

**Madison County  
Soil Conservation District  
313 N Parkway  
Jackson, TN 38305**

Phone: 731-668-1544 ext. 3  
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[www.madisonscd.com](http://www.madisonscd.com)

Chairman, Allen Verell  
Vice-Chairman, Don Johnson  
Sec. –Treas., Joel Haynes  
Member, Bob Bryant  
Member, Don Pearson

Serving to Conserve  
Madison County's  
Natural Resources  
Since 1941



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# NEWSLETTER



MADISON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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## Madison County SCD Recognized as Tennessee's Outstanding Soil Conservation District

*Feb. 25th - Airport Marriott, Nashville*

The Madison County Soil Conservation District was honored at the Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts (TACD) 70th annual convention; earning The Conservation District of the Year Award presented by TACD and Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). The award recognizes a Tennessee SCD for its outstanding accomplishment in Education Programs & Implementing Best Management Practices for Erosion Control and Water Quality. Madison SCD is 1 of 95 SCDs in Tennessee.

I sincerely thank the office staff, the SCD Board, local, state and federal governments, their many participating agencies, the local affiliated businesses and our many district cooperators. You are the District and this is your award. Together we are able to work as one to conserve soil, water, and soil related natural resources. Our combined efforts benefit the greater community and assure productive farmland for future generations.

Thanks and Congratulations!

*Allen Verell*, Chairman  
Madison County Soil Conservation District





# Newsletter

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## Board of Supervisors

**Allen Verell**  
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**Don Johnson**  
Vice-Chairman

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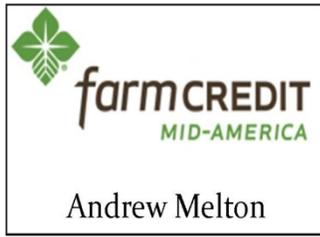
**Don Pearson**  
Member

## **Annual District Awards and Appreciation Banquet 2014**

Over 100 guests attended our Awards & Appreciation Banquet including Tennessee's Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture Jai Templeton and NRCS State Conservationist Kevin Brown. Jared King was recognized as the District's Outstanding Cooperator of 2013. Jared has worked closely with the district to protect his soil from erosion and to improve his soil's quality. Jared has installed 2 large grade control structures to address severe soil erosion that was gobbling up cropland. Jared is incorporating winter cover crops as a way to enhance his no-till cropping operation and to further improve soil health. Mike Pearson was recognized for his 18 years of service as a district supervisor and was presented a distinguish service award. Everyone was treated to a steak dinner. Kevin Brown delivered a presentation on soil health and Jai Templeton addressed the group.



We thank our many sponsors for making the banquet possible. We also thank Sand's Old Hickory Florist for the beautiful floral centerpiece and Four Seasons Nursery for the 21 potted flowers and the \$25 gift certificate to Four Seasons that they donated. The potted plants, the gift certificate, and the centerpiece were given to the guests as door prizes.



### Conservation Cost-Share Programs Available

**NRCS & TDA** provide funding for conservation work to address erosion and water quality under the EQIP and ARCF programs. Practices include gully control structures, livestock watering facilities, grass establishment, cross fencing, winter cover crops and others. It is best if you sign-up before October 1<sup>st</sup>, contact the district office, 668-1544.



**CRP** - FSA has an on-going sign-up for certain CRP practices. These practices include filter strips, riparian forest buffers, bottomland hardwoods, upland bird habitat field borders, and SAFE. The CRP program provides funding to take land out of production and to establish it to soil conserving wildlife friendly plantings, including grasses, forbs, and trees. Funding includes cost-share for establishment costs and an annual rental payment of up to \$185 per acre. For questions concerning CRP contact the FSA office, 731-668-1544.



**WRE** - NRCS has an on-going sign-up for purchasing easements to convert certain cropland back to wetland through the establishment of bottomland hardwoods. Easement acquisitions for Madison County are currently \$2,400/acre for crop and pasture land and \$1,480/acre for woodland. Contact the NRCS field office, 668-1544.



**Drill for Sale** - The District has a 10 foot wide Haybuster no-till drill for sale. The drill has the ability to plant Native Warm Season Grass seed. The drill is housed at the Mid-South Farmers Co-op on Ragland Road in Madison County. Anyone interested in buying the drill should call our office at 668-1544 ext. 3. Sealed bids will be taken through Aug. 28<sup>th</sup> & will be opened Aug. 29<sup>th</sup>. The District reserves the right to reject all bids.

## Soil Health

There has been much buzz within the agricultural community about **Soil Health**, but what is Soil Health and what does it have to do with agriculture and the general public?

