

**Annual Report**  
**1954**  
**Madison County Soil Conservation District**

This report was prepared by the board of supervisors of the Madison County Soil Conservation District. It was prepared for the purpose of informing district cooperators and the public about the operation and accomplishments of the district during 1954. It is our intention to keep the public informed, at all times, on the activities of the district program because we feel that conservation of our soil and water is important to every man and woman whether or not he actually lives on the farm.

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.

The Madison County Soil Conservation District was organized in 1942 by popular vote of farmers in the county. Prior to this organization our soils were being depleted at such a rate that farmers began to realize that something had to be done. The farmers needed someone or an agency to give them technical on-site assistance with their farm problems. After learning about soil conservation districts a group of leading farmers set out to get an organized Madison County. This was accomplished in 1942. The Soil Conservation District is governed by local farm people elected by farmers in the county. Five farmers, known as the Board of Supervisors, govern the activities of the district. These members are elected by farmers and two are appointed. In order to keep the district program truly democratic, supervisors are elected every three years. All farmers serving as supervisors receive no pay. They give their time freely to direct the program.

After the district was organized and ready for operation the U. S. Department of Agriculture, through the Soil Conservation Service, assigned technically trained personnel to the district. During 1954 the Soil Conservation Service assigned Clarence L. Daniels, Work Unit Conservationist, C. W. Tomlin, conservation aide and James F. Hughes, Negro technician to work with Negro cooperators with the district.

The many services offered by the Soil Conservation District may be obtained by any farmer in the county. All services are free of charge. Among services offered are: technical assistance in farm planning, layout work and surveys of needed practices, supervision of installation and maintenance of conservation practices.

In order to obtain these services, an application for assistance must be made by contacting the district office, located in the Madison County Office Building, or any member of the Board of Supervisors.

Farmers may obtain a soils map of their individual farm through the Soil Conservation District. Technicians of the Soil Conservation Service use these maps when assisting farmers in working out a basic soil and water conservation plan to determine the kind of soil on the farm, the class of the land and its capabilities and limitations. These maps were made by the Soil Scientist working for the Soil Conservation Service. Madison County is one of the few counties in Tennessee now completely soils mapped. Following is a breakdown of land in Madison County according to land classes, with a general description of each class.

Class I—4887 Acres. Land which is suitable for intensive use for row crops without danger of deterioration, provided ordinary good farming methods are used.

Class II—132,816 acres. Land that can be cultivated safely provided such practices as short rotations, cover crops, fertilization, contour cultivation and in some cases terraces are used. In bottom land in this class a good drainage system may be required to remove excess surface water.

Class III—83,898 acres. Land that can be cultivated safely only if such practices are terracing, contour cultivation, long rotations, cover crops and fertilization. This is moderately sloping land and moderate to severe erosion is common. Bottomland in this class is usually poorly drained and has modern limitations in

crop adaptation. It can be used intensively for adapted crops with ordinary good farming methods after the establishment of a drainage system to remove excess surface water.

Class IV – 27,322 acres. Land that is best suited for permanent vegetation for hay and pasture, but which can be cultivated occasionally. This land is usually moderately steep and severe erosion is common. Bottomland in this class is usually very poorly drained and has severe limitations in crop adaptations. It can be for adapted crops, preferably hay and pasture crops, after the establishment of a drainage system to remove excess surface water.

Class VI – 37,333 acres. Land best suited for permanent vegetation, preferably for hay and pasture. May be used for trees. Usually steep or severely eroded or both. Requires careful management to stabilize erosion.

Class VII – 61,933 acres. Land best suited for timber and wildlife production with selected areas suited for grazing. Usually very steep or severely eroded or both.

From an estimate or conservation needs worked by the Board of Supervisors, with the assistance of the other agricultural agencies in the county, the following was determined to be needed at this time in Madison County:

Cover Crops -	90,474 acres
Kudzu -	354 “
Sericea -	4,157 “
Alfalfa & Perennial grasses -	2,463 “
Pasture Seeding -	6,795 “
Tree Planting -	28,119 “
Wildlife Area Improvement -	679 “
Farm Drainage -	6,612 “
Terracing -	1,496 miles
Diversion Construction -	367 “
Waterway Development -	2,120 acres
Pond Construction -	4,826 (No.)
Fishponds -	2,048 (No.)

