



THE **C**ONSERVATION **C**URRENT

FROM THE COMMISSION

Mississippi's conservation community continues to demonstrate the power of collaboration, stewardship, and education. This quarter's newsletter highlights several important milestones, including the successful 2026 MACD Annual Meeting, preparations for the 2026 NCF Envirothon, and recognition of the incredible people who make conservation work across our state.

Across Mississippi, conservation districts, partners, educators, and landowners continue working together to protect soil, water, wildlife, and agricultural resources. The stories in this issue celebrate those efforts and the people who make them possible.

THIS ISSUE:

2026 MACD
ANNUAL MEETING

2026 INTERNATIONAL
ENVIROTHON UPDATE

INTERNATIONAL
YEAR OF THE WOMAN



2026 MACD ANNUAL MEETING: ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR



The 2026 Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting proved once again to be a tremendous success, bringing together conservation leaders, district staff, partners, and supporters from across the state. The annual gathering served as an important opportunity for Mississippi's conservation community to celebrate achievements, share ideas, and strengthen partnerships that support natural resource conservation.



One of the highlights of the meeting was the tremendous level of support shown by attendees and partners. Through sponsorships, participation, and fundraising efforts, the funds needed to support the 2026 MACD scholarship program were successfully secured. These funds will help invest in the next generation of conservation leaders while continuing to support conservation education and initiatives that benefit communities across Mississippi.

The MACD Annual Meeting continues to serve as a cornerstone event for conservation leadership in the state. Each year, it provides a platform for collaboration, recognition, and renewed commitment to protecting Mississippi's natural resources.





Keynote Speaker Inspires Audience with Message of Stewardship

A highlight of the annual banquet was the keynote address delivered by Dr. David Carter, owner of Double C Ranch and founder of Great River Outdoors in Adams County, Mississippi. Dr. Carter delivered an inspiring presentation centered on conservation, hard work, and the importance of constantly striving to improve both personally and professionally.

Drawing from decades of experience in agriculture, education, and public outreach, he encouraged attendees to continue investing in conservation practices that strengthen both the land and the communities that depend on it.

Dr. Carter holds multiple degrees in agriculture, business, and education. He has built a reputation as a respected agricultural leader and master horseman. His professional experience includes more than sixteen years as a 4-H and county agent with Mississippi State University Extension and the LSU AgCenter Extension Service. Dr. Carter gained extensive knowledge in production agriculture, horticulture, forestry, and wildlife and fisheries management.

Today, Dr. Carter continues to share his passion for agriculture and the outdoors through Double C Ranch and Great River Outdoors. His operation offers visitors unique opportunities to experience Mississippi's natural beauty through horseback riding, ATV tours, and educational programs that highlight the importance of responsible land stewardship.

His message served as a powerful reminder that conservation success is built on dedication, knowledge, and a commitment to improving the land for future generations.





Celebrating Student Achievement: 2025 MACD Scholarship Recipients

Each year, the Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts proudly supports the next generation of agricultural and conservation leaders through its scholarship program. The following students were recognized as recipients of the 2026 MACD scholarships.

M.C. Sparks Jr. Memorial Scholarship

Jacob Bernard Dodd, Sunflower County

Herman L. Dungan Jr. Scholarship

Dalton Ryan Whitt, Washington County

Paul R. Myrick Scholarship

Emily Anna Boyd, Leake County

Jack Winstead Scholarship

Allison Renea Beard, Lauderdale County

Don Underwood Scholarship

Emma Elizabeth Tindall, Webster County

Pete Hunter Scholarship

Cole Nathaniel Tadlock, Newton County

Gale Martin Youth Camp Scholarship

Emily Stewart

These scholarships represent an investment in the future of conservation in Mississippi and help encourage students to pursue careers that support agriculture, natural resources, and environmental stewardship.



Recognizing Outstanding Conservation Leaders

The annual banquet also provides an opportunity to recognize individuals who demonstrate exceptional dedication to conservation programs and service within their districts.

District Employee of the Year

Erica Fortenberry, Neshoba County, Central Area

NRCS Employee of the Year

Paul Rodrigue, Delta Area

Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner of the Year

Benny Goff, Jackson County, South Area

These awards recognize individuals who consistently go above and beyond in their work to support conservation districts throughout Mississippi.



Check out pictures of
the 81st MACD Annual
Meeting on our Flickr
Account!
Link Below!

<https://www.mswcc.ms.gov/related-links>

RESOURCES:
MACD 2026 ANNUAL MEETING - PICTURES



NCF ENVIROTHON 2026 DRAWS CLOSER

Excitement continues to grow as Mississippi prepares to host the 2026 National Conservation Foundation Envirothon. The Envirothon is the largest environmental education competition in North America and brings together top high school students from across the United States, Canada, and participating regions.



Students compete in a series of rigorous field tests that focus on forestry, wildlife, soils, aquatic ecology, and current environmental issues. The competition also provides students with valuable opportunities to connect with professionals working in conservation, agriculture, and natural resource management.



Hosting this event places Mississippi on a national stage and provides an incredible opportunity to showcase the state's conservation leadership and educational programs.

Support from partners and sponsors continues to play a vital role in the success of this event. Individuals, organizations, and businesses interested in supporting the 2026 Envirothon through sponsorship, partnership, or donations are encouraged to reach out for more information.

For questions about supporting the 2026 Envirothon, please contact Patrick Vowell at pvowell@mswcc.ms.gov.



2026 INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE WOMAN FARMER



The United Nations has officially declared 2026 the International Year of the Woman Farmer. This global initiative will highlight the critical role women play throughout agricultural and food systems across the world.

Women farmers contribute significantly to food production, environmental stewardship, and rural economic stability. Despite their contributions, their work often goes unrecognized. The International Year of the Woman Farmer aims to raise awareness and promote actions that close gender gaps and improve opportunities for women in agriculture.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, women are central to strengthening food security, improving nutrition, and building resilient agricultural communities.

In recognition of this initiative, the Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission would like to spotlight the Women of Agriculture in Mississippi who actively practice conservation.

If you are interested in being featured in an upcoming newsletter or would like to nominate a woman making an impact in agriculture and conservation, please contact Justin Polk at jpolk@mswcc.ms.gov to learn more about how to participate.

