

Madison County Soil Conservation District
Supervisors' Annual Report
1953

This report, prepared by the board of supervisors of the Madison County Soil Conservation District, is published so that the public may better understand how the district program is progressing and how it operates for the advancement and improvement of agriculture in this area.

We would like to go back to the beginning of our soil conservation district and explain why and how Madison County obtained an organized soil conservation district.

Conservation of our natural resources is essential and especially our farm land. The need for conserving our soil was recognized several years ago. In early 1942, the farmers in Madison County realized that we were losing much of our most productive soil through erosion and they decided to do something about it. In that same year (1942) the Madison County Soil Conservation District was organized and brought into being by the popular vote of landowners as provided under the District Act passed by the Tenn. State Legislature of 1939. Madison County was among the first counties in the state to obtain an organized soil conservation district. Only nine other counties preceded Madison. Prior to 1942 our soils were being depleted, eroded and farm income was not as it should be. At that time there was no agency or group set up to assist farmers in conserving and improving the land.

When the district was organized, it had to be governed by someone or group. To do this, five farmers within the county were elected at the time of the organization. These farmers were to be known as the district board of supervisors; three of which were elected by local farmers to serve three year terms and two were 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. Each month at least one board meeting is held in the district office to plan and direct the soil conservation program for the county.

Services rendered by the soil conservation district may be obtained by any landowner or operator within the county, free of charge. Among the many services rendered, farmers may obtain technical assistance in working out a complete soil and water conservation farm plan, layout work and surveys of needed practices on the farm, supervision of installation and maintenance of those practices. The 348,180 acres of farmland in the county have been completely soils mapped. These soils maps are available and may be obtained by any farmer for his individual farm. These soil maps can be very valuable to landowners in working out a soil and water conservation farm plan because they distinguish the various types of soil, percent of slope and the degree of erosion. By using these distinguishing factors, the land is classified into various classes, and its capabilities and limitations can be determined. A farm plan worked out by the farmer and assisted by a technician of the Soil Conservation Service consists of a soils map, a land use map, and recommendation for each field on the farm based on its capabilities.\

To help carry out the services rendered to farmers through the Soil Conservation District, the U. S. Department of Agriculture, through the Soil Conservation Service, assigned technically trained personnel to the district. During 1953 the Soil Conservation Service assigned Clarence L. Daniels, Work Unit Conservationist, C. W. Tomlin, conservation aid and James F. Hughes, negro technician working with negro cooperators, to Madison County to assist farmers cooperating with the district.

Just recently the district board of supervisors, with the assistance of other agricultural agencies in the county, worked out an estimate of conservation needs for Madison County. They were determined as follows:

Contour Farming	54,132 acres
Winter cover crops	90,744 “
Stubble mulching	127,411 “
Kudzu	354 “
Sericea	4,157 “
Alfalfa & Perennial grasses	2,463 “
Pasture seeding	6,795 “
Tree Planting	28,110 “
Woodland protection	91,089 “
Wildlife area improvement	679 “
Farm drainage	6,612 “
Terraces	1,496 miles
Diversion ditches	367 “
Pond construction	4,826 each
Water disposal area	2,120 acres

These conservation needs, when properly applied and maintained, will mean much to the welfare of the people of Madison County because each acre of land will be put to its proper use. Erosion will be held to a minimum and each acre will be contributing its share to the over-all sound conservation farm program.

Accomplishments During 1953

1953 has been a good year despite the severe drought. Progress was made in the soil conservation program.

During 1953 a total of 136 farmers became cooperators of the district. This now brings the total cooperators to 1,635 since the district was organized. These farms comprise a total of 227,399 acres, or 65 percent of the total land in the county.

Contour farming: During 1953 a total of 7,462 acres were planted and cultivated on the contour. On the majority of this land terraces were used as guide lines for row direction.

Winter cover crops: 6,936 acres were seeded. Due to the severe drought more small grain to be used for winter grazing, was seeded than normally. Because the drought extended beyond the recommended dates for seeding of vetch and crimson clover, the amount of these crops seeded was below normal.

