

EQIP Program – “A Natural” for Tennessee Landowner...“The EQIP Program was a natural for me since I always believed very strongly in the preservation of our environment,” says Brenda Fielder, landowner in Cheatham County, Tennessee.

Fielder contacted the Natural Resources Conservation Service for assistance with her 300-acre farm after her Dad passed away. Actually, the farm has been in the Fielder family for several generations.

Since Fielder was a little girl she had dreamed of moving to the farm and doing something productive with the land. She said her original idea was to have her own pony farm. “At age 43, I finally made the move, but I did not have a clue where to start. I called Carolyn Dillard, NRCS District Conservationist, Ashland City, Tennessee, and she talked with me about the possibilities,” Fielder said. Fielder signed up in the EQIP program and was approved. She immediately bought 65 head of beef cattle. She had already completed some fencing, but continued with cross fencing and other best management practices.

“I do have to admit that I was resistant to some of the ideas in the beginning, such as too many fences and gates for freedom of pleasure riding, which was my original reason for moving to the farm in the first place. But, Carolyn was so patient and understanding and always took our priorities into consideration. By doing that, she won us over to the advantages of the EQIP practices we put into place.” Fielder stated.

Rotating the cows every few days has actually given Fielder an good excuse for an early morning ride a few times a week, one with a purpose in mind. She says, “Our running joke is we got the cows just to have a legitimate excuse to ride!”

“Carolyn Dillard is much more than just the “cost share lady. Her job is to show us how these practices can actually benefit us all in the long run and help us accomplish our ultimate goal of sustainable agriculture and preservation of our centuries old farm land — too much is being lost to development, in my opinion,” Fielder added.

Innovative Coffee County Landowner Uses EQIP and Other Funds to Create Usable Product from Poultry Waste...Andy Scott, an innovative landowner in Coffee County, Tennessee recently used EQIP program and Tennessee Department of Agriculture funds for the construction of a poultry litter storage facility. For the proper disposal of his dead birds, an incinerator that “he designed” is used with a new and innovative invessel composter being installed with funds from a Tennessee Environmental Endowment. This new composting method uses electricity to rotate a drum with dead birds and allows the natural process of heat and turning to make usable compost in three days!

Coffee County Landowners “Team Up” for Conservation...Steve and Margaret Cunningham, a husband and wife farming team in Coffee County, Tennessee own a 285-acre Holstein dairy heifer replacement operation. The Cunningham’s were interested in improving their land and the water quality on their farm. They contacted the Natural Resources Conservation Service and enrolled in the EQIP program. To offset their out-of-pocket costs for conservation practice installation, they partnered with agencies and groups such as the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Nature Conservancy of Tennessee, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Tennessee Division of Forestry, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Conservation Fisheries Institute, and Quail Unlimited of

Tennessee. Best management practices were installed to exclude cattle from streams and wetlands and establish more wildlife habitat.

The Cunningham's wanted to create and/or restore habitat for certain aquatic species, particularly the globally rare, Barrens topminnow. To accomplish this they agreed to restore, protect, and manage two springs, the adjacent runs, surrounding buffer zones, and create small pools, specifically for this species.

In addition to the streams and springs, they also converted ten acres of cropland and grassland to native warm season grasses to provide habitat for migrating birds, cottontail rabbits, and bobwhite quail. In the future, the Cunningham's plan to dedicate a portion of their farmland to teach adults and students about fencing, watering systems, water quality of streams and springs, and protecting rare aquatic species and animals on private property.

Another result of their efforts include joining with seven contiguous landowners and enrolling in conservation programs to protect approximately four miles of riparian/spring habitat for the Barrens topminnow and other species including the federally endangered Cumberland pigtoe mussel and the state threatened flame chub.

The Cunningham's have been widely recognized for their efforts in environmental stewardship and natural resource conservation, they have recently received the following awards: Conservation Farmers of the Year by the Coffee County Soil Conservation District and Southeast Regional Conservation Award from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Tennessee Hosts Commercial Poultry Issues Field Day in Coffee County, Tennessee...Several agencies recently partnered on a Commercial Poultry Issues Field Day in Coffee County, TN. Included were: Natural Resources Conservation Service, University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, Nature Conservancy of Tennessee, Tennessee Valley Authority, Tennessee Environmental Endowment, Poultry Water Quality Consortium, Coffee-Franklin-Warren County Animal Waste Utilization Association and the Coffee/Grundly County Soil Conservation Districts. Tour stops and topics discussed were power outages and generators, use of incinerators and emission laws, the phosphorous issue, alum for ammonia and soluble phosphorous reductions, litter spreader calibration, composting methods, alternative feedstuffs for beef cattle, CAFO regulations and plans, and cost-share programs. Two hundred participants attended this field day with representation from thirteen Tennessee counties and five states: Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Texas and Iowa.

Tennessee NRCS Partners on School Greenhouse Project in Rutherford County...The NRCS, Rutherford Soil Conservation District Board of Supervisors and the University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service have formed a partnership with the Murfreesboro City Schools to help finalize the Hobgood Elementary School Greenhouse Project. NRCS will provide technical assistance for the project. The greenhouse will enable the school to have a working laboratory that will aid in developing the students' economics, mathematics, language arts, and science skills. Hobgood Elementary has received an Atlas Grant that will provide approximately \$41,000 of the \$56,000 needed. The school has raised \$8000 of their \$15,000 goal. The student population at Hobgood Elementary is 47% minorities and 67% of the students participate in the Free or Reduced Lunch Program. The success of this project will facilitate the

students' understanding the importance of agriculture and conserving our natural resources.

Nashville, Tennessee - As an outreach effort, the Natural Resources Conservation Service participated in the Tennessee Lawn and Garden Show that was held recently at the Tennessee State Fairgrounds. At the NRCS booth, information was distributed about Backyard Conservation, including tree planting, backyard ponds, wildlife habitat and other information. The attendance for the weekend was approximately 20,000 people. "This is a very effective outreach effort for our non-traditional and potential customers," says Christy Luna, District Conservationist, Lebanon, Tennessee.

Lauderdale County, Tennessee - George Meadows and his father and sons in Lauderdale County have been looking for ways to keep problem spots on their cotton-corn-soybeans operation from slipping away after a good rain. Meadows has participated in several farm conservation programs... Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), state cost share programs, Ducks Unlimited programs, and, of course, completed some of it on his own.

He also has installed diversions, grassed waterways and rock drop structures allowing water to safely leave the field. Meadows is especially impressed with the rock drop structures' easy maintenance.

In addition to these useful structures, however, Meadows has gradually revamped the overall management of the fields and soil, allowing much more of the rain to percolate in and raising the overall productivity of the fields. The entire farm is now "no or low" till and crop residue and winter cover crops further stabilize and enrich the fields. When combined with Meadows' careful management of nutrients and pesticides this means a big contribution to Lauderdale County's water quality.

Jackson County, Tennessee - Edward Clark of Jackson County started out just wanting to bring more wildlife to his farm, but when he was offered a good sum of money to lease the land for turkey hunting he began to think about intensive management for wild turkeys. Clark requested assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency to help him implement his goals to enhance wildlife populations on his land. He also enrolled some of his land in the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program and implemented several key management steps that have greatly contributed to his success, such as, creating open spaces for wildlife, adding spring and fall food plots, maintaining field borders planted with native warm season grasses and others. Clark Farms was recently chosen as Rural Sportsman Wild Turkey Management Farm of the Year in a contest sponsored by Benelli and Progressive Farmer Magazine. The award, a dream come true for Clark, was recently presented in Fort Worth, Texas.

