



SOIL AND WATER Resources

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Inside This Issue

Commission Offers Additional \$10,000 to Districts to Fund First Contract in any Resource Concern Listed in the Needs Assessment

Commission Covers Contracts Due to Wet Weather

Commission Votes to End Loan Interest-Share Program

New Election Policies Effective July 1, Commission Shares Timeline for Rule Changes

Commission Approves Policy Changes to the Cost-Share Handbook

Commission Votes to Fence Existing Ponds through Use Exclusion Practice

Governor Signs Bill, Emergency Rule Filed Making Water Quality Practices Available Statewide

Resolutions from the Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Reviewed at May Meeting

Commission Approves List of Eligible Information/Education Expenses

NRCS Hires J.R. Flores as New Missouri State Conservationist

Enhanced MoSWIMS Debuts for Fiscal Year 2010

Commission Supports Targeted Watershed Program

Bryan Hopkins Takes Over as the New Soil and Water Conservation Program Director

Mark Templeton, director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, announced Bryan Hopkins as the director of the Soil and Water Conservation Program. Hopkins started on July 16. He previously served as the Department's wetland and watershed coordinator and led the Department's involvement on Gulf of Mexico hypoxia issues.

Hopkins has a bachelor's degree in ecology and a master's degree in microbiology. He spent 12 years managing environmental studies for industry and served as a college instructor of environmental sciences before joining the Department in 2001.



A Message from Bryan Hopkins:

I have already had the pleasure of working with some of you and look forward to getting to know those of you that I have not met. I could not be more pleased with the caliber of the staff of the program and I have been uniformly impressed by the program's activities.

I honestly consider the Soil and Water Conservation Program to be one of the most important and effective programs in the state in regards to stewardship of our natural resources. It is in many ways one of our "best kept secrets" and it will be my intention to change that and tell our story.

We face complex times in regards to the economy and the rapid changes occurring in the agricultural sector of Missouri. We will be challenged to make sure our program is fully responsive to contemporary issues while supporting our basic mission.

For a period of time, I will be "drinking from a firehose" regarding learning about the program, and I look forward to it. You can count on me wanting to learn more about your role in the program and the challenges we face to provide the best support we can.

I look forward to visiting more of the district offices and working with program staff to support the districts. I do not intend to lead this program from my desk.

Through our local offices and our partners we have tremendous scope and I look forward to working with staff to continue to provide stewardship of our state's diverse and precious resources.



**Missouri Department
of Natural Resources**
Soil and Water Conservation Program

Commission Offers Additional \$10,000 to Districts to Fund First Contract in any Resource Concern Listed in the Needs Assessment

During the July meeting, the commission approved an additional \$10,000 cost-share allocation per district to fund the first contract in any resource concern identified through the needs assessment in which the initial allocation was not sufficient to fund the first contract's estimated cost-share amount. This should allow districts to fund at least one practice in each resource concern identified in their needs assessment, creating opportunities to showcase new practices and collect information for future needs assessment plans.

For example, if your district has an allocation in the groundwater protection resource concern for \$1,255 and the board has a request from a landowner to do a spring development with an estimated cost-share amount of \$3,120, the board would be able to use part of the \$10,000 to cover the difference between the allocation and the estimated cost-share amount which is \$1,865. The district would then have \$8,135 remaining of the \$10,000 to use in other resource concerns for similar situations described above.

If you have any questions about the additional cost-share allocation, contact your district coordinator.

Commission Covers Contracts Due to Wet Weather

In July, the Soil and Water Districts Commission voted to provide districts an additional \$2.2 million allocation to cover the costs of contracts that transitioned into FY10. This brings the total dollars allocated to districts for FY10 to \$28.4 million. This additional allocation of \$2.2 million is for contracts approved and started in FY09, but were not completed by the end of the fiscal year. The commission will continue to monitor revenue as well as program expenses incurred throughout the year, prior to making any further adjustments to the FY10 cost-share allocations.

When the commission approved funding for the resource concerns, they realized the allocation process would need to be constantly evaluated.

To assist in this, program office staff will provide a report summarizing the allocation activity at each meeting. Staff will also continue to provide updates to the commission regarding revenues for the parks, soils, and water sales tax. Revenues have been down due to the economy.

