Farmland protection work

The District continues to build on the work started through the 2005 Farmland Study for Campbell County. Board members and staff from the Campbell County Conservation District and their partners continue to work to implement recommendations from the study. Partners include: Campbell Conservancy, Campbell County Fiscal Court, Campbell County Planning Commission, Campbell County Cooperative Extension Service, Campbell County Cattle Association, Campbell County Farm Bureau, Northern Kentucky Horse Network, Northern Kentucky University Center for Applied Ecology, and the Campbell County Economic Progress Authority. Campbell County Conservation District members on the Farmland Work Group include Dennis Walter, Linda Bray-Schafer, and Ron McCormick, and former board members Helen Fehr and Alan Ahrman. Staff assisting were Linda Grizzell, Jennifer Mason, and Mary Kathryn Dickerson.

The Outreach Task Force, chaired by Linda Bray-Schafer, launched its third annual Campbell County Backroads Farm Tour this year. Visitors enjoyed the warmth and generous hospitality of fifteen Campbell County farm owners on Sat., July 23, 2011. The tour attracted more than 1,666 visitors with 5,945 farm visits at all locations. Most of the visitors were from Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati with seven states and 72 cities represented. The tour crisscrossed the county showcasing a greenhouse operation, three vineyards, a museum, horse farms, a 4-H project farm, a honey bee farm, a forestry and switchgrass operation, and beef, grain, and tobacco farms. Visitors were directed along some of the county’s most scenic back roads while stops along the way offered the opportunity to purchase fresh produce, honey and wine, and learn from some of our best farmers about the farming process. Two Campbell County Proud Gift Baskets and 15 t-shirts were given away in drawings from completed visitor surveys. The task force is planning next year’s tour for July 14, 2012.

A Farm to Fork event was held on August 1, 2011 at the Lazy K Ranch in Southern Campbell County with over 130 in attendance. Guests included business, community and political leaders in the county. The event was held to reconnect people to the land and the farmers who produce quality local food and wine. Speakers included First Lady Jane Beshear and Mac Stone, Executive Director in the Office for Ag Marketing and Product Promotion with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture. The meal was prepared by chefs Jean-Robert de Cavel, Laine Steelman, and Matthew Buschle, along with their associates, using locally grown foods.
The District’s easement committee is working to draft policies and procedures relating to conservation easements. The committee consists of board members Ron McCormick and Sanford Record.

Farmland Work Group members Don Girton, Alan Ahrman, and Don Sorrell met with Campbell County Property Valuation County Administrator Daniel Braun in February about agricultural and farm building assessments. Rates for pastureland and cropland rental were also revised. In each case, the rates and assessments were lowered as compared to the state guidelines, better reflecting local conditions. Re-assessments are performed every four years.

The Farmland Work Group is working with the Campbell County High School Future Farmers of America Chapter in a land leasing program where students may rent land from a landowner for a minimal fee and harvest their crops. Educating our youth is included in the committee’s strategic plan.

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is provided to Campbell County through Greta Steverson, District Conservationist, and Allen Arthur, Soil Conservation Technician, with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), our federal partner, and Campbell County Conservation District staff. Greta Steverson was welcomed as the new District Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service in October 2011. Jennifer Zimmer, a student studying conservation and geology, joined the NRCS as a summer intern in June 2011.

In 2011-12, staff provided assistance to over 230 Campbell County landowners concerning conservation planning, rotational grazing systems, wildlife habitat improvement, forestry practices, animal waste control, nutrient management, storm water runoff, drainage, erosion and sediment control, and other conservation needs.

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The NRCS, Conservation District, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, and Kentucky Division of Forestry work together to assist landowners with programs under the federal Farm Bill. Landowners have several years to complete practices and are required to maintain the practices for up to 20 years, depending on the program requirements. The staff also currently provides ongoing assistance for 17 contracts under the 2008 Farm Bill. These contracts cover 1,422 acres of land and are valued at $259,481. An additional five applications covering 155 acres have been received. The value of those applications is $15,779.

Agricultural Districts - There are fourteen agricultural districts in Campbell County with a total of 12,139 acres and 249 landowners.

The District operates a Cricket 3-ton Lime Spreader for rent to Campbell County farmers for $25/day for spreading lime to improve productivity by increasing the soil pH. Before using the lime spreader farmers must attend a safety training program offered by the Campbell County Extension Service. The spreader was purchased as a cooperative effort of the Campbell County Farm Bureau, Campbell County Extension Service, Campbell County Cattle Association, and the Campbell County Conservation District. It was rented by four farmers this fiscal year and brought in revenue of $125. It is housed and managed by board member Ron McCormick.

