

Current Developments

 **NRCS**
USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service
675 U. S. Courthouse
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
Telephone: 615/277-2531
FAX: 615/277-2577

June 2005

From the office of the State Conservationist

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is celebrating its 70th year of existence in 2005, and throughout each of those 70 years, the NRCS has made a significant impact in Tennessee. Our water quality is improved, and our soil is more productive. We have been responsible for programs and projects that have made Tennessee an even better place to live.

Good work is not always easy work, so we have faced some stiff challenges. However, we are not defined by our challenges as much as we are by our responses to those challenges. Our successful responses in the first 70 years have made us into an effective and productive agency.

One of the challenges we face now is an all-time high customer demand, so we are responding by making improvements in the ways we deliver our services. Another challenge has involved our changing customer base over the past 70 years. We have responded by changing along with our customers, taking advantage of new technology, and becoming better equipped to implement programs and services. We know that the number one thing we do is the professional delivery of our services to customers, and when we have done our jobs well, the results are better water and soil quality and an overall increase in productivity.

During this 70th year of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, agency leadership has renewed its commitment to focus more strategically on how we do business. We are continuing to review our lines of business and service to improve them and make them even more efficient. As your fellow NRCS employee, I am proud of the good work you do and the important results you produce. May we all continue together at least another 70 years!

James Ford
State Conservationist

Johanns Announces First Farm Bill Forum to be held in Nashville

Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns announced the first Farm Bill Forum will be held in Nashville, Tennessee on July 7 from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. CDT at RFD-TV Northstar Studios. "The next farm bill will affect America's entire agricultural community," said Johanns. "That's why I want to ask America's farmers and ranchers how our farm policy is working and how we can make it better. I believe very strongly that they deserve a voice in this process."



Inside This Issue....

	Page
American Indian Program Delivery Initiative Training	6
Appalachian RC&D Receives More than \$35,000 in Grants	7
Bacon Celebrates 105th Birthday	3
Buffalo/Duck River RC&D Earth Team Volunteers Work at the Elephant Sanctuary	4
Darrell Beason Update	3
Kenny Childress Memorial	2
NRCS Celebrates 70th Anniversary	5
SCD's Active in Conservation Education	4
Upcoming Events	3
Welcome Aboard - Perry Stevens John Rissler	2 2

In Memory of Kenneth "Kenny" William Childress, Jr. April 21, 1948 – June 7, 2005



Kenny Childress touched the life of virtually everyone he met. A native of LaFollette, Tennessee, he was married to Kathy Powell Childress for 27 years. They had three children – Cindy, William and Rosemary. He was a Christian and a member of the Walton's Chapel Church of Christ.

Kenny obtained his BS Degree from Austin Peay State University and his Master's Degree from Tennessee State University. He began his career with NRCS (then the Soil Conservation Service) in 1978 in Union City and from there moved to Trousdale County.

Kenny was transferred to Macon County in 1981. The local farmers reminded him of the folks in the rural area of LaFollette where he had grown up. With his affable personality, people soon thought of Kenny as "one of the locals."

Kenny was a friend to everyone. Easily recognizable by his trademark fisherman's hat, most days he could be found at the Stockyard Café eating lunch. It wasn't unusual to see Kenny and his friend, five-year-old Stetson, having a truck and tractor pull on the café table.

Kenny knew that getting conservation on the ground required compassion, patience, a willingness to work with landowners, and a love for the natural resources. These were characteristics he demonstrated daily. NRCS employees thought of Kenny as more than a

Tennessee Welcomes... Perry Stevens, State Public Affairs Specialist

Perry Stevens is a Mississippi native and longtime Tennessee resident. He received his B.A. in Journalism from the University of Mississippi and worked for several years as a news director, anchor, and reporter at radio stations throughout the southeast. After completing his Master of Public Administration at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, he was named a Presidential Management Fellow at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. At the CDC, he was a health communications specialist and a press officer. Most recently, he was the Risk Communication Coordinator at the Tennessee Department of Health's Bioterrorism Preparedness Program.



Perry took over the job of State Public Affairs Specialist in May 2005 and he says he is looking forward to meeting and working with District Conservationists and other NRCS staff across the state.

John Rissler, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs



Tennessee's new Assistant State Conservationist for Programs is now onboard. John Rissler comes to the position with 12 years of NRCS experience under his belt. John grew up in Oklahoma and received his degree in Agricultural Education from Oklahoma State University. He started out as a student trainee, but before long he was a Soil Conservationist in Oklahoma. He followed that with positions as a Nutrient Management Specialist in Missouri, a District Conservationist in New York, a Tribal Conservationist in Oklahoma, a Plant Materials Center Manager in Michigan, and as a Zone Program Liaison in Texas.