As the commission reviews these reports, they may make some adjustments to the original allocations and goals for each resource concern. The program appreciates the input provided by the districts through the needs assessments to help with determining resource goals and allocations. As the districts complete their FY11 needs assessments this fall, they may receive funding as early as January to address a resource concern not identified (or fully funded) in the initial FY10 needs assessment through the advanced allocation funds.

Please contact the program office at 573-751-4932 if you have any questions.

Commission Votes to End Loan Interest-Share Program

The Soil and Water Districts Commission voted to discontinue the loan interest-share program on Oct. 31, 2009, but they will honor all eligible applicants who have purchased equipment and secured a loan prior to Oct. 31. Landowners will still receive payments on all active loans for up to five years.

The program was originally set up to encourage the use of no-till and other soil and water conservation measures but since no-till is fairly common now, interest in the program has declined dramatically.

The commission had previously discussed using the \$500,000 appropriated for this program to start a Conservation Equipment Incentive Program, which would provide producers with a rebate on new or used eligible equipment purchased from an equipment dealer. At this time, the commission does not want to pursue this concept. The commission intends to redirect those funds to targeted watersheds in the state. Please read the article on page 7 for more information on that program.



High school students from Pembroke Hill High School in Kansas City pose with their award for fifth place at the 2009 Canon Envirothon, a weeklong North American environmental education competition. The competition, sponsored by Canon U.S.A. Inc., was held Aug. 1-8 at the University of North Carolina in Asheville with 52 teams competing. Each student on the Missouri team won a \$1,500 scholarship and other prizes. Left to right: SueAnn Wright, advisor; Robert Wright, advisor; Isaac Alpert, Austin Caldwell, Thomas Hogdman, Peter Vale and Richard Wright.

New Election Policies Effective July 1, Commission Shares Timeline for Rule Changes

Recently, the commission developed policy for districts to help make the election process more transparent and increase voter participation. These new policies were effective July 1, 2009, and include two additional newspaper election advertisements, an optional mailing of the advertisements to cooperators and extending the hours that the polls are open. At the end of this fiscal year, election results will be evaluated to determine if the policy changes were effective. If the policies were effective, rule changes will not be considered. However, if the policies were ineffective, changes to the rules will be evaluated. The following is a timeline of the changes in the election process:

- July 1, 2009 – Implement new policies for election process.
- Aug. 26-Sept. 3, 2009 – Election process discussed with supervisors during area meetings.
- June 30, 2010 – Evaluate results of elections to determine if policy changes were effective.
- Aug. 1, 2010 – File rule changes if policies were not effective.

- Aug. 1, 2010 – 30-day public comment period.
- Feb. 15, 2011 – Rule changes finalized by Secretary of State.
- Feb. 15, 2011 – Rule changes in effect.

Commission Approves Policy Changes to the Cost-Share Handbook

The commission approved changes to update the cost-share handbook. Major changes include:

- Adding water quality practices to the list of eligible statewide practices;
- Removing the mDSP-2 Modified Permanent Vegetative Cover Enhancement practice and applying it to the regular DSP-2 practice increasing the eligibility to 160 acres;
- Eliminating the 10 percent slope requirement for the DFR-4 and DFR-5;
- Removing N634 Manure Transfer practice because of lack of interest;
- Adding statements referring to grouping seeding components; and
- Reorganizing the practices by resource concerns.

There will be more changes in the future related to the new allocation process through the needs assessment, the advanced allocation process and defining acres served to be consistent statewide.



Cows graze by a pond that has been fenced out. Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS.

Commission Votes to Fence Existing Ponds through Use Exclusion Practice

During the July 29 meeting, the commission voted to approve the use of the N472 Use Exclusion practice for exclusion of ponds that do not act as a water source for livestock grazing and the fence solely prevents livestock from having access. The purpose of the N472 Use Exclusion is to protect, maintain or improve the quality of the plant, soil and water resources. It applies to areas where vegetative establishment and maintenance, soil condition and water quality need to be protected and results in total exclusion of livestock from the area protected. However, if the N472 Use Exclusion practice is used to fence off ponds that are determined to be a viable watering source for a grazing system, providing an additional water source to those paddocks will not be approved for cost-share. If you have any questions about the use exclusion practice, please contact your district coordinator.

