

Conservation Courier Newsletter



Volume 24, Issue 2

May 2010

Envirothon Teams Excel

Congratulations to Pembroke Hill High School, Kansas City, for winning the 2010 Missouri Envirothon held April 13th! This is the second state win for the Pembroke team. Members also earned high score awards for the current issue and wildlife ecostations (test sites) as well as for their oral presentation. Nineteen teams from across Missouri competed in the event held at the Missouri Department of Conservation Runge Conservation Nature Center in Jefferson City.



Pembroke Hill High School Envirothon team from left: Riley Sloan, Austin Caldwell, SueAnn Wright (team coach), Richard Wright, Foster Honeck, and Jeffrey Rubel.

The Pembroke Hill team will represent Missouri in the Canon Envirothon, August 1st through 6th at California State University in Fresno. Winning Canon Envirothon team members receive substantial college scholarships and Canon photographic equipment for their coach.

Kansas City Envirothon Region teams from Blue Springs and Blue Springs South high schools also competed well at the state event. Blue Springs South earned an impressive 4th place resulting in two Kansas City Region teams among the top four. Pembroke Hill and the two Blue Springs teams placed at the top of seven teams in the regional Envirothon held April 1st at Burr Oak Woods in Blue Springs.

The Envirothon program provides a problem solving, natural resources learning experience for 9th through 12th graders. Students are trained in real-life, hands-on environmentalism and then use what they have learned to solve environmental problems in a competitive framework. Subject areas include soils, forestry, aquatics, wildlife, and current environmental issues. High schools, home school groups, and organizations such as Scouts and 4-H may form Envirothon teams of high-school age students. The 2011 Envirothon year begins in August. For more details or to join the Envirothon program, contact chuck.shroyer@mdc.mo.gov.

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Congratulations District Supervisors

The 2010 District election held February 18 resulted in two supervisors returning to our board. **Melvin Dickmeyer** of Buckner was re-elected to a four-year term in Area 1, encompassing northern Jackson County. **Rob Montgomery** of rural Lone Jack, will serve a four-year term in Area 3 which includes the southeast corner of the county. An election for supervisors to represent Areas 2 (east central Jackson County) and 4 (southwest corner) will be conducted in 2012.



Melvin Dickmeyer



Rob Montgomery

The District Board of Supervisors administers policies, programs, personnel, and funding. Their volunteer service is indispensable for the efficient conduct of soil and water conservation programs in Jackson County. By Missouri statute, the board is composed of four elected members, representing specific geographic areas of Jackson County, plus one individual appointed by University of Missouri Extension.

At a recent reorganization meeting, Dickmeyer was elected as board Chairman and Montgomery as Vice-Chairman. Other supervisors on the Jackson County board include Lala Kumar, Blue Springs, Secretary; Don Hicks, Lee's Summit, Treasurer; and Dan Stock, Buckner, member.

To increase election participation and improve transparency, the state Soil and Water Districts Commission implemented new procedures that were employed in the recent election including newspaper advertising and extended poll hours. Individuals interested in becoming a candidate for supervisor in the 2012 election should contact linda.struwe@swcd.mo.gov or call the district office at 816-228-1836, extension 3, for qualifications and election procedures.

Environmental Educator Honored



SueAnn Wright, Conservation Educator of the Year.

SueAnn Wright of Shawnee Mission has been named Conservation Educator of the Year for her leadership as coach of the Pembroke Hill High School Envirothon Team of Kansas City.

SueAnn has inspired, trained, and coached her team to victory in three Kansas City Region Envirothon competitions, three Missouri Envirothons (two 1st place and one 2nd place), and to 5th place in the international Canon Envirothon. Additionally, she has been actively involved in other science and environment based educational programs, including Science Olympiad, in the Pembroke school system.

SueAnn received an engraved crystal obelisk at the recent Kansas City Region Envirothon in recognition of her outstanding contributions to environmental and conservation education. She will be nominated by the District for the state *Conservation Educator of the Year* award to be presented in November at Osage Beach, Missouri. The state competition is sponsored by the Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Thanks a Bunch!



A sincere *thank you* is due the following for their generous financial contributions to help support the Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District throughout the year. Thanks also to door prize donors for adding a special dimension to our 2010 *Ag Appreciation Night*. Please extend our thanks and appreciation to these contributors through your patronage. The District also expresses appreciation to the City of Oak Grove for use of the Oak Grove Civic Center and to Hy-Vee Food Store, Blue Springs, for catering the meal.

