

# Conservation Conversations

May 2009 - Issue No. Eight

*Energy and Environment Cabinet  
Department for Natural Resources  
Division of Conservation*



## From the Chairman's Desk



Pete Dotson, Chairman  
Kentucky Soil and Water  
Conservation Commission

I appreciate the opportunity to share a few of my thoughts for this edition of *Conservation Conversations*. Having had the opportunity to serve for several years now as chairman of the Kentucky Soil and Water Conservation Commission, I have observed tremendous successes of local, state and federal agencies that make up our conservation partnership. One prime example was this winter's ice storm that had a tremendous impact on our lives and natural resources here in Kentucky. Thanks should be given to our NRCS staff for their leadership and hard work in leveraging federal assistance in a timely manner to deal with resource concerns through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program. These efforts were supported by the state and local conservation partners working diligently with local governments to bring much needed assistance to the many counties in Kentucky hard hit by this disaster. Their hard work in identifying potential resource concerns and quickly engaging contractors to complete the work resulted in over \$900 thousand in federal funds being utilized. We are also seeing additional federal funds being leveraged to continue addressing the long-term resource concerns left by this disaster.

As in this winter's ice storm, our conservation partnership continues to face and meet daily challenges in each of our conservation districts. As we look toward the new fiscal year and the commission's

deliberations on providing state support to the 121 conservation districts, it will be a hard task to meet the needs of each district with the limited resources available. The commission has

identified two major priorities to be considered by the governor as he prepares his next biennial budget for the 2010 General Assembly's consideration. Of utmost importance is the need to increase general fund dollars in direct aid assistance to help conservation districts carry out their local projects during the year. Presently, direct aid is \$1 million. We will be requesting double this amount. The second, but equally important, priority is a request for \$2.4 million to be used as state matching funds to rehabilitate Kentucky's 200 water impoundment structures. I ask each conservation district to work with the KACD Board of Directors in their efforts to promote these two concerns with our General Assembly members.

As always, it is a privilege to serve on the commission and I commend the diligent work of each commission member and the dedicated staff at the Division of Conservation for the support they provide to conservation districts. We look forward to working with each of you to strengthen the conservation delivery system in our communities and state.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Deville W. Dotson III".

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*Welcome!*

## New Employee for the Division of Conservation

Submitted By Kimberly Richardson

Johnna McHugh has joined the Division of Conservation as the new environmental control manager replacing the retired Martin Bess. Along with her duties of serving as supervisor for the field representative staff in their efforts to assist all 121 conservation districts across the state, Johnna will also have the additional assignment of working as field representative in Anderson, Franklin, Henry, Jefferson, Oldham, Scott, Shelby and Woodford counties assisting them on a day-to-day basis.

Johnna started working with the division on April 1, 2009. She is very excited to begin working with the county district boards as they strive to encourage conservation stewardship across the commonwealth.



Ms. Johnna McHugh

Johnna comes to the division from the Environmental Quality Commission where she has worked for the past three years. She holds a bachelor's degree in environmental studies from Georgetown College and a master's degree in environmental risk assessment from the University of Charleston and Medical University of South Carolina. She lives in Shelby County with her husband and daughter. Please join us in giving her a warm welcome.

## Grant County Native Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

Submitted By Johnna McHugh

Mr. Reavis "Reb" Stacey of Grant County was recently recognized by the Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his years of dedication to preserving the natural resources of the commonwealth.

More than 40 years ago, Mr. Stacey began restoring over 700 acres of forestland in Grant County. He created the Reb Stacey Woodland and Wildlife Center to teach young people about the importance of the forest and its vulnerability by using his forest as a classroom.

Last year Mr. Stacey and his family granted a perpetual conservation easement on approximately 600 acres to the Northern Kentucky University Research Foundation. This easement will aid in managing and preserving the environmental and ecological quality of streams, wetlands, meadows and forests on the property. Under the agreement, the land will continue to undergo restoration and is guaranteed to remain in its natural state.

During the awards ceremony held in Frankfort on April 17, 2009, Mr. Stacey was presented with a plaque commemorating this achievement. Pictured left to right are Bill Stacey, son of Reb; Scott Smith, chairman of EQC; Reb Stacey, award winner and Hank List, deputy secretary, Energy and Environment Cabinet.





