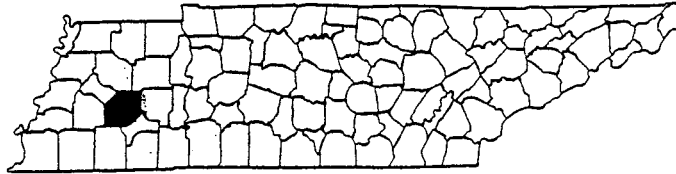


MADISON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1994



MADISON COUNTY

1992 Census

Total Land in Farms	141,357
Average Farm Size	280
Average Value of Farm and Buildings	\$ 311,830
Market Value of All Farm Products	\$ 27,166,000
Market Value of All Crops	\$ 22,578,000
Market Value of All Livestock	\$ 4,588,000
Market Value of Nursery and Greenhouse	*
Average Age of Farmers	55

<u>1993 CROPS</u>	<u>Acres Harv.</u>	<u>Yield</u>	<u>Production</u>	<u>Rank</u>
Corn for Grain, Bu.	8,500	74	630,000	22
Soybeans, Bu.	15,000	30	450,000	16
Wheat, Bu.	2,200	40	87,000	27
Grain Sorghum, Bu.	**	**	**	**
Burley Tobacco, Lbs.	**	**	**	**
Dark Fired Tobacco, Lbs.	**	**	**	**
Dark Air-Cured Tobacco, Lbs.	**	**	**	**
Alfalfa Hay, Tons	**	**	**	**
All Other Hay, Tons	10,000	1.8	18,000	66
Cotton, 480-lb. Bales	51,000	381	40,500	7

<u>Livestock</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Rank</u>
All Cattle and Calves (1/1/94)	14,000	62
Beef Cows (1/1/94)	7,000	61
Milk Cows (1/1/94)	300	70
All Hogs and Pigs (12/1/93)	8,000	17
Hogs and Pigs for Breeding (12/1/93)	1,300	16

On December 31, 1994 the deadline for conservation compliance arrived and district cooperators in Madison County were in good shape. Since the dust bowl days of the thirties the Federal Government, through the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), has worked voluntarily with soil conservation districts and individual cooperators to conserve the soil, one of America's most valuable natural resources. America's voluntary approach to soil conservation worked reasonably well for many years. However things did change. Advanced technologies ushered in larger equipment, commercial fertilizer and pesticides, each of which became more affordable and

increasingly more effective. To accommodate the larger equipment fields had to be made larger and producers had to farm more land to profit from their capital investments. Gradually thickets and fence rows, which had once acted to protect the land from rainfall and storm runoff, were torn out to expand field boundaries. Terraces, waterways, and other conservation practices which had been installed to protect the land no longer seemed necessary to some and were removed to accommodate the larger equipment. As terraces were disked down, contour farming was abandoned. What was once many small fields became large fields with long uninterrupted slopes.

Steeper marginal lands that had been used for pasture or hayland were converted to row crops. More and more land owners opted to give up farming and elected to rent their ground to the more progressive farmers. As a result, many producers owned only a small portion of the land they worked. Some producers took good care of their land as well as the land they rented. Yet, many producers abused the land they rented as well as the land they owned, and often the land owners who rented their ground didn't question the farming practices of their operator.

Winter cover crops and crop rotation, including sod based rotation, were once commonly used to replenish

lost nutrients and to control crop pests. These practices also provided the soil with excellent protection from rainfall and storm runoff. As commercial fertilizer and pesticide became standard practices these cultural practice became less common. No longer did ground need to be rested to maintain its productivity and no longer did crops need to be rotated to control crop pests. The government programs also discouraged the soil conserving practice of crop rotation.

Fall and winter plowing was advocated for a host of things including weed control, insect control, moisture conservation, and as a remedy for soil

compaction. As a result, many fields were being plowed after harvest, with the soil left loose and unprotected from rainfall and storm runoff for several months during each year.

Of course not all producers replaced soil conservation practices with high tech farming practices. Many producers saw merits in both and incorporated the two. Nonetheless many producers all but abandoned soil conservation practices. With many acres being rented, conservation practices incorporated by one renter weren't guaranteed to be maintained by the next renter and often weren't maintained. By the mid seventies the Soil Conservation Service

estimated soil loss on rolling west Tennessee crop land to average nearly one quarter inch per acre per year and to be as great as one half inch per acre per year. These estimates only included sheet and rill erosion and excluded the more obvious gully erosion. Although West Tennessee suffered some of the worst soil erosion in the country, soil erosion appeared to be a major problem across much of the country. Excessive erosion rates were a cause for alarm so the country mapped out a new strategy for soil conservation.

As a result of many years of public debate, public meetings, and public input, Congress passed the 1985 Farm Bill which included

the Food Security Act (FSA). To reduce erosion and therein help ensure the productivity of America's crop land the Food Security Act contained the Conservation Compliance provision. Conservation Compliance, although voluntary, required those farmers who chose to participate in government farm programs, and only those farmers, to develop conservation farm plans on all their fields determined to be highly erodible land (HEL). Each plan had to be approved by the Soil Conservation Service and the local District's Board of Supervisors. Based on criteria established by SCS, district staffs made HEL determinations for every cropland field farmed by farm program

participates. HEL determinations were made on over 10,000 fields in Madison County alone. Congress set forth December 31, 1994 as the deadline for all conservation farm plans to be fully applied. For the last few years farmers incorporated approved conservation practices into their farming operations. As of the deadline nearly 700 district cooperators of Madison County were actively applying Conservation farm plans on approximately 80,000 acres of highly erodible cropland. These 80,000 acres compose approximately 5,500 fields, 1,700 tracts, and 1,300 farms, which is roughly one fifth of Madison County.

