



United States Department of Agriculture • Natural Resources Conservation Service

2003 Report



McKenzie Creek flows through Lon Sanders Canyon near piedmont.

Harmony between people and the land.



It is my privilege to present the 2003 annual report for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Missouri.

This report highlights the natural resource accomplishments on private land. These accomplishments benefit all Missouri residents by improving water quality, reducing soil erosion, increasing wildlife habitat and improving the management of cropland, grassland and other land uses.

I congratulate Missouri's farmers, ranchers and others for being good stewards of the natural resources on their property. I appreciate the excellent assistance provided by NRCS employees, the soil and water conservation district staff, and other members of our Missouri conservation partnership in obtaining conservation on the land.

This has been a record year for conservation of natural resources in Missouri!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger A. Hansen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Roger A. Hansen
Missouri State Conservationist

About NRCS

NRCS in Missouri is designed for customer service and field office support. We have 100 field offices with over 400 employees, serving 114 counties. In addition to field offices, NRCS also has other technical offices. These offices support soil survey, watershed projects, water quality, outreach, resource conservation and development and plant materials.

Our field offices are co-located with the USDA Farm Service Agency, Rural Development and local soil and water conservation district staffs. The state is divided into five areas led by

area conservationists. Those five areas are further divided into one-to-three county field office service areas (FOSAs) led by district conservationists.

The State Office, located in Columbia, provides technical and administrative support for all other offices and is made up of eight separate teams. They are Engineering, Water Resources, Resource Inventory and Assessment, Field Technical Services, Public Information and Marketing, Administration and Finance, Human Resources and the State Conservationist's staff.



Floodplain Buyout Provides Park, Pride in Piedmont

Even at high flow, McKenzie Creek resembles poetry in motion as it flows through the Lon Sanders Canyon shut-ins about one mile upstream from Piedmont. Inside the city limits, however, many residents of the small Wayne County community view the creek with skepticism, remembering all too well the times when it became an uncontrollable monster.

Boys view rain-swollen McKenzie Creek from a new handicap-accessible pier in the buyout area.

Mckenzie Creek floodwaters have invaded homes and businesses in Piedmont many times over the years, causing an average of \$584,000 in damages each year. In 1992, the creek flooded for the fourth time in 10 years, encouraging Piedmont Mayor Galon Watson to seek a solution following his election in 1993.

“One day I got the idea to bring all of the agencies together that had some jurisdiction,” Watson says. Based upon information from that meeting, the city requested a study by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Initial NRCS studies concentrated on flood control using small, floodwater-retarding structures. However, too few suitable dam sites were available to adequately control storm runoff in the 21,330 acre McKenzie Creek watershed.

Unable to control the creek’s flow, planners on the Missouri NRCS water resources staff suggested a voluntary floodplain buyout to control the damage. In July 1998, NRCS, the Wayne County Soil and Water Conservation District and the City of Piedmont signed the McKenzie Creek Watershed Plan and Environmental Assessment.

As of February 1, the city had purchased and removed three commercial buildings and 101

mostly low-income residences. Residents were relocated to flood-free areas.

In place of the 104 residences and businesses, about 50 acres of open space was added along the creek. The city built two new parks, including playground equipment, two pavilions, two restrooms, a little league baseball field, a youth soccer field, benches, picnic shelters and horseshoe pits.

The centerpiece of the improvements is a paved trail that winds for almost a mile along McKenzie Creek. It includes a handicap-accessible pier at a popular swimming and fishing hole.

Environmental improvements included planting more than

500 trees within the stream corridor and stabilizing and restoring 800 feet of the stream's bank.

The cost of the project thus far is about \$4 million. NRCS and the State Emergency Management Agency contributed about \$1.5 million each. The remaining funds came from community development grants, the Missouri Department of Conservation and the USDA Forest Service, as well as cash and in-kind contributions from the city, local businesses, groups and individuals.

Watson says a few people have chosen not to sell their property in the floodplain, but most people appreciated the opportunity

to move to areas where they don't have to worry about flooding.

"It's a win-win situation," Watson says. "Sellers win by getting fair market value for their property, renters win by getting better places to live, and the city wins because we are able to get people out of harm's way and get rid of some blight. The federal government also wins because they don't have to keep paying on flood-insurance claims."

By utilizing authority provided by the Watershed Protection and Flood Protection Act, NRCS and its partners were able to help the City of Piedmont live in harmony with the McKenzie Creek monster.