## 2008 Conservation District Supervisors and Employees Training

Submitted By Kimberly Richardson

The Kentucky Division of Conservation staff in partnership with the Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts and the Kentucky Association of Conservation District Employees recently completed trainings for conservation district supervisors and conservation district employees in the central locations of the Pulaski County Public Library, Magoffin County Extension Office, Muhlenberg County Agriculture and Convention Center, and the Franklin County Extension Office.

Presentations were made on topics that would assist conservation districts in their day-to-day responsibilities. Topics that were discussed included the roles and responsibilities of district supervisors, agricultural districts, programs of the Division of Conservation and protection of taxpayer funds. State Conservationist Tom Perrin informed participants of updates from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Amanda Gumbert, University of Kentucky extension water quality liaison, reported that the Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Plan is now available online.

This was also an opportunity for those who were newly elected in November 2008 to begin their training as conservation district supervisors. Across the state, 67 individuals were newly elected to serve as conservation district supervisors and 397 were re-elected to continue serving their counties. Supervisors who were elected in November 2008 will begin their term January 1, 2009.



Approximately 215 conservation district supervisors and 101 conservation district employees representing 86 counties attended these trainings in order to better understand their roles and responsibilities as servants of the taxpayers.



District employees in a break-out session.



At the Magoffin County training, County Judge Executive Dr. Charles Hardin welcomes the crowd.

## Perry County Partnerships in Action

Submitted By Anthony Mullins



Over the past few years all conservation districts across the state have been affected by USDA office closings. Due to the closings, many conservation districts have had to start renting facilities for office space, many incurring costs that formerly were never there. That is where this story of partnerships begins.

Every conservation district has partnerships with many agencies. On the federal level, they partner with USDA agencies such as Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, and Rural Development. Locally, they make alliances with University of Kentucky extension service, Department of Forestry, county fiscal courts, etc. The Perry County Conservation District, located in Hazard, Ky., knew the importance of having partnerships locally and nationally and these partnerships have added tremendously to their conservation efforts.

Over the years, the conservation district has partnered with the Perry County Fiscal Court to do many projects. Those projects have had a huge impact on the environment and the well-being of many Perry County citizens. Together they sponsored several appliance buybacks, illegal garbage dump removal projects, the Hazard-Perry County cleanup campaign, and several tire removal projects. This cooperative effort has made Perry County a cleaner and safer place to live.

After years of working together, a time came when the district was without a home. Mr. Bobby Brown, who now serves as chairman to the Perry County Conservation District, was vice-chairman at that time. He approached the Perry County Fiscal Court and was offered space in the Perry County courthouse. In February 2008 the conservation district made the move into their new space. The good thing about this space is that it is rent free and utility free. The money saved by not paying rent and utilities is being put towards purchasing property for a future conservation district office.



*Present home of the Perry County Conservation District*

Partnerships do pay off. The Perry County Conservation District is a testimonial to that. They urge other conservation districts to partner with agencies in their county and work together to place conservation on the ground.

## Is the Millage Tax an Option for Your Conservation District?

Submitted By Steven Olt



These are increasingly straining times for conservation districts in the state of Kentucky. With the recent economic impacts, accompanied by statewide

budget cuts, our local district offices are struggling to find enough financial stability to keep necessary programs operating. Many of these districts have long been funded from local fiscal courts by way of the general fund. As the state cuts its budget across the board, fiscal courts are also feeling the crunching effects. With this scenario playing out, it's time that local conservation districts take action to ensure they can continue to implement needed conservation practices.

Districts should look at the option of a millage tax as a way to balance their budget and continue to operate. When the word "TAX" arises, people automatically get defensive. However, we have to look at the greater good of the community. In most cases, millage taxing can produce high levels of income at a low expense to the public. If you were to compare several conservation district tax rates to those of other entities such as schools, ambulance services, and the extension service, in most cases the tax rate for a conservation district would be much lower.

The amount of state leveraged funding that the local conservation district brings into the county itself should also be considered. As a rule of thumb, for each dollar brought into a community from an outside source, up to eight more dollars are generated from its circulation. Every water system, fence, or environmental improvement to a property increases the tax value of that property. In turn, this increases the revenue generated by taxes as a whole in the community.

**The approach we take as districts is crucial to being able to acquire the millage tax. Making a solid case to fiscal court, as well as the community, as to why it is important for the conservation district to exist is the main objective.**

Initially, discuss the process with your county judge executive to get a feel for their stance on the issue. Without the support of the judge, it will be impossible to succeed at the request. If the judge is supportive, each board member should begin to contact the magistrates with the proposal. It is very important that the board members are prepared with documentation to take before the judge and the magistrates.

