

SOIL AND WATER Resources

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Inside This Issue

**Soil and Water Districts
Commission Holds
February Meeting**

**Cover Crop Comments
Sought Through May 1**

**Missouri Envirothon
competition to be held
May 1**

**Cover Crop Tour Held
March 10 in New Madrid
and Stoddard Counties**

**Missouri State Fair
Scholarships Awarded to
4-H and FFA Youth**

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Soil and Water Districts Commission Holds February Meeting

Gary Vandiver was nominated and elected as chair and H. Ralph Gaw was nominated and elected as vice-chair of the Soil and Water Districts Commission following elections at the Feb. 11, 2015 commission meeting. Both had served in the same capacity prior to being approved by unanimous vote by the commission. Newly appointed commissioner Jeff Lance attended his first meeting as an official member of the commission.

The commission heard a report from Kurt Boeckmann about Missouri's \$6 million Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) award through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to be used for the Our Missouri Waters Targeted Conservation Project.

The commission approved an increase in retirement benefits for district staff as proposed by the Program Delivery and Operations Plan for the Future subcommittee from 5 percent to 7 percent. The commission also approved adopting new criteria for linear progression for staff advancement within the districts. The position progression will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2016.

Claire Baffaut, U.S. Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) Research Hydrologist and Dr. John Lory, Extension Associate Professor, University of Missouri, Division of Plant Sciences, gave a presentation about Using Missouri Data to Understand Capabilities of the APEX Model to Estimate Nutrients and Sediment in Runoff.



Soil and Water Districts commissioners Charlie Ausfahl, Ralph Gaw, Gary Vandiver and Jeff Lance attend to business at the February commission meeting held in Jefferson City.

DNR Photo by Van Beydler



Missouri Department of Natural Resources director Sara Parker Pauley visits with Beverly Dometrorch from Howard County and George Engelbach from Jefferson County during a break at the February Soil and Water Districts Commission meeting. DNR Photo by Van Beydler

The commission has discussed making sure research needs are being done in a cost effective way to get the answers to justify the expenditures being made with taxpayer's money from the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax.

The commission heard a report about funding needs for Missouri Regional Grazing Schools from Dave Baker, Assistant Dean, Agriculture Extension, University of Missouri. Baker said, "We need to figure out a new model to ensure the continuation of the Missouri Regional Grazing Schools in the future." Commission chair Gary Vandiver quoted from Baker's letter to the commission saying, "We have the cadillac grazing program in the nation." Vandiver commented, "We need to retain that and the money approved by the commission is a small price to pay for the amount of revenue it generates for our state."

Richard Fordyce, Missouri Department of Agriculture director addressed the commission saying, "The relationship between the Missouri Department of Agriculture and the Department of Natural Resources is probably as good as it has been in a long time. Things are going well in Agriculture. The governor and I are going to Cuba March 1 through 4 to lead a delegation to see what opportunities are available. The motivation is to get Missouri producers products to the 11 million people of Cuba if restrictions are lifted.

J.R. Flores, state conservationist with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), updated the commission about the Regional Conservation Partnership Projects awarded in Missouri and shared a new NRCS Field Office Service Area boundary map showing the 30 district conservationists for the state.

Cover Crop Comments Sought Through May 1

When members of the Soil and Water Districts Commission approved the pilot cover crop practice last July for the whole

state, they also established a comment period of Dec. 1, 2014 to May 1, 2015. District comments about changes or additions to the policies of the pilot cover crop practice to help transition it to a regular cost-share practice are due by May 1. In Memorandum 2015-002 are some questions the board may wish to take into consideration when providing comments about the pilot cover crop practice.

Districts can submit comments by mailing them to the program office or via email to Matt Elliott at matt.elliott@dnr.mo.gov.

Missouri Envirothon Competition to be Held May 1



The state competition for teams participating in the Missouri Envirothon is scheduled for May 1 in Jefferson City. Theme for the state competition is Urban/Community Forestry. There will be 19 teams with a total of 95 students participating. The Missouri Envirothon is a problem-solving, natural resource education program for high school students.

In the field, teams of students are challenged to hone critical thinking skills and work as a team. Students answer written questions and conduct hands-on investigation of environmental issues in five categories including soils/land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife, and current environmental issues. In addition to a written test, the teams also present an oral presentation solving a specific natural resource issue. Reference materials for students and teachers are available through local soil and water conservation districts. The top team will advance to the national Envirothon competition, which is being hosted this year by Missouri from July 27 through Aug. 2 in Springfield.

