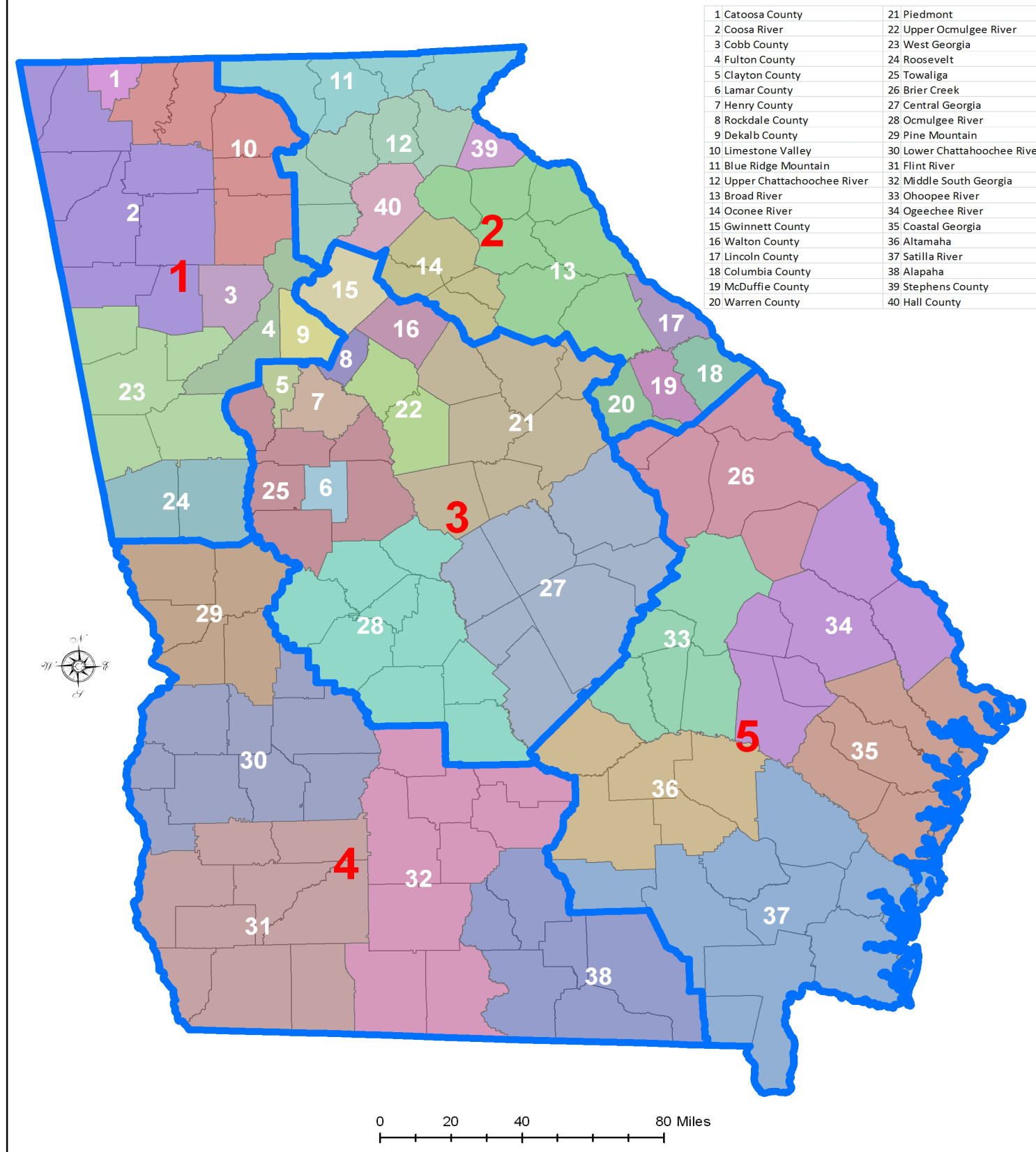


Soil and Water
Conservation in Georgia

2013



Georgia's Forty Soil and Water
Conservation Districts



<http://gaswcc.georgia.gov/fact-sheet>

Healthy Soil and Clean Water
Sustain Your Life



Mission and Vision

Soil and water conservation is about protecting and improving natural resources, but basically, it is about people. Georgia's 40 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, made up of 370 elected and voluntarily appointed district supervisors, along with the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (GSWCC) state staff work with private landowners to encourage improvements to natural resources that are the foundation of economic growth and prosperity. The Georgia Association of Conservation District Supervisors (GACDS) serves as the statewide organization representing local conservation districts.

