

CONSERVATION NEWS

MAR-MAY 25

COMMISSION CHRONICALS

LIVE & LOVE, MISSISSIPPI



NEW HIGHLIGHT

MARSHALL COUNTY HOSTS
4TH ANNUAL SAFETY DAY



Marshall County Hosts 4th Annual Safety Day for Over 600 Students



Students gain hands-on experience in machinery, emergency response, environmental awareness, and soil conservation

Marshall County, MS – April 17, 2025 – The Marshall County Sheriff's Department successfully hosted its 4th Annual Safety Day, welcoming more than 600 students from schools across the Marshall County School District. Held on April 17, the event brought together 27 participating vendors and agencies for a full day of hands-on safety education and demonstrations.

The primary goal of Safety Day is to give students the knowledge they need to recognize how heavy machinery can be used safely and to understand who the trusted adults are in emergency situations.

This issue:

Marshall County Hosts 4th Annual Safety Day

Celebrating the Retirement of Geana Keys

Hands-On Environmental Education

Crossword Puzzle

Environmental Day Inspires Young Minds

Employee Spotlight

Sam E. Soil Tours

Celebrating a 100th Birthday

Word Search Puzzle



Such as police officers, sheriff's deputies, state troopers, and emergency medical services personnel.



This year, for the first time, the event expanded to include natural and environmental safety. Students participated in interactive lessons on:
Snake awareness – learning how to identify dangerous snakes in the wild
Forest survival skills – what to do if lost and how to stay safe
Fire safety in the forest – preventing wildfires and knowing how to respond

The Mississippi Soil & Water Conservation Commission (MSWCC) also joined this year's lineup, teaching students about soil conservation and its vital role in supporting both wildlife and human life. Students walked away with a better understanding of how protecting soil health helps sustain Mississippi's natural environment.





Events like Marshall County Safety Day highlight the importance of community collaboration in educating the next generation on safety, responsibility, and environmental stewardship. With growing participation each year, the event continues to make a lasting impact on students and families throughout the region.



Celebrating the Retirement of Geana Keys:

A Legacy of Service, Knowledge, and Heart

*MSWCC honors a remarkable 12-year career of
dedication, community connection, and excellence in
public service*

Jackson, MS – After 12 years of faithful service, Geana Keys, Human Resources Generalist at the Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission (MSWCC), is retiring—leaving behind not only a role, but a lasting impact on the agency and the many people whose paths she crossed along the way.

A proud native of Hazlehurst, Mississippi, Geana brought with her a spirit of commitment, warmth, and professionalism that quickly made her an invaluable member of the MSWCC team. Over her time at the Commission, she developed a deep understanding of the many moving parts of the Commission, which allowed her to improve the day-to-day work of the Commission staff. More than just her institutional knowledge, Geana will be remembered for the genuine connections she made across the state. “One of the most meaningful parts of this job,” she often said, “was getting to meet people from nearly every county in Mississippi.” Her ability to connect with others and make everyone feel welcomed and valued has left a lasting impression.

“Geana’s retirement is bittersweet for all of us at MSWCC. While we are incredibly happy for her as she enters this exciting new chapter of life, we will truly miss her presence, her work ethic, and her positive energy. Geana has given 12 dedicated years of service, and her contributions to this agency go beyond her role—they’re part of the fabric of who we are. We are forever grateful for her commitment to our mission and to the people we serve. On behalf of the entire MSWCC team, thank you, Geana. You will be missed more than words can express.” — Nick Ivy, Executive Director, MSWCC





Outside of her career, Geana is a devoted mother and grandmother. Her two sons, Chris and Jake, and her grandchildren, Jacob and Beth, are her pride and joy. Whether on a baseball field or cheering from the sidelines at a soccer match, she never misses a moment to support her family. Her adventurous spirit also shines through her love of travel—having already visited Hawaii, the Virgin Islands, and with Greece next on her retirement list.

As she looks ahead to new adventures, Geana leaves behind a legacy of service that will continue to inspire those who had the privilege of working alongside her. Thank you, Geana, for your years of dedication, your heart for people, and your unwavering support of conservation in Mississippi. Enjoy every moment of your well-earned retirement—you've more than earned it.

UNION COUNTY CONSERVATION FIELD DAY BRINGS HANDS-ON ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION TO OVER 300 STUDENTS



Students explore the natural world through interactive stations, drone demonstrations, and the MSWCC Soil Tunnel

Union County, MS – April 10, 2025 – The Union County MS Extension Service hosted the annual Union County Conservation Field Day, welcoming more than 300 fifth-grade students from across Union County Schools for a day of hands-on environmental education.

