

SOIL & WATER NEWS



July 2, 2009

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A Word From the Director



Despite budget cuts totaling over 14% in FY09, **GSWCC** had a successful year. Recent highlights within the Commission show progress in spite of our reduced budget. We were able to complete maintenance on multiple watersheds in North Georgia, make updates to our Erosion Control Certification Training material, and complete our transition to the PeopleSoft payroll system. Other accomplishments include metering all remaining basins except Lower Ocmulgee below the Fall Line, and continuing to provide incentive opportunities to private landowners to protect water quality and improve water conservation across the state. A few other noteworthy items are that the Ponds program signup is scheduled for August 2009. In financial news, the FY2010 State Budget will be similar to FY09. Revised budget instructions are forthcoming from the Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) in August. All state agencies have been encouraged to reduce July 2009 expenditures by 3%. **GSWCC** is preparing for additional reductions in response to the OPB August guidance. But, on a positive note, we recently received approval for \$1.8M from OneGeorgia for 2010 metering program. 

Upper Broad 319 Project

The Upper Broad River Watershed 319 Project has been successful in 2009, thanks to the help of the Broad River Soil & Water Conservation District. Banks, Franklin, and Madison County landowners have contracted nearly \$300,000 in grant funds to implement best management practices and improve water quality on farms inside the watershed. The project has already cost-shared toward the installation of over 13,700 feet of buffer fencing for livestock exclusion along EPD listed impaired streams in the Upper Broad River Watershed. On April 1, 2009, **GSWCC** along with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and UGA Cooperative Extension Service showcased key projects in the Banks and Franklin County area by hosting a successful farm tour. Keep an eye out for more activities in Region II and the Broad River SWCD as we work to improve the quality of soil and water in the State of Georgia. 





American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Update

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will receive additional stimulus funding through ARRA for the Federal, Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program (REHAB). The law has been in place since 2000 and allows NRCS to provide technical and financial assistance to watershed sponsors to rehabilitate aging dams. Many Georgia watershed dams were built in the 1950s-1970s, and now over 150 of these dams are classified as high hazard structures. This classification requires that dams be upgraded and rehabilitated in order to meet new discharge requirements designed to protect the dams and existing structures in breach zones below these dams. This program requires sponsors to provide a local cost-share match of 35%. Fortunately, the Commission will receive state assistance to accommodate the local cost share requirement. We anticipate approximately \$5.7M in federal funding and \$3M in state funding that will allow GSWCC and the Oconee and Broad River Districts to implement the REHAB program. These are funding estimates; precise funding figures will be determined soon.

This money provides an opportunity for GSWCC and NRCS to select five dams for rehabilitation. The selected dams are Marbury #22 in Barrow County, Sandy Creek dams #15 and #23 in Jackson County, and South River #4 and Little Sandy and Trail Creek #1 in Madison County. An engineering firm will be selected in late July to begin specification and design work leading to development of construction contracts. NRCS will provide the federal funding and the Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission will assist GSWCC in developing contracts for engineering services and construction of dam upgrades and rehabilitation. 

Takin' it to the Streets

Region II and the State office in Athens have been working to keep Clarke County streets clean. In 2009, GSWCC signed up to be official volunteers for the Georgia Department of Transportation Adopt-A-Highway Program. Under program guidelines GSWCC has agreed to pick up trash four times during the 2009 calendar year. Volunteer employees have already performed 2 successful trash pick-ups, one in February and one in April of this year. We netted a total of 48 trash bags full of litter from a one-mile stretch on Lexington Road in Athens. 

District News

The Coosa River SWCD provides educational materials and microscopes to the Arrowhead Wildlife Trail & Environmental Education Center in (Floyd County) Armuchee. Approximately 15,000 students tour the facility each year. The District sponsors two \$500.00 scholarships to students in May.

Catoosa County SWCD sponsors an essay/poster contest and banquet in May each year. A scholarship is awarded for the best essay. Also, three posters and ten honorable mentions are recognized. The three are awarded cash prizes of \$200 for first place, \$100 for second place, and \$50 for third place. The ten honorable mentions receive t-shirts.

GACDS Supervisor Training will be hosted by the Blue Ridge Mountain SWCD. The event is scheduled for August 21-22, 2009. Several special events are planned for the 2-days—a smoked trout dinner and a tour of the Mercier Orchards Farm.

Grazing Systems Field Day was held at the Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center on June 2, 2009. This event was hosted by the Lower Chattahoochee SWCD.

Ben Mosely and Pam Nichols (Region V) will be participating in the Water Festival at the Flint River-Quarium Sept. 30-Oct. 2, 2009. This is their 7th year sponsoring the three-day event to educate local 5th grade students about “The Many Uses of Water.” Each day 300+ students from Dougherty, Lee, and surrounding schools will participate in the festivities. 



