



# Current Developments

*Helping People Help the Land*

December 2006



## Message from the State Conservationist

It is with a mixture of great personal feelings that I bring you this message. I am joyful for the blessed holiday season and for the remarkable opportunity I have had to spend a decade of my life as Tennessee's State Conservationist. The chance I have been given to work with the fine employees of NRCS in Tennessee and with our excellent partners and customers has been a rich and rewarding experience. As you know, I am retiring as the new calendar year gets underway, and saying goodbye is never easy. It will be difficult to leave dedicated friends, colleagues, and coworkers. I know how committed you all are to natural resources conservation, and I am proud to have stood with you and beside you while working toward protecting and preserving Tennessee's natural resources these past ten years.

In the last issue of *Current Developments*, I congratulated you on a job well done for helping NRCS-Tennessee out of the budget deficit in which we found ourselves during fiscal year 2006. Since publication of that newsletter, we received word that the preliminary budget for fiscal year 2007 will likely result in a deficit which is even greater than the one we just overcame. It is this new challenge that makes my heart heavy as I depart, since it comes at a time when our agency will be in transition as a new State Conservationist is named and is settling into the job. However, I have tremendous faith in the people of NRCS and in the management team in place throughout the state. Our Area Conservationists and our State Office managers are experienced and committed leaders. They are also dedicated to working closely with the new State Conservationist—whoever is named to that position—to ensure that your important efforts to preserve and protect Tennessee's natural resources are sustained at the highest level of quality.

Thank you for your support, your friendship, and most of all for your excellent work. I salute your ongoing success in Helping People Help the Land.

James W. Ford

## Upcoming Events

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| 10th Annual National Conservation Systems Cotton & Rice Conference<br>For more info: <a href="http://www.nctd.net">www.nctd.net</a> or call 573-547-2244 | January 29-30, 2007<br>Omni Houston Hotel Westside<br>Houston, Texas       |
| 63rd Annual TACD Convention<br>For registration info: <a href="http://www.tn.nrcs.usda.gov">http://www.tn.nrcs.usda.gov</a>                              | February 22-25, 2007<br>Marriott Nashville Airport<br>Nashville, Tennessee |
| 31st Annual National Wild Turkey Federation Convention & Sport Show<br>For more info: <a href="http://www.nwtf.org/">http://www.nwtf.org/</a>            | February 22-25, 2007<br>Gaylord Opryland Resort Hotel                      |

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## A Beef Cattle Tour in West Tennessee?

by Chris Moyers

Yes, it is hard to believe that scattered amongst the cotton and soybean fields in West Tennessee cattle do roam. The Twin Valleys RC&D Council in Louisiana recently sponsored a four state livestock tour and came to Henderson County for a look-see on how our farmers raise cattle.

Chris Moyers and Gary Blackwood coordinated the tour hosted by the Lexington Field Office and the Henderson County Soil Conservation District. The tour consisted of a backgrounding operation that feeds out approximately 2,000 calves every fall and winter. The tour concluded at a registered Beefmaster operation where a lunch of (no not barbecue) ribeye steak sandwiches was served. The tour also highlighted many best management practices that had been installed with grant funds from the Chickasaw-Shiloh RC&D Council and installed with technical assistance from the Lexington Field Office.



## Tennessee Carbon/Air Quality Project

by Phil Cherry

The Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts (TACD) was awarded a grant from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture to fund an Air Quality/Soil Quality Research Project in 2000. The project is located on property owned by the Robertson County Conservation District. This Conservation District Board reviews and approves all technical work at the project site. The local NRCS technical team including a Grazing Land Specialist, Conservation Agronomist, and three Soil Scientists provide the technical work.

When farmers plow the land, each tillage trip mixes oxygen into the soil, which oxidizes organic matter and releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. When this carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere, it contributes to global climate change, also called global warming. However, when farmers use no-till cropping systems or permanent grass for haying or grazing, the carbon is trapped in the ground and will not be released into the atmosphere. When carbon is trapped in the ground, it improves soil quality by increasing organic matter as well as this air quality benefit.

The 16-plot project includes practices that trap carbon as well as negative practices that release carbon for study. This project can be used by the USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) National Headquarters as a model for the Southeastern United States. We will be able to measure the amount of carbon per acre that is being sequestered on a farmer's property. The model can also be used to establish program funds for maintaining conservation practices that sequester carbon on farms across the Southeast. The project is in the fifth year of study, which includes carbon and soil quality testing and crop yield monitoring. Local District Conservationist James Brown and Conservation Farmer Buddy Bourne are part of the technical team.



Photo above: Greg Brann, NRCS Grazing Specialist, and James Brown, NRCS DC, Springfield Field Office working on the Carbon/Air Quality Demonstration Project in Robertson County.

## Rudolph selected as Area Conservationist for East Tennessee

State Conservationist James Ford has named Terrance Rudolph to be the new Area Conservationist for Area 3 (East Tennessee). Terrance is originally from Bellville, Alabama (Conecuh County). He graduated from Alabama A&M University with a degree in Agricultural Education. He spent summers as a student trainee with NRCS in Janesville, Wisconsin. Upon graduation, he joined the agency fulltime as a Soil Conservationist in Walworth County, Wisconsin.



From there, Terrance was promoted to acting District Conservationist in Madison and Portage, Wisconsin before accepting a permanent DC position in Burlington, Iowa. After another promotion to a District Conservationist position in East Lansing, Michigan, he served for nearly four years before his selection as East Tennessee's new Area Conservationist. Terrance is an avid golfer, hunter, and fisherman. He also enjoys spending time with his family. He and his wife have a 15-month old daughter.