The event featured 11 interactive learning stations, each designed to engage students in key conservation topics. From wildlife and bird identification to soil health and insect ecology, students had the opportunity to explore the natural world in a fun and meaningful way.

A major highlight of the day was the MSWCC Soil Tunnel, a walk-through inflatable exhibit that allowed students to crawl through and experience the underground ecosystem that supports agriculture and environmental health. “It’s all hands (and feet) on the ground here,” one educator shared, as students explored how soil sustains everything from crops to clean water.

In addition to traditional conservation topics, students also received a glimpse into the future of environmental science. Fulgham’s drone demonstration showcased how LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) technology is used to collect 3D data for urban canopy analysis, tree health monitoring, and city planning.

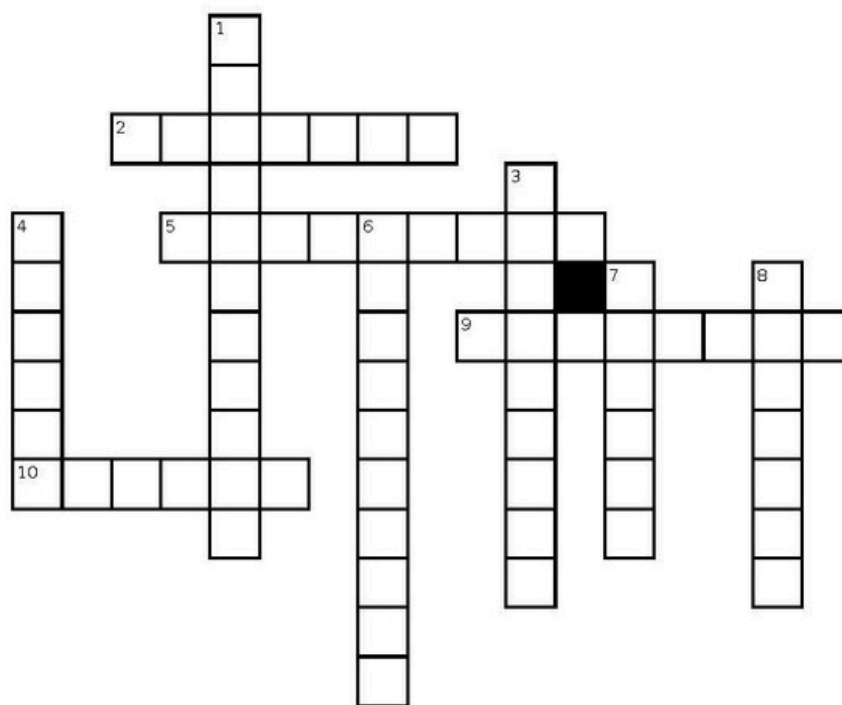


The purpose of the field day is to connect students with the natural environment, helping them understand how Mississippi's ecosystems work and why it's important to protect them. Students learned about the roles insects play, the diversity of Mississippi bird species, and how to properly care for small animals—lessons that build a foundation for lifelong environmental stewardship.

Thanks to the collaboration of educators, volunteers, and conservation professionals, Union County Conservation Field Day continues to inspire curiosity and respect for nature in young learners across the region.



Mississippi Cities Crossword Puzzle



Down:

1. Home to the University of Southern Mississippi.
3. Famous for its role in blues music history and the Delta region.
4. Birthplace of Elvis Presley.
6. Home to Mississippi State University.
7. has the longest man-made beach in the world, which is 26 miles long.
8. the first human lung transplant took place here.

Across:

2. became part of the United States with the establishment of the Mississippi Territory in 1798 and served as the first capital for the new State of Mississippi in 1817.
5. in 1863 a Siege took place here during the civil war that was a pivotal Union victory that significantly impacted the war
9. Birthplace of country music star Jimmie Rodgers.
10. Home to the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss).

Copiah County Environmental Day Inspires Young Minds at Chautauqua Park



Fifth-grade students explore conservation, safety, and natural resource education through hands-on learning

Crystal Springs, MS – Fifth-grade students from across the Copiah County School District gathered at Chautauqua Park for Environmental Day, a fun and educational event aimed at sparking early interest in natural resource conservation and environmental stewardship. The event was hosted by the Crystal Springs Parks and Recreation Department and featured six interactive learning stations.



Students rotated through each station, learning valuable lessons about the world around them. Keep Mississippi Beautiful led a session on recycling, teaching students how small actions can make a big impact on their environment. Another station focused on farm equipment and general safety tips for staying safe at home and around machinery.



