

**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.

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, 2007- June 30, 2008

Boone County Conservation District

Local Options for Protecting Farmland

The Boone, Campbell and Kenton County Conservation Districts jointly sponsored a series of meetings in April on farmland protection through Kentucky's Agricultural District Law. The meetings featured information on the Kentucky Agricultural District Program and farmland protection efforts and issues. The meeting in Boone County included a presentation by Judge Executive Gary Moore, who discussed the importance of agriculture, farmers, and farmland to Boone County. A presentation was given by Mary Kathryn Dickerson about farmland protection, during which she talked about the Conservation District's efforts to launch a Farmland Protection Initiative. The meeting was held at the Walton Branch of the Boone County Library and was attended by over 30 people. Board members Jan Garbett and Tom Comte, along with staff Sally Aaron also attended.

During the discussion following the presentations, the following topics were brought up: property taxes and the high valuation of buildings and land, especially horse stables; the Sanitation District #1 service area and that farmers are paying a fee even though they have no water or sewer; the unavailability of farm labor; erosion problems in several areas of the county including Big Bone Creek; the use of Agricultural Development Council funds; the need for young farmer loan programs; issues surrounding Planning and Zoning; and wildlife nuisance permits for turkey and deer.

Farm Protection Initiative

The Conservation District applied for a grant through the Kentucky Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Program to work on an initiative to protect farmland in the county. The initiative would include an Agricultural Industry Profile, Cost of Community Study, and meetings with farmers to determine their needs and wishes for farmland protection in the county. The grant is pending with the Kentucky Soil and Water Commission and additional funding for this project is being sought from the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and other sources.

Agricultural Districts

There are 15 agricultural districts in Boone County, comprised of 7,769.6 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 008-01, 008-02, 008-03, 008-07, 008-08 and 008-13. There are two (2) new districts included 008-14 and 008-15.

Forestland Conservation Grant and Tree Planter

The Conservation District purchased a **tree planter** through a grant from the Kentucky Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Program. As a part of this grant, the District was able to assist Boone County Fiscal Court and Boone County Parks and Recreation with tree plantings on county land on the South Fork of Gunpowder Creek and at Boone Woods Park. The tree planter is available for rent to county residents for \$40 a day. To date, one property owner has rented this equipment.

Land Restoration Project

The Conservation District secured a grant through the Kentucky Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Program to help restore and reclaim land owned by the Boone Conservancy in Belleview. The land was a former gravel mine site. In March, the Conservation District, in cooperation with the Boone Conservancy and Boone County Parks and Recreation, hosted a tree planting day. Over 45 volunteers assisted that day to plant 3,500 trees. Students from Kelly Elementary School helped by packaging tree seedlings for the volunteers. Later in the year, native grasses and other forbs were planted. More work is planned at the site in the coming year. The site presents special conservation challenges, but the community will be rewarded with a new recreation and conservation area in the future.

Native Grass No-Till Seeder

In 2006, 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 34 landowners have used the seeder to plant over 405 acres of warm season grasses.

Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Program

Four (4) applications were funded by the state in 2008 for a total of \$28,887 to help install Best Management Practices for improvement of water quality.

Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Act

A total of 672 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.

Gunpowder Creek Initiative

The Conservation District held preliminary meetings with several agencies and organizations regarding an initiative to develop a watershed plan for Gunpowder Creek. A formal process will be launched in the fall of 2008.

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, 230 producers have benefited from the program. The grant also assists the county animal shelter with proper disposal of companion pet carcasses.

Farm Dump Removal Grant

The Conservation District applied for a grant through the Kentucky Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Program to assist farmers in cleaning up old dumps on their farms. The grant is pending with the Kentucky Soil and Water Commission.

Conservation Dinner

The district held their Conservation Dinner in November 2007 with 138 present. Music was provided by the Howard House Band and dinner featured a Kentucky Proud menu. Walt and Todd Ryan were honored as the 2007 Cooperator of the Year.

Water Quality

Board members continue to gather water quality data to improve water quality in the county. Board members Jim Walton, Debra Franks, and Billy Rehkamp, 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 monitor 13 sites around the county at least three times each year. Habitat and macroinvertebrate assessments were continued this year.

Licking River Watershed Watch

District staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson and Kristin Scott are assisting the Licking River Watershed Watch with compilation of existing data for monitoring sites in the three counties. Work has started on sites in Boone County in the Gunpowder Creek Watershed, a targeted watershed for a focus study on bacteriological contamination. The focus study will be conducted later in 2008.

