

1956

ANNUAL REPORT

SEMINOLE SOIL

CONSERVATION

DISTRICT

SANFORD, FLORIDA

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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SECTION I

FARM DRAINAGE AND IRRIGATION

Water control continues to be the number one problem in this District. The local demands for an ample supply of fresh water are now greater than ever before. The total rainfall in this area for 1956 was below normal and the intensity of rainfall was lower; therefore, a greater percentage of the precipitation was actually absorbed by the land, thus allowing only a small amount of run-off to the low areas. Many of our small lakes and ponds are either dry or far below normal. The water levels in most of our flowing wells are considerably lower and a good many of them have not flowed in ever two years.

The increased demands for fresh water in this District were brought about mainly by our rapidly increasing population, several new developments, professional buildings and factories, and also by our improved methods of farming. We feel that our proposed county wide water conservation district is necessary in order to meet the increased demands for fresh water.

One of our beautiful streams, the Econlockhatchee River, was so polluted from the refuse from an Orlando disposal plant that many of our existing game fish perished from lack of oxygen. We feel that this is a serious problem that should be corrected and unless some corrective measures are taken within a few years the constantly increasing amount of refuse will eventually contaminate the entire river.

Several meetings in regard to water conservation were held in this District during 1956. One meeting with the County Commissioners in an effort to point out some of the water problems which are confronting the citizens of Seminole County. At this meeting, Jack Barraclough of the U. S. Geological Survey, pointed out the importance and need for re-capping the rusted out, broken off and abandoned flowing wells in this area.

These un-capped wells were estimated to be between 250 and 500 with a total discharge of several millions of gallons of water each day. Not only does this result in a waste of water and lowering of adjoining water table but it also renders the land surrounding each well unproductive by a constant build-up of minerals and chlorides. It was suggested, at this meeting, that the County Commissioners think about the problems and see if they could manage to set aside some funds to assist with the program of re-capping the abandoned wells, however, they felt that it was the individual landowners problem and so far none of the abandoned wells have been re-capped.

The seriousness of our water supply was also evidenced by the increased number of requests from the landowners and cooperators of the District seeking technical assistance with the design and layout of their irrigation systems on pasture, citrus, and vegetable land. Last year five seepage irrigation systems, covering approximately 475 acres, were established on local cooperators' farms. These irrigation systems are becoming more popular and are enabling the ranchers and dairymen to develop better improved pastures and greater beef and milk production.

WATER PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Many other problems concerning water were brought to the attention of our local technicians during the past year. Some of these problems were as follows: lowering of water level in private and semi-private ponds by dredging, digging with draglines, and by pumping for irrigation purposes; landowners leaving flowing wells running constantly, thus causing an insufficient amount of water in adjoining wells; and the effects of pumping on adjoining wells.

We will continue to stress the need of and work for a county-wide water control program. More interest was created in this District than ever before in regard to water management.

The increased demands for fresh water in this District were brought about mainly by our rapidly increasing population, several new developments, professional buildings and industries, and also by our improved methods of farming. We feel that our proposed county wide water conservation district is necessary in order to meet the increased demands for fresh water.

One of our beautiful streams, the Neenah River, was so polluted from the refuse from an Orlando disposal plant that many of our citizens have been deprived from lack of oxygen. We feel that this is a serious problem that should be corrected and unless some corrective measures are taken within a few years the constantly increasing amount of refuse will eventually contaminate the entire river.

Several meetings in regard to water conservation were held in this District during 1956. One meeting with the County Commissioners as an effort to point out some of the water problems which are confronting the citizens of Kenosha County. At this meeting, Jack Bartholomew of the U. S. Geological Survey, pointed out the importance and need for re-capping the treated effluent and abandoned flowing wells in this area.

These re-capped wells were estimated to be between 250 and 300 with a total discharge of several million gallons of water each day. Not only does this result in a waste of water and lowering of adjoining water table but it also renders the land surrounding each well unproductive by a constant build-up of minerals and chemicals. It was suggested, at this meeting, that the County Commissioners think about the problem and see if they could arrange to set aside some funds to assist with the program of re-capping the abandoned wells, however, they felt that it was the individual landowners problem and so far none of the abandoned wells have been re-capped.