Again, **Making a solid case as to why it is important for the conservation district to exist is the main objective.** This documentation should include all state funds leveraged by the conservation district, all programs available, number of participants in programs, any major environmental impacts made, educational programs or outreach, and a budget and plan of work. It is also helpful for each board member to have a working understanding of the laws that apply to millage taxing in advance of the request.

Kentucky's conservation districts need to put aside their fears of community perception that taxes are always bad. It is time to pursue all available options for funding so they can continue to improve the quality of the environment as they have done for so many years.

Remember, a conservation district is an asset to every person across this great state. Let them know why.

For more information: Contact your local field representative or the Division of Conservation.

## 2008 Jim Claypool Art and Conservation Writing Winners Announced Annual contest generated over 54,000 entries

Submitted By Kimberly Richardson

The Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts, in partnership with the Kentucky Farm Bureau, announced the winners of the 2008 Art and Writing Contest entitled: "Working Trees: Kentucky's Renewable Future." Students, grades K-12, from across the commonwealth used the forestry theme to create 40,267 art entries and 14,517 writing entries. Judges from the local conservation districts chose county winners whose entries then moved on to the state level competition. A distinguished panel of judges with diverse environmental backgrounds selected state-wide winners in both categories on March 20, 2009. State, area and county winners will receive a U.S. Savings Bond sponsored by the Kentucky Farm Bureau.

"These two contests have been conducted in our school systems across the commonwealth by conservation districts for well over 65 years. Many of us now working in the conservation profession can remember creating our first essay or poster," said Steve Coleman, director of the Division of Conservation. "These students represent the future of Kentucky's environmental and conservation leaders."

State winners for the Jim Claypool Art Contest are:

- ◆ First place: Reed Skelton, Henderson County
- ◆ Second place: Casey Welch, Bourbon County
- ◆ Third place: Mikie Dillon, Pike County

State winners for the Conservation Writing Contest are:

- ◆ First place: Shea Jennings, Jefferson County
- ◆ Second place: Ruth M. Myers, Campbell County
- ◆ Third place: Natalie Orms, Boyle County

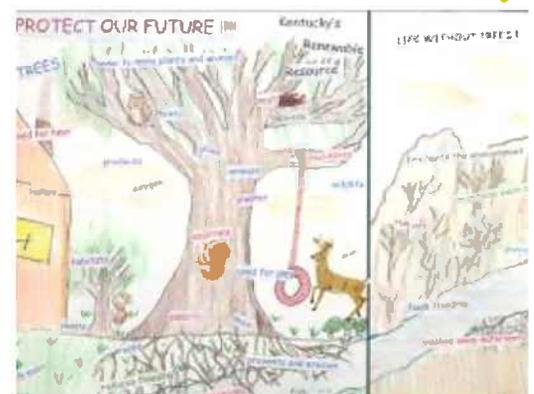
Commissioner Carl Campbell of the Department for Natural Resources added, "This traditional educational contest continues to promote the conservation of our natural resources. I commend the partnership between the Kentucky Farm Bureau, the county farm bureaus, the Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts, the local conservation districts and the Division of Conservation for their efforts in rewarding these deserving students."



1st Place Poster



2nd Place Poster



3rd Place Poster

## NRCS State Conservationist Advisory Council Formed

Submitted by Crystal Renfro



Ms. Crystal Renfro

There is now a place for the conservation district technical staff to voice their cares, concerns, problems, needs or praises. I am honored to have been nominated to represent the conservation district technical staff across the state as a member of the NRCS State Conservationist Advisory Council.

Mr. Tom Perrin, NRCS state conservationist, has a very positive outlook for conservation programs in Kentucky and wants to hear what concerns we have as a group. What training needs should be reviewed? Is there any area in the state where you feel more staff is needed? What support (equipment, vehicles, etc.) is lacking? Do you have a success story you would like to share?

If you have any other issues concerning our responsibilities as district staff, please let me be your voice for any comments and suggestions. This is our chance to be heard. Feel free to contact me at the Madison County Conservation District, 859-624-1981, or e-mail [Crytal.Renfro@ky.nacdnet.net](mailto:Crytal.Renfro@ky.nacdnet.net).

