




The Division of Conservation is charged by KRS 146.080-121 with providing assistance to Kentucky's 121 conservation districts to develop, administer and implement sound conservation programs across Kentucky. Kentucky's conservation districts are subdivisions of state government, and districts are organized with their boundaries coinciding with county lines except for Logan County, which is divided into two districts. Each local district is governed by a seven member Board of Supervisors elected by the registered voters within that district.

The conservation districts have been organized for the special purpose of assisting landowners and land users in solving soil and water resource problems, setting priorities for conservation work to be accomplished and coordination the federal, state and local resources to carry out these programs.



**MISSION**





**The mission of the Division of Conservation is:**

*To* **assist Kentucky's 121 local conservation districts in the development and implementation of sound soil and water conservation programs to manage, enhance, and promote the wise use of the Commonwealth's natural resources.**

*To* **responsibly administer the conservation programs of the division to ensure, through conservation districts, the availability of technical and financial assistance to the landowners and land users of Kentucky.**



### **Soil and Water Conservation Commission**

The Soil and Water Conservation Commission set the policies under which the division operates. The commission is made up of nine district supervisors from across the state appointed to serve by the Energy and Environment Cabinet Secretary, with approval from the Governor. They have the responsibility to assist local conservation districts in carrying out their responsibilities.



Soil and Water Conservation Commission members (L to R) : Jack Roberts, Wayne Co.; Ray Adams, Jefferson Co.; Billy Doolin, Garrard Co.; Scotty Parsons, Christian Co.; and John McCauley, FSA State Executive Director, at the January 2011 Commission Meeting

## Direct Aid Funds

Direct aid funds are appropriated by the legislature to be made available to conservation districts for the operation of their offices including hiring administrative and technical assistance, office rent, and other necessities of the district. Direct aid is distributed to districts through base level funding to each district and grant funding based on requests submitted by conservation districts to the commission.

- \$975,000 was awarded in fiscal year 2011 to conservation districts in base funding, district employee salary assistance, and office funds.
- Of the \$975,000 awarded, Direct Aid supported:
  - 131 conservation district employees' salaries
  - 50 conservation district offices

## Equipment and Infrastructure Revolving Fund

The Equipment and Infrastructure Revolving Fund program makes loans to conservation districts for the purchase of heavy or specialized machinery, equipment and district office buildings within the boundaries of the district. This program has enabled the commonwealth to provide the necessary equipment to construct proper conservation measures on land as needed as well as providing districts with the funding to purchase their own buildings in order to benefit the community surrounding them.

- 10 equipment loans were made to conservation districts for a total of \$602,719.53.
- At the closing of the fiscal year, there were 29 active equipment loans and 4 active infrastructure loans.



A no-till drill in use on a farm in Fayette County.

## **Agricultural District Program**

The Division of Conservation administers the Agricultural District Program as passed by the 1982 General Assembly. Kentucky's law allows landowners or groups of landowners that own 250 acres or more of land in agricultural use to petition their local district for the creation of agricultural districts. The goal of the agricultural district law is to protect our best agricultural land for food and fiber production and to prevent its conversion to nonagricultural use.

Division of Conservation staff also supports the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Purchase of Agriculture and Conservation Easements (PACE) program. The staff routinely processes applications, ranks applications according to the PACE Board's criteria, and provides geographic database on locations of easements.

For fiscal year 2011:

- 9,109.92 additional acres belonging to 81 landowners were added to agricultural districts through 13 new petitions and 22 amendments to active agricultural districts.
- 45 active agricultural districts were recertified
- As of June 30, 2011 there are 818 agricultural districts comprised of 515,544.19 acres belonging to 3594 landowners in 80 counties.



## **Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Program**

The state cost share program provides financial assistance to individuals to implement best management practices on farms or in forest operations to improve water quality. Any person engaged in agricultural or silvicultural operations is eligible to apply through the local conservation district, which oversees the installation of best management practices.

- 544 state cost share best management practices were installed for a total of \$2,046,762.80
- 179 Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) practices were installed for a total of \$565,188.71



- 5% of state cost share funds are used for administrative purposes. With the 5% of state cost share withheld this year, it supported 31 conservation district employees.
- The corrective measures portion of the state cost share program, which assists landowners with correcting water quality problems cited by a Notice of Violation from the Division of Water, assisted 9 landowners for a total of \$165,000.

During the 2011 fiscal year, new practices were added to the cost share program to better address the needs of producers in Kentucky. Those practices included fallen animal composting and precision agriculture to assist with the Mississippi River Basin Initiative.



Demonstration area showing fallen animal composting.



Grassed Waterway in Livingston County

Another component of the cost share program is the environmental grant program for conservation districts. Conservation districts can apply for an environmental grant to address a special need in their county. Many districts assist their local fiscal courts with fallen animal removal through the environmental grant program. During fiscal year 2011, 55 dead animal removal grants were awarded for a grand total of \$275,000.00. Other grants are used for white goods clean-up, scrap metal collection, illegal dump clean-ups, and local cost share programs.



White Goods Clean-up in Carlisle County

- The total amount paid to conservation districts for environmental grants for fiscal year 2011 was \$603,772.50.

