

MADISON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
ANNUAL REPORT  
1952

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This report is prepared by the board of supervisors of the Madison County Soil Conservation District so that the public might better understand the district program and how it operates to improve agriculture in this area.

The need for conserving our soil was recognized several years ago. Madison was the tenth county in Tennessee to undertake to do something about the problem. In 1942 the Madison Soil Conservation District was organized by the popular vote of land owners as provided under the District Act passed by the Tennessee State Legislature of 1939. Prior to 1942 there was no agency or group set up to assist farmers in conserving and improving their land. Soils were becoming depleted, eroded and farm income was on the downward trend. To govern the soil conservation district a board of supervisors was elected at time of organization. This board consists of five farmers, three of which are elected to three year terms and two appointed for three year terms by the State Soil Conservation Committee. The board serves as public servants in this capacity because of their interest in better agriculture for their communities. Board meetings are held each month to plan and direct the soil conservation program.

Services rendered by the soil conservation district are available to any landowner or operator in the county who is interested in applying one or more soil conservation practices on their farm. The district assists farmers with working out a soil and water conservation plan on their farms, applying needed practices and maintain practices already applied. The soil conservation plan sets up the proper use of each partial of land on the farm. Included in each plan is a soil survey map which shows the class of land. Land classes are determined by soil type, degree of erosion, and slope which are indicated on the soil map. The 359,040 acres of farm land in Madison County have been completely mapped. Any farmer may secure a map of his farm.

Each year the board of supervisors determines the conservation needs of Madison County. In 1952 the board estimated the following needs:

|                              |              |             |
|------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Winter cover crops        | 75,000 Acres |             |
| 2. Permanent pasture         | 40,000 "     |             |
| 3. Wildlife area improvement |              | 2,000 Acres |
| 4. Tree planting             |              | 30,000 "    |
| 5. Farm ponds                |              | 2,000 No.   |
| 6. Terraces                  |              | 75,000 Ac.  |
| 7. Contour cultivation       |              | 75,000 "    |
| 8. Farm drainage             |              | 38,000 "    |
| 9. Crop rotation             |              | 85,000 "    |
| 10. Water disposal areas     |              | 3,000 "     |
| 11. Kudzu                    |              | 2,000 "     |
| 12. Sericea                  |              | 23,000 "    |

In 1952 we have had the most outstanding year in the history of the soil conservation district. We have reached more farmers than in any other year. During the year 178 additional farmers became cooperators of the district. This makes a total of 1,495 farmers who have been assisted by the district since it was organized. These farms total 213,377 acres, or more than 50 percent of the county. In addition to increased cooperators of the district the district was able to apply more conservation to the land. Some of the accomplishments were:

Pasture Seeding: 5,555 acres of pastures were seeded during 1952. These pastures were seeded on land better suited to permanent vegetation rather than row crops. A total of 16,738 acres have been seeded to date.

Pasture Improvement: 4,345 acres of old pasture was improved during the year by fertilizing, clipping or reseeding.

Cover crops: The severe drouth influenced more farmers to sow winter cover crops, particularly ~~grassing~~ crimson clover, and small grain for early winter grazing. As a result 10,088 acres were seeded in 1952.

Contour Farming: 3,589 additional acres of row crops were planted on the contour in 1952. A total of 48,028 acres have been contoured to date.

TERRACES: 157.5 miles of terraces were constructed during the year by farmers using their farm equipment. 3022.5 miles have been built since 1942.

Waterways: 62 acres of water disposal areas were established during the year. These include W-type outlets, shaped meadows and larger areas seeded to grasses and clovers to provide outlets for runoff water. Most of them were established in connection with a terracing system. Drouthy conditions prevented many farmers from establishing waterways in 1952.

Field Diversions: 4.2 miles of diversion ditches were built in 1952. The ditches were constructed at the bottom of hills to protect valuable bottomland.

Drainage: 479 acres of bottomland was drained during the year by open ditches. Most ditches were constructed by farm contractors using bulldozers and draglines.

Sericea: 895 acres were seeded to sericea in the spring of 1952, making a total of 5,718 acres seeded in the district since 1942. The sericea was seeded on fairly steep, eroded slopes. The plant is well adapted to thin, drouthy land of which there are several thousand acres in Madison County.

