds. Porter implemented numerous practices to conserve natural resources while improving the production, environment, and value of his farm. Included were a grade stabilization structure, water and sediment control basin, diversion, grassed waterway, critical area treatment, and other practices.



Quail calling demonstration by NRCS Wildlife Biologist Mike Hansbrough.



Mark Wardlaw farm includes a Labrador retriever training facility.



Bobby Griggs hybrid Bermuda-grass hay operation



EQIP project on David Porter farm

Weakley County Farmer selected Tennessee Star Small Farmer of the Year

Approximately 200 people recently gathered at the Tennessee State University (TSU) Research and Demonstration Farm in Cheatham County for the annual Small Farms Expo. The highlight of the Expo is the Tennessee Small Farmer Recognition Program which was established to honor small farmers throughout the state. Seven small farmers and their families were selected this year from different categories and income groups with one overall winner named Tennessee Star Small Farmer of the Year. Winners were selected in Best Management Practices, Alternative Enterprise and Innovative Marketing with two winners selected in each category—under \$100,000 in annual farm sales and over \$100,000 but less than \$250,000 in annual farm sales.

The Overall Star Small Farmer of The Year for the state is Scott Penick from Martin. Scott has worked diligently to become one of the area's best conservation farmers. He utilizes no-till crop production, the Conservation Reserve Program, and grows a truck crop every year. Scott also maintains a wide variety of custom activities such as brush and tree removal and custom seeding. The Weakley County Soil Conservation District nominated him for this award because of his commitment to conservation. The event was sponsored by TSU, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the TN Dept. of Agriculture to recognize and award small farmers in the state.



Photo above, l to r: Dr. Clyde Chesney, TSU Cooperative Extension Program, with Overall Star Small Farmer of The Year Scott Penick, and Asst. Tennessee Commissioner of Agriculture Pat Clark

Field Day at Tolley's

by Gary L. Blackwood

Quality water is important to humans but just as important to livestock as well. A recent field day at the Marty Tolley farm in Darden addressed these and other farming issues that impact landowners in Decatur and Henderson Counties.



Today's farmers are faced with many decisions that will help keep them in business, but how does water affect these decisions.

"An adequate supply of quality water keeps my livestock healthier and gives me peace of mind that water is available regardless of weather conditions," stated Marty. Over the past 2 years, Marty has participated in the EQIP program. This program has assisted Marty in sowing permanent vegetation on land that was growing soybeans. Also, water lines have been installed to supply 4 freeze proof watering facilities with heavy use areas around each one to reduce mud and erosion. Heavy use areas have been installed for feeders and hay rings. Other stops at the field day included weed control, rotational grazing, and fly control.

TVA and the TN Department of Agriculture have also provided funding to install similar practices throughout Decatur and Henderson Counties.

"An adequate supply of quality water keeps my livestock healthier and gives me peace of mind that water is available regardless of weather conditions," stated Marty Tolley.



Photo above: Mr. Asbraidge, along with sons Jeff and Lee (2 generations of family farmers) and NRCS Soil Conservationist Trent Cash on structure site with large oak in the background.

Landowners Realize Harmony Between Trees and Crops

Brothers Jeff and Lee Asbraidge do not like to see land deteriorate! They have devoted part of the 2004 summer to installing conservation practices to stop erosion on three different farms using funding provided through the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. Personnel from the Gibson County NRCS and SCD office surveyed and designed water and sediment control basins and pipe drop outlets specifically for this project. The Asbridge's were familiar with NRCS practices and specifications and they performed the work using heavy earth moving equipment.

They are excited about the next cropping sequence on one 70-acre farm because they will be able to plant all the acreage instead of steering around gullies only to see them get worse. On another farm they were able to work around a 200 year old red oak tree to build a structure. In an area where trees and crops do not normally exist in the same area, these farmers made an exception for historical and aesthetic reasons.

The Asbridge's raise over 2,000 acres of no-till corn, wheat, and soybeans in Gibson County. Lee and Jeff are hard working individuals who help make agriculture what it is today and their positive outlook make working with them a pleasure.

The Asbridge's already have their next project planned—installing seven acres of CRP filter strips in the summer of 2005.

30th Annual Dickson County Farm Tour

by Wynne Mitchell

Local, State and Federal officials, landowners, and other individuals were on hand on July 16, 2004 at the 30th Annual Dickson County Farm Tour. The tour is conducted annually to highlight outstanding conservation accomplishments by Dickson County landowners. It has grown in popularity over the years with approximately 200 participants attending the tour this year. Tour stops had appeal to all participants and consisted of conservation practices, cultural and community interests, and landscaped homes with ponds and gardens.

