

CONSERVATION CONVERSATIONS

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

As we move into fall, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the Division of Conservation's and the Conservation Partnership's accomplishments over the past fiscal year.

The division provided \$975,000 in Direct Aid funding to conservation districts. These funds were available to assist with salaries for part-time and full-time district technical and administrative positions, as well as to assist with rent, purchase of office space, technology support and utilities for districts that are no longer housed with USDA offices.

Equipment loans continue to be a valuable service the Soil and Water Conservation Commission provides to the landowners of Kentucky. This year, 10 loans were approved for a total of \$400,728. This continues a recent trend of declining numbers of loan applications. However, the commission has recently changed the interest rate for the loans, which may make them more attractive to landowners and contractors. Beginning July 1, the interest rate dropped from 4 percent to 2 percent for conservation districts or contractors wanting to purchase equipment, infrastructure, or doing repairs on one of the 200 flood retarding structures across the state.

The Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Program is continuing to be well received by the landowners of Kentucky. During the previous fiscal year, the commission approved \$4,750,955 in cost share projects that are administered on the local level by conservation districts in cooperation with landowners in the area. The cost share program also funds the Environmental Grant program. Conservation districts can apply for environmental grants to assist their communities with fallen animal pickup and disposal, white goods pickup, metal recycling, illegal dump cleanup and local cost share programs to address on-site sewage programs, tree planting projects, stream bank stabilization and agriculture watershed monitoring. The funds provided for the cost share program are to be cut by \$3 million in the next fiscal year. It continues to be very important for beneficiaries of the program to make sure that their legislators know to support the program.

The upcoming Mississippi River Basin Initiative will provide the opportunity for over 15 partnering organizations including commodity groups, federal agencies, state agencies, environmental organizations, and the largest educational institution in Kentucky, to join forces while applying conservation practices within 12-digit hydrologic units in the Green River Basin, Licking River Watershed, and the Mayfield Creek-Bayou de Chein. This project will involve implementation of focused conservation practices in the targeted watersheds, expanding and improving landowner education, participation, and cooperation in applying soil and water conservation practices, enhancing landowner involvement in long-term land planning efforts through the development of Nutrient Management Plans and Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Plans, strengthening the partnerships between the organization and agencies involved so that the relationships built during this four-year effort will extend beyond the Missis-

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Letter from the Director, Continued

Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) timeframe and provide monitoring and project accountability to show that Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation practices can directly improve water quality by reducing nutrients, soil erosion and stream sedimentation.

The Agriculture District program remains a viable, growing program, with over 433,980 acres of Kentucky's farmland involved in the program's 509 certified districts. The number of acres involved has been steadily increasing over the years. More information about this program can be found on Page 12 of this newsletter.

The Division of Conservation and Conservation Partnership have been working tirelessly to obtain federal funds to assist the conservation districts. Another year of funding for the 50/50 agriculture technician positions was approved. Currently there are 20 of these positions across the Commonwealth. The Division of Conservation also has an agreement with the Division of Forestry that allowed federal funds to be used to fill four forester positions to work on the ice storm damaged counties.

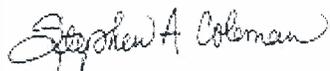
A federal grant to assist with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has been allocated to the Division of Conservation. These funds will give the division the ability to give funds to the districts for technical staff that will perform follow-ups and monitoring of flood plain easement restoration activities.

The Division of Conservation has a contribution agreement with NRCS that provides federal funds to pass to conservation districts for the purpose of capacity building. The capacity will be built by increasing administrative assistance to the Farm Bill teams and promoting Farm Bill program delivery. The conservation districts will match this funding at a rate of 50 percent per position. Another agreement with NRCS provides federal funds to be used to assist with the planning, design, implementation and inspection of NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program recovery projects. With these funds the districts will be able to employ the technical staff to support this project.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the Division of Conservation staff for their hard work throughout the year. The staff has been repeatedly asked to do more with less this year, and they have done an exceptional job with continuing to provide excellent support to Kentucky's conservation districts.

Please join me in promoting these accomplishments, as well as the accomplishments of individual conservation districts, across the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



Stephen A. Coleman, Director
Kentucky Division of Conservation

News From the Division of Conservation

State Cost Share Program

County conservation districts across the Commonwealth will be accepting requests for cost share funding under the Kentucky Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Program and the Environmental Stewardship Program beginning Sept. 1, 2010 and extending through Sept. 30, 2010.