The performance of our water supply was also evidenced by the increased number of requests from the landowners and cooperators of the District seeking technical assistance with the design and layout of their irrigation systems on pasture, alfalfa, and vegetable land. Last year five separate irrigation systems, covering approximately 45 acres, were established on local cooperators' farms. These irrigation systems are becoming more popular and are enabling the farmers and dairymen to develop better improved pastures and greater beef and milk production.

SECTION 2

CITRUS AND COVER CROPS

The planting of young citrus continued at a rapid rate during 1956. Although our remaining undeveloped good citrus lands, lands that are recommended as capable of producing citrus economically, are limited the acreage planted last year exceeded that of any other agricultural crop. Since there is only a limited amount of the good citrus land remaining undeveloped in this District many growers are planting citrus on marginal and sub-marginal land. Under our present economic conditions many of these sub-marginal soils are not recommended as capable of producing citrus economically.

The severe cold, which occurred in November, did considerable damage to the young and old citrus trees in this District. More critical damage was noted on the trees planted on the poorer type soils. Too many of our cooperators and other growers within the District are too prone to plant on some of the sub-marginal areas just in order to fill out or square up the grove. One of the older cooperators of this District, Mr. Frank Russell of Fern Park, planted a few acres on sub-marginal land just to block out his grove about eight years ago. A few weeks ago Mr. Russell dropped by the local Work Unit office seeking information on adjoining land and looking over his farm plan the technician asked the owner if he had noticed any difference in the growth and production on the sub-marginal land and the good citrus land. Mr. Russell then stated that he hauled in muck and organic material from his other land and also applied considerable extra fertilizer to the trees on sub-marginal land and the yield and size of trees were less than half in comparison with the trees planted on the recommended citrus land.

The majority of the citrus soils in this District are very infertile, droughty and lack of sufficient organic material. This District advocates the planting of a good leguminous cover crop such as hairy indigo on all young groves. We feel that in addition to protecting the soil from wind and water erosion the cover crop will also add considerable nitrogen and much of the badly needed organic material to the soil. We also feel that by chopping the cover crop into the soil with a chopper results in better protection to the soil and to the young trees.

Since our remaining undeveloped citrus soils are becoming exhausted we feel that a detailed soil survey would be of vital importance to all land owners who intend to make future citrus plantings in this District. This survey would result in better land use and also be more profitable to all growers.

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SECTION 3

VEGETABLES AND COVER CROPS

There was no noticeable increase in acreage devoted to vegetable production during 1956. Total production per acre was considerably lower than usual. This was brought about chiefly by an unusually dry Fall and Winter. The vast majority of our vegetables are produced on land within the flowing well areas. The water levels have dropped to where many of the formerly flowing wells now have to be pumped in order to provide sufficient moisture for vegetable production.

The majority of the vegetable farmers in this District plant at least two vegetable crops on the same land each year. We feel, and results of tests show, that most of this land is compacted, heavily infested with nematodes, and contains practically no organic matter.

In order to maintain this land in a good productive condition we feel that a rotational system of one year vegetables and three years of pasture is necessary on this land. However, there are several factors which makes a rotational program difficult in this area; excessively high taxes on our tiled land, higher costs of production than in other areas, and generally lower per acre yields than other producing areas. Each farmer feels that he must plant his entire acreage to vegetables each season in order to pay his taxes and debts, consequently the productive capacity of the land is dwindling each year.

Since local economic conditions will not permit a pasture-vegetable rotation we feel that the next best thing is to plant an annual leguminous cover crop each Summer in order to help build up the organic matter in the soil. Our heaviest rainfall usually occurs during the Summer months and a standing cover crop will aid greatly in protecting the land from leaching and sheet erosion. Several cooperators are practicing mowing the cover crops a few days before preparing the land for the Fall truck crops, allowing it to dry on the surface, and then plowing it under. This method, which was tried and recommended by the District about four years ago, tends to allow better air and water movement through the soil and the dried stems and leaves will not decompose as rapidly as when turned under as a green manure crop. Sesbania and cretalaria are the main cover crops being used on the vegetable land; however, some cowpeas, velvet beans, and hairy indigo are also used to some degree.