Governor Signs Bill, Emergency Rule Filed Making Water Quality Practices Available Statewide

On June 26, Governor Nixon signed House Bill 250 allowing local soil and water conservation districts 41 practices to address water quality concerns statewide on agricultural land. Prior to this law, water quality practices were only available in specified watersheds.

Typically after a bill is signed by the governor it becomes a law on Aug. 28, but if the bill contains an emergency clause, it allows implementation as soon as it is signed. The emergency rule was filed allowing immediate implementation and funding was available July 1 for districts that included water quality practices in their needs assessments.

Resolutions from the Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Reviewed at May Meeting

The Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts passed four resolutions at its annual meeting Dec. 2, 2008, at Tan-Tar-A resort in Osage Beach, which were presented and reviewed at the May commission meeting. The commission took no official action on these resolutions. The resolutions and general guidance given by the commission follows:

- **Group health insurance coverage for board supervisors and their family paid 100 percent by the supervisor** –The commission did not go on record supporting this resolution due to the information gathered from the insurance provider on the potential impacts this could have on the monthly insurance premiums for district employees;
- **First year cost-share funding eligibility for land under an expiring Conservation Reserve Program contract, which will be brought into cropland production** – The commission supported this resolution and is working with program staff to develop some policies to consider at a future meeting;
- **An itemized financial report of program expenses every fiscal year by Aug. 1** – This is already available as a public document once it has been shared with the commission; and
- **Continuous operation of the cost-share program with available reserve funds** – The commission previously approved this as the advance cost-share allocation.

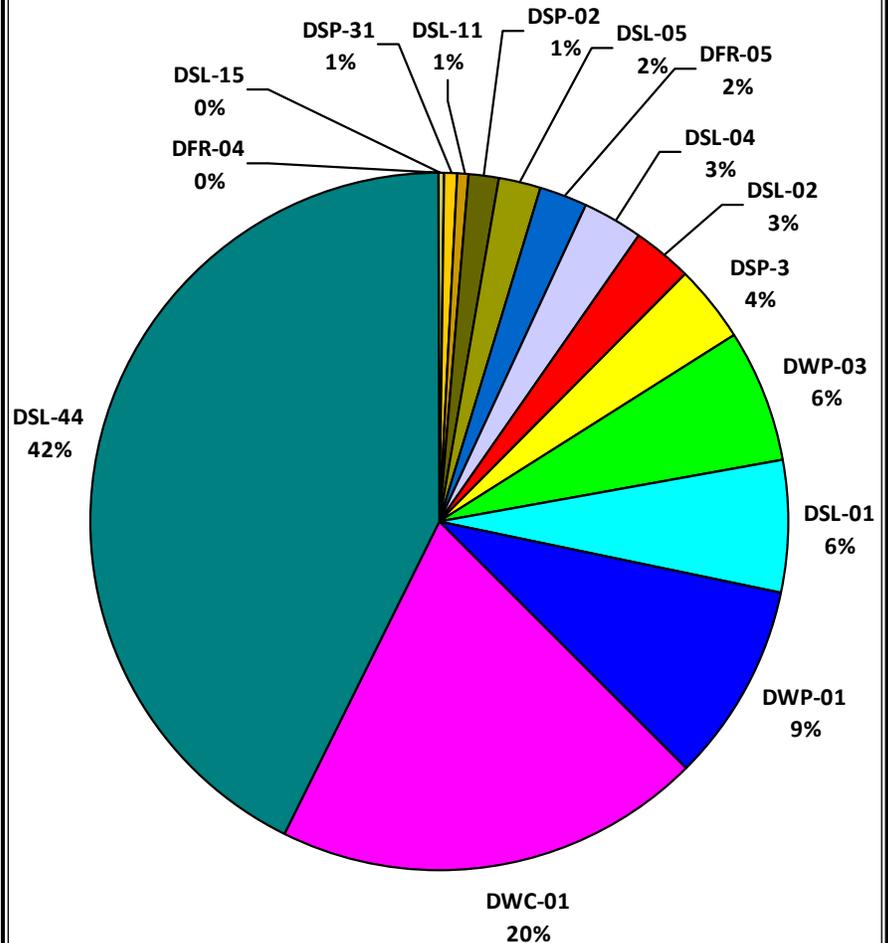
FY09 Year End Snapshot

Regular Cost-Share	AgNPS SALT Cost-Share
Allocated: \$24.8 million	Allocated: \$9.4 million
Obligated: \$22 million	Obligated: \$6.6 million
Claimed: \$19.8 million	Claimed: \$4.6 million