Education & Certification Update

Time to Re-Certify?

Since the Education and Certification Program rollout in April of 2005, GSWCC has issued approximately 60,000 certifications which more than doubles the initial estimate of 25,000. If you are one of the 60,000, it may be time to renew your certification. All certification cards are valid for three years; to keep your certification valid you must attend at least four hours of continuing education as established by the Commission.

FAQ

When can I become re-certified?

Individuals can begin taking continuing education courses 1 year before their certification expires. Any course or courses taken prior to the 1 year mark will not be accepted.

What if I allow my certification to expire?

Those individuals that fail to obtain at least 4 hours of continuing education prior to their expiration date will have a 90 day grace period to attend a continuing education course. Failure to attend a continuing education course after the 90 day grace period will require the individual to attend the full course and pass the exam.

Please note that the 90 day grace period does not apply to your certification status. If an individual allows their certification to expire, they will be in non-compliance with the State Law and are subject to any enforcement actions that may occur. The 90 day grace period will only exempt you from retaking the course and exam. For example if you are a design professional certification must be current at the time the plan was received for each submittal.

How do I find an approved continuing education course?

Individuals may check the GSWCC's website at www.gaswcc.georgia.gov for a list of approved continuing education courses.

What if I have multiple certifications?

Individuals must attend four hours of continuing education for every certification they wish to renew. Example: If an individual is a Certified Inspector and Certified Plan Reviewer, they would need to take 4 hours for Level IB and 4 hours for Level II for a total of 8 hours of continuing education.

When will I receive my new certification card?

Individuals with 4 or more hours will receive a new certification card in the mail two weeks before the initial certification expires. 

NRCW Camp Successful

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton hosted this year's Natural Resources Conservation Workshop (NRCW) June 7th-11th, for rising 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students. The NRCW camp targets students who wish learn more about Georgia's natural resources. "Some of our youth do not realize the importance of our natural resources that we all depend on daily. This camp utilizes classrooms and field trips to help educate our students on the basic principles to conserve our natural resources," stated Workshop Director, Dennis Brooks. This workshop gives students a unique opportunity to learn about Georgia's natural resources from the experts in the field. Various activities help interested young people learn more about the basic principles and the responsible use of our natural resources. Students who attend the workshop receive a small taste of college life while gaining valuable insight into career possibilities through their counselors and instructors. There were professional personnel present from the Department of Natural Resources, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Georgia Forestry Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife



Service, and many private industries and organizations. The Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission employees who served as advisors for the Natural Resources Conservation Workshop are Breon Wright, David Hall, Jonathan Hall, Carrie Fowler, Kim Chapman, Jennifer Standridge, and Brian Horne. 



Lagoon Pumpout Field Day at Walker Dairy



On June 23rd the Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), in partnership with the Oconee River Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D), hosted an animal waste management field day at Walker Dairy in Greene County. Attendees heard speakers from the University of Georgia, **GSWCC**, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). These conservation professionals provided information about the procedures and processes for responsible animal waste management practices. Representatives from Georgia Milk Producers, Southeast Milk, Georgia Farm Bureau and the Georgia Farm Monitor were also in attendance. Those in attendance got to see a demonstration of an animal waste lagoon pumpout. This process manages animal waste effectively and efficiently while simultaneously providing valuable nutrients for forage production.



The lagoon pumpout program is a service provided by the Oconee River RC&D Council and the Piedmont SWCD and is available to producers within the area.

Walker Dairy is a third-generation farm that is operated by Mr.

Kent Walker. Through the years Walker Dairy has been managed for quality production while also conserving and protecting the natural resources on the farm. Several best management practices (BMPs) have been implemented to help achieve this goal, including animal waste management. In 1972, Kent and his father, the late Mr. Deleon Walker, installed the first animal waste lagoon within the Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District. The lagoon was designed by the USDA-NRCS and has been functioning effectively and efficiently for almost forty years. Walker Dairy is proof that sound management and maintenance of a lagoon structure will provide producers with an effective way to manage animal waste while protecting our natural resources.

DATES TO REMEMBER

July

16th- GSWCC Board Meeting
8:00am, Athens/State Office

August

4th- Group III Meeting
Morgan Co. Farm Bureau
Williams Dairy

5th- Group I Meeting
White Oak Park, Dallas

18th- Group IV Meeting
Dawson

21st & 22nd- Supervisor
Training- Blue Ridge Comfort
Inn & Suites

September

17th- GSWCC Board Meeting
8:00am, Athens/State Office