McMinn County, Tennessee - McMinn County Farmer W. D. Watson operates a cow/calf herd and requested NRCS assistance to install several conservation practices to improve water quality and prevent soil erosion on his land. These practices include: pasture and hayland planting, cross-fencing, livestock water access ramps, streambank/shoreline protection, and pasture management.

Forty-four hundred feet of Chestuee Creek flows through the farm. To protect the streambank from erosion, Watson fenced his beef herd from the creek. Two strands of

high tensile wire was used with fence posts spaced approximately 40 feet apart. Chestuee Creek gets out of its banks during periods of heavy rainfall, but the fence withstands the floodwater.

Watson realizes that each landowner's actions are important to the watershed area and to his neighbors downstream. His care and stewardship of his land has earned him the title of "Certified Conservation Farmer." The McMinn County Soil Conservation District recognized Watson at its Annual Banquet last fall.

NRCS Soil Scientists Discover New Soils in the Smokies... Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Scientists from Tennessee and North Carolina are currently surveying all soils in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and have discovered types of soil not previously known to science!

The project's goal is to generate detailed, digital maps of the soils in the park as they relate to various landscapes. Teams of soil scientists working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and based in Sevierville and Waynesville, N.C., have been working on the survey for four years and expect to be finished by 2007. The soil survey is at about the halfway point, having mapped 260,000 acres in the park.

In addition to the soil survey, there are other scientists surveying all life forms in the park, officially called an All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI).

And just as the ATBI already has uncovered dozens of species new to science, the soil survey so far has identified 21 soil types, some of which probably occur in the park and nowhere else.

"This is the most comprehensive soil survey we've done," says Anthony Kheil, NRCS Soil Scientist, Sevierville, Tennessee, "Nowhere do you get the range of soils you find in the Park, and that comes from the combination of elevation, geology and climate you only get in the Smokies."

Hardeman County, Tennessee - Vernon Henderson recently constructed a livestock pond on his farm near Middleton, Tennessee in Hardeman County as a part of his Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contract.

Mr. Henderson had wanted to do rotational grazing, but had only one pond for his livestock. Through EQIP, Mr. Henderson was able to cross fence his farm and add another pond so that he can begin intensive, rotational grazing. The cost sharing on the fencing and pond made it possible for him to do something he had wanted to do for a long time, but was not able to do on his own.

Nashville, Tennessee – "Working Together for Measurable Water Quality Results" was the theme of the Second Annual Tennessee Watershed Roundtable held March 27-28, 2003, in Nashville, Tennessee. State Conservationist James Ford served on a "Leadership Panel" along with the heads of other state and Federal agencies. Assistant State Conservationist Donald Dotson served on an "Assistance Panel" and discussed the 2002 Farm Bill.

Watershed success stories were presented in three concurrent sessions entitled

Land Trusts and Local Watershed Initiatives, Farmland Protection and the Farm Bill, and Impaired Waters Recovery. Breakout sessions were held to discuss Tennessee watersheds where success and restoration can occur and to begin a dialogue and cooperative strategies and actions to restore Tennessee watersheds.

Appalachian RC&D... "Take a Walk on the Arts Trail" Mini-Grants Merge Local Arts and Nature-Based Recreation...The Appalachian RC&D Council is offering Mini-Grant funding for Arts groups again in 2003. In 2002, 8 projects were funded in the region, ranging from Classical Music to Reggae to Bluegrass as well as nature crafts, fine art and pioneer cooking and tradecraft. Projects funded for 2003 include wildlife viewing and painting, sheep poetry, art shows, family art classes, story telling, music and much more. A special "Take a Walk on the Arts Trail" logo was commissioned and used on posters, websites, news articles, and 15,000 rack cards to publicize all events.

The Arts Trail Mini-Grant program is designed to enhance public knowledge, understanding and appreciation by providing access to the arts in a natural setting, while promoting tourism.

McNairy County, Tennessee - The Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Environmental Protection Agency, McNairy County Soil Conservation District, McNairy County Commissioners, Chickasaw-Shiloh Resource Conservation and Development Council, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service are cooperating and encouraging landowners to establish Best Management Practices in the lower Cypress Creek Watershed.

The McNairy County Soil Conservation District was awarded \$794,563 in a state grant from the Agriculture Nonpoint Fund to apply erosion control practices aimed at reducing sediment loads entering the lower Cypress Creek Canal.

NRCS Signs Technical Service Provider Agreement with The University of Tennessee...At a ceremony held on April 9, 2003 in Washington D.C, NRCS Chief Bruce Knight signed a TSP memorandum of understanding with The University of Tennessee. Those present from UT included: Dr. Jack Britt, vice president, University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture; Dr. Charles Norman, dean, University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service; Dr. Gary Cunningham, Associate Administrator, CSREES; and Dr. Robert T. Burns, designated technical leader, University of Tennessee's Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) Certification Program.

Also, attending were Congressman Jim Duncan, from the Second Congressional District in Tennessee; representatives of Senators Bill Frist and Lamar Alexander, and others. Tennessee NRCS State Conservationist James W. Ford served as Master of Ceremonies for the event.

The three-year agreement allows the UT Agricultural Extension Service to recommend certified nutrient management specialists in manure and wastewater handling and storage, nutrient management and land treatment practices as USDA-NRCS technical service providers. These providers must perform work that meets USDA-NRCS standards and specifications for effective nutrient management.

Lauderdale County, Tennessee - Tennessee NRCS Employees Richard Cooke, Paul McQuade and Dwaine Johnston met with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians on Tribal Land to discuss services offered by USDA NRCS. Details of programs and services

available were presented to the group. Information was also provided concerning employment through the STAR Program, the Volunteer Program, and the Student Trainee Program.

Weakley County, Tennessee - In 2002, NRCS contacted minority landowner Hoover Nunley informing him that a cost-share program was available. Nunley decided to participate in the State Agricultural Resources Cost-Share Program in the spring of 2002. A grade control structure was constructed that benefited 13 acres on his farm. This structure also eliminated sheet erosion in a neighbor's field. In addition, this grade control structure has a permanent pool for livestock watering.

Mark Carroll, NRCS District Conservationist, discussed the possibilities available to Nunley during the planning interview and while walking over the farm with him. Carroll discussed the availability of cost share that the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) had to offer. Nunley decided to convert two crop fields to pastureland in the fall of 2003 with the cost share available through the program.

The cropland conversion of 16.1 acres will result in approximately 189 tons of soil saved. Nunley will have 29.1 acres of land benefited by the end of 2003. These benefited acres do not count his neighbor's bottomland crop field that is also being protected.

Mountain City, Tennessee - An Emergency Watershed Protection plan has been approved for Mountain City, Tennessee. Funding in the amount of \$119,000 will be utilized for conservation structures needed as a result of flooding damage that occurred in July 2001. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has been working closely with the mayor and city officials on the projects. As of last week, design proposals and blueprints had been submitted for all the sights involved so can begin this summer. In addition, the city has been assisted in collecting information so all necessary permitting applications can be prepared.