### **Agriculture Water Quality Act**

The Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Act was passed by the 1994 General Assembly. The law focuses on pollution prevention in the protection of surface water and groundwater resources from agriculture and silviculture activities. The act created the Agriculture Water Quality Authority, a 15 member peer group made up of representatives from various agencies, organizations and farmers. The authority established a statewide water quality plan. The authority may establish regional or priority watershed plans if necessary. The Division of Conservation is the lead agency in the implementation of this act.

- In the 2011 fiscal year, Division of Conservation Staff, along with conservation district employees, worked on a 319 grant project. The goal of this project is to survey landowners in different watersheds to determine their knowledge about the Agriculture Water Quality Act. To date, there have been 258 surveys taken in Fleming, Lincoln, Calloway, Barren, Hart and Logan Counties.
- Also during the 2011 fiscal year, the Agriculture Water Quality Authority reviewed and revised many of the best management practices covered under the livestock portion of the Agriculture Water Quality Plan. The review of this continues into the 2012 fiscal year.
- The Agriculture Water Quality Authority has a new initiative in conjunction with the Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) concerning nutrient reductions from agriculture sources to address the hypoxia issue in the Gulf of Mexico. Many attempts are being made from groups involved with the Agriculture Water Quality Authority to receive grant money in order to provide water quality monitoring to assist with the MRBI program.



Members of the Agriculture Water Quality Authority celebrate their 50th meeting since being created. Members from left to right: Corrine Mulberry, Amanda Gumbert, Pete Goodman, Steve Kull, Larry Thomas, Kevin Jeffries, Allen Kyle, Karen Woodrich, Angela Billings and Steve Coleman (seated).

## Field Services

Field Services are provided by the division's 11 field representatives. They help the 121 conservation district develop and implement a conservation program. Among their many responsibilities are conducting conservation education and information programs; financial reporting and budgeting according to KRS statutes; assisting with coordination and implementation of federal, state, and local conservation programs at the district level; and providing important communication links between the district, cooperating agencies and the division.

- The field representatives attended 878 district board meetings during the 2011 fiscal year.
- The field representatives and other division staff are held directly responsible for the education of the 847 district supervisors in the state. In fiscal year 2011, Kentucky was recognized for their outstanding training efforts by being one of only 13 states recognized by the National Association of Conservation Districts for the district officials training program.



Crystal Renfro, on the left, is one of the 11 field representatives with the division. She is seen here talking to Carly Burton, district employee, at a fallen animal composting demonstration.

### **Special Initiatives for fiscal year 2011**

Division of Conservation, local conservation districts, USDA-NRCS and local sponsors such as Fiscal Courts, City Councils etc. all worked together to mend a lot of damage that occurred from weather events that created havoc across Kentucky of late. Many counties across Kentucky received disaster declarations from recent storm events, and with that they gained eligibility for funding assistance through the federal Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP). These events certainly brought more damage and destruction than many counties and city municipalities could deal with on their own without creating an economic hardship of immense proportion.



Protection completed on eroded stream bank in Carter County under EWP



- 11 conservation district employees have completed work for the EWP program and completed 20 jobs in 11 counties.
- Division of Conservation had spent \$25,650.34 of the EWP grant monies by the end of June 2011.

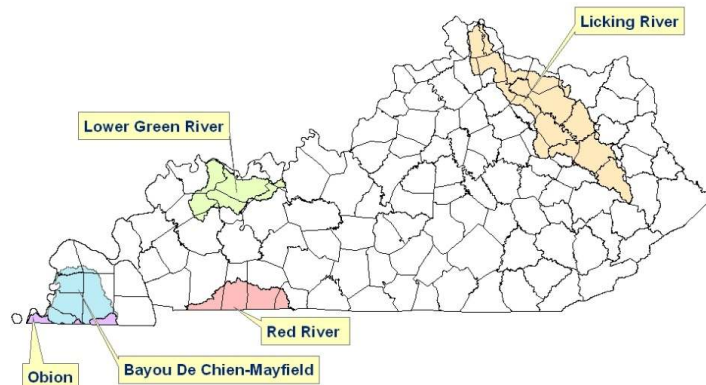
### **Transition from CREP to MRBI**

With the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program reaching its goal of 101,303 acres last year, Kentucky Division of Conservation has partnered with the Natural Resources Conservation Service once again to relieve hypoxia issues going on in the Mississippi River Basin.

The Mississippi River Basin Initiative is focused on the following things:

- 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 4-year effort will extend beyond the MRBI timeframe.
- Provide monitoring and project accountability to show that NRCS conservation practices can directly improve water quality by reducing nutrients, soil erosion and stream sedimentation.

### *Kentucky's Mississippi Bayou Healthy Watershed Initiative Focus Watersheds*



**2010 MRBI Numbers**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Number of Contracts</b>	<b>Obligation Amount</b>	<b>Total Acres Contracted</b>
Licking River	17	\$ 574,190.00	1,410
Lower Green	15	\$ 455,457.00	2,224
Mayfield Creek	9	\$ 513,893.00	1,514

**2011 MRBI Numbers**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Number of Contracts</b>	<b>Obligation Amount</b>	<b>Total Acres Contracted</b>
Licking River	30	\$ 419,634.00	2,123
Lower Green	8	\$ 168,327.00	1,276
Mayfield Creek	2	\$ 230,158.00	1,091
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>\$2,361,659.00</b>	<b>9,638</b>