

PROGRAM

HILLSBOROUGH SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

I INTRODUCTION

The Hillsborough Soil Conservation District was formed by the people of the County for the purpose of providing an organized procedure for assisting farmers, landowners and interested agencies with problems related to soil and water conservation. The efforts of the District will be directed toward the preparation of plans and the establishment and maintenance of soil and water conservation practices within the District.

II LOCATION

The Hillsborough Soil Conservation District is composed of all the lands lying within the bounds of Hillsborough County, Florida.

III DESCRIPTION

Hillsborough County is located in the west central part of peninsular Florida bounded on the north by Pasco County, on the east by Polk County, on the south by Manatee County and on the west by Pinellas County. At its broadest point it is 36 miles from east to west and an equal distance from north to south. The topography ranges from nearly level to gently rolling with a few slopes of 7 to 10%. The drainage is from north to south and from east to west and the main water sheds almost without exception, arise within and remain within the District until reaching the coastal waters along the west boundary. The eastern part of the District constitutes a portion of the recharge area for the artesian water along the bay shore section, according to Dr. A. P. Black, Prof. of Chemistry, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Florida.

The native cover consists of long leaf pine, saw palmetto and wiregrass on the low flatwoods section interspersed with cabbage palmetto and species of hardwood along the streams and lakes. Cypress ponds are found on the poorer

drained areas where water stands several months of the year. The native cover throughout the higher section is long leaf pine and wiregrass with occasional clumps of saw palmetto while the less fertile areas have pine and scrub oak with wiregrass.

The average rainfall is around 52 inches but the greater portion of this falls within the so called "rainy season" from mid May to September. Rainfall in the winter months is often insufficient to meet requirements and irrigation is necessary for truck crops and citrus land.

IV AGRICULTURE

There are 668,800 acres in the District with a land area of 665,000 acres. According to the 1940 census there were 3680 farms within the District comprising 181,408 acres or approximately 50 acres each. Over 22,000 people live on farms and are actually engaged in agriculture while twice this number live outside cities in rural areas who are not engaged in agriculture. Over 201,000 people live within the District and depend largely on local farms for such fresh farm products as milk, poultry, and eggs as well as many fresh vegetables and other farm produce. The acreage of the principal crops are submitted below to give some idea of present usage.

<u>Crop</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
Citrus (all varieties)	25,000
Commercial Vegetables	12,000
Corn (after Spring vegetables)	4,990

The Plant City and Buskin sections are important truck crop areas and annually produce much of the truck crops shipped from Florida. Interest in pasture for the production of beef cattle is increasing and some of the cut-over land is adapted to the growing of improved grasses. Progressive cattlemen are developing these grazing lands and many beef cattle show signs of improved breeding. Due to the large urban population to be supplied, dairying is important as there is an active and steady demand for dairy products. The 1945 agricultural census reflected the following livestock in the District:

	<u>Number</u>
Beef Cattle	40,517

	<u>Number</u>
Dairy Cattle	10,314
Poultry	158,398
Hogs	10,327
Horses and Mules	2,360

The production of beef, dairy and poultry products, citrus and truck crops can be increased with proper development and utilization of the land and when necessary to meet market demands.

Less than 7% of the land area is crop land which gives an idea as to the amount of forest land, cut-over lands and range lands. Much of this land is non-productive, both from the standpoint of livestock products as well as forest products.

V FUELS

A. Water Control

This is a major problem of the District. Several organized drainage districts exist and a great part of the County has been excessively drained and drained without regard to the maintenance of a uniform ground water table. Some of the cut-over lands, which are good grass lands, need surface drainage to carry off excess water during the wet season and lower the water table to a depth sufficient to grow grass. Due to the unequal distribution of rainfall, control structures are necessary to raise and maintain a high water table during the months of slight rainfall. Irrigation is practiced both on citrus and truck lands and the problem of adequate water for this purpose is becoming more acute. The District needs many reservoirs and artificial lakes to supply this water, thereby relieving the draw down on artesian water sources. Uncontrolled runoff has caused erosion on parts of the higher rolling land, both in cultivated fields and on citrus groves. Contributing factors were the soil type, degree of slope, and the problem of maintaining cover or close growing crops in the rainy months.

B. Pasture development

Some of the cut-over woodland and rangeland is well adapted to the production

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of improved grasses. Development of these lands is needed on a much wider scale so as to increase the quantity and quality of beef and dairy products. Equipment is needed for clearing this land for development to pasture and equipment is also needed for the construction and establishment of water control systems. Some of the rangeland can be improved by the control and elimination of undesirable and useless weeds and brush.

C. Soil Depletion

Soils subject to excessive leaching and in some cases serious erosion, with climatic conditions encouraging rapid decomposition of organic matter, make the problem of maintaining soil fertility a major one. Maintaining cover in citrus groves is more difficult because of shading from the large citrus trees and competition for moisture between the trees and the shallow rooted cover crops. Adapted cover crops, both for Winter and Summer, are needed to supply nitrogen and organic matter, control erosion and conserve moisture.

D. Woodland and Wildlife

An idea as to the extent of forest and range lands is forcefully brought out in the 1940 census, which shows that crops were harvested from less than 7% of the land. Many acres of this land are best suited to the production of timber such as long leaf and slash pine. Many of these acres are deplete of desirable species and are producing only scrub oak and species returning no income to the land owner. Contributing causes have been unrestricted cutting or clean cutting of all desirable species in mill operations, uncontrolled burning and over grazing. Some effort has been made toward proper woodland management, yet uncontrolled burning and clean cutting of desirable species is still a common practice. Some areas need interplanting to reestablish a good stand while other areas only need protection for natural reseeding.

Many lakes as well as rivers and creeks within the District, together with the large areas of woodland and cut-over lands, offer sport and recreation to the residents as well as many visitors. There is a need for improving the fish and

game population. New plants are needed to provide year round food for wildlife and methods of controlling injurious aquatic plants in fresh water lakes and streams are needed.

E. Land Use

Because of the increasing interest in agriculture and the development of the District agriculturally, there is a definite need for the soil survey of its lands which is now being started. It will be used as a guide in making sound recommendations for future rural development. The District desires to see the lands put to the use for which they are best suited and managed so as to remain productive and fertile.

VI REVISION

The program for the Hillsborough Soil Conservation District is subject to revision as the District Supervisors see fit. Such revisions must be necessitated by developments and are subject to the approval of the Supervisors.

VII ADOPTION

Recognizing the Hillsborough Soil Conservation District as a governmental subdivision of the State of Florida, a body corporate and politic, organized in accordance with the provisions of the Florida Soil Conservation District Act of 1937, Chapter 18144, as amended by the Act of 1939, Chapter 19473, for the purpose, with the powers, and subject to the restrictions set forth therein, the Supervisors hereby adopt the Program which described general conditions existing in the District.

ADOPTED:

/s/ A. B. McMullen
A. B. McMullen, Chairman

/s/ J. Arden Hays
J. Arden Hays

/s/ Lyle Dickson
Lyle Dickson

/s/ J. L. Cone
J. L. Cone

/s/ Henry Carlton
Henry Carlton

Signed: December 9, 1946

Date: _____