

STONE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

April 2015

District Receives National and State Earth Team Awards

The Stone County Conservation District was recognized as one of the most effective districts in helping with Natural Resources Conservation Service Earth Team Volunteers. The Stone County district employs 66 volunteers who help with programs, stewardship and education.

The Earth Team is the volunteer workforce of NRCS that helps conservation groups and others to ensure private lands are conserved, restored and more resilient to environmental challenges like climate change. Working side-by-side with farmers and ranchers, SCCD and NRCS identifies natural resource concerns, such as soil erosion and water quality issues, and develops unique conservation plans for restoring and protecting resources.

The strong partnership between the Stone County Conservation District, NRCS in Mountain View and Earth Team volunteers has enabled the Mountain View field office to expand their Farm Bill and Conservation Technical Assistance services to new clientele who otherwise would not have known about their services and visited the office.

The district takes the lead in sponsoring and providing outreach events and in mobilizing, training and utilizing their 66 Earth Team volunteers, who donated a total of 2,642 hours of service in 2014 by:

- advertising, organizing, and implementing several educational field days. One resulted in increased compliance with NRCS fence specifications and better comradery with 50 producers; another taught safe trapping techniques to capture wild hogs that are causing extensive damage to crops in the county.
- educating youths on hunting, fishing and boating safety.
- recruiting customers through social media by creating new web and Facebook pages that expand outreach and promote the benefits of utilizing NRCS's Farm Bill programs to producers throughout the county, resulting in new potential customers coming into the office and requesting services, plus increased attendance at field days over previous years.
- providing food for struggling families by helping set up food collection boxes, collecting donated food, and delivering the food to selected non-profit community pantries.
- conducting educational programs for youths and adults. Volunteers assisted with two district-sponsored local Envirothon teams by helping direct participating students, preparing testing sites by posting signs and setting up educational/testing materials on tables, organizing/implementing activities, processing score sheets, and cleaning up the site after the events.
- raising native plants in a USDA People's Garden.
- distributing approximately 8,000 tree seedlings to the public.
- measuring and recording rainfall data.

Stone County Conservation District was presented the national award in New Orleans at the National Association of Conservation Districts annual meeting. SCCD was also presented the state award at the annual meeting of the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts in Little Rock.

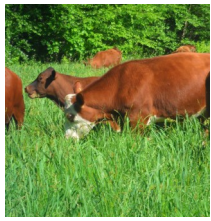


From left, NRCS State Conservationist Mike Sullivan, NACD President Earl Garber, District Directors Derek Littrell and Terry Joe Stewart, District Conservationist Wendy Hendrix, District Coordinator Martha Blackwell, and NRCS Chief Jason Weller. Not pictured are District Technicians Tim Storey and Colby Smith and District Directors Barton Foll, Larry James Gammill and Eddie Stewart.



Mike Sullivan, NRCS State Conservationist and Martha Blackwell, District Coordinator

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Planning for the Grazing Season

Submitted by Wendy Hendrix, District Conservationist

With the arrival of spring it's a good time to start making plans for the grazing season ahead. Most people think when the grass starts growing their grazing season is planned: just let the livestock graze where ever they want to. Then when the rain stops in the summer months, they are scrambling for pasture. But if you start planning your grazing now, then you are ahead of the game when dry periods in the summer time appear.

One of the best things you can do now is to get your livestock into one pasture and shut the gates to all of the other pastures. This will give the grass in these fields time to grow up to 6 inches. This will allow the forages to have enough energy to balance the protein, so the cattle don't appear they're on the Atkins diet. I don't think any of us want our livestock to lose weight coming out of the winter months.

Also, waiting to graze will allow the plants to regrow from energy produced from the leaves and not from stored carbohydrates in the roots. The stored carbohydrates can then be used to promote new root growth and this will allow the roots to go deeper into the soil. So the deeper the root system goes, the more soil moisture the plants can have access to during dry periods of the year.

Once the forages have been given the chance to grow, start moving your livestock on at least a weekly rotation of pasture, so they don't repeatedly graze the same plants. This will require a minimum of 4 pastures to allow 3 weeks of rest, which normally is enough for recovery. You should not graze the forages below the recommended heights of 3-4 inches, for Fescue and most cool season grasses, 2 inches, for Bermuda grass, and 4-6 inches, for native grasses.

You should have the fields sized so livestock can graze them off evenly. This can be accomplished using temporary electric fence. If you don't have that as an option, consider clipping the fields down to the same heights. I like to think of this like mowing your lawn. If your lawn mower was leaving tall grass in places and scalping the ground in other spots you would get the lawn mower fixed. If your livestock are leaving tall grasses and short grasses in the same field it's time to fix the grazing system.

