

# Current Developments

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Summer 2008



## Message from the State Conservationist

After months of uncertainty, the “Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008”—otherwise known as the Farm Bill—is now law. That means we can stop wondering about the bill and start implementing it.

The Conservation Title of the new law includes an increase in conservation program spending overall. The Farm Bill emphasizes a focus on agricultural and forestry working lands, and it significantly expands the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). WHIP, CRP, CSP, WRP, and other Farm Bill programs will continue, and they will be joined by some new programs, including the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP). The Department is currently in the rule-making phase of implementing the new Farm Bill, so more details about how we are to implement these programs will be available in a couple of months.

It is very important that each of us read and understand the new Farm Bill’s Conservation Title. Our customers and partners expect and deserve expert advice about the opportunities and responsibilities outlined in the new law, and they will be looking to us to get it. I urge you to read the Conservation Title and view a powerpoint presentation highlighting the Conservation Title. Both the presentation and the text of the “Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008” are at the top of the Programs section on the Tennessee NRCS website.

We all need to understand the Farm Bill, however, we cannot forget that the important goal is getting conservation on the land. Thank you for your patience throughout the Farm Bill process. I am proud of your work and your ongoing commitment to help people help the land.

Kevin Brown  
State Conservationist

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**25th Milan No-Till Field Day** **July 24, 2008**

6:00 a.m. - ???

For more info, Research and Education Center @  
(731)686-7362 or email: [tennu@bellsouth.net](mailto:tennu@bellsouth.net)

**State Annual Meeting of TN RC&D Councils** **August 7-8, 2008**

Fall Creek Falls State Park

For more info, contact Hull York Lakeland RC&D

**Smithsonian’s “New Harmonies Celebrating  
American Roots Music” traveling exhibit**  
Celina Fairgrounds

**June 20 - August 8, 2008**

For more info, <http://www.museumonmainstreet.org> (click on New Harmonies)  
or <http://www.freehillcommunity.org/>



## Jeff Sanders Receives Circle of Excellence Award



Photos above & right: Jeff Sanders on duty in Afghanistan.

**N**RCS Chief Arlen Lancaster and Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer have awarded the Circle of Excellence Award to Tennessee State Resource Conservationist Jeff Sanders. The award is recognition for Jeff's service in Afghanistan.

Jeff is one of only 14 NRCS employees in the United States to receive the Circle of Excellence Award. Each recipient has been honored for their contributions and sacrifice in Iraq and Afghanistan. NRCS has had more employees volunteer to serve in both countries than any other agency in the Department.

This is not the first award Jeff has received for his service. In 2006, Jeff received the "Commander's Award for Excellent Service," the fourth highest military honor that a civilian can receive from the Army. Congratulations on a job well done, Jeff!

## EQIP Participant Receives 2008 Tennessee Governor's Environmental Stewardship Award

by Bill Dailey and Wayne Coates

**M**cMinn County Farmer Robert Thompson has been named the recipient of the 2008 Tennessee Governor's Environmental Stewardship Award. Thompson operates a beef farm in northern McMinn County. He is a participant in EQIP as well as programs with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and the TVA. On his farm, which contains a large beautiful stream and a number of creeks, Thompson has implemented livestock exclusion, stream buffers, water tanks, and other conservation practices.

The Tennessee Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards are the most prestigious environmental and conservation awards in the state. For over 20 years, the awards have been presented to individuals and organizations that make great contributions to the conservation of our wildlife and related natural resources, the natural elements upon which all life depends.

The purpose of the Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards is to recognize outstanding achievements by individuals, businesses, organizations, educational institutions, and agencies for successful environmental projects and conservation measures. Also to promote leadership by example and in turn increase conservation of the natural resources of the State of Tennessee – its wildlife, forests, soils, water, natural heritage, parks and recreation, and air. The awards are designed to bring about a greater knowledge and awareness of environmental and conservation practices and projects, and to give proper recognition to those persons and organizations that make outstanding contributions to the natural resource welfare of their community and the state.



McMinn County Farmer Robert Thompson with McMinn County SCD Board.



