

Current Developments

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Message from the State Conservationist

We've had a lot on our plates the past few months with the budget issues that threatened to shut down the federal government and losing the RC&D and watershed programs. It would be easy to get discouraged but the best way to deal with this is to remain focused on doing our job and getting conservation on the ground.

These times of uncertainty can be very challenging, and there are more uncertainties ahead. After working most of this fiscal year under a Continuing Resolution, it is possible we will have to do so again starting in October if Congress is unable to approve the 2012 budget. If that's the case, we will continue to do our jobs and provide the best customer service possible. Another big issue in 2012 is the passage of a new Farm Bill. It's hard to say just yet what it will look like, but I will keep you updated.

I am proud of the work you do and your dedication to the agency and our customers. Your dedication was never more obvious than when the Chief announced that Tennessee was one of the 5 states in the country that exceeded their program obligation goals. We can be proud of our accomplishments, what our agency does and the role we play in protecting and conserving our natural resources. We do make a difference in the lives of Tennessee landowners and I thank each of you for doing your part.



Kevin Brown
State Conservationist

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Tennessee Conservation SHOWCASE

Success stories are now posted on the webpage at:
<http://www.tn.nrcs.usda.gov/news/SuccessStories/index.html>

Submit success stories to Jeanne Eastham at jeanne.eastham@tn.usda.gov



2011 Conservation Planning Course

by Lacey Gaw, Resource Conservationist

For the second year in a row, NRCS held a Conservation Planning Course at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville. For two weeks in early January, thirty-eight students from Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Alabama learned to apply the NRCS nine-step planning process to assist clients in developing complete and comprehensive plans.

The attendees represented Soil Conservation Districts, County Governments, AmeriCorps, NRCS, and Technical Service Providers. Training took place in the field and classroom on Conservation Planning, Wildlife, Threatened & Endangered Species, Cultural Resources, Grazing,

Water Quality, Soils, Forestry, and Human considerations in planning.

Presentations from District Conservationists Phillip Dixon & Mike McElroy provided the group with a field level perspective.

Students learned how to use & interpret various evaluation tools and worked in groups with mock producers to develop a plan on one of the TTU farms. Finally, the students presented their plan and how they used the planning process to arrive at their decisions to Resource Specialists.

The Instructors and Resource Specialists along with Kathy Daugherty & the Hull-York

Lakeland RC&D Council did an exceptional job organizing and presenting the course. One attendee commented on their evaluation that this was "honestly the best NRCS training I have been to!" The group from Kentucky enjoyed the course so much that they presented a signed University of Kentucky flag to Tennessee NRCS.

When asked about the 2011 course State Resource Conservationist, John Rissler said, "This year's course was a great success and reemphasized my belief that we are bringing the best and the brightest into the field of conservation. In a workplace of deadlines and dollars, we showed the newer employees the true heart of the agency. Good conservation planning is the first ingredient to getting conservation implementation."

Photo below: 2011 Conservation Planning Course participates.

"This year's course was a great success and reemphasized my belief that we are bringing the best and the brightest into the field of conservation."

John Rissler, SRC





Arbor Day at Dillon Park Kicks Off Riparian Project

by Kathy Daugherty, Hull-York Lakeland RC&D Coordinator

Over 50 students, Boy Scouts, volunteers, and members of the public joined together on Thursday, March 3rd, to make a positive impact on the environment and celebrate Arbor Day. Tennessee was one of the first states to adopt this special day in 1875 to create “a better understanding of nature and the importance of protecting wildlife, planting and cultivating flowers, and setting and protecting trees”.

The Dillon Park Riparian Project began with tree and shrub planting utilizing native and local grown plantings. Almost 900 bare root and potted trees and shrubs were planted in a 50’ wide riparian zone along 1500’ of Stones River in Dillon Park during this phase of the Project.

The increased width of the riparian zone will provide multiple benefits of water filtration, wildlife habitat, and decreased water temperatures. Besides increasing the number of native trees and shrubs, additional phases of the Project will work to decrease the non-native species in the riparian zone.

