

Soil and Water Gazette

Manatee River Soil and Water Conservation District

Fall 2020

A Brief History of the District

The **Manatee River Soil and Water Conservation District (MRSWCD)** was chartered by the State of Florida on April 5, 1945.

The District Board of Supervisors entered into an agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture, whereby the USDA/NRCS provides technical information and experienced conservation personnel to the district. Manatee County Government has been and continues to be a strong supporter of the MRSWCD by providing staff and technical assistance.

Supervisors meet regularly on the second Monday night of each month at 6:00 pm at the Manatee Extension Office in Palmetto (due to the pandemic the public should call the office if interested in attending a meeting).

Board Members

Paul Howard	Chairman
John J. O'Connor, Jr.	Vice-Chairman
Ben King	Treasurer
Callon C. (Buddy) Keen, Jr.	Supervisor
Julie Tillett	Supervisor

USDA FARM BILL PROGRAM

Cost Assistance for Conservation Practices

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is now accepting applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), including the following subaccounts National On-Farm Initiative, National Organic Initiative, High Tunnel System, Long Leaf Pine Initiative, Working Lands for Wildlife, and Conservation Activity Plans.

USDA program applications are accepted on a continuous basis.

Farms and ranches will be ranked based on environmental benefits, then government **incentive funds** will be allocated based on highest to lowest ranking until available funds run out.

For more information or to receive an application contact the local NRCS office at (941)907-0011 or visit <http://www.fl.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>

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OFFICE STAFF:

Angela Bright	Administrative Specialist II
Israel Vega-Marrero	District Conservationist
Jeremy Ansel	Soil Conservation Technician
Christine Russo	Soil Conservation Planner
Gail Somodi	Soil Conservation Supervisor

An Equal Opportunity Provider, Employer, and Lender.

MRSWCD News: For more information on these programs call 907-0011. *If you would like to make a donation to the MRSWCD to help defray the costs of MRSWCD sponsored student programs, please call 907-0011 Ext 3142. Any donations would be greatly appreciated.*

Speech Competition

Seven participants prepared a 5-7 minute speech on the topic selected by the Association of Florida Conservation Districts, "Where would we BEE without Pollinators?" Kea Kamiya, a State College of Florida Collegiate School senior, won the competition and was awarded a check for \$150. Placing second and awarded \$100 was Bailey McGreevy, a Braden River High School student. Billie Mason, a Palmetto High School student, placed third and received \$75. Kamiya qualified for the area contest which was cancelled due to the pandemic. Kamiya is registered for the state contest which will be held virtually.

Staff hosted 7 participants with the help of 3 volunteers.

Manasota Regional Envirothon

Palmetto High School's *The Green Gang* team advised by Leah Breth was the Manatee County winner of the Manasota Regional Envirothon. The team represented Manatee County at the state contest, earning special recognition in the Soil and Land Use category. The state contest was held online due to the pandemic. The Florida Envirothon competition is a field event for high school students requiring problem solving, teamwork and the application of knowledge in five areas: aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and current environmental issues.



Staff assisted 122 students with the help of 40 volunteers.



Manatee County Land Judging Competition

The 59th annual event allowed students from local 4-H and FFA chapters to compete and show their knowledge of soil science, home site evaluation and conservation practices on a parcel of land. The students compete for the opportunity to represent Manatee County in the state contest and possibly move on to the national competition held annually. Lakewood Ranch High School won the senior FFA team division and the junior FFA winning team was from Buffalo Creek Middle School. One intermediate 4-H individual and one senior 4-H team also competed. The overall highest scoring team was from Lakewood Ranch High School. Several top teams qualified for the state contest in late March. The state contest was not held due to the pandemic.

Staff assisted 61 students with the help of 7 volunteers.

Manatee Spring Conservation Farm Tour

Each spring the MRSWCD sponsors a Farm Tour of the county showcasing various farming areas and communities. We take citizens on a guided bus tour to highlight the importance of agriculture to our area. Lunch and snacks are provided. **For more information on attending in spring 2021 please call 941-907-0011 x 3142.** We may move to a virtual format for 2021. If you would like your farm/agricultural operation to be considered as a stop on the tour please call us. The 2020 Spring Farm tour was planned, but then cancelled due to the pandemic.

2021 Manatee River SWCD Spring Event Update

In this space we announce our spring event dates. Due to COVID-19 we are unsure of format and dates of the Envirothon, Land Judging, and Farm Tour. These events may be altered in format or not held.



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service Corner

Conservation Stewardship Program. This program is a great way for producers to maintain and improve their existing conservation systems as well as adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resource concerns. CSP addresses resource concerns such as soil, water, air quality, and plant/animal resources. The program will pay participants based on their level of conservation performance in an annual payment for a five year contract period. Eligible applicants must meet the stewardship threshold for at least two priority resource concerns at the application phase, they must be in control of the land with which they are applying, and agree to meet or exceed the stewardship threshold for at least one priority resource concern by the end of the contract. Cropland, pastureland, and forestland are some examples of qualifying land types. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/fl/programs/financial/csp/>

Statistics 2020 (Oct 2019-Sept 2020)

Customers assisted	4,194
Students assisted through educational events/classroom visits	610
Adult education through farm tours and training	120

2020 Conservation Applied (Acres) (Oct 1, 2019-Sep 30, 2020)

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and other programs	1,792
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Services Provided

Natural Resource Information. NRCS access to recent and historical aerial photographs, topography maps, and soil maps.

USDA Soil Survey Distribution. Soil surveys used for development and crops are available. Soil survey information for many areas may now be found online at <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/> Please contact us if you would like assistance.

Develop Conservation Plans on land used for agriculture. The plans recommend Best Management Practices for protecting resources.

Available Programs

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and others. Call for information 941-907-0011.

Manatee River Soil and Water Conservation District

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Fax (Toll Free): 1(855)464-1961

Soils Unit/Extension website
<http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/manatee/agriculture/soils-unit/>
MRSWCD website
<http://www.manateeriverswcd.com>

Farm City Week

For more information contact

Crystal Snodgrass/ County Extension Director at 722-4524 ext. 1812

Due to COVID-19 event details are subject to change

- Nov 9** MRSWCD Speech Contest: “Healthy Forests = Healthy Communities” Pre-registration required. Results will be announced at the Manatee River Soil and Water Conservation District meeting scheduled for this date.
- Nov 12** Ag Venture
- Nov 14** Beef Workshop and Prospect Show
- Nov 17** Kiwanis Agriculturalist of the Year/Hall of Fame Joint Event
- Nov 20** Farm Tour (virtual format)

The **Prospect Beef Show** educates the youth of Manatee County on their beef projects in areas such as the industry, proper animal care, show techniques and how to prepare their animals. The focus this year will be on showmanship. This show is provided to the youth of Manatee County through sponsorships. If you are interested in being a sponsor or **for more information** contact Extension Agent Christa Kirby 722-4524 ext. 1824 or visit <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/manatee/agriculture/livestock--forage-crops/>