## Tom Pointer - Tennessee's First Earth Team Volunteer Recognized for 25 Years of Service

by Dimple Geesling, State ET Volunteer Coordinator

Tennessee's very first Earth Team Volunteer has been recognized for his 25 years of service to conservation in Tennessee. State Conservationist Kevin Brown awarded Earth Team Volunteer Tom Pointer with a certificate of merit during National Earth Team Volunteer Week.

Tom signed up as a volunteer in the old Cookeville Area Office in 1983 getting new vehicles serviced, cleaned and operational. He also assisted in getting annual maintenance inspections on other vehicles.

Tom has been the driving force behind many projects sponsored by the Hull-York Lakeland RC&D Council since becoming a director in 1984. He was instrumental in the success of a program to restore the American Sweetheart Chestnut to the area. Through his efforts, more than 7,000 seedlings have been planted in the fourteen county area of Hull-York Lakeland. He materially contributed to the success of a project to safely collect and recycle used motor oil, using his personal funds to purchase materials to prepared used oil collection site signs for each location.

Tom has served as a member of the executive committee as secretary/treasurer, prepared displays for meetings and been the driving force for the Regional Envirothon. He volunteers his time for each State Envirothon event, as well as TN RC&D Council Annual Meetings.

In addition to providing outstanding volunteer service to RC&D, Tom has also contributed immensely to the overall mission of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. He has spent many hours in the field office doing numerous tasks which allowed field personnel to spend more time assisting land users plan and apply conservation practices. Tom has presented programs on conservation, assisted with award banquets, helped assemble conservation plans, and performed numerous other tasks for the local Soil Conservation District

In addition to his volunteer work, Tom is treasurer of the Algood Lions Club; treasurer of the Middle Tennessee Antique Tractor Association; a member of the finance committee of the Algood United Methodist Church; director of the Agriculture Foundation at Tennessee Tech University; a member of Upper Cumberland Genealogical Association; director of the Algood Alumni Association; a member Farm Bureau; a member of National Association of Retired Federal Employees; and a member of the Andrew Jackson Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society. He also assists the Agriculture Extension Service and Rotary Club with special events.

Tom is an outstanding volunteer. Thanks to Tom for helping people help the land!!

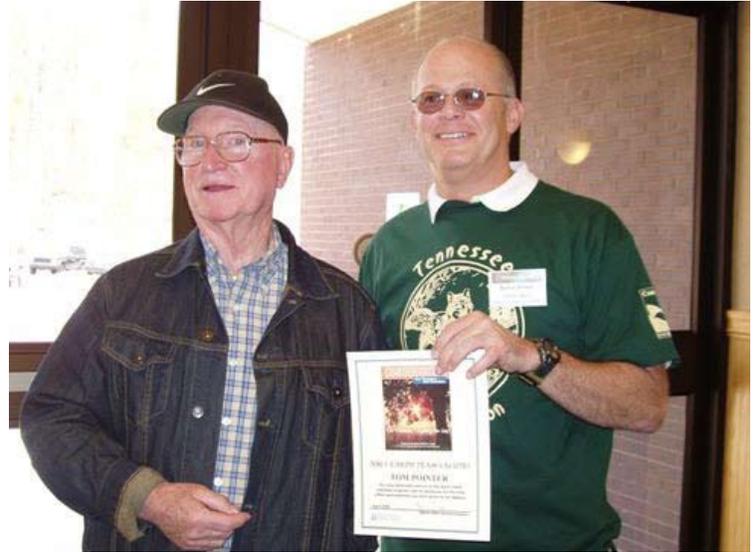


Photo above: Tom Pointer receives a Certificate of Merit for 25 years of Volunteer Service from Kevin Brown, NRCS State Conservationist.

## Earth Day Celebrated at Paris Elementary

by Pam Jewell, Secretary, Henry County Soil Conservation District

The Henry County Soil Conservation District and NRCS celebrated Earth Day 2008 with the fifth grade classes from Paris Elementary. A short presentation was given to the classes on how Earth Day was started and why we should celebrate the planet we live on not only on April 22 but every day of the year. After the presentation the classes planted two red maples and 3 red oak trees near their new playground.