This project is sponsored by the Hull-York Lakeland RC&D Council through a grant from the TN Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Resources Conservation Fund with partnership assistance from the Stones River Watershed Association, Cannon County High School, TN Division of Forestry, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Cannon County Soil Conservation District.



Photo above: Soil Conservationist Dustin Graham and TDA Forestry Division Employee volunteers are shown with students from Cannon County High Schools Horticulture Class who assisted in planting the 900 trees and shrubs for the Dillon Park Riparian Project. The students will be involved in future phases of the Project such as eliminating the non-native species and continuing to propagate and plant native wildlife species in the riparian zone.

Webb Flowers, Grazing Specialist

Welcome Charles W. (Webb) Flowers, a Grazing Specialist hired through a contribution agreement with the Clinch-Powell RC&D Council. Webb has extensive farm experience in beef, dairy, pork, soybean, corn, forage and timber production, as well as management and marketing. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science from Mississippi State University and is currently working on a Master of Science degree in Food Safety at Virginia Tech University.

Webb has previous work experience as an Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent in Virginia and as a Beef and Dairy Project Assistant at Mississippi State University Extension with focus areas in Integrated Resource Management, Dairy Herd Improvement Association, Forage Quality Analysis,

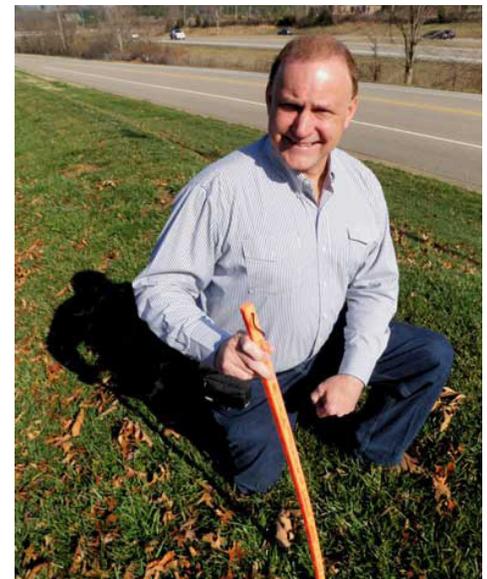


Photo above: Webb Flowers, Grazing Specialist

Animal Identification Systems and Youth Livestock Programs.

Webb is located in the Knoxville Area Office. He publishes the Tennessee Grazing Coalition Weekly E-News which is available at <http://clinchpowell.net/aginit/news.php>



In Remembrance of Mike Richardson



Photo above: Mike Richardson, retired District Conservationist and Earth Team Volunteer.

Mike Richardson, age 61, passed away Saturday, April 9, 2011. Mike, a retired NRCS District Conservationist, had remained devoted to NRCS, conservation and his community.

Everyone knew Mike had a passion for this nation, and a commitment to the environment and teaching. His life centered around his family and friends. And it was well known that “he never met a stranger.”

He was in the Navy from 1967 to 1971, and served in Vietnam. He was in the Navy reserves until retiring in 1994, and was proud of his service in the US Navy. He was also a member of the Citizens Police Academy in Cookeville.

Mike graduated from Tennessee Tech University in 1975 and began his career with the NRCS as a soil conservationist. He worked for NRCS until he retired in 2004.

He was an advocate for conservation throughout his career, and beyond. Mike signed up as an Earth Team Volunteer his last day of work. Throughout his retirement years, he continued to promote conservation by serving as an Earth Team Volunteer, working with the Clean Commission, doing school programs, and helping with Envirothon.

While Mike enjoyed retirement, he also remained passionate about teaching and sharing knowledge. A fourth degree black belt, he instructed countless students in karate. He also loved to teach people about horseback riding and responsible gun ownership (he was a lifetime member of the NRA). He was a founding member of the Garland Family Research Association and at the time of his passing was serving as its president.

Mike and his wife Linda, had two children--John and Laurel, and four grandchildren—Jade, Alexis, Alana, and Evan who loved their “Papa Mike.”