John is married to Carrie, and they have two children, 5-year old Abigail and 3-year old Anna. In his spare time, John likes to hunt, fish, and spend time in other outdoor activities. He says he is happy to be in Tennessee and is looking forward to working with employees throughout Tennessee to run the most effective programs possible.

coworker; he was a friend who will be missed. Kenny spent his life caring for people and conserving the natural resources, and in doing so left a legacy that will endure for generations.

Tennessean is Nation's Eldest Soil Scientist at 105



He is the Dean of American Soil Scientists. Samuel R. Bacon of Cookeville turned 105 years old on July 1, 2005. The longtime Tennessee resident is the nation's oldest living soil scientist. He worked for NRCS-Tennessee (then the Soil Conservation Service) from 1945-1963. After 35 years with the NRCS and USDA, Mr. Bacon retired in Cookeville. He was honored there earlier this month by the NRCS, which presented him with several original soil surveys he co-authored in the 1940s and 1950s. He also received a plaque from State Conservationist James Ford commemorating Mr. Bacon's years of exemplary service.

During the ceremonies, Mr. Bacon also received letters of congratulations from Congressman Gordon, the Tennessee General Assembly, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns, Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen, and Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich. (Mr. Bacon attended the University of Maryland.) Mr. Bacon told the crowd of about 150 well-wishers, "I'm feeling so good right now, you may have me around for a few more years."



Photos above & right: Samuel Bacon and friends celebrate his 105th birthday.

Upcoming Events

Event	Location	For more information
NRCS Diversity Day July 12, 2005 10:00 am	Ag Expo Center Franklin, TN	NRCS Civil Rights Committee
Small Farm Expo July 19 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Pre-registration required by June 30, 2005, for awards luncheon	TSU Farm Cheatham County	Hilda Gooch, TSU 615-963-5530 Or register online at: www.tnstate.edu/cep
Pasture Walk July 21	Roy McClerran Farm	Phillip Dixon Clay County SCD 931-243-3321
RC&D Annual Meeting August 4-5, 2005	Agri-Lane 315 John R. Rice Blvd Murfreesboro, TN 37129	TN RC&D Council website www.tnrnd.org
Pasture Walk August 18	Wayne Tucker Farm	George Hofstetter Shelbyville Field Office 931-684-4197, ext. 3
Pasture Walk September 15	Bart Lays Farm	Louis Boyd Clarksville Field Office 931-729-2686, ext. 3

Darrell Beason Completes Warrant Officer Training



Darrell Beason returned to work on June 27 following a 13-week assignment in Maryland to complete a Warrant Officer training course. He graduated on June 22 from the course. "This training was not nearly as rough as the last experience. The worst part was missing family and friends," said Darrell. This session was less restrictive, and he was able to call home on a regular basis.

Darrell has been told he will be reconnected to his unit, which is currently in Iraq, but this is still unofficial at this time.



Jackson Madison County Schools Fifth Grade Environmental Fair 2005

The Madison County Soil Conservation District, along with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, serves as an exhibitor for the Fifth Grade Environmental Fair each year. During these activities students learn about the effects of soil erosion on the environment and how to correct erosion problems. Students also learn how they can help take care of our natural resources.

Approximately 1200 fifth graders, teachers, and teacher aids attended this year's environmental fair.



Buffalo/Duck River RC&D Earth Team Volunteers Work at the Elephant Sanctuary for the 8th Consecutive Year

For the eighth consecutive year, Earth Team volunteers from the Buffalo/Duck River Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) volunteered at the Elephant Sanctuary in Lewis County. On May 14, volunteers Amanda Brower, Katy Couch, Sharon & Derek Englett, Christina & Curtis Hart, Michael Kelley, Jena Stilwell, and Bobby Thigpen joined John Sheffield of the Elephant Sanctuary who directed the work of the Earth Team volunteers.

The group of volunteers worked hard cleaning rust off of steel fence posts and picking up litter on the recently acquired Lee's Lake area. Many of the students have volunteered at the Sanctuary before and look forward to the annual event.

"The students were tired at the end of the day, but they had the self-satisfaction of knowing they had a role in maintaining this safe haven for the Asian and African elephants," said Sharon Englett of the Buffalo/Duck RC&D.

The Sanctuary started out with 112 acres back in 1995; today it operates on 2,700 acres that supports 8 Asian and 4 African elephants. The Sanctuary provides the elephants a place to roam with ample food and water readily available. A full-grown Asian Elephant consumes 150-200 pounds of food and drinks 30-50 gallons of water every day!

Farm City Day in Rhea County

The Rhea County SCD participates in the annual FARM CITY DAY which is held on the Purser Farm in the Cottonport community of Rhea County for all 3rd graders in the county-the majority of whom have never been on a real farm before.