Financial Donor

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Door Prize Donors

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- ❖ *Hy-Vee Food Store*
- ❖ *Feldman's Farm & Home*
- ❖ *Powell Gardens*
- ❖ *Peacedale Farm, Inc.*

Photos Win National Recognition

Two local contestants in the *National Association of Conservation Districts* conservation photo contest recently won national honors. **Halle Wild**, a home school student from Kansas City, won *Honorable Mention* in the youth "Up Close Conservation" category. **Jillian Hishaw** of Grandview earned *Honorable Mention* in the adult "Ag/Conservation Across America" category. Both received plaques (pictured below) from District Treasurer Don Hicks recognizing their photographic skills at the recent *Ag Appreciation Night*. Halle and Jillian also won awards for entries in the District's local contest along with Tammy Baxter of Grain Valley, Stacey DeGrace, Independence, Adisynn Foster, Grain Valley, and Monsignor Ralph Kaiser, Buckner.



"Taylor's Scared of Horse" by Jillian Hishaw (right).

Picture yourself a winner in the 2010 photo contest by capturing nature in any of the following categories: conservation, education, trees and plants, wildlife, and landscapes. Both youth and adults may compete in separate divisions. For more information and a photo contest entry form, e-mail linda.struwe@swcd.mo.gov or call the District office at 816-228-1836, extension 3.



"Fishing for Crawdads" by Halle Wild (left).

Consider Compost



With the arrival of spring, homeowners often have difficulty disposing of grass clippings, leaves, and garden refuse, particularly in urban areas. These byproducts of the lawn and garden can be turned into a useful product, compost, which benefits the soil.

Compost is a valuable mulching material for garden and landscape plants. It contains natural nutrients and beneficial soil microorganisms. Perhaps the greatest benefit from compost is the improvement of soil physical properties, especially soil structure. This is achieved by the increase in soil organic matter provided by compost addition.

Compost can also serve as a mulch for soil erosion control and moisture conservation. A small, well-managed compost pile in the backyard is an excellent way to keep useable materials out of the waste stream while benefiting the home grounds and gardens.

Materials that may be turned into compost include vegetable garden refuse, lawn clippings, sod, leaves, hay, straw, and even small branches. Items that should be avoided in a compost pile include kitchen scraps containing meat, bone and grease as well as weedy plant residues with lots of seeds.

While the biological processes of nature that result in compost are very complex, the logistics of making it in your back yard are relatively simple. For best results, consult a good reference such as University of Missouri Extension Guide 6956, *Making and Using Compost*, which includes suggested procedures and supplies. This publication can be found online at <http://extension.missouri.edu/explorepdf/agguides/hort/g06956.pdf>.



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 info/ed 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
- ◆ Natural resource education classes for *X-Stream Green* and *Jacomo Day Camp* programs at the Kemper Outdoor Education Center
- ◆ Sediment and erosion control and watershed hydrology training workshops
- ◆ Technical assistance with natural resource expertise for the Jackson County Master Plan Steering Committee

Grazing Management School Scheduled

Management intensive grazing promotes efficient use of soil, plant, animal, and water resources. Livestock producers can optimize profitability, conservation, and convenience by systematically rotating animals among grazing cells. This livestock management technique enables more animals to be raised on fewer acres with improved quality and quantity of forage.

A two-day school designed to familiarize livestock producers with the concepts and practices of management intensive grazing is scheduled June 4th and 5th in the St. Joseph area. Topics will include economics of grazing management, design and construction of fence and water systems, forages, soil fertility, livestock nutrition, grazing cell design, and much more. For more details and registration information, e-mail curt.walker@mo.usda.gov or call 816-232-6555, extension 139.



Conservation Posters Spotlight Habitat



First Place 4th Grade:

Vivian Covert
Blackburn Elementary
School
Independence



First Place 3rd Grade:

Jessica James
Plaza Heights
Christian Academy
Blue Springs



Second Place Overall:

Miranda Taylor
4th Grade
Blackburn Elementary
School
Independence



Third Place Overall:

Jordan Mabry
4th Grade
Blackburn Elementary
School
Independence

Trophies were recently awarded to county winners in the District's *Conservation Poster Contest*, the theme of which was *Habitat: Nature's Niches*. Poster contest supplies were provided for 1,164 third and fourth grade students from 50 classrooms at 10 Jackson County elementary schools. The contest provides students an opportunity to artistically express what they have learned in the classroom about soil, water, and related natural resource conservation.

County poster contest winners receive trophies for their winning entries and a poster party, including cookies and punch, for their entire class. First-place third and fourth grade posters may be entered in the state conservation poster contest this fall.

