

»»» NEWSLETTER «««

CONSERVATION NEWS

The beauty of nature and education.



TOP NEWS OF THE MONTH

**TREE
PROGRAMS
COMING
UP**

»»» **READ MORE**

The Third Grade Tree Program and the Annual Tree Giveaway will be here before we know it and we would love to have some local citizens join our volunteer group. Do you have some extra time on your hands and would like to volunteer in our community?

READ MORE «««

It's time to renew your membership with the District. We are so proud to have such a wonderful membership drive each year. We appreciate your support and look forward to serving our community in the upcoming year!

**DISTRICT
MEMBERSHIP
DRIVE**



2024 M.C. SPARKS ESSAY & POSTER CONTEST

CONTEST MATERIALS WILL BE SENT OUT TO DESOTO COUNTY SCHOOLS IN JANUARY.

THE ESSAY CONTEST WILL BE OPEN TO ALL 7TH AND 8TH GRADERS AND THE POSTER CONTEST WILL BE OPEN TO ALL GRADES AND ALL STUDENTS IN K-12.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CONTESTS PLEASE CONTACT MELEIAH TYUS AT 662-912-4152 OR VIA EMAIL AT DESOTOCOUNTYSWCD@GMAIL.COM

MEMBERSHIP

“HAVE A VOICE IN CONSERVATION”

RENEW YOUR DISTRICT MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP BY SENDING IN \$15.00 TO \$24.00 FOR EACH ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP OR \$25.00 OR MORE FOR EACH AFFILIATE MEMBERSHIP. MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES A SUBSCRIPTION TO THE BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER AND AN EVENING OF FELLOWSHIP AND FUN AT OUR ANNUAL BANQUET. THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL BANQUET WILL BE HELD AT CYPRESS HALL ON APRIL 4, 2024. MEMBERS WILL RECEIVE INVITATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S EVENT VIA MAIL. WE HAVE SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE FOR THIS EVENT. IF INTERESTED, PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO DESOTO COUNTY SWCD AND MAIL TO OUR OFFICE AT 3260 HIGHWAY 51 SOUTH, HERNANDO, MS 38632. ALL CONTRIBUTIONS ARE FULLY TAX DEDUCTIBLE AND ARE GREATLY APPRECIATED! PLEASE SUBMIT MEMBERSHIP DUES BY FEBRUARY 12, 2024.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CALL BARBARA AT 662-912-4147.

DESOTO COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT MEMBERSHIP

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PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ ST: _____ ZIP: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

- ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP (\$15.00-\$24.00)
- AFFILIATE MEMBERSHIP: (\$25.00 OR MORE)
- SPONSORSHIP: (\$100.00 OR MORE)

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE DISTRICT!!



District Conservationist's Corner

For more than 80 years, the Natural Resources Conservation Service has been a pioneer in conservation, working with landowners, local and state governments, and other federal agencies to maintain healthy and productive working landscapes.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making additional financial assistance available for agricultural producers and forest landowners nationwide who want to participate in its conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices.

Our current funding cycle ranking deadline to apply was October 27, 2023, however, NRCS accepts producer applications for its conservation programs year-round for producers interested in EQIP or CSP. Funding is provided through a competitive process.

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provided an additional \$19.5 billion over five years for climate smart agriculture through several of the conservation programs that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) implements.

For Mississippi, the FY 2024 Program Allocation is:

\$40,582,259 for EQIP

\$25,630,691 for CSP

\$42,858,000 for IRA EQIP

\$14,787,000 for IRA CSP

Making the total FY 2024 Allocation for Mississippi \$123,857,950



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is increasing the minimum annual payment for agricultural producers participating in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) from \$1,500 to \$4,000 starting in fiscal year 2024. The increase addresses challenges faced by small scale, underserved, and urban producers and improves equity in the program by making participation more financially beneficial for smaller operations.

CSP offers technical and financial assistance to help agricultural and forest producers take their conservation efforts to the next level. The program is designed to compensate agricultural and forest producers who agree to increase their level of conservation by adopting additional conservation activities and maintaining their baseline level of conservation. Examples of CSP enhancements that are suitable for being adopted by smaller scale and urban producers include:

- Planting multi-species cover crops
- Mulching with natural materials
- Establishing pollinator habitats
- Soil health crop rotation

Inflation Reduction Act and CSP Currently, an unprecedented amount of funding is available for CSP through the Inflation Reduction Act and Farm Bill.

The IRA funding includes an additional \$8.45 billion for EQIP, \$4.95 billion for RCPP, \$3.25 billion for CSP, and \$1.4 billion for ACEP. The increased funding levels begin in fiscal year 2023 and rapidly build over four years. These additional investments are estimated to help hundreds of thousands of farmers and ranchers apply conservation to millions of acres of land.