You need to also plan a field that you wouldn't mind sacrificing during dry times of the summer. What this means is during dry times you would put your livestock into that field and feed them until it began raining. I know this is a strange concept, but in the winter when you don't have any forages growing you feed. So what is the difference: during dry times forages aren't growing either? This may keep you from killing out grasses in your fields from overgrazing. And the fields with more insulating residue don't dry out as fast with the heat and regrow faster when it finally does rain.

A little planning before livestock begin grazing the green grass this spring may help you avoid problems during the dry months that always seem to come during a summer in Arkansas.



Avian Influenza Outbreak

With the recent case of Avian Influenza (H5N2) in Boone County, our attention has once again been brought to biosecurity. With the potential losses and cost associated with an Avian Influenza outbreak, it becomes increasingly important to practice biosecurity. There are several biosecurity practices one can put into effect to reduce the risk of Avian Influenza, such as:

Do not allow visitors on farm. Keep "No Visitors" and/or "Restricted" signs posted at the road entrance of the farm.

All farm personnel should wear separate clothing (including shoes, boots, hats, gloves, etc.) on the farm. Clothes used on the farm should stay on the farm. Also wash hands and arms thoroughly before leaving the premises.

Do not visit other poultry farms or flocks or have contact with any other species of birds. Also do not borrow equipment, vehicles, etc. from another poultry farm.

Keep all poultry houses securely locked. Lock all houses from the inside while working inside.

All equipment, crates, coops, etc. should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before and after use.

All essential visitors (owners, feed delivery personnel, poultry catchers and haulers, service men, etc.) are to wear protective outer clothing (coveralls), boots, and headgear prior to being allowed near the poultry flock or farm.

Monitor all vehicles (service, feed delivery, poultry delivery or removal, etc.) entering the premises to determine if they have been properly cleaned and disinfected. This includes disinfection of the tires and vehicle undercarriage.

Sick and dying birds should be submitted to a diagnostic laboratory for proper diagnosis of the problem. All commercial growers should contact their flock supervisor and follow their instructions.

Dead birds are to be properly disposed of by burial, incineration or other approved method.

Any person handling wild game (especially waterfowl) must completely change clothing and shower or bathe before entering the premises.

Do not visit areas where avian influenza is a problem.

Remember to use basic hygiene to prevent contracting any influenza virus. This includes covering your mouth when you cough and/or sneeze and then washing your hands with soap and water afterwards.

Submitted by Colby Smith, District Technician

AWHA



ARKANSAS WILD HOG ASSOCIATION **AWHA**

Arkansas Wild Hog Association

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submitted by Kevin J. Goodwin

Because feral hog numbers are steadily increasing, and the damage they cause is growing more wide spread, we realized there is, and will be, a growing need for help in our communities and rural areas in dealing with feral hog problems.

Removing hogs from an area by trapping, snaring, shooting or dogs, requires many skills, experience, tools and coordination strategies that most individual land owners don't have. Additionally feral hog removal can be very costly in both time and money that most folks cannot afford.

There are however, several people in our area that do have the abilities to make a difference and willingness to help our neighbors with feral hog problems. Over the last several years, these experienced/capable folks have removed at least a couple thousand hogs from our area.

So, with the current and future needs for help in mind, and knowing that we do have folks that can really get the job done, we decided to form an association, that together, will be more efficient in dealing with our feral hog problem. We decided to name our group, "ARANSAS WILD HOG ASSOCIATION, Inc." or AWWA for short. Our organization is registered with the Secretary of State as a 501c3 non-profit incorporation. Our mission statement is, "To educate the public and help control the issues and damages caused by feral hogs." As a locally established non-profit organization, we will be able to raise money for equipment, supplies, etc., to help with our areas feral hog problems. Unlike some of the larger, ecologically based non-profits, that spend your money on extravagant luxuries and overhead, our group will use funds within our local communities.

We intend to have banquets, beast feasts, shooting/archery competitions, and any thing else to raise money for traps, equipment, supplies, etc., to help you, the landowner, with feral hog problems.

Based upon our experience in seeing the hog population growth rate here, along with research from other areas of the nation where they've had hogs a lot longer resulting in much higher numbers of them, and the catastrophic impacts that high hog populations cause, we are very confident that lots of rural land owners, WILL NEED OUR HELP.

In short, hogs are a comin, folks are gonna need help, we can help, help us, so we can help you.

For more information contact: Roper Blackwell, AWWA President, 870-615-3262;
David Callahan, Operations Chief, 870-615-1795;
Kevin J. Goodwin, Public Information Chief, 870-214-1316.