Hands-on lessons in wildlife management, land use, and park trail care helped students better understand how to take care of the spaces they enjoy. The Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission (MSWCC) engaged students with a fun and educational water cycle game, which challenged them to use their critical thinking skills to follow the journey of water through its many stages and uses.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) rounded out the day with a rain simulator demonstration, giving students a visual understanding of how heavy rain impacts soil and why conservation practices are essential to preventing erosion.



The goal of Environmental Day was to help younger generations become more aware of their natural surroundings and equip them with the knowledge to care for it. By combining education with real-world application, the event provided students with a strong foundation in environmental science and conservation.



Thanks to the collaboration of local partners and educators, Copiah County's Environmental Day continues to be a valuable experience that connects students to the land and encourages responsible stewardship of Mississippi's natural resources.



Employee Spotlight

Brad Shedd Federal Programs Director

MSWCC's Federal Programs Director celebrates over two decades of service and stewardship

Sandhill, MS – For almost 23 years, Brad Shedd has been a dedicated and influential member of the Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission (MSWCC) team. As the agency's Federal Programs Director, Brad brings decades of experience, strategic leadership, and a deep-rooted passion for conservation to his role, one that impacts communities across the entire state.



A lifelong resident of Sandhill, Mississippi, located in north Rankin County, Brad is a devoted family man. He and his wife, Susan, have two children, Brooke and Lane. Outside of the office, he enjoys spending time with his family, hunting, and watching sports—interests that reflect his appreciation for Mississippi's land, traditions, and values.

In his current position, Brad manages 11 federal grants totaling over \$276 million, overseeing a wide range of programs and initiatives that support soil and water conservation efforts statewide. One of his key responsibilities includes administering payments through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in partnership with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and The Nature Conservancy. This program plays a vital role in helping landowners protect environmentally sensitive land and improve water quality.

Continued:



Brad also works closely with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to assist with the purchase of conservation equipment through the Revolving Loan Fund and Education Enhancement Fund—programs that expand on-the-ground conservation capacity in communities. His leadership extends to MSWCC’s watershed rehabilitation program, where he coordinates both lake draining projects and pipe video inspections, ensuring infrastructure remains safe, effective, and aligned with environmental priorities.

What Brad values most about his work is the relationships he’s built over the years with MSWCC staff, NRCS, district employees, and soil and water conservation district commissioners. “It’s about working together”, he says, “to conserve our natural resources for future generations.” Brad’s motivation stems from a clear and heartfelt mission: to leave the earth better than we found it. His work is not only about managing programs and budgets—it’s about making a lasting difference. His leadership, integrity, and commitment to service has made him a cornerstone of MSWCC’s success, and his impact will be felt for years to come.



Sam E. Soil Tours Calhoun County Schools to Promote Reading and Conservation

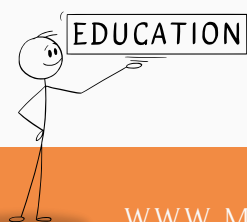
Fifth-grade students explore conservation, safety, and natural resource education through hands-on learning

Calhoun County, MS – April 4-7, 2025 – Sam E. Soil, the Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission's (MSWCC) beloved mascot, hit the road for a special school tour across Calhoun County, spreading messages about reading and soil conservation to young students.



The tour kicked off on April 4th at Calhoun Academy, where Sam E. visited classrooms and greeted K3-K5 students with cheerful high-fives and smiles. For students in grades 1 through 4, Sam E. Soils' Soil Educator read aloud and handed out coloring books designed to teach the basics of soil care and environmental awareness in a fun and age-appropriate way.

The goal of the tour was to help students understand that soil and water play a vital role in producing the things we depend on every day—like food, clothing, and clean water. By engaging students at an early age, MSWCC hopes to inspire a lifelong appreciation for the natural environment and the importance of conservation.





The tour, which ran from April 4-7, included multiple stops throughout the Calhoun County School District and was met with excitement and enthusiasm from students and teachers alike.

Through interactive visits like this, MSWCC continues its mission to educate Mississippi's youth about the value of protecting and preserving our natural resources—starting from the ground up.



A Century of Faith, Family & Farming: Celebrating Mr. Willie T. Berry's 100th Birthday



Rankin County honors a life rooted in service, stewardship, and legacy

Rankin County, MS — In a time when generations shift and landscapes change, there are still some individuals whose lives remain rooted in purpose, integrity, and unwavering connection to the land. One such man is Mr. Willie T. Berry, who turns 100 years old this year—an extraordinary milestone for a beloved World War II veteran, farmer, pastor, and lifelong land steward.

