

# Reporter

ST. CHARLES COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## NRCS Welcomes Additions to Staff

The Natural Resource Conservation Service has hired two employees who are currently receiving training in the USDA Service Centers of St. Charles, St. Louis and Lincoln Counties.

Eugene P. Lewis, a native of St. Louis and currently a senior at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, has returned for his second summer internship with NRCS in the St. Charles County office. Lewis is studying Agricultural Business at the university, and has completed one other internship as a Soil Conservationist with NRCS in Marshall, Mo.



"I grew up in the city where people don't often think about agriculture," Lewis said, "so my studies and work experiences have really opened my eyes to the vital importance of productive agricultural businesses."

Lewis is training under the direction of Renee Cook, District Conservationist, and he plans to continue with a career in NRCS after graduation.

"I'm looking forward to meeting and working with the farmers," he said.

Kervin Bryant is a Lincoln University graduate who has recently joined the NRCS team as a Soil Conservationist.

"I grew up in southern Georgia where agriculture was a means of survival for my family. I was involved in agriculture before I actually knew what it was," Bryant said.



Bryant's educational background is in Agriculture Natural Resource Management.

"I plan to continue learning and broadening my knowledge so I can effectively assist landowners with their conservation management needs."

## Twitter and Flickr

No it's not some new age dance. Twitter is a social media site in which a person or organization can post daily comments about issues, events, and really just anything. NRCS has a Twitter site. Go to twitter.com and type Missouri NRCS in the search bar.

Flickr is a photo sharing site. The Soil and Water District has a flickr site on which they post photos of events. They will soon be adding conservation practice photos. Access at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/swcd>



## Kids + Conservation = Happy Earth

As the final days of the school year dwindled in numbers, the Soil and Water District staff was busy visiting with as many young people as possible. Among the many activities that take place near the end of the school year are the NACD Poster Contest, the Regional and State Envirothons, Eighth Grade Ecology Day, and various other field trips and school visits. On this page, and on page 3, are just a few glimpses into the busy months of March, April and May outreach activities. In those three months, the district made contact with over 950 people.

Congratulations to all the young people who won awards or scholarships, and to the 50 elementary students who participated in the poster contest. It is easy to see that the majority of today's kids are seriously conservation-minded, and enthusiastically express their desires to help the Earth.



Raindrops are Falling

The Earth Club at Forest Park Elementary in O'Fallon enjoyed learning about watersheds and storm water runoff through the use of the Rain Table. Here, club members watch for erosion in four sample surface types (soil, grass, mulch and concrete).



Painting with the Colors of the Soil

Painting with soil was a big hit at the GM Earth Day in Wentzville. This young man took his time and did a fabulous job on his painting. Soils were collected locally and included a variety of colors: yellow, red, tan, blue, grey and many shades of black and brown. Crushed and mixed with a little white glue and water, soils make great paints!



Poster Contest Winner

Audrey Dickherber, a fourth grader at St. Charles Borromeo, was the Grand Prize winner of this year's local poster contest sponsored by the Soil & Water District. Audrey won \$75, and her poster will be entered in the State NACD contest. See pg. 4 for more poster contest winners.

## Funds Available through Cost-Share for FY12

The District has the following funds available to assist landowners with practices that benefit farm operations while addressing conservation issues. Funds are designated to particular resource concerns:

Grazing Management	\$4,000
Sensitive Areas	\$9,000
Sheet, Rill, Gully	\$9,000
Woodland Erosion	\$3,500

Farmers, Ag producers, Landowners....let us help determine how you can benefit from the state cost-share program. FY-12 begins July 1, 2011. Just a few of the practices available in this county are:

- Waterways
- Terraces
- Water Impoundment Structures
- Exclusion of Livestock from Streams

These cost-share practices are designed to keep productive soil on the land and to improve water quality in streams and lakes.

Call the St. Charles County Soil & Water Conservation District at: 636-922-2833, ext. 3.

## Get Flood Predictions

As "The Reporter" went to print this month, there were ever-changing flooding forecasts for the Missouri River.



Rather than rely only on the media reports, "The Reporter" encourages Missouri flood plain farmers to access either the NOAA or Corps websites.