Agriculture Water Quality Act - A total of 599 landowners currently have a self-certification form filed with the District stating that they have developed and are implementing a water quality plan for their operation. In cooperation with Campbell County Extension Agent Don Sorrell, NRCS Staff Greta Steverson and District Staff John Stork assisted in a workshop entitled “Developing and Funding a Stewardship Plan for Your Farm” in February and March to assist farmers in completing or updating an Ag Water Quality Plan. The final step in this series will be a farm tour to 2-3 farms this summer to showcase completed best management practices.
Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Fund – This year no funds were approved to county producers through the Ky. Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Fund to help install Best Management Practices on their farms to resolve resource problems. Producers may be granted up to two years to complete their practices. This fiscal year one county producer completed a project and was paid $5,249 in cost share assistance.

Farm Dump Removal Grants – The Conservation District received a grant from the Kentucky Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Fund to assist in cleaning up farm dumps. One application was approved and one producer has been awarded $1,875 this fiscal year. Board members Gene Dobbs and Ron McCormick serve on this committee. The funds were extended to include storm damage removal caused by the March tornadoes. Three producers have applied and two have been awarded $1,000 each.

Dead Farm Animal Disposal Program - The District received a matching grant from the Kentucky Division of Conservation Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Fund to assist landowners with proper disposal of fallen livestock. This year 33 producers participated in the program that assisted in the disposal of 23 cows, 9 horses, and 1 goat. The program also assists the county animal shelter with costs for proper disposal of pets. A total of $2,888.36 was awarded from the grant this fiscal year.

Alternative Agriculture Grant – Last fiscal year the Conservation District received a grant from the Kentucky Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Fund to assist landowners who are not eligible for traditional Farm Bill cost share programs. The grant assists landowners to install practices to control sediment and erosion. Three applications are pending completion for this fiscal year. Staff John Stork provides the technical assistance.

Pond Scum Project - District staff has been working the past few years with local farmers and lake owners to help identify problems with algae. The Boone, Campbell and Kenton County Conservation Districts received a KSW9 Environmental grant for a joint program to demonstrate Best Management Practices for controlling pond and lake algae growth. Uncontrolled growth may affect their use for livestock water and other purposes. Partners in this project are Dr. Miriam Kannan with Northern Kentucky University and the Foundation for Ohio River Education (FORE). A field day is scheduled for August 2012. Supervisors Larry Varney and Ron McCormick serve on this committee.

Weed Management Project - Students from NKU conducted a survey of local farmers about invasive species knowledge. The results should be compiled later this year and will help the districts better understand the extent of the problem and what types of educational programs and resources or tools are needed to assist landowners. The Boone, Campbell and Kenton County Conservation Districts received a KSW9 Environmental grant for a joint program to demonstrate effective ways of controlling invasive species on private and public lands. A field day is scheduled for October 2012. Supervisors Larry Varney and Ron McCormick serve on this committee.

Agriculture Development Fund - This is a program of the County Agriculture Development Council set up to administer funds from the Phase I tobacco settlement. Funds are available for model programs such as cattle genetics, cattle handling facilities, forages, fencing, agricultural diversification, and hay/grain storage facilities programs. The new state guidelines make all programs available to County applicants. This fiscal year Board member Dennis Walter and former board member Alan Ahrman served as the district’s representatives to this county board. The Conservation District administers the program in Campbell County. Dennis attended the County Ag Development Council meeting in July, and Dennis and staff Linda Grizzell attended another meeting in February. The District voted to administer the program again for 2012. The county council awarded $28,631 to 13 producers this fiscal year. Staff John Stork performs the field visits for the District to verify completion and that all requirements are met.

(Continued on page 4)
Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund Grant – The Conservation District, in cooperation with the Campbell Conservancy and the Campbell County Fiscal Court, continues work on the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund Board (KHLCFB) grant that helped purchase land along the Licking River. The Conservancy gave a five-acre tract bordering the Hawthorne Heritage tract to the Conservation District. The property will be open in the future for hiking, bird watching, nature study, and a stop along the Licking River for canoeing and kayaking.

A project through the Northern Kentucky University Center for Applied Ecology is removing invasive species and repairing several areas along the stream. Efforts to preserve a log cabin home site continue.

Bellevue Landslides – Staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson is working with residents in Bellevue on hillside slippage issues and making inquiries about possible funding to assist with local match and geotechnical studies for projects. She assisted with the publicity for and attended a community meeting with Bellevue residents in February. Board member Ron McCormick also attended. The conservation district’s goal is to connect people to the resources they need to help resolve these issues.