The NRCS family mourn his loss.

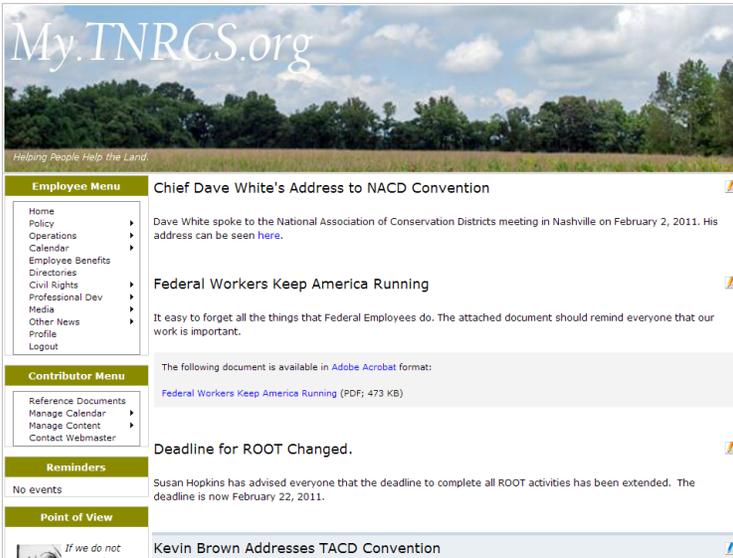


TN-NRCS Employees Donation to Charity

The Tennessee Natural Resources Conservation Service employees recently donated **\$570.41** from NRCS employees to the Wounded Warriors Project charity.

The All Employees Meeting Planning Committee contacted the State Office Employees Association for their assistance in distributing the surplus funds collected from the Social Night during the All Employees Meeting. The AEM committee recommended several charities, including the Wounded Warriors Project.

Donating to the Wounded Warriors Project is a great way to express our appreciation to our military families for their service! Thank you for making this possible!



My.tnracs.org Has More to Offer

by Carter Harris, Program Analyst (Webmaster)

NRCS Employees now have access to a more robust “intranet” site at <http://my.tnracs.org>. The site includes content that was previously posted on the public site at <http://www.tn.nrcs.usda.gov/> as well as new content that was not previously available. The site is secured by passwords and limited to NRCS Employees.

New content includes a document library, calendars, employee benefits, media and a section for green articles. Other content is provided through modules that render quotes randomly and provide reminders of upcoming events. “My.tnracs.org is much more community orientated,” according to Jeanne Eastham, Public Affairs Specialist. “It provides information that could not be placed on a public site such as internal communications and it permits our employees to participate by contributing content.”

The site is built on the Joomla!® open source content management application but has been enhanced with a number of extensions that provide additional functionality for the site. To contribute content for your area, contact Carter Harris.

Gilliam Retires

by Carolyn Bartee, Office Assistant, Jackson Area Office

James Gilliam, Engineering Technician, retired from NRCS with more than 32 years of service. He began working for the Soil Conservation Service as a W.A.E. in Weakley County in 1978. “I have been privileged to work for and with the very best people that this country has to offer for 32-plus years, and stay close to my home,” said James. “It didn’t take long for me to realize that working for NRCS was a chance to work with various people for the common good of all people. I have been blessed to work for a government agency that promotes teamwork, diversity, works directly with people (clients and employees) performing services they want, need and appreciate while feeling a sense of satisfaction during the process of helping those who deserves it and protects our valuable natural resources.”

“James touched the lives of many, many people during his career,” said Richard West, Area Conservationist.

“His commitment and work ethic were exemplary. He helped a lot of people during his career and everyone who worked with him considered him a friend. Not only did he give 100% but he did it with a good attitude and a smile. We will miss him in West Tennessee.”



Photo above: Richard West and James Gilliam. Below (l to r): James Gilliam, Kevin Brown, and Will Pinson.