Kudzu: 44 acres were planted in 1952. The district assisted farmers by ordering plants. Most plantings were made on severe gullies, road banks and along drainage ditch banks. Kudzu will prevent the growth of willows and other vegetation which has the tendency to choke ditches. 483 acres of kudzu have been planted to date by cooperators.

Wildlife area improvement: 73 acres of lespedesa bicolor and multiflora rose were planted in 1952 by district cooperators for wildlife food and cover. 1,228 acres have been planted since 1942. Planting material was furnished by The Tenn. Game and Fish Commission.

Farm Ponds: 135 ponds were built in 1952. The drouth caused a heavy demand for stockwater ponds. Most ponds were built by farm contractors using bulldozers.

Fishponds: 58 ponds ranging in size from one quarter acre to eight acres were stocked with bream and bass during the year. The fish were furnished by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Tree Plantings: 214 acres of trees were planted during the year. This was a sharp increase over previous years. Most of the plantings were pine trees planted on severe gullies.

The Madison County Soil Conservation District sponsored the SOS Contest during the year. The contest is opened to every farmer in Madison County who desires to carry out a soil conservation program. The contest is divided into three divisions. They are (1) owner-operator (2) Father and son and (3) Landlord and tenant. The district awarded a total of \$150 to the first, second and third place winners in each of the

three divisions. First place county winners may compete for state and mid-south awards which are sponsored by the Memphis Press Scimitar, Memphis Chamber of Commerce, and Memphis Chapter of the Friends of the Land. The board of supervisors feel that this contest stimulates the interest of many farmers to practice soil conservation.

Local businessmen have become interested in the district program. They realize that soil conservation is vital to their businesses. They also like the democratic way in which soil conservation districts operate. Last year ten business men contributed \$25 each to the district in the form of an affiliate membership. This money was used to promote the district program. The outstanding accomplishments of the Madison County Soil Conservation District are attributed to the efforts of many agencies and organizations. We would like to acknowledge and express our appreciation to the following groups: The Soil Conservation Service, which provides the district with the technical assistance of R. D. Fisher, work unit conservationist, C. W. Tomlin, conservation aid, and James Hughes, negro technician working with the colored people. These men have done an outstanding job in reaching farmers, working out sound soil and water conservation plans and helping the farmers to apply them. They have carried out the program as outlined by the board of supervisors. PMA provided financial assistance to farmers for practicing soil conservation and encouraging them to become district cooperators. Agricultural Extension Service worked closely with the board of supervisors and promoted the district program through its educational efforts. The FHA referred many of its clients to the district for conservation plans. They also offered financial assistance and farm supervision to their farmers carrying out their conservation plans. Tenn. Dept. of Agriculture supported the district by providing funds for office supplied and per diem expenses of supervisors. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service furnished fish for all fishponds stocked in 1952. The Tenn. Div. of Forestry produced tree seedlings for farmers who planted trees. Tenn. Game and Fish Comm. provided bicolor and multi-flora rose planted by cooperators to increase wildlife inhabitants on their farms. Production Credit Asso. aided farmers to practice soil conservation by making loans. Three local banks made loans to farmers to improve their land as well as contributing funds to the soil conservation district. Ve-Ag Dept. encouraged participation in the district program, both through High School boys and veteran-on-the-farm program.

The Jackson Sun Publishing Company has cooperated by giving the district program publicity; weekly articles appear in the paper. Local radio programs have broadcast programs explaining the work of the district. Local heavy equipment contractors have aided the work by doing jobs for farmers requiring heavy machinery.

In looking forward to 1953 the board of supervisors plan to emphasize the building of ponds and silting dams, tree planting, serices, better pastures, and water disposal areas. We believe that dams prevent the runoff of excess water thus preventing silting of our streams, that more trees need to be planted on severely gullied land which is contributing tons of sand to downstream areas. Pastures must be established by proper seedbed preparation and heavy fertilization. More acres of serices are needed on the steeper slopes for hay and pasture. Water disposal areas must be established prior to terrace construction. Let us all work together for the sake of the land. We are moving forward. Let us continue to move.

Signed:

  
J. Harris Smith, chairman

Board of Supervisors

Madison County Soil Conservation Distri