One of the larger cooperators with the district had about fifty acres of tiled land which had not produced a satisfactory crop of vegetables for the past few seasons so he called on our technician for advice on this parcel of land. A Fall cover crop was recommended. This cover crop consisted of a mixture of Huban clover, oats, and rye. It was planted about the end of November and was about three feet tall by the end of February. This great amount of arganic matter should prove beneficial to the next crop of vegetables, if so, we may be able to persuade other farmers to use both a Fall and a Summer cover crop each year.

There is very little likelihood of any further expansion of the vegetable acreage in this District.

SECTION 4

PASTURE AND RANGE

The establishment of improved pastures and ranges slowed down considerably during the past year. There were only 1283 acres of woodland or new land cleared and planted to improved pasture grasses during 1956. The average annual plantings to improved pastures since the District was organized is a little over 2,000 acres per year. At present there are approximately 13,000 acres established to improved grasses in this District.

Most of the ranchers in this District realize the importance of fertilization and are practicing the good management practices of rotational grazing, periodic mowing to control noxious weeds, and are planting the types of legumes and grasses that are best adapted to the capability of their land.

There are several problems confronting the ranchers of this District; such as, a wide variation of the surface and sub-surface water table during the seasons; also a wide variation of soils varying from very droughty, infertile, white sands to deep organic muckland. During the dry seasons many of our flowing wells cease to flow and the salt or chloride content of many wells renders them unsuitable for irrigating purposes.

Several seepage irrigation systems were established by local cooperators, with technical assistance from technicians of the Soil Conservation Service, during 1956. These systems range in size from 10 acres to 200 acres. They appear to be working satisfactorily and a greater margin of profit is being realized from the older systems that were established about two years ago. The unusually dry weather during 1956 is partially responsible for the increased requests the Board received for technical assistance in the seepage irrigation practice.

Water control seems to be the number one problem confronting the ranchers of this District. During the dry seasons they need some form of irrigation and during the rainy seasons they need farm drainage.

Several of the larger ranches within this District were sold to developers last year. With the higher values placed on the land and higher taxes required there is very little likelihood of any sizeable increase or expansion of the cattle industry in this District. Greater efforts and stronger conservation measures will be required for the remaining land that will continue to be used for cattle and dairy production.

SECTION 5

FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE

The woodland and wildlife programs have suffered the brunt of our modern day expansion of industry, developments, roads, etc., in this District. There are approximately 70,000 acres of land in our District that are classified as woodland and we feel that the best land use for these areas is woodland and wildlife preservation. A considerable number of our farm plans contain a woodland section and it has been the policy of the District Supervisors to encourage the cooperators to leave it as such for timber production, game and wildlife preservations. We also encourage the planting of bahia grasses, clovers, and partridge peas in strips adjacent to the woodland areas to provide supplemental feed and cover for birds.

The local fire control units of the Florida Forest Service are providing valuable services by assisting local land owners in ploughing fire-lanes and aiding in preventing and controlling wild fires.

The services of a part-time farm forester have been secured for this District and he has been rendering valuable service in timber management to many of our cooperators and local land owners. We believe that his services will aid tremendously towards promoting the woodland industry in this District. Close cooperation has been observed between our local SCS technicians and the local farm forester.

During 1956 several local cooperators were provided with trial plantings of partridge peas and other material for wildlife plantings. C. H. Galloway, of Lake Howell, obtained good results from the trial plantings that were given to him by the District. We will continue to promote the improvement and protection of our woodland and wildlife program.

SECTION 6

FARM PLANNING AND APPLICATION

Conservation farm planning progressed at a moderate rate during the past year. A total of 33 new cooperators signed agreements with this District for technical assistance in working out and developing conservation farm plans last year. There were 32 basic conservation plans developed with local land owners during 1956. As of December 31st a total of 297 basic plans covering approximately 47,798 acres have been worked out with district cooperators. Two hundred and seventy of these basic plans are considered active; that is, one or more of the conservation practices as recommended in their farm plans are being carried out, or actually applied on the land.