Brown recognized as TTU 2010 Outstanding Alumni

Tennessee Tech University recognized Kevin Brown as Outstanding Alumni for 2010. Brown received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Agricultural Science and Engineering from Tennessee Technological University. He also received the 2009 TTU Outstanding Alumnus Award for the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences.

When notified about the award, Brown stated “I am deeply moved by this award and very proud to be a recipient. I know most of the past winners and to be included in this group is a great personal honor for me.”

Brown was recognized for his support of Tennessee Tech University School of Agriculture through the years. TTU noted that he has returned to Tennessee Tech on numerous occasions to talk to student and groups on career opportunities in agriculture, has done an excellent job recruiting and is personally responsible for many individuals attending the School of Agriculture at Tennessee Tech.



Photo above: Kevin Brown Receives TTU 2010 Outstanding Alumni Award.

Community Gardens in Columbia



Photo above: HUD Assistant Secretary Sandra Henriquez recently toured the Northridge Community Garden in Columbia.

The residents of the five developments at Columbia Housing and Redevelopment Corporation (CHRC) in Columbia, have two community gardens this year thanks to a partnership with CHRC, Advent Community Development Corporation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Tennessee Farm Bureau, and the U.T. Agricultural Extension Service. A local Boy Scout, Zack Neely, constructed and placed twelve raised beds for the senior citizens and disabled residents, to complete his Eagle Scout project.

Clint Bain, Maury County Executive Director, USDA-Farm Service Agency and Debbie Brasfield, Soil Scientist, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service advised the gardeners and obtained soil samples.

The U.T. Agricultural Extension Service is providing a series of gardening workshops for both the adult and youth gardeners throughout the growing season. Food preservation and nutrition will also be covered in these workshops.

The Southern Middle Tennessee RC&D is planning to host a rain barrel workshop for the gardeners.

Columbia Housing and Redevelopment Corporation provides housing for low income residents in Columbia. Elderly and single-parent family residents are particularly affected by high prices for fresh foods and inadequate nutrition. CHRC feels the community gardens will help residents reduce the cost of food and be more self-sufficient.



Bedford County 2010 Conservation Farmer of the Year Award presented to Curl Family Farms

The 2010 Conservation Farmer of the Year Award was not an individual, but a whole family – the Curl family of Curl Family Farms. The Curl family makes a significant impact on Bedford County agriculture.

The American family farm has been the backbone of this country since its inception and the Curl family exemplifies the American farm family. Don and Claudia Curl, along with sons Joey and Greg, make up Curl Family Farms, and also own and operate Hawkins Equipment and Curl Construction. Curl Construction has also installed numerous conservation practices for other farmers. Last year they dug practice pits on their land for the county high school soil judging teams.

In the past couple of years the Curl's have installed or are in the process of installing 13 water troughs, 2 miles of cross-fencing, 10,000 feet of pipeline, over a mile of fence to exclude cattle from 48 acres of woodland and stream corridors, 19 acres of cropland conversion, 2 acres of forest openings for wildlife, 2 spring developments, 2 pumping plants, and 36 acres of pasture and hayland plantings.

The Bedford County Soil Conservation District Board of Supervisors presented Curl Family Farms the Bedford County 2010 Conservation Farmer of the Year award for their dedication to reducing soil erosion, protecting water quality and improving wildlife habitat in Bedford County.



Photo above left to right; Front row - Claudia, Maria, and Lisa; Back Row - Don, Joey, and Greg Curl.

Civil Rights Committee Spotlight Employee Yi Kum

by Pam Hoskins, District Conservationist, Woodbury Field Office



Photo above: Yi Kum, NRCS State Vendor Coordinator in Financial Management.

Yi Kum works in Financial Management at the State Office and is the State Vendor Coordinator for ProTracts vendors along with other assignments. She came to TN NRCS in December 2010. She previously worked with NRCS in Kansas as a Cartographic Tech for SSURGO project.

She graduated from Kansas Wesleyan University with a MBA degree in 2007. She is an active member of the Asian Pacific Islander Organization with NRCS.