## 2008 Floyd County Conservation District Hay and Pasture Workshop

Submitted by Anthony Mullins



A hay and pasture workshop was held at the Floyd County Extension Office during the month of August 2008 through the joint efforts of the Floyd County Conservation District, the Floyd County Cooperative Extension Service, the Floyd County Farm Bureau and the environmental grant program from the Kentucky Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

Participants viewed educational power points at sessions conducted by Ray Tackett, Floyd County Cooperative Extension; Tony Grubb, Floyd County Conservation District; and Chris Slone, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Participants also received vouchers for fertilizer and lime, which they could redeem at McGahan Feed Company in Paintsville, Ky.



Workshop Participants

## Ohio County Celebrates its 60th Anniversary Submitted by Shanna Drake



The Ohio County Conservation District recently celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Approximately 50 people attended the event held in conjunction with a reception honoring the winners of the Jim Claypool Conservation Art and Writing Contests.

During the past 60 years, the district has supported many educational programs throughout the county, such as soil stewardship, the annual art and writing contest, and youth agriculture days held at Luttrell Farms.

Since its inception, the Ohio County Conservation District has seen many members come and go. The current board of supervisors include Darren Luttrell, Chairman; Cletus Greer, Vice-Chairman; Walter Porter, Secretary/Treasurer; Gary Igleheart, Brian Milligan and Jason Anderson.

The Ohio County Conservation District Board of Supervisors and the office staff are a progressive group that continually strives to conserve natural resources and educate the county's youth, hopefully for another 60 years.



(Left to right) Dan Porter, NRCS; Brad Haney, Ohio Co. Conservation District; Rush Midkiff, UK Farm Analysis; Jason Morgan, Felty Crop Services.



(Left to right) Bess Ralph, Ohio Co. Conservation District; Jackie Westerfield, Ohio Co. Conservation District; Dan Porter, NRCS.



## The World We Create

Submitted By Deborah Hinton



The *World We Create* is a traveling exhibit from the Louisville Science Center where concepts of science and technology translate into hands-on, heads-up activities for all ages.

The Calloway County Conservation District partnered with Murray State University, College of Science Engineering and Technology, School of Agriculture; Regional Stewardship Outreach Office and the Calloway County 4-H Council to bring the *World We Create* exhibit to Murray from January 19 thru February 6. Almost 4,000 students throughout the region registered to attend the exhibit - then the ice storm hit the area. Unfortunately, with almost all of the schools closed for over a week, only half of the students were able to attend before the exhibit had to be packed up and moved to the next location.

For those students who were able to attend, captivating designs, informative graphics and exciting activity stations created a one-of-a-kind experience. The various stations let students explore motion, energy, earthquakes, engineering, manufacturing, applied science and technology.



## KACD Auxiliary Supports Kentucky Envirothon

Submitted by Stephen Coleman

On May 5, 2009, the KACD Auxiliary officers presented Steve Coleman, Director, Division of Conservation, a check for \$500.00 for the 2009 Kentucky Envirothon.

The regional competitions have already been held on April 18 at Pennyrile State Forest and on April 25 at Morehead State University. The winners of the regionals will be competing on the state level at the Kentucky Leadership Center on May 21-22. The overall winning team will represent Kentucky in 2009 Canon Envirothon August 2 - 8 at the University of North Carolina, Asheville.



Pictured left to right: Treasurer, Phyllis Amyx, President, Betty Barrick; Steve Coleman; Vice President Ginny Tucker; and Secretary Ona Sidebottom.



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## 2009 Conservation District Quarterly Calendar

### May

- KACD State Envirothon Contest (21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>)
- KACD Board of Directors Meeting – 12<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM
- Soil and Water Conservation Commission Meeting – 18<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM
- UFIR Budget Report to GOLD by the 1<sup>st</sup>
- Equipment Loan Payments – due 5<sup>th</sup> to district
- Equipment Loan Payments and Report – due 10<sup>th</sup> to division
- State Cost Share Monthly Status – due 15<sup>th</sup>



### June

- Kentucky Forestry Camp
- Extensions for State Cost Share Practices for six additional months
- Equipment Loan Payments – due 5<sup>th</sup> to district
- Equipment Loan Payments and Report – due 10<sup>th</sup> to division
- State Cost Share Monthly Status – due 15<sup>th</sup>

### July

#### **KACD STATE CONVENTION—12, 13, and 14—Louisville—Galt House Hotel**

- Soil and Water Conservation Commission Meeting—12th
- Equipment Loan Payments – due 5<sup>th</sup> to district
- Equipment Loan Payments and Report – due 10<sup>th</sup> to division
- State Cost Share Monthly Status – due 15<sup>th</sup>