For FY09, the state cost-share program helped landowners construct 4,200 conservation practices. Preliminary numbers indicate that through the efforts shown in FY09, the state cost-share program will save roughly 2.1 million tons of soil with the installed practices. These practices are treating nearly 70,000 acres.

Regular Cost-Share Summary Expenditures by Practice

FY09 Total Claimed: \$19.8 million



Commission Approves List of Eligible Information/Education Expenses

The commission approved a list of eligible expenses from the information/education grant which includes many of the information/education activities districts are currently participating in. The list is not exclusive, but personnel expenses (salary, travel and training) are not an eligible expense from this grant. A requirement for this grant is that districts must state that items are made available through the parks, soils and water sales tax through the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. This information should be included on all written materials.

The Soil and Water Districts Commission approved the theme for the grant, "Farming, conserving and preserving our soil and water resources work hand in hand." Districts are encouraged to include this theme in their information/education activities.

Eligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Poster contests
- Field days/conservation kids day
- Envirothon
- Grassland evaluation
- Soil Judging
- Enviroscene model
- Brochures, Newsletters
- Teacher or Contractor workshops
- Groundwater model
- Speech, Photo or Essay contests
- Erosion control model
- Displays
- Water quality workshops
- Tours
- Soil stewardship week
- Women in Ag programs
- Adult education workshops
- Awards
- Worm tunnel
- Community programs/workshops
- Earth Day activities
- Water festivals
- School presentations
- Newspaper or radio ads
- Annual meeting/Open house
- Office equipment – cannot exceed 15 percent of information/education allocation

NRCS Hires J.R. Flores as New Missouri State Conservationist

J.R. Flores is the new Missouri state conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. He began on Aug. 30. Flores is replacing Roger Hansen, who retired on June 3.



Since March 2004, Flores served as the NRCS state conservationist in North Dakota, where he led approximately 300 employees and managed an annual budget of \$100 million. In Missouri, he will oversee approximately 400 NRCS employees and manage an annual budget of \$110 million. As state conservationist, Flores will direct NRCS' statewide efforts in helping people help the land through locally-led, cooperative conservation programs.

Flores is a native of Altus, Okla. He received a bachelor's degree in agronomy from Cameron University in Lawton, Okla. His 27-year NRCS career included serving in several locations as a soil conservationist and as a district conservationist in Oklahoma and Texas, and as an area conservationist in Oklahoma. He later served as an assistant state conservationist in California before serving for six months as acting state conservationist in New York. He was deputy state conservationist in Wyoming when he was selected as North Dakota state conservationist.

Flores and his wife, Nancy, have three grown children and three grandchildren.

Enhanced MoSWIMS Debuts for Fiscal Year 2010

The program office recently enhanced the Missouri Soil and Water Information Management System to provide districts with additional tools to manage cost-share funds more efficiently for FY10. These improvements are a result of commission action regarding the current allocation process and the advanced allocation concept, in addition to positive feedback from the districts over this past year.

Enhancements will update state average costs, assist in payment processing and make it easier to gather information for reports. If you have any questions regarding MoSWIMS enhancements, please contact your district coordinator.