Several mid-west farmers have been farming the soil health way for years and swear by it. Recently a number of mid-south farmers have become interested in it including at least three in Madison County who have incorporated multi-species of winter cover into their no-till farming operations for the last few years. Local interest is growing. Small groups of local producers have met three times in the district office to share their experiences. NRCS has incorporated soil health into its EQIP program and provides cost-share to producers interested in using cover crops. Local producers have enrolled several hundred acres in the program.



Healthy soil is the key to sustaining agriculture and resolving many natural resource problems. It has greater infiltration capability and greater water holding capacity; resulting in less runoff, less flooding, and less soil erosion. Healthy soil increases the nutrient and moisture available to plants; allowing for the production of high yielding crops that can better withstand drought and crops that require less chemical inputs. Healthy soil is directly related to the biological activity of soil. It is home to billions and billions of microorganisms. In fact, in just a hand full of healthy soil there are more microorganisms than there are people on earth and perhaps as many as 30,000 different species. The key to healthy soil is to create a habitat in which soil microbes can live and thrive. That habitat is based on carbon derived from living plants and crop residue. As soil organisms increase in numbers and diversity; soil structure and soil chemistry improve making the soil richer and healthier.

Although tillage was once thought of as a good agronomic practice, it is perhaps the single most detrimental thing one can do to undermine soil health and diminish long term soil productivity. Tillage wreaks havoc on soil organisms by destroying them and their habitat. A single tillage after years of no-till undermines years of soil building. Tillage destroys soil structure; it causes soil compaction, crusting, less infiltration, excessive runoff and soil erosion. No-till, crop rotation, and **keeping the soil covered at all times**, with crop residue and **with a diversity of live plants**, creates an environment in which soil microbes can thrive, soil structure is enhanced, nutrient and moisture availability are improved, weeds and other pests are suppressed, runoff is reduced, and soil erosion is minimized. However, healthy soil cannot be restored overnight. It takes time, commitment, patience, and good management skills to rebuild and maintain the physical, chemical, and biological properties of the soil.

Soil health affects us all in many ways. Healthy soil is good for the greater environment, contributing to purer water, cleaner air, and improved fish and wildlife. In the next 40 years, it is projected that the human population of the world will increase from 7 billion in 2010 to more than 9 billion in 2050. In just 25 years, between 1982 and 2007, 14 million acres of prime farmland were lost to development in the U. S., an area half the size of Tennessee. By 2050, several million more acres of prime farmland will have been developed for other uses. To feed the world in 2050, food production will need to rise by 70 percent over the 2010 level. As the world population continues to grow and agricultural land continues to decline, healthy soil becomes increasingly important if agriculture is to keep pace with our ever increasing demand for food and fiber. By taking care of the soil it will take care of us. However, our failure to take care of the soil will surely lead to our eventual downfall as it has led to the decline and collapse of past civilizations.

Keeping a diversity of live plants growing throughout the year is important to soil biology and soil health. The picture in the newsletter header is of radishes and cereal rye growing in crop residue after harvest. Radishes and Cereal Rye are very good to excellent **N Scavengers**, **Soil Builders**, **Erosion Fighters**, and **Weed Fighters**. Anyone interested in attending future meetings or applying for cost-share for winter cover needs to contact our office.

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### **2012 Census of Agriculture – Released 2014 - Madison County Highlights**

Madison County 358,000 acres \* Total Acres in Farms: 165,946 \* Total Acres of Cropland: 117,822 \* Total Acres Harvested: 101,366 \* **Acres Harvested**: Corn: 36,775 \* Soybeans: 28,363 \* Cotton: 26,092 \* Hay: 7,275 \* Non Double Crop Wheat & All Others: 2,861 \* Total Number of Farms: 592 = 134 Grain Farms \* 23 Cotton Farms \* 124 Beef Farms \* 75 All Other Animals Farms \* 16 Fruits, Vegetables, Nuts, & Nursery Farms & 220 Hay & Other Crop Farms \* **Irrigated**: 24 Farms Irrigated 7,891 acres \* Average Age of Principal Operator: 61.8 \* Average Age of Principal Operator in 2007: 58.5

\*Market Value of Products Sold: \$66,039,000: \$62,369,000 from Crop Sales & \$3,670,000 from Livestock Sales

\*Government Payments: \$2,288,000 ⇒ includes Crop Subsidies, Disaster Payments, CRP Payments, & Other Conservation Programs

*The Madison County Soil Conservation District does not discriminate on the basis of a person's race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.*

*The District is a recipient of taxpayer funding. If you observe an agency director or employee engaging in any activity which you consider to be illegal, improper, or wasteful, please call the comptroller's toll free hotline: 1-800-232-5454.*