

MADISON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2002

Presented by the board of supervisors of the Madison County Soil Conservation District
to inform district cooperators and the public about the District's activities.

INTRODUCTION - The District is a corporate and political subdivision of the state, established by the state soil conservation committee in 1941. The geographic and political boundaries of the District are the same as those of Madison County. The District is a member of the Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts (TACD), and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD).

DISTRICT SUPERVISORS - A board of supervisors, responsible for developing and administering the District's long range program governs the District. The board is composed of five landowners residing within the District. Two of the supervisors are appointed to serve three year terms by the state soil conservation committee, while three of the supervisors are elected to serve three years by the land owners within the District. The supervisors meet monthly and do not receive a salary. The present board consists of Franklin James, Mike Pearson, Allen Verell, Joel Haynes, and Bob Bryant.

Chairman, Franklin James, a residence of the Windy City community, has been on the board since 1972 and has served as the board's chairman since 1975. Franklin is a past director for area VIII of the Tennessee Association of Conservation District.

Vice-Chairman, Allen Verell, of the Huntersville Community was elected to the board in 1995, elected to a second term in 1998, and a third term in 2001.

Secretary-Treasurer, Joel Haynes, of the Huntersville Community, was appointed to the board in 1999 by the state soil conservation committee, and reappointed to a second term this year

Mike Pearson of the Adair Community was elected to the board in 1995, elected to a second term in 1998, and a third term in 2001.

Bob Bryant of the Beech Bluff Community was elected to the board in 2001.

OFFICE STAFF - Technically the District does not have any employees. However, there were 4 employees working out of the office in 2002, which we claim as our own. They were federal employees **Brad Denton** and **Kenneth Williams**, and county employees **Maxine Blankenship**, and **Benton James**. Brad is a District Conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and has been stationed with the District since 1986. Kenneth is a Soil Conservationist for NRCS and has been stationed in Madison County since January of 1997. Maxine has been a secretary-clerk for Madison County since 1969, while Benton has been an engineering technician/soil conservationist for Madison County since 1979.

DISTRICT PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET - The District held its annual awards banquet in March, at the Madison County Agricultural Complex Auditorium. U. S. Congressman John Tanner spoke to the over 100 guests in attendance. John spoke on the new USDA farm bill and other current issues concerning our country. Everyone enjoyed a steak dinner catered by Richard's of Bolivar. Keith Salmon was recognized as the District's Conservation Farmer of 2001, while former board member Mark Smith, and cooperator Ray Fuller were recognized for their distinguish service to the District.

2002 TACD ANNUAL CONVENTION - Jackson-Madison County was honored to be the site of the TACD Annual Convention although the District was not the official host. This was the first time the convention was ever held in Jackson. The District was glad to be assigned the responsibility of arranging some of the 3-day program. David Bird, the District's conservation farmer of 2000 received the TACD Category I Conservation Farmer of 2001 Award. Benton James who works in the District office was recognized for submitting the official theme of the Convention. Every supervisor and everyone who works in the District office attended the convention. NACD staff was present to assist Districts with the development of their important business plan. Our District promptly used the format and ideals presented at the convention to develop a current business plan for the District.

TACD SUMMER MEETING - Keith Salmon, the District's 2001 Conservation Farmer was recognized as the West Tennessee Conservation Farmer of the year by the West Tennessee Region of the Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts (TACD) at their summer meeting.

DISTRICT NEWSLETTERS - During the year, the District published and printed two newsletters, which were mailed to over 300 District cooperators and landowners. The newsletters serve to inform cooperators and landowners of up and coming events, programs, and activities.

SOIL STEWARDSHIP SERVICES - In April the District supplied St. John's Baptist Church Number 2, Denmark Baptist Church, Forest Heights Methodist Church, and Greater Mercer Baptist Church, with soil stewardship material for worship services during Soil and Water Stewardship Week.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS DAY - In May, the District staff took part in Environmental Awareness Day attended by 1,200 fifth grade students from 19 schools in Madison County. Handouts prepared by the office staff were given to the students visiting the booth.

MARKET DAY - In September, Brad and Kenneth attended Market Day, a day that affords 10th graders throughout the county the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the various job possibilities. Brad and Kenneth fielded question about natural resources, conservation, and related job opportunities, from among the over 1,000 10th graders who attended.

TDA AG BMP GRANT - The district provided 18 cooperators with over \$47,000 in cost-share assistance to apply best management practices on their land. The funds were provided through grants from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA). Participants received up to 75% cost-share to install Best Management Practices (BMPs) on their land. BMPs are conservation practices recognized for improving water quality in Tennessee's rivers and streams. The Johnson Creek watershed in south Madison County and the Turkey Creek watershed in north Madison County receive special consideration due to the environmental impact agriculture there has on the waters of the state.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVE PROGRAM (EQIP) EQIP is a USDA program which provides agricultural landowners and operators with technical assistance and up to 75% cost-share in the installation of conservation practices. We had 5 cooperators accepted into the program in 2002, two for Cropland Conversion and three for Grade Control Structures. Contracts totaled \$26,000

SOIL and WATER CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
 SWAC is a USDA program similar to EQIP except in Madison County only open to agricultural land in the Hatchie River Watershed. We had 2 cooperators complete their contracts in 2002 as they installed 4,650 of terraces and 1 grade control structure, totaling \$1,660.