Morristown, Hamblen County - The Morristown NRCS Field Office has been working with the City of Morristown to help form a "Tree Board" to improve the use, care, and maintenance of the trees located in city. Through this effort, people with a wide variety of expertise have come together to develop plans for the effort. So far, several projects have been accomplished including planting trees along the stream banks in Fred Miller Park, the development of a greenway trail to connect two city parks, the approval of a grant to finance an arboretum, and the development of a pamphlet describing the 25 types of trees recommended for planting in the area. Also, the Smoky Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Council working in partnership with NRCS has purchased a tree cooler to store seedlings for projects. All of these things are helping improve the quality of life in the Morristown area.

Rhea County, Tennessee...Firewise Controlled Burn Held at Yuchi Wildlife Management Area... Southeast Tennessee Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council and the Rhea County Soil Conservation District recently sponsored a Firewise Prescribed Burning Workshop with an actual controlled burn demonstration. The workshop was held March 4, 2003 at the Yuchi Wildlife Management Area in Rhea County. The event was made possible by a Firewise grant administered through the Southeast Tennessee RC&D Council. Approximately 70 persons attended the workshop, which included speakers from the Tennessee Division of Forestry, Rhea County Soil Conservation District, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Southeast Tennessee Resource

Conservation and Development Council, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service.

Gearing Up Emergency Services in Clinch-Powell RC&D Area... Clinch-Powell Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) and Enterprise Community (EC) joined together to improve the capabilities of Volunteer Fire Departments (VFD's) across the five-county RC&D area. In direct response to needs expressed in a broad-based public participation process, the RC&D and EC developed a strategy for how to best help the numerous VFD's in the region with very limited dollars. After much research and discussion with firefighters, a strategy was developed to offer a challenge cost-share program with VFD's for the purchase of full sets of Bunker (Turn Out) Gear. VFD's have volunteer firefighters willing to serve but have no safety gear to equip the firefighters. On average, fewer than 3 sets of approved Bunker Gear per department were available.

Offering a challenge cost-share program to departments allowed use of bulk purchasing to obtain a discount price per set of gear that would not have been possible for departments purchasing on an individual basis. Each department received a per set cost of \$1,200 for only \$400 after the bulk discount and EC cost share.

RC&D also provided direct assistance to 25 VFD's in accessing FEMA grant funds. In FY 2001 the RC&D Council wrote 20 grants on behalf of VFD's in the region. In 2002, the RC&D provided hands-on training to aid VFD's write their own grants as required on-line. This direct assistance produced 10 grants to 9 VFD's in the region including 1 of only 200 fire truck grants in the country. Total FEMA grant awards to date in the area is \$424,767.

Because of the increased focus on emergency services in the region, the newly formed United Way in Grainger County designated emergency services as one of their areas of giving. Because VFD's did not have 501C3 status, RC&D serves as the pass-thru agency for those departments. These first year funds have already resulted in \$10,300 in badly needed new operating funds for VFD's.

At the request of VFD's, RC&D is now working on an effort to determine the feasibility of group insurance, equipment swaps, bulk purchasing, region-wide training, etc. The increased dialogue among the departments as a result of RC&D efforts is encouraging. The increased cooperation across county boundaries is exciting.

This has been a highly gratifying project. While we began our work in this project pre-9/11, the value has certainly been elevated post-9/11. More than 200 firefighters, who put their lives on the line for the public's safety, now have safety gear thanks to RC&D efforts. The total project value is \$591,163.

Benefits include:

25 Volunteer Fire Departments trained in FEMA grant writing,

9 Volunteer Fire Departments receive FEMA grants,

17 Volunteer Fire Departments receive EC grants

200+ new sets of Bunker Gear purchased

1 new pumper truck

6 Volunteer Departments receive United Way donations for operating funds

Tennessee Partnership Produces Excellent Results for Conservation

Buffers...Conservation Buffers including Filter Strips and Riparian Forest Buffers were planned on approximately 2950 acres with 394 Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Signup program participants, primarily in 21 Western Tennessee counties. Accomplishments are the result of a joint partnership between the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) supporting a fulltime wildlife biologist who provides technical assistance to field staffs and landowners. TWRA provides 100% of the funding for the staff position and has agreed to provide 100% of the funding for two (2) additional similar positions for Middle and Eastern Tennessee, due to the excellent results of this partnership.

"We have had a great deal of success with the West Tennessee position over the last several years in terms of quail habitat being put on the ground. Having someone working directly with the NRCS District Conservationists on a day-to-day basis has made a significant impact on the acceptance and success of wildlife plantings, such as native warm season grasses, in conventional conservation practices," stated TWRA Assistant Chief of Wildlife, Mark Gudlin. "Our Agency's Commission was so impressed by the progress in habitat gains in West Tennessee and resulting response by quail that they directed us to pursue similar positions in the other two regions of the state. We are looking forward to a continued beneficial working relationship between TWRA and NRCS in Tennessee to make strides in putting quail habitat on the ground through USDA conservation programs".

Shelby County, Tennessee...Shelby County Personnel Participates in American

Indian Pow Wow...The Shelby County Soil Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service recently participated in an American Indian Association Pow Wow at the Millington Naval Base. An exhibit was set up as an outreach effort and materials distributed including wildflower seed packets, posters, backyard conservation and buffer strip information, and other information about programs and services offered by NRCS and Soil Conservation Districts and how they can help landowners and land users.

As a result the Andy Neal, NRCS District Conservationist, was requested by four Shelby County teachers to come and give presentations to their school classes. In addition, scout leaders requested him to speak to their scout troops about conservation.

Hopefully, these outreach efforts will be beneficial as we strive to work with undeserved communities. It was a good educational outreach to youth and adults about soil and water conservation. Approximately 2,000 persons attended the two-day event.

Shelby County NRCS Provides Assistance to Boy Scouts...Recently, the Shelby County Natural Resources Conservation Service office had a booth in Millington at the Boy Scout Base Camp. This was an outdoor activity and there were approximately 7,000 Boy Scouts/Cub Scouts at the old Millington Naval Base. They came in as far away as Texas to set up camp. While there, the local Shelby County Soil Conservation District set up a booth to help the boys earn a soil and water conservation merit badge. Brochures and literature were distributed by District and NRCS employees about conservation. Charlie Davis, NRCS, provided soil profiles and discussed the importance of soils information. The District gave a 55-minute presentation to start the boys on their merit badges. A merit badge cannot be completed in one day, but most of the boys were off to a good start!

Tennessee NRCS Helps Landowners Restore Sequatchie River in Bledsoe County,

TN...The Sequatchie River snakes through Bledsoe County. After spring rains the current tends to be very swift making sharp 180-degree turns in some places causing the riverbanks to erode.

On a recent tour of several farms that straddle the river's edge, participants were able to see firsthand some of the notable efforts being made to restore some of the eroded riverbanks. NRCS District Conservationist Randy Parnell provided technical assistance to landowners in the restorations efforts and discussed sites where a combination of fencing livestock away from the river, alternative water sources, limited access of watering sites, stream crossings, and vegetative filter strips were showing positive results. He also discussed Best Management Practices (BMP's) and how they reduce sediment and manure in streams, improve farming operations, promote healthier livestock (less hoof disease and injury), reduce erosion, improve property values, and enhance wildlife habitat along streambanks. In addition, rotational grazing and other pasture management techniques that aid in the protection of the stream from field runoff were discussed.

