

VOL. 28 ISSUE 3

Soil Conservation News

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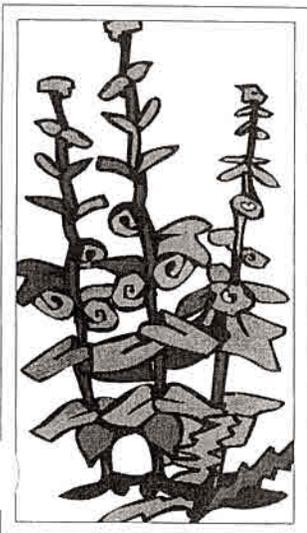
FOREST ECONOMICS: MAKING WISE LAND MANAGEMENT DECISIONS FOR THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE PG. 3

The Morgan County Soil and Water Conservation District cordially invites you and your family to our annual meeting on Tuesday evening March 20, 2012. This year's meeting will be held at the Rolling Hills Country Club on Hwy 5 north of Versailles. The evening will begin with a meal, provided by the district, being served at 6:30 pm.

Following the meal we will have a special presentation by Rex Martensen. Rex is with the MDC Private Land Field Program. Rex will present a program about feral hogs and mountain lions in Missouri. Following Mr. Martensen, Bob Broze from University Extension will talk about the Lake of the Ozarks Watershed Alliance.

The cooperator of the year for 2011 will be named following the presentations. Winners of the poster contest from Morgan County 4th grades will be announced and presented with prizes. There will be drawings for door prizes donated by area businesses.

So that we will know how many dinners to plan for, please contact our office no later than March 15, 2012 with the exact number in your family that will be attending. Please return the bottom portion of the newsletter or phone 573-378-5822 ext. 101.



From: _____

Please Print Name

_____ Number attending dinner. Please include both adults and children. To participate in the dinner we must have your reservation no later than March 15th, 2012.

Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

NRCS Missouri is part of an ongoing pilot testing the viability and functionality of seasonal tunnel systems. A seasonal high tunnel is a polyethylene-covered structure at least six feet high which modifies the climate to create more favorable growing conditions for vegetable and other specialty crops grown in the natural soil beneath it.



During the pilot period, high tunnel systems will be eligible for financial assistance, limited to tunnels covering up to five percent of one acre (2,178 square feet maximum) per farm operation. The size is equal to a structure of approximately 30 feet by 72 feet. The Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative also offers conservation practices that support the seasonal high tunnel practice.

EQIP applications are accepted year-round. NRCS has established three ranking periods for 2012:

Ranking Period 1: February 3, 2012

Ranking Period 2: March 30, 2012

Ranking Period 3: June 1, 2012

To be considered for funding under a ranking period, each application must be received, determined eligible and evaluated by the deadlines listed above, so don't wait till the last day. The seasonal high tunnel will have to be physically located on ground that has been in annually-tilled crops for 3 or more years, 2007 thru 2011.

Also Available:

On-Farm Energy Initiative: NRCS and producers develop Agricultural Energy Management Plans (AgEMP) or farm energy audits that assess energy consumption on an operation. NRCS then uses audit data to develop energy conservation recommendations.

Organic Initiative: NRCS helps certified organic growers and producers working to achieve organic certification install conservation practices for organic production

Visit the [NRCS National Web site](#) for more information on how to apply for these initiatives and connect with an NRCS office near you.

Forestland Economics: Making Wise Land Management Decisions for the Present and the Future

By: Lauren Cartwright, State Agricultural Economist, NRCS Columbia, MO

Every landowner faces a finite amount of land with an infinite amount of choices and opportunities to manage that land. Land management decisions are made based on each landowner's goals, which can also vary widely. Some landowners only want to maximize profits from their land. Some landowners are only interested in the aesthetic attributes that their land offers. Many landowners fall somewhere in between and are interested in both profit and aesthetic in some balance. Missouri is graced with vast forestland and a climate suitable for growing trees as well as grass and cropland. As a result, Missouri landowners have many options available for managing land to meet their goals. The challenge arises however when trying to assess the economic impact of land use decisions when the time horizon of land use decisions are so different. Specifically, the benefit of the decision to plant trees or maintain and manage an existing stand of trees versus managing that land as pasture or cropland is challenging to assess economically because the trees grow over a much longer time period and provide returns to producers in lump sums versus pasture or cropland that provide returns annually.

Missouri NRCS has a user friendly planning tool available that provides a quick economic analysis of forestland management decisions. The tool, entitled "The Economics of Converting Cropland or Grassland to Forestland" is run in MS Excel, and available to download from <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/technical/econ/stateresources/?&cid=stelprdb1044088>.

For producers considering converting cropland or pasture to forestland, the tool captures the costs of tree establishment and management and compares those costs to the benefits the forestland will return in future years through saw timber, veneer and pulpwood harvest. Users will benefit from the input of a forester to help assess the estimated yields from a stand based on stand composition and location. The model returns an Investment Evaluation for the landowner to use to compare with other possible land use options, such as maintaining the land in its current land use as cropland or pasture.

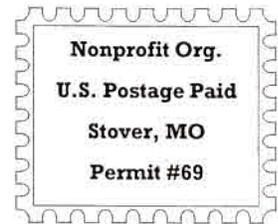
For producers who have an existing stand of timber, the tool can also be used to assess the potential value of that existing stand. In this scenario, the only cost the landowner may have is associated with managing the stand through a timber stand improvement to maximize the future yield potential. Again, the tool will compare any management costs to the expected returns from the stand and return an Investment Evaluation. This aspect of the tool may be helpful for landowners considering converting an existing stand of timber to another land use, such as pasture. The investment evaluation will provide the producer with information on what potential income can be expected from the existing timber.

Missouri landowners are faced with decisions every day on the best management of their land resources to meet specific goals. With all the choices possible, decision making can be challenging and overwhelming. Ultimately, the final decision on how to manage the land and its resources lies solely with the landowner. However, there are many resources available to provide information to landowners that may assist decision making. The tool described above is one example of a resource available to help landowners.

For more information, or questions on the tool described in this article please contact:

Lauren Cartwright
MO NRCS State Agricultural Economist
Lauren.cartwright@mo.usda.gov
(573) 876-9415

Morgan County Soil and Water
Conservation District
100 S. Burke Street
Versailles, MO 65084



Phone: 573-378-5822
Fax: 573-378-6163
E-mail: patty.wittrock@swcd.mo.gov

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