



## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission  
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July 1, 2014

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### **Middle Coosawattee River clean-up results in cleaner water for Gilmer, Gordon, Murray, and Pickens counties**

**ATHENS, Ga.** – Water flowing through Gilmer, Gordon, Murray, and Pickens counties is cleaner following a recently completed \$700,000 water quality program for the Middle Coosawattee River conducted by the Limestone Valley Soil and Water Conservation District and the Coosa River Soil and Water Conservation District.

With funding provided by Section 319 of the Clean Water Act, Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission staff contracted with agricultural producers to install conservation practices that have reduced nitrogen entering the Middle Coosawattee River by an estimated 63 percent, reduced phosphorus by an estimated 80 percent and reduced sediment by an estimated 57 percent.

Working in voluntary cooperation with agricultural producers, GSWCC identified areas of concern that included the improper spreading of animal manure near streams, runoff from stored manure and unrestricted livestock access to streams.

“By sharing the cost of installing conservation practices with landowners, we were able to make measurable improvements to the Talking Rock Creek, Little Scarecorn Creek, Salacoa Creek, and Lick Creek. This is resulting in cleaner water downstream in the Middle Coosawattee River Watershed, which runs through Gilmer, Gordon, Murray, and Pickens counties,” explained Brent Dykes, executive director of the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

To improve water quality, two miles of fencing was erected to reduce livestock access to creeks, and winter feeders were installed to reduce soil erosion from feeding areas. In addition, stack houses, heavy use livestock areas, and watering facilities were built. Among the measures taken, 196 acres of pasture were planted in clover following tornados in the project area that created a need for soil stabilization and pasture re-establishment.

Farmer response to this project was positive in terms of behavior and attitude. Residents in the project area were interested in cost-share funding that allowed them to improve their farming operation’s viability while also improving and protecting natural resources.

– continued –

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GSWCC is now beginning work on another Clean Water Act Section 319 project in the Settingdown Creek Watershed that lies primarily within the boundaries of the Upper Chattahoochee River Soil and Water Conservation District (Dawson and Forsyth counties) but also runs through a portion of the Limestone Valley Soil and Water Conservation District (Cherokee and Pickens counties).

Agricultural producers in this watershed are eligible for an incentive payment for completed a farm assessment and updating their nutrient management plans.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts work with private landowners in voluntary cooperation to encourage the wise use and stewardship of the state’s soil and water resources. More information on these water quality improvement projects and on Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Georgia is available on the GSWCC website at <http://gaswcc.georgia.gov> or by calling 706-552-4470.

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