

HENRY COUNTY

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

ANNUAL WORK PLANS

FY 2013

**Henry County
Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors**

J. David Almand, Chairman

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Introduction

This document outlines an annual plan to guide the work of the District and its partners during FY 2013 and beyond. It is a dynamic plan that is subject to change as necessary and when appropriate. It will be reviewed on an as needed basis to ensure that the efforts of the District are in keeping with its legal and stewardship responsibilities.

Background

The Soil and Water Conservation Districts were first established by the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation District's Law, Act No. 339 approved March 26, 1937. The Henry County Soil and Water Conservation District was officially organized on September 11, 1981. The Henry County District is one of forty Districts statewide whose collective responsibilities cover all of Georgia's 159 counties.

Purpose and Mission

The purpose of Georgia's 40 Soil and Water Conservation Districts is to promote the wise use of soil, water, plant, animal and human resources. It is the mission of the Districts to encourage the utilization of natural resources in accordance with their capabilities and needs for protection and improvement.

The Henry County SWCD Board is composed of five members, three elected and two appointed. The Members, or District Supervisors, are local citizens who are aware of the area's natural resources and their conservation needs.

Partnerships

Given the nature of its mission and its authorizing legislation, the District must take a partnership approach with other organizations and units of Government. Although the District Supervisors are local volunteers, they are also elected or appointed State Government officials. They work closely with the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SSWCC), the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), the USDA Forest Service, the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division, the Georgia Forestry Commission, the Cooperative Extension Service and local entities including the Henry County School Board, County Engineering, Parks and Recreation Department, Water Authority, the North Georgia Metropolitan Water Planning District and local Issuing Authorities of land-disturbance permits. They also work with other groups such as the Upper Ocmulgee River Resource Conservation & Development Council and the Atlanta Urban Resources Partnership to accomplish mission goals.

The District's work also includes partnership efforts with the NRCS and the FSA to provide technical and cost-sharing assistance for the installation of conservation practices. The District conducts educational activities for students of all ages, and provides training for land managers of urban and rural areas.

Why This Plan is Important

A well thought plan for safeguarding natural resources concurrently with the pace of development is vital to the economic and social well being of the County. Dramatic change has already occurred during the last 30 years and even greater change will occur during the next 30 years.

Henry County Soil and Water Conservation District FY 2013 Annual Work Plans

Objective 1

Improve and safeguard soil and water quality, and, dependent plant and wildlife resources in urban and developing areas.

Strategy

1. Provide technical review of E&SC practices on development sites to ensure compliance with Georgia's E&SC Act.
2. Provide soil information to developers/engineers for proper development of erosion and sediment control plans.
3. Conduct overviews of local issuing authorities, E&SC Program to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement in their programs.
4. Monitor development activities in the County for effective E&SC Plan implementation.
5. Promote the inclusion of natural areas, greenways, greenbelts, wildlife habitats or similar areas in new housing developments.
6. Support Henry County Government in development of green space areas.

Objective 2

Promote educational activities directed toward the general public, the agricultural community, and the County's youth to increase awareness, understanding, and management of our natural resources.

Strategy

1. Continue working towards the establishment of an outdoor classroom/natural area associated with and available to each public school in the County.
 - a. Continue identification, together with the schools, the County, and NRCS, potential outdoor classroom/natural area sites.
 - b. Work actively with appropriate elements of the Henry County Government and the Upper Ocmulgee River RC&D in the grant application process, in securing private contributions for outdoor classrooms.
2. Work with concerned Henry County Departments (Water Authority, Parks and Recreation, etc.) on an inventory and assessment of potential natural resources conservation, education, and recreation sites on County lands.

3. Encourage the local news media to promote awareness and understanding of the issues surrounding the conservation of natural resources, and to publicize in a positive and timely manner those actions which benefit the County's soil and water.
 - a. Inform local newspapers of efforts of developers, landowners, farmers, and others who manage/safeguard soil, water, wildlife or plant resources and request that they prepare articles. Also submit written articles regarding such activities.
 - b. Cooperate with the Georgia Wildlife Federation in publicizing National Wildlife Week, and Soil Stewardship Week, via a poster contest or other activities in local schools.
4. Sponsor and fund cost of sending two or three Henry County high school students to the Natural Resources Conservation Workshop at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, Georgia.
5. Contact Henry County high schools to field a team to the North Georgia Envirothon.