Kudzu: 24 acres were planted in 1953, bringing the total to 507 acres planted in the county since the district was organized in 1942. The district again assisted farmers in obtaining plants. The kudzu crowns were set around gullied areas and along drainage ditch banks. Kudzu does an excellent job of controlling erosion and keeping down the growth of willows and undesirable vegetation along drainage ditches. The kudzu, massive as it grows, will not choke or stop drainage ditches; in fact by controlling willows and bushes along the ditch bank the channel can be kept open.

Sericea: Sericea is a plant capable of growing in thin eroded land. For this reason we now recognize sericea as a very valuable plant in this county. When cut at the proper stage it makes an excellent hay crop and if kept clipped, it provides good pasture just at the time we need pastures the most. During 1953, 1,158 acres were seeded making a total of 6,877 acres seeded during the 12 years the district has been organized.

Pasture Seeding: Due to the severe drought that extended far beyond the recommended seeding dates, the amount of permanent pastures seeded were below normal. 2,096 acres were seeded in 1953. A total of 18,383 to date.

Tree planting: 156 acres were planted to trees during the year. The majority of the trees planted were pine and were set mainly for the purpose of erosion control.

Wildlife Area Improvements: During 1953 Madison County farmers set lespedeza bicolor and multiflora rose for the improvement of 128 acres of wildlife. These plants were furnished by the Tennessee Game and Fish Commission. District cooperators set these plants for several reasons, one being to supply food and cover for wildlife.

Farm Ponds: 140 farm ponds, ranging in size from ¼ acres to 6 acres, were constructed during the year. The drought also had its effect on this practice. Many farms were without water for livestock. Farmers realizing how essential it is to have stock water available, prepared for the years to come. More farm ponds were constructed during the year than ever before. Not only were new ponds constructed but many old ponds were cleaned out and repaired. A total of 958 new ponds have been constructed since 1942.

Fish Ponds: 116 farm ponds were stocked with bream and bass fish. Ponds were stocked at the rate of 100 bass and 1,000 bream per surface acres of water. Fishponds, when properly stocked and managed, offer much recreation for the farm family. Not only is the fishing good but a well-managed fishpond provides fish for the table and home freezer. The 136 ponds stocked this year brings the total to date to 425. The fish were furnished to district cooperators by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Terraces: 17.5 miles of terraces were constructed during 1953 by farmers using their farm equipment. A total of 3, 040 miles have been constructed since 1942.

Field Diversions: 3.5 miles of diversion ditches were constructed during the year for the purpose of diverting hill water and protection of valuable bottomland.

Water Disposal Areas: Twenty-nine acres of vegetated waterways were established in 1953. Again the drought had its effect on this practice. Many more waterways were prepared and seeded but due to the lack of rainfall the vegetation did not become established.

Drainage: 1,235 acres of wet, swampy bottomland was drained during 1953. This land was drained by cutting ditches, mainly with draglines owned and operated by farm contractors. This means that these many additional acres of good fertile soil can be put back into production. This land is capable of producing high yielding crops and will mean much to the farmers.

Other Activities of the District:

In early 1952 a group of farmers in the New Deal Community, located in the northeastern section of the county, composed of 14 farmers of which eleven are Negroes, got up a petition for assistance on a group drainage project. This petition was presented to the board of supervisors and immediately the entire board became very interested in the project. The farmers were assured by the board that technical assistance would be furnished them. A preliminary survey of the ditch, known as Poplar Creek, was made and at a group meeting the design and specifications of the proposed ditch was submitted to the group along with an estimated cost. After several meetings all agreed to have the ditch dug, each landowner bearing the expense of the ditch through his property. A detail survey has been made and the contractor is now in the process of digging this ditch.

Poplar Creek has a watershed of 4,184 acres and is a little over three miles long. The new drainage ditch when completed will actually benefit 494 acres of land. The entire watershed has been planned under basic soil and water conservation farm plans. Some are old plans and some were planned just recently. These plans will now be reviewed and brought up to date to insure a sound conservation program on the entire watershed. Technical assistance for the follow-up will also be furnished through the district.