Projects and Partners

Campbell Conservancy – In August 2006, the Conservancy and Conservation District Board approved an agreement through which the Conservation District provides administrative and technical services to the Conservancy for a nominal fee. The Conservation District also provides a space for meetings and storage of records. District Administrative Secretary Linda Grizzell provides staff support for the Conservancy. Members of the Conservancy are: Penny Hoskin, chair; Don Girton; Barney Stengle; Bonnie Richmond; Donavan Hornsby; Mark McGinnis; Mike Waligura; Scott Fennell; Scott Steinhard; Susan Utt; Joe Piller; Melissa Williams; David Peck; David Shaw; and Peter Garrett. Advisory Board members are Mary Kathryn Dickerson of the Campbell County Conservation District, DJ. Scully of the Campbell County Cooperative Extension Service, Robert Horine of Campbell County Fiscal Court, and Peter Klear of Campbell County Planning and Zoning.

Campbell County Ag Community Leaders’ Meeting – The Campbell County Conservation District co-hosted a breakfast meeting in November at the Campbell County Environmental Education Center at A. J. Jolly Park. Speakers included representatives from the Northern Kentucky Vintners and Grape Growers Association, Campbell County Cooperative Extension Service, Campbell County Farm Bureau, Northern Kentucky Horse Network, Campbell County Cattle Association, Northern Kentucky Agritourism Network, and the Conservation District. This annual event provides a forum for agricultural organizations and agencies to present issues of concern to state legislators and county officials. Conservation District board members who attended were Larry Varney, Dennis Walter, Ron McCormick, Linda Bray-Schafer, Ken McCormick, Sanford Record, and staff Linda Grizzell and Mary Kathryn Dickerson.
Staff member Mary Kathryn Dickerson represents the District on the Solid Waste Technical Advisory Committee.

Through a partnership with the Cooperative Extension Service Agriculture Agents, the Northern Kentucky Agritourism Network was officially formed as a 501(c)3 organization and includes the counties of Campbell, Boone, Kenton, and Pendleton. Supervisor Dennis Walter is the president and Linda Bray-Schafer serves on the steering committee.

The Boone, Campbell and Kenton County Conservation Districts hosted their third Joint Agency meeting to discuss ways our agencies can better serve clients in our three counties. Representatives from the Natural Resources Conservation Service; Farm Service Agency; the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet - Division of Air, Waste Management and Water; the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources; Campbell County Cooperative Extension Service Agricultural Agent; and the Kentucky Division of Forestry attended. Board members Larry Varney, Sanford Record, and Linda Bray-Schafer; and staff Linda Grizzell, John Stork and Mary Kathryn Dickerson also attended.

Board member Larry Varney attended the 2012 Licking River Watershed Watch Annual Meeting in Winchester, KY in February. Larry volunteers with the group as their web master.

Board member Larry Varney attended Northern Kentucky Urban & Community Forestry Council Annual fall dinner in October and their monthly meeting in May.

Reforest Northern Kentucky – Board Chairman Larry Varney attended Reforest Northern Kentucky 2012 in Ft. Thomas in Campbell County in April. Even though it rained and the event was shortened due to the rain, many trees were planted.

Education and Outreach

Tree Planting and Urban Forestry Enhancement - The Campbell County Conservation District has been giving matching grants for Tree Planting and Community Beautification since 1993 to help cities and communities establish programs or develop projects to protect and conserve our natural resources. The project must be accomplished on lands located in Campbell County that are owned, leased, or otherwise controlled by city, county, state, or federal government and must include funding or in-kind contributions in an amount equal to the grant request. This year four grants were awarded. The City of Bellevue received $2,500 for their “City-wide Tree Planting Plan” and the City of Alexandria received $500 for their “Beautification of Washington Street” project.

A booth at the Alexandria Fair and Horse Show was shared by the Campbell County Cattle Association, the Campbell County Beef Association, the Northern Kentucky Vintner and Grape Growers’ Association, Campbell County Farmer’s Market, Campbell County Extension Service, Northern Kentucky Beekeepers’ Association, and the Campbell County Conservation District. The booth promoted their respective programs that include wine, honey, produce, and farmland protection. Supervisors Larry Varney, Linda Bray-Schafer, and Sanford Record helped to man the booth.