The Kentucky Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Program and the Environmental Stewardship Program were created to help agricultural operations protect the soil and water resources of Kentucky. These programs were established by the Kentucky General Assembly in 1994 and 2000, respectively, and during the past 16 years approximately \$113.5 million has been approved to plan, design and install much needed best management practices on approximately 10,500 farms to protect soil resources and water quality.

These annual cost share funds are administered by conservation districts with priority given to animal waste-related problems and agricultural district participants where pollution problems have been identified. Initial funding for the programs will be provided by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and now also utilizes the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement Funds.

These programs are administered at the state level by the Soil and Water Conservation Commission and the Kentucky Division of Conservation, located in Frankfort. Applications are ranked statewide and approved for funding based on available funds. For more information, contact your local conservation district.

Fayette County Envirothon Team Travels to International Competition

Submitted by Carly Burton, Fayette County Conservation District Environmental Education Coordinator

During the first week of August, the Fayette County Envirothon Team competed in the Canon International Envirothon in Fresno, Calif. They had earned that opportunity by winning the Kentucky Envirothon earlier this year, where they competed with nine other teams at the state level following regional competitions in the state. The top five teams from each of those regional contests moved on to compete at the Kentucky Envirothon Competition. The Fayette County Envirothon Team, all seniors at P.L. Dunbar High School, had been working hard over the last three years and it finally paid off.

Envirothon is a competition based on natural resources subjects such as forestry, aquatics, wildlife, soils, and a changing outdoor / natural resource topical category as well. The students take written tests, as well as practical skills tests by experts in those individual areas. In addition to the tests in each of those areas, they must also deliver a presentation related to the special topic. This year's topic was **Protection of Groundwater through Urban, Agricultural and Environmental Planning**

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Fayette County Envirothon Team Travels to International Competition, Continued

for the state and national Envirothon competition. Out of the six possible scoring categories, the Fayette County team had the top score in four of them at the state level.

Kentucky was represented by five outstanding seniors - Ranajay Sen, Darshali Vyas, Becca and Alex Fleischman, and Arlene Wang, who have competed for three years in the program. They were coached by Fayette County 4-H Agent Eric Comley and Fayette County Conservation Environmental Education Coordinator Carly Burton.

Fayette County's team flew out west the last week in July and had the opportunity to travel to San Francisco, Los Angeles, Monterey, Kings Canyon and Yosemite National Park. While in San Francisco, they visited the California Academy of Science Museum and the Golden Gate Bridge. While driving through Kings Canyon, the team stopped at the Giant Sequoia National Forest and saw the world's largest tree, General Sherman. On the last full day out in California, the team drove to Yosemite and saw one of the most gorgeous places in the United States.

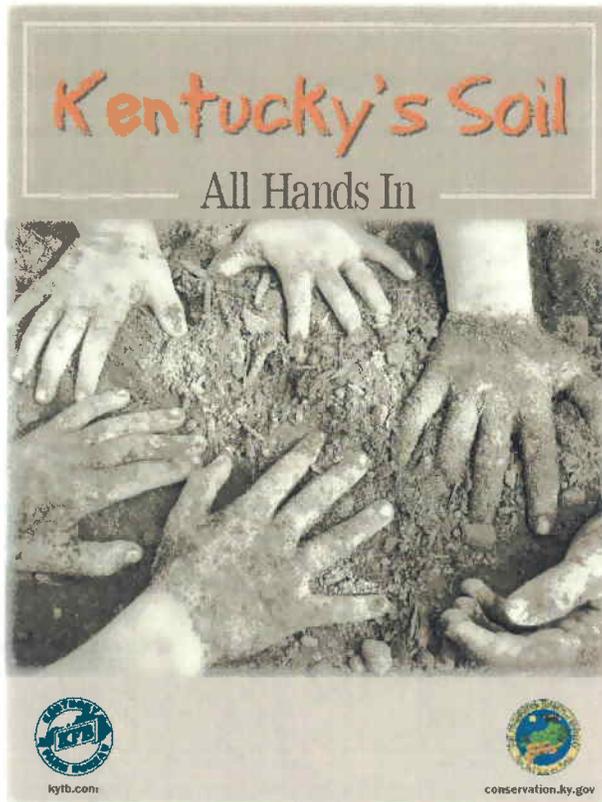
Prior to the actual competition, California State University trained the youth in environmental concerns that were all unique to California, like groundwater issues. In addition to the training and actual competition, the students participated in a state swap and visited a local water park in Fresno. There were 54 high school teams that participated in the Canon Envirothon, representing almost every state and Canada. The Fayette County Envirothon team placed 17th in the nation, which was very respectable.

