

Soil District '55 Report For County Is Released

A report of 1955 activities in the Macon Soil Conservation District has been released for publication.

In brief, the eight-point report covers the functions of the district and its personnel, offers a partial list of conservation practices carried out during the year, lists the practices needed on county farms according to capabilities, and suggests more emphasis on soil needs to make lands more productive and valuable.

J. S. Gray is chairman of the soil district board and Robert Parker and E. J. Bradley are members.

The report:
1. The Macon Soil Conservation District is composed of all the

land in Macon County, except town lots, cemeteries, state highway rights-of-way and government-owned or controlled lands. The district program is directed by three supervisors who serve for three years. One supervisor is elected or re-elected alternately by the voters of the county, during the first week in December of each year. It is their duty to solicit the aid of any agency or individual to help further the cause of soil and water conservation. Also, to assist in the educational program of informing the public about conservation needs.

2. The district has available, locally, the services of one conservationist, on conservation aid, and one part-time soil scientist, who render free services upon request to any person in the district desiring conservation planning or the establishment of such practices. If technical questions arise which cannot be solved locally specialized assistance can be called for from the state office.

3. The soil conservation district personnel offers, without charge, the following services:

a. To make a soil classification or capability map of your farm showing the land slope, erosion and other soil characteristics. Such map gives the farmer and conservation technician an immediate inventory of the physical features of the farm, which better enables the farmer to improve his farming practices.

b. To lay off and set grades for both open and closed drains.
c. To lay off contour lines for strip cropping; survey and lay off farm ponds; assist in securing trout, bass and bream for farm ponds and open streams; assist in furnishing certain seed and seedlings for wildlife feed and protective cover during the winter season and take soil samples when time permits.

4. During the year 1955, a partial list of conservation practices carried out included:

Conservation crop rotation 1,356 acres; contour farming, 1,038 acres; winter cover crops, 695 acres; rotation hay and pasture, 622 acres; pasture seeding, 254 acres; perennial legumes and grasses, 261 acres; rotation grazing, 614 acres; closed drains, 7,523 feet; tree planting, 49 acres.

While the above figures and practices represent only those farms that the district worked with, and represent only a small percentage of the total job to be done, it is a big step in the right direction.

5. A recent survey to determine the practices needed on Macon County farm lands according to their capabilities was estimated as follows:

Contour farming, 15,000 acres; cover crops, 6,000 acres; strip cropping, 1,500 acres; crop rotations, 7,500 acres; Alfalfa and perennial grasses, 3,000 acres; pasture planting, 12,000 acres; Rotation grazing, 14,000 acres; tree planting, 8,500 acres; Woodland management, 75,000 acres; tile ditches, 223,500 feet; wildlife area improvement, 150 acres.

It is recognized that some of our farmers are now following reasonably good farm practices, but the county, as a whole, leaves much to be desired. For example: How much revenue is yielded from the 8,500 acres of idle land that should be set to trees? How many farms have pasture cross-fenced for proper rotation grazing? Is there a cover crop on the fields to control erosion during the winter season? How many of the 75,000 acres of woodland are fenced in with the pasture? The only

harvest we reap from idle and eroded areas is higher taxes; filled up ponds and stream beds and flooded bottom land. From improperly grazed pastures we get less forage and a shorter pasture life, besides the loss of valuable fertilizer and topsoil. For lack of cover crops our fields erode, yields decrease and the land is harder to cultivate. From grazed woodland we lose our most valuable species of timber, suffer damage to root growth, set up decay in older timber, still must provide necessary forage from other sources to keep our livestock.

6. Farmers of the district should place more emphasis on soil needs and capabilities, in order that our lands may become more productive and therefore more valuable. The present trend in livestock prices may have a depressing effect on our grassland farming, but for the long pull we feel that many more acres should be seeded to pasture and that livestock farming will still have its place on any average size mountain farm. Our bottom lands should be used mainly for row crops and all acreage with a slope above 25% should be kept in perennial grasses or be set back in trees. Our woodland in Macon County does not get proper consideration. Timber should be considered and cared for just like any other crop. Each year, thousands of dollars are received by the people of this county from the sale of lumber, pulp and fuel wood, not to mention the various jobs provided through the harvesting and manufacturing of its products and by-products.

7. This year, we have held various meetings in conjunction with other governmental agencies of this County and Rabun County, Georgia, regarding a plan to undertake a 90,000-acre watershed control and conservation project on the Little Tennessee River drainage area. Tentatively, this project would provide for straightening and cleaning out the river channel and possibly the construction of a few small reservoirs. It would also include a long range

development of a system of terracing and drainage for the area which would benefit all landowners and also conserve much water and soil. Recently, a number of local, state, and federal officials representing Soil Conservation Service, Extension, T. V. A., Wildlife Resources, Forestry, and others from North Carolina and Georgia made a survey of the watershed to determine its usefulness and feasibility. This group then submitted a field examination report of their findings to the state committee which is now considering this report and will, in turn, forward their recommendation to Washington for approval or disapproval of the project. We feel that this program, if approved, would be valuable attraction for new industries in this area, since it would improve water quality and also meet the spreading interest in irrigation. It would provide flood control practices and protection for all business establishments located on the flood plain of the Little Tennessee River in Franklin, N. C.

8. Recognizing the fact that unwise land use has contributed to the deterioration of too many acres of Macon County farm land, the supervisors of soil conservation service recommend that all farmers of this district use, to their fullest extent, all free services offered by our local soil conservation service men, with the thought in mind that always the wise and sound use of our soil will certainly raise our standard of living.

The estimated total commercial slaughter of livestock in North Carolina amounted to 22,550,000 pounds, liveweight, during December of 1955 — about 10 per cent below the record high kill for December, 1954.

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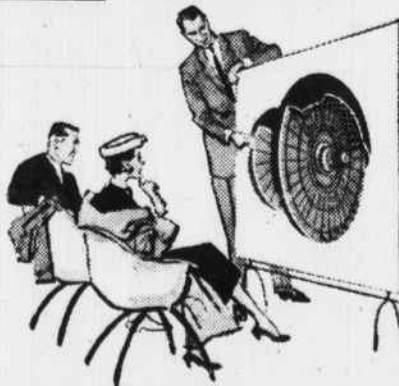
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