Of course these conservation needs can be variable. For instance, many farmers lost permanent pastures this year and amount needed today is considerably more than it was last year. But in general we feel that these estimates of needs, if carried out, would make our farms more productive and at the time maintain and improve the soil. Not only will our land be protected but our future generation will be protected also because they will inherit land in better condition than it is today.

### **Accomplishments During 1954**

**Contour Farming:** 5,392 acres were cultivated on the contour. This is a little below average but is due to the reduction in the amount of row crops since cotton acreage control is on.

**Cover Crops:** 8,938 acres were seeded. More crimson clover and small grains were seeded this fall than usual because of the need for early winter grazing Vetch was seeded in the major portion of the cotton middles to be turned as a green manure crop next spring.

**Kudzu:** 25 acres. This is below what was expected but due to the past two dry years kudzu has been very difficult to get a good stand to survive. This brings the total to 52 acres established in Madison County.

**Sericea:** 1,017 acres making a total of 7,894 acres established on cooperators' farms since the district was established in 1942. Some of the cooperators seeding sericea were, F. L. Exum and Sons, Hillsman – Stegall, K. J. Johnson and N. C. Edwards.

**Alfalfa and Perennial Grasses:** 262 acres. The total to date is now 11,500 acres. Some of the farmers seeding alfalfa are: C. A. Rowlett, Harold McLeary, Williard Settles, Robert Sanders, C. O. Hopper, Ben Sharp, M. T. Lawrence and Fred T. Smith.

**Pasture Seeding:** 2,076 acres seeded making a total of 20,461 acres established since the beginning of the district. The amount of seeding was about the same as last year, but is much below normal. The dry weather that extended until winter was the main reason why more seeding was not done. The principle grass and legume seeded this year was Ky. 31 fescue and ladino clover. Among the farmers seeding pastures this year were: James Farrow, Arthur Jared, Mrs. Edna Hargrove, C. N. Pentecost, James Shellabarger, Mrs. Pearl Chandler, Bill Chester, V. D. Johnson, Noble Raines, E. L. Stannell, V. C. Allen, G. F. Giles, Herndon McCleary, J. W. Williams, J. M. Smith, Mrs. T. H. Campbell, J. E. Oldhous, and W. E. Matson

**Tree planting:** 120 acres making a total of 631 acres set to date. The majority of the trees set were Loblolly pine and were set mainly for the erosion control. Some of the cooperators that set trees are: L. T. Upton, Mrs. A. Ferguson, William McCommon, Dr. H. N. Moore, Mr. A. V. Patton, Marvin McKnight, Guy McMasters, Mayo Pearson, June Graves, and A. Z. Cathey.

**Wildlife Area Improvements:** During the year 84 acres were improved for wildlife by setting out lespedza bicolor, Multiflora Rose and seeding strips of sericea. 1,440 acres have had such treatment since the district was organized in 1942. Some farmers setting out bicolor are: Mike Tucker, George Kinfrell, R. A. Turner, R. A. Dover, Howard House, Billy Hopper, John SM. Smith, J. C. McGee, Lawrence Gaia, Mrs. Frank Johnson, R. T. Curlin, Jamie Braggs, J. D. Harris, Ivory Bond, J. R. Crawford and Warner Grimes.

**Farm Drainage:** 798 acres. This makes the total acres drained to date 20,802 acres. Poplar Creek was completed earlier this year. This group drainage job was started in 1953 and completed in May of this year. The ditch is three miles long and runs through property belonging to 14 farmers. Eleven of these 14 farmers are Negroes. The completed ditch is now doing an excellent job and has enabled these farmers to work land that has before been too wet and has been lying idle for many years.