On the NOAA site, access Missouri River information from the National Weather Service at:

<http://www.crh.noaa.gov/mbrfc/>

On the Army Corps of Engineers site, access river stages, levee topping forecasts and more at:

<http://www.nwk.usace.army.mil/Flood/index.cfm>

## Maintenance Extends Life of Conservation Practices

By Larry Farris, NRCS Technician

Maintenance equals life span of a conservation practice. Proper continuous maintenance can extend the life span of a conservation practice almost indefinitely. As a landowner you have invested money to install these practices. The longer they last and perform their intended purpose, the more you get for your investment.

Maintenance of Tile Outlet Terrace systems are in two parts. The tile requires checking the inlets and cleaning them of trash, to allow water to enter the tile line. The outlet of each tile line should be checked to make sure it is open and flowing. Part two is the terrace itself. The terrace inlet basin will need to have sediment removed to maintain the correct amount of water storage in the basin and keep the inlet from becoming buried. The terrace ridge, when it becomes weathered and wore down, will need to be plowed up to its designed height.

Maintenance of a Grass Waterway will require it to be mowed each year. Then check it for rill or gully erosion starting to form or sedimentation. If there is erosion, fill in the eroded areas and reseed. If there is sediment, remove it and reseed the disturbed area.

Maintenance of a Grade Stabilization Structure begins with the principal spillway pipe. Check the pipe to see if it is clear of trash at the inlet. Is the outlet stable? Is the dam free of holes from burrowing animals and trees? The trees will have to be removed and the holes filled. Does the dam and auxiliary spillway have a good stand of grass growing on it? If not, fertilize and over seed to improve the stand. Check the auxiliary spillway for damage due to flow through the spillway. If damaged, repair the auxiliary spillway as soon as possible.

Each practice has its own maintenance needs. If you have any questions contact your NRCS & SWCD field office in St. Peters for information and assistance.



NRCS-USDA Photo

## News



## Clean Stream 2011 Removes Tons of Trash



The streams around the county were the target of a large litter pick-up event during the annual Clean Stream effort April 2, 2011. Across St. Charles County, 1,102 volunteers donned boots and work gloves and hiked along streams and runoff ditches gathering trash. The final figures for items collected are:

- 12 tons of trash
- 62 tires
- 1,000 pounds of metal



Operation: Clean Stream is sponsored by Greenway Network and the communities of Cotteville, Dardenne Prairie, Lake St. Louis, O'Fallon, St. Charles and Wentzville.

## MDC St. Louis Region has New Conservation Planner

Angie Weber was recently hired as the St. Louis Region Community Conservation Planner within the Private Lands Services Division. This arm of the Missouri Department of Conservation helps landowners achieve their land-use objectives in ways that enhance the conservation of Missouri's natural resources.

Prior to this appointment, Weber worked for the Outreach and Education division as Regional Volunteer Coordinator and Naturalist at the Busch Conservation Area. She began her career with MDC in 2007, and came to the department with a BS in Environmental Science and Biology and an MS in Biology.

In her free time, Weber enjoys camping, canoeing, fishing and hiking with her two dogs. To escape the hustle and bustle of city life, Weber makes frequent weekend trips to her parents' rustic B&B, south of Fredericktown, Mo.



Angie Weber

## County Conducting Stream Checks

The Soil and Water Conservation District, in partnership with St. Charles County Government, will be conducting stream checks beginning this month and continuing throughout the coming year.

Streams to be investigated include mostly urban waterways running through subdivisions and commercial developments. Signs will be posted in the affected areas a week previous to the investigation.

The streams will be checked for turbidity, algae, chemicals, stream life, and pool and riffle spacing. The team will also check riparian corridor setbacks. Most streams in the county require a 25 foot setback—in which construction and alteration cannot take place. For example, the team will observe if there is excessive yard waste dumping, or if vegetation has been removed in the setback areas.

The purpose behind these efforts is to establish whether or not the current ordinances are protecting county streams after development.

## Women in Agriculture Conference Planned

The 17th Annual Women in Agriculture State Conference will be held September 12-14, at the Isle of Capri Hotel in Booneville, Mo, with the theme, "Taking Charge of Your Future".

Among the workshops planned are: "How to Prepare Your Child for the Future", "Forest Management and Your Economic Returns", and "Growing Your Own Herbs." The group will also take a tour of the Warm Springs Ranch which is home to the Budweiser Clydesdale horses, and the Starr Pines Christmas Tree Farm.

