

SOIL & WATER NEWS

April 2010

Brent Dykes, Executive Director

Brigitte Clifton, Editor

A Word From the Director

Spring is always an exciting time, and a great time to be thankful for nature's plentiful gifts. That's why recognitions such as Earth Day on April 22 and National Soil and Water Stewardship Week from April 25-May 2 are so important to GSWCC. When we take the time to recognize and celebrate the ways all of us contribute to preserving our natural resources, we put our hard work in perspective. We acknowledge the importance of our streams, lakes and waterways, and the surrounding ecosystems that help keep them clean and functioning. And we accept our place in that ecosystem as not only producers, consumers, and landowners, but as caretakers and stewards.



When GSWCC sends staff out to investigate sustainable irrigation options for farms, when we partner with other conservation agencies to control soil erosion, write grants to assist landowners in protecting their watersheds through proven and innovative management practices, certify subcontractors to control sediment and erosion concerns during their land-disturbing activities, or the scores of other projects at which we work so diligently, it's easy to get bogged down in the technical procedures, weather conditions and budget, and lose sight of what we're actually doing.

These celebrations remind us that our work is important, and that our efforts today will provide not only immediate solutions for the inherent challenges of working with land and water, but will help make sure these precious resources are there for generations to come.

However you celebrate these weeks of spring, I hope you take the time to look at the big picture and note the myriad of ways you're helping to sustain the future of our soil and water resources.



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National Association of Conservation Districts
Stewardship Week
April 25–May 2, 2010



FEATURED PROGRAM

PONDS PROGRAM

*A Cooperative Agreement between GSWCC and the USDA
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)*



Due to saltwater intrusion into Southeast Georgia groundwater aquifers and moratoriums on well drillings along Georgia's coast, irrigation from existing ponds in the southeast Georgia area increased. In 2001, after concerns about over pumping groundwater sources and dropping aquifer levels in the Flint River Basin led to even more strain on the area's ponds, GSWCC, in cooperation with NRCS, developed the Ponds Program.

How It Works

GSWCC accepts applications from landowners located in the Southeast Georgia coastal river areas and the Flint River ecosystem who wish to construct new or renovate existing ponds for irrigation purposes. Landowners receive technical assistance from NRCS to install best management practices for their ponds as well as federal financial cost-share assistance to cover 75 percent of the construction costs, not to exceed \$50,000. Landowners are responsible for paying a minimum of 25% of the total costs of any management practices installed.

Who Benefits?

During the recent drought, these ponds were invaluable in making water available for crops. Beyond the drought, more water means more opportunities for producers to grow higher yielding crops and increase

profits. Research from the USDA/ARS National Peanut Laboratory in Dawson, GA indicates that just 2 additional acre-inches of available irrigation capacity can provide revenue increases for irrigated Georgia crops. Pond irrigation usually reduces pumping and power costs, as well as making the system more functional and efficient for agricultural producers.

From a conservation standpoint, farmers become more conscientious of their water use and implement irrigation scheduling to conserve water. And, in addition to the obvious resulting water savings and reduced withdrawal from our aquifers, ponds help to protect and enhance water quality, capture sediment to reduce downstream transport, and provide wildlife habitats. Since the Ponds Program began, this cooperative agreement between GSWCC and NRCS has produced 235 ponds resulting in 7,580 additional acre-feet of additional water storage, not including completion of 2008-09 projects underway.

For more information on GSWCC's Ponds Program, contact David Hall, GSWCC Engineering Technician, at (478) 934-7299.



Every quarter, we feature a different GSWCC program providing invaluable conservation work in Georgia.

URBAN PROGRAMS UPDATE

Setting BMP Methods and Standards for Inclusion into the Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control in Georgia Grant

GSWCC has recently received 319 funding that will allow us to establish procedures for accepting new practices and products into the Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control. By the end of this project, GSWCC will have established benchmark standards for specific BMPs to be included in the Manual.

To assist GSWCC with this project, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be created. The TAC will be responsible for:

1. assessing the literature review and, based on the assessment, determine what BMP tests and test methods should be accepted and adopted by the GSWCC Board;
2. establishing procedures and criteria for accepting new products and practices into the Manual;
3. acting as subject matter experts to GSWCC regarding other revisions to the Manual;
4. determining the criteria for testing facilities; and
5. meeting on a quarterly basis with the possibility of additional meetings, if needed.

Those interested in serving on the TAC may complete an application online and return it to Lauren Zdunczyk by **April 23**. Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted. If you have any questions, contact Lauren Zdunczyk at (706) 542-1840. TAC members will be selected by the GSWCC Board.

Applications may be downloaded from the [GSWCC website](#).

New GSWCC Online Course! Re-certification - Level II Introduction to Design

Partnering with the University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education, GSWCC will soon offer Re-certification - Level II, Introduction to Design: An Online Course. This newly developed online re-certification course satisfies the four hours of continuing education required to renew a Level II certification and will be available late this spring.

Congratulations to Newly Certified GSWCC Staff!

The Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control (CPESC) program was created over 25 years ago to provide internationally recognized professional credentials to individuals working on construction-site erosion and sediment control issues. To become CPESC certified, individuals must pass a very difficult test demonstrating proficiencies in site planning and management, erosion prediction, runoff management, soil stabilization, erosion control, and sediment control.