Yi grew up in Seoul, Korea and came to the United States in 1989 with her husband Sung to join their family in Kansas. Soon after moving to Kansas, Yi had twin boys who are now attending college at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska.

Yi enjoys reading books, especially books about the history of East Asia. She also loves to watch Chinese movies because most involve historical events.

Gardening is her hobby. She is at peace while planting and watching flowers bloom.

Welcome Yi Kum to the TN NRCS family.



Earth Team Award Winners

Earth Team volunteers play a significant role in carrying out the conservation programs across Tennessee. State Conservationist Kevin Brown presented awards to five Earth Team Award Winners, one of which was also a regional award winner, at the 67th Annual TACD Convention. Earth Team Award winners include:

Shirley Pendley, Hull-York Lakeland RC&D - NRCS Earth Team Individual Award Winner

Matthew Denton - NRCS Earth Team Employee Award Winner

Chris Hancock, Area 3 Volunteer Coordinator - Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator Award Winner & East Regional Volunteer Coordinator Award Winner

Dr. Warren Anderson, Middle TN State University - NRCS Partnership Award Winner

Smoky Mountain RC&D Council - NRCS RC&D Earth Team Award Winner



Photo above: Shirley Pendley, Hull-York Lakeland RC&D, received the TN Earth Team Individual Award.



Photo above l to r: Matthew Denton, recipient of the TN Earth Team Individual Award; Kevin Brown, State Conservationist; and Chris Hancock, recipient of the TN Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator Award and the NRCS East Regional Volunteer Coordinator Award.



Photo above: Dr. Warren Anderson, MTSU, Rutherford County, was the recipient of the Earth Team Partnership Award.



Photo at left (l to r): Smoky Mountain RC&D Council members Chairman Russel Harris, Knox County representative Broadus Hubbs, Sevier County representative Beverly Treadway, and Treasurer Amy Mann accept the NRCS RC&D Earth Team Award.



Area 4 Receives Volunteer Trophy

by Dimple Geesling, State Volunteer Coordinator

The first ever Tennessee Earth Team Volunteer "Traveling Trophy" was presented to Area 4 for contributing 8,399 volunteer hours in fiscal year 2010. The Earth Team Traveling Trophy is an annual award to promote the volunteer program across Tennessee.

It will be presented each year to the Area that has the most volunteer hours. The winning Area's name will be engraved on the trophy and that area will host the trophy for the year.



Photo above: Dave White, NRCS Chief; Terrance Rudolph, Area Conservationist; Natalie Freeman, Area 4 Volunteer Coordinator; and Kevin Brown, State Conservationist.

Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee Provides Hull-York Lakeland RC&D Grant Funding for EWP

by Kathy Daugherty, Hull-York Lakeland RC&D Coordinator

The Community Foundation of Middle TN awarded the Hull-York Lakeland RC&D Council \$15,000 in grant funding from the TN Emergency Response Fund. The funds were used by the EWP sponsoring entities to supplement their match in Clay, Jackson, and Macon Counties. In addition to the 1,500 flood event of May 2010, Jackson and Clay Counties had three 100 year flood events in May, July, and August of 2010.



Photo above: Shown at the Blackburn Creek site in Jackson County, from left, are Acting District Conservationist Darrell Beason, Cookeville Area Conservationist Jenny Adkins, HYL RC&D Director Dolores Angelini, Jackson County Mayor John Cason, State Representative Kelly Keisling, State Senator Charlotte Burks, Soil Conservation Technician Phillip Brown, and Civil Engineering Technician Josh Gipson. Several other middle Tennessee RC&D Councils were, also, able to utilize the CFMT funding to assist their counties ravaged by the May 2010 flooding event.

TDA Ag Resources Conservation Grant Provides Funding for Dibble Bars

by Kathy Daugherty, Hull-York Lakeland RC&D Coordinator

The Hull-York Lakeland purchased dibble bars with funding from TDA's Ag Resources Conservation Fund. District Conservationist's in the 14-county HYL RC&D Council area will be caretaker of a dibble bar for the county(s) they represent. The bars will be utilized in demonstrations, at Trees Days, or Field Days, and loaned or rented out by the Soil Conservation Districts.