Another stop on the tour included an alternative watering structure where water is collected from a nearby spring and pumped up to an 18,000-gallon concrete lined storage basin. Water then flows by gravity to several watering troughs made by reusing old tractor tires. This allows the farmer to fence off a significant amount of his riverfront property. A ramp made of geotextile material and gravel along with fencing provides controlled access for cattle watering and equipment crossing.

Weakley County Landowner — Good Neighbor Through Conservation...As an outreach effort, NRCS District Conservationist Mark Carroll, contacted minority landowner Hoover Nunley to inform him of the cost-share programs and services available to him. While walking over the farm with Nunley during the planning interview, Carroll discussed the availability of cost share to help implement the practices needed. Nunley decided to participate in the State Agricultural Resources Cost-Share Program. NRCS provides technical assistance for this program at no cost to the landowner. A grade control structure was constructed that benefited 13 acres on his farm. This structure also eliminated sheet erosion in a neighbor's bottom crop field. This grade control structure has a permanent pool for livestock watering. Utilizing the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Nunley plans to convert two crop fields to pastureland in the fall of 2003. These two fields add up to 16.1 acres. The cropland conversion of 16.1 acres will result in approximately 189 tons of soil saved. Nunley will have 29.1 acres of land improved and protected from erosion by the end of 2003, and his neighbor's bottomland crop field will also be protected.

Henry County Landowner Fights Erosion at Home/Fights For His Country in Kuwait...Edward Milam, a young landowner in the Buchanan community, has been very persistent about getting cost share through the EQIP program to control erosion on a large gully that goes through this farm. After several unsuccessful attempts at trying to get a grade stabilization structure partially funded under the EQIP program, Edwards' structure was approved late in fiscal year 2002 and a contract was written.

Edward was glad to be approved and able to get cost-share assistance to help stop erosion on the gully, which ran through his farm. The gully was large, deeply eroded and large trees were falling from the tops of ditch banks. The structure had a seventy-acre drainage area. Edward was very eager to get the structure surveyed so he could visualize what it would look like. Edward is also a member of the local Tennessee National Guard

unit, which was deployed to Kuwait back in October. We set up an appointment with Edward to go out on a Friday and do the survey, but he was to be deployed with the National Guard unit on the next day. Since he was so interested in the layout of the structure, he helped us survey the project.

Due to some rainy conditions the structure wasn't completed for about three weeks. Edwards' father helped oversee the project in his son's absence. The structure was completed on November 5, 2002. Edwards' father took pictures of the completed structure and sent them to him in Kuwait since he doesn't know when he will return home. Edward was very interested in taking care of his land by stopping erosion as well as serving his country in the Tennessee National Guard and U.S. Military.

Benton County Landowner Pleased With NRCS Assistance...The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently provided assistance to help Charles Key of Benton County to prevent loss of buildings and land. He called NRCS after a large storm had washed trees and eroded soil from the bank behind his storage shed. After needs were assessed and it was determined that a riprap jetty was needed. Riprap jetties help to protect the streambank by deflecting the current away from the bank. The jetties are environmentally friendly because of the minimal amount of disturbance to the stream. After acquiring the necessary permits, the jetty was installed.

James Woodall, NRCS District Conservationist said, "This was a win-win situation for everyone. Not only was the landowner pleased, but our environmental folks were happy with the way we installed this practice. I am glad we could assist both the landowner and the environment."

Lauderdale County, Tennessee - Jerome Williams and Sons (David and Guilford) operate a family farm in Lauderdale County and reside in Ripley. Their operation is diversified with beef cattle, corn, soybeans, wheat and cotton. In addition, the family also operates a masonry construction company along with an earth moving operation.

They requested technical assistance from the Ripley Field Office approximately two years ago. Since that time, NRCS and District personnel have assisted Jerome Williams and Sons with the application of a variety of conservation work including: thirteen EQIP contracts, three State cost share contracts, and twenty-one grade stabilization structures.

Madison County Cotton Farmer Role Model for Conservation/Precision Farming...Allen Verell is a cotton farmer in the Huntersville Community of Madison County near Jackson, Tennessee. While he was growing up he helped his dad farm, but has been farming on his own since 1972.

Allen presently farms 2,000 acres, which consists of 1,400 acres of cotton with the remaining 600 acres in soybeans and corn. All of Allen's crops have been no-tilled for the past 10 years. Along with no-till farming, Allen maintains thousands of feet of terraces, practices contour farming, applies winter cover crops on highly erodible land, manages his crop residues for winter cover and no-till, and practices crop rotation. This coming spring Allen, through CRP contracts, will establish filter strips along the streams of five of his largest farms.

Jackson State Community College has been working with Allen for the past two years with precision farming. All of Allen's fields have been grid sampled and light imaged. Allen

plans to use this technology to increase his net return by reducing input costs and increasing yields through variable rate applications of seed, chemical, fertilizer and lime within each field.

This past summer Marestail became roundup resistant in West Tennessee and several farmers plowed fields that had been no-tilled for years. Allen chose to stay with no-till instead of losing the benefits from the past 10 years. This shows his commitment and dedication to no-till farming. To keep abreast of no-till technology, Allen has attended the National No-till Conference for the past seven years.

Allen is a member of the Soybean Association, on the boards of the Madison County Farmers Coop and the Madison County Soil Conservation District. Allen was honored as Dupont's Outstanding Young Farmer in 1986 the Madison County Soil Conservation District honored Allen as Madison County Conservation Farmer of the Year in 1993.

Madison County Field Office Assists Minority Landowners...Ira Taylor and James Stewart. are minority farmers who have farms in Madison County, Tennessee. They received assistance this year from the Madison County Field Office in applying conservation practices to control erosion and in establishing 46.3 acres of fescue and clover. They received cost share assistance through the Tennessee Department of Agriculture cost program and technical assistance from NRCS. They used the Madison County Soil Conservation District no-till drill to complete their accomplishments.

Fayette County, Tennessee - Alex Armour, Fayette County Farmer, took 27 acres of marginal soybean production ground and converted it to hybrid bermuda grass. This change has helped this young farmer in many different ways. Alex's main crop is cotton. With the addition of this bermuda grass, which is cut after the rush of cotton planting, his cash flow has been improved. According to Alex, he makes more cash from an acre of bermuda than he ever made from an acre of soybeans, even though it requires work that is more physical. He also recognizes the conservation benefits of the grass. The water is clearer as it runs off the fields. The Tennessee Department of Agriculture and the Fayette Soil Conservation District assisted Alex with cost-share to establish the bermuda grass. Technical assistance was provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Hardin County, Tennessee - Mark Roberts, District Conservationist, with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, recently met with several partners to plan a countywide Hazardous Waste Collection Day. Partners present during the planning session were Tennessee Valley Authority, The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation - Division of Solid Waste, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, and Hardin County's Solid Waste Director. The proposed date for the collection day is Saturday, March 22. All types of hazardous waste will be accepted including agricultural pesticides, home pesticides and cleaning products, lead-containing paint and batteries, and even used appliances. In fact, practically all unwanted items that would otherwise be dumped on the landscape will be properly disposed of. This year's event will be held in the Pickwick Lake area to focus on protecting the lake's water quality.