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 2007 – 2008, they provided assistance to over 719 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 \$323,418.45 in conservation practices on 2,321.5 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. One (1) landowner is currently implementing practices under the Conservation Security Program on 595 acres, representing a Farm Bill investment of \$79,736.00. Six (6) landowners are currently involved in the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP), another program of the Farm Bill that will affect 146.5 acres of land and represents an investment of \$36,482.49. NRCS and District staff assist the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources with this program.

Conservation Progress

- *Conservation Plans Written* – 1,448 acres
- *Cropland with conservation applied to improve soil quality* – 131 acres
- *Land with conservation applied to improve water quality* – 494 acres
- *Grazing and forest land with conservation applied to protect and improve the resource base* – 434 acres
- *Non-federal land with conservation applied to improve fish and wildlife habitat quality* – 115 acres
- *Certified Nutrient Management Plans written and applied* – 0

Other 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.
- Conservation Technician Mark Jacobs represents the board on the **Boone County Urban Forest Commission** and the **No. Ky. Urban and Community Forestry Committee**.
- Mark Jacobs assists the **Boone County Parks Department** with land management issues. He assisted this year with projects at Boone Woods Park, Central Park, Idlewild Park, park land near Erpenbeck School and Conrad Park.
- Mark also attends **Boone County Planning and Zoning Site Review** meetings, conducts site visits as needed, and assists the board in preparing comments on site reviews. One of their main efforts this year was to concentrate on protection of headwaters streams in the planning and development processes.
- Tom Comte and Mark Jacobs represent the District on the **Boone County Greenways Task Force**.
- District Coordinator Mary Kathryn Dickerson represents the board on the **No. Ky. Area Solid Waste Technical Advisory Committee**.
- Tom Comte represents the District on the **Sanitation District #1 Watershed Council**, which was formed to assist SD #1 in formulating policies and procedures to assess and implement practices to improve storm water quality.
- The District participated in the **Sanitation District #1 Stormwater Design Forum** at Holmes High School, at their invitation. Following the session, the district participated in interviews with EPA and SD #1 staff regarding issues of local importance to the Districts. Those included that regulations should protect, enhance and improve natural resources and that there is a disconnect with natural resources issues in current planning structures. Those attending were board member Tom Comte and staff Mark Jacobs and Mary Kathryn Dickerson.
- **Sanitation District #1 Green Infrastructure Presentation:** The District Board and staff attended a special meeting to learn more about Sanitation District's initiatives to use green infrastructure practices to help alleviate and prevent problems with storm water. Those attending were Tom Comte and Debra Franks, and staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson, Kristin Scott, and Mark Jacobs.
- **Reforest Northern Kentucky:** The District assisted with this project of the No. Ky. Urban

and Community Forestry Council held in Campbell County. The Boone County Conservation District furnished planting equipment, and staff assisted on-site with the tree planting and tree give-away to volunteers. Over 300 volunteers planted about 3,000 trees on land surrounding the Campbell County Environmental Education Center and Parkside Conservancy property.

- **Kentucky Interim Joint Committee on Local Government:** In response to a request from Senator Damon Thayer, Mary Kathryn Dickerson represented the Boone, Campbell and Kenton County Conservation Districts before this committee to present the work of local conservation districts. Other speakers were Ky. Division of Conservation Director Steve Coleman and Ward Wilson, chairman of the Jefferson County Conservation District.
- **Kentucky Wild Game Dinner:** The District participated in this annual event intended to be a time for county conservation district officials to meet with their legislators while they are in session in Frankfort. Over 350 people attended the event, which included an address by Lieutenant Governor Daniel Mongiardo and displays and exhibits from participating agencies and conservation districts. Those attending were Tom Comte, and staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson and Mark Jacobs.
- **Vision 2015 Regional Parks Initiative:** Staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson represents the Conservation District on this committee, which is promoting a coordinated approach to open space and recreation planning for the three Northern Kentucky counties.

Education and Outreach

Big Bone Lick State Park Discovery Days - The exhibit this year, "Would Lewis and Clark find Me Here?" that 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 a display on exotic plant species, recommending native plant alternatives.

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 no applications were received.