Cover Crop Tour Held on March 10 in New Madrid and Stoddard Counties

by Jennifer Pellett - SWCP District Coordinator

Despite heavy rain and flooded conditions, more than 60 people attended a cover crop tour on March 10 in Stoddard and New Madrid counties hosted by Missouri Delta Soil Health Alliance in association with Stoddard Soil and Water Conservation District and NRCS.

The tour began inside Johnny Hunter's shop in Avert with Jerry Kaiser, NRCS Plant Material Specialist, giving some background about cover crops and the various uses for them. The tour then moved outside to Hunter's corn and soybean field, where, despite the rain, we were able to walk in the crop field without getting muddy boots. The minimal water on the field was clear and was not carrying topsoil to the drainage ditches.

Hunter row crops about 2,500 acres and has converted entirely to no-till and cover crops. Hunter uses a blend of annual rye, winter peas, radishes, hairy vetch and several other varieties as cover crops. He noted the improved soil health from cover crops and reduced erosion, and he was able to increase the yield to 75 bu/acre of soybeans, after the first year of using cover crops as a conservation practice.



DNR Photo by Jennifer Pellett

The next stop was at Keith Mayberry's field in Bernie. Mayberry picked this particular field to plant cover crops because when he took over management it was not producing well. He was able to grow winter wheat on it, but not a second crop. Since starting cover crops, he has noticed marked yield improvements, and the return of earthworms. He spreads a mixture of about 12 cover crops including buckwheat, annual rye, hairy vetch, radishes, mustards, winter peas, brassicas, etc. Using soil moisture monitoring equipment, Mayberry irrigated only half of his fields that were under cover crops last year. "There was no yield difference between the irrigated and non-irrigated fields," said Mayberry. He put 2,700 acres in cover crops this winter and plans to put all 3,800 acres he manages under cover crops next year. He also has converted completely to no-till.

The last farm stop was at Peter Rost's rice fields in Lilbourn to view what first year plantings of cover crops looked like. The tour ended with soil aggregate stability and infiltration demonstrations by NRCS and lunch at Peter Rost's shop in New Madrid. Demonstrations were performed by NRCS staff members Darin Gant, District Conservationist, and Warren Cork, Resource Conservationist.

Missouri State Fair Scholarships Awarded to 4-H and FFA Youth

Missouri State Fair Director Mark Wolfe announced that 32 youth, selected from Missouri 4-H and FFA, are awarded scholarships by the Missouri State Fair Foundation Youth in Agriculture (YIA) committee. These students are seeking higher education in agriculture-related fields, and received their scholarships during the annual State FFA Convention in Columbia.

The scholarships are funded by the Missouri State Fair Foundation and by YIA supporters at the 2014 Sale of Champions.

Scholarship applicants were evaluated in a variety of areas including Missouri State Fair participation, grade point average, community involvement and leadership roles. Since 1992, the YIA committee has awarded 506 scholarships totaling \$453,000.

Bailey Kemp, of Auxvasse, received the \$5,000 platinum scholarship offered by YIA supporters. Walter Schaefer, of Callao, received the \$2,500 supreme scholarship. The youth chosen to receive \$1,500 scholarships, sponsored by the Missouri State Fair Foundation and YIA supporters are:

- Sydney M. Anderson, Tipton
- Shelby Lynn Bagnell, Slater
- Dalton John Bargfrede, Alma
- Hannah Lynn Boatright, Sedalia
- Austin Boland, Sweet Springs
- Dane Michael Brammer, Gallatin
- Jessica Cobban, Fair Grove
- Martha Cowherd, Blackburn
- Alexander Coulter Engeman, Montrose
- Brant Francis, Paris
- Allison Frappier, Columbia
- Abilene Gatson, Vandalia
- Lauren Haley, Chillicothe
- Jacob D. Hoellering, California
- Addison Jackson, Miller
- Olivia Loges, Sweet Springs
- McKalie Lorenz, Pilot Grove
- Alysa Lyle, Sheridan
- Brett Mason, Paris
- Russell Henry Mitchell, Paris
- Andy Mott, Rocheport
- Cassandra Rankin, Columbia
- Lynsey Rector, Fair Grove
- Cody Schniedermeyer, Skidmore
- Claire Silvers, El Dorado Springs
- Teanna McKay Simpson, Thayer
- Allison Stiens, Maryville
- Mackenzie Stumpe, Mexico
- Tannah Terry, Gallatin
- Sydney Laurel Thummel, Sheridan

The 113th annual Missouri State Fair, themed "Show Offs Welcome" will be held Aug. 13 to 23, 2015 in Sedalia.



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