## Tennessee Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society Conducts Annual Spring Meeting

by Charles Roberts, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist  
(Water Resources)

The Tennessee Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society conducted its annual spring state-wide meeting. The meeting was held Thursday, May 1 at the Lane Agriculture Center in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

President Chester Bush welcomed 57 members and guests to the meeting. The technical portion of the program included presentations from Robert Karsh, Statewide Storm Water Coordinator with the Tennessee Department of Conservation (TDEC); Sharon Schutz, Engineer with the firm of Neel Schaffer; and Julie LaLonde, Project Manager with Volkert and Associates.

Other technical session presenters were Daniel Horne, District Conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, (NRCS), and Jeff Hoilman, Project Manager with Arcadis. The group heard information relating to storm water management, site inspections and permit requirements. The group also saw a demonstration of materials and devices utilized in construction site stabilization.

Following the technical meeting, the Chapter held a members business session.

Darrell Beason, Chairman of the Scholarship committee, announced that Kayla Brown had been selected to receive the Society's annual scholarship for 2008-2009. Miss Brown will receive a \$600.00 scholarship and will be attending Middle Tennessee State University in the fall.

In other Chapter business, the members elected to send Janette Peters as the Chapter's delegate to the International Annual Society Conference to be held in Tucson, Arizona, July 26-30, 2008. Don Tyler was selected to serve as alternative delegate.

President Chester Bush closed the meeting by thanking out-going President Mark Buckreis for his excellent service to the Society. Bush stated that "Mark's efforts had been very instrumental in making the Society a viable organization in Tennessee again."

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



Photo above: SWCS participants observe an outdoor demonstration of storm water management. Photo by Charles Roberts.



Photo above: Past SWCS President Mark Buckreis leads discussion on materials and devices to control and stabilize construction sites. Photo by Charles Roberts.





## Congratulations Mandy & Trent

Soil Conservationist Trent Cash and District Conservationist Mandy Silvey are officially husband and wife. The twosome said their vows before friends and family on June 7, 2008.

State Resource Conservationist Jeff Sanders was among those on hand, saying, "I hope this happy union produces at least a few little soil con technicians down the road!" Trent and Mandy will make their home in Marshall County.



## Retiree Vic Simpson....

Former State Resource Conservationist Vic Simpson retired earlier this year, but he is busier than ever. We wanted to check in with Vic to find out what he's up to.

"I have finally adjusted to the retirement schedule and highly recommend it to those thinking about it. Like all the others that have retired, I find it difficult to understand how I ever had time to hold a full time job."

"Of course, I have been busy with my photography. I produced a video for the neighbor's wedding of her daughter. It was a combination of old scanned photos and VHS videos of the couple growing up and meeting. It really turned out pretty good."

"Also, I am still restoring the old photos given to us by my wife's mother, lots of fixer-up duties and chores long put off, gardening, landscaping, and naps. I am supposed to teach a Facilitation course for NEDC later this summer as a volunteer. We are also spending a lot of time with family. I have a new grandson as of last week, Colton Simpson - that makes 4 now.

"My best to everyone - the thing you miss the most is the great people that work for NRCS - they are the best!"





## Chickasaw-Shiloh RC&D Council Receives State Rural Development Committee Award for 2007

The Chickasaw-Shiloh RC&D Council has been named the recipient of the State Rural Development Committee Award for 2007. Council president Troy Kilzer accepts the award from Assistant Commissioner Joe Gains of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.

Congratulations Chickasaw-Shiloh RC&D!

*Photo at right: Chickasaw-Shiloh RC&D Council President Troy Kilzer accepts the State Rural Development Committee Award from Joe Gains, Assistant Commissioner of TDA.*



## Meet Kim Johnson, HR Manager

If you see a deliriously happy lady wandering the halls of the State Office, you have probably run into me, Kim Johnson. I'm the new HR Manager. I came to NRCS from spending the last 23 years in the Washington, DC area. I moved with two children ages 21 and 15, two dogs, five cats and one ferret in February. It looked like Noah's Ark traveling down Interstates 81 and 40 to get here. I settled into Lebanon with my menagerie and have been extremely busy ever since.

I started my career 23 years ago with USDA and I'm pleased to be back. In 1985, I worked in the front office for FCIC in the South Building. I now feel that I have come full circle in my career and I plan on being here a long time. The people are wonderful, the work is terrific; besides I love Tennessee!