The tour is a partnership effort and the result of community involvement, commitment, and planning by Dickson County officials. It was officially sponsored by the Dickson County Soil Conservation District, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Chamber of Commerce and several other local agencies, organizations, and businesses. Participants were given the opportunity to gain knowledge about conservation and their community on the tour.

NRCS District Conservationist Wynne Mitchell provided information on the conservation practices installed on the farms utilizing the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Conservation Reserve Program, funding from Tennessee Department of Agriculture Cost-Share Program and other programs.

The local radio station, WDXN, taped the entire tour for broadcast on the Morning Show the next day. Newspaper and other media representatives also attended.



Williamson County SCD and Quail Unlimited Sponsors Wildlife Field Day

by Cory Hodge

The Williamson County Soil Conservation District, along with the Music City Chapter of Quail Unlimited sponsored a Wildlife Field Day at Misty River Farms in Franklin, TN on September 16. Misty River Farms is a 3,000 acre property owned by Mr. Chuck Elcan that is primarily managed for bobwhite quail and other upland wildlife species. This field day was held to educate landowners on the methods of establishing wildlife habitat, with an emphasis on creating early successional habitat through the planting of native warm season grasses. In addition, landowners were provided valuable information on the benefits of native grasses as quality forage for livestock. Other agencies, organizations, and individuals that provided additional support were the Davidson County Soil Conservation District, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Williamson County Farmers Co-OP, Fairview Farmers Co-OP, and Tommy Pardue.

Over 140 people attended, even enduring intermittent rain showers from Hurricane Ivan. Fortunately, the rain held off for most of the morning and people were able to get a first hand look at the habitat practices that were currently being developed on the farm. Tractors and wagons were provided



Photo by Jhampton Photography

by Gentry Farms to transport people to various tour stops throughout the property. At the first tour stop, Mike Hansbrough, NRCS Area Biologist, discussed the benefits of native grasses for wildlife along with proper establishment techniques. At tour stop two Russ Skoglund, TWRA Regional Biologist, provided information on how landowners can manage their property for bobwhite quail. At tour stop three, attendees learned about the value of native grasses for hay and forage production from Greg Brann, Grazing Lands Specialist, NRCS. At the final stop of the tour, Bryan Kinkel, Wildlife Specialist with Woods & Associates, Inc. gave a presentation about the philosophy behind Quality Deer Management (QDM) on private lands and how to incorporate wildlife food plots into a current QDM management strategy.

Lunch was provided at the farm headquarters by Tennessee Wildsides gourmet chef, Mr. Tommy Pardue. Door prizes, donated by Quail Unlimited, Inc., TWRA, and the Williamson County Co-OP, were presented. Chris Wolkonowski presented awards to several individuals for their help and support of the field day. Mike Shoffner provided additional information on the availability of USDA programs for wildlife that can assist private landowners.

A focus on the importance of wildlife conservation on private lands helped people understand the need for habitat improvement on a grand scale. Landowners learned they can work together to improve conditions for declining species like bobwhite quail, while at the same time helping a multitude of other wildlife populations. The information provided at the field day helped many landowners develop management strategies they could apply to their land as well. The success of this wildlife field day was a direct result of many individuals and organizations coming together to help for a common cause. The event was so successful, plans are underway to make it even bigger and better next year. Primary organizers of the event were Chris Wolkonowski - NRCS Area Biologist, Mike Shoffner - District Conservationist, Cory Hodge - Soil Conservationist, and Vina Winstead - Office Manager, Williamson County SCD.



Photo by Jhampton Photography



Photo by Jhampton Photography



Photo by Jhampton Photography

Loudon County Annual Farm Day by Alicia Whitten

The Loudon County Soil Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service participated again this year with the Loudon County Farm Day. This annual event is for all second graders in Loudon County and is coordinated by the Loudon County Farm Bureau Women.

District employee Karen Hewett and NRCS employee Alicia Whitten taught the children how surface water becomes contaminated using the Enviroscope, a plastic scale model of a typical watershed. The students also learned what everyone can do to prevent non-point pollution and promised to do their part to protect water quality.

This year was a great success with over 550 students in attendance. The District also provided conservation education material for each student to take home.