Photo at right: Hull-York Lakeland RC&D recently distributed tree-planting dibble bars with the assistance of STC Kevin Brown, Cookeville Area Conservationist Jenny Adkins, RC&D Coordinator Kathy Daugherty, and TN Dept of Agriculture's Mark Hudson. DC's available for the presentation were Phillip Dixon, Darrell Beason, Pam Hoskins, and Dwight Dickson.





Civil Rights Award Recipient for 2010 is Southeast TN RC&D Council

by Lori Pittman, GIS Specialist/ Asian American/Pacific Islander SEPM, Murfreesboro Area Office

The 2010 NRCS-TN Civil Rights Award recipient was Southeast Tennessee RC&D Council and Frank Sagona, Southeast Tennessee RC&D Coordinator. The Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) in conjunction with the CR Committee initiated an annual award for outstanding Civil Rights efforts in TN with the first award given in 2010.

The criteria for the award was work in natural resources conservation and/or agriculture that also advanced the cause of Civil Rights in Tennessee. Nominations were open to NRCS-Tennessee employees; Soil Conservation District employees; Earth Team volunteers; RC&D Council Members; and any other Tennessee individual or organization working to advance Civil Rights through NRCS-related work. Nominations were based on Outreach efforts, customers served, volunteers recruited, programs implemented, Education/awareness efforts or other related actions.

The Southeast Tennessee RC&D partnered with the Cherokee National Forest on "Kids in the Woods" a snorkeling project on the Conasauga River in Polk County and Citico Creek in Monroe County. The Cherokee National Forest began the project for school kids (ages 12-16). The project was so popular it soon grew beyond the capability of the national forest. Furthermore, SETN RC&D had the opportunity to assist with scholarships for underserved youth who were primarily from Title 1 schools.



Photo above: Students enjoy snorkeling in the Conasauga River thanks to the "Kids in the Woods" project sponsored by the SE TN RC&D council and the Cherokee National Forest.

Many students cannot afford to pay the \$20 fee which covers wet suit maintenance and the cost of retired biologists to conduct the program. The national forest does not provide the program on a free basis, except for the forest biologist staff that manages the program.

The RC&D Council expected to provide scholarships for 200 students from principally Title 1 schools by the end of

the 2010 snorkeling season.

The Conasauga River has 30 species of native fish, with some listed as endangered, that students can see up close with the snorkeling equipment. At the same time the children are taught about the bio-diversity of the national forest and the value of clean water. An example of the participating groups are the Madisonville Boys and Girls Club, Polk County Boys and Girls Club, Bradley County Boys and Girls Club, Bradley County Youth Leadership, and Hamilton County City Schools. The youth from the Boys and Girls Clubs are generally underprivileged children and the Hamilton County school students have been principally African American and Hispanic children who have never had the opportunity to visit the forest and the river.

The Southeast Tennessee RC&D funding has come from two grants – The World Wildlife Fund and Volunteer Electric Cooperative. The RC&D's immediate goal is to continue providing assistance through 2012.

The 2010 award was presented by Kevin Brown at the AEM in November 2010 and at the TACD Convention in January 2011. The 2011 Award Announcement has been posted to the my.tnrcs.org website. Information headlines on the front page...just follow the link for information on applying. It is also listed at the top of the list of SEPM articles at Civil Rights --> SEPM.

If you have any questions about submitting an award nomination, contact Lori Pittman at lori.pittman@tn.usda.gov or 615-893-9295, ext. 113.



Photo above (l to r): Frank Sagona, RC&D Coordinator, Joyce Green, Council Member; Audrey Burton, Secretary, Southeast TN RC&D Council; and Lewis Kearney, Vice-President, Southeast TN RC&D Council.