Being in Washington, DC, I have had the opportunity to work for several different agencies. That is part of the beauty of Human Resources and Washington. The majority of Federal Agencies are headquartered there and everyone has HR.

I was working for FEMA on September 11, 2001. It profoundly changed my life. It was that day that I decided I no longer wanted to work in DC. My children didn't want me to return to my job following that horrific day. I had to explain to them that this is what mommy does; I go into Washington to do my job. Many people do not know that when you work at FEMA, you perform your normal job, but you are also assigned to an Emergency Support Team that rotates every 3 months. 19 days later, the Emergency Support Team that I was assigned to began their tour. October 1, I started working from

7:00 pm to 7:00 am, 7 days a week. I was the Administrative Supervisor at the Command Center. This wasn't for a few days as it had previously been when a natural disaster had occurred. This was continuous, till the next team's turn. This was **TERRORISM** it doesn't go away. It changed the way we live. The silver lining to this, I did get to meet and shake hands with President George W. Bush. He came to FEMA and personally thanked us for our efforts.

In May of 2002, I accepted a position with the Drug Enforcement Administration. I must say it was an honor and privilege to have spent the past six years working with an agency that has such a powerful mission. These public servants are the most dedicated that I have ever worked with. Every day I walked past the Wall of Honor that was dedicated to our fallen co-workers. It reminded me daily of the sacrifices that are being made.

It was a difficult decision to part ways with DEA. But when you know with all your heart that you are supposed to be in a particular place, you go. I am here. I am Kim C. Johnson, the new HR Manager for NRCS in Tennessee. Please come by and see me when you get the opportunity. I would love to meet you.



*Kim Johnson, HR Manager*

## The 2008 Farm Bill

State Conservationist Kevin Brown is encouraging all employees to familiarize themselves with the Conservation Title of the new Farm Bill. Some new links have been uploaded to the Tennessee NRCS website that should help.

<http://www.tn.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/index.html>

The link above takes you to the Programs page where four new items have been placed explaining the Farm Bill's impact on conservation.

One link is to a summary of the Conservation Title from the US House Agriculture Committee; another is a similar summary from the NACD; a third link will take you to the complete text of the entire Farm Bill; and a fourth link will bring up a new powerpoint presentation from NHQ summarizing the Conservation Title. The last two files are large, so please be patient while they load.



Photo above: Dot and husband Roy.

## Meet Dot Griggs, Area 2 Administrative Assistant

**W**e have Hurricane Katrina to thank for Dot Griggs coming to NRCS. Dot, who has been in her new position as Area 2's Administrative Assistant since early January, is a New Orleans native. She and her family evacuated before the hurricane but returned a few days later where they lived off a generator, ate MREs (meals ready to eat), and picked up ice from the Army. The experience made Dot decide to try something new. "I thought I'd enjoy knowing what it's like to live above sea-level for awhile," she says.

Dot has about 13 years of federal service. She has spent most of her career as a Department of Defense civilian employee, though her most recent federal position was with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. While spending several years home-schooling her children, Dot worked as a professional organizer—a very important skill she uses daily as an area administrative assistant.

Dot's husband, Roy, is a retired navy public affairs officer who now does public affairs as a civilian for naval support activity in New Orleans. Dot says living apart has been tough, but Roy is job searching in middle Tennessee, so she hopes they'll be together again full-time soon.

Dot and Roy have a 27-year old daughter and a 24-year old son, and they are the proud grandparents of six—with the latest grandbaby coming into the world this past March.

Dot's passion is fitness, nutrition and exercise, and "anything health-related." Her lifelong commitment to being healthy is inspired by her dad, who suffered with diabetes and heart disease. She lifts weights, does aerobics, and is well-versed in vitamins and natural supplements. And she enjoys giving advice, too. "Cinnamon helps control blood sugar, you know," says Dot. Still, there's one sure way to get on her good side. "My weakness is bread pudding. I love it!"

Dot says she's very happy to be at NRCS. "I love my new job. My boss is one of the nicest people I've ever worked for. And I like credit leave! I've never worked at an agency that allowed that, so I appreciate it a lot. I'm just glad and thrilled to be here. I've never worked with a nicer group of people in my life."