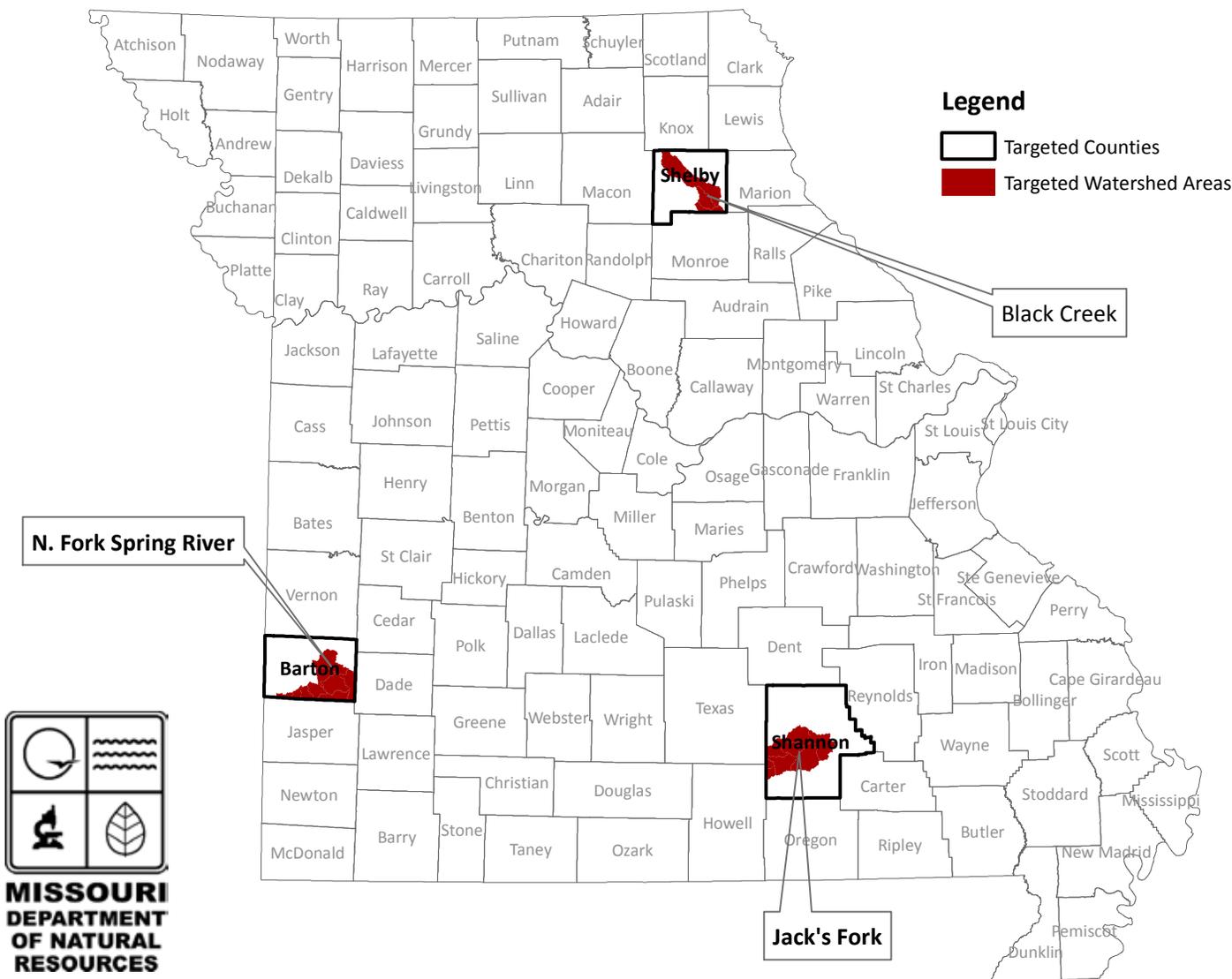
Commission Supports Targeted Watershed Program

The commission voted to support a targeted watershed program, which will focus on reducing agricultural nonpoint source pollution in three high priority watersheds across the state. The goal of this program is to encourage landowners to voluntarily implement best management practices to restore waters in order to sustain the watershed for years to come and remove the need for future

regulations. This program will be funded with a \$177,249 allocation that was originally earmarked for the loan interest-share program.

The targeted watersheds include Jack's Fork, North Fork Spring River and Black Creek. Jack's Fork and North Fork Spring River are currently on the 303d list. Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires that each state identify waters that are not meeting water quality standards and for which adequate water pollution controls have not been required. It helps state and federal agencies keep track of waters that are impaired but not addressed by normal water pollution control programs. The commission will evaluate the progress of this program each year for consideration of continued funding.

Fiscal Year 2010 Targeted Watershed Areas





SOIL AND WATER *Resources*

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