Fayette County, Tennessee...Billy Montague, of Fayette County, Tennessee is both a cotton farmer and avid rabbit hunter. He decided to combine his two passions, by planting filter strips on his home farm. Mr. Montague signed a contract for Conservation Reserve Program filter strips along two main drainage ditches. A mixture of five native warm

season grasses were established in early April of this year. He received an incentive payment from the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency for planting this mixture. Mr. Montague says that besides noticing more rabbits in the area, the development of wildlife habitat, improvement of water quality, and his annual income rental payments, that this program fit his farming operation perfectly.

Fayette County, Tennessee - Larry Humber plans to move back to his farm in Fayette County as soon as he retires. For the past year, he has been busy applying conservation practices to conserve and protect his land. With assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Fayette County Soil Conservation District they jointly came up with a plan that included the conservation practices he wanted to install.

With cost-share from the District and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Humber has converted all of his Highly Erodible Cropland (30 acres) to grass for hay production. He has converted three acres of land to pine trees through the Tennessee Division of Forestry TRIP Program.

McNairy County, Tennessee - The Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Environmental Protection Agency, McNairy County Soil Conservation District, McNairy County Commissioners, Chickasaw-Shiloh Resource Conservation and Development Council, and Natural Resources Conservation Service are encouraging landowners to establish Best Management Practices in the lower Cypress Creek Watershed.

The McNairy County Soil Conservation District was awarded \$794,563 in a state grant from the Agriculture Nonpoint Fund Program in 2001. The objective is to apply erosion control practices to reduce sediment loads entering the lower Cypress Creek Canal.

Since January 2001 the following Best Management Practices (BMP) have been planned:

Cropland Conversion to Pasture and Hayland: 413 acres
No-till: 2798 acres
Critical Area Planting: 1 acre
Buffer Strips: 129 acres
Grade Stabilization Structures: 20 no.
Water and Sediment Control Basins: 4 no.
Timber Restoration: 133 acres

Sponsors are anticipating an increase in landowner participation during the final two years of the contract period, which end in late 2004.

Stones River National Battlefield Interagency Agreement To Increase Native Plants... Recently, Larry Robeson, NRCS District Conservationist and Cory Hodge, Soil Conservationist of the NRCS Field Office in Murfreesboro met with Terri Hogan, Ecologist with the National Park Service along with John Vandevender, Manager, Warren Haynes, Technician, and Dan Pinkham, Technician from the Alderson Plant Material Center in West Virginia. The meeting was held at the Stones River National Battlefield to start up a five-year interagency agreement between the National Park Service and the Alderson Plant Material Center. Over the next five years the (PMC) staff will collect, evaluate, grow, and increase native plant materials to revegetate disturbed areas on the Battlefield.

The Hull-York Lakeland Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)

Council... is currently working with representatives from Smith County on two projects. One, of which, is the plan for a livestock pavilion that is going to be constructed within the county. The other project is concerning several health clinics that will be provided in several RC&D counties, with representatives from Smith County leading this project.

Central Basin Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Open House...

The newly opened Central Basin RC&D Office in Mount Juliet, Tennessee held an Open House on January 9, 2003. Visitors had an opportunity to meet council members and NRCS personnel who work with the RC&D program both locally and across the state.

Approximately 40 people attended the open house. Among the visitors were Douglas Henry and Susan Lynn, who are state representatives in the area along with Don Majors who is a field representative for Congressman Jim Cooper's office and serves on the Nashville City Council. Representatives from partner agencies, Lewis Kearney of the Cherokee National Forrest, Jim Nance of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and Terry Ark of the Tennessee Valley Authority also attended.

Visitors also had an opportunity to view a power point presentation and video at their leisure that explained the formation of RC&D councils, mission and depicted general activities of RC&D councils across the country. With the interest shown by the guests especially those who previously were not aware of the RC&D program, the future of the Central Basin RC&D Area looks very bright.

Wilson County Landowners use "Common Sense Conservation Approach"...

The Neal Brothers of Wilson County have been farming all their lives. The operation includes an extensive cow/calf operation and tobacco. The Neal's are practical producers.

Perry Neal stated, "We run as many animals as we can, but we rest our grass to get the most production from both our grass and cattle." Five years ago the Neal's began a project with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to improve the profitability of their operation using low input common sense techniques.

A Pasture Walk was held at the Neal Farm in Lebanon, Tennessee recently. The event was hosted by the Neal Family, along with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wilson County Soil Conservation District, UT Extension Service and Farm Credit Service. Included was a tour of their forage and livestock operation along with discussions on rotational grazing, alternative water systems, Vaughns Bermuda grass, Common Bermuda grass, and crabgrass. Dr. Warren Gill, Middle Tennessee Beef Specialist with University of Tennessee Extension Service explained the results of a test conducted on-site concerning the level of sulfur in the soil. Over 100 people attended the event.

NRCS/Soil Conservation District Assists With Senior Day on the Trail for

Cheatham County Citizens... Cheatham County Natural Resources Conservation Service and Soil Conservation District recently joined the Cheatham County Friends of the Trail group to sponsor Senior Day on the Trail. The participants enjoyed a hayride and picnic at the native garden and comfort station, Approximately 75 senior citizens attended.

NRCS Assists Cheatham County With Streambank Projects...

Recently, NRCS and the Cheatham County Soil Conservation District have been working with the Harpeth River Watershed Association and the Town of Kingston Springs to plan two streambank projects at city parks. One project was on the Turnbull Creek at the Fishin Hole Park. A rock jetty

was constructed according to NRCS Engineer Terry Horne's design. This small park was at risk of losing a lot of its area due to erosion. The jetty will provide erosion control for this area. Another site is at the Kingston Springs ballpark. This severely eroded bank is approximately 2000 feet in length, with a bank height of 20 feet. A series of jetties is planned in conjunction with tree planting. Additional jetties will be constructed as funds are approved. Permits for these projects were received from Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The University School of Nashville Receives Assistance with Wetland for Wastewater Treatment...

Cheatham County's Natural Resources Conservation Service and Soil Conservation District personnel partnered with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation recently to assist The University School of Nashville. The cooperative effort was to select and plant wetland plants for a wetland that has been established at the school for wastewater treatment.

White County Farmers Of the Year Advise Young Farmers: "If You Take Care of Your Land...It Will Take Care of You"... Ed and Eddie Ray Cole of the Coles Chapel Community were selected as the White County Soil Conservation District Farmers of the Year for 2002. The Coles are widely respected for their exemplary farming operation. Their 750-acre operation includes 275 acres of corn silage; 200 acres of wheat double cropped for hay or silage, 170 acres of pastureland and 200 acres of hayland, and a 205-head dairy herd.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), White County Soil Conservation District and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, have provided assistance to the Coles in implementing many practices to control erosion and manage nutrient wastes. Buffer strips are used to control erosion and filter water before it leaves their land.

Ed Cole gives this advice to young farmers, "Keep trying to do the best you can and everything will work out." He also stated when asked about the importance of soil and water conservation, "I try to take care of my land. If you take care of your land, it will take care of you and be there for future generations to come."

Field Day/Demonstration Held To Assist Poultry Producers in Coffee and Surrounding Counties...

