

2014-2015 ACTIVITIES REPORT

Marion Soil and Water Conservation District

May 2015



Central Florida Springs Cost Share Program

Sponsored by: MARION SWCD

OPEN TO PRODUCERS OR FARMERS WHO FILED A SCHEDULE F OR C FORM WITH THE IRS

Financial incentive to implement Best Management Practices, reimbursed at 75%, up to \$50,000*!

*For equipment, labor and materials are only covered up to \$15,000. Program is open on a first come, first serve basis.

Some payable practices include:

- Weed Wipers
- Compost Bins
- Pasture aerators
- Vegetative Buffers
- Pasture seeding
- Interior Fencing
- Surface Stabilization
- Mobile Hay Bins
- Gutters
- Watering Facilities
- Pasture Drags
- Automated Irrigation

For more information contact:
Marion Soil and Water Conservation District
2441 NE 3rd Street, Suite 204-2 Ocala, Florida 34470
352-622-3971, option 3

2015 Board of Supervisors

Justin Albright

Vivi Serena

Colleen Stenstream

Robert Stenstream

Fred Ward

MSWCD Staff

Ann Bishop, Office Administrator

Nick Godano, Technician

Flyer and brochure for the Central FL Springs Cost Share; FED sign presented to farmers (photos top to bottom)

Conservation Programs Available Cost Share — Farms of Environmental Distinction

In 2012, Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD) partnered with Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), Office of Ag Water Policy, offering a Commercial Equine Best Management Practice Cost-share Program for Marion County residents whom implemented practices such as: soil testing, cross-fencing, water troughs, composting bins, rain gutters, mobile hay and feed dispensers, culverts, and fertilizer application.

These practices otherwise known as Best Management Practices (BMPs) are one of the primary educational outreach topics MSWCD focuses its efforts on. The more MSWCD is able to educate producers on BMPs and sign these farms up for one of the conservation programs offered, the more money that comes into Marion County to protect our natural resources.

Presently MSWCD and FDACS have expanded the Equine Cost-share Program, now entitled Central Florida Springs Cost-share Program, which includes all producers whom have an agricultural commodity with a FDACS BMP manual.

Central Florida Springs Cost Share Program

Marion Soil and Water Conservation District

Conserving Natural Resources for our Future

MARION SWCD

www.marionsoilandwater.com

Proud to be a

Farm of Environmental Distinction

awarded by:
Marion Soil & Water Conservation District

The Creation of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts



In the 1930's Dust Bowl disaster spurred the U.S. Congress to declare soil and water conservation a national policy and a national priority. Over 3,000 local districts across the United States were established to address conservation concerns, serving as liaisons between the federal government and local landowners. MSWCD was one of 62 districts established in Florida. Each of these districts are governed by a board of five, elected nonpartisan supervisors, who prioritize and aid in the implementation of services provided by our government to our local landowners.

The Mission of the Conservation Districts

The fundamental role of the Board is to bring together at the local level all interested and affected parties, along with the support organizations to develop and implement a plan to address resource concerns.

Some of the ways the boards may do this is by:

- advocate and support best management practices of natural resources through wise use, management and general conservation.
- facilitate landowners with the federal, state and local cost-share programs.
- promote conservation through educational outreach in the schools and the community, by encouraging conservation efforts.

MSWCD bringing conservation to Marion County citizens!



Welcome our New Conservation Technician

MSWCD partnered with FDACS and hired a conservation technician, Nick Godano, who will help producers enroll in their cost-share programs, educate producers on BMPs, and enroll producers into the agricultural commodities with FDACS BMP manuals, notice of intents.



Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our services and products

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This program currently offers up to \$50,000 per farm on a first come, first serve basis, with a priority given to those living in a Springs Protection Zone. In the 2014-2015 fiscal year, MSCWD cost-shared \$412,824 to local producers here in Marion County.

Furthermore, MSWCD works under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This unique partnership has huge benefits for the farm owners of Marion County. The MOU requires MSWCD to supply NRCS with an office assistant to assist with processing government cost-share programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

These programs brought in a dollar amount of \$1,312,798 in the 2008-2009 fiscal year to Marion County, and has been increasing yearly. Each year since the 2008 Farm Bill has gone into effect additional cost-share programs have been added. Since the 2014 Farm Bill, new contracts currently totaled \$476,029. Through these new funding opportunities Marion County farmers will be receiving over \$4,056,496 in funding. This money allows for conservation practices to be implemented on farms around the county to further assist in protecting our natural resources.

In addition, the MSWCD's Farms of Environmental Distinction Program currently in its ninth year and has awarded over 50 farms for their environmental conservation efforts in implementing BMPs. During this fiscal year, MSWCD is also expanding this program to include producers of all commodities.



Conservation Education Contests

Marion Soil and Water Conservation District's overall goal is to provide conservation outreach and education to Marion County citizens and its students. The District continues to promote conservation through various educational contests. Each of these contests are offered to Marion County Students through the Marion County School Board, Marion County 4-H, Home-schooling Programs and FFA. The MSWCD this school year had approximately 300 students and 15 teachers participate, giving away close to \$6,000 in awards.

Furthermore, every year the MSWCD chooses to use the National Association of Conservation District's Stewardship theme for our essay, poster, and speech contests. This year's theme was "Local Heroes—Your Hard Working Pollinators" (Why are these pollinators, local heroes?). Students who competed learned interesting factors about pollinators, like moths and bats pollinate flowers at night, and why these pollinators are essential to us. As one student stated, "without pollinators mankind would not exist because without these pollinators our food source would disappear."

In addition to these three contests, MSWCD is in its second year offering a contest entitled, Found "Junk" Art, which involves constructing Marion County native flora and/or fauna out of items that are no longer considered of use. In its first year, only 11 students competed; however, this year, 49 students participated in this particular contest. A teacher commented that her students enjoyed thinking outside the box to make native animals and plants, and she (the teacher) enjoyed seeing what these students created.

Other contests this year included: Conservation Landscape Tray (A contest where students demonstrated on a smaller scale, conservation practices and how these practices are utilized in real world applications.), Envirothon (A hands-on competition involving Forestry, Soils, Aquatics, Wildlife, and a Current Event Topic —The 2015 topic was Urban Forestry.), and Land Judging (A contest that teaches the importance of land characteristics, conservation practices and home site evaluation.)

Finally each contest year is summed up with awards congratulating the winners of these contests and announcing our Youth Conservationist of the Year, Volunteer of the Year, and our Teachers of the Year. This year once again these awards will be presented at each school's award ceremony.

MSWCD FY 14-15 Accomplishments

- ◆ Represented Florida's Conservation Districts at the SECDEA Midyear Meeting and presented a Power Point on Florida's accomplishments.
- ◆ We had over 100 students participate in this year's contest entitled, "Local Heroes—Your Hardworking Pollinators"
- ◆ Participated on the Greenway and Rainbow Springs Land Management Review providing voluntary technical assistance and conservation planning.
- ◆ Organized educational outreach events and workshops at local, agricultural fairs and other public venues in order to increase conservation awareness and participation.
- ◆ Participated in the SEYF, 4-H Farm Week and the EAGO Festival by providing educational activities and information.
- ◆ Attended several Marion County Horse Association Meetings to promote the Central Florida Springs Cost Share Program and Best Management Practices.
- ◆ Partnered with other agencies, organizations, and local, State and Federal governments to promote programs and education on Best Management Practices.
- ◆ Provided assistance to landowners through cost share funds for agricultural producers on select agricultural practices that promote preservation and conservation of our natural resources. Funding was made available by FDACS and NRCS.

Photos from the 2014-2015 Fiscal Year