In administering the Inflation Reduction Act climate investments, USDA will also support other environmental co-benefits, including – among other things – water conservation, wildlife habitat improvements, and reducing runoff.

Please stop by the office and pick up your 2024 Soils Planner. The Soil and Plant Science Division of NRCS has made calendar-style 2024 Soils Planner is available for our local offices and our customers. This year's theme, "Back to Basics," spotlights basic soil properties and characteristics.

Happy New Year!

Chantel Davis,

Supervisory District Conservationist



Farmer Spotlight



ALLEN TWIN FARM

DeSoto Co. Mississippi

The youngest farmers in DeSoto County are the local farming twins, Laycee and Layne Allen, with Allen Twin Farm. For many years, the twins attended Conservation Kids Camp every summer where they learned about our natural resources, why we should all be good stewards of the land, and the importance of farming and agriculture. That camp inspired them to start a farm. In 2020, due to Covid restrictions the district was forced to cancel camp. At that time, they asked their dad if they could plant a small garden and that is how their story got started.

In 2020, their father was teaching them how to be self-sufficient. They started with a small garden in their backyard which quickly grew, and they expanded their growing operations over the last few years. Their farm is in Horn Lake, Mississippi. Farming and agricultural is important to them because they realized that small farms were the staple of the community.

Each year they plant sweet corn and white corn in the summer months with their purple hull peas and watermelons. In the fall, they plant specialty corn and around 20 different species of pumpkins. Their most successful crop to date is their purple hull peas. Since their farming adventures began, they have learned all about entrepreneurship and they sell their crops at the Hernando farmers market and on sight at the farm. Also, what they don't sell they put up for their family to enjoy. Their favorite crop to grow is watermelons because they tend to eat them straight out the field. They have quickly become community favorites at the local Farmer's Market.

Farming is not all the twins do in their spare time, they have also played a large part in Conservation Kids Camp by being camp leaders and by leading learning lessons. They have also gone into the local schools during the fall to educate the kindergarten students about pumpkin growing and harvesting. They have also volunteered during Conservation Field Day for local fifth graders. These twins have bright futures and will be leaders in our community one day!



LIFE
is better
- ON THE -
FARM





Meleiah Hill Tyus, Information & Education Specialist visiting with third graders at PHES!! She's using EnviroScape to demonstrate to the third graders about how pollutions occur! She also taught students about watersheds, ground water, surface water, point source and non-point source pollution. She always discusses ways to reduce pollution in our communities and how we can all be better stewards of our land and resources!
Conservation Education is the key! The more you know!

Annual Tree Giveaway

Available Species

American Plum
Bald Cypress
Common Hackberry
Highbush Blueberry
Loblolly Pine
Native Pecan
Paw Paw
Pee-Gee Hydrangea
Persimmon
Red Crepe Myrtle
Red Maple
Red Oak
Sassafras
Sawtooth Oak
Shumard Oak
Southern Magnolia
Spice Bush
Water Oak
White Flowering
Dogwood

FEBRUARY 8, 2024

Location: Bank Plus Sports Complex
Indoor Soccer Field
7360 Highway 51 N,
Southaven, MS 38671
8am-12pm

*3 seedlings per species per person *

For questions or volunteer opportunities,
please contact Meleiah Tyus at
662-912-4152 or via email at desotocountyswcd@gmail.com

May end sooner if all trees are given away before noon.



DeSoto County
**SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT**



☀️ CONSERVATION FIELD DAY ☀️

Conservation Field Day was held at the Dub Patton Day Use Facility at Arkabutla Lake on October 18 & 19, 2023. There were over 1100 students, teachers, chaperones, and volunteers that participated in this two-day event. We were blessed with beautiful weather and lots of smiles! Thank you to all who participated in this annual event.

We couldn't have hosted this event without these awesome people!!! Thank you for all your hard work and dedication!!