## Bedford Jackson 1924 - 2006

Bedford Jackson, retired soil scientist, died Friday Sept 15, at the age of 82. Mr. Jackson was a veteran of the U.S. Navy, a member of the American Legion #5033 and VFW Post #66.

He received a B.S. degree from Tennessee Technological University in agriculture and a master's from Kansas State University in agronomy. He worked for the Soil Conservation Service and retired as a soil scientist. He was also a well-known surveyor for 27 years in Bledsoe and surrounding counties. He was a member of the United States Civil Service Commission, National Society of Professional Surveyors, Soil and Water Conservation Society, National Rifle Association and served on the Land Surveyor Board.

During his career with NRCS, he was the party leader in Hamilton County and also worked on the Monroe County Soil Survey. He worked around the Chattanooga area for most of his career.

"He was my first supervisor. He was a really good soil scientist and a dedicated employee," stated Paul Fulks. " He was proud of the fact that he was a licensed surveyor . He surveyed part-time during his career. After he retired, he worked as a land surveyor and remained active surveying until a few months before his death."

Survivors include his wife of 55 years, Doris Jackson, two daughters, one son, and four grandchildren.

## FY06 Tennessee Earth Team Annual Report

The 2006 Earth Team Annual Status Report has been released from headquarters, and the figures show Tennessee's Earth Team program is one of the most active and vital programs in the southeastern United States. From October 2005 through September 2006, a total number of 1,681 Tennessee Earth Team members volunteered their time to promote natural resources conservation throughout the state. Their work combined to a grand total of 15,506 hours of volunteered time to Tennessee's Earth Team program in fiscal year 2006. Congratulations to Tennessee Earth Team Coordinator Dimple Geesling, and all the State's Area coordinators: Debbie Blankenship and Faye Floyd in West Tennessee; Heather Conner and Cory Hodge in Middle Tennessee; and Lorella Jennings and Terron Hillsman in East Tennessee.

Tennessee Earth Team Volunteer Award Winners are:

- Group Volunteer Award - Alvin C. York Agricultural Institute Special Learning Work-Based Program, Fentress County
- Earth Team Employee Award - Volunteer Coordinator, Debra Blankenship, Office Assistant, Chickasaw-Shiloh RC&D Office
- ET Partnership Award - Cumberland County Soil Conservation District
- Individual ET Award - Jimmy Winfree, Carthage Field Office.

### NRCS Photo Contest

NRCS-Tennessee employees from across the state participated in the 2006 NRCS-TN Photo Contest. Participants submitted more than 300 entries, and nearly all the images will be available for viewing via the NRCS-TN website soon. Thanks to our contest judge, David Duhl, who teaches Photography at Nashville State Community College and maintains a portfolio of over 9,000 images capturing the natural world. He specializes in native plants and animals, national parks, Tennessee landscapes and landmarks, and natural history. The criteria used by Mr. Duhl in the judging included: Lighting; Treatment of Subject; and Composition.

Congratulations to the winners! The winning photos are on pages 4-5.



## Natural Resources/Agriculture Photo Contest Winners



1st Place

Winter Solitude - Deer in Snow (Wilson County)  
Mike Hart, GIS Specialist, Murfreesboro Area Office



2nd Place

Cotton Field No. 1 (Carroll County)  
James Woodall, District Conservationist, Camden Field Office



3rd Place

Deer in Sunlight (Sumner County)  
Jeanne Eastham, Public Affairs Specialist, Gallatin Field Office

Grazing Photo Contest Winners



1st Place  
Horse Grazing in the Mist (Crockett County)  
Wray Pulliam, District Conservationist, Alamo Field Office



2nd Place  
Sterling Road Goats (Cocke County)  
Carol Chandler, Biologist, Water Resources Staff



3rd Place  
Goats Grazing (Claiborne County)  
Todd Reed, District Conservationist, Tazewell Field Office

## Local Partnership Makes School Playground Safe Again

School playgrounds are supposed to be fun and safe. But a ditch on one Trousdale County Elementary School playground turned into a danger for children because of ongoing soil erosion. The ditch was getting deeper, and school officials realized it had turned into a hazard.

In the fall of 2004, Trousdale County Schools Superintendent Margaret Oldham, contacted Dwight Bell, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) District Conservationist at the Trousdale County Soil Conservation District, to see what could be done about the problem that was steadily getting worse.

Ms. Oldham told the District Conservationist that the ditch kept getting deeper and was already over three feet deep in places. "It was deep enough that a kindergarten child could stand in it and not be seen. It was definitely a hazard to children playing on the playground," she said.

Bell; Philip Brasfield, a NRCS Civil Engineering Technician; and Jedidiah Marshall, an Earth Team Volunteer with the Trousdale County Soil Conservation District immediately surveyed the site. After determining that a riprap rock chute would be the best solution, Brasfield designed the chute and prepared a cost estimate.

"I began looking for sources of possible funding for the project," Bell said. "One of the first people I contacted was Mark Hudson, the Regional Administrator with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA). Fortunately, TDA was able to provide cost-share funding in the form of a matching grant."

Claude Beasley, Trousdale County Road Superintendent, and the Trousdale County Highway Department did the installation at no charge. Ms. Oldham contacted the Rogers Group, which donated the geotextile fabric and provided the riprap at their cost.