This is an exciting event for these 3rd graders as they get a close-up view of pigs, cows and horses, as well as grain crops, forestry, wildlife, a sawmill, beekeeping, and sheep shearing. They are also treated to an old fashioned hayride.

At the SCD booth different colored beads were used to represent things on the farm, i.e., red/barn, blue/water, green/grass, clear/air, white/sheep, black/cow, pink/pig, yellow/sun. A brown leather strap represents soil (brown/soil). Students are told what each bead represents and then given a bead of each color to add to the strap to make a bracelet.

The goal of the Rhea County Soil Conservation District is to teach the children that their food and clothes come from the farm. The district wants students to develop an understanding and appreciation for agriculture and an awareness of the products produced on the farm.



Todd Trew, CED for the Dayton and Chattanooga Farm Service Agency translates for the Hispanic students who visited the SCD booth.



Buffalo/Duck RC&D Earth Team Volunteers clean rust off of steel posts that will be used at the Elephant Sanctuary.



The Buffalo/Duck River Council treated the volunteers to lunch and presented each of them an Earth Day t-shirt.

State Office Employee Association Sponsors Field Day

The State Office Employees Association sponsored a Field Day June 9, 2005. Participants visited the Warner Park Nature Center at the Natchez Trace Parkway where they learned about the park, its history and current use, and the relationship it has with NRCS. The group learned about invasive species identification and floodplain management issues, and they got a look at the bioengineering project for stream bank stabilization that was designed for the park by NRCS employees.

A short hike along part of the original Natchez Trace and lunch at the famous Loveless Café completed the field day.



State office employees enjoy a visit to the Warner Park Nature Center.



Warner Park Nature Center Director Sandy Bivens greeted NRCS employees. Sandy's father, Donald C. Bivens, was Tennessee's State Conservationist 1975-1987.

NRCS Celebrates 70th Anniversary in 2005



State office staff members and James Ford, State Conservationist, planted a tree at the Hermitage as part of the 70th anniversary celebration.

Volunteers are Winners!

In October 2004, after participating in local soil judging contests, a group of high school FFA and 4-H students decided that they wanted to volunteer as a group and help the soil conservation office in Celina. This group had a great run of success in the soil judging competitions. At every competition this group competed in, they either had a 1st or 2nd place team.

As a result, 12 of the initial 14 volunteers competed in the National Land Judging Contest. One of the three teams finished 4th in the nation, one student finished 10th and the coaches finished 7th and 17th in the nation. It's amazing what a little thing called volunteering can do!



NRCS celebrated its 70th anniversary in April 2005. NRCS offices throughout the state held special events such as planting a tree or flowers as part of the agencies nationwide effort to mark seven decades of conserving natural resources on private and tribal land.

The anniversary's theme, "A Partner in Conservation Since 1935," reflects the agency's mission—providing leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

Current Developments

Water Quality Workshop/Field Day

NRCS partnered with the Caney Fork Watershed Association, Putnam County and White County Soil Conservation Districts and Tennessee Department of Agriculture to deliver a water quality based workshop/field day on Steve Slatten's farm on May 20, 2005.

Upper Cumberland residents learned about stabilizing stream banks, maintaining and improving water quality, and how applying conservation practices can have a positive economic effect on their farm operation and the environment.

Jenny Adkins, NRCS did a water quality presentation; Eric Chance, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Foundation talked about the Tennessee Stream Mitigation Program; Charles Parris, NRCS and Mike Richardson, retired NRCS discussed agricultural practices and assistance available from NRCS; and Mark Hudson, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, made a presentation on "How Did We Get Here?"

Attendees were a diverse group of individuals from surrounding communities including landowners/operators, agribusiness professionals, community leaders, Tennessee Technological University professors, Tennessee Department of Agriculture representatives and local political figures, as well as, concerned citizens.

Approximately 90 people attended the event which was sponsored by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Caney Fork Watershed Association, Putnam and White County Soil Conservation Districts, and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.



Jenny Adkins conducted a workshop on water quality on the Steve Slatten farm.



Tour attendees had a chance to see applied conservation practices and the impact they have on the environment.



James Ford and Phillip Dixon at the Elders Luncheon at the American Indian Program Delivery Initiative Training in Atmore, Alabama.

Ford and Dixon Attend American Indian Program Delivery Initiative Training

James Ford, State Conservationist and Phillip Dixon, American Indian/Alaskan Native SEPM for Tennessee, attended the American Indian Program Delivery Initiative Training on May 8-11, 2005 at the Poarch Band of Creek Indian Reservation in Atmore, Alabama. The purpose of the meeting was to bring Tribes and NRCS together in an effort to improve program delivery to Tribes and Tribal people. This event provided NRCS employees an opportunity to learn about the different cultures within the Tribes.