**Farm Irrigation Systems:** Seven systems are now in operation in Madison County. Other farmers are considering going into irrigation on their farms but due to the initial cost of irrigating the practice is off to a slow start. The farmers now using irrigation systems on their farms are: J. T. Hopper, V. D. Johnson, Henry Hillard, Vandon Griffin and H. W. Johnson, and Owen Williams and the County Farm.

**Terraces:** 16.8 miles of terraces were constructed in 1954. A total of 3,056 miles have been constructed since the beginning of the Madison County SCD. These terraces were laid out and constructed on row crop land. They were laid out to drain from the crest of the ridge toward protected outlets. Terraces were built by farmers using farm equipment. John S. Smith, Reece Graves, Jr., Fred Duke, C. V. Harris, T. B. Hunt, and N. C. Edwards are among the farmers building terraces this year.

**Waterway Development:** 60 acres have been prepared and seeded to permanent vegetation, These waterways were seeded and well established prior to terrace layout construction. Some of the farmers carrying out this practice during the year are: A. B. Lane, John S. Smith, Fred T. Smith, H. C. Creasey, I. H. Lassiter, J. C. Stanfill, George Kimbull, and Reece Graves, Jr.

**Farm Ponds:** 224 – Making a grand total of 1,182 ponds constructed on district cooperators' farms since the district began operation. This is by far the largest number of farm ponds constructed in any one year. During the month of August 42 ponds were constructed. This was the largest number of ponds constructed

in any one month since 1942. Farm ponds are important to farmers in Madison County. The past three years bears out this fact because many farmers were without water for livestock this past summer. All ponds constructed in 1954 were done so by local heavy equipment contractors.

**District Cooperators:** During the year 118 new farmers became district cooperators. This now makes the total of 1,567 farmers in the county cooperating with the Madison County SCD.

**Other Activities of the District:**

**Watershed Association Organized** – The Johnson Creek Watershed was organized with the passing of the Small Watershed Bill in Congress, and as it became known to our farmers, interest in doing something about Johnson Creek Area began to pick up. Many of the leading farmers in the watershed became interested and suggested that a special meeting with the Board of Supervisors be held. This was done and the program fitting the Small Watershed Bill was outlined and explained by personnel of the Soil Conservation Service. Only a few weeks passed until another meeting of this same group was held. This time the group organized and elected officers. Fred T. Smith was elected president of the association, J. E. Collins, vice president, and James Lawrence, secretary and treasurer.

A formal application for obtaining the watershed under this new Bill was submitted to the State Committee. On December 8 this committee came to Jackson and met with the group in order to help them make their decision as to whether or not to approve the application. No further information is known on the watershed situation at this time.

**Goodyear Nation-wide Soil Conservation Awards Program:** The district was entered in the contest which is sponsored entirely for the purpose of conservation of soil and water on farms. Even though our district did not win first place we feel that it has had its effects on the district.

**Save-Enrich our Soil Contest** – The Save-Enrich our Soil Contest is sponsored annually by the Memphis Chamber of Commerce, Memphis Press Scimitar and the Memphis Chapter of The Friends of the Land to promote conservation farming. The Board of Supervisors sponsored this contest locally. The farm operator division of the contest was won by K. J. Johnson. He was awarded a \$25 Savings Bond for being county winner. He competed for state honors and after the judging was complete he was declared the state winner. For this he will receive a \$100 Savings Bond and be eligible to compete for grand sweepstakes honors.

Honorable mention in the county contest went to John S. Smith, Bill Wilbur and C. A. Rowlett & Son. Judging was done by T. W. Hillsman, County Agent in Madison County, and C. E. Burger, Woodland Conservationist with the Soil Conservation Service.

At the annual rally held in Memphis last March three entries from Madison County were awarded praise for their accomplishments during 1953. G. F. Giles was awarded a \$25 Saving Bond for being picked as third place winner in the state in the Forestry Division. K. J. Johnson was awarded a \$25 Savings Bond for the third place winner in the state in the Owner-Operator Division, and J. Harris Smith was awarded a \$500 Savings Bond for grand sweepstakes winner in the Owner-operator Division. Mr. Smith was picked as the best and most outstanding conservation farmer in the five-state area including in the contest. These farmers have done outstanding work and are outstanding farmers. They are to be congratulated for the splendid job they are doing. These farmers are all cooperators of the Madison county SCD and have used the services of the district.