Gary Moore, District Conservationist and Adam Daugherty, Soil Conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Coffee County, recently assisted area producers with a Liquid Alum Demonstration at the Anita and Brian Goodman farm. Alternative and innovative methods of reducing the ammonia odor in poultry houses, controlling soluble phosphorus, and the ease of using a liquid versus the solid alum were main education points of the program. Several producers from Bedford, Sumner and Coffee counties were in attendance along with representatives from the University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, Tennessee Division of Forestry, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Coffee County Soil Conservation District, General Chemical, Royster-Clark, and Tyson.

NRCS/Soil Conservation District Assist With Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) in Cumberland County, Tennessee...

Numerous Cumberland County farms were intensively damaged from a tornado that swept through the county on November 10, 2002. There were a total of four (4) fatalities from the deadly storm. NRCS and FSA personnel toured the damaged areas and surveyed the damages. They submitted a request to the Nashville FSA State Office for ECP funds to assist landowners with debris

removal and fence replacement. Cumberland County was approved for a total of \$129,000 ECP funds.

A total of 70 applications were received. NRCS personnel made site visits and completed cost estimates for the landowners. There were 58 applications approved for funding in the amount \$124,060. Landowners are currently working to remove debris from farmland and replace fencing.

NRCS Assists With Grazing Lands in White County, Tennessee... Charles Parris, NRCS District Conservationist, White County, recently provided assistance to the White County Livestock Association in an effort to emphasize Prescribed Grazing. As a result, several local farmers have requested assistance with their grazing land concerns. Examples of practices discussed include: 1) livestock rotation, pond sealing, limited access for livestock to ponds, travel lanes and watering trough systems, 2) splitting of fields into paddocks, watering troughs, heavy use area, and use of a four gate corral to implement a livestock rotation. Parris also discussed changing the corn silage/wheat field to grassland and limited access fencing for a pond and critical area treatment on the shoreline of the pond. A farm visit was made to discuss rotational grazing, limited access fencing, and access points for ponds.

NRCS and Soil Conservation District Provide Assistance to Native American Landowner... Recently, Greg Taylor, NRCS District Conservationist, Hickman County, assisted Ms. Venus Tyler with information about building a pond on her property for fish and wildlife benefits. She is a Native American who has recorded music and makes jewelry and pottery. She also regularly speaks about her ancestry to groups and to schools in Lewis, Perry and Hickman Counties. She recently gave a presentation at Centerville Intermediate School to approximately 157 students about Native American heritage and customs. Ms. Tyler also displayed jewelry that she has made and explained how she used items from nature to make jewelry, facial paint, and clothing.

Conservation Partnership to Assist Bullrun Creek... When Bullrun Creek made the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation's List of Impaired Streams for Poor Water Quality, the classification got the attention of local residents, agencies and county officials in the area. The watershed includes 104 square miles in Anderson, Grainger, Knox, and Union Counties.

"There were several reasons for the impairment of Bullrun Creek, including sedimentation, pathogens (bacteria and other possible disease-causing organisms), channelization, habitat alterations from agriculture, permitted industrial discharge, and municipal water discharge," stated Bobby Ellison, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Conservation Technician located in Union County, Tennessee.

Several agencies and organizations formed a partnership in response to concerns about the deteriorating water quality and began working together to identify and solve these problems. Included were the Union, Knox, Grainger, and Anderson Soil Conservation districts; Knox County Engineering Department; Natural Resource Conservation Service; University of Tennessee; Tennessee Valley Authority; Tennessee Department of Agriculture; Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation; Maynardville Utilities Department; Hallsdale-Powell Utilities Department; and the Cumberland and Clinch-Powell Resource Conservation and Development Councils.

Since then, a number of best management practices (BMPs) have been implemented to improve water quality in the watershed.

"Simple things like adding buffers (areas of vegetation) along streams can have a huge impact on water quality," says Ellison. "Native trees, shrubs, and grasses reduce the amount of sediments entering the stream, combat flood damage, and help control erosion. Planting trees and other vegetation can also help to stabilize streambanks."

During a Bullrun Creek Farm Tour held recently, area residents and others had the opportunity to see and learn about the best management practices that have been implemented to improve water quality in the watershed.

Scott's Career Enhancement Program...Annually Oscar and Barbara Scott, Tennessee NRCS Earth Team Volunteers, invite area high school students to their farm in Ooltewah, Tennessee (near Chattanooga) for Scott's Career Enhancement Program. This event is held to provide students in grades 9-11 with information on careers and scholarship opportunities in agriculture and related sciences.

Partnering with the Scott's in the event were:

- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Hamilton County Soil Conservation District
- USDA-Forest Service, Cherokee National Forest
- Tennessee Chapter of the National
- Organization for Professional Black NRCS Employees (NOPBNRCSE).

The Scotts have received widespread recognition for their efforts in conservation education and community activities.

Smoky Mountain RC&D Assists Blount County In Protecting Water Quality...Blount County is blessed with many creeks, rivers, streams, and drains. Problems with dumping waste in the many bodies of water and drains are prevalent throughout the county. The Smoky Mountain RC&D is providing assistance in finding a solution to the problem.

The Smoky Mountain RC&D worked very closed with the Little River Watershed Association in Blount County to create a preventative measure that would urge individuals to stop polluting the streams and drains. The RC&D has provided grant funds to purchase stencils that are being used at every street drain in Blount County. These stencils are being used with the assistance of volunteers (who are donating work as in-kind). In addition, the RC&D has also provided funding to create a mobile Kiosk that consists of a computer with software addressing the awareness and the importance of water quality. This Kiosk can be used throughout the five-county RC&D area.

"Friend of Conservation"...Jerry Howell from the Mt. Harmony Community in McMinn County, Tennessee recently received a well-deserved "Friend of Conservation Award." He and his family have a long history of supporting soil and water conservation. His father and grandfather have carried out conservation practices on their farm in the same community for many years.

Howell was appointed to the McMinn County Soil Conservation District Board in 1984, and has served seven terms as Vice-Chairman and nine terms as Chairman. Under his leadership, the District has received numerous honors and awards and has been

recognized as an “innovator of new and unique conservation projects.” Examples are: Oostanaula Creek Project, successful completion of three floodwater retarding dams in the Sweetwater Creek Watershed Project, numerous animal waste systems, establishment of best management practices with state and Federal cost-share funds, new McMinn County Soil Survey, and the establishment of a Water Quality Coordinator position in the county.

The successful completion of many these projects can be attributed to Mr. Howell’s leadership working in partnership with the McMinn County Soil Conservation District, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and others in McMinn County.

Johnson County, Tennessee - An Emergency Watershed Protection plan has been approved for Mountain City, Tennessee. Funding in the amount of \$119,000 will be utilized for conservation structures needed as a result of flooding damage that occurred in July 2001. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has been working closely with the mayor and city officials on the projects. As of last week, design proposals and blueprints had been submitted for all the sights involved so can begin this summer. In addition, the city has been assisted in collecting information so all necessary permitting applications can be prepared.

Obion County, Tennessee - “ It just doesn’t make good sense to do it any other way.” That’s the sentiment expressed by Jimmy Seals of Obion County recently after construction of a grade stabilization structure on one of his farms. Jimmy and his brother, Ricky, farm over 1900 acres of cropland in a corn / wheat / soybean no-till cropping system. Union City NRCS Field Office staff had provided assistance on one of the farms to plan and install a pipe outlet grade stabilization structure to intercept and control runoff water. The pipe was taken underground to a stable outlet to control erosion behind the structure.