The Fayette County Envirothon team would like to thank the Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts, Kentucky Association of Conservation District Employees, Tracy Farmer Center for the Environment, Fayette County Farm Bureau, Fayette County 4-H Council, Fayette County Conservation District and Jim Grey for all the support that was given to them in order to make the trip out to California possible.



Pictured (left to right): Eric Comley, Darshali Vyas, Ranajay Sen, Alex Fleischman, Becca Fleischman, Carly Burton and Arlene Wang.

The Jim Claypool Conservation Art and Writing Contests



Kentucky's Soil - All Hands In

This is the theme for the 2010 Jim Claypool Conservation Art and Writing Contests. The contests are named for the late director of the Division of Conservation and sponsored by Kentucky Farm Bureau, Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts and the Division of Conservation in cooperation with other state and federal agencies.

The conservation writing contest is for students in grades six through 12. The conservation art contest is for students in grades one through five. Contests run **Sept. 1 through Nov. 30, 2010**. Schools select winning entries by late November then send them to their respective conservation districts. County winners are selected during December and mailed to the Division of Conservation by **Dec. 31**.

For more information contact the Division of Conservation at 502-573-3080, or for an electronic version of the tabloid *Kentucky's Soil - All Hands In*, visit this website: <http://conservation.ky.gov/Pages/ArtandWritingContest.aspx>

Fifth Annual Butler County Progressive Agriculture Safety Day

Submitted by Shanna Drake

On May 24, 2010, the Butler County Conservation District and the Butler County Farm Bureau Federation hosted the fifth annual Butler County Progressive Agriculture Safety Day. Approximately 150 fourth-grade students from across the county came together to learn about safe living on and off the farm. Topics taught at the event included ATV safety, electrical safety, first aid and healthy lifestyles. About 40 volunteers were on hand teaching, guiding and assisting with the event.

Students began arriving at the Morgantown City Park at 8:30 a.m. wearing "Progressive Agriculture Safety Day" T-shirts provided by the Progressive Agriculture Foundation. After receiving a sun visor at the registration station, students were divided into groups and taught lessons about electrical safety by Warren Rural Electric employees and first aid by the Butler County Ambulance Service crew. In the afternoon everyone enjoyed a sack lunch. Students then rotated through five stations: drug abuse awareness, sun safety, ATV safety, outdoor safety, and healthy lifestyles.

"The 2010 Butler County Progressive Agriculture Farm Safety Day was a great success. We educated all the counties fourth grade students about some of the dangers associated with rural living, Greg Drake, Butler County agent for agriculture, stated. "Students, teachers and adult volunteers learned how to stay safe in a variety of settings. We had top notch presenters that delivered powerful programs on the fourth-grade level. We owe a special thanks to the more than 40 student and adult volunteers who were group leaders, food preparers, care givers or performed whatever task needed to be done. Local sponsorship and community involvement are keys to a successful camp, and Butler County is fortunate to have had both for our safety day. Our schools and community look forward to another successful camp next year."

Hickman County Summer Youth Activities

Submitted by Debbie Seltsam

On June 24, 2010, Tatia Bradshaw, administrative secretary from Fulton County Conservation District, and Jennifer Swain, administrative secretary from McCracken County Conservation District, assisted the Hickman County Extension Service by providing learning stations during their Summer Youth Environmental Activities Program. This environmental day for fourth- through eighth-graders was held on a farm in Hickman County. For some of the kids it was their first exposure to a farm. The children received demonstrations on the river table and Enviroscape models and were able to go fishing and take a nature hike with help from Kentucky Fish and Wildlife officers, along with other activities.

The youths learned how rivers work, their parts, erosion problems and how to correct them and how meanders and straight line rivers effect the stream banks by using a river table model borrowed from the Marshall County Conservation District. The kids got to "play in the sand" and design and correct their river layouts.