NO-TILL DRILL - The District has a 7-foot no-till Tye drill for rent by people in and around Madison County. The drill is housed by, and can be rented through the Madison County Farmers Co-op. Cooperators used the drill to plant nearly 700 acres in 2002. An initial drill was obtained through a grant from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA). The rent revenue received from the initial drill was used to purchase the District's current drill.

STRAW MULCHING MACHINE - The Chickasaw-Shiloh RC&D Council has a straw mulcher available for rent through the District, (\$50 per 1/2 day, \$80 per day). The Blower is housed at Bemis Gin. The District receives 15 % of the gross rental. Sixteen cooperators used the machine in 2002.

WETLAND RESERVE PROGRAM(WRP) - The Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) is a federal program where the government purchases permanent or temporary easements on lands that would have been considered wetlands before they were cleared. The land is restored to its natural hydrology and planted to bottomland hardwood trees. District cooperators had three WRP contracts totaling around 110 acres finalized for entry by USDA in 2002. These contracts totaled \$74,000. This, added to the 2 contracts consisting of 45 acres already in WRP, brings a total of 5 contracts totally 155 acres in WRP within the District. Another contract totally 160 acres is pending approval by USDA.

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP) - CRP contracts are agreements between landowners and the federal government, where the landowner agrees to establish and maintain their environmentally sensitive land in a vegetative cover which protects the soil from erosion and benefits wildlife. In return, the government partially reimburses the individual's establishment costs and pays the landowner an annual rent. The District was very active the last two years to get CRP soil rental rates increased for Madison County landowners. Finally in September of 2002 we received notice that our efforts had paid off. After a number of letters to Congressman Tanner and FSA, a petition drive, and two

well-prepared reports documenting the problem, Madison County's rates were increased significantly. Since the rates were raised in September, the District has had 192 acres of 17 tracts enrolled in filter strips and 245 acres of 11 tracks enrolled in riparian forest buffers through the CRP continuous sign-up. These contracts will total over \$500,000 in payments during the contract periods. Currently in the District there are over 250 contracts on over 9,000 acres enrolled in CRP.

PRACTICES APPLIED - The District staff assisted cooperators with a number of conservation practices in 2002. Practices included 28,400 ft. of Terraces, 5,400 ft. of Diversions, 8 Grade Structures, 2 Ponds, 329 acres of Cropland Conversion, 516 acres of Winter Cover Crops, and 150 acres of Native Warm Season Grass Establishment. 192 acres of Filter Strips, and 245 acres of Riparian Forest Buffers are planned.

INFORMATION ASSISTANCE - The District staff assisted several real estate agents, farm appraisers, environmental consultants, and individuals by providing them with soil information, soil maps, topography maps, flood insurance rate maps, wetland inventory maps, and historical aerial photographs of Madison County. We recently assisted the Madison County Health Department by developing a Map of Jackson depicting the ditches. The map will assist them with their West Nile Virus work in Jackson. Our customers often compare us most favorable to other District offices they visit, noting our organization, our quantity of information, and our helpfulness and efficiency.

WATERSHED DISTRICTS - The District has two active watershed districts, Johnson Creek and Meridian Creek. The Johnson Creek Watershed has 5 flood retardant structures and the Meridian Creek Watershed has 3. All of the dams were built in the late 1950s and early 1960s. All of the structures passed recent state inspections but several are experiencing problems with their pipe spillways and will require expensive repairs in the near future.

WILDLIFE FOOD PLOTS - The District in partnership with the Forked Deer Chapter of Quail Unlimited, NRCS, the Chickasaw-Shiloh RC&D Council, and TWRA provided cooperators with prepackaged bags of seed for use in seeding half-acre wildlife food plots. Over 50 cooperators participated.

<u>Conservation Programs Summary 2002:</u>	
CRP Contracts accepted in 2002.....	28 contracts, 437 acre..\$562,000
WRP Contracts finalized in 2002.....	3 contracts, 110 acres...74,000
TDA Contracts in 2002.....	20 contracts.....47,728
EQIP Contracts accepted in 2002.....	5 contracts.....26,000
FIP Contracts accepted in 2002.....	2 contracts, 70 acres..... 6,188
SWCA Contracts completed in 2002...	2 contracts.....1,660
Total.....	<u>\$717,576</u>

<u>Agriculture Census 1997</u>	
Total Area in Madison County	358,000 acres
Total Land in Farms	145,586 acres
Average Farm Size	255 acres
Mkt. Value all farm products	\$28,896,000
Estimated total farm value	\$167,000,000

The District extends **Special Thanks** to the following in recognition of their invaluable support in 2002:

Affiliate Members and Sponsors:

- Bancorp South
- Bemis Gin
- Dunavant Enterprises
- Fletcher Equipment, Inc.
- Jimmy Bond
- Madison County Farmers Co-op
- Madison County Farm Bureau
- Mercer Gin
- Monsanto

- R&J Feed Supply Company
- Sidney David Florist
- Syngenta Crop Protection
- Union Planters Bank of West Tennessee

- Chickasaw-Shiloh RC&D Council**
- Forked Deer Chapter Quail Unlimited**
- Madison County Government**
- Tennessee Dept. of Agriculture**
- Tennessee Division of Forestry**
- TWRA**
- USDA, FSA**
- USDA, NRCS**
- UT Extension Service**

Franklin James, Chairman
Madison County Soil Conservation District