

**LSWCD Staff**

# LAKE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION

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Mobile Irrigation Lab, Team Leader  
James Joiner  
Mobile Irrigation Lab, Team Member

DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

USDA -NRCS Staff  
Keshia Martin  
District Conservationist

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## Mobile Irrigation Lab

By Camilo Gaitan, P.E.,  
Senior Water Resources Engineer  
Office of Agricultural Water Policy

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

The Lake Soil and Water Conservation District, Agriculture Mobile Irrigation Lab (MIL), has been providing water conservation services to the Agriculture industry of the county since July of 2006. The MIL was created through partnership between:

- Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)
- St Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD)
- USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Lake County Board of County Commissioners (LCBCC)
- Lake Soil and Water Conservation District (LSWCD)



Camilo Gaitan, P.E. (left), with Bobby Brown, Team Leader

Since its inception, this two-person MIL has provided water conservation recommendations via 105 evaluations on close to 3000 acres of land. Such work has actually saved over 83 million gallons of water every year, and could save up to 426 million gallons a

year if all their evaluation recommendations were implemented by all the nurseries and farms they have visited to date.

See *Mobile Irrigation Lab*, page 2

## Lake Regional Envirothon

The sixth annual Lake Regional Envirothon was held on February 19 with a new record of seventeen teams from Lake and Marion Counties. Students gathered at the Hickory Point Recreational Facility in Tavares to compete in a written exam and hands-on investigations.



See *Envirothon*, page 2



Nadine Foley, Chairman, spoke to participants before the contest.

## Lake County Land Judging

The annual Land Judging competition was held on March 5 at Ellis Acres, a Lake County public lands property in Paisley.



Peggy Belflower, Supervisor, presents Nicole Lewis with the First Place Individual High Score award.

Lake Soil and Water Conservation District invited students in Future Farmers of America to test their knowledge by judging soils from four pits that were selected by Richard Ford, Soil Scientist with USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Individual scorecards were marked for evaluation of characteristics, planned use, and limitations.

### Winning Teams

- 1st place East Ridge High School Blue Team
- 2nd place East Ridge High School Silver Team
- 3rd place Clermont Middle School Team A

### Individual High Scores

- 1st place Nicole Lewis
- 2nd place Casey Raines
- 3rd place Jennifer Hurley



First Place Team



## Lake County Teams Win at State Land Judging Competition

East Ridge High School Blue Team and Clermont Middle School Team A represented Lake County at the state competition in Alachua County on Friday, March 27 and each won first place in their division. East Ridge High School Blue Team is eligible to compete in the National Land Judging Contest in Oklahoma, May 2009.

## Mobile Irrigation Lab continued

The MIL attends quarterly statewide MIL meetings in order to share knowledge and information with and from other MILs in the State. The MIL members stay up-to-date on the latest water conservation techniques and technologies by attending training courses at least once a year.

They also attend workshops and do outreach activities in addition to working closely with FDACS and NRCS to maximize their impact and services in the county.



MIL Technicians can develop irrigation water management plans specific to your needs.

Call 352-343-2481, ext. 6 to schedule your appointment.



### Agricultural Producers

- Voluntary
- Non-regulatory
- Free public service
- Confidential

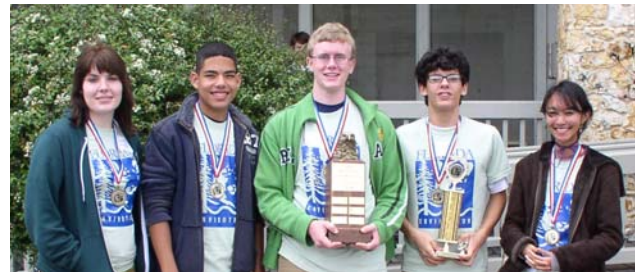
## Envirothon continued

The five-member teams were given 25 minutes each at stations representing aquatics, forestry, wildlife, soils and a selected current environmental issue, which was "Biodiversity in a Changing World."

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| <p>1<sup>st</sup> Place "Tuataras!", Advisor Sandi Good<br/>Leesburg High School</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> Place "Killer Tomatoes", Advisor Betsy Farner<br/>Tavares High School</p> <p>3<sup>rd</sup> Place "Introduced Species", Advisor Sandi Good<br/>Leesburg High School</p> |
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Jeff Deniger, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service tested the participants at the Soils Station.



First Place Team (L to R): Hannah Moore, Joyner Atilos-Lopez, Carter Sligh, Leonardo Finelli, Trisha DeTorres

The first place team "Tuataras!" from Leesburg High School, is eligible to participate in the Florida Envirothon in Hillsborough County on April 25.



At the Current Issue Station, participants looked for evidence that consumers, producers, or decomposers have been there.

Carol Johnson, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services asked students, "What is a Keystone Species?" at the Current Issue Station.

