



### April 2012 Spring Issue

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## The Pearl Preview

**Dear Area 2 Conservationists:**

As your new AC, I thought some of you might like to know a little about my background. I grew up in Tallahatchie County in the small town of Charleston, MS. As the son of a part-time cattle farmer, I have a vast knowledge of what I would call "county boy wisdom" when it comes to conservation. My Dad and Granddad were practicing stewardship of the land before I knew what to call it.



**David Brunson**  
*Area Conservationist*

I started as a soil conservation aide being hired through the local Conservation District in 1986. In between my junior and senior year of college at MSU, I applied for a student trainee position. A position was offered to me at the SCS office in Coffeerville, MS. Ten days after graduating MSU with a B.S. in Agricultural Economics, I started my career with the SCS. I worked in the Coffeerville Field Office for a little over 2 years and then became a Soil Conservationist in Humphreys County smack dab in the Mississippi Delta. Later I became District Conservationist. After 9 years, I became the DC in Sunflower County and worked there for 5 years.

During this time I applied for the Mississippi Leadership Development Program and was accepted. While doing my DC, job I went to the State Office on detail as the State WRP Coordinator for 4 months. While working at the State Office, I happened to apply for the Assistant State Conservationist for Operations job that was open and was offered the position. I worked in this position for 6 years, then came out to the Pearl Area Office to help out while Homer Wilkes took a detail to Washington, DC. After a year of acting as the Area Conservationist, I became the full time Area Conservationist for the 21 central Mississippi counties beginning in January 2012.

I have made it to a few regularly scheduled SWCD Commissioners' meetings in the Area, but will visit with all of the District Boards at my earliest convenience. With that being said, if you have not invited me to one of your county commissioners' meetings or a special event, please do so and I will make every attempt to make it. You can send me a request through the Outlook Calendar or give me a call at the Pearl Area Office.

With a National Civil Rights Review behind us, I would like to say a big "Thank You" to everyone that assisted with the 5 counties that NHQ visited during the weeklong visit. From what I understand, the CR review went well.

I would like to issue a personal goodbye to Ron Read, Supervisory DC for Jasper and Smith Counties. Ron retired on March 30, 2012, after 35 plus years of service. Your wisdom, knowledge and personality will be missed. I would like to wish you well in all your new endeavors, whatever you choose to do in the future.

**David Brunson**  
Area Conservationist

*"Helping People Help the Land"*

*USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

## Rankin County's BobKat Farms Gets "Down to Earth"—

*Story by Judi Craddock, Photos by Justin Fritscher and Murray Fulton*

Sitting on the porch with Bob and Kathy Stoltzfus of BobKat Farms near Florence, MS, was similar to reminiscing with old friends. This fun-spirited, "down to earth" (pun intended) couple was meant to farm! Getting to know them personally, as well as learning how the Rankin County, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), helped to play a part in their success, was truly an unforgettable and rewarding experience.



*Bob and Kathy Stoltzfus (BobKat Farms) reflect on their success in full-time farming in Rankin County.*

Sharing her fond memories of running barefoot through the rice fields in the Mississippi Delta, Kathy Stoltzfus recounts growing up as an inquisitive rice farmer's daughter, eagerly learning everything she could gather from her father about growing crops. Born in the rural community of Abbeville, Louisiana, Kathy moved with her family to Shelby, Mississippi, at only 9 months old. In sixth grade, her family moved to Hazlehurst; but they continued farming, and Kathy continued learning. Now she carries on the farming legacy of her father!



*On National Ag Day, March 8, 2012, BobKat Farms featured its farm fresh eggs at the Mississippi Farmers' Market. The Stoltzfuses have been featured in the magazine, Landscape, Winter of 2010, a publication issued by MS Land Bank; and other articles including Rankin County Ledger.*



*Hardy, dual purpose, and high producing egg layers, the chicken breeds at BobKat Farms include Dominique, Rhode Island Reds, Barred Rocks, Black Stars and Red Stars (Sexlinks).*

Born in Slidell, Louisiana, Bob Stoltzfus reflects his early life as a rambunctious "city boy" growing up in north Jackson. (The editor sort of promised not to go into a lot of details on some of his "stories" from that era!) After graduating from General Motors Institute with a B.S. in Industrial Administration, Bob worked at various jobs including industrial lighting. He was never truly satisfied with this line of work; but times have certainly changed—he now lives happily as a farmer on one of the most highly producing farms in Rankin County! He recalls he never liked city life anyway, always preferring the country and outdoors. But he revealed contentedly that, "Kathy is the real farmer, and I do most of the marketing and eating!"

Beginning their marriage 13 years ago, they lived on just one acre near Simpson County. In 2004, they decided to look around for more space, found and bought this property of 32.4 acres with the help of Mississippi Land Bank, and began farming part time while still holding full time “normal” jobs away from home.

In 2007, while selling their fruits and vegetables at the Mississippi Farmers’ Market in Jackson, another farmer told the Stoltzfuses about the NRCS and how they could get technical assistance as well as financial help with installing conservation practices on their land.

They soon contacted Murray Fulton, Soil Conservationist; and Mark Scott, Soil Conservation Technician; both with the Brandon NRCS Office; and found out since they were small farmers, they qualified for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Organic Initiative Program. Over the past two years, the Stoltzfuses have steadily worked with NRCS to install several conservation practices including the installation of a seasonal high tunnel that allows farmers to lengthen their growing season. The high tunnels can increase productivity, keep the plants at a steadier temperature, and even conserve water and energy.



*Fresh collard and mustard greens are a hit at the Mississippi Farmers’ Market.*



*Above: The sides of the seasonal high tunnel structure have levers attached that enable them to be raised or lowered according to weather conditions and temperatures.*

An early March visit to the farm revealed two fully functional high tunnels—the first one they had built themselves, but the second one was partially funded by NRCS. There are specific guidelines, such as operation and maintenance plans, that when followed will assist the family in eventually becoming certified organic farmers.

The high tunnels are structured out of polyethylene and don’t use any electrical or mechanical power; but the sides of the structure have a lever attached that enables them to be raised or lowered according to weather conditions and temperatures.

An irrigation system in each tunnel was installed by initially tilling up the soil and laying rows of plastic mesh and soaker tape hose for water. “The Stoltzfuses utilize their high tunnels the way they were intended,” remarked Mark Scott. “They use it a full 12 months of the year!”



*Left: Malcolm Lowe, Supervisory District Conservationist (left); and Mark Scott, Soil Conservation Technician on far right, show Bob and Kathy Stoltzfus their conservation plan and discuss future possibilities. Not pictured is Murray Fulton, Soil Conservationist in the Brandon NRCS Office.*



In addition to the high tunnels, outside garden spots for more vegetables, herbs, and fruit trees are visible on an acre of land.



With smaller gauged openings at the bottom of the wildlife exclusion fence, even smaller animals such as rabbits and foxes have a more difficult time getting into the gardens.

The Stoltzfuses produce collards, mustards, mustard tender greens which can be eaten raw in a salad; kale, broccoli, arugula, green onions, spinach, radishes, sugar snaps, snow peas, and tomatoes. In addition, they periodically do home canning of tomatoes, jarred pickles, pickled green beans and squash, “Just to be more self sufficient in case times get hard,” remarked Bob. Closely connected with other farmers, they strive to market their produce at local restaurants. The Stoltzfuses produce farm fresh eggs that are used on burgers at “Table 100,” a popular Flowood, MS, restaurant. They also grind their own beef for hamburger meat, process deer meat for themselves and friends, and have a huge walk-in cooler for storing eggs.

Farming to eat and sell has become their only job and source of income. With smiles and laughter at each other, apparently they love it! Bob remarked, “We are small farmers wanting to get bigger!” They have plans to eventually expand their operation on the remainder of their five acres with pastureland for cattle, a pond for a watering facility, cross-fencing, and a well for irrigation.

The Stoltzfuses are thankful to the USDA-NRCS for all their assistance, and are appreciative of their knowledge and friendliness. The Brandon NRCS Office is always happy to help them in any way possible.

Other NRCS conservation practices implemented on the farm include a wildlife exclusion fence on five acres to keep deer and other animals outside the growing area, and critical area planting to establish grass cover for erosion control on the property. “The fence has been a great help to us,” explained Bob. “The first year we farmed the deer got us. The second year, Hurricane Katrina got us. The third year we finally had a good crop of produce.”

Bob and Kathy explained that after several years of part-time work on the farm, Kathy quit her full-time public job in 2009, Bob soon afterwards quit his regular job, and they began to farm “seriously.” They have become successful natural growers or “transitioning organic farmers.” “We don’t use harsh pesticides in growing our fruits and vegetables, and we use an organic fertilizer that comes from catfish ponds in Isola, MS, that is certified organic and water soluble,” Bob stated. “Any pest control used is “OMRI-certified,” referring to The Organic Materials Review Institute, a national nonprofit organization that rigorously reviews products for use in organic production and processing.

OMRI approved products are certified organic (or transitioning organic) and comply with standards in the USDA National Organic Program. “Since selling produce at the Mississippi Farmers’ Market for the past five years, we know our customers don’t mind fertilizer, they just don’t like pesticides,” Bob said.



A storage shed located on their property has the latest tiller.

## SPACE TECHNOLOGY AT ITS BEST— SOIL CLIMATE ANALYSIS NETWORK (SCAN) IN MISSISSIPPI

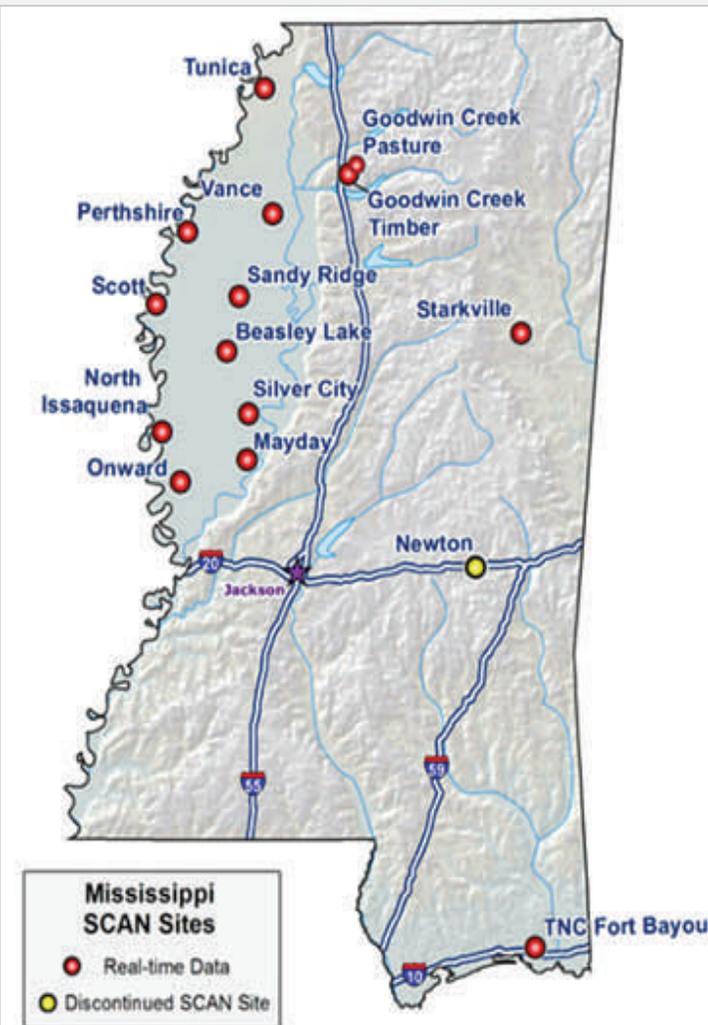
*Story by Mike Lilly*

The Soil Climate Analysis Network (SCAN) consists of automated remote sites which collect soil moisture and soil temperature data along with precipitation, wind, and solar radiation data. These sites are located throughout the United States and other global locations. Mississippi has 14 active SCAN sites. This data is used for the management and prediction of climatic issues affecting our natural resources.

Surface soil moisture plays an important role in the dynamics of land—atmosphere interactions and many current and upcoming models and satellite sensors. In situ data will be required to provide calibration and validation datasets. Therefore, there is a need for sensor networks at a variety of scales that provide near-real-time soil moisture and temperature data combined with other climate information for use in natural resource planning, drought assessment, water resource management, and resource inventory.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)—Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)—National Water and Climate Center (NWCC) has established a continental-scale network to address this need, called the **Soil Climate Analysis Network (SCAN)**. This ever-growing network has more than 116 stations located in 39 states, most of which have been installed since 1999.

The stations are remotely located and collect hourly atmospheric, soil moisture, and soil temperature data that are available to the public online in near-real time. New stations are located on benchmark soils when possible. Future plans for the network include increasing the number of stations, improving on user-friendly data summaries, increasing data quality, and scaling the stations to the surrounding region.

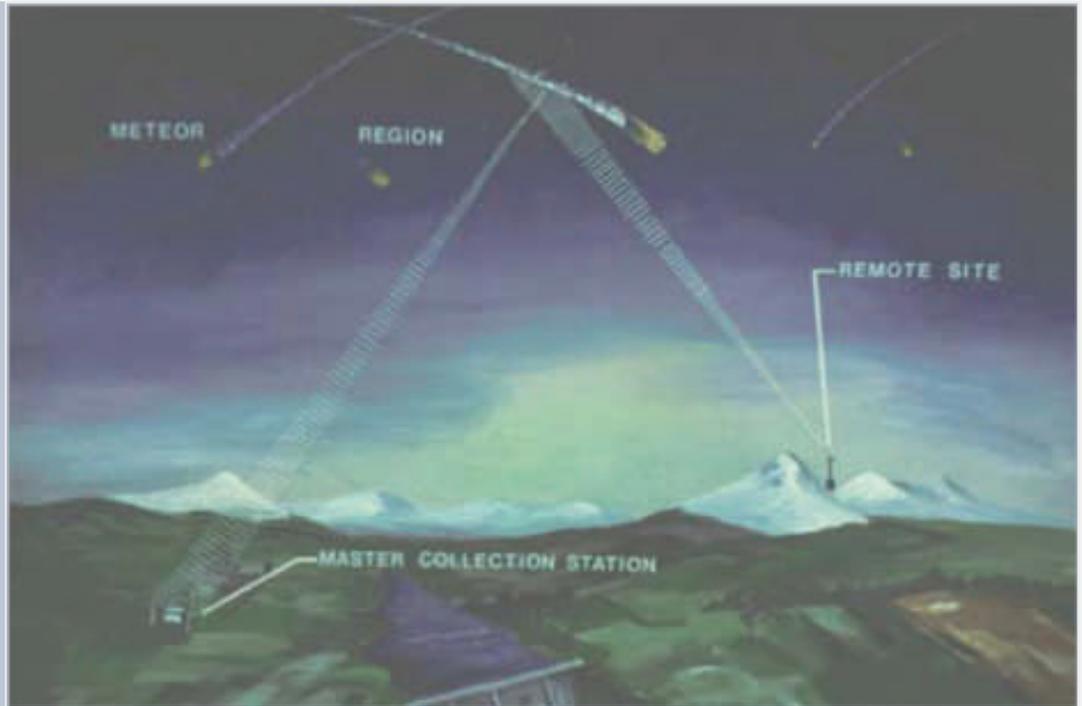


*SCAN station site located near Newton, MS. This was one of the first sites in the state. Its use has recently been discontinued, however, due to being struck by lightning.*

**Continued from Page 5.**

Data from the SCAN sites are transmitted via Meteor Burst Telemetry. Meteor burst communication, developed by the military in the 1950's, uses the ionized gas trail from the billions of sand sized particles (1 gram or larger), that burn up in the 50 to 80 mile high region of the atmosphere to relay radio signals back to the earth (See photo at right.)

VHF radio signals can be bounced off this gas trail and reflected back to the earth.



Such signals generate a communications footprint on the earth. Remote sites located in the footprint can transmit data to the master station. This technique allows communication to take place between a remote site and a master station up to 1200 miles apart. At the master station, the data are checked for completeness. If complete, an acknowledgment message is sent back to the remote site instructing it not to transmit again until its next scheduled time. All three transmissions take place in less than a tenth of a second!

The NRCS owns and operates two master stations located near Boise, Idaho, and Ogden, Utah. Only one master station is required to communicate with the remote site network, but two are used to decrease wait times and provide redundancy for the network. These master stations act as central receiving facilities and are linked with the NWCC Central Computer Facility (CCF) by a packet switched, X.25 telephone communication system with Portland, Oregon.

The NRCS currently leases a third master station, located in Tipton, Missouri, to extend coverage to the central and eastern United States. Data received from the master stations are transferred to the CCF continuously. You may visit the website at [www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/scan](http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/scan)



**Right:** SCAN site located at Starkville, MS, on the Mississippi State University campus.



*Dwight Jackson, Soil Conservationist in the DeKalb NRCS Office, shows tree farmer and friend Dwight McIntosh the conservation plan for his forestland.*

## Kemper County Tree Farmer Improves Century Old Family Land—

*Story by Judi Craddock, Photos by Justin Fritscher*

A native Kemper County tree farmer, Dwight McIntosh of DeKalb, Mississippi, has lived all his life on the 100 year old family land that he inherited from his grandparents. The historically underserved landowner recalls his grandparents were always growing trees too, but it seems even back then their forestland always had a lot of problems—competition from invasive, undesirable species such as blackberry, briars, sweet gum, Privet hedge, and other vegetation that competed for light, nutrients and water. This unfortunately resulted in unfavorable quality timber and poor utilization of his grandparent’s legacy.

An occasional visit with Dwight Jackson, Soil Conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Kemper County, was really nothing new for McIntosh. In such a small town, all farmers know each other and their families; thus, he had known Jackson as a close friend and farmer all his life. Jackson’s mother had even taught McIntosh English in school.



*Dwight McIntosh and Dwight Jackson look out over the newly prescribed burned forestland and the tree planting results done on 12 acres.*



*This little tree has a long way to go, but the results of the stand will be worth the wait.*

So last summer of 2011, when they got together on how to improve his family forestland, McIntosh quickly signed up for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)—Tree and Shrub Establishment (Practice 612).

After evaluation of the property, a forestry management plan on 12 acres was developed. It was decided to implement the following conservation practices: Forest Site Preparation (Practice 490— heavy site with use of drum chopping); Prescribed Burning (Practice 338); Tree and Shrub Establishment (Practice 612—tree planting); and Forest Stand Improvement (Practice 666) to be done later this year for control of undesirable vegetation (spray release).



*The site shown above was prepared for tree planting by forest site preparation (heavy site preparation) and prescribed burning.*



*Prescribed burning on the McIntosh land.*

The desired outcome will be enhanced growth of the newly planted trees as well as native vegetation that provides forage (browse) desirable for deer and other wildlife. McIntosh stated that he rarely hunts on his land, but he does lease to other turkey and deer hunters.

As well as a tree farmer, McIntosh works for Mississippi Department of Transportation full time and manages 14 acres of pastureland where he has 22 beef cows and 1 Charolais bull. His future plans include participating in the Grazing Land Conservation Initiative (GLCI) program for his remaining 80 acres of pastureland.

McIntosh is thankful to Kemper County NRCS for their technical assistance and helpful approach in improving the quality and utilization of his grandfather's land.

Heavy forest site preparation was done last summer due to the dense, heavily concentrated re-growth. Prescribed burning was done in the early fall to remove most of this re-growth and undesirable ground vegetation.

Tree planting of loblolly pine trees on 12 acres of the McIntosh land was completed in early January. Trees for poles and timber production is a long term investment that perhaps takes 13 years before a financial benefit can be obtained.

Later this year, McIntosh will implement forest stand improvement which includes an aerial herbicide chemical spray arsenal (imazapin) release. Because of the vast, uneven terrain of the land, a helicopter will be contracted to release the spray. In cases where the land is more even and drivable, ground application by sprayers attached to backpacks, ATV, skidder or other ground equipment that travels throughout the forest spraying the chemicals on the undesirable vegetation is preferred.

The chemical spraying is usually done in the fall because chemicals can enter into the root systems of the plants before they go dormant. The spray greatly reduces or eliminates undesirable species, aids in installation of fire lanes and prescribed burning, and prepares the site for planting trees as well as wildlife food plots in some cases.



*Shown at right is a successfully performed prescribed burn—note that undesirable species such as these shown have been eradicated.*

## A Milestone for the Mississippi Soil Survey Program—

*Story by Delaney Johnson*

The state soil survey program of Mississippi has reached a milestone! The Initial “Once Over “ Soil Survey for Mississippi has been completed. We (NRCS soil scientists) have mapped/ inventoried and classified more than 31 million acres of land surface, which makes up the entire state.

Soil Survey goes as far back as the late 1800’s; however, the new classification system that we use today began in 1973. Under the new classification system current soil mapping and interpretations have been completed and are available for all types of land use management and planning concerns. **We plan to mark this milestone with a statewide celebration on May 8 in Jackson (more details to come).**

This has ushered the “Next Generation” for the Soil Survey Program. The delivery method of this technical information is very critical to the success of any land use effort. Most planners recognize that having the capability to access soil information on-



*Above: Dr. Billy Kingery, State Soil Survey Liaison, MSU, MAFES, foreground; and Mike Lilly, ACES Farm Bill Resource Specialist, far right have been diligent in providing soils training and field exercises to Hinds Community College students.*



*Mike Lilly shows the students different soil features and characteristics.*

site is the first step in conducting a science-based resource inventory. When used properly the conservation planning process helps NRCS clients understand their soils inherent suitability and limitations, and is an opportunity to enhance the continued stewardship of soil and water resources.

In the “Next Generation” of planning tools, planners will be able to conduct resource inventory, on-site assessments and determine alternative measures, all with the use of mobile devices. These devices will always have the soils maps and interpretative information electronically accessible to the planner. In addition, the planning system will be much more integrated than the current, stand alone tools, and will employ an enterprise approach to the databases.

This integration means that the planner can utilize soils information through support tools without having to duplicate data entry. For example, the integrated erosion tool being designed into the mobile planner will automatically populate the soils data for any field that the planner points to on the screen. Similarly, soils information can be populated for pesticide tools, nutrient and grazing applications and engineering tools. The same concept will be used to streamline the entry of other known data and even pre-screen sites prior to visiting the site.

The soils staff has already begun transferring this soils technology and information to users. More importantly, we have made great progress and placed emphasis in training our future users as evidenced by going to schools and conducting exercises and providing hands-on training to area students.

The future looks bright for the soil survey program, and many challenges lay ahead as we provide quality soils data to all land users for managing, protecting and being good stewards of the state's natural resources.

Soil Apps provide a new way to access soils information: Click on the following link to see USDA homepage posting.

<http://blogs.usda.gov/2012/02/03/a-smartphone-app-provides-new-way-to-access-soil-survey-information/>



*At a Hillcrest Christian School Soils Training class, Mike Lilly teaches students about soil texture, color and structure.*



*Hillcrest Christian School students show off their smart phones with a Soils App that Mike had shown them. Soil Apps provide access to many kinds of soils information and data.*



### IN THE SPOTLIGHT

These gorgeous little fellows (Cedar Waxwings) appeared in Jason Keenan's back yard a few weeks ago. What a great job of photography! That is, until he broke the camera! Oops!



**A Day in the Field with  
Jason Keenan—  
Photos by Judi Craddock**



*Above left: Jason makes it down a huge slope in the rain and mud. A smart photographer stayed in the truck!  
Above right: This site was recently contracted for site preparation and prescribed burning on 11 acres in Attala County. Jason concluded that a partial, ineffective burn had occurred. The logging deck debris was burned and the rest of the acreage appeared to not have been burned at all. Firebreaks were in place, but he didn't recommend payment for a full burn. Landowner is not behind schedule though; he plans to complete site preparation in March before tree planting.*



*Above: Jason is really a dog person (cat too), but "Bobby Sue" really liked the photographer a lot better. Notice she stays close to her owner!*



*Above: On the Miller farm in Attala County, Jason takes measurements and counts trees that have been recently planted. Results show that not enough trees survived a drought period and will need at least half of it replanted. The top half got too dry and died. Jason recommended that in certain cases such as this one, when drought may have affected the tree planting success, follow-up with the landowner is needed to help them even after completion of planting contract. "Sometimes the conservation assistance isn't quite finished yet, even though the contract is completed," stated Jason.*



*We spotted turkeys everywhere we went, wild as well as domestic!*



On a recent trip to Claiborne and Newton Counties, Mike Lilly, ACES Farm Bill Resource Specialist, found several soil samples needed for a Hinds County SWCD project. **Shown above:** Here he is in Claiborne County digging for Natchez soils—our State Soil. This particular soil is silty loess which is actually wind blown material from the Mississippi River Valley.

## A Day in the Field with Mike Lilly

Photos by Judi Craddock



**Above and at right:** Some sites like this one in Newton County are not so easy to get to. This has never stopped Mike though,

even if it takes a long hike back into the woods! Shown here is Vaiden soil which is a clayey soil on the Jackson Prairie. This soil has a high shrink swell potential (foundation moves and cracks).



**Above left and right:** Mike had never seen Windsor Ruins in Claiborne County, so we had a short walk around the 1859 historical mansion near Port Gibson. Wonder what kind of soil (and other) mysteries are hidden at this site?



**Right:** A quick stop in Hinds County near Raymond showed the remnants of the Civil War, another interesting part of the day in the field with Mike.



# MISSISSIPPI'S VENOMOUS AND NON-VENOMOUS SNAKES—HOW TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE

By Jason Keenan

(Photos from [www.phsource.us](http://www.phsource.us))

Venomous snakes are a dangerous thing! The first step to prevent an encounter with a venomous snake is knowing how to ID them properly. There are only six species of venomous snakes in Mississippi: the pigmy rattlesnake, diamondback rattlesnake, timber rattlesnake, cottonmouth, copperhead, and the coral snake. In comparison, there are roughly 40 species of non-venomous snakes.



*Venomous—Diamondback Rattlesnake*



*Venomous—Pigmy Rattlesnake*



*Venomous—Cottonmouth (top) and Copperhead*



*Venomous—Eastern Coral Snake*



*Non-Venomous—Common Garter Snake*

To properly ID a venomous snake, there are some basic characteristics that you can look for:

**The cat-eye like pupils.** A vertical elliptical pupil is the easiest way to know if the snake is venomous. Most of us will not get that close to ever find out. One exception is the coral snake will have a rounded pupil.

**Triangular-shaped head.** Picture the snake having its rear jaw showing on each side. Rounded heads are normally a characteristic of non-venomous snakes.

**Coloration:** The visual pattern of most snakes makes them easy to tell apart from other snakes. The coral snake for example has a Red-Yellow-Black-Yellow-Red pattern. This can be confused with the scarlet snake that has a Yellow-Black-Red-Black-Yellow pattern. Confused yet? Think of this little rhyme: “Red touches Black, friend of Jack. Red touches Yellow, kill a fellow.” When red touches yellow, it will be the venomous coral snake.

The important key to remember here is that if you are unsure as to the proper ID of the snake, do not touch it. Most snake bites happen when we are careless and attempt to pick-up or grab a venomous snake. The old saying, “they are more scared of you than you are of them,” holds true. If you leave them alone, they will more than likely leave you alone. Should you encounter a venomous snake and get bitten, please keep calm and seek medical attention.



*Venomous—Canebrake/  
Timber Rattlesnake*



*Venomous—Eastern Cottonmouth  
(AKA Water Moccasin)*



*Non-Venomous Scarlet Snake*



*Non-Venomous—Black Pine Snake*

*Non-Venomous Smooth  
Earth Snake*



Visit the following websites for further information:

<http://www.phsource.us/PH/ME/Snakes/Venom.html> and

<http://www.phsource.us/PH/ME/Snakes/index.html>

## FEATURING HINDS COUNTY IN ACTION—Photos by Justin Fritscher



*Above: Lynn Porter, Hinds County District I&E Specialist; and Rogerick Thompson, Supervisory District Conservationist; pose during the viewing of "The Lorax" at Van Winkle Elementary for the District's "Read Across America" project.*



*Above: Lynn Porter does a tree program at Edwards-Bolton Elementary during Hinds County Tree Planting Week.*



*Left: Wyvette Robinson, Hinds County District Clerk, reads The Lorax to the children at Van Winkle Elementary in Jackson.*

For more on this great Hinds County Earth Team story, please visit this website: <http://blogs.usda.gov/2012/03/12/earth-team-volunteers-conservationists-bring-tree-lessons-to-mississippi-classrooms/>



*Right: Dedicated Hinds County Earth Team—pictured here at Van Winkle Elementary during viewing of "The Lorax." Congratulations for being one of the two Mississippi award winners selected for the 2011 Earth Team National Awards. Area 2 appreciates all their hard work and the giving of their time and energy to promote resource conservation education. For more information, please visit the websites: [www.ms.nrcs.usda.gov/volunteers.html](http://www.ms.nrcs.usda.gov/volunteers.html) and <http://www.ms.nrcs.usda.gov/news/TheLorax.pdf>*



**MACD 2011 Awards Presented to Area 2 Employees and Districts—Photos by Deborah Logan**



*Above: Congratulations to Julie Bradford for winning the NRCS Employee of the Year for 2011!! Smith County and Area 2 are very proud! Thank you, Julie, for all your hard work!*



*Hinds County Earth Team (top photo) and Keep the Rez Beautiful (bottom photo) both received Group Earth Team awards at MACD!*



*Hinds County received District Newsletter of the Year! Congratulations Lynn Porter (Editor) and Hinds County SWCD!*

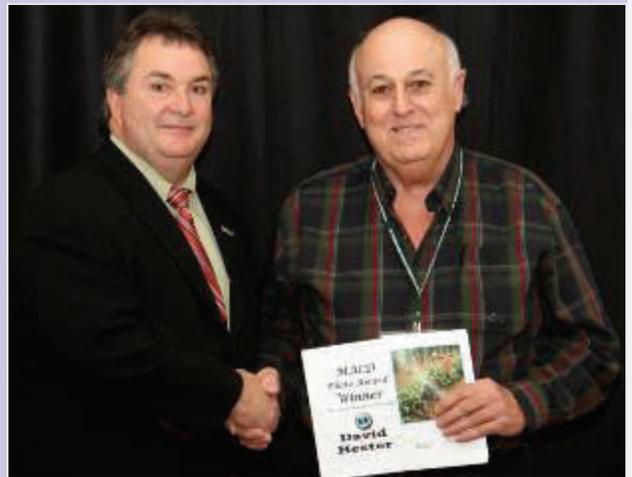
*At right: Ron Reid, Supervisory District Conservationist in Raleigh, won a MACD Photo Award.*



*(bottom right photo); David Hester, District Technician in Columbus, also won a MACD Photo Award.*



*Left: Heather Cook, Rankin County District Clerk, was presented with a MACD Endowment Fund Grant for their county.*



# MISSISSIPPI'S NATIONAL AG DAY

## MISSISSIPPI FARMERS' MARKET

*Photos by Judi Craddock*



*Gail Spears of the MS Soil and Water Conservation Commission helps with the day's celebration.*

Mississippi celebrated National Agriculture Day on March 8, 2012, with a program organized by several state and federal agencies including the Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission, USDA-NRCS, Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum, and the Mississippi Farmers' Market.



*Viking Cooking School Chefs were on hand to cook some of the locally grown food. The crab cakes were a sure hit!*



*Al Garner meets Bob Stoltzfus of BobKat Farms for the first time.*

The theme for the event, held at the Mississippi Farmers' Market, was "Eat Local, Eat Healthy;" and served to provide awareness and support of locally grown, healthy food from our own Mississippi farmers. This nationally observed day provides a way to thank our farmers for all that they do to give us a nutritional and safe food supply, and to show our support for their businesses. Plus, we have all heard that it just tastes better!

Two Rankin County farmers were highlighted during the day—Bob and Kathy Stoltzfus of BobKat Farms in Florence; and James Gregory of the Monterey area. Two local schools, Eastside Elementary from Clinton and St. Anthony Catholic from Madison, enjoyed their field trip and learning experience by tasting the freshly prepared food and participating in presentations from vendors at booths.





*Above: Justin Fritscher gets caught in the rain on a shoot in Kemper County.*



*Left: Jason Keenan taught students about wildlife habitats and conservation ;and*

*Below: Mike Lilly taught them about the importance of soil science at the recent Area Envirothon held at Crystal Springs.*



*Left: SNAKE caught early one morning in the area office. Jason Keenan told us it was a Smooth Earth Snake (Virginia valeriae) that eats earthworms and insects and is "non-venomous." Unfortunately, it is now a **DEAD SNAKE!!***



*Looking good, E.J.!!!*

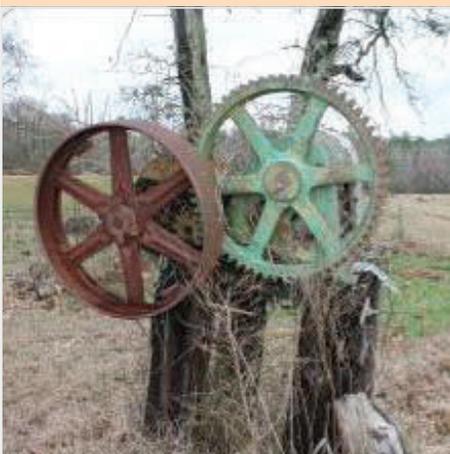


*You too, Ms. Mary Isabelle!*

*Below: Anyone want to guess what this thing is? I had to ask Mr. Miller, landowner in Attala County, who told me it was an old sugarcane "mill." From the old tag that reads "Chattanooga Plow Company, we Googled it and found that this particular item dates back pre-1919. For more info: <http://www.herculesengines.com/sorghum/default.html>*



*"T-R-O-U-B-L-E" (Left to right: Heather Cook, Julie Kent, and Jeana Parrett)*



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Al Garner, Acting State Conservationist



*"Helping People Help the Land"  
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