**West Tennessee Soil Conservation District Awards Program** – This is a new contest and offered for the first time in West Tennessee. It is sponsored by the Memphis Press Scimitar. It is a district contest designed to encourage districts to do as overall better job of conservation of soil and water, and to recognize and point out the districts that are now doing outstanding work. This contest was entered by our district and is still in progress at the present time.

The Madison County SCD had an outstanding year during 1954. The district was responsible for a lot of conservation work despite the dry year. Our farmers are now conservation minded and we feel that accomplishments during 1954 were very satisfactory. The outstanding record made by the district could not

have been possible had it not been for the combined efforts of all agricultural agencies and businessmen of the county. We would like to express our sincere appreciation for their splendid assistance and close working relations during the year. They are:

The Soil Conservation Service which provided the technical assistance of Clarence L. Daniels, work unit conservationist, C. W. Tomlin, conservation aide, and James F. Hughes, Negro technician working with Negro farmers in the county. These men had an extremely heavy workload and are to be congratulated for the splendid job of reaching more farmers and assisting them in working out basic conservation farm plans and helping them carry out needed conservation practices. The county program was carried out as outlined.

The Jackson Sun for publishing weekly news articles, features articles, feature stories, etc. Their paper has one of the best agricultural sections we know of and we appreciate what they are doing to promote our district program.

The ASC which, through the agricultural conservation program, provided financial assistance to farmers in carrying out permanent conservation practices. They also refer many farmers to the district for assistance and encourage them to become cooperators. The Extension Service, through the county agent, has assisted the district through their educational program. The FHA continues to refer many of their clients to the district for technical assistance in farm planning and layout work. The Tenn. Div. of Forestry for making tree seedlings available to farmers for setting at a very reasonable rate. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for supplying bream and bass for stocking of farm ponds. These fish are furnished through the district free of charge to farmers. The Tenn. Game and Fish Commission for their close working relations with the district and making lespedeza bicolor, Multiflora Rose plants and sericea seed available to cooperators each year. Other agencies that have contributed to the district program are:

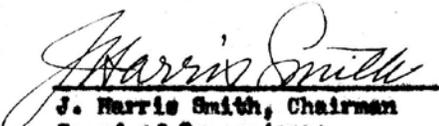
Production Credit Association, Tenn. Dept. of Agriculture, Dept. of Vo-Ag., Veterans on-the-farm Instructors, Madison County Highway Dept., Local Heavy Equipment Dealers, and the banks of Madison County. We also want to express our appreciation to the following firms for financial support through the purchase of Affiliate Memberships. This money is being used to promote soil conservation in the district. Those who contributed were:

Murphy Tractor Company, R. L. Morgan, Williams Implement Company, Second National Bank, National Bank of Commerce, First National Bank, Madison Farmers Cooperative, Sadler Oil Company, Jackson Truck & Tractor Company, Farmers Gin Company, Blackmon & Hopper Gin Co., and A. R. Reid & Son.

We, the supervisors of the Madison County Soil Conservation District, feel that we have had a very successful year. More people are now engaged in conservation farming than ever before. After reviewing the estimates of conservation needs for Madison County we feel that certain practices need more emphasis than others. We plan to put emphasis on the improvement and establishment of permanent pastures, more sericea on the eroded land and larger farm ponds. Good water disposal systems on crop land and the treatment of critical areas that are not now contributing to the total farm income will also be stressed.

We are hopeful of getting the Johnson Creek Watershed approved under the Small Watershed Bill. We will land every assistance to the proper cooperation and function of this watershed that we possibly can. Conservation of our farm land and water is a big job, but with the close working relations of all our people we will meet our goals.

Signed:

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

Board Members are: C. O. Hopper, A. R. Buntin, W. W. Donnell, K. J. Johnson and J. Harris Smith.