Students gave the following examples:

- Honeybee - plants depend on it for pollination to produce fruit and other organisms.
- Humans - they have few predators and help control the populations of other species.
- Mangrove - it provides habitat for the young of crustations and fish, and its roots cause sand to build up shorelines and help create islands.
- Sharks - they prey on other species and reduce populations so that biodiversity can be maintained.

## Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program Signup Announced

The USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), is accepting applications for the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP). Applications for funding are accepted on a continuous basis, however, eligible entities must submit applications on or before June 1, 2009 to receive consideration for funding in fiscal year 2009. Funds must be obligated by July 15, 2009.

Eligible entities are State, Tribal, or local governments and non-government organizations that meet specific requirements. The entities must have an established farm and ranch land protection program, have the authority to hold and manage easements; have the capacity to acquire, manage, and enforce the easements; and the funds to match the Federal contribution.

The FRPP can provide up to fifty percent of the appraised fair market value of the easement on the farm or ranch. At least fifty percent of the appraised fair market value of the easement must be provided by the eligible entity. Landowners may accept less than the appraised fair market value of the easement; the difference between the appraised value and the purchase price the landowners are willing to accept is considered a landowner donation. The eligible entity must provide at least twenty-five percent of the purchase price in cash. The eligible entity must also secure the appraisal, survey, and title search, prepare the conservation easement deed, and pay for the closing.

Land proposed for funding in FRPP must meet one of three eligibility categories: contain at least fifty percent prime and unique farmland soils and soils of Statewide and local importance; contain historic or archeological resources; or contain land that supports the farm and ranch land protection policies of state or local programs.

Owners of the parcels must have an adjusted gross income of less than one million dollars and be in compliance with the USDA highly erodible land and wetland compliance requirements.

Application must be made by the eligible entities to the state offices of NRCS at the following address USDA-NRCS, 2614 NW 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, Gainesville, FL 32606. The applications will be evaluated on state and national developed criteria. Entities and landowners will be evaluated for eligibility. The individual parcels will be evaluated for eligibility and quality; the highest quality parcels for which the NRCS state office has funding will be selected for funding. The ranking and selection of parcels will take place immediately after June 1, 2009.

For further information, contact Ronald Howard, FRPP State Program Manager, at (352) 338-9508 or email at ron.howard@fl.usda.gov.

## Conservation Education

Cindy Strickland, Resource Conservationist, has taught over 47,000 students since 2005 when she began the outreach program developed for kindergarten through sixth grade students. March was a record-breaking month, giving 79 presentations to 2,908 students.

With the assistance of Earth Team Volunteers from USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Cindy can focus more on *giving* presentations rather than *preparing* for presentations, allowing her to schedule two or three in one day.

Below is an example of teachers' appreciation for the program:

*Dear Lake Soil and Water District:  
I just wanted to write and let you all know how much we appreciate Mrs. Strickland and her wonderful talks to my class of special needs children at Tavares Middle School.*

*She brings professionalism, excitement, dedication and caring to her job as a speaker. Whenever she comes, she holds their attention in the palms of her hands - they're involved, ask and answer questions, and enjoy the materials and speaker so much!*

*I wanted to share how much her time with us means to us, and that we appreciate everything you all have done for my class here at Tavares Middle!*

*Thank you,  
Virginia Vinson*



## Lake Regional Science and Engineering Fair

Lake Soil and Water Conservation District sponsored the Lake Regional Science and Engineering Fair to support agriculture and natural resource projects. Betsy Farner, Board Supervisor, attended the ceremony on February 7 to present the awards.

A thank-note received from one of the recipients:

*Thank you for sponsoring the Lake County Science Fair and for providing an award in the area of environmental science and natural resource protection. I was honored to be chosen to receive your award. I am very excited about competing at the State Science Fair in April.*

*Again, thank you for your support.*

*Sincerely,  
Alexandra Campione*

# Upcoming Events - 2009

## April

- 2 - Lake County Fair (through April 11)
- 12 - Easter
- 22 - Lake Soil & Water Conservation District Meeting - 3:00 p.m.
- 24 - National Arbor Day
- 25 - Florida Envirothon - Hillsborough State Park

## May

- 10 - Mother's Day
- 21 - Association of Florida Conservation Districts, Area IV Meeting
- 25 - Memorial Day
- 27 - Lake Soil & Water Conservation District Meeting - 3:00 p.m.

## June

- 21 - Father's Day
- 24 - Lake Soil & Water Conservation District Meeting - 3:00 p.m.

### **Newsletter Distribution**

The Lake Soil and Water Conservation District Newsletter is available on the web at [lakegovernment.com/Lake Soil & Water](http://lakegovernment.com/Lake%20Soil%20&%20Water). Send an email to:

**Patty.Fletcher@fl.nacdnet.net** or call **352-343-2481, ext. 6**, and we will add you to our mailing list.

**Board meetings are held at  
the Lake County  
Agriculture Center  
1951 Woodlea Rd, Tavares**

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