Board members participated in the Alexandria Fair & Horse Show by purchasing a fair book advertisement featuring “Buy Fresh Eat Local” supporting Campbell County farmers. They also purchased animals at the 4-H/FFA Livestock Sale, in partnership with several other organizations, and sponsored the 4-H Forestry Award (a $50 savings bond) at the Alexandria Fair and Horse Show. Board member Larry Varney presented the forestry award at the fair to Hannah Myers.

Education Grants - The Campbell County Conservation District has offered education grants since 1991 to assist schools in fostering learning about conservation and our environment. Grant applications are accepted from October through January each year. This year one grant was awarded. Crossroads Elementary received $1,000 for their “Plants and Trees with a Purpose” project.

Board member Larry Varney attended the Crossroads Elementary Appreciation Luncheon in September. He toured their outdoor classroom that was enhanced by funds from the District’s Education Grant.

Conservation Scholarships - Alexandra Lynn Rawlings received a $1,000 scholarship for her academic year through the Campbell County Conservation District. She is a sophomore at the University of Louisville and her field of study is biology.

The Campbell County Conservation District supports the Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts Auxiliary Scholarship program through a donation of money. Items for the annual auction are donated by board members and partners.

When applicable, the District sponsors a $175 scholarship to attend the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources’ Camp Webb. This year the District awarded a scholarship to (Continued on page 6)
Josh Wagner from Reiley Elementary. Scholarships are made possible by donations from local hunting and fishing clubs and sponsors, such as the Campbell County Conservation District.

**Writing and Art Contests** – “Where Kentucky’s Wild Things are…” was the topic for this school year’s Conservation Contests. In the Art Contest there were 562 entries from ten schools. In the Writing Contest there were 242 entries from eight schools. County and school winners received a certificate of achievement from the District. Also from the District, the art winners received a *Wild Life of Elk* book and the writing winners received the book *ELK: A Falcon Field Guide*. All teachers received a cash award from the Conservation District. The K-2 art winner received a $25 check from the District. Students also received Legislative Citations to honor their work from Senator Katie Stine and Representatives Joe Fischer and Tom McKee. The meal was catered by Sis’s Family Restaurant & Catering from Newport.

Sister Dolores Gohs, St. Philip School, was the recipient of the District’s Teacher Incentive Award for the Writing and Art Contests.

**Highlands High School** of Ft. Thomas competed for the third time in the East Regional State Envirothon competition in April with two teams. One team moved on to the state competition in May placing seventh overall out of 12 teams and placing second in wildlife.

The **Cooperator of the Year** was Howard and Terry Kleier of Lazy K Ranch. They were nominated for the award by the Campbell County Conservation District for their hard work and stewardship of their 79 acres in Campbell County. They own Rocky Mountain horses, which they formerly showed. Their operation concentrates on holding horse seminars, giving riding lessons and hosting benefit shows. They implement excellent rotational grazing practices and acquire soil tests on their pastures every other year for proper nutrient management. They were host to the Campbell County Farm Work Group’s Farm to Fork event in August and provided the space for our farm tour host dinner. Lazy K has been a Backroads Farm Tour stop for the past three years and will be again for the farm tour in July 2012.

This fiscal year the **District Appreciation Award** was presented to **Community Media Central** for their technical services. The staff is friendly, cooperative, and highly skilled. They videotape our annual community leaders meetings, awards dinners, and compile our cooperator of the year videotapes for the District as a part of their community services.

The quarterly newsletter, *Landscapes*, reaches over 2,000 Campbell County farmers and other cooperators.

Board member Larry Varney maintains a web site for the District, at [http://home.fuse.net/campbellcd](http://home.fuse.net/campbellcd).

The district also set up a Facebook page this year and can be found at Campbell County Conservation District, Kentucky.

**Big Bone Lick State Park Discovery Days** – Board member Larry Varney worked at October’s Big Bone Lick State Park Discovery Days. Staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson organized the Boone-Campbell-Kenton District booth at the three-day event. Staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson worked the school-day booth on Friday and had approximately 350 visits from students, parents, and faculty. The Districts hosted over 500 visitors total during the festival. The booth focused on Kentucky’s wildlife, which was the theme of the annual Conservation Writing and Art Contests this year.

The district supports the **NKU Environmental Education Alliance** and the **Environmental Education in No. Ky. Resource Guide** is available through the district office.
District Operations and Involvement

Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts (KACD) – The state convention was held at the Galt House in Louisville in July. Board members Dennis Walter, Ken McCormick, Ron McCormick, Sanford Record, Gene Dobbs, and Larry Varney attended the meeting. Staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson prepared displays for Boone, Campbell, and Kenton Counties.