“ We’ve had several structures built in the past few years, but this is the first time we got NRCS involved. The other structures held water too long and we lost crop, or didn’t hold enough, and washed out around the ends,” said Jimmy. “ We won’t build another structure without NRCS help, regardless of whether we get cost-share or not, ” he stated, “It just makes good sense to do it right the first time and be done with it.”

Fayette County, Tennessee - The Natural Resources Conservation Service, Fayette County Forestry Association, and the Fayette County Soil Conservation District sponsored a Forestry Field Day recently. Topics of discussion were, opportunities in pine management, hardwood production and marketing, wildlife/timber production and benefits of chemical treatments in forest production. Fifty-five landowners from Fayette, Hardeman, and Shelby Counties attended.

Claiborne County, Tennessee - Billy and Debbie Venable of Tazewell were concerned with the natural resource problems evident on their farm, some of which included too few watering locations and severe creek bank erosion. Venable contacted District Conservationist Todd Reed and Soil Conservationist Bobby Ellison of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and representatives of the Claiborne County Soil Conservation District. Venable worked with NRCS to develop a plan to address the concerns he had on his farm.

Several agencies and programs were then brought together to help the Venables offset the cost of installing the conservation plan. Included were: Tennessee Department of

Agriculture's Non-Point Source fund, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Reserve Program, and a Tennessee Valley Authority grant. The cooperating agencies involved with improving the water quality and other natural resources on this project were the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Claiborne County Soil Conservation District (CCSCD), Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA), Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), Tennessee Department of Forestry (TDF) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

On May 1, 2003, the Claiborne County Soil Conservation District in partnership with NRCS and others held an educational tour to give landowners and others an opportunity to view what had been accomplished on the Venable farm in the Little Sycamore Watershed area.

The tour consisted of three sites where conservation best management practices were put into place. The best management practices showcased on the Venable farm were cross fencing for rotational grazing, spring development, alternate watering system, heavy use area pad, stream bank stabilization, and riparian buffers. Tour stops included presentations by Todd Reed, District Conservationist, Claiborne/Union Counties, NRCS; Mike McElroy, District Conservationist, Greene County, NRCS; Jenny Adkins, Water Quality Specialist, NRCS, Nashville; Shannon O'Quinn, TVA; Tiffany Day, TVA, and Steve Roark, Tennessee Division of Forestry.

Sponsors of the tour were: Claiborne County SCD, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Tennessee Valley Authority, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, and the Tennessee Department of Forestry. Approximately 130 landowners, local FFA students, and others participated in the tour. All participants received "Farm the Best, Buffer the Rest" teeshirts along with other items.

Buffalo-Duck RC&D Council Assists With "Communities Tomorrow" Initiative -

Local leaders of Hickman, Lewis, Perry and Wayne Counties in Tennessee recognized the need to work together to address a wide variety of economic and community development issues. A united regional initiative called "Communities Tomorrow" evolved as a process to seek out local input for establishing a vision of what communities want to be, and defining goals and initiating actions to make that vision a reality. The initiative places a strong emphasis on strategic planning and effective partnering between local governments, businesses, organizations, and state and federal agencies.

A strategic agenda for the four counties was developed through public input workshops facilitated by staff from the Tennessee Valley Authority, USDA Rural Development, the Buffalo-Duck RC&D Council, and the South Central Tennessee Development District. A significant part of the initiative involves "regional - based" collaboration in education and training, recreation, tourism, and transportation. "Communities Tomorrow" is an on-going process, but the benefits of increased cooperation between counties and communities are already being realized with several community development projects underway.

Contact person: Larry Lofton, RC&D Coordinator, Buffalo-Duck RC&D area, Linden, Tennessee - Telephone 931/589-5855

Tennessee NRCS Helps Landowners Restore Sequatchie River in Bledsoe County, TN - The Sequatchie River snakes through Bledsoe County. After spring rains the current tends to be very swift making sharp 180-degree turns in some places causing the riverbanks to erode.

On a recent tour of several farms that straddle the river's edge, participants were able to see firsthand some of the notable efforts being made to restore some of the eroded riverbanks. NRCS District Conservationist Randy Parnell provided technical assistance to landowners in the restorations efforts and discussed sites where a combination of fencing livestock away from the river, alternative water sources, limited access of watering sites, stream crossings, and vegetative filter strips were showing positive results. He also discussed Best Management Practices (BMP's) and how they reduce sediment and manure in streams, improve farming operations, promote healthier livestock (less hoof disease and injury), reduce erosion, improve property values, and enhance wildlife habitat along streambanks. In addition, rotational grazing and other pasture management techniques that aid in the protection of the stream from field runoff were discussed.

Another stop on the tour included an alternative watering structure where water is collected from a nearby spring and pumped up to an 18,000-gallon concrete lined storage basin. Water then flows by gravity to several watering troughs made by reusing old tractor tires. This allows the farmer to fence off a significant amount of his riverfront property. A ramp made of geotextile material and gravel along with fencing provides controlled access for cattle watering and equipment crossing.

Contact Person: Randy Parnell, District Conservationist, NRCS, Pikeville, TN – Telephone: 423/447-2532, Ext. 3.

The Annual East Tennessee Agriculture and Community Expo - This event is held annually in White Pine, TN and hosted by the Smoky Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Council. Partners assisting with the Expo include USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Farm Service Agency, Cherokee National Forest, The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, Soil Conservation Districts and numerous other local, state and Federal agencies, organizations, individuals and volunteers. There are several tours and presentations focusing various conservation, community and forestry practices targeted to small farmers and underserved community residents.

Contact person: Eston Williams, RC&D Coordinator, Smoky Mountain RC&D Area, White Pine, TN – Telephone: 865/674-8890.
Website: www.east-tenn-expo.com

Tennessee Greenways, Trails and Natural Areas – The Resource Conservation and Development Councils in Tennessee partner with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and the Parks and Greenways Foundation to preserve Tennessee's scenic beauty and rich wildlife by creating an interconnected system of parks, greenways and wild and natural areas from the Mississippi River to the Great Smoky Mountains.

One example - The Five Rivers Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council has assisted the citizens of Cheatham County, Tennessee and various partners with the community Rails-To-Trails project. The Council and local community are pleased with the approximately four miles of award-winning nature trails that have been developed that were once old railroad beds.

Contact person: Carolyn Dillard, District Conservationist, NRCS, Ashland City, TN –

Telephone: 615/792-5161, Ext. 3.

Regional Conservation Easement Workshop for Estate Planners, CPA's and Tax Attorneys in Northeast Tennessee...We are pleased to report on the success of our training workshop for Estate Planning Professionals. This event was held on Monday – May 19, 2003 at Ridgefield's Country Club in Kingsport, Tennessee. We originally estimated that we would attract approximately 40 members of our target audience to this event. We were fortunate enough to form an alliance with Blackburn, Childers & Stegall, PLC; Appalachian Chapter of CPA's and the Tri-City Estate Planning Council. Through this partnership we were able to sell both groups on the concept of making this the program for their semi-annual meetings. This led to a highly successful event that **attracted 89 professionals** in the field who now have the beginnings of a detailed understanding of what a Conservation Easement is.