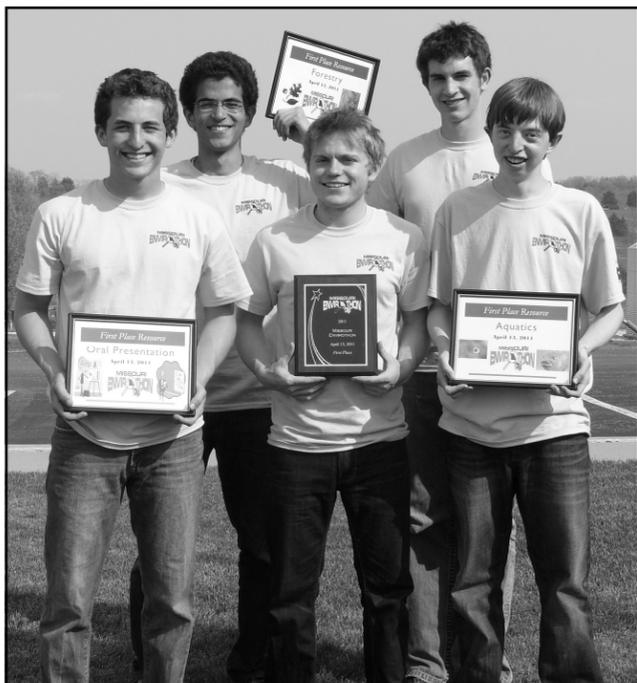
Full registration is \$75 and includes the Monday banquet, Tuesday breakfast and tours, Tuesday lunch and Wednesday's breakfast and lunch. Participants can also register for just one or two days if desired. Registration is due by August 15, and can be sent with payment to Any Neier at the Maries Co. Soil and Water Conservation District, 105 Parkway, Vienna, Mo., 65582. For more information, call Amy at 573-422-3342.

## Farm Energy Management Plans Offered

MAESTRO is a program funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, University of Missouri and En-Save, Inc. The program offers farm Energy Management Plans, Technical Assistance and Home Energy Audits. MAESTRO looks at ways to save energy on the whole farm including the farm residence through the installation of energy efficient equipment. Financial incentives are offered when projects have a 15% energy savings or greater.

To learn more, call the MAESTRO team at 800-732-1399, or log on to MoAgEnergySavings.org.

## Envirothon News



Members of the Pembroke Hill H.S. Envirothon team are: Front row: Foster Honeck, team captain Austin Caldwell, Jeffrey Rubel. Back row: Hosain Ghassemi, Riley Sloan.

### STATE ENVIROTHON WINNERS

These young men have a lot to smile about. They will be traveling to New Brunswick, Canada to represent the State of Missouri in the Canon Envirothon. They are Pembroke Hill High School students from

the Kansas City area, who competed both regionally and at the State Envirothon to earn the honor.

The Envirothon is a natural resources-based competition for high school students across North America and Canada. These students have the potential to win college scholarships, as well as a variety of other prizes such as

### SCHOLARSHIP WINNER



Chelsea Smith is the first Envirothon participant to receive the Mary S. Burt Envirothon Scholarship. Chelsea, a graduate of Licking High School in southern Missouri, is the daughter of Ryan Smith and Angela Harris. She will begin her college studies at Lindenwood University in the Fall, and will pursue a degree in Biology. Congratulations Chelsea!

### Missouri Forage and Grassland Council

Website has information on Grazing Schools and other related events: <http://agebb.missouri.edu/mfgc/index.htm>

The soil and water conservation district does not endorse nor recommend any of the vendors/contractors advertised in this newsletter, furthermore, any contractor/vendor that wishes to be added to the district's contractor/vendor list can be added upon request.

## West Alton Farmer Wins Cash for Charity

Michael Mintert of West Alton was the farmer chosen from St. Charles County to receive \$2,500 for the charity of his choice through Monsanto's America's Farmers Grow Communities program. Mintert chose to have his donation made to Operation Food Search in O'Fallon, Mo.

The program is open to farmers in more than 1,200 counties in 38 states. More than \$320,000 has been donated to nonprofits in Missouri.