The District participates in the 10-minute Supervisor Trainings provided by Division of Conservation Field Representative Linda Hunter during district board meetings.

Ron McCormick, Ken McCormick, Gene Dobbs, Larry Varney, Linda Bray-Schafer, Dennis Walter, Mary Kathryn Dickerson, John Stork, and Linda Grizzell attended the KACD Area 5 meeting in Campbell County. Thirteen counties were represented with 60 in attendance.

Board members Larry Varney and Sanford Record attended supervisor training in Warsaw in April.

Board members serve on statewide KACD committees, which meet annually: Public Information, Sanford Record; Research and Natural Resources, Larry Varney; and Education, Ken McCormick.

Soil & Water Conservation Commission – Chairman Larry Varney was appointed by the Governor to serve on the Kentucky Soil & Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) effective July 1, 2010. Larry attends the SWCC meetings throughout the year. The SWCC provides leadership and guidance for the Kentucky Division of Conservation and Kentucky’s 121 Conservation Districts.

The Campbell County Conservation District is a member of the National Association of Conservation Districts.

Board member and Soil and Water Conservation Commissioner Larry Varney attended the 2012 Agriculture Legislative Appreciation Reception at the Kentucky State University Research and Demonstration Farm in Frankfort in January. Staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson also attended and provided displays from Boone, Campbell, and Kenton County Districts.

Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts Employee Association (KACDE) – The conservation district supports the work of the KACDE with a small donation each year, earning them the “Handtool Award”. The employee association helps provide training and support for district employees.

Board member Sanford Record received an award for 35 years of service as an elected Conservation District Supervisor. Staff member Linda Grizzell received an award for 10 years of service as a Conservation District employee.

Legislative Action - Dennis Walter serves as the district’s legislative liaison.

Board member Larry Varney made a presentation to Campbell County Fiscal Court at their regular meeting in April. The presentation covered the District’s goals, accomplishments, and plan of work. Staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson assisted in the preparation and also attended the meeting.

Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Conservation Council (OKI-RCC) The annual meeting was held at the OKI Regional office in April. Board members Sanford Record, Ron McCormick, Larry Varney, Ken McCormick, Gene Dobbs, and
(Continued from page 7)

Linda Bray-Schafer attended. Larry Varney participated on the planning committee for the meeting. Larry Varney is treasurer and the District holds the OKI funds. A conservation tour is hosted each year by a member of the OKI-RCC. Those attending the tour in Butler County in September were board members Larry Varney and Sanford Record. Next year’s tour is being planned in Campbell County.

Board member Larry Varney is also on the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI-RCG) Planning Forum that meets quarterly. OKI-RCG is committed to helping local government in the region implement well-defined land use and transportation strategies and enhance and conserve environmental resources. Staff member Mary Kathryn Dickerson participated in several focus groups for the OKI-RCG transportation planning initiative.

The Executive Committee of the Campbell County Conservation District meets as needed with those of the Boone and Kenton County Conservation Districts. The boards work together on conservation programs and employee policy, making changes as needed.

Security and Privacy Act Training – All District staff completed USDA training in basic Security and Privacy Act compliance.

Standing Committees of the District are:
Land Use Committee – Dennis Walter, Chairman; Linda Bray-Schafer; Larry Varney, and, Sanford Record. Advisory Committee: DJ. Scully, Don Sorrell, and Dave Koester, Campbell County Cooperative Extension Service; Greta Steverson, NRCS District Conservationist; and, John Stork, Campbell County Conservation District staff. Gene Dobbs is the Agriculture Water Quality Act contact in the event a landowner is cited for violations under the Bad Actor clause of the Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Act (AWQA).

Conservation Education and Public Information Committee – Ron McCormick, Chairman; Gene Dobbs, Ken McCormick, and Larry Varney. Advisory Committee: DJ. Scully and Owen Prim of the Campbell County Cooperative Extension Service and Helen Fehr, former district board member.

District Funding - District revenue is provided through a county tax on real property and funding from the Kentucky Division of Conservation. A complete financial report is available at the district office.

District Property - In December 2010 the District purchased 2,456 acres of land in Southern Campbell County. Future plans for the land have not been confirmed. This fiscal year a culvert project was completed to acquire access to the property from US 27 (Alexandria Pike).

Staff

Greta Steverson  
District Conservationist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Allen Arthur  
Soil Conservation Technician  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Linda Grizzell  
Administrative Secretary  
Campbell County Conservation District

Mary Kathryn Dickerson  
District Coordinator  
Campbell County Conservation District

John Stork  
Conservation Technician  
Campbell County Conservation District