

21 teams to compete at State Envirothon April 27

JACKSON — The 2018 Envirothon area competitions, held throughout the state on March 22, 2018, in the South, North, Central and Delta areas included more than 60 student teams with more than 360 students in the competition, and 100 teacher advisors on-site who worked with the teams to prepare for Mississippi Envirothon.

Through local soil and water conservation districts, more than 125 volunteers and resource personnel from state and federal natural resource agencies and organizations worked with educators, sharing environmental expertise to prepare teams for the competition.

Winning teams at the Area competition include:

SOUTH: Forrest County AHS FFA team; Pascagoula High School Team

A; Hancock High School Team B; Hancock High School Team A; Greene County FFA Team A;

NORTH: Oxford High School Team A; Oxford High School Team B; New Site High School FFA; New Albany High School Team A; Southaven High School Team A;

DELTA: Sharkey-Issaquena Academy Team A; Indianola Academy Team A; Delta Academy Team A; Delta Academy Team B; Cleveland Central High School Team B;

CENTRAL: Hillcrest Team A; Copiah Team A; Copiah Team D; Hillcrest Team B; Copiah Team B; Clarksdale FFA.

Mississippi Envirothon, a program of the Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts, is a hands-on natural

resource competition designed to challenge students in grades 9 through 12 to explore the natural world around them. Competitors are tested in the categories of: aquatic ecology, forestry, soils/land use, wildlife, and current environmental issues.

The Mississippi Envirothon is funded by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Chevron Pascagoula Refinery and Georgia-Pacific Monticello Mill.

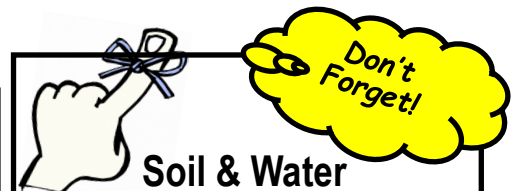
The winning team at State on April 27 will compete at the National Conservation Foundation, NCF-Envirothon Competition at Idaho State University, Pocatello, Idaho, July 22-July 26, 2018.

Celebrating 83 years of Soil Conservation

Our nation celebrates 83 years of Soil Conservation on April 27, 2018. On April 27, 1935, Congress passed Public Law 74-46, in which it recognized that "the wastage of soil and moisture resources on farm, grazing, and forest lands ... is a menace to the national welfare," and it directed the Secretary of Agriculture to establish the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) as a permanent agency in the USDA. In 1994, Congress changed SCS's name to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to better reflect the broadened scope of the agency's concerns.

Hugh Hammond Bennett, who led the soil conservation movement in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s and is today known as the father of soil conservation, served as the chief of the Soil Conservation Service, now the NRCS, until he retired in 1951.

"Out of the long list of nature's gifts to man, none is perhaps so utterly essential to human life as soil." —H.H. Bennett



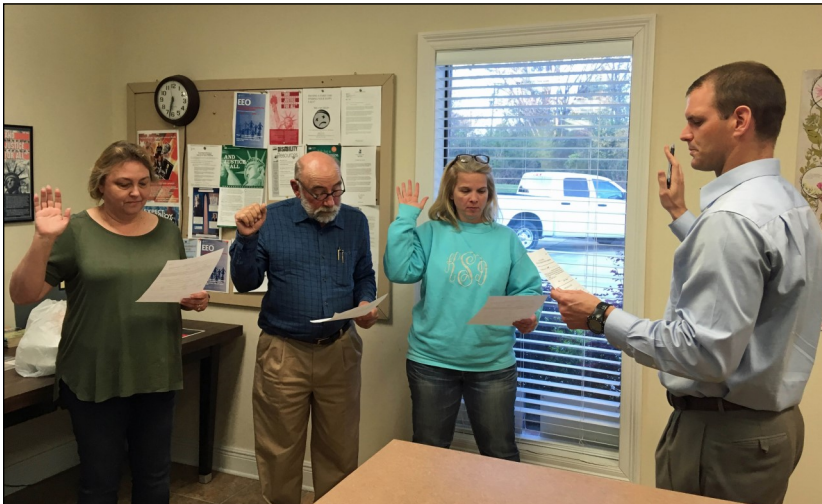
Soil & Water
Conservation Commission

YOUTH CAMP

JUNE 3-7, 2018
HINDS CC,
RAYMOND, MS

*Contact your local SWCD
for more information.
Registration deadline
is May 1, 2018!*

Four Lamar Co. District Commissioners take oath of office



Circuit Clerk Martin Hankins, at right, swears in Lamar County District Commissioners (left to right), Renee Keith, Stephen Bushardt and Kelly Soberoski. The ceremony took place on March 13, 2018, at the Lamar County SWCD office in Purvis.