Damage caused by feral hogs.
Photos submitted by Garry Butler



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Wild Hog Management *continued from last quarter*

Damage from pigs is nothing new, and wherever wild pigs are present, they inevitably become a problem. Although pigs were an important food source for early Americans, they also were widely considered a nuisance. Free-range livestock practices were commonplace in colonial America, and roaming pigs routinely damaged crops and food stores of both colonists and Native Americans. Thus they were a source of much tension among colonists and even more so between colonists and Native Americans.

Today, free-range livestock practices are no longer used in the eastern United States, and all free-ranging pigs are considered wild pigs. Just like the free-ranging domestic pigs of early America, today's wild pigs are a problem for many landowners and agricultural producers. In addition to damaging crops and livestock, wild pigs damage forests and are a threat to native wildlife and the environment. A conservative estimate of the cost of wild pig damage to agriculture and the environment in the United States is \$1.5 billion annually.

Wild pigs consume and trample crops, and their rooting and wallowing behaviors further damage crop fields. Rooting and wallowing create holes and ruts that, if unnoticed, can damage farm equipment and pose a hazard to equipment operators. Wild pigs may at times prey on livestock, including newborn lambs, goats, and calves. Livestock predation usually occurs on calving or lambing grounds where wild pigs may be attracted by afterbirth and fetal tissue.

Hardwood mast (for example, acorns and hickory nuts) is a major food source for wild pigs. Consequently, regenerating hardwoods from seed can be difficult in areas with high wild pig populations. In areas where mast or fruit has already germinated, rooting activities often dislodge and damage young seedlings. Wild pigs can damage pine plantations and natural regeneration areas through direct consumption, rooting, and trampling. Longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) seedlings in particular are favored by wild pigs because the soft root system is high in carbohydrates. Wild pigs can damage both pine and hardwood trees by using them as scratching posts. Intense rubbing and damage to the bark layers can leave trees more vulnerable to harmful insects and pathogens (bacteria, fungi, and viruses). *to be continued*



Why Control Weeds?

Properly applied weed control is one of the most cost-effective management practices available to forage producers. Many weed control practices are relatively inexpensive when compared to other pasture improvement methods. Consider the cost of the initial treatments, the life of the treatment and the cost of maintenance treatments to avoid losing what was gained by the initial application. Research the projected forage response and the financial outlay involved.

One of the most effective ways to use mowing as a means of weed control is to reduce seed production and dispersal. Timely mowing during bloom has been effective in reducing seed production of weeds like biennial thistles, cheat and downy brome. Mow in the bud stage or earlier to prevent weed seed production. Timing mowing is critical because the time between flower initiation and viable seed set is often a matter of days for many weeds. One disadvantage of mowing is the lack of selectivity. Another problem with mowing is that by the time the weeds are large enough to cut, they have done most of their competitive damage. Following a schedule is necessary if mowing is to have any effect on weeds, especially perennials.

Stone County Conservation District has cluster and boom trailer sprayers, 3 point hitch, four wheeler and back pack sprayers for rent.



Backyard Conservation

Landowners and farmers are making progress in natural resource protection. You can join them by having your own conservation tradition, right in your own backyard. Backyard conservation practices are easy and most are inexpensive. Activities can be done by individuals and families, and many practices can be adapted to community gardens, schools and other public places.

The nation's farmers have worked at protecting soil and water resources for more than 70 years. The Backyard Conservation materials share successful conservation practice ideas with non-farm neighbors. We encourage you to use in your own backyard some of the same soil conservation, water quality, wildlife habitat and natural resource protection practices farmers have been installing on their farms.

Backyard Conservation is a multifaceted cooperative project by National Association of Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Audubon and the Wildlife Habitat Council. Printed copies of Backyard Conservation materials, including books, guides and posters can be ordered through NRCS online or by calling (888) LANDCARE (526-3227). You can also download copies of the booklet and tip sheets from the NRCS Backyard Conservation Website Tip sheet topics include Backyard Pond, Backyard Wetland, Composting, Mulching, Nutrient Management, Pest Management, Terracing, Tree Planting, Water Conservation and Wildlife Habitat.

Soil Testing

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Soil testing is a useful tool for determining the kinds and rates of nutrients and/or animal wastes required to maximize and sustain profitable forage production, greener lawns and more productive gardens. Proper soil sampling is critical to ensure that soil test results accurately characterize the soil chemical properties that influence nutrient availability to plants.



The best time of year to test your soil depends on the forage species/growth habit and time of nutrient applications. For cool season forages, soil samples should be taken in late spring or early summer. For warm season forages and legume mixtures, soil samples should be taken in late fall or winter. These sample times correspond to the forage's dormant period and allow for timely collection of samples and laboratory analysis as well as planning of nutrient management strategies that maximize forage production.