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Hickman County Summer Youth Activities, Continued

Jennifer Swain (below, left, white shirt) and Tatia Bradshaw (below, right, white shirt) discussed non-point source pollution using the EnviroScape model. The kids learned the effects of not having cover crops on fields, how trash can make it into the water and how run off from subdivisions, factories, towns, etc. have an effect on the water they drink.



Children Learn About Safety at Home and on The Farm

Submitted by Connie Gray

On June 3, 2010, there was an ATV accident at the UK Research and Education Center. Even though the accident was a mock finale for the 11th annual Progressive Agriculture Safety Day many of the children believed the accident was real. 15-year-old Will Cox was pinned under the ATV as the children anxiously waited for the Air Evac Life team to arrive.

Princeton Fire Chief Brent Francis organized the mock accident, which was narrated by Dale Dobson of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture. Princeton Fire/Rescue and Caldwell County EMS personnel made the event portray as close to real life as possible for those watching, while Dobson announced the accident over a loud speaker explaining step by step the emergency procedures. Dobson stated a real accident would be handled similar to the mock one, and told the children that each one is responsible for their own safety.

More than 110 children attended the day-long event sponsored by Caldwell and Lyon County conservation districts. Each participant received a T-shirt, goodie bag, lunch and snacks. With the recent events of natural disasters such as the 2009 ice storm and recent flooding, both the Optimist Club and the Caldwell County Conservation District felt it is important to help Caldwell County residents be prepared. In doing so, the Princeton Optimist Club helped Caldwell County Conservation District purchase 4-in-1 emergency lights for each child.

Professionals used a hands-on approach to teach the youngsters about farm and home safety throughout the day. Chief Francis taught the children how important it was to check smoke alarms and replace batteries yearly. Each child was given the opportunity to spray the fire hose and feel the

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Children Learn About Safety at Home and on The Farm, Continued

force used. Bunge Grain Elevator sponsored a station that demonstrated the dangers of improper use of grain storage and handling equipment. This station was very effective due to recent fatalities.

Stations and assistance were provided by Caldwell County Sheriff Deputy Tony Noel, Pennyrite Electric Co-Op Staff, Joni Phelps of UK Extension Service, Cristy Carter of Livingston County Hospital, Stu Recke of Kentucky State Police and Sam McNeal.

During the lunch break Caldwell County and Lyon County FFA members provided recreational activities for the youth. The FFA members also helped with the snack rotations. The Caldwell and Lyon County conservation districts and the Division of Conservation were co-coordinators of the event.

The conservation districts and the Boards of Supervisors appreciate the individuals who volunteered and the businesses and organizations that made contributions to the event. The Safety Day would not have been possible without the support of our communities. The coordinators were also pleased with the cooperation and accommodations by Kay Cotton, Joe Williams and the staff of the UK Research and Education Center. The center has served as the Safety Day location since it began in 2000.



Scenes from the Progressive
Agriculture Safety Day



Casey County Loses Office In Flood

Submitted by Kimberly Bartley



A scene in Liberty showing the extent of the flooding

The heavy rains on Derby Day weekend were devastating to many counties across the state, but in Casey County it was a total loss. After receiving over 11 inches of rain in a very short time, 45 major businesses on the US 127 bypass in Liberty were all under water – including the Casey County USDA Service Center. This 150 year storm brought the unexpected to the town. Residents saw everything from bridges being totally washed away to livestock carcasses being found in trees. Never in the recorded history of the Green River had it reached places it reached that day.

Staff arrived Monday morning to find that nearly 2 feet of water had filled their office and left behind inches of mud and a huge mess. Although they were able to save a few things – they lost vital historical documents and most of their landowner folders. The longer things remained in those conditions – the more “contaminated” they became. Thanks to the quick response of the Division of Conservation, the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Farm Service Agency, they were able to secure a temporary space quickly.

Now that the office has moved – staff are rebuilding files, replenishing supplies and furniture and beginning to function again – they want to thank Division of Conservation for all of their support. Work still continues in Casey County repairing roads and bridges through the Emergency Watershed Program. Ninety-seven percent of the businesses have reopened thanks to the many volunteers that put in countless hours to rebuild their hometown. The flood of 2010 will go down in history!