## Lynda Lemay Retires After More than 32 Years of Federal Service



**A**fter 25 years of service to NRCS, the State Office is saying goodbye to Lynda LeMay. Lynda retired in June after 32.7 years of federal service.

Before coming to NRCS in 1983, Lynda worked at Vanderbilt University's Department of Campus Planning. Prior

to that she spent a few years as an office manager at the Yearwood & Johnson Architecture firm. She began her professional career at the Food & Drug Administration.

In her quarter-century with NRCS, Lynda has held positions in every department of the State Office from the State Admin's office to public affairs to the SRC staff and Programs, Ecological Sciences, and finally as supervisor of the Business Support Staff.

So what's in store now that she's retired? Lynda says for a couple of months she's going to rest, relax, and de-stress. "Then I'm going to be involved with taking care of my mom and spending time with my grandsons. And perhaps eventually I'll find some other kind of work I really want to do. That'll happen when I get bored. I haven't gotten bored yet," she says with a smile.

Lynda says she will miss her coworkers a lot, but she's looking forward to sleeping in and

having time for herself. Her hobbies include working in the yard, gardening, and the outdoors. She particularly loves to fish.

"I think most of all, I'm going to miss going to the farmer's market with Sheila (Caradine)," she says, adding, "And I'm still smoking cigarettes but I'm planning on quitting. They're getting too expensive."

Good luck, Lynda. We're all going to miss you!



## EWP Cost Share Funding Used on 31 Sites in Perry County

by Gregory M. Taylor

The Perry County Highway Department and NRCS have been working together the last few years to repair roads in the county that have been damaged by heavy rainfall events.

The Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) is a program administered by the NRCS with funds allocated by Congress is a recovery effort that relieves imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, and other natural occurrences.

During 2007, the Perry County Highway Department repaired 31 sites throughout the county that had been eroded dangerously close to the roadways. The accompanying picture is a site on South Fork Toms Creek Road that was repaired by a relatively new process of placing preformed blocks at the bottom of the slope then placing rock rip rap above the blocks to stabilize the streambank and to repair and prevent any future damage to the roadway. This allows areas that if only rip rap is used would extend into the stream and restrict normal flow.

The total cost of the 31 sites in 2007 was over \$700,000.00 with the EWP program providing 75% cost share that exceeded \$500,000.00.



*This site on South Fork Toms Creek Road was repaired by a relatively new process of placing preformed blocks at the bottom of the slope and then placing rock rip rap above the blocks to stabilize the streambank and to repair and prevent future damage to the roadway. Photo by Greg Taylor.*

## Tree Day in Williamson County

by Trent Cash

The Williamson County Soil Conservation District celebrated Arbor day this year with a free tree giveaway. The Williamson County SCD's annual tree day event was held on March 4, 2008. More than 75 residents came out to take advantage of the tree seedling giveaway. District and NRCS employees provided information about the trees, which included 500 pine seedlings, 500 tulip poplars, and 100 dogwoods.

The complete success of the event has resulted in plans for a similar tree giveaway next year offering even more selections.



*The Williamson County Tree Day was a success with county residents.*



## Chickasaw-Shiloh RC&D Council Awards Five Community Grants

by Debbie Blankenship

The Chickasaw-Shiloh RC&D Council has awarded five Community Grants for \$1,000 each to allow community groups and organizations, schools, and local agencies the opportunity to implement small scale projects that have significant importance in the RC&D Area. Grants were awarded to Adamsville Elementary School for Conservation Education materials for their library; Bethel Springs Elementary School to renovate the school's playground; The Bird Dog Foundation to continue development of an interactive Nature Trail; Hardin County Middle School to help the students produce a conservation education video; and the Savannah Christian Academy for an outdoor classroom.

The RC&D Council received 24 grant applications this year which proves there is a tremendous need for community development in the area. Congratulations to all the grantees!



Photo above: Debbie Blankenship, NRCS RC&D Office Assistant, (center) awards a \$1,000 Community Grant to members of the Bird Dog Foundation at the Hardeman County Soil Conservation District Banquet March 13, 2008.

## AgStar Leadership Program in 7th Year

State Conservationist Kevin Brown and TN Farm Bureau Field Director Joe McKinnon present Tammy Hargett from Crockett County with her AgStar Class of 2008 graduation plaque. This is the seventh year of successful AgStar Leadership Programs. Tammy was one of 11 class members this year.