Born in 1925 on family land in Rankin County, Mr. Berry was

delivered by a midwife and raised on the very soil he still surveys today. The land—passed down from his grandfather—has remained not only a home but a sacred inheritance, sustained through a lifetime of labor, faith, and generational love.

Over the years, Mr. Berry wore many hats: a carpenter, horse-shoer, livestock farmer, and vegetable gardener, all while pastoring and raising a strong, God-fearing family. He raised hogs, cattle, chickens, and bountiful gardens that fed his family and neighbors. Even in his retirement, he could be found bottle-feeding calves and making rounds on his Kubota, ensuring the land was cared for just as it had always cared for him.

Mr. Berry's deep-rooted commitment to conservation and land stewardship led to improvements supported by local conservation programs—running water lines, restoring barns, and preserving healthy pastures. His approach to farming was not just practical—it was spiritual, sustainable, and deeply respectful of nature's rhythm.

Known affectionately as “Mr. Berry,” “Mr. Willie,” or “Papa,” he is a cornerstone of the community. Say “Berry on Monterey Road,” and everyone knows the name. His values live on in his children and grandchildren who continue to farm, build, and serve, just as he did.

Now, with limited mobility but a heart as strong as ever, Mr. Berry still rides the yard, greets visitors, and oversees the land with wisdom and pride. His faith remains unwavering, and his presence at Metropolitan Full Gospel Baptist Church, pastored by his eldest son, is constant.



On May 25, 2025, family and friends gathered “in the yard” on the Berry family property under the same tree where generations have gathered for decades. Church service was relocated to the land for the day, with a special tribute from Bishop Freddie Loftin of Florida, Mr. Berry’s nephew.



Mr. Willie T. Berry’s life is a testament to hard work, integrity, and unwavering love—for the land, his family, and his community. As he enters a new century, his legacy stands tall, like the oak under which he’ll be honored—rooted deep and reaching far.



G	U	H	W	O	C	R	B	T	E	R	U	T	S	A	P	C	O	T	T	O	N	C
C	G	N	I	K	L	I	M	A	U	R	E	Z	I	L	I	T	R	E	F	R	P	T
O	R	E	L	L	I	T	P	L	L	A	Q	M	K	C	O	T	S	E	V	I	L	H
N	J	O	C	X	V	L	M	B	Y	E	M	D	R	A	Y	N	R	A	B	C	J	G
V	T	I	P	U	U	R	O	T	C	A	R	T	A	N	P	O	R	C	I	X	Q	U
O	S	H	E	P	L	Q	R	C	M	A	N	U	R	E	A	C	R	E	A	G	E	O
R	E	X	G	L	F	T	O	A	O	F	H	Y	L	Q	S	P	R	A	Y	E	R	R
G	V	F	A	O	E	R	I	R	I	R	A	R	H	S	K	Y	R	I	A	D	J	D
A	R	K	L	W	L	E	P	V	A	N	N	E	L	B	A	N	I	A	T	S	U	S
N	A	C	I	S	T	D	W	O	A	N	F	Y	P	E	D	I	C	I	T	S	E	P
I	H	A	S	H	T	E	U	G	U	T	C	A	H	E	C	N	E	F	Q	O	A	Y
C	C	T	Z	A	A	E	F	N	C	L	E	H	L	S	T	A	E	H	W	F	B	H
V	O	S	I	R	C	S	I	R	N	V	T	M	I	L	E	G	A	L	L	I	T	E
F	L	Y	B	E	Z	D	L	E	I	Y	I	R	R	I	G	A	T	I	O	N	X	A
R	I	A	Y	Z	G	E	N	I	B	M	O	C	Y	T	O	P	S	O	I	L	M	L
J	S	H	M	Z	X	Y	Y	M	O	N	O	R	G	A	C	Z	N	I	A	R	G	N

Find the following words in the puzzle.

Words are hidden ↑, ↓, →, ←, and ↘.

SUSTAINABLE
IRRIGATION
FERTILIZER
PLOWSHARE
LIVESTOCK
PESTICIDE
CULTIVATE
BARNYARD

HAYSTACK
RAINFALL
AGRONOMY
TRACTOR
HARVEST
TOPSOIL
ACREAGE
PASTURE

COMBINE
DROUGHT
TILLAGE
POULTRY
MILKING
ORGANIC
SPRAYER
SEEDER

SILAGE
MANURE
COTTON
CATTLE
TILLER
GRAIN
WHEAT
DAIRY

FENCE
BALER
YIELD
RANCH
CROP
SILO
CORN

Farming Wordsearch

Created using the Word Search Generator on
Super Teacher Worksheets (www.superteacherworksheets.com)