Photo above: NRCS employee Alicia Whitten teaches a group of second graders about water pollution.

Fentress County Earth Team Volunteers

by Dwight Dickson

The Jamestown Field Office is proud of the relationship they have formed with York Agricultural Institute (Y.A.I.) in Jamestown. The school has a Special Education Work Based Learning Program. The district has worked with the school for the past four years, allowing Ms. Jody Hancock to bring 3 to 4 students to the office each week to work for a couple of hours. Students have done data entry, participated in conservation field days, and helped with the 5th Grade Conservation Day where they do a station on worms, annual picnic and tree sales. Currently students are working on a soil tunnel that can be used by all elementary students.

This has been a valuable program in the community and the soil conservation district is providing students an opportunity to work on conservation initiatives and gain general office skills. The soil conservation district schedules field trips to dairies and poultry houses, providing students a hands-on learning experience. For many students this is the first time they have actually seen and touched a farm animal.

As Earth Team Volunteers, students gain the self-satisfaction of volunteering for their community. The students also work at a couple of other businesses in town each week to learn different job skills.

Jody Hancock does an outstanding job with the students. The soil conservation district is honored to help these students gain skills and knowledge that will shape their future.



Photo above, l to r: Jody Hancock, Dwight Dickson, and students

Meigs County Landowners Plants Warm Season Grasses for Wildlife Habitat by Wayne Coates

Johnny Powell, local Meigs County landowner, decided to establish native warm season grasses to provide better wildlife habitat for small game on his farm. He enrolled 28 acres in the Conservation Reserve Program last spring.

In March, Johnny destroyed the existing stand of Kentucky 31 tall fescue in preparation for seeding warm season grasses. The seed mixture of Little bluestem, Sideoats grama, Indiangrass, Partridge pea and Shrub lespedeza were planted in April to provide food, shelter, and nesting habitat for quail and rabbit. Information about the Conservation Reserve Program was provided by the Farm Service Agency and the Natural Resources Conservation Service provided technical assistance and a conservation plan. Richard Conley, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency biologist, assisted Johnny by providing a grassland drill equipped for seeding warm season grasses.

Mr. Powell is not alone in his efforts to establish wildlife habitat for small game. Five landowners in Meigs County planted 292 acres of native warm season grasses this year.

Photo at left: Johnny Powell, Meigs County landowner, enrolled 28 acres in CRP



Shelby County Soil Conservation District and NRCS participate in Great Outdoors Festival

The Ducks Unlimited tenth Great Outdoors Festival was held on June 4-6th, 2004 at Agricenter International in Memphis. This was a successful educational and informational project including adults, children and teachers, reaching non-traditional groups such as the urban non-farming public from the United States and Canada. Once again, the District sponsored a booth in Conservation Village with the theme on a “wetlands” display by NRCS.



Approximately 47,000 attended the three-day event with 2,000 people stopping by the booth. Andy Neal and Troy Taylor, NRCS Memphis Field Office; Nancy Dollar, Bill Vautrot, Catherine Neal, Becky Neal, Sam Brown, Earth Team Volunteers; Betty Brown and Carolyn Kiesel, Shelby County Soil Conservation District staffed the exhibit.

This marks the tenth year anniversary that NRCS and Shelby County SCD has participated in the Ducks Unlimited Great Outdoors Festival. With more than one million supporters, Ducks Unlimited is the world’s largest wetlands and waterfowl conservation organization.

This project was sponsored by the Shelby County SCD and NRCS.



Photo above: Rhea County students enjoy visit to Sale Creek.

Girl Scouts Visit NRCS Office

Girl Scouts from Benton County, who attended day camp recently, visited the local Natural Resources Conservation Service office. Twenty-three girl scouts and their leaders visited with James Woodall, District Conservationist to learn more about aerial photography and how it is used to conserve natural resources.

The girl scouts saw photography of their school, homes, and other familiar locations and learned how technology like computers and aerial photography help landowners take care of their natural resources.



Pictured above are Brownies, Daises and Junior Girl Scouts visiting with District Conservationist James Woodall in the USDA Camden Field Office.

Aquatic Workshop in Rhea County

On August 5th, Aaron Loyd, Rhea County SCD Soil Conservationist and Gloria York, NRCS District Conservationist, conducted an Aquatic Workshop for Maria Kazmark’s Home School Day Camp for 20 students in grades K-3. They met at the

Kazmark Farm in Sale Creek in the Cranmore Cove Community of Rhea County. After a brief educational presentation by Gloria York, the children were led on a short nature walk to pristine Sale Creek where Aaron and Gloria led discussion and identification of aquatic species caught on site. Using the species that were captured, they rated the pollution level of the creek according to the Izaak Walton work sheet of pollution sensitive organisms. The creek was found to be very low in point source pollution.