The Superintendent is pleased with how well the project went. "Working together, we were

## Billy Gulledge 1932 - 2006

Billy Gulledge, District Conservationist in Dickson County from 1974 to 1994, left a legacy in Dickson County that is still visible today. He assisted landowners in installing conservation practices such as ponds, waterways, critical area treatment sites, animal waste systems, seeded road banks, retention areas, and more that are still evident throughout the county. He started the annual farm tour in 1974 to draw attention to the conservation practices installed on farms in Dickson County. This idea was so successful the annual farm tour is still being conducted today.



He received several awards during his career, including the NACD Award for "District Conservationist of the Year" in 1988-1989. He retired in 1994, but never stopped learning or teaching conservation. In 1995, he was selected as AGI Business Leader of the Year by the Dickson County Chamber of Commerce. He was a member of the Chamber of Commerce Ag Committee from 1974 until his death. He served as a Director on the Five Rivers RC&D Council from 1997 to 2005. He worked with other RC&D Directors to get RC&D funding for the J. Dan Buckner Park in the City of Dickson and then spent numerous hours working on this project for NRCS. The J. Dan Buckner Park is still a beautiful park, a great asset to Dickson County and a tribute to the conservation legacy Billy Gulledge left.

After retirement, he was active in his community. He worked with his fellow church members one day a week assisting with their "meals on wheels" program. He drove to Clarksville each week and picked up the weekly papers for distribution. He was owner and operator of the B&J Liquid Feed Company which serviced Dickson County, adjoining counties and parts of West Tennessee. He also worked as a soil conservation technician with the Dickson County SCD from 2002 to August 30, 2006.

He is survived by three children, 4 grandchildren, and 2 great grandchildren. He was a member of the Water Street Church of Christ where he served as an Elder and church treasurer. He lived on his 35 acre cattle farm in the Sylvia Community of Dickson County.

able to remove a safety hazard and provide a safe place for our students," Ms. Oldham said. "Everyone did a great job, our campus looks better, and our students will benefit from this project for years to come."



Before the project was completed, the ditch was over 3 feet deep in places.



L to r: Claude Ray Beasley, Trousdale County Road Superintendent; Toby Ellis, Rogers Group; Margaret Oldham, Trousdale County School Superintendent; Benny Shepherd, Rogers Group; Dwight Bell, NRCS District Conservationist, Trousdale County SCD.

## Wildflower Planting at First Tee of Memphis

by Andy Neal

NRCS-TN and the Memphis Service Center are working with the Shelby County Soil and Water Conservation District, and NRCS Plant Materials Specialist Sherry Surette to help youth in West Tennessee through an appreciation of natural resources.



NRCS is assisting with planting wildflowers on the Memphis First Tee project, coordinated through the Mid-South Junior Golf Association/The First Tee of Memphis, which provides youth a vehicle through which they can have positive experiences in a non-threatening environment. The MSJGA/The First Tee of Memphis is committed to instilling high standards of academic performance, personal integrity, leadership, athletic accomplishment and the transmission of family values.

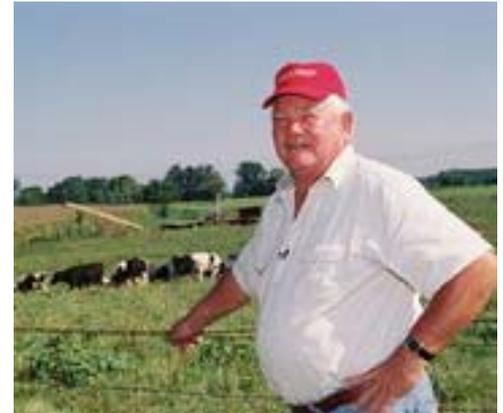
The MSJGA/The First Tee of Memphis seeks to foster an appreciation of the discipline and sportsmanship required in the game of golf, and to demonstrate how these qualities can be applied to everyday life experiences. The NRCS Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center is assisting in the use of native wildflowers and warm-season grasses in the project. The native wildflowers Black-eyed Susan, Claspig Coneflower, and Plains Coreopsis (*Calliopsis*) were planted along with Purpletop, a native warm season grass. Wheat was also planted to provide soil stabilization for the soil over the winter.

The plantings were made on the back slopes of the tee boxes of the First Tee driving range. The purpose of the plantings is to use native plants, provide aesthetics, and to reduce maintenance requirements (mowing). The native wildflowers will meet all these purposes.

Additional plantings of native warm season grasses (e.g. Switchgrass, Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Indian grass) as buffers will

## Bob Willis receives Prestigious Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year Award for 2006

Bob Willis of Hillsboro, TN, has been named the recipient of the prestigious Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year Award for 2006. Mr. Willis was selected for the honor by a panel of judges in competition among nine state finalists in the Southeastern states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia.



As the Southeastern Farmer of the Year, Willis received a \$14,000 cash award from Swisher International. He also received the use of a tractor of his choice for a year from Massey Ferguson North America; gift certificates totaling \$1,000 from Southern States; a \$500 cash award, a \$500 gift certificate and a custom designed jacket from the Williamson-Dickie Company; A \$3,600 custom-designed gun safe from Misty Morn Safe Company.

Willis grew up the youngest of ten children and realized at a very young age if he was going to fulfill his dream of becoming a fulltime farmer, it would have to be with his own operation. He purchased 145 acres in 1961 and planted his first crop – sweet potatoes. Today's operation has grown from that 145 acres to 4,500 acres and includes a variety of crops. Willis is the second winner of the Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year from Tennessee. Jimmy Tosh of Henry was selected as the overall winner in 1998.