Objective 3

Promote land stewardship on agricultural and other private lands, including soil loss reduction and soil and water quality improvement and the enhancement of associated riparian areas, and natural area protection for the benefit of wildlife and native plant communities.

Strategy

1. Work with NRCS in promoting awareness and participation in USDA programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), and the Forestry Incentives Program (FIP). Encourage participation of interested local non-governmental groups in the locally led conservation priority assessment process.
2. Improve soil productivity and water quality through soil loss reductions on eroding lands.
 - a. Identify critical areas in rural areas in special need of treatment and encourage the landowner to contact NRCS and develop a conservation plan to adequately treat those areas.
 - b. Provide conservation treatment on cropland through farm plans incorporating no-till and conservation tillage systems, waterways, contour grass strips and/or field borders, and nutrient and pest management systems.
 - c. Establish permanent vegetative cover on urban/rural land using no-till, hydro-seeder and mulching equipment available through RC&D, and by other means.
3. Promote direct citizen involvement in soil and water conservation activities, such as community workdays on stream bank restoration, or the formation of a local adopt-a-stream group.

Objective 4

Support the Upper Ocmulgee River RC&D in the sustainable development of the natural and human resources of Henry County.

Strategy

1. Involve the RC&D with the promotion of outdoor classrooms and the search for funds.

Objective 5

Manage District financial and material resources to meet District goals in an efficient and productive manner and as prescribed by state guidelines.

ACRONYMS

AGENCIES

DNR: The Georgia Department of Natural Resources; includes the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) with final authority over erosion and sediment control, and the Wildlife Resources Division (WRD) which assists in the training and implementation of wildlife-related aspects of the USDA farm conservation programs.

E&SC: Erosion and Sedimentation Act of 1975; refers to implementation of the Georgia Erosion and Sediment Control Act, which requires a permit for most land-disturbing activities in Georgia. Local units of government are designated as permitting and enforcement authorities if they adopt ordinances reflecting the law's letter and intent, but all E&SC plans must be reviewed and approved by the respective Soil and Water Conservation District. The District may request the technical assistance of the NRCS, or grant plan review authority to the local issuing authority.

FSA: Farm Services Agency (formerly the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service) of the United State Department of Agriculture. Responsible for the administration of USDA commodity programs and certain conservation programs.

NRCS: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly the Soil Conservation Service) of the United States Department of Agriculture. Responsible for on-the-ground technical conservation assistance to farmers and other landowners, as well as partial administration of certain USDA farm conservation programs.

SWCC: Soil and Water Conservation Commission of the Georgia State Government. Provides the legal, structural and administrative framework for the functioning of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts, as well as promotes soil and water conservation and the implementation of the Erosion and Sedimentation Act at the State level.

SWCD: Soil and Water Conservation District, the single or multi-county locally organized and elected/appointed branch of the SWCC. Responsible for the promotion of soil and water conservation and related locally led conservation efforts, usually in partnership with the USDA-NRCS.

RC&D: Resource Conservation and Development Council, a multi-county non-profit organization promoting resource conservation and sustainable development in close partnership with USDA-NRCS and member SWCDs and County Commissions. The Upper Ocmulgee River RC&D Council includes Gwinnett, Henry, Jasper, Newton, and Rockdale counties.

USDA Farm Programs

CRP: Conservation Reserve Program provides yearly rental payments to farmers in exchange for cropland set-aside agreements in an effort to reduce soil loss and improve water quality nationwide. Beginning with the 1996 Farm Bill also contains a continuous sign-up (bypassing the competitive ranking process) for “environmentally sensitive” lands such as riparian buffers, filter strips, waterways and shallow water areas for wildlife.

EQIP: Environmental Quality Incentives Program replaces ACP, as the USDA’s most comprehensive agricultural conservation program. Provides cost-share and incentive payments to farmers to encourage the adoption of conservation structures and practices, and promotes whole-farm planning.

FIP: Forestry Incentive Program provides cost-share to landowners for tree planting, forest stand improvement and other forest management activities.

WHIP: Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program provides cost-share to landowners for the improvement of wildlife habitat and natural areas protection.

WRP: Wetlands Reserve Program, provides funds for the restoration and purchase of easements, whether permanent, 30-year, or 10-year, of previously altered wetlands.