Kevin Brown Receives Patriotic Employer Award for Extraordinary Support of Troops

by Sarah Singhurst, Administrative Management Specialist, Cookeville Area Office

Numerous thoughts are on the minds of the military service members of the National Guard or Reserves when they are called to active duty. Separation from their families is usually at the top of the list. Following closely behind are worries about being away from their civilian job for a year or more.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) guarantees soldiers can return to their civilian jobs when they return from deployment, but for some soldiers the process is not always smooth. However, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) District Conservationist Darrell Beason describes his transition back to work as “flawless.” Beason, who spent a year in Afghanistan as a Chief Warrant Officer for Tennessee National Guard’s 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, was able to step back into his job easily when he returned home in August 2010. He credits Tennessee State Conservationist Kevin Brown for making sure it all went off without a hitch.

Beason expressed his appreciation for the smooth transition by nominating Brown for a Patriotic Employer Award through an organization called Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). The award program gives soldiers and their families an opportunity to recognize employers who go above and beyond the legal requirements and show extraordinary support for their military families.



Photo above (l to r): Robert Haynes, ESGR; Darrell Beason, NRCS District Conservationist and Chief Warrant Officer for TN National Guard; Kevin Brown, NRCS State Conservationist, and Ed Day, ESGR.

Beason arranged to surprise Brown with the award presentation at a NRCS meeting in Murfreesboro on January 19, 2011. ESGR volunteers Robert Haynes and Ed Day, veterans themselves, personally presented the award. Brown said, “I’m genuinely touched and surprised by the honor.”

Jerry Prater, NRCS Veterans Emphasis Program Manager for Tennessee, points out that a number of recently hired employees are veterans and Reserve/Guard members along with several long time employees of NRCS. In addition, there are many more employees whose immediate family members have served and/or currently serve in the military.

More information about ESGR can be found on the organization’s website <http://www.esgr.org>.



Photo above: Robert Haynes presents Kevin Brown Patriotic Employer Award.



Web Utilization Training Scheduled

Make plans now to attend a two-day web seminar on "Web Utilization to Support your Mission". This seminar will provide: 1) Information on the assistance available from Tennessee NRCS to support your web utilization; 2) Training on the use of a state of the art web application to create dynamic websites; and 3) Examples of best practices for website utilization. An example site can be seen at: <http://gcsd.com>

Webpage training has been scheduled as follows:

- Area I - June 1-2 - Jackson AO
- Area II - June 6-7 - Murfreesboro AO
- Area III- June 15-16 - Cookeville AO
- Area IV - May 24-25 - Knoxville AO

Contact Carter Harris to register if you plan to attend as space is limited.

Ordering Publications and Exhibits

The NRCS Distribution Center (formerly LANDCARE) has undergone several changes including the name change.

To order publications and forms, go to: www.nrcs.usda.gov/distributioncenter

Exhibits can be viewed and ordered at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/exhibits/>

There is no charge for publications or for shipping exhibits but order early to ensure the exhibit is available. Exhibits are shipped with a prepaid return shipping label.

Hunter Duncan, Earth Team Volunteer Makes a Difference in Monroe County



Photo above: Earth Team Volunteer Hunter Duncan using GPS to get the job done.

Hunter Duncan, a 14 year old Sequoyah High School student, is an Earth Team Volunteer in the Madisonville Field Office. He began volunteering in the Madisonville Field Office in the summer of 2010 by assisting in various field work activities and clerical activities.

Hunter's big project last summer was assisting in the Feds, Farmers and Friends Feed Families Program. He and former AmeriCorps Worker Corey Rolen, went to businesses in Monroe County with information about the program and also got the local newspapers to do an article. Hunter also decided to ask his youth group at Hopewell Baptist Church to help him with this project.

He and his church helped collect over 1000 lbs. of food and various items (baby diapers, toilet paper, soap, shampoo, etc). All of the donations collected were donated to the Douglas-Cherokee Neighbor Service Center to distribute to families in Monroe County. Hunter was persistent in his determination to help feed hungry families and local families benefitted from his efforts.

"I am proud to be an Earth Team Volunteer for the Natural Resource Conservation Service," said Hunter. "It is a good way to give back to my community."