Photo above: Wildflower plantings on the First Tee of Memphis.

be made in the spring of 2007. Additionally, the possibility of creating an outdoor classroom of plant materials is being explored.

## Tennessee Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society Hosts First State Fall Meeting

by Charles Roberts

The Tennessee Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society held its first state-wide meeting since consolidating from three chapters to one state-wide chapter. The meeting was held on October 13-14, 2006 at the scenic Falls Creek Falls State Park near Pikeville, Tennessee.

President John Buchanan welcomed some forty members and guests to the meeting. The technical portion of the meeting began at 1:00 pm on Friday with presenters from across the state. The technical portion of the program included presentations from Beth Chesson, President of the State Chapter of the International Erosion Control Association (ICEA). The ICEA were co-sponsors of the meeting.

Other technical session presenters were Doug Slabaugh, State Soil Scientist with the USDA/NRCS in Tennessee; Roy Author, Knox County, Tennessee Watershed Coordinator; Daniel Yoder, with the University of Tennessee Soils Department; Mike Zeman, Biologist, USDA/NRCS; and Brandon Chance and Jennifer Chilton with the State of Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Cookeville, Tennessee.

The technical session covered subjects ranging from use and applications of the new RUSLE2, the history of the USDA Soil Survey Program and its current day applications, agricultural wetland issues, permitting issues relating to the waters of Tennessee and the ICEA's Muddy Water Blues program in Tennessee.

The Saturday morning business session included a report from SWCS South Central Regional Director Ira Linville. He reported on work at the National Chapter level to improve the Society's position as being one of the best professional organizations to belong to. Mr. Linville reported that the next International meeting of SWCS will happen in July 2007 in Tampa, FL.

Scholarship Committee Chairman Chester Bush announced that the Chapter had issued a scholarship to Mr. Alvin Brown. The Tennessee Chapter offers scholarship to college bound or students already enrolled at a university of college. Plans are underway to issue more scholarships in 2007.

The SWCS mission is to advance the art and science of soil, water, and related resources management to achieve sustainability. Anyone wishing to join the Tennessee Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society may contact any member or go online at [www.swcs.org](http://www.swcs.org).



Photo above, l to r: John Buchanan, TN Chapter President; Charles V. Roberts, TN Chapter Secretary-Treasurer; Ira Linville, South Central Regional Director; Don Tyler, TN Chapter Archivist, and Mark Buckreis, TN Chapter Vice-President



Photo above: Participants of the Tennessee SWCS Chapter Meeting on October 13-14, 2006

## Best Wishes and Congratulations to Retiring Coworkers

As the calendar year ends, we want to congratulate several of our coworkers who are retiring in December and January. They come from all across the state, and they include the Director of NRCS in Tennessee, State Conservationist James Ford. The next four pages are devoted to the retirees, and in each of these brief profiles we hope to highlight just a few of their many career accomplishments and achievements.

The eight faces you will see represent more than 275 years of conservation experience. We will surely miss their knowledge and wisdom, but we are happy that they will be able to spend some well-earned time with their families after working so hard to protect and preserve the nation's natural resources. We have come to admire and respect these men, and we always will appreciate their work on behalf of Tennessee and the nation.

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*Don't be dismayed at good-byes. A farewell is necessary before you can meet again. And meeting again, after moments or lifetimes, is certain for those who are friends.*

—Richard Bach

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### Hugh Jackson

**H**ugh Jackson, District Conservationist, Gallatin Field Office, is retiring after 36 years and 10 months of federal service. Hugh began his career as a Student Trainee in the Alamo Field Office where he worked for two months before being drafted into the Army. After returning from 18 months in Germany, he worked in the Clarksville Field Office as a Soil Conservationist for 17 years. In 1991, he went to the Carthage Field Office as District Conservationist.

He came to the Gallatin Field Office as a District Conservationist in 1994. "I have enjoyed my career with NRCS. I have had the opportunity to work with wonderful people, both in the agency and in local communities throughout the state. And I've had the good fortune to spend much of my career working in the field helping landowners conserve our valuable natural resources," stated Hugh. "It's been good."

"Hugh gets along well with coworkers, clients, and agency partners and can be counted on to lend a helping hand. He is the epitomy of a 'volunteer' and always approaches the job at hand with a positive attitude," says Paul Fulks, Area Conservationist, Murfreesboro Area Office. "He will be missed by coworkers, partners and our clients."

Hugh and his wife Joyce, who retired from the Veteran's Administration in 2005, plan to fish, travel and visit family and friends. They have two children, Brian and Kim, who are both in the Nashville area. Hugh has been a baseball and basketball coach for community leagues for more than 20 years. He plans to continue coaching and will definitely be out on the golf course.



### Johnny Sandefur



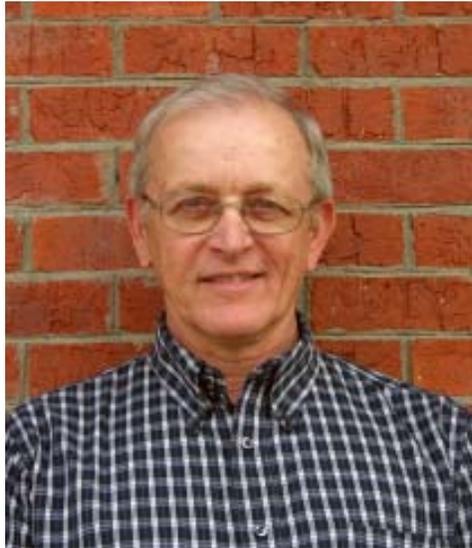
**J**ohnny Sandefur is a military veteran who began his career with NRCS as a student trainee in Warren County in 1977. He joined the agency full time in 1979 in Gibson County as a Soil Conservationist where he remained for the next four years. In 1983 he was promoted to District Conservationist in Hawkins County, and he has lived in Rogersville ever since.