Campbell County Farmland Work Group Promotes Agriculture

Submitted by Linda Hunter

Campbell County Conservation District began the farmland work group in 2003 to explore farmland options for the county. Their mission is to improve economic viability of agriculture, develop local programs and policies to protect productive farmland and provide education for the public about the value of farmland.

Realizing how quickly Campbell County's farmland was being developed this working group was formed to educate people on the importance of preserving Campbell County's farmland and agriculture.

The Farmland Work Group endeavors to guide development to reduce sprawl and protect the natural qualities of Campbell County.

They were able to obtain a matching grant through the Kentucky Department of Agriculture Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) Corporation. With this grant they were able to fund a cost of community services study, agricultural industry profile and survey of county farmers.

The Campbell County Conservation District enlisted partners to help in their endeavor. Those partners included many citizens from Campbell County as well as Campbell County Cattle Association, Campbell Conservancy, Campbell County Cooperative Extension Service, Campbell County Farm Bureau, Campbell County Fiscal Court, Campbell County Planning Commission, Northern Kentucky Horse Network and the Northern Kentucky University Center for Applied Ecology.

The group was able to point out through their studies that farmland pays more in local tax revenues than it receives in services. For every \$1 in taxes paid on farmland the county spent only 38 cents providing services to that land. Residential landowners received \$1.21 in services for \$1 collected, and commercial land costs the county 30 cents for every \$1 collected.

The Campbell Co. Farmland Work Group is implementing a plan to:

- Prioritize what types of farm, forest and other working land that should be protected.
- Continue to educate the public about the values of farmland.
- Pilot a program to purchase agricultural conservation easements.
- Improve the economic viability of agriculture.
- Develop future agricultural leadership.

Spencer County Soil Stewardship Breakfast

Submitted By Kimberly Bartley

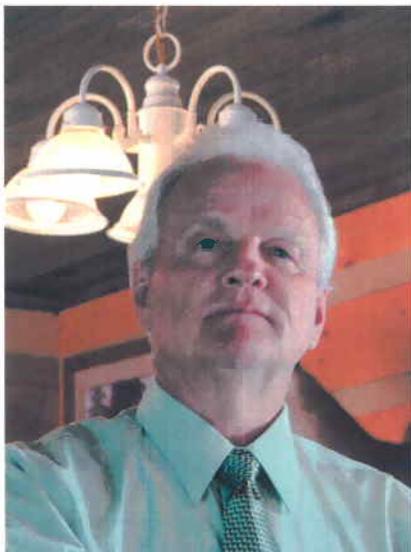
For 42 years the Spencer County Conservation District has been hosting their annual soil stewardship country ham breakfast to kick off Soil Stewardship Week. It continues to be a success year after year. "This is one of our best programs, and we hope to continue this for years to come," stated Chairman Glen Goebel.

The breakfast was held at the local Elk Creek Restaurant. The district invites pastors, ministers and priests of all denominations throughout the county to attend the breakfast. If they attend, they receive a complete soil stewardship packet to take back to their church. They also agree that they will celebrate Soil Stewardship Week by preparing a sermon that relates to stewardship topic or by presenting the materials to Sunday School.

This year the guest speaker was the Rev. Joe Stone from Waterford Church of Christ, and he spoke about stewardship in relation to creation and our everyday lives.

The district also takes this opportunity to recognize their master conservationists, Paul and James Jeffiers. The district invites former master conservationists; board members; fiscal court members; local legislators; and representatives from the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Division of Conservation, Fish & Wildlife and Division of Forestry to the breakfast.

This is just one more way that conservation districts across the state are carrying on the tradition of teaching the importance of stewardship.



Rev. Joe Stone



Spencer County Master Conservationist Paul Jeffiers with his wife, June

Dead Animal Removal Company Abandons Northern Kentucky

Submitted By Linda Hunter

Boone, Campbell, Kenton and Pendleton County conservation districts were given notification in late May that Griffin Industries, with offices located in Campbell County and a processing plant in Pendleton County, would no longer be picking up dead animals. The new laws on cattle processing made their pickup no longer profitable in the area because most of their pickup requests were for cattle. This action has left the conservation districts in a quandary. Their programs are largely funded by state cost share dollars for environmental grants furnished by the Kentucky Division of Conservation.

The counties began looking to neighboring counties to see what service they were using. Gallatin County had been using Harmon Brothers, a dead animal removal service for several years.