Lamar County Circuit Clerk Martin Hankins, at left, swears in District Commissioner Bob Windham at the Lamar County SWCD office in Purvis on March 14, 2018.

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL 17-18, 2018
MSWCC Quarterly Board Meeting, Starkville

APRIL 27, 2018
State Envirothon Competi-

tion, FFA Center, Raymond

APRIL 30-MAY 3, 2018
NASCA Mid-Year Meeting, Biloxi

MAY 8, 2018
Marshall County Annual Meeting, 6:30 PM, Marshall Co. Extension Office, 120 S. Spring St., Holly Springs

Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission

Mark E. Gilbert, CPM, Executive Director

Buddy Allen
Chairman
Tunica, MS

Pete Hunter
Vice Chairman
Clarksdale, MS

Herman Dungan Jr.
Prentiss, MS

Jerry Smith
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Pat Ragsdale
Walnut, MS

Charlie W. Morgan
State Forester
Jackson, MS

Andy Gipson
Commissioner of
Agriculture
Jackson, MS

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Dr. Gary Jackson
Director, MSU-ES
Mississippi State, MS

Dr. George Hopper
Director, M.A.F.E.S.
Mississippi State, MS



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MSWCC among exhibitors at Magnolia Beef & Poultry Expo

RALEIGH — More than 500 people participated in the annual Magnolia Beef & Poultry Expo, held at the Smith County Ag Complex in Raleigh on Thursday, April 12, 2018.



Attendees at the Magnolia Beef & Poultry Expo visit MSWCC's booth on April 12, 2018.

In addition to 53 booths of local, national and international exhibitors, those in attendance went to break-out sessions on topics including “Recent Disease Conditions Seen in Mississippi,” “The Gap of Opportunity,” and “Low Stress Cattle Handling.”

Highlights included educational seminars with door prizes and displays of agricultural equipment for beef and poultry producers.

The event was sponsored by: MS State University Extension Service, Community Bank, First Financial Bank and Solar South LLC.



Earth Day is April 22

Looking for ideas? Visit <https://www.epa.gov/earthday>



Heather Giger presented with MACD Teacher of the Year Award

Lamar County District 4 Supervisor Phillip Carlisle, right, presents Oak Grove Upper Elementary School Heather Giger, center, the SWCD Teacher of the Year Award At right is SWCD Board Chairman and District Commissioner Renee Keith.

NEW GOVERNOR APPOINTEES

Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant appointed state Agriculture and Commerce Commissioner **Cindy Hyde-Smith** to the U.S. Senate on Wednesday, March 21, 2018. Hyde-Smith will succeed Thad Cochran, who stepped down from his Senate seat on April 1, 2018.

On March 29, 2018, Gov. Phil Bryant chose **Andy Gipson**, a 41-year-old Republican lawmaker from Braxton, to serve out the term of Cindy Hyde-Smith, that ends in January 2020.

CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORY:

Funches plants new life in soil of family farm

BY KATHY DOUGAN, MSWCC

It is early December 2017, and Otis Funches is planting 50 acres of winter wheat cover crop on his 250-acre farm in Bolivar County. As he plants, Funches has faith that the predicted rains will fall to nurture the wheat seed. The cover crop will not only improve soil health and reduce tilling and erosion, but also will help kill out pigweed, which is a huge problem in the Mississippi Delta. Funches got approval from the NRCS to plant the wheat, a variety which was genetically engineered specifically as a cover crop.

This, however, is not the first time a cover crop has been planted to improve soil health on the Funches family farm. When Otis Funches' father, Walter Funches, purchased his 40-acre farm in Shaw, MS, in 1939, he planted cotton, soybeans and cover crop. "My parents planted alfalfa clover. It helped the yield," Funches said.