Piedmont Mayor Gaylon Watson, right, City Clerk Carolyn Lovelace, left, and Tammy Thurman, assistant to the mayor, in Handy Park. The park replaced low-income, frequently flooded homes



Program Summary

This annual report covers one fiscal year - from October 1, 2002, to September 30, 2003. In a few cases, to show trends, data from other years have been included. The information in this publication highlights a number of our annual activities in Fiscal Year 2003.

Conservation Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is simply about helping people. NRCS employees provide conservation options, recommendations, planning, or application assistance to individual farmers, ranchers, local governments, and even individual homeowners.

During Fiscal Year 2003, NRCS and its partners in Missouri provided technical assistance to 91,799 customers, including 34,151 first-time customers. They helped land users apply conservation systems on 805,522 acres and plan conservation measures that, when applied, would protect another 746,873 acres.

They helped establish irrigation management systems on 120,844 acres in southeastern Missouri, helped establish prescribed grazing systems on 123,524 acres in the state's grassland areas, assisted with pest management on 126,112 acres, and helped landowners improve wildlife habitat on 176,519 acres throughout the state.

Missouri's natural resources conservation team also provided technical assistance to install 95 animal waste management systems.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

WRP helps landowners restore wetlands on agricultural and non-agricultural lands. Restored wetlands provide wildlife habitat for migratory birds, threatened and endangered species and other wetland wildlife. WRP started as a pilot in Missouri in 1992. To date, 695 applications have been funded statewide encompassing 98,630 acres. In 2003, NRCS accepted 222 applications covering 18,306 acres.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals. EQIP provides financial and technical help to install or implement structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.

In 2003, Missouri farmers requested more than \$50 million in EQIP financial assistance. The \$14.2 million available funded 514 of the 2,995 Missouri EQIP applications. This financial assistance will help install conservation practices that will reduce soil erosion, use water more efficiently, and improve grazing land and wildlife habitat.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)

The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program provides an opportunity for USDA to purchase development rights from private landowners, thereby keeping productive farmland in agricultural use and protecting historical sites on agricultural land. USDA provides matching funds to organizations with existing farmland protection procedures to help them acquire permanent conservation easements from landowners interested in maintaining their current farming enterprise.



In 2003, Missouri completed its first FRPP contract, which will prevent development on 102 historically significant acres of pastureland bordering Wilson's Creek National Battlefield. Missouri NRCS also received funding to help organizations protect nearly 460 acres of privately owned land in four counties from further development to non-agricultural use.

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

The Grassland Reserve Program is a new program that offers landowners an opportunity to restore and protect grassland and pastureland rather than converting it to cropland or other uses. Last year \$1.8 million was available in Missouri, which was used to protect and enhance more than 12,000 acres.

Watershed Program (PL-566)

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act authorizes NRCS to provide assistance to local organizations in planning and implementing watershed projects. In 2003, Missouri's \$4.3 million allotment of PL-566 watershed implementation funds was used to award 16 contracts in 11 watersheds. The contracts are for constructing 67 floodwater retarding structures, improving the Neosho city park along Hickory Creek, and for acquiring flood-prone property and buildings along McKenzie Creek in Piedmont.

Watershed Rehabilitation funds totaling \$520,000 were obligated to rehabilitate a dam in the Williams Creek Watershed.

Cooperative Soil Survey Program

The mission of the Missouri Cooperative Soil Survey Program is to continue developing science-based, soil-system information that is customized to meet natural resource management needs. The emphasis of the program in 2003 was to develop soil survey manuscripts and soil maps for all counties without available publications. An evaluation of the initial soils inventory also was conducted.

Future activities will include continuing the refinement effort and developing interpretations and ratings for specific uses of the soil resources in Missouri. Additional emphasis has been placed on the delivery of soils information to

Missouri citizens via paper copy, compact disk and the Internet.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

WHIP is designed to maintain ecosystem diversity by improving habitats of reduced or declining wildlife populations within agricultural systems. Missouri obligated more than \$350,000 with 54 contracts during 2003.

Plant Materials Program

The Elsberry Plant Materials Center (PMC) primarily serves Missouri, Illinois and Iowa. Its mission is to develop and transfer plant materials and technology for the conservation of natural resources.

During 2003, the Elsberry Plant Materials Center released eight of the 20 plants released nationally through the Plant Materials Program. The commercial value of Elsberry PMC releases was \$2.9 million.



The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

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