Stone County residents can submit soil samples for free analysis through the Stone County Extension office located at 205 Martin Street, Mountain View or for more information call 870-269-3336.



Arkansas Grown

The Arkansas Agriculture Department announced today the release of its annual publication, *Arkansas Grown*. The *Arkansas Grown* magazine is a guide to Arkansas's farms, forests, food and exports. The articles cover a broad range of topics across the sectors of Arkansas agriculture and highlight the importance of this \$16 billion industry to the economy of Arkansas. The magazine can be viewed online by visiting www.AR-agriculture.com. Hard copies are available, while supplies last, at the Stone County Conservation District office or call the Arkansas Agriculture Department office at 501-683-4851.



Turn a Soda Bottle into a Worry-Free Self-Watering Planter

This inexpensive project makes starting or growing plants a whole lot easier by automatically keeping the soil at just the right moisture level. All you need is a 2 liter bottle and some string.

You cut the bottle in half, and thread some string or yarn through the bottle cap. Then invert the top half into the base and add your plants and soil. The yarn acts as a wick and the plants will take the water as they need it. Even better for those of us with black thumbs: The clear bottles help you see when the water needs refilling.



Quarterly Rainfall Amounts

Rainfall for the first quarter of 2015 was 15.83 inches. Data was collected daily at Station #2, located at 207 Martin Street, Mountain View.

⇒ January 4.27
⇒ February 2.14
⇒ March 9.42

Product, Services and General Information

For your conservation needs come by the office at 207 Martin Street or call 870-269-3726, extension 3 or by visiting us on the web at www.stonecountyconservationdistrict.com.

Maps:

- Ownership Books
- Topographical Maps
- Stone County Soil Survey Books

Other products:

- Filter Fabric
- Float Valves/High & Low Pressure
- Feed Bunks
- Freeze Proof Tanks
- Spring Tanks

Rental Equipment:

- Aerator
- 3 point hitch Wand Sprayer
- 4 Wheeler and Backpack Sprayers
- Backpack Blowers
- Boom and Cluster Trailer Sprayers
- Cattle Scales
- Drip Torches
- Fire Rakes
- No-Till Drills

Assorted nuts and pecans during season.

Services:

- Conservation Technical Assistance
- Conservation Stewardship Program
- Emergency Watershed Protection Program
- Environmental Quality Incentive Program
- Nutrient Management Plans

Support Conservation by buying your personalized plate at your local Department of Revenue Office.

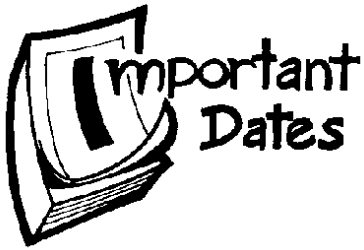


Staff:

- Martha Blackwell, District Coordinator
- Colby Smith, District Technician
- Wendy Hendrix, NRCS, District Conservationist
- Derek Hall, NRCS, Soil Conservationist Technician
- Brian Gawf, NRCS, Civil Engineering Technician
- Reggie Watson, NRCS, Farm Bill Programs Specialist

Board of Directors:

- Eddie Stewart, District Chairman
- Larry James Gammill, Vice Chair
- Derek Littrell, Secretary/Treasurer
- Barton Foll, Member
- Terry Joe Stewart, Member
- Stacey Avey, Advisory Member



- SCCD Board Meeting, 2nd Thursday of each month (call for time and place)
- NRCS Program Applications for 2016
- Time to plant Spring annuals
- 53rd Annual Arkansas Folk Festival, April 17-19
- Earth Day, April 22nd
- Arbor Day, April 24th
- Pasture Grazing Field Day, May 21st, Jack and Deane Morris Farm

Pasture Management Calendar

January, February, March

Confine animals to sacrifice areas or winter turnouts to keep them off wet pastures. Take soil samples to determine fertilizer and lime application rates.

April, May, June

Once soils begin to dry out, set up a rotational grazing system before turning your animals out. Walk fence lines and repair as necessary. Apply approximately one-third of the recommended annual fertilizer in mid- to late-spring and again in early summer. Monitor grass height, moving animals when average grass height reaches three to four inches.

July, August, September

If no pastures have adequate grass height, use a sacrifice area to rest pastures. Once the season begins to cool, reseed or overseed pasture areas with bare soil where animals will not be grazed again until spring. Apply lime and additional fertilizers as indicated by your soil test recommendations. Monitor pastures when the fall rains begin to determine if animals need to be removed.

October, November, December

Confine animals to winter sacrifice area(s).

Stone County Conservation District
207 Martin Street, Stewart Building
Mountain View, Arkansas 72560

TO: