

**BOONE COUNTY
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

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www.boonecountyky.org/bccd/default.aspx

The board meets at 7:00 p.m. on the third Monday of every month at the District office.

Mission

The mission of the Boone County Conservation District is to conserve and promote the best use of natural resources of Boone County by encouraging the use of Best Management Practices, district involvement with land use policy decisions, public awareness and education to maintain and improve the quality of life in Boone County. (1996)

Board:

Jim Walton, Chairman;
Debra Franks, Vice Chairman;
Monty Taylor, Secretary-Treasurer;
Tom Comte; Jan Garbett; Rob Hall;
and Billy Rehkamp Jr.
(Terms ended Dec. 2006, Mike Keller and Edward Moore)

District Staff:

Sally Aaron, Administrative Secretary;
Kristin Scott, Agriculture Conservation Technician;
Mark Jacobs, Conservation Technician;
and, Mary Kathryn Dickerson, District Coordinator.

**NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE:**

Ed Thompson, District Conservationist

KY. DIV. OF CONSERVATION:

Linda Hunter, Field Representative

All programs and services of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and conservation districts are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status.



Annual Report July 1, 2006 - June 30, 2007

Boone County Conservation District Boone County Conservation District Honored with Preservation Award

The Boone County Conservation District was among those honored by the Boone County Historic Preservation Review Board in May 2007. The Preservation Project Award was given to the Kentucky Parks Department, Boone County Conservation District, and Northern Kentucky University Center for Applied Ecology. Their joint project at Big Bone Lick State Park relocated the resident bison herd from a wetland area into a larger pasture area that was enhanced with native warm season grasses and cool season grasses to prolong the grazing season. The move will not only enhance herd health in the long run, but will make restoration of the wetland area possible. New animal handling and feeding areas, as well as watering systems, were also added. The improvements will also greatly reduce the possibility of soil erosion and water quality issues in Big Bone Creek from the bison operation.

Northern Kentucky Horse Network - In May 2006, the Boone County Conservation District, along with the Kenton and Campbell Conservation Districts and Cooperative Extension Services of Boone, Kenton and Campbell counties, started meeting with a group of horse farm owners to discuss ways to better manage environmental issues, such as horse manure and over-grazing of pastures. The group identified a number of challenges and opportunities for horse owners and horse farm operators and decided to address them. The Northern Kentucky Horse Network was officially formed in November 2006 with the mission to help horse owners of all interests and ability levels keep up with current equine issues, share information, work to reduce horse mistreatment, promote agri-tourism, and encourage sound farm management.

Native Grass No-Till Seeder - The Boone County Conservation District, with financial assistance from the Ky. Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Kentucky Division of Conservation, and Northern Ky. Chapter of Quail Unlimited, purchased a no-till seed drill with a native grass box to rent to landowners in Northern Kentucky. Establishing native grassland species is difficult due to the fluffy nature of the seed and requires specialized equipment to plant it in large areas. Native grasses and native grass mixtures that include forbs need to be planted between April 15 and June 30. To date 22 landowners have used the seeder to plant over 178 acres of warm season grasses.

Big Bone Lick State Park - A grant through the Kentucky Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share program was used to establish a new 30-acre pasture for the resident bison herd. Twenty acres of the pasture were renovated with cool season grasses and nine acres were seeded with native warm season grasses to provide improved forage. Water systems were added to complete a rotational grazing system. Also under the grant, a 2.5 acre wildlife viewing area was renovated. Signs describing both projects were erected in 2006.

Central Park Wildlife Viewing Area - A

demonstration area was renovated over the past two years to include native shrubs, grasses and forbs to improve plant biodiversity, attract a variety of wildlife species and demonstrate the aesthetic and ecological value of a native grassland landscape. The district provided technical assistance and funds for educational signage, which was installed 2006.

Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share

Program - Seven (7) applications were funded by the state in 2006 for a total of \$95,769 to help install Best Management Practices for improvement of water quality.

Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Act -A total of 670 water quality plan certifications have been received by the conservation district. **An Agriculture Water Quality Committee** formed by the Boone, Campbell, and Kenton County Conservation Districts meets regularly to help local producers comply with this law enacted in 1994. The committee includes representatives from over ten agencies and organizations involved in agriculture and water quality.

Farmer Appreciation Dinner - The district held their seventh Farmer Appreciation Dinner in November 2006 with 138 present. Music was provided by vocalist Beth King, and Big Bone Lick State Park was honored as the 2006 Cooperator of the Year.

Dead Livestock Disposal Program - The District received a matching grant from the Kentucky Soil and Water Quality Cost Share program to assist county landowners with proper disposal of dead livestock. Since the program started in January 2000, 179 producers have benefited from the program. The grant also assists the county animal shelter with proper disposal of companion pet carcasses.

Agricultural Districts - There are 14 agricultural districts in Boone County, comprised of 7,148 acres of land owned by 82 families. This voluntary state program provides some protection for farmers who wish to keep their land in agricultural production. District Administrative Secretary Sally Aaron coordinated the recertification of Agricultural Districts 008-04, 008-05, 008-06, and 008-10.

Technical assistance

Technical assistance is provided to Boone County through Ed L. Thompson Jr., District Conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, our federal partner, and Boone County Conservation District staff Mark Jacobs and Kristin Scott. Administrative and other support is provided by district staff Sally Aaron and Mary Kathryn Dickerson. In 2006 – 2007, they provided assistance to over 600 Boone 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.

Federal Farm Bill Programs - The staff also currently provides ongoing assistance for ten (10) landowners who completed or are implementing Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contracts since 2002. Landowners are required to maintain the practices for up to ten years. EQIP, a program of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill), helped fund \$352,636.26 in conservation practices on 2,762.5 acres of land. EQIP goals include the reduction of soil erosion and non-point source pollution, as well as promotion of at-risk species wildlife habitat conservation. Eight (8) landowners are currently involved in the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP), another program of the Farm Bill that will affect 166.2 acres of land and represent an investment of \$39,601.15. NRCS and District staff assists the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources with this program. One landowner was accepted to the Conservation Security Program, enrolling 595 acres.

Conservation Progress

- *Conservation Plans Written* – 3,185 acres
- *Cropland with conservation applied to improve soil quality* – 702 acres
- *Land with conservation applied to improve water quality* – 2,497 acres
- *Grazing and forest land with conservation applied to protect and improve the resource base* – 2,156 acres
- *Non-federal land with conservation applied to improve fish and wildlife habitat quality* – 404 acres
- *Certified Nutrient Management Plans written and applied* – 2

Water Quality - Board members continue to gather water quality data to improve water quality in the county. Board members Jim Walton, Debra Franks, Billy Rehkamp, and Tom Comte, along with staff Sally Aaron, Kristin Scott, Mark Jacobs and Mary Kathryn Dickerson participate in the Licking River Watershed Watch monitoring program. As of June 2007, they have adopted 13 sites around the county to monitor at least three times each year. Habitat and macroinvertebrate assessments were also started this year.

Other projects and assistance:

- Board members Jim Walton and Debra Franks represent the Conservation District on the **County Agriculture Development Board**, which administers Phase I Tobacco Settlement Funds in the county.
- Agriculture Conservation Technician Kristin Scott represented the board at a regional meeting of the Natural Resources Conservation Service **Environmental Quality Incentives Program** work group to develop criteria for local practices.
- Conservation Technician Mark Jacobs represents the board on the **Boone County Urban Forest Commission** and the **No. Ky. Urban and Community Forestry Committee**. Mark also attends **Boone County Planning and Zoning Site Review** meetings.
- Jacobs also assists the **Boone County Parks Department** and **Boone Conservancy** with land management issues. He assisted this year with projects at England-Idlewild Park to plant trees and is consulting on a future project at Boone Woods Park. The Conservation District has applied for a grant to assist with land management at the Boone Conservancy property near Bellevue
- The Conservation District applied for a grant to purchase a **tree planter** and implement two tree-planting projects on land in Boone County.
- District Coordinator Mary Kathryn Dickerson represents the board on the **No. Ky. Area Solid Waste Technical Advisory Committee**.

Education and Outreach

Your Place in a Growing Community - The Boone, Campbell and Kenton County Conservation Districts jointly sponsored a series of workshops in January, February, March and April to look at resource planning on your property and why what you do on your land can have a huge impact in the neighborhood. Sessions included Beyond Landscaping; rain barrels and rain gardens; managing invasive species; issues and trends; and the condition of local waterways and watersheds. The last session took participants to Camp Michaels and Boone Woods Park to walk their watersheds. Over 20 people participated in the series. Guest speakers included Heather Mayfield with ORSANCO, Matt Whooten with Sanitation District #1, and Conservation District staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson and Mark Jacobs. **Big Bone Lick State Park Discovery Days** - "Would Lewis and Clark have found me here" was the theme for the exhibit this year which featured common plants of the area and invited visitors to identify them and learn about their history. District programs were also highlighted. Over 500 people visited the booth during the festival. Board members and staff from the Boone, Campbell and Kenton Districts helped with the exhibit.

Board members hosted a booth at the **Boone County 4-H and Utopia Fair**. The booth featured Best Management Practices and native warm season grasses and other pasture improvement methods.

District board members and staff participated in the "Spring Fling" **Arboretum Day** in June at Central Park. The display featured native plants and information on how to rid your property of invasive, exotic plants.

Education Grants - The Boone County Conservation District has been awarding grants to county educational institutions since 1994. Grant applications are accepted from October through January each year. This year, **Goodridge Elementary School** received \$941 for their Kentucky Heritage Garden and Greenhouse project.

No applications were received this year for the **Boone County Conservation District Robert W. Ellis Scholarship**.

Programs for Teachers - The district supports the **NKU Environmental Education Alliance** and the **Environmental Education in No. Ky. Resource Guide** is available through the District office.

Programs for Students - Mark Jacobs and Mary Kathryn Dickerson taught classes for over 300 individuals this year through the Sanitation District #1 *Waterific* program. Dickerson assisted the Boone County Cooperative Extension Service and Boone County Schools with a soils class for 5th grade students attending the overnight Environmental Camp at North Central 4-H Camp.

Writing and Art Contests – Kentucky’s Soil – It’s Worth Protecting was the topic for this school year’s Conservation Contests. The theme focused on soil composition, its importance, and ways that all citizens can help protect, restore, and conserve Kentucky’s soil. In Boone County, county and school winners received a certificate of achievement from The Courier Journal, and a Life in a Bucket of Soil book from the Conservation District. Teachers received a Life in a Bucket of Soil book from the conservation district. Students and teachers also received educational materials about soils. These included: Dig In – Hands On Soil Investigations, Amazing Soil Stories, Search for Soil, Soil Biology, and Conserving Soil. Twelve schools participated in the contests this year. This year there were 221 entries in the Art Contest and 61 entries in the Writing Contest.

The World Beneath Your Feet - These workshops were held to promote the Writing and Art Contests and attracted over 20 teachers, parents and students to help them prepare for the contest. The workshops featured materials and activities about soils.

Newsletters - The quarterly newsletter, *Landscapes*, reaches over 2,500 Boone County households.

Web Site - The Conservation District web site is provided through the Boone County Fiscal Court at www.boonecountyky.org/bccd/default.aspx

District Operations and Involvement

The Boone County Conservation District also participated in several joint meetings with the Kenton and Campbell Conservation Districts to discuss planning for the future and joint projects and workshops. They also attended a locally-sponsored joint training with the board members and staff of the Kenton and Campbell Conservation Districts at the Crestview Hills City Building in January.

Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Conservation Council (OKI-RCC) The annual meeting was held at the OKI Regional Council of Government office in March. Urban forests and watershed protection were the featured topics. Board member Tom Comte

attended along with staff Mark Jacobs. A conservation tour is hosted each year by a member of the **OKI-RCC**. Those attending the tour in Dearborn County, Indiana, in September 2006 were staff Kristin Scott and Sally Aaron.

The **Ky. Association of Conservation District’s (KACD)** state convention was held in Owensboro in July 2006. Board member Debra Franks and staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson attended. Board member Tom Comte and staff Mark Jacobs attended the KACD Area 5 meeting in Mason County. Members of the board participated in several conference calls throughout the year to discuss conservation issues.

Debra Franks attended the **National Association of Conservation Districts** Annual Meeting in Los Angeles in February.

Board Elections - The Boone County Conservation District board welcomed two new members, Kenneth Robert Hall and Thomas Comte. Former board members Edward D. Moore and Mike Keller chose not to seek re-election. Monty Taylor, who was appointed to the board in July to fill an unexpired term, was re-elected. One position remained open and was filled by appointment in January through the Kentucky Soil and Water Commission.

Legislative Action – Jim Walton serves as the district’s legislative liaison.

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

Land Use and Resources Committee: Ed Moore (through Dec. 2006), Jim Walton, Billy Rehkamp Jr., Debra Franks, Tom Comte, Rob Hall, Monty Taylor. Billy Rehkamp Jr. is the district contact in event landowner is cited for violations under the Bad Actor clause of the Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Act (AWQA).

Conservation Education and Public Information Committee: Jan Garbett, Jim Walton, Debra Franks, Mike Keller (through Dec. 2006), Rob Hall.

District Funding - The District received a grant from the Ky. Division of Conservation that included funding for the Conservation Technician position. Other revenue is provided to the District through the Boone County Fiscal Court and the Kentucky Division of Conservation. A complete financial report is available at the District office.