The Madison County Soil Conservation District again sponsored the Save-Enrich our Soil Contest in 1953. This contest was open to any farmer that wanted to carry out a soil conservation program. The contest is an annual affair and is divided into various divisions. They are: (1) Owner-Operator, (2) Father and Son, (3) Landlord-Tenant and (4) Forestry. Madison County had entries in all four divisions, this year being the first time farmers entered the forestry phase of the contest. Praise will be awarded as follows: \$20 for first place winner in each division; \$10 to second place winners in each division and \$7.50 to third place winners in each division. Prize money was donated by the Jackson Lions Club. On January 11th the prizes were awarded to the winners at a special luncheon and program given in honor of all entries.

The first place winners will compete with other county winners throughout Tennessee for State and Mid-South awards which are sponsored by the Memphis Press Scimitar, Memphis Chamber of Commerce, Memphis Chapter of Friends of The Land, and the Memphis Lumberman's Club. The SOS Contest, both locally and in the Mid-South is sponsored for the sole purpose of encouraging farmers to do a better job of conservation farming.

Another contest with the sole purpose of improving our conservation farming program is now in progress. This contest is sponsored by the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. It is a nationwide contest for individual soil conservation districts and the outstanding farmer in each district. Each district will compete with all other districts in the state. From these districts one will be declared state winner and so recognized. Madison District was one of the first in the state to enter this contest.

The Madison County Soil Conservation District has had one of the most outstanding years during 1953 that the district has ever known. This just didn't happen. We realize that the job is a big one. The success of the district could not have been as it was without the splendid cooperation of all agricultural and non-agricultural groups and agencies in the county. We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to all agencies that helped us during the past year. Without their full cooperation we could not have accomplished so much. We would like to say thanks to the following:

Soil Conservation Service, which provides the district with the technical assistance of Clarence L. Daniels, work unit conservationist; C. W. Tomlin, conservation aid; and James F. Hughes, negro technician working with the negro farmers. These men have done an outstanding job in reaching more farmers and working out sound soil and water conservation farm plans and helping the farmers apply them. They have carried out the program as outlined by the board of supervisors. The Jackson Sun Publishing Company has cooperated by giving the district program very valuable publicity; weekly news articles are carried by their paper whenever the district desires. For the past year they have run full page spreads free of charge. This publicity had done much toward encouraging farmers to carry out sound conservation farming practices.

The ASC has assisted farmers in carrying out conservation practices by providing financial assistance through the ACP program.

The agricultural Extension Service, through the county agent, has made great contributions to the district program through their educational efforts. The FHA continued to refer many of their clients to the district for conservation farm plans. Through their financial assistance and supervision to farmers many sound conservation practices are put into effect. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service furnished fish for all fishponds stocked during 1953. The Tennessee Division of Forestry, with its nursery located in our county, produced tree seedlings for farmers who planted trees. The Tennessee Game and Fish Commission provided

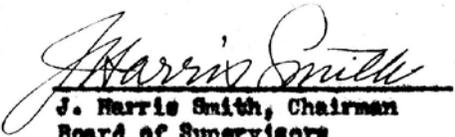
lespedeza bicolor and Multiflora Rose to district cooperators. The Vo-Agriculture Department encouraged both high school boys and Veterans On-The-Farm Training to carry out sound conservation practices.

We also express our appreciation to the Production Credit Association and to the local merchants and business men in Madison County. During 1953 local business men got behind the district program 100 percent. Realizing that sound conservation farming is essential to all people and that it is another step forward toward the security and welfare of all the people, they gave financial assistance directly to the board of supervisors for the purpose of promotion and establishment of the overall district program. Last year 14 business men contributed \$25 each to the district in the form of Affiliate Memberships. This money was used to promote the district program.

The board of supervisors are looking forward to many things we hope to accomplish during 1954. Some of the practices we plan to emphasize are more and better pastures, water disposal areas, the building of farm ponds, sericea, tree planting to stabilize the movement of silt and sand from badly gullied and eroded areas. We believe that a good water disposal system is essential to every field on the farm that waterways must be properly shaped and well established prior to terrace construction, and that terraces should be constructed so that water will divide on the crest and drain toward natural draws. We have had a good year during 1953, let's all work together to make 1954 even better.

Let us use each acre of land in our county within its capabilities and treat it according to its needs. With the right to use goes the duty to conserve.

Signed:


**J. Harris Smith, Chairman
Board of Supervisors**