The AgStar Leadership program is sponsored by the Chickasaw-Shiloh RC&D Council, along with the West Tennessee Leadership Development Corporation, Tennessee Farm Bureau, Tennessee Farmers Cooperatives, and UT Agricultural Extension Service.



Photo above (l to r): Kevin Brown, NRCS State Conservationist; Tammy Hargett, Crockett County AgStar Graduate; and Joe McKinnon, TN Farm Bureau Field Director

## Kevin Brown Visits Madison County



Photo above: When State Conservationist Kevin Brown conducted a field visit in Madison County in June, he got put to work doing some surveying. Photo by Benton James.



## David Garland Memorial

Former TACD President David Gordon Garland, 75, died in his home in Johnson City on Saturday, June 21, 2008. "We have lost a good friend and a longtime supporter of conservation," stated Kevin Brown. "David Garland was a strong advocate for conservation, not just in East Tennessee but across the state. He will be deeply missed, but he left a legacy that will remain far beyond his lifetime."

Throughout his life in Washington County, as a dairy farmer and conservationist, David served the community in many capacities. He received the Tennessee Outstanding Young Farmer Award in 1966, awarded by the Tennessee Jaycees. David served as President of both the Tennessee Holstein Association and the Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts. He served as chair for the Washington County Soil Conservation District from 1977 to 1995, was a member of the Governor's Council on Agriculture and Forestry in Tennessee and was a Board Member for the Johnson City Area Home Builders Association.

David was a graduate of the University of Tennessee in 1957. He was a member of the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Johnson City.

He was the son of the late Gladys and Jesse Garland. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by two sisters, Anne Garland and Kathryn Garland Stokes, his son David Garland, III and a nephew, Phillip Stokes, Jr.

Survivors include: his wife of 50 years, Jane Garland; a daughter and son-in-law, Sarah and Normand St. Onge and grandchildren Alex, Nathan and Darby St. Onge; son and daughter-in-law, Michael and Jackie Garland and grandsons Josh and Danny Pressley; grandson Jesse Garland and daughter-in-law Sherry Garland Spooner; brother-in-law Phillip Stokes, Sr.; and nephew Thom Stokes and family.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorials be made to the following: The Westminster Presbyterian Church Building Fund, or the Mission to North America for

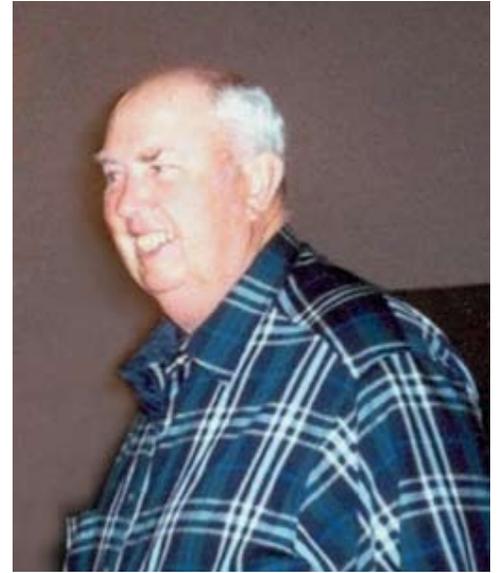


Photo above: David Garland, former TACD President and lifelong supporter of conservation.

Curtis Stapleton's Church Planting, both at this address: 2343 Knob Creek Road, Johnson City, TN 37604 or the Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts Scholarship Fund, 126 Mesa Drive, Gray, TN 37615.

## Rhodes Platt Is No Stranger to Conservation

by Donald Roan

William Rhodes Platt is no stranger to the field of natural resources conservation. Rhodes is a former soil conservationist with NRCS who currently works for the Farm Services Agency in Selmer.

You can get a first hand view of his dedication to the wise use of soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources management by observing the Best Management Practices installed on his farm located in the Michie community of McNairy County. Over the past 16 years, he has applied three grade stabilization structures and 500 feet of diversion which protect the soil resources by reducing excessive gully erosion. During the period of May 2005 to December of 2007, he has installed an alternative watering system and a heavy use feeding pad for his cattle herd. These measures protect water quality and improve herd health. Additionally, he has converted twenty acres to Bermuda grass hay.