Johnny said what he will miss most during his retirement is the people he works with—the farmers, the board, and his NRCS coworkers. "We have good jobs here," he said. "I love our agency, and I love what we do for the landowners. I don't think there's a better agency in the USA than ours. I think we're the top dogs, and that's just how I feel about it."

Johnny said he will stay busy in retirement. "My wife, Jeanie has a lot of assignments for me to do. I have a hundred things to get done around the house, but I'll also golf and maybe get back into real estate. Who knows? We like to travel and piddle around the farm. I'm looking forward to it." Johnny and Jeanie are the proud parents of two sons, both of whom are in college.

### Larry Hasty

Larry Hasty, Civil (Planning) Engineer, Program Planning Staff is retiring after 42 years and 2 months of federal service. Larry began his career as an Ag Engineer Student Trainee in 1964 in Lincoln County. In 1965, he worked as an Ag Engineer Student Trainee on the Watershed Planning Staff. After graduation from University of Tennessee Knoxville in August 1966, he went to work in the Knoxville Area Office as an Agricultural Engineer. He transferred to the Johnson City Area Office as Area Engineer in 1967, and then to the Nashville Area Office as Area Engineer in 1972. In 1987, he was promoted to the Watershed Planning Staff as a Civil Engineer. Due to agency reorganizations, he became the Civil Engineer on the Program Planning Staff in 1995 and was relocated to the Shelbyville Field Office.



"It has been an interesting and rewarding career," said Larry. "I've worked with a lot of people on many different projects, but one of the things I am most proud of was a project in Mountain City where we helped over a hundred people get running (potable) water in their homes without the benefit of any cost-share or other Federal assistance. Bear Creek, an abandoned mines land reclamation PL-566 project was also very rewarding. I have been able to see the fruits of our labor in planning come to fruition with the improvement of Water Quality in Bear Creek (critters and fish are now there that have been absent since the early 1900's) and the quality of life for people of the area improved due to industry coming in on reclaimed mine lands as well as recreation opportunities developed on these reclaimed areas. Another rewarding project was a RC&D flood control project in an economically depressed area of South Guthrie, Tennessee. Those folks really appreciated being able to live without water all around their houses every time it rained. Of course it was always rewarding to provide assistance to private landowners to help them solve their resource problems and make their life easier on a daily basis. I've worked all across Tennessee in virtually every program that SCS/NRCS has had and made friends in NRCS, in our partner agencies and in the communities where I've worked."

"Larry is an esteemed conservation professional. He has a professional attitude, gets along well with everyone he meets, and leads by example. His attitude is, 'Work till the job is done right,' said John Rissler, ASTC for Program Planning. "He has the ability to work across discipline lines and uses a common-sense approach to solve technical problems. He has been a teacher and a mentor to coworkers, partners, and customers. He is multi-talented and will be missed."

Larry and his wife Connie (a retired school teacher), have four children (3 daughters and 1 son) and ten grandchildren. They live on a farm in Bedford County and plan to utilize their fifth wheel camper and do some traveling. Larry plans to do some consulting work on a limited basis and work around the farm.

### Matt Crowell



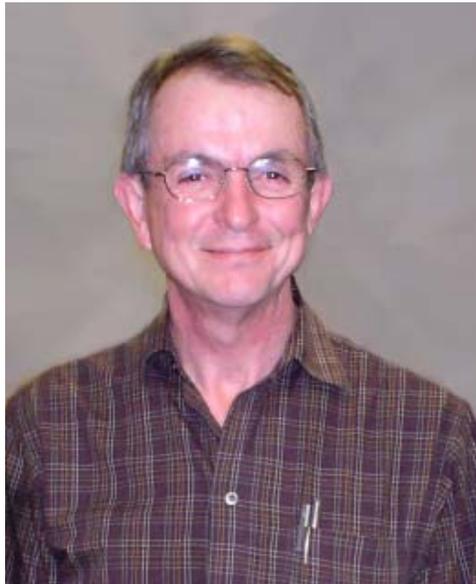
Matt Crowell is retiring as District Conservationist of the Lawrenceburg Field Office after being with the agency since 1977. Matt is originally from Covington, Georgia and attended the University of Georgia where he received a bachelors degree in Agriculture with a minor in Agronomy. He served 4 years in the U.S. Navy from 1972 until 1976. His career with the agency started in Ripley, Tennessee where Matt began working as a Soil Conservationist. In 1978 he was promoted to District Conservationist in the Linden Field Office where he served for 10 years.

In 1988 he became the District Conservationist in the Lawrenceburg Field Office where he has served for the past eighteen years. His friends and coworkers say there is no one else like him. "Matt is an individual. He marches to the beat of his own drum," said Area 2 Conservationist Paul Fulks. "He has a great sense of humor, and we're going to miss him. Matt is also very respected in Lawrence County for his knowledge of conservation."

Matt has two children. His daughter Christen, and husband Mark Pilkington have a 1-1/2 year old son Garrett and reside in Lawrenceburg. Corey, his son, is a cadet 3rd class at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. Corey plans to be a rocket scientist and a jet pilot. "Life is good," says Matt. As for plans after retirement, Matt has been collecting knives and deer antlers most of his adult life. He now plans to put these parts together making hunting knives with deer antler handles.