Nine different Tribes participated in the meeting including:

- Poarch Bank of Creek Indians (AL)
- Seminole Tribe of Florida (FL)
- Eastern Bank of Cherokee Indians (NC)
- Oneida Indiana Nation (NY)
- Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe (GA)
- Pamunkey Indian Tribe Reservation (VA)
- Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe (VA)
- Passamaquoddy Tribe (ME)
- Lower Muskogee Tribe (FL)

Richard Coombe, Regional Assistant Chief, NRCS East Region said, "Over the years, we came close to seeing the last of America's first farmers. By the early 1990's, there were approximately 7,000 American Indian farmers in the United States. The situation has changed in recent years. The 2002 Agricultural Census shows there are now more than 24,000 American Indian and Alaska Native farm operations. America's first farmers are making a comeback and USDA and NRCS are helping."

Appalachian RC&D Council Recipient of Federal and State Grants Totaling more than \$35,000

A regional crowd of approximately 100 elected officials, business and community leaders and entrepreneurs were on hand July 1, 2005, as the Appalachian Resource Conservation & Development Council was awarded three grants totaling more than \$35,000. The funding will benefit businesses in



Carter, Greene, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi and Washington Counties. The grants are to fund initiatives that promote goods and specialized services produced by locally owned manufacturers, producers and agricultural operations.

Funding will be available to further research and market the www.LocalGoods.org web based buyers guide. Additionally, funding from the Tennessee Arts Commission will increase artist involvement in the www.QuiltTrail.org project. The Quilt Trail is fast becoming a Tourist Destination that can attract visitors from across the country to this region. Through the merging of the Quilt Trail and the Local Goods efforts, visitors can be linked to local business. The goal of these initiatives is to support locally owned businesses by creating specialized ways of connecting them with retail and wholesale consumers in this region.

The event was held at Farmhouse Gallery & Gardens in Unicoi Tennessee. This site displays a Quilt Square Mural and also is a Local Goods site producing local artwork and a line of Farmhouse BBQ Sauces.

Grants awarded were:

USDA – Rural Development – Rural Business Enterprise Grant - \$20,000

Funding to expand, enhance and market the www.LocalGoods.org searchable online database of items made, grown and crafted in Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia.

Tennessee Department of Agriculture – Agriculture Development Fund Grant - \$9,750

The funding will allow Tennessee Agriculture Producers to apply for mini matching grants to get a Quilt Square Mural to display at their farm to help market their products. Operation must be a point of sale for locally produced agricultural product or agri-tourism. Application guidelines will be available at www.QuiltTrail.org by August 1, 2005.

Tennessee Arts Commission – Arts Project Support Grant - \$5,500

Funding to commission a local artist to paint 10 Quilt Square Murals for permanent display in the region. Artist will also assist 5 schools with painting murals for the www.QuiltTrail.org project. This effort will be documented with photographic images and essays and presented on the website.

The Appalachian RC&D Council is a regional non profit that has been serving Carter, Greene, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi and Washington Counties since 1994. The Council Mission is to conserve natural resources and improve rural economies through community leadership and enhanced educational opportunities. To learn more about the Council and it's activities visit their website at www.appalachianrcd.org.

RC&D Council Sponsors International Heritage Development Conference Tour

A field tour featuring Perry County was sponsored by the Buffalo/Duck River RC&D Council in support of International Heritage Development Conference held June 4-8 in Nashville, Tennessee. The conference was a program of the Alliance of National Heritage Areas and was hosted by the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area and the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University.

As part of "Workshop Tuesday", on June 7 seventeen conference attendees participated in the Perry County Workshop entitled *Building Capacity Where Resources are Few and Far Between*. Featured in the workshop were three tour stops highlighting outreach activities in assisting local artists and developing rural arts programs, protecting cultural resources, improving recreation, addressing watershed education and water quality issues, and building private and public partnerships that benefit the citizens of Perry County from farms to towns.

RC&D Council President Ancil Balentine stated, "This illustrates how effective partnerships are making a difference by building capacity in our rural communities. We are proud to play a supporting role as part of a very successful conference".

As part of the tour a luncheon was held with over sixty five in attendance to exchange ideas on partnering and to become more familiar about Heritage Areas from other parts of the United States.

Local government, organizations and agencies participating in the tour included Perry County Commission, Perry County Historical Society, The Center for Historic Preservation, Town of Linden, City of Lobelville, Tennessee Arts Commission, Mousetail Landing State Park, Tennessee Valley Authority, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rural Development, Farm Service Agency, Forest Service, South Central Tennessee Development District, Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, Tennessee River Trails and Extension Service.