Funches has worked with the NRCS and FSA to implement Best Management Practices on his farm, which is located between Sunflower and Solomon, MS. On the flat Delta land, he has put in water wells and leveled off the property to promote

drainage. He has installed control pads and a drainage system that is controlled by a computer, allowing him to irrigate when needed and to close off the system when there is rain. Water sensors indicate when

he should stop watering to keep from flooding the fields, he said.

Although his farming operation is not 100 percent no till, Funches is moving in that direction. He currently grows soybeans, discing back into the soil after harvest. He doesn't have a compost area set up yet, but is interested in composting. "Some neighbors have connections with chicken houses and swap out corn for chicken litter," Funches said. "I might try to put some of that out to increase the yield."

After about five years of controlling the water in his fields, Funches has noticed an increase in his soybean yield. "Last year I had a yield



OTIS FUNCHES

of 70 bushels on a 75-acre field," he said. The previous year the same 75-acres yielded 55 bushels. "I'm impressed with genetically altered soybeans and how they grow at a higher yield," he said.

"There's really no problems with the fertile, Delta land," he said, adding that he just needs to make sure he puts the right stuff back in the ground and rotates his crops, which he said is critical for the Delta farm land. "Crop rotation will help build it."

Funches, whose father deeded the farm to him in 1989, moved to California, where he taught science for 32 years in San Diego Public

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SUCCESS STORY (continued from page 4)

Schools. A good friend helped Funches keep the farm going while he was in California. He came home during his summer breaks from teaching, just in time to harvest. He initially grew cotton and soybeans, however, when the bottom fell out of the price for cotton, he switched to soybeans. He is contemplating planting corn next year in rotation with his soybeans, depending on the market price for corn.

Funches has noticed that no till eliminates a lot of erosion.

“Minimum tillage allows you to maintain the soil without erosion,” he said.

Keeping the farm in the family is important to Funches, and he has talked to his children and grandchildren about the land, and the importance of farming. “A lot of people, especially black people, have gone to the cities,” he said. He encourages those who have left family farms and land to come back to the South and farm again. “This is

not your grandfather’s farming procedures. Everything is technologically changed; genetically modified,” he said. “Seeds grow better than they did back when Daddy was farming.”

He acknowledges that farming is hard work, however, he wouldn’t trade it for the world. And he’s hoping his children and grandchildren will feel the same way and continue the tradition.

You’re Invited:

FIELD DAY

Friday, April 20, 2018
Piney Woods, Mississippi

REGISTRATION: 10:00 AM

PROGRAM: 10:30 AM TO 2:30 PM

FREE LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED

There is **NO COST** to attend this event, but **PRE-REGISTRATION** is required!

TO REGISTER SEND EMAIL

TO: AllianceofSustainableFarms@gmail.com

This field day is hosted by the NCAT Demonstration Farm at the Piney Woods School in Piney Woods, MS. Topics include: **“Drip Irrigation, Plastic Mulch Laying, and Transplanting Demonstrations.”** Activities are in collaboration with Foot Print Farms of Jackson, MS, and Irrigation Mart of Ruston, LA.

The demonstration farm gives hands-on training to farmers and producers in the region, and to the students of Piney Woods, about ecologically sound and profitable production practices, marketing, business planning and more. *This project is funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.*

TO REPORT A WILDFIRE 1-833-MFC-FIRE (1-833-632-3473)

MS Forestry Commission announces new Wildfire Reporting phone number

JACKSON, Miss. – The Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) has a new wildfire reporting phone number for the public to call in Mississippi: 1-833-MFC-FIRE (1-833-632-3473). Previously, numbers were broken down by geographic areas of the state. The new wildfire reporting number will allow the public to quickly report wildfires statewide to the Mississippi Forestry Commission’s Central Dispatch Center, which will dispatch the necessary wildfire suppression resources to the appropriate location.

“We are very excited to announce our new wildfire reporting number,” said Randy Giachelli, Fire Chief, Mississippi Forestry Commission. “The same number can also be used to obtain a burning permit anywhere in Mississippi.”

MSFC MEDIA CONTACT: Brighton Forester,
bforester@mfc.ms.gov; 601.500.0489