### Ray Holyfield

**R**ay Holyfield, started working with the agency as a Soil Conservationist in 1974 at the Springfield Field Office after graduating from UT-Martin with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. The next year he went to the Linden Field Office before being promoted in July 1975 to a District Conservationist at the Waynesboro Field Office. Four years later he transferred to the Pulaski Field Office where he remained until he was promoted to Resource Conservationist for Area 2 in December 1991 and stationed in Cookeville where he has remained ever since.



Area Conservationist Paul Fulks said he is going to miss Ray very much. "Ray has a saying for everything. Two of my favorites are, 'Whatever you do, don't break a sweat' and 'Remember, the only person you have to make happy is the person in the mirror.' He has been an essential part of the management and leadership team in Middle Tennessee," Paul said. "When he leaves, it will be like cutting off my right arm. He has made the Middle Tennessee DCs' jobs easier. He's a book of knowledge and helps get the job done. He keeps everyone on the right path."

Ray has one daughter, Carol, two grandchildren Nicole 10 years old and Colin, 18 mos., who reside in Tusculum, Al. Ray and his wife Barbara plan on traveling and camping after retirement; and of course Ray will manage to get some fishing in with his "ole buddie" Lansford.

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### Sam Darnell

**S**am Darnell is retiring after 37 years with NRCS. He began his career as a student trainee in Milan in 1969. Shortly afterward, he came on full-time as an engineer in Dresden. That job led him to West Virginia where he worked as a project engineer for five years. Sam's career then took him to Illinois where he worked on the planning staff in Champaign and then as the Area Engineer in Carbondale for seven years.

After several years in Illinois, it was time to travel southward again, and Sam joined the Design Staff in Mississippi, serving in Jackson for seven years. He finally returned to Tennessee in 1991 where he remained the Supervisory Civil Engineer in West Tennessee's Area One. State Conservation Engineer Robert Anderson says Sam's approach to work makes him a great engineer. "Sam has a knack for comprehending and analyzing all the variables involved in a complex design and we will miss his special ability to recognize several solutions to design challenges."

And what will Sam miss the most after his retirement? "I think the thing I'm going to miss most of all is working on the Cane Creek Project," he said. "That has taken up a big part of my work life."



### Jim Needham



**J**im Needham, 57, the District Conservationist in Obion County, is retiring from the agency after 35 years of service. Jim began his career as a student trainee in the summers of 1969 and 1970. He came onboard full-time in 1971 as a soil conservationist in Ripley. Just two years later, he was promoted to District Conservationist in Union County. He served as a DC in Franklin County from 1974 till 1980, and in McNairy County from 1980 till 1987.

In June 1987, Jim's career came full circle as he came to work in Obion County as a District Conservationist, where he was supervised by the same man who first hired him as a student trainee so many years earlier, retired Area Conservationist Glenn Headden. Headden said he knew that Jim Needham would be a good District Conservationist from the first summer he saw him working. "Jim has always been a hard worker and a quick learner. He's good with people and somebody I could always count on. I'm sure everybody is going to miss working with him, but I know they all wish him a happy retirement."

## State Conservationist James Ford to Retire



After ten years as Tennessee's State Conservationist, James W. Ford has announced he is retiring from the agency effective January 3, 2007. Mr. Ford will leave NRCS after having served the Natural Resources Conservation Service for nearly four decades.

James assumed responsibility as State Conservationist in Tennessee in March 1997. But he began his career in 1968 as a student trainee with the Soil Conservation Service (later to become NRCS) in his native Georgia. He spent his formative years in Early County, Georgia, where he grew up on

a diversified family farm. He attended public school in Early County. James received a BS Degree in Agriculture from Fort Valley State College in 1971 and MS Degree in Public Administration from Georgia College in 1985.

After joining the agency, James held many positions at the county, area and state level in Georgia including Acting State Conservationist. He served as the Partnership Liaison for NRCS in the Southeastern United States, and held additional assignments at the national level before being named to lead NRCS in Tennessee in early 1997.

James received numerous awards during his career. However, among the most outstanding were the Hammer Award for his work on the flood recovery after Hurricane Alberto and the National Outreach Award from the U. S. Forest Service for assisting and empowering communities in Tennessee.

James is an active member and Past President of the Fort Valley State University Agricultural Alumni Association. During his tenure, he revitalized the newsletter and was successful in increasing the membership. He is an active member of the Soil and Water Conservation Society. James also served on the Board of Directors of the Middle TN Fellowship of Christian Athletes and the Advisory Board of Land Between the Lakes.

James is Pop-Pop to three grandchildren. He is married to the former Isabelle Revelle, who is a conservationist in her own right. They both enjoy collecting pottery and restoring small antiques. Congratulations and good wishes to James and the entire Ford family!

### State Administrative Officer Susan Hopkins:

The thing I'll miss most about James is his humanity. He truly cares about the individuals who work for him and that will be hard to replace. He believes in treating everyone fairly. That, and he's always good for a story. No matter the situation, he always has a story!

### ASTC for Water Resources Charles Roberts:

It's been a real learning experience working with James. He's always been the type of boss you could talk to and who was willing to hear your concerns. I wish him well in his retirement.

### State Resource Conservationist Vic Simpson:

I have really appreciated that Mr. Ford gave me the opportunity to serve on the Tennessee staff. It has been a pleasure and an honor. May this new beginning be the best one!