The children were later led to a local overpass where they could observe the effect of trash being dumped into the creek. Gloria and Aaron touched on water quality, conservation, pollution and reclamation along with identification of local flora and fauna. They finished up with a brief question and answer segment and passed out age appropriate literature on water quality along with pencils from the Rhea County Soil Conservation District.

RC&D Annual Meeting

The 2004 Tennessee RC&D Council Annual Meeting was held August 5-6 in Townsend with Bill Williams, Chairperson of the Smoky Mountain RC&D presiding. James Ford, NRCS State Conservationist, gave an overview of NRCS/RC&D programs. Dr. Jack H. Britt, Vice-President, UT Institute of Agriculture, gave the keynote address.

Several outstanding speakers addressed the group including Linda Caldwell, Executive Director of the Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association, who spoke on trends in rural tourism. Ed Harlan, Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture, spoke on agriculture business development for the state.

Lewis Kearney, Staff Officer with the Cherokee National Forest presented Larry Blick, RC&D Program Manager an award from the Southern Group of State Foresters and the Southern Region of the Forest Service. The Southern Region of the Forest Service, Cooperative Forestry Branch, recognized Larry for his role in promoting the Rural Community Assistance economic action programs of the USDA Forest Service.

Annual RC&D awards were presented at the banquet on August 5th. Award winners for 2004 are:

- **Bob Peters - Outstanding Coordinator**
- **Brandi Lamb - Outstanding Office Asst.**
- **Southeast TN RC&D Council - Outstanding RC&D Council**
- **Jesse Wilcox - Outstanding RC&D Council Member**
- **Southeast TN RC&D Kudzu Project - Outstanding Project**



Photo above: Bob Peters receives Outstanding Coordinator award from Charlene Shelton, President, Tennessee RC&D Council.



Photo above: Brandi Greene receives Outstanding Office Assistant from Charlene Shelton, President, Tennessee RC&D Council.



Photo above: Southeast TN RC&D Council was selected as Outstanding Council. Pictured l to r are: Joyce Green, Bud Weaver, Audrey Burton, Juanie Weaver, Charlene Shelton, Bob Aikman, & John Solsbee.

Clinch/Powell & Appalachian RC&Ds - Clothesline of Quilts in Appalachia

In a classic example of three states' Resource Conservation and Development initiatives, representatives from two Ohio RC&D's, four Kentucky RC&D's and two Tennessee RC&D's attended a "Clothesline of Quilts in Appalachia" meeting at the Kentucky Artisan Center, Berea, Kentucky on July 13, 2004. This meeting, led by Ohio's Donna Sue Groves representing the Ohio Arts Council, and Lindy Turner and Candy Barbee from Tennessee's Clinch-Powell RC&D, featured presentations of completed sections of the Ohio trail, the Clinch-Powell RC&D's trail and the Appalachian RC&D's trail.

The topic of this discussion was inter-locking the Adams County Ohio quilt trail with the Clinch Powell/Appalachian quilt trails in TN by crossing the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Each section would be a loop in itself but would connect with others to build a continuous "clothesline" across the states.



These quilt blocks are painted on plywood or barnwood canvases and then hung on barns and buildings throughout the region. The blocks which are at least 8'x8' are painted in vivid colors that stand out against their backdrops. The blocks are "pinned" to the quilt trail as they are completed.

The purpose of this unique quilt trail is to draw tourists off the interstates and into our beautiful rural areas. Not only do these small towns and farm lands have beautiful vistas and excellent outdoor recreation venues, they also have hometown eateries, handmade crafts and fine arts, farm produce stands and a genuine desire to show-off their rural brand of hospitality while gaining tourism dollars that will boost the economy.



EWP Work Near Completion

Water is running a lot clearer in the Big Creek watershed these days. Major flooding occurred in August 2001 in the Southern Appalachians causing extensive bed loading and stream bank erosion in several East Tennessee counties. Many roads washed out resulting in significant property damage.

Terry Horne, Engineer and Jenny Adkins, Water Quality Specialist organized and led damage survey assessments. Once Congress approved funding for east TN counties, NRCS did the surveying. NRCS engineers Allen Morrow and Joe Zimmerman completed design work.