He also has installed wildlife friendly conservation buffers under the Conservation Reserve Program. To-date he has installed 3.1 acres in field borders consisting of Switchgrass and Kobe lespedeza. Four- and-a-half acres of riparian forest buffer were installed in 2003. These buffers provide a wide range of environmental benefits. Those most noted are soil erosion reduction, improved air and water quality, and wildlife habitat enhancement.



Photo above: Rhodes Platt addressing group of local landowners. Bottom left: Grade stabilization structure. Bottom right: Rhodes Platt planted field borders consisting of Switchgrass and Kobe lespedeza.





## Smithsonian Institution's Museum on Main Street comes to Tennessee Locations

Well before the Civil War, Virginia Hill, a slaveholder from North Carolina, came to Celina and granted her slaves their freedom and gave them 2,000 acres of rough timbered land. The former slaves called the mountain Free Hill, because Mrs. Hill freed them and the land was on a hillside. The area has since been referred to as Free Hill. Among the slaves was a free woman by the name of Betsy Manny and her son Rubin, a slave. Rubin married a Sarah, a housekeeper and they had three sons-Tom, Joshua, and Polk Hill. Virginia Hill gave Rubin 400 acres and divided the rest among the rest of the slaves. The newly freed slaves were never expected to survive.

However, the ex-slaves not only survived but prospered. They made their living rafting, logging, and farming. The women provided extra income by getting day jobs. It wasn't easy; they withstood the night riders who beat and ran off the males, while violating and raping the women. Against all odds, they endured and triumphed over the rough hill and valley farms. Eventually, other runaway and freed slaves migrated to the area and intermarried. Residents of Free Hill built their own stores, clubs, and eateries.

Free Hill, once the home to over 300 residents is now home to only 75. These residents, many direct descendants of the original free Blacks who owned the land, have organized the Free Hill's Community Club, and continue in their efforts of Keeping Free Hill Alive.

One of their initiatives is partnering with the Smithsonian Institution and Humanities Tennessee to bring **Museum on Main Street** to the Putnam County area. Museum on Main Street brings rural Americans one-of-a-kind access to prestigious Smithsonian exhibitions and first-rate educational programs while providing rural museums a chance to demonstrate their tremendous talents and their meaningful contributions to small town life. Museum on Main Street is funded by the United States Congress.

According to the Smithsonian, the New Harmonies exhibit will let you, "Listen to America's music and hear the story of freedom. It's the story of people in a New World, places they have left behind, and ideas they have brought with them. It is the

story of people who were already here, but whose world is remade. The distinct cultural identities of all of these people are carried in song -- both sacred and secular. Their music tracks the unique history of many peoples reshaping each other into one incredibly diverse and complex people -- Americans. Their music is the roots of American music.

The music that emerges is known by names like blues, country western, folk ballads, and gospel. The sounds are as sweet as mountain air, and as sultry as a summer night in Mississippi delta country. The instruments vary from fiddle to banjo to accordion to guitar to drum. But a drum in the hands of an African sounds different than one in the hands of a European. And neither is the drumbeat of an American Indian. Yet all the rhythms merge, as do the melodies and harmonies, producing completely new sounds -- new music. The music's merge because this is America. New waves of music ride ashore in the hearts

and heads of new immigrants and they create still new sounds from what they have brought with them and what they find here. And nothing expresses the tensions -- or the triumphs -- of this journey into democracy quite like the music that it spawns.

The main beat of the exhibition is the on-going cultural process that has made America the birthplace of more music than any place on earth. The exhibition provides a fascinating, inspiring, and toe-tapping listen to the American story of multi-cultural exchange. The story is full of surprises about familiar songs, histories of instruments, the roles of religion and technology, and the continuity of musical roots from "Yankee Doodle Dandy" to the latest hip hop CD."

Take time to view the exhibit while it's in Tennessee. It will be located at various locations across the state. Go to [www.museumonmainstreet.org](http://www.museumonmainstreet.org) for locations and dates.