Monsanto developed the program to help farmers give back to the community. While Monsanto could make donations directly to nonprofits, this program puts the money into the hands of the local farmer who can then decide where that money might best serve the community.

Operation Food Search was grateful for the donation, "American Farmers are responsible for putting the meals on families' tables throughout the country. It seems appropriate that this grant will be used to feed children at risk for hunger right here in our community," said Denny Gladieus, Operation Food Search community relations director.

## Farming for Pollinators—Native Bees & Your Crops

More than 75% of the world's flowering plants rely on the services of insect pollinators. This includes more than 2/3 of the world's crops, which in turn provide more than 30% of the foods and beverages we consume. Pollinators, therefore, are essential to agriculture and to our very existence.

Most people think of European honey bees when crop pollination is discussed, but the number of managed honey bee hives has declined by more than 50% since the 1950s. The decline can be attributed to many factors including habitat loss, disease and insecticides.

The good news is that there are over 4,000 species of native bees in North America, hundreds of which are good pollinators for crops. The trick is getting these bees to visit your farm. Farms of the past were more likely to have natural, undisturbed landscapes near or adjacent to the agricultural production, allowing the native pollinators to have ready access to crops.

New language in the Farm Bill gave recognition to these facts, and for the first time in Farm Bill history, made mention of pollinators, making pollinators and their habitat a priority for every USDA land manager and conservationist. Many NRCS programs already offer opportunities to conserve and create habitat for pollinators in existing programs and practices. Field borders, cover crops, filter strips and grassed waterways can contain forbs and legumes that provide pollen and nectar for native bees.

Small changes on the farm are all that is needed to encourage native bees to move back into the area. Begin by identifying and protecting any existing nest sites or foraging habitats. If you notice bees visiting a hedgerow, don't disturb the plants there. Some native bees nest in wood, some in the ground and others in small spaces such as abandoned rodent burrows.

Encouraging native bee activity on the farm might include:

- Minimizing tillage—many native pollinators live in the ground, some at the root of the very plants they pollinate.
- Allow crops to bolt—If possible let leafy crops, such as lettuce, flower if they don't need to be tilled right away.
- Set aside marginal areas and plant hedgerows or windbreaks with a variety of flowering plants.
- Reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides, whenever possible. If you are able, spray on dry evenings, soon after dark when bees are not active.
- Promote the protection of natural areas, such as parks, in your community.
- Put bee blocks in the field. Bee blocks are chunks of wood with tunnels drilled into them.
- Plant willows by streams. They nourish bumble bee queens in the spring.
- Allow dead trees to stand: if the trees are in a spot where they are unlikely to be a danger to humans.
- In a hedgerow or set-aside, use plants with overlapping flowering periods.
- Plant a vegetable, flower or herb garden on the farm.
- Leave a pile of soil when you've completed an excavation for a ditch.

- Include legumes in cover crop mixes.

- Do not spray chemicals on road borders.

For more information on how your current conservation practices are helping the native bee population, or to find out if your property might benefit from a conservation plan, call the SWCD/NRCS office at 636-922-2833, ext. 3.



## In Memory: Ellis Balling

It is with great sadness that the USDA office has received the news of the passing of Ellis Balling, former NRCS Soil Conservation Technician. Ellis passed away on Saturday, June 4, 2011, at his home in Rocheport, Missouri, after a lengthy illness.



Ellis Balling

Ellis worked for more than 30 years with NRCS, and was in close contact with many St. Charles County farmers, landowners and conservation contractors; surveying and designing countless conservation practices that continue to protect soil and water resources even today.

Ellis was a dedicated employee with an honest desire to protect natural resources, but more than that...he was a good friend, and took the time to show kindness to all he encountered. He enjoyed hunting and fishing, and was a true outdoorsman.

He is survived by his wife, Buffie; his mother, Gloria B. Balling; his daughters, Emily Speakman and Erica Balling; his stepchildren, Erin Omey and Lindsay Bacot; his grandchildren: Jude Ellis Speakman and Ella Mackenzie Speakman; his brother, Bruce Balling and his sister, Diane Balling.



The Soil and Water District has been busy visiting with children: sharing information about soil and water, and encouraging them to grow into adults who have a mind to help protect these vital natural resources.