### Management Analyst Grace Lutz:

James is always in control and always professional in every situation. He bends over backward for employee concerns. I think what I've admired about him most is his desire and commitment to play by and adhere to the rules. It's important to him to do what's right.

## NRCS Colleagues on State Conservationist James Ford

### Area 1 Conservationist Richard West:

James' strong suit is that he has had us work together much more as a team than we did under any other state conservationist. He brings people in to look at all sides of the issues. During James' tenure, we've been dealing with a lot of tough issues. For example, we've had a budget deficit the whole time he's been here—through no fault of his—but through his leadership, we've been able to pay everybody and put more conservation on the ground, and that's due to him.

### Area 2 Conservationist Paul Fulks:

James is the most caring and thoughtful State Conservationist I have ever known. He truly cares about all his employees and especially the field staff. I wish James and his family the very best in his retirement.

### Area 3 Conservationist Terrance Rudolph:

I've never had a State Conservationist that is as caring and easy to talk to than Mr. Ford. I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to work with him. I wish him and his family an abundance of blessings during his retirement.

### State Engineer Robert Anderson:

I always appreciated James's calm nature and his gift of patience. We could all use a dose of James's patience in carrying out our jobs and in our relationships with challenging and unpredictable people.

### EWP Program Manager Alton Miller:

During many of our many conversations through the years, James would tell at least one story. In each story he shared a truth about some aspect of work and life that he deemed important. I wish to thank James for those "truths" and wish him a long and happy retirement with family and friends.

### ASTC for Programs John Rissler:

James is very professional and always operates on an even keel. I've never seen him lose his temper or lose control. I don't think he's ever yelled at an employee, which you can't say about too many bosses. He's a man with a great deal of integrity, and I'm going to miss him.

### Administrative Assistant Naomi Johnson:

Thanks for the opportunity! I will always remember the quote "Teachable moment". Best wishes in your retirement.

## Soil Quality Workshop held in Maury County

by Jeff Bowie

The Maury County Soil Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service held a one day Soil Quality Workshop on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006 at Mr. Campbell Ridley's farm in Maury County. The workshop provided farmers and other attendees with information on soil quality, the difference between inherent and management induced soil quality, soil quality indicators, soil quality measurements and observations. The workshop was planned to help landowners identify management practices that would enhance soil quality on all land uses, understand available water capacity, water infiltration and know the pH level of the soil.

Natural Resources Conservation Service soil scientists Jerry Prater and Debbie Brasfield led the Soil Quality Workshop. They facilitated discussion and conducted hands-on exercises such as available water capacity, water infiltration and residue management.

Producers and agency partners attending the sessions had the opportunity to participate in the hands on activities. Attendees also received packets containing information about soil quality and its importance when farming.

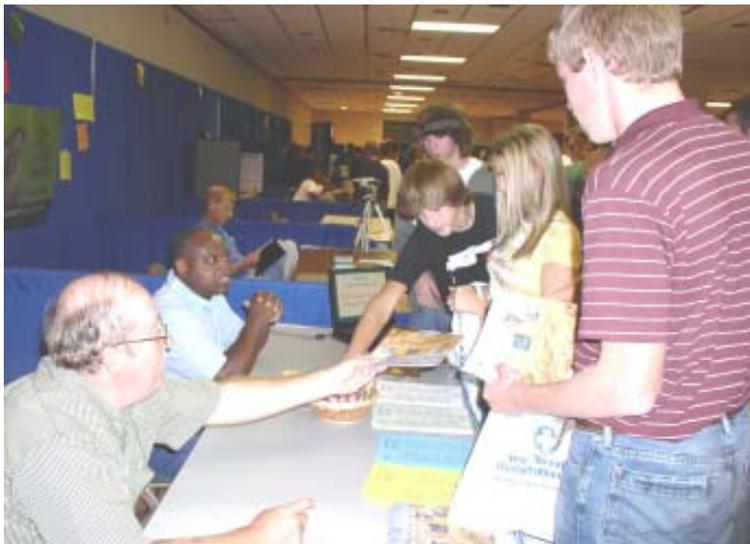
*Photos: Debbie Brasfield, NRCS Soil Scientist (photo top right) and Jerry Prater, NRCS Soil Scientist (photo bottom right) conducted hands-on exercises and facilitated discussion on soil quality.*



## Market Day 2006 in Madison County

by Benton James

District Conservationist Brad Denton and Soil Conservationist Kenneth Williams participated in Market Day 2006 in October. The event presented by the Jackson-Madison County Board of Education enabled one thousand 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students from Madison County Tennessee an opportunity to visit with and discuss potential career opportunities with representatives of various employers including NRCS.



## Three Marshall County Dairy Animal Waste Systems Completed in 303d Watersheds

Work that began in 2005 on three Marshall County dairy farms, all of which were located in 303d watersheds, has now been completed. The landowners approached the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Marshall County Soil Conservation District because they needed technical assistance with several natural resource concerns on their farms. With help from NRCS engineer Matt Brown three unique animal waste systems were planned and implemented. Each waste system was designed to fit the needs and function of the individual farms.

The Gilmac Dairy Farm needed more room for their waste storage and the ability to spread the



*A heavy use travel lane and exclusion fencing was installed at the Gilmac Dairy.*

waste in a timely manner when the crops needed it. They were able to make use of an existing manure holding pit after it was core sampled and tested for its ability to adequately contain the waste. Old trees and shrubs that had been allowed to grow on the banks of the manure pit were removed and the pit was reshaped and compacted. A second manure holding pit was excavated and a pipe installed to transfer the waste into the second stage pit. Guttering was installed on all the buildings contributing water to the system. Concrete curbing was installed as well as a heavy use travel lane, critical area treatment and exclusion fence.



