

Conservation Courier Newsletter



Volume 27 Issue 1

February 2013

COMING SOON!

2013 Ag Appreciation Night

It's that time of year again! We are so excited to invite you to come join us for **AG APPRECIATION NIGHT**, Thursday night, February 21, 2013, at the Oak Grove Civic Center for an evening of ag information, awards, conservation conversation, good food, and entertainment as we celebrate farming in Jackson County! The event will recognize the positive impact of soil and water stewardship on agriculture.

Program highlights for this annual event includes:

- ◆ **Conservation Farmer of the year award**
- ◆ **Conservation Educator of the year award**
- ◆ **Conservation photo contest awards**
- ◆ **Educational displays and information**
- ◆ **Dinner**
- ◆ **The North American Envirothon Champs- Pembroke Hill High School**



Ag Appreciation Night is scheduled at the Civic Center at 2100 South Broadway in Oak Grove. Educational displays may be viewed from 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. as well as after the program, and the dinner with program following will begin at 6:30 p.m. Admission is free although an RSVP is required by February 13, 2013, as seating may be limited.

E-mail: linda.struwe@swcd.mo.gov for your reservation or call 816-228-1836, extension 3, for a reservation and directions if necessary.



Soil and water conservation practices like no-till, terraces, waterways, ponds, etc. have added measurably to the conservation and wise use of soil and water resources in Jackson County. *Ag Appreciation Night* is designed to recognize the efforts of farm owners and operators who have installed and maintained these practices on the land.



Farmers are the best in their field!

Considering a Pond Cleanout?



The drought conditions this past year left many landowners and livestock producers in this area short of good quality pond water for livestock and recreational uses. This winter seems to hold no promise of replenishing snows or rains. Now appears to be a great time to clean the silt (muck) out of the pond in the hope that spring will bring adequate rainfall to recharge the pond and improve water quality. Before making the final decision there are some questions you should ask yourself that might just save some time and money.

Location, location, location is the existing pond in a good location for water distribution (if livestock water is your need?) Sometimes there may be a better location in the pasture system for a new pond that will allow for gravity fed waterlines to increase grazing distribution. Is the old ponds water system functioning and will cleanout possibly damage the waterlines, valves, etc? Does the existing site have adequate runoff area to fill and stay full or has it always been low volume or overfull? A good rule of thumb for this area is 10 acres of runoff for every one acre of pond surface. Also could you add diversions or terraces to capture more of the runoff in the area and move it to the pond.

Always leaking, brush on the pond embankment, rusted out pipe, cattails, wave damage, how many issues does the pond really have? If your pond leaks through the dam the only fix is to rebuild the dam. If you have brush removed it might case the dam to leak by loosening the compaction or a dried root creates a pipeline for water to flow. Replacing rusted pipes may cause failure if not compacted properly. Disturbing the shoreline most always spreads cattail tubers which does not help control. If you have compound problems it would be best to build a new structure with a good core trench and new soil compaction.

What to do with the by-product of the pond? If your pond has valuable fish where to place them while the construction is going on and the water level is coming back should be planned. What will you do with the silt removed? The wet muck should not be kept above the pond or rains will wash is back in, if spread out below the pond it will kill the vegetation and will have to be smooth enough to reseed, this will limit your already tight forage production.

Hog tight, Horses high, and Bull strong: Fencing is a very important consideration since your spending money on this pond. If livestock are involved you should always fence them out of the pond for water quality and bank erosion control. If the pond is located in an urban area consider the safety a fence will provide for securing the water area from children, pets or trespassers.

Where did this rock come from? Caution should be used to keep from digging deeper than the original pond depth. Removing too much may loosen a clay compacted bottom and, or expose rocky layers with fragmented openings allowing the water to leak out. Never assume a new or old pond will hold water. Another good rule of thumb for this area is 8 feet of water depth over 10% of the bottom should keep the water temperature cool in the summer. If the pond can't be deepened you might consider adding to or raising the dam to get more water depth and increase storage volume. A word of caution, site preparation is critical when adding to the dam to make sure the new soil bonds to existing fill.



For more information contact the local SWCD office and always call before you dig. 1-800-344-7483

By Scott Slusher

The farmer is the only man in our economy who buys everything at retail, sells everything at wholesale, and pays the freight both ways. -John F. Kennedy

Are You Looking for Healthier Soil?



Keeping your soil covered with cover crops between crops is a key ingredient to healthy soil. Some think once you started no-till that was the answer, but by not changing management practices, no-till isn't 100% successful.

Most conventional corn and soy farmers till their soil on a large scale because it helps control the weeds. So it has become common to use more herbicides when you stop tilling.

By starting to plant cover crops—crops that, like their name implies, provide a cover to stop the soil from eroding between crops, and provide a natural source of nutrients as well.

Why does organic matter in soil matter so much? For one, it makes the soil look different; it's usually darker, spongier, and full of earthworms. Healthy soil also tends to make crops less vulnerable to pests. And perhaps most importantly, soil with a lot of organic matter holds more

moisture, helping farms remain more resilient through both droughts and floods.

When a farmer works to increase the living organisms in the soil, water soaks in and it doesn't run off into our stream and rivers. The best visual explanation of the difference between healthy soil and bare soil is the one where soil scientists drop clumps of two identical soils in two tubes of water. The soil with low organic matter disintegrates and the one with higher organic matter has integrity and sticks together, even when soaked through.

Soil with high levels of organic matter has also been shown to absorb far more carbon. Conventional tillage releases CO₂ rather than sequestering carbon. Changes to soil health, and the resulting reduction in chemicals and fertilizers seems to be happening on the farms where soil health is taking precedence.

Learn more about cover crops at the MID MO SOIL HEALTH & COVER CROP SEMINAR, Thursday, March 7th, 9:00am—4:00pm. For more information on the seminar call Cooper County SWCD at 660-882-5647 ext. 3 or by emailing monique.frazier@swcd.mo.gov.

If you would like more information on cover crops, contact Resource Conservationist, Greg Stegner at the Blue Springs Field Office at 816-228-1161 or greg.stegner@mo.usda.gov.



THANK YOU JACKSON COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Sincere appreciation is expressed to the **Jackson County Legislature** for assistance in funding Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District technical and information/education programs. With the Legislature's help, valuable programs are conducted which protect the natural resources of the county and further the missions of the county and our district. Several specific programs include:

- ◆ **Technical and State cost-share assistance to secure conservation practices on the land, protecting county soil and water resources and infrastructure**
- ◆ **Presenting soil presentations for school age children**
- ◆ **Sediment and erosion control and watershed hydrology training workshops**
- ◆ **Technical assistance with natural resource expertise for the West Branch Sni-A-Bar Creek Watershed Consortium**



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JACKSON COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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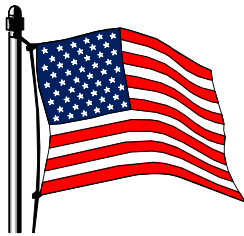
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The Conservation Courier Newsletter carries the message of natural resource conservation to rural and urban Jackson County. To receive a quarterly e-mail notice listing new topics, just e-mail linda.struwe@swcd.mo.gov with your request.



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Conserving America**

Please deliver by February 5th

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**JACKSON COUNTY SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
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