In 1994 the following conservation practices were being applied or maintained on the highly erodible cropland acres of Madison County.

Over 11,000 acre were enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

Over 20,000 acres were cropped utilizing reduced tillage methods such as no-till. The remaining cropland, although not considered minimal tilled, wasn't plowed from July or August through March or April. A period of seven to nine months.

Nearly 20,000 acres were farmed along the contour guidelines of well over 1,000,000 feet of terraces.

Nearly 35,000 acres were protected over the winter months by overseeded winter cover crops and crop residue.

Nearly 27,000 acres were protected over the winter months by crop residue alone.

There was little if any land plowed and left unprotected over the winter months.

To some producers conservation compliance

amounted to considerable change, to others it amounted to little if any change. Some called it outright communism with Big Brother overextending its influence and control yet again over individuals. Still others called it responsible government with government not out and out regulating the land but at least expecting reasonable care be taken care of the land by those who participated in government farm programs. However, to all consumers of agricultural commodities, hopefully conservation compliance will help insure abundant, and reasonable priced, food and fiber to the present generation as well as to the future generations. Erosion rates on Madison County

cropland, although still above the level which would sustain productivity indefinitely, have been reduce significantly. The continuation of these established conservation practices with the incorporation of future land conserving techniques should insure a bright future for agriculture. The theme of the 1994 West Tennessee State Fair was hats off to agriculture, we agree, particularly to the farmers who met the challenge of conservation compliance.

Aside from the outstanding job cooperators accomplished with conservation compliance nearly thirty District cooperators enrolled 7,500 acres in the District's

1994 No-till Cotton Incentive Program. The District Board had obtained a \$15,000 grant in 1993 from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA). The grant was for the funding of Best Management Practices (BMPs). Since cotton is Madison County's largest crop and the most erosive, the District Board applied for, and was awarded, the BMP grant for the promotion of no-till cotton on highly erodible cropland.

The District Board also applied for, and was awarded, an \$18,000 BMP grant in 1994. The 1994 grant was use as an incentive program to promote the early seeding (before Oct. 1st) of winter cover crops on highly

erodible cropland. Nearly thirty cooperators enrolled 5,000 acres in the program in 1994.

Nearly 40 tracts in Madison County were selected randomly by USDA to be field visited and evaluated by SCS personnel for plan compliance. The random check revealed that most cooperators in Madison County were doing an outstanding job. Only one of the tracts were found to be out of compliance. However, this violation was later overturned on a technicality by the state office.

In 1994 the District staff processed nearly 80 ASCS ACP referrals, 75 farm reconstitutions, and 3 wetland reserve

applications. The staff also finished making whole farm determinations on over 2,000 tracts and field visited over 700 tracts to finish verifying that conservation practices were being applied as scheduled. The district staff assisted with the layout, design, and construction of 3 grade control structures, one animal waste system, and several thousand feet of terraces and diversions. The staff was notified of a problem with the primary spillway of a 60 acre Johnson Creek Watershed lake, and took the necessary steps to correct the potentially life threatening situation.

Although the staff is better known for the assistance they provide



farmers, they also worked with home owners, business consultants, land appraisers, land developers, real estate agents, schools, and other agencies during 1994.

The District office began 1994 with several employees including a District Conservationist, a Soil Conservationist, a Soil Conservation Technician, a District Technician, a Secretary, and a part time Data Input Operator. The District also had the services of a student trainee for two months during the summer. By the end of the year the District office had lost the services of Soil Conservationist, Cathey Jones, and Soil Conservation Technician,

Julie Swift. The data input operator took maternity leave and the District Conservationist was having to spend at least ten percent of his time in Chester County. This left only the District Technician and the District Secretary to handle the load full time.

During 1994, Board Chairman, Franklin James, was reappointed to another three year term. Vice Chairman, Waring Hazlehurst was reappointed in 1993. During 1995 the District will hold elections for positions currently held by Secretary and Treasurer Jimmy Bond, Supervisor, J. E. Mullis, and Supervisor, Terry Moore.

In 1993 the District Board elected to move its annual banquet from November to February and move the location to the West Tennessee Experiment Station. During the 1994 banquet Allen Verell was presented with Conservation Farmer of 1993. Richard Swain, Director of the Obion Forked Deer River Basin Authority, delivered a slide presentation on the Basin's work, and Dr. Don Tyler delivered a slide presentation on his trip to Thailand. Richard's Barbecue catered the meal.

During 1994 the USDA began the process of restructuring. The Soil Conservation Service (SCS), which works hand in hand with Soil Conservation Districts and their

cooperators, changed its name to the National Resources Conservation Service. The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), another agency that works closely with District and District cooperators, changed its name to the Consolidated Farm Services Agency. The effect restructuring will have on our district and other districts is unclear at this time.



Franklin James, Chairman  
SCD

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DISTRICT BOARD

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WARING HAZLEHURST  
VICE CHAIRMAN

JIMMY BOND  
SECRETARY-TREASURER

J. E. MULLIS  
MEMBER

TERRY MOORE  
MEMBER

OFFICE STAFF

BRAD DENTON  
DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

JIM HENSHAW  
SOIL CONSERVATIONIST

BENTON JAMES  
TECHNICIAN

MAXINE BLANKENSHIP  
SECRETARY-CLERK

SHA WILLIAMS  
DATA ENTRY