A Celebration of Agriculture

Ninety-three individuals attended the District's *Ag Appreciation Night* at the Oak Grove Civic Center for an evening of ag information, awards, conservation conversation, and good food. The event was designed to recognize the positive impact of soil and water stewardship on agriculture.

Program highlights for the third annual event of its kind in Jackson County included *Conservation Farmer of the Year* and *Conservation Photo Contest* awards as well as entertainment, educational displays, and door prizes. An election of supervisors for District Areas 1 and 3 was also conducted in conjunction with the event. Pictorial highlights follow:



Branson entertainer Keith "Red" Allen provided hillbilly comedy and musical entertainment much enjoyed by those attending.



Conservation Photo Contest winners (from left) Adisynn Foster, Halle Wild, Jillian Hishaw, Stacey DeGrace, Monsignor Ralph Kaiser, and Tammy Baxter received recognition and awards.

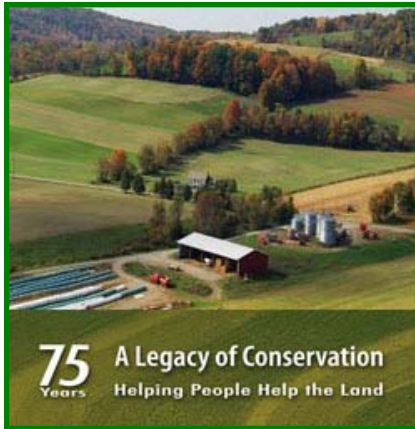


Allen Owings, Conservation Farmer of the Year award winner for 2010.



'District Panorama', a PowerPoint slide show set to music, highlighted two decades of conservation practices, educational programs, and activities of the Jackson County District.

A Legacy of Conservation



This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the beginning of the federal commitment to conserving natural resources on private lands. Originally established by Congress in 1935 as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), NRCS has expanded to become a conservation leader for all natural resources. This helps to ensure that private landowners have the opportunity to conserve, protect, and restore natural resources as part of an enduring environment.

Seventy percent of the land in the United States is privately owned, making stewardship by private landowners critical to the health of our nation's environment. NRCS works with landowners through conservation planning and assistance designed to benefit the soil, water, air, plants, and animals that result in productive lands and healthy ecosystems.

Science and technology are critical to good conservation. NRCS specialists from many disciplines come together to help landowners conserve natural resources in ways that are efficient and sustainable. Whether developed in a laboratory or on the land, NRCS science and technology helps landowners make the right decisions for each natural resource. NRCS successes often come through partnerships. They work closely with individual farmers and ranchers, landowners, local conservation districts, government agencies, tribes, Earth Team volunteers and other people and groups that care about the quality of America's natural resources.

The rich history of NRCS provides firm ground on which a bond between the land and its people remains strong today. NRCS draws on a tradition of principles in working with private landowners that is as relevant now as when it was conceived by Hugh H. Bennett, the first chief of SCS, in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Bennett believed that soil erosion was a national menace and that its solution lay in tailoring conservation practices to fit the capability of the land and the desires of landowners.

The following principles from the NRCS heritage still guide its work today:

- ◆ Evaluate the land to assess resources, conservation problems, and opportunities
- ◆ Use various sciences and disciplines to develop a conservation plan for the whole property
- ◆ Work closely with land users so that plans for conservation are consistent with their objectives
- ◆ By implementing conservation on individual properties, contribute to the overall quality of life in the watershed or region

In Missouri, NRCS serves all 114 counties. Across the Show-Me State, 400 NRCS employees work out of more than 100 offices. Another 400 employees of local soil and water conservation districts and state agencies work in partnership with NRCS out of Missouri agency offices. For 75 years, Missouri NRCS has been helping people help their land by providing financial incentives and free technical assistance to land users. NRCS employees want to use their agency's 75th anniversary to help spread the word about the work that they and their partners accomplish.

For more information on the 75th anniversary commemoration of NRCS, including a seven minute video entitled *A Legacy of Conservation*, access <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/index.html>.



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JACKSON COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

1974 NW Copper Oaks Circle
Blue Springs, MO 64015-8300
Phone: 816-228-1836,
Extension 3

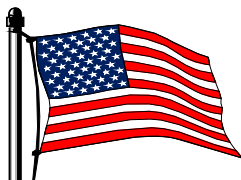
Fax: 816-229-2384
E-mail: linda.struwe@swcd.mo.gov

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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**Conservation Districts
Conserving America**

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This newsletter is funded by the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax through the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

JACKSON COUNTY SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
1974 NW Copper Oaks Circle
Blue Springs, MO 64015-8300