USACE – Cody Scruggs, Sawyer Hunt, Austin Neel Schaffer – Libby Wiseman & Chris Howe
Tate Co. SWCD – Cathy Tarver
Hernando Civic Garden Club
MS Museum of Natural Science – Deb Esz & Jackie Kerr
MS Soil & Water Conservation Commission - Chelsey Gazaway, Lauren Dettwiller, Lydia Edmonson, & Robin Tisdale
Mid-South Quail Forever - Walker Morris
DeSoto Arts Council - Kyli Collins
MDOT – Courtney Goode
Natural Resources Conservation Service – Ricky Guray, Chantel Davis, Cody Richey, Hunter Hayes
Pam Selby - Local volunteer
MS Wildlife Rehab - Mykl Wallruth & Stephanie Hogan
DeSoto County Master Gardeners -Reba Wright, Shelda Rickman, Linda Mathis, Sherry Marshall, Lee Mathis, & Edward Burke
DeSoto County Stormwater – Cathy Barham, Coby Ayers, & Jason Youngblood
Allen Twin Farm – Laycee & Layne Allen
DeSoto Co. Farm Bureau Federation/Ag in the Classroom- Deniese Swindoll
MS Wildlife Federation – Deb Veeder
DeSoto County GIS – Rob Winkler & Judith
Community Foundation of NW Mississippi – Stacye Trout & Olivia Dunning
We also want to thank the following schools for their participation:
Southaven Intermediate School
Olive Branch Intermediate School
Center Hill Elementary School
Walls Elementary School
DeSoto Christian Academy
Thank you to [Northcentral Electric Cooperative](#) for your generous donation towards snacks for the students!



yay!

2023 Accomplishments DeSoto Co. SWCD & NRCS

yay!

Conservation Education & Outreach Programs

- Visited all of the Third Grade Schools that allowed us to present an in-person program and distributed over 2500 rulers to third graders.
- Annual Public Tree Giveaway, February 9, 2023 –gave away 25,000 seedlings
- Received over 400 essays for the M.C. Sparks Memorial Essay Contests & about 100 Posters. Hosted Awards Reception in May. DeSoto County also had 2 poster winners and 1 essay winner at the area competition and advanced to the state competition.
- Hosted the North Area Envirothon Training for high school students.
- District served on planning committee for Earth Day community event and also had an education booth during event.
- Met monthly with a local homeschool group to provide conservation education lessons and activities.
- Hosted Conservation Kids Camp the week of June 26-30, 2023.
- Hosted a Producer Appreciation Event on National Ag Day.
- Visited several schools during the year to present the Enviroscape model to third, fifth, and eighth grade science classes.
- Hosted two week-long teacher workshops with over 50 teachers in attendance earning over 150 CEU's.
- Hosted the Senses and Conservation Kindergarten Field Day for Pleasant Hill Elementary at Olive Branch City Park.
- Hosted the Pleasant Hill Elementary Ag Day (in school field trip)
- Hosted the Lake Cormorant Elementary Ag Day (in school field trip)
- Hosted Conservation Field Day for fifth graders October 18 & 19, 2023. Over a thousand students from various DeSoto County schools participated.
- Led an education session at the North Area District Employee Education Training.
- Visited many schools throughout the year to cover various conservation education related teacher requests.

NRCS Allocations

Soil Health Initiative - Cropland	1 contract	\$8,152.88
Cover Crop Initiative -General	1 contract	\$73,066.00
Area 1 Grazing Lands	3 contracts	\$49,957.58
Area 1 Cropland	2 contracts	\$83,092.00
Wildlife Habitat	2 contracts	\$3,982.77
IRA-EQIP-CSAF-BFR	1 contract	\$26,281.00
IRA-RQIP-CSAF-SDFR	1 contract	\$28,046.00
EQIP Programs	11 contracts	\$273,830.13



There were three Conservation Stewardship Program contracts totaling \$865,442.00.

DeSoto County total allocations to landowners for FY23 was \$1,139,272.13.

For FY24, Mississippi has \$123.8 million for EQIP, EQIP IRA, CSP, AND CSP IRA combined.

Conservation & Our Senses

The district hosted the second annual Conservation and our Senses field trip for Pleasant Hill Elementary School kindergartners on September 27, 2023. This event teaches students how we can tie in using our five senses while learning about natural resources and our environment. We want to thank our partners that helped make this field trip a huge success! First and foremost, thank you to the Olive Branch Parks and Recreation department for sharing their beautiful park with us and PHES. They were also kind enough to provide and setup the tables and chairs we needed for the event! We also want to thank a few of our partner agencies for leading conservation education stations that tie into our five senses, Mississippi Soil & Water Conservation Commission, Desoto County Extension Office, Master Gardeners of Desoto County, Mississippi Forestry Commission, and DeSoto County Farm Bureau Federation/Ag in the Classroom! We appreciate you sharing your knowledge with these sweet kiddos! It with such a fun and educational event! We enjoy hosting this field trip for these awesome students and their teachers and look forward to it each year!



AG DAY

KINDERGARTENERS AT PLEASANT HILL & LAKE CORMORANT ELEMENTARY LEARNED ALL ABOUT FARMING AND AGRICULTURE.



DESOTO COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT



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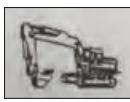
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