This effort is aided by the technical assistance and planning resources provided by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service to ensure productive lands and healthy ecosystems.

Through the cooperation of private landowners and local, state, and federal agencies; Soil and Water Conservation Districts work to maintain, conserve and wisely use soil and water resources for all Georgians both today and for the future.

Contact Information

For inquiries about soil and water conservation issues in Georgia, the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission can assist by providing authoritative answers and guidance.

Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission
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P.O. Box 8024
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Danny Hogan, President
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Healthy Soil and Clean Water Sustain Your Life



Ag Water Data Collection

GSWCC conducts an agricultural water metering program to obtain accurate and timely data on the patterns and amounts of agricultural water use. The program includes installation, inspection and maintenance of meters. Data from the program are analyzed by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Results are provided to policy makers so they can make informed decisions about water policy. Farmers use the data to develop more efficient irrigation plans.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife

GSWCC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offer a cost sharing incentive program to encourage private landowners to create riparian buffers that protect water quality and provide improved natural wildlife habitats.



Promoting conservation

Soil and Water Conservation Districts, in partnership with GSWCC and NRCS, educate Georgians on conservation issues. For adults, districts hold field day demonstrations of conservation management best practices. For younger folks, they sponsor contests and workshops that provide hands-on, science-based training in natural resources and ecology.



Nonpoint Source Pollution Projects

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funds a Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) grant program that makes available funding for nonpoint source pollution projects. In partnership with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, GSWCC uses these funds in targeted watersheds to protect water quality through the installation of best management practices (BMP) on agricultural operations to reduce nonpoint source pollution.

Flood Control Watershed Reservoirs

GSWCC provides technical assistance in the operation and maintenance of over 350 flood control reservoirs. Local conservation districts hold easements to operate these structures. Many of these once-agricultural areas have been urbanized. Dams now protect houses, roads and other improvements downstream.

Land Disturbance Reviews

GSWCC conducts technical plan reviews in partnership with conservation districts to minimize soil erosion through the use of best management practices (BMP). These efforts result in reduced soil erosion and decreased water sedimentation, thus reducing the cost of treating water at municipal filtration plants.

Mobile Irrigation Lab

Agriculture is a major user of water. GSWCC operates a Mobile Irrigation Lab (MIL) that assists farmers with in-field irrigation uniformity tests and visual inspection to promote water efficiency.

Irrigator Pro

In cooperation with USDA ARS National Peanut Research Laboratory, GSWCC promotes Irrigator Pro software that allows producers of peanuts, corn and cotton to schedule irrigation using real time data matching crop water needs with available soil moisture.



Youth Education

GSWCC, along with the Georgia Association of Conservation District Supervisors (GACDS) and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts, co-sponsor the annual Georgia Envirothon competition as well as an annual Natural Resources Conservation Workshop that teaches younger Georgians about the importance of natural resources and the impact of the environment on their lives.

Soil Erosion and Certification

GSWCC manages and administers an education and certification program required for individuals involved in land disturbing activities. Through certification, GSWCC ensures the use of best management practices (BMP) to protect water resources in areas undergoing urban land development.



FY 2008 and 2013, by the numbers

\$5.3 million GSWCC budget for AFY13
(\$14.1 million GSWCC budget for FY08)

38 full-time GSWCC staff in AFY13
(64 full-time GSWCC staff in FY08)

1:1 nonstate/state funds ratio in AFY13
(4:1 nonstate/state funds ratio in FY08)

Land-use Challenges

In Georgia, agriculture is the state's largest industry utilizing more than one-third of the state's land and generating more than \$7 billion in sales annually.

Georgia faces water management issues as urban areas expand and Georgia's agricultural producers work hard to meet increasing demands for food and fiber. Both activities put pressure on the state's natural resources and wildlife.

More than 90 percent of the land in Georgia is privately owned; that is more than 33 million acres. Private landowners are critical to the success of any conservation efforts in the state.

Impact of Farm Policy on Conservation

A successful farm bill, supported by an agriculture appropriations bill, will encourage conservation efforts and should include:

- Maintaining local work group involvement
- Increasing funding for Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) in the NRCS Conservation Operations account
- Maintaining EQIP and CSP funding levels
- Creating block grants to states to allow for more local control
- Funding the Watershed Rehab Program to maintain flood control benefits
- Funding ARS research on water saving practices
- Providing funds to build ponds that provide water for irrigation and support wildlife habitats

Partners in Conservation



Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission
gaswcc.georgia.gov



USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
www.nrcs.usda.gov



Georgia Association of Conservation District Supervisors
www.gacds.org



National Association of Conservation Districts
www.nacdnet.org