Harmon Brothers recently expanded their pickup service to Carroll, Henry and Trimble counties. Boone, Campbell and Kenton and Pendleton counties recently contacted Harmon Brothers and were able to sign contracts with them for pickup service as well.

All counties presently receiving services by Harmon Brothers are very satisfied.

17th Annual Marshall County Agriculture Day

Submitted by Debbie Seltsam

More than 400 students visited the farm of former Marshall County Conservation District supervisor Wavil Joseph and current board supervisor David Joseph on April 1, 2010. This has become the host location over the years for the field day, with the exception of the location being moved to the National Guard Armory when there is rain.

Students arrived at the farm where popcorn was being popped with corn that was produced on the farm. The students were then divided into groups and visited various stations where they learned about the river table, Enviroscape, animals, soybeans, corn and commodity crops, bees and many other topics. The Josephs had their farming equipment located in and around the site for the students to view.

Even in a rural county, this is sometimes the first time for the children to be on a working farm, around equipment and close to livestock.

Students, teachers, and volunteers enjoyed the hands-on learning experiences they received at the Marshall County Agriculture Day.

Debbie Seltsam (background, white shirt) demonstrates a river table to students.



Protecting Kentucky Farming Operations: Agriculture Districts

Submitted By Crystal Renfro

Your local conservation district can be a great resource if you are concerned about protecting your farming operation. Over 100 acres a day in Kentucky are being converted from agricultural to urban use. Through the Kentucky Division of Conservation, landowners have the option to take part in the Agriculture District Program. Currently Kentucky has 509 certified agriculture districts in the state. These individual districts consist of approximately 433,979 acres and are located in 79 counties.

The Agriculture District and Conservation Act (KRS 262.850) was passed by the Kentucky General Assembly in 1982. This program allows a landowner or a group of landowners with land in active agriculture production to enroll their land in an agriculture district. The main purpose of the district is to conserve, protect and encourage development and improvement of Kentucky's best agriculture lands for the protection of food and other agriculture products.

Farmland that is approved for the program receive the following benefits: protection from annexation; mitigation from the impacts of state-funded projects on the conversion to non farm use of nearby land; deferred payments of assessed cost for the extension of water lines across the property (as long as the land is not developed); priority for participation in state conservation programs; and public hearings to protect landowners from eminent domain.

An individual landowner or group of landowners owning at least 250 contiguous acres in any active agriculture production can file a petition with their local conservation district to create an agricultural district. If the conservation district determines that the land is eligible and actively engaged in agriculture production, it can then be recommended to the Kentucky Soil and Water Conservation Commission that the area be declared an agriculture district.

This is a valuable program that benefits everyone with only positive outcomes for the landowner. Membership is completely voluntary and landowners may withdraw from the district at any time and the program does not include any deed restrictions. From any standpoint it is easy to see this is a win/win situation for Kentucky farmers.

For additional information concerning agriculture districts, please contact your local conservation district, field representative or Kentucky Division of Conservation.



Dates to Remember

2010 Conservation District Calendar

OCTOBER:

Division of Forestry Tree Seedling Orders
Area Conservation District Employee Training Meeting – DOC Field Representatives
20-21- 34th Governor's Conference on the Environment – Downtown Marriott, Louisville

NOVEMBER:

5- National Conservation Poster Contest entries due to Frankfort Office
9- KACD Board of Directors Meeting at 9:30 a.m.
15- Soil and Water Conservation Commission Meeting at 9 a.m.

DECEMBER:

1- State Conservation Art and Writing Contest entries due to conservation district
State Conservation Art and Writing Contest entries judged at the conservation district
31- State Conservation Art and Writing Contest County Winners due to division
31- Last day for extensions for State Cost Share Practices for six additional months

EVERY MONTH:

5- Equipment Loan Payments due to district
10- Equipment Loan Payments and Report due to division
10- Treasurer's Report due to division
10- Employee Timesheet due to division
15- State Cost Share Monthly Status Report due



The Kentucky Division of Conservation exists to assist Kentucky's 121 local conservation districts in the development and implementation of sound soil and water conservation programs in order to manage, enhance and promote the wise use of the Commonwealth's natural resources. By responsibly administering the conservation programs of the Division of Conservation, through the conservation districts, the availability of technical and financial assistance to the landowners and land users of Kentucky is ensured.

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