*Gilmac Dairy installed a pipe to transfer waste from the existing holding pit to the second manure pit that was excavated.*

The Warner Dairy Farm had concerns about erosion, waste containment and waste utilization. Cattle loafed on a travel lane located on a hillside before entering the parlor to be milked. Originally, the dairy owner was considering an earthen storage system but after consultation with Brown and NRCS geologist Andy Hartman an above ground concrete storage tank was designed.



*The Warner Dairy installed an above concrete storage tank, a travel lane and staging area, concrete curbing, and roofing and guttering.*

Concrete slabs were poured for a travel lane and a staging area to get the cattle off the hillside. Concrete curbing was also poured along the new slabs and all of the old concrete areas. Roofing and guttering was incorporated into this system to minimize the amount of water entering the manure storage tank and increase the manure storage time. A pipe was installed to transfer the parlor water into the storage tank. The waste system also included critical



*Above & below: Kilpatrick Dairy cleaned and resealed a slurry store tank and installed concrete slabs, curbing, roofing and gutters. Two underground storage tanks were installed along with pumps and pipelines to move the waste into the slurry store.*

area treatment and exclusion fencing.

The Kilpatrick Dairy Farm had the same issues as the Gilmac and Warner dairies. There was an abandoned slurry store tank on the farm but no functional waste storage system. The slurry store was cleaned out and resealed. Concrete slabs and curbing were installed as well as roofing. Gutters were installed on old and new structures. An underground concrete tank was installed to collect the parlor water and a second underground tank was installed to collect the manure scraped from the concrete each day. Pumps and pipelines were installed to move the waste into the slurry store. Critical area treatment and a heavy use travel lane were also components of this project.



Each of these Marshall County dairies now have a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan. There's no doubt that soil, air, and water quality and animal health has been improved due to the efforts of each of these landowners! Along with NRCS, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture was a financial contributor to these projects and the Tennessee Nature Conservancy contributed to one of the projects.

## 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Farm Ed Day in Shelby County

The tenth annual "Farm Ed Day" was held on Thursday, November 2, 2006, at Agri-center International from 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Farm Education Day's purpose is to teach students and teachers about agriculture. This activity is directed to the local urban fifth grade audience. A total of 838 students and 55 teachers/parents attended with 94 volunteers/exhibitors making a grand total attendance of 1,031 participating in this event. There were 15 Memphis/City and private schools involved in this year's event. The students and teachers received educational packets that they can take home with them, providing even more information about agriculture and its importance to society worldwide. Upon arrival, the students had class pictures made and then viewed 15 exhibits featuring birds of prey, corn, cotton, soybeans, honey bees, forestry, safety and farm equipment and real live animals on site. The Shelby County Soil Conservation District has served on the steering committee and sponsored this event from its conception.



## Lexington Chapter wins Mid-South Fair FFA/Agribusiness Soil Judging Contest

The Mid-South Fair FFA/Agribusiness Soil Judging Contest was held at Shelby Farms in Memphis on Monday, September 25, 2006. The contest was conducted by Andy Neal, District Conservationist with Troy Taylor, Soil Conservationist, and Betty Brown, Soil Conservation District assisting. Don Tyler and Charlie Davis were the judges and the scorekeepers were Ozell Wright and Becky Muller.

There were four (4) states competing in the event::

- Lexington Chapter – Tennessee
- Jackson County - Kentucky
- South Jones – Mississippi
- Charleston Chapter - Missouri

The winning team was Tennessee, Lexington Chapter. Daniel White from Tennessee received the high scorer individual award. Second Place went to Kentucky. Third Place went to Mississippi and Fourth Place went to Missouri. The winning teams were recognized at the Mid-South Fair Agribusiness.



*Lexington Chapter wins Mid-South Fair FFA/Agribusiness Soil Judging Contest*



## New Survey Equipment to Improve NRCS-TN Efficiency

by Robert Anderson

NRCS-TN has recently purchased two new Survey Grade GPS systems that link to 34 satellites (24 US and 10 Russian) orbiting the earth. This technology allows for speedy topographic surveys by a single person on the go. Surveys that once took weeks to perform can now be potentially performed in a matter of a couple of days. This is the best method for improving surveying efficiencies and will result in significant cost savings in staff time. It will allow one person to survey versus three, and time saved surveying equals more time for other conservation tasks. Survey grade GPS technology can be used with state plane coordinates which makes matching surveys to GIS data possible. Initially, NRCS-TN will use the new equipment to run topographic surveys on rehab projects, WRP sites, large CO-01 jobs, animal waste sites, and irrigation land leveling



NRCS in Tennessee also will be piloting the use of Pocket PCs for field work. The PDAs will be used to design conservation practices and perform other tasks in the field.



These handheld devices are multi-task devices and also can be used to print designs and maps in the field; increase efficiency; integrate GPS data with GIS, forms and digital pictures; increase field time while decreasing office computer time; reduce the trips required per job; and, easily carry electronic resource information. Potential users of this new technology include engineers, technicians and conservationists for survey note keeping and design of engineering practices; Soil Conservationists for inventory and plan development; and Biologists for Wetland, Easement and Wildlife habitat delineation and assessment. Initially, NRCS-TN will use the new equipment to design water and sediment control basins and other practices in the field.

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