

**Soil and Water Gazette**  
**Manatee River Soil and Water Conservation District**

**Fall 2024**

**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.

**Board Members**

Paul Howard	Chairman
Michael Ingram	Vice-Chairman
Julie Tillett	Treasurer
Callon C. (Buddy) Keen, Jr.	Supervisor
Ben King	Supervisor

**USDA FARM BILL PROGRAM**

**Cost Assistance for Conservation Practices**

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), climate-smart practices through EQIP and CSP funded by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Apply by **November 1, 2024** for FY2024 funding consideration.

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/>**

**In this Issue**

History of the District.....1  
 EQIP Update.....1  
 MRSWCD News.....2  
 MRSWCD Events.....3  
 NRCS Corner.....3  
 Farm City Week Calendar.....4  
 Prospect Beef Show.....4

**OFFICE STAFF:**

Israel Vega-Marrero	District Conservationist
Jeremy Ansel	Soil Conservationist
Christine Russo	Soil Conservationist
Gail Somodi	Soil Conservation Supervisor
Will Weis	Soil Conservation Planner
Joan DiIorio	Administrative Specialist II

An Equal Opportunity Provider, Employer, and Lender.

**MRSWCD News:** For more information on these programs call 941-907-0011. *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**

Four participants prepared a 5-7 minute speech on the topic selected by the National Association of Conservation Districts, "May the Forest Be with You Always." Emma Hakes, a home-schooled student, won the contest and was awarded a check for \$250. Placing second and awarded \$200 was Ashley McIlwaine, a Parrish Community High School student. Taliyah Moore, a Palmetto High School student, placed 3rd and was awarded a check for \$100. Sophia Gagliano, a Haile Middle School student, placed 2<sup>nd</sup> among middle school competitors and was awarded a ribbon. Being the sole competitor at the area level, Hakes advanced to the state contest held in June. Hakes won the state contest and was awarded \$500.

**Staff assisted 4 participants with the help of 3 volunteers.**

**Manasota Regional Envirothon**

Manatee High School's *The Evergreens* team advised by Ms. Elswick was the Manatee County winner of the Manasota Regional Envirothon held at Oscar Scherer State Park. The team represented Manatee County at the state contest at the Suncoast Youth Conservation Center in Apollo Beach, where they placed 5<sup>th</sup> overall. The Florida Envirothon competition is an 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 140 students with the help of 17 volunteers.**



**Manatee County Land Judging Competition**

The 63rd 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. Parrish Community High School (PCHS) won the senior FFA team division and the junior FFA winning team was from Buffalo Creek Middle School. Junior, Intermediate and senior 4-H teams also competed. Several top teams qualified and attended the state contest in early April in Manatee County. The senior and intermediate 4-H teams both placed 1<sup>st</sup> in their divisions at the state contest, as did Buffalo Creek Middle School FFA. The PCHS FFA team placed 5th in their division. The PCHS FFA team attended the national contest in Oklahoma.

**Staff assisted 46 students with the help of 7 volunteers.**

**Manatee Spring Conservation Farm Tour**

In the spring the MRSWCD sponsors a Farm Tour showcasing farming areas in the county. We take citizens on a guided bus tour to highlight the importance of agriculture to our area. Lunch and snacks are included. **For more information on attending in spring 2024, please call 941-907-0011 x 3142.** If you would like your farm/agricultural operation to be considered as a stop on the tour, please call us. In spring 2024, over 90 attendees visited TerraNova Equestrian Center, Blue Lily Farm, and a Mosaic reclamation area.

## 2025 Manatee River SWCD Spring Events

Envirothon	January 30
Land Judging	February 20
Spring Farm Tour	TBD



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.

For more information on the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program, visit:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/csp-conservation-stewardship-program>

### 2024 Conservation Applied (Oct 1, 2023-Sep 30, 2024)

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and other programs – 6,919 acres

Planned practices in FY2024 – 19,535 acres

Active contracts – 34 = 26,336 acres in conservation (EQIP and CSP only)

### Services Provided

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

**USDA Soil Survey Distribution.** Soil surveys can be used to assist with land management decisions. 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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Palmetto, FL 34221

Phone: (941) 907-0011  
Fax (Toll Free): 1 (855) 464-1961

Soils Unit/Extension website:  
<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/manatee/agriculture/soils-unit/>

MRSWCD website:  
<http://www.manateeriverswcd.com>



**Farm City Week**

**For more information contact**

**Christa Kirby – Interim County Extension Director at 722-4524 ext. 1824**

- Oct 21** MRSWCD Speech Contest: “Home Is Where the Habitat Is”.  
Pre-registration required.
- Nov 13** Hall of Fame Luncheon
- Nov 14** Farm Tour
- Nov 19** Kiwanis Agriculturalist of the Year
- Nov 20, 21** Ag Venture
- Nov 23** Beef Workshop and Prospect Show

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 Marketing and Products. 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/>