

Soil and Water Gazette

Manatee River Soil and Water Conservation District

Fall 2021

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, 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/>

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 Conservation Technician
Christine Russo	Soil Conservation Planner
Gail Somodi	Soil Conservation Supervisor
Vacant	Administrative Specialist II

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

Three participants prepared a 5-7 minute speech on the topic selected by the Association of Florida Conservation Districts, "Healthy Forests: Healthy Communities" The contest took place virtually in the fall of 2020. Abigail Lillibridge, a Lakewood Ranch High School student, won the competition and was awarded a check for \$150. Placing second and awarded \$100 was Megan Hosker, a Palmetto High School student. Taliyah Moore, a Lincoln Memorial Academy Middle School student, placed third and received \$75.

Staff assisted 3 participants with the help of 3 volunteers.

Manasota Regional Envirothon

Manatee High School's *The Manatees* team advised by Boontarika Elswick was the Manatee County winner of the virtual Manasota Regional Envirothon. The team represented Manatee County at the state contest and placed 9th overall. The state contest was held online due to the pandemic. 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 55 students with the help of 8 volunteers.



Manatee County Land Judging Competition

The 60th 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. Intermediate and senior 4-H teams also competed. The overall highest scoring team was from Lakewood Ranch High School. Several top teams qualified and attended the state contest in late March in Alachua County. The Lakewood Ranch High School FFA team placed 7th in their division. The senior 4-H team and an intermediate 4-H individual placed 1st in their divisions at the state contest, as did Buffalo Creek Middle School FFA.

Staff assisted 31 students with the help of 7 volunteers.

Manatee Spring Conservation Farm Tour

In the spring the MRSWCD sponsors a Farm Tour showcasing various 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 2022 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. The spring 2021 tour was not held due to the pandemic.

2022 Manatee River SWCD Spring Event Update

Envirothon	January 27
Land Judging	February 24
Spring Farm Tour	March 11

Events subject to change pending COVID conditions.



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/>

2021 Conservation Applied (Acres) (Oct 1, 2020-Sep 30, 2021)

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and other programs – 595
Planned practices in FY2021 – 422
Active contracts – 12 = 2,142 in conservation (EQIP and CSP only)
Conservation plans written – 834

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**

1303 17th St. W.
Palmetto, FL 34221

Phone: (941)907-0011
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

- Nov 8** MRSWCD Speech Contest: "Healthy Soils Healthy Life" Pre-registration required.
- Nov 10** Hall of Fame Luncheon
- Nov 16** Kiwanis Agriculturalist of the Year
- Nov 18** AgVenture
- Nov 19** Farm Tour
- Nov 20** 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 health care. 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/>