Eighth graders from the Wentzville School District (top, left) listen as Charlie Perkins, SWCD Technician, speaks about Wetlands. Second graders from Heritage Elementary (above) conduct soil investigations, looking for soil structure, texture, color, and soil critters. The Enviroscope (left) is always a big hit with kids. These children were attending the O'Fallon Public Works Day, and stopped to see how pollutants move through a watershed. The Enviroscope uses chocolate milk mix and Kool-Aid mix as pollutants, that then travel into the miniature lake when it "rains" from a watering can onto the miniature watershed.





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ST. CHARLES COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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St. Peters, MO 63376-1695

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## County Kids Win Cash in Poster Contest

Fifty County youth participated in the NACD Poster Contest, with this year's theme being Forests For People, More Than You Can Imagine.

These students used their imaginations and creative talents to make some inspiring posters with picnic scenes, woodland animals, and lots and lots of trees.

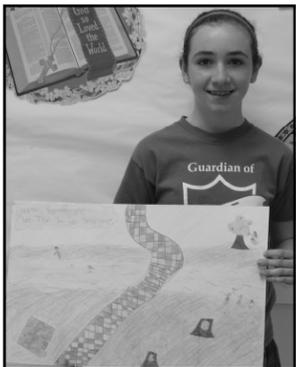
Students receiving cash prizes were:

Audrey Dickherber, St. Charles Borromeo Fourth Grader—Grand Prize! (She is pictured on

page one of this issue)

Arianna Chaves of St. Charles Borromeo  
Morgan Bolk of All Saints School  
Marilyn Lercel of St. Peter School  
Emma Valvera of Sts. Joachim & Ann  
Elizabeth Harmon of Sts. Joachim & Ann  
Lauren Solverund of Sts. Joachim & Ann

Audrey's poster will be entered in the State NACD Poster Contest this Fall.



Happy Poster Contest Winners are (clockwise, starting on far left) Emma Valvera (third place, 5th grade), Elizabeth Harmon (second place, 5th grade), Lauren Sulverud (first place, 5th grade), Morgan Bolk (second place, 4th grade), Arianna Chaves (third place, 4th grade) and Marilyn Lercel (first place, 4th grade).

**St. Charles County  
Soil & Water Conservation District**  
160 St. Peters Centre Boulevard  
St. Peters, MO 63376-1695  
636-922-2833, ext. 3

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Renee Cook, District Conservationist  
Shawn Keller, Soil Conservationist  
Curtis Hoeft, Soil Conservationist  
Larry Farris, Soil Conservation Technician  
Deb Frazier, ACES

The mission of the Soil & Water Conservation District is to conserve the soil and water resources of the county; promote the wise use of these resources through education; protect residents from undue hardship caused by erosion, sedimentation and flooding; protect the agricultural soil base to ensure continued productivity; and preserve the quality of water and water courses within the county.

## State Allocates Large Portion of Funds to One Resource Concern

The Soil and Water Conservation Program spends more money in conservation cost-share on sheet, rill and gully erosion than any other natural resource issue in the state.

Sheet, rill and gully erosion is simply the unwanted removal of soil usually caused by rain runoff. The state has allocated over \$19 million in FY11 cost-share funds for practices that address this erosion concern. Some eligible practices are:

- Permanent Vegetative Cover Establishment
- Terraces Systems
- Sod Waterways
- Diversions

If there is a soil erosion problem on your farm, call 636-922-2833, ext. 3, to have an SWCD Technician evaluate your options.

**In the United States, sedimentation is the #1 pollutant of streams and rivers—threatening aquatic life, increasing flood potential and clogging utility inlet and outlet pipes.**

## Cicada Facts

Cicadas serenading in the woods this year are known as the "thirteen year" Great Southern Brood.

- Heavily wooded areas may have more than a million cicadas per acre.
- The last time this brood emerged was in 1998, coinciding with the 17-year cicadas.
- Before emerging, they spend most of their lives underground, sucking juices from plant roots.
- Adult lifespan after emergence is 4 to 6 weeks.
- Only males make noise.
- Females saw into the tips of branches on trees and shrubs to lay their eggs.
- After hatching, ant-sized nymphs fall to the ground and burrow down.....where they will remain until 2024!

Information provided by University of Missouri Extension