# Tennessee RC&D Councils, Inc.

State Annual Meeting, August 7-8th, 2008



## Sustaining Tennessee Through RC&D

### Fall Creek Falls

\*All programs and assistance of the NRCS and RC&D Council are available without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiobpe, etc.) should contact the USDA's TARGET Center at (202)720-2600 (voice and TDD).\*



## “Woody” Makes His Debut at Farm City Day 2008

by Donna Woodall and LaDonna Caldwell

The Franklin County Soil Conservation District introduced its newest participant in the annual Farm City Day this year. His name is “Woody, the Talking Tree”. Woody, Sammy Soil, and Ruby Raindrop educated approximately 500 kindergarten students, teachers, and their helpers on the importance of taking care of our natural resources.

Woody started in the imagination of the district’s newly hired secretary, Donna Woodall. After many hours of research on the project, the cost to purchase a mechanical type talking tree was too excessive for the district. After discussing the idea of Woody with local carpenter Ray Cole, he agreed to volunteer his time to construct the tree from peeled bark donated from a local lumber yard.

It didn’t take much persuasion for Lester Hayes, Franklin County FSA CED, to jump on board to hand-carve Woody’s face. Carving is a unique talent that Lester has that only a few people know about.



Woody the Talking Tree joined Sammy Soil and Ruby Raindrop at this year’s annual Farm City Day in Franklin County.

Woody relates to his captive audience by waving his branches and occasionally speaking a few words to each group of children who stopped for our program. The branches shake as though he is a living tree. The choreography was set to the music, “Dirt Made My Lunch”. We surrounded Woody with all sorts of living things such as real grass, spring flowers, and a picnic setting. The turkeys were there, too. When Woody talked he sounded a lot like Adam Daugherty DC. LaDonna Caldwell (Soil Conservationist), Ms. Helen Mullins (SCD board member), Donna Woodall (Franklin County SCD secretary) and the Franklin County 4-H youth also assisted the district with their educational program for Farm City Day 2008. Many of the items used in the program display were donated by local businesses.

## “Your Farm-Keeping It Profitable, Keeping It in the Family” - Reaching Out to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers

by Larry Lofton

The Tennessee RC&D Program will be conducting three outreach workshops across the state for women, minorities and limited resource farmers, and those with disabilities who are actively engaged in agriculture.

Entitled “Your Farm-Keeping It Profitable, Keeping It in the Family”, the workshops focus on programs and assistance that can provide both economic and conservation based opportunities to farmers who have historically faced difficult challenges.

Planned topics for the workshops include Value-Added Agriculture & Ag-Tourism, Tennessee Century Farms, Farm Preservation, Assisting Agricultural Producers with Disabilities, Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Improvement, Estate Planning, Women & Minorities in Agriculture and Farm Support & Conservation Programs.

Presenters include the USDA-Farm Service Agency, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA-Rural Development, The Center for Historic Preservation, Land Trust for Tennessee, Tennessee AgriAbility Project, University of Tennessee Extension Service, The Center for Profitable Agriculture, the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.

The project is funded through a partnership with the USDA-Farm Service Agency and the Tennessee RC&D Program. Workshops will be held on the following dates and at these locations:

August 12, Knoxville-at the USDA/NRCS Area Office, 9737 Cogdill Road

August 19, Nashville-at the Ellington Agricultural Center, 440 Hogan Road

August 27, Jackson-at the University of Tennessee-Jackson Experiment Station 605 Airways Blvd.

Onsite registration begins at 8:00AM. The workshop starts at 8:45AM and ends at 3:30PM. Lunch is free.

Interested participants may contact one of the following RC&D offices.

For the Knoxville Workshop, contact:  
Eston Williams  
Email: [eston.williams@tn.usda.gov](mailto:eston.williams@tn.usda.gov)  
Telephone: 865/671-3830 EXT.4  
Fax: 865/671-4852

For the Nashville Workshop, contact:  
Allen Persinger  
Email: [allen.persinger@tn.usda.gov](mailto:allen.persinger@tn.usda.gov)  
Telephone: 615/444-1890 EXT. 110  
Fax: 615-444-4894

For the Jackson Workshop, contact:  
Debra Blankenship  
Email: [debbie.blankenship@tn.usda.gov](mailto:debbie.blankenship@tn.usda.gov)  
Telephone: 731/668-0770 EXT.100  
Fax: 731/668-8510