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

Writing and Art Contests - *Kentucky's Wildlife* was the topic for this school year's Conservation Contests. The theme focused on Wildlife, Why We Care. The contest was designed to stimulate the thinking of students about the abundance of Kentucky wildlife and the need for conservation practice that will ensure continued abundance. In Boone County, county and school winners received a certificate of achievement from Division of Conservation, and Backyard & Beyond or Wildlife Habitat book from the Conservation District. Teachers received a Backyard and Beyond book from the conservation district. Nine schools participated in the contests this year. This year there were 200 entries in the Art Contest and 58 entries in the Writing Contest.

Boone County Cooperative Extension Service: Mary Kathryn Dickerson assisted Mike Klahr, Boone County Cooperative Extension Service Horticulture Agent, with a Nature Walk at the Boone County Extension Property, Seven Hills, on Camp Ernst Road. She discussed the importance of plant diversity in conservation efforts and helped the 18 participants with identification of wildflowers and other plants.

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 - Mary Kathryn Dickerson taught classes for over 285 students this year through the Sanitation District #1 *Waterific* program.

Newsletters - The quarterly newsletter, *Landscapes*, reaches over 2,500 Boone County households. Also this year, the District published articles about their work in *What's Happening*, in order to reach a broader audience with conservation issues and actions.

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

District Operations and Involvement

The **Ky. Association of Conservation District's (KACD)** state convention was held in Louisville in July 2007. Board member Debra Franks and Tom Comte and staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson attended. Board members, Debra Franks, Jim Walton Tom Comte and staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson and Mark Jacobs attended the KACD Area 5 meeting in Henry County. Tom made a presentation on programs of the Boone County Conservation District. Members of the board participated in several KACD conference calls throughout the year to discuss conservation issues.

Tom Comte attended the **National Association of Conservation Districts** Annual Meeting in Las Vegas in February.

Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Conservation Council (OKI-RCC) The annual meeting was held at the Boone County Extension Service in March. Ohio River Happenings was the featured topic. Board members Jim Walton and Tom Comte and staff Mark Jacobs attended. A conservation tour is hosted each year by a member of the **OKI-RCC**. Those attending the tour in Hamilton County Ohio, in October 2007 were board member Tom Comte attended along with staff Mark Jacobs.

Jan Garbett, Tom Comte, Mark Jacobs, Kristin Scott, and Mary Kathryn Dickerson attended a **watershed training** presented by Marc Hult, hydrologist, and Kenton County Conservation District chair. Members of the Kenton and Campbell Conservation Districts joined them for the training at the Crestview Hills City Building in April.

District board member Tom Comte, along with staff Mark Jacobs and Mary Kathryn Dickerson attended a **Livable Communities Workshop**, sponsored in part by the Northern Kentucky District Health Dept. and Sanitation District #1 at Simon Kenton High School.

Conservation Planning Using A Green Infrastructure Approach – Staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson attended this week-long training at the National Conservation Training Center. The course was designed for professionals working in the fields of land conservation and restoration. She received financial assistance to attend the training from The Conservation Fund and Sanitation District #1.

Kentucky Association of Conservation District Employees Training – Staff Mary Kathryn Dickerson attended this training to bring back new programs and skills to local staff. Topics included trail building, the

Envirothon competition, and programs from the Kentucky Department of Agriculture the Wild Turkey Federation.

Soil Quality Training - District staff Mark Jacobs, Kristin Scott, and Mary Kathryn Dickerson, along with NRCS District Conservationist Ed Thompson, attended this NRCS-sponsored training to develop skills in promoting conservation practices to farmers and other landusers that will enhance soil quality.

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

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

The Boone County Conservation District participated in several joint meetings with the Kenton and Campbell Conservation Districts to discuss planning for the future and joint projects and workshops.

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 shared-employee matters. The District Boards worked together this year to review the board hiring and employee policies, making updates and changes as needed.

Land Use and Resources Committee: 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, and Rob Hall.

District Funding - The District received a grant from the Ky. Division of Conservation that included funding for the Conservation Technician position. Federal funds were received to assist with personnel costs for the Agriculture Conservation Technician position. Other revenue is provided to the District through the Boone County Fiscal Court and the Kentucky Division of Conservation. The District met with Boone County Fiscal Court several times throughout the year to discuss the District budget and items of concern. The District is working on ways to meet the needs of the citizens of Boone County in light of a 25% budget cut over the next three fiscal years. A complete financial report is available at the District office.