Construction began once contracts were written. Though some construction work is ongoing, many counties have now completed construction inspections.

The Emergency Watershed Protection Program has brought much needed assistance to economically strapped portions of east Tennessee. This major accomplishment is due to a team effort involving numerous partners.



Photo above, left to right: Final inspection on the Cocke County portion of EWP work relating to flooding in east Tennessee was completed in January 2004. L to r (seated) Allen Morrow, Joe Zimmerman, Steve Koonce, (standing) Gary Handley, Randy Franks, and Alton Miller.

Photo at right: Work continues on extensive gabion placement on Upper Dry Fork Creek.



Rhea County SCD & Southeast Tennessee RC&D Partner to Host Field Day

The Rhea County Soil Conservation District partnered with the Southeast Tennessee RC&D to host a Farm Field Day on June 15, 2004 in Rhea County. Approximately 80 folks turned out for the event including local farmers, SCD, NRCS, FSA, and UT Extension Service personnel, and Earth Team Volunteers.

On the Donnie Mickel Farm attendees looked at heavy use areas, cross-fencing, use exclusion fencing and watering tanks. Mr. Mickel has utilized several cost-share programs including EQIP and TDA's Ag Conservation fund.

The next stop on the tour was the Bruce Norton Farm. At this farm, they observed an actual Bermuda Sprigging demonstration and Mr. Norton talked about the benefits of having Bermuda on the farm. Mr. Norton utilizes several cost-share programs including the CRP, EQIP and TDA's Ag Conservation fund on his farm. While at the Norton Farm, the group also viewed a fencing demonstration by the Bobby Loyd & Sons Fence Company from Pikeville, TN. The Loyds demonstrated a post driver and constructed a corner brace system for hi-tensile fencing that meets NRCS specifications and standards.



Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program *Current Developments*

Cruze Family Farm...a Farm Forever

by Lavonne Winters

A ceremony was held on September 8 to celebrate the preservation of the Cruze Family Farm located in Knox County.

Attending the event were Knoxville Mayor Mike Ragsdale and other county officials; representatives of partners working with the Cruze Family to preserve their land; Richard Swenson, representing NRCS Chief Bruce Knight, Washington, DC; State Conservationist James Ford; as well as landowners from the surrounding area.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in partnership with the Land Trust of Tennessee, Knox County Government and other partners are assisting the owners of a 425-acre dairy farm on the French Broad River to keep their land a "farm forever." The Cruze Dairy Farm in Knox County is the "first in the state" to be preserved and protected through the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP).

The FRPP is a voluntary program that helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture. FRPP was reauthorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill).

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service cooperates with local entities, like the Land Trust of Tennessee, to place a conservation easement on farmland that will protect the land from future conversion to non-agricultural uses. The landowner receives an easement payment for the encumbrance placed on the land.



Cruze family farm

According to the 1997 National Resources Inventory (NRI), Tennessee is losing prime agricultural land to urban development at a much higher rate than most other states (8th in the U. S.). There are approximately 6 million acres of prime farmland in Tennessee. The NRI shows a loss of approximately 124,000 acres of prime farm land from 1992 to 1997.

"This is his legacy to those who come after him."

James Ford, State Conservationist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service said, "We are pleased the Natural Resources Conservation Service is a part of this important partnership to preserve and protect Tennessee's farmland. This is a historic event in that this is the first farm in Tennessee protected through the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program. The Cruze Family members are to be commended for their efforts in preserving and protecting their land and serving as a model for other landowners." Ford added.

Landowner Cheri Cruze said, "Preservation is complicated, but from my perspective it is simple and from Earl's it is a no-brainer. By that I mean his heritage is so completely about the land and the enjoyment of open space, and yet his own reality has been to see "his" land, the land of his childhood memories, covered with waste

rock, made into a trash dump, or buried beneath a manufacturing plant."

"Earl wants to make binding decisions about his land that still leave choices to other generations, yet reflect his choice for them which is: Farm the land, enjoy the land, but don't divide the land or sell the land. He wants to make the choice that his grandchildren and other people's grandchildren will not be able to make. The choice to conserve the land in perpetuity is now or never. This is his legacy to those who come after him," Cruze added.



L to r: Earl Cruze, James Ford, and Cheri Cruze



Photo above, l to r: Richard Swenson, NRCS and Cheri Cruze