Interest was high and many questions were asked of Mr. Marshall Peterson, Holbrook & Peterson, PLLC and Ed Williams – Attorney at Law and Conservationist. We have arranged for one of the Attorney's in attendance to write an article that will be printed in the "TriCities-Business Journal" on the topic. This will reach a large audience that will be made aware of this conservation and estate planning tool. Thanks to Tennessee Department of Agriculture support they will be able to contact many professionals who can guide them through the process.

Plant Materials...Greg Brann, Tennessee NRCS Grazing Lands Specialist, has been involved in the collecting of plant materials useful to landowners for a number of years. One native species that he collected in 1990 in Montgomery County, Tennessee—Highlander Eastern gamagrass—out yielded Tifton 44 bermudagrass and Alamo switchgrass when cut on a 45-day interval. Tifton 44 yielded more when cut on a 30-day interval.

Eastern gamagrass is a native grass that can be found from Massachusetts, west to Illinois and Nebraska, and south to the West Indies, Central America, and Brazil. Highlander eastern gamagrass forms large clumps, with thick, knotty, rhizomes. Mature foliage height ranges from 1.5 to 5 feet tall.

Highlander is recommended for forage production. It is best used as a hay crop; however, it can be grazed if given appropriate management (i.e. rotational grazing) to prevent damage to the plant stand. It also has potential as a perennial silage crop and as a source of biomass for bioenergy production. It can be used in many types of conservation plantings, such as buffers and vegetative barriers.

Highlander was initially evaluated at the USDA-NRCS Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center (PMC), Coffeeville, Mississippi, from 1992 through 1994. A total of 73 accessions, collected from nine states in the Southeast and southern Great Plains of the United States, were included in the study. From these initial evaluations, Highlander was determined to have superior vigor, growth form and development, and disease resistance.

Highlander was then selected by the PMC for inclusion in a regional trial comparing 13 eastern gamagrass accessions from southern and western seed sources. This trial was conducted from 1996 through 1998 at nine PMCs, including the Jamie L. Whitten PMC. Yield data was collected at of these six sites. Plants of all accessions except Highlander died in the winter of 1997 or the early spring of 1998 at the Coffeeville location due to a

disease problem.

Breeder seed will be maintained by the USDA-NRCS Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center in Coffeeville, MS. For additional information, contact the PMC, or Greg Brann, Grazing Lands Specialist, NRCS, Nashville, Tennessee.

Pandamonium Growing in Memphis, Tennessee...John Charles Wilson, Chairman of the Shelby County Soil Conservation District Board and President of Agricenter International is partnering with the Memphis Zoo to grow bamboo to help feed a pair of rare Panda Bears from China now located at the Memphis Zoo.

Le Le, a two-year-old female and Yah Yah, a four-year-old male are from two separate provinces in China, and are on loan to the Memphis Zoo for 10 years. The two pandas arrived at the Zoo in April and are part of a \$16 million dollar China Exhibit that is working to support giant panda conservation projects in China.

"Agricenter International has partnered with the Memphis Zoo to grow six different varieties of bamboo on the farm," says Wilson. "This is a research project to determine which variety the Pandas like best and which variety is the best adapted to this area. The bamboo has been growing at Agricenter for three years and the research is continuous."

Pandas can consume from 20 to 40 lbs. of bamboo daily along with other food while in captivity. In order to have an abundant supply, bamboo is also being grown at the Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials in Coffeeville, Mississippi and by a local landowner. Agricenter International, NRCS, and Soil Conservation Districts in Mississippi and Tennessee are cooperating on the effort to feed the pandas. Educational packets are also being developed for teachers, a video is being prepared about the project and tours are being planned. The China Exhibit at the Memphis Zoo is now open to the public.

Shelby County SCD/NRCS Partners on Booth at Ducks Unlimited Great Outdoors Festival, May 30-June 1, 2003 — Shelby County Soil Conservation District (SCD) and the Tennessee Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) partnered on a booth in the Conservation Village at the Ducks Unlimited (DU) Great Outdoors Festival in Memphis, Tennessee, May 30-June 1, 2003. Activities included an exhibit in the Conservation Village on the "2002 Farm Bill," with various information and education publications distributed; free native wildflower seed packets made available...and for children visiting the booth, there were free conservation education materials including balloons, coloring books, bookmarkers and posters. Demonstrations by participating agencies and partners were given each day in the Conservation Village. Attendance was well over 100,000 for the 3-day event. This event is an example of a successful information and education project that reaches non-traditional urban groups including adults, teachers and children. With more than one million supporters, Ducks Unlimited is the world's largest wetlands and waterfowl conservation organization.

Bradley County, Tennessee - A conservation field day was held on June 5, 2003 in Bradley County, Tennessee on the farm of Varnell and James Beaty. The Beaty's are a father and son team, who have a poultry/dairy farm and plenty of environmental challenges, but with several conservation programs, they have been very successful in meeting those challenges! The tour highlighted numerous best management practices that have been implemented on the Beaty Farm. The BMP's are part of a total resource management system planned to benefit both the landowner and the public.

Candies Creek, which is a 303d listed stream, flows through the farm. The Beaty's were concerned about the water quality and wanted improve and protect it. They contacted the Bradley County Soil Conservation District and NRCS for technical assistance primarily on how to install best management practices to protect the creek bottoms, build fences for proper pasture management, and construct stream crossings for the equipment and cattle.

James operates four poultry broiler houses which produce over 100,000 birds every six weeks or so. A couple of years ago, he constructed a dead poultry composter and also a poultry litter storage building with both technical and financial assistance from USDA.

Presentations were made on the tour by several speakers from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bradley County Soil Conservation District, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, and Farm Service Agency.

Bill Dailey, District Conservationist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service located in Cleveland, Tennessee gave highlights of the tour and explained what the Beaty's had accomplished. He stated, "The farm is diverse in operation and has very challenging environmental concerns. Through their care and stewardship of the land, the Beaty's have implemented numerous best management practices."

Gregg Brann, NRCS Grazing Lands Specialist and Bill Dailey, discussed pasture management, pest management, alternative-watering systems, and cross fencing. In addition, they provided information about grazing sticks that were given to all attendees compliments of the Bradley County Soil Conservation District.

The Bradley County Soil Conservation District sponsored the tour along with other partners including Southeast Tennessee Resource Conservation and Development Council, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, UT Agricultural Extension Service, and the Farm Service Agency. Approximately 70 persons attended the event.

Crossville, Tennessee - A Conservation Planning Course was held recently in Crossville, TN. New employees from across the State met for four days of intensive training. The NRCS Phase Three, Nine Steps Planning Process, was heavily stressed to provide a basis for all conservation planning procedures. The new employees were able to practice using this process while developing a mock conservation plan at the Highland Rim University of Tennessee Agricultural Experiment Station. The students were divided into groups, given different farm scenarios and asked to present their conservation plans to the instructors. The instructors were able to critique the presentations and provide guidance to the new employees. The course is just another example of NRCS striving to provide the best assistance to the public as possible while taking into consideration all social, economic and ecological concerns.

NRCS Officially Certifies Tennessee Employees...Intensive training of NRCS employees has been carried out in Tennessee to enable employees to become certified conservation planners. On April 30, thirty Jackson Area employees were officially certified. Regional Conservationist Charles Adams attended the event. State Conservationist James Ford presented certification awards to the employees. On May 8, twenty-one Area 2

employees received certification. Thirty employees have been certified in Area 3.