In this modern economy the building and widening of roads, establishment of factories and professional buildings, new military installations, and housing developments have taken over a thousand acres of agricultural land out of production during the past year. Not only is this detrimental to the agricultural industry but it has caused such high land values that many speculators have disregarded land use, land capability, and proper land treatment. However, it is encouraging to observe that many of our down to earth farmers are learning that conservation farming and proper care and treatment of the land will increase the productivity of the land and also give them greater profits. We feel that as our agricultural land continues to dwindle each year better care and stronger conservation measures must be practiced on all remaining land in order to maintain it in a productive condition.

SECTION 7

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

The promotion of conservation through our schools, garden clubs, churches; newspapers, civic clubs, and other agricultural agencies is being carried out very successfully in this District.

During the past year, an average of about two news articles were prepared by the local technicians each month and published by the local newspapers. An average of about one talk per month was given to garden clubs, civic organizations, and etc.. This phase of our program was also aided by our displays at the county fair and at the annual garden club convention at the Mayfair Hotel.

Very close cooperation and much assistance was rendered to the Future Farmer Chapter and agricultural classes at the Seminole High School. Several motion picture films were shown to these classes and to several garden clubs.

We feel that much, in the way of information and education, was also accomplished by our sponsorship of the public speaking contest last year. Our participant won the area contest and represented this area in the state contest held in Orlando.

We feel that the public relations between our technicians and the schools, churches, and civic organizations have played a big part in getting new cooperators and more conservation practices applied to the land.

SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT
ANNUAL REPORT OF RECEIPTS & EXPENDITURES

District Seminole SCD Atl. Nat'l. Bk. Bldg. Florida
(Name) (Supervisors' Headquarters) (State)

Period January 1, 1956 to December 31, 1956

RECEIPTS (BY SOURCE)

1. Balance Brought Forward (Dec. 31, 1955)	\$ 363.09
2. Rental of Farm Eqpt.	706.00
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
TOTAL	\$1,069.09

EXPENDITURES (CLASSIFIED)

1. Repair and Upkeep of Eqpt.	\$217.79
Mimeograph Service	5.75
2. Telephone	101.05
Office Supplies & Postage	16.38
3. Area Contest Expense	5.00
Meals	79.40
4. Speaking Award to FFA	25.00
State Dues & Registration	30.00
5. Insurance	13.50
Gift	5.00
6. Auditing Fee	10.00
7. TOTAL	\$508.87
BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD (Dec. 31, 1956)	\$560.22

SECTION 10

SUMMARY

We the Supervisors of the Seminole District feel that substantial progress in all phases of our conservation program was made in 1956. Due to an unusually dry year a great deal of the local technicians' time was devoted to the practice of irrigation.

The water levels in many of our ponds, lakes and streams remain at an all time low and we feel that stronger conservation laws in regards to the use of water should be enacted and enforced. Several meetings regarding water problems were held in the District and area during the year.

Benner Carter was reelected Chairman and Ralph Hammond was reelected Vice Chairman at our reorganizational meeting. At the close of the year Cecil Tucker, local county agent, was elected Secretary to replace Bill West, who resigned.

The Board did not receive any financial assistance from other sources for use on district work during the year. Our only source of income was derived from rent of our rotary-type mower to local cooperators for mowing cover crops, crop residue and pastures. The mower has proved to be a very useful piece of equipment and does a wonderful job of grinding up cover crops, pasture grasses, and crop residues.

We also feel that the local conservationist did a creditable job during 1956. Jim Sargent, local Conservation Aid, resigned last April and only the services of a part time Aid was made available to the District for the remainder of the year. We feel that a full time aid should be made available to this District.

Respectfully submitted,

SEMINOLE SOIL CONSERVATION
DISTRICT BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

BY: /S/ Bonner L. Carter Chairman