In February, GSWCC staff took on the challenging certification process and are now equipped to provide additional expertise to construction projects. Those who hold CPESC certification in Georgia have the authority to design erosion, sedimentation and pollution control (ES&PC) plans. We are fortunate to have them as staff members.

Congratulations to:

- Robert Amos - Region II Representative
- Kelli Coleman - Region II Resource Specialist
- John Loughridge - Region I Resource Specialist
- Ben Ruzowicz - Technical Specialist



How Will You Celebrate Earth Day This Year? Conserve Georgia Has Your Comprehensive Guide

The 40th anniversary of Earth Day is Thursday, April 22. It's our day to celebrate the natural resources we're working so hard to protect; but as the big day approaches, many of us find ourselves at a loss for enticing activities or events nearby.

This year, countless events are planned throughout the state by a multitude of nonprofit, state and local organizations. And this year, GSWCC's partner, Conserve Georgia, helps connect Georgians to Earth Day events throughout the state with a new interactive tool at [ConserveGeorgia.org](#). Click on the banner at the bottom of the website to find a handy listing of event descriptions sorted by date and state region. This year, plan ahead to enjoy your celebration of the 40th Earth Day.

WATERSHED UPDATE

Watershed Wonders: Improvising to Meet Challenges

When a landowner on the upper end of a Cherokee County watershed structure called the GSWCC Region I office at the beginning of this year complaining that her driveway was underwater, GSWCC staff went in to investigate. What they discovered was a sabotage of the lake's concrete riser by beavers who had plugged up the riser with logs



Cherokee County, and the team spent the next two days assembling the system and making repeated attempts to get it going. Pumps and siphons are trial and error efforts more so than exact science. On the first attempt of day three, the system started, and the lake began to drain. After several weeks, the water level came down enough for the system to shut down and let the riser complete the job. Divers were hired to inspect the riser, and then a crew was hired to clear the inside of the riser once it was no longer underwater.

Returning everything to normal working order required quite a lot of patience, ingenuity and team work, but this cooperative effort between GSWCC, NRCS, GAEPD and Cherokee County accomplished the mission at minimal cost and proved, once again, that humans can triumph over even the wildest of beavers.

*Keith Gilmer,
Bob Fulmer, and
John Loughridge*

and debris. During heavy rains, the beavers' ingenuity had restricted water flow to the riser that normally would have drained the excess water to keep the lake at normal pool. Instead, Little River Watershed, the lake's auxiliary spillway, was activated, flooding properties upstream.

In order to evaluate the riser and clear the debris, GSWCC staff needed to get the lake back to normal pool. One option would have been to rent a pump to drain the lake, which would be very costly after purchasing the fuel and hiring someone to do the time-consuming work. So the GSWCC team, consisting of Rural Water Program Manager Bob Fulmer, Region I Representative Keith Gilmer, Watershed Dam Technician Andy Dyar, and Resource Specialist John Loughridge, in conjunction with NRCS staff, borrowed a siphon from the GA Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD). The advantage of a siphon is that once it is established, it will run until the water level gets down to the pipe intake situated near normal pool. Siphons do not require any fuel or electricity to operate other than the pump required to initially prime it. The pump and a plug were borrowed from



Andy Dyar, Joe Bishop (NRCS), and Bob Fulmer



GSWCC REGIONAL OFFICE NEWS

Region I



Catoosa County SWCD hosts a banquet in the County Courthouse Annex at 7:00 pm on May 11 to honor poster and essay contest entrants and supporters. Area college Agriculture students will answer questions and write

short essays on soil and water stewardship, and the two winners chosen by Coosa River District Supervisors will be awarded \$500 scholarships.

Supervisors from the West Georgia SWCD will provide two \$500 prizes to top students showing livestock at upcoming district cattle shows.



Similarly, the Mud Creek 319 Project had contracted over \$220,000 with Banks, Habersham, and Hall County landowners to implement over 41,000 linear feet of exclusion and cross fencing, around 600 acres that will incorporate a Nutrient Management Plan to the farm's overall management plan, and over 32,000 square feet of Heavy Use Areas (HUAs).

Region II



On April 7, Upper Broad Watershed 319 and Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation and Development Council Mud Creek 319 Projects co-hosted a conservation field day to display completed agricultural

water quality BMP projects on farms in Banks and Habersham Counties. With the help of the NRCS, Rural Development, and UGA Cooperative Extension Service, the tour exhibited key projects including a winter feeder featuring a solar energy system and rainwater harvester, critical area treatment, cross fencing and a stackhouse. These 319 Projects have met tremendous success in 2009 thanks to the help of the Broad River and Upper Chattahoochee River Soil & Water Conservation Districts. In the Upper

Broad Watershed 319 project, Banks, Franklin, and Madison County landowners have contracted nearly \$322,000 in grant funds for the purpose of implementing these practices to improve water quality on farms inside the watershed. Already, the project has cost-shared toward the installation of 32,485 feet of buffer fencing for cattle exclusion along EPD listed impaired streams in the Upper Broad River Basin.



From top: stream crossing and water trough at Jeff Herrin's farm, rainwater harvester at Herrin's farm, stackhouse at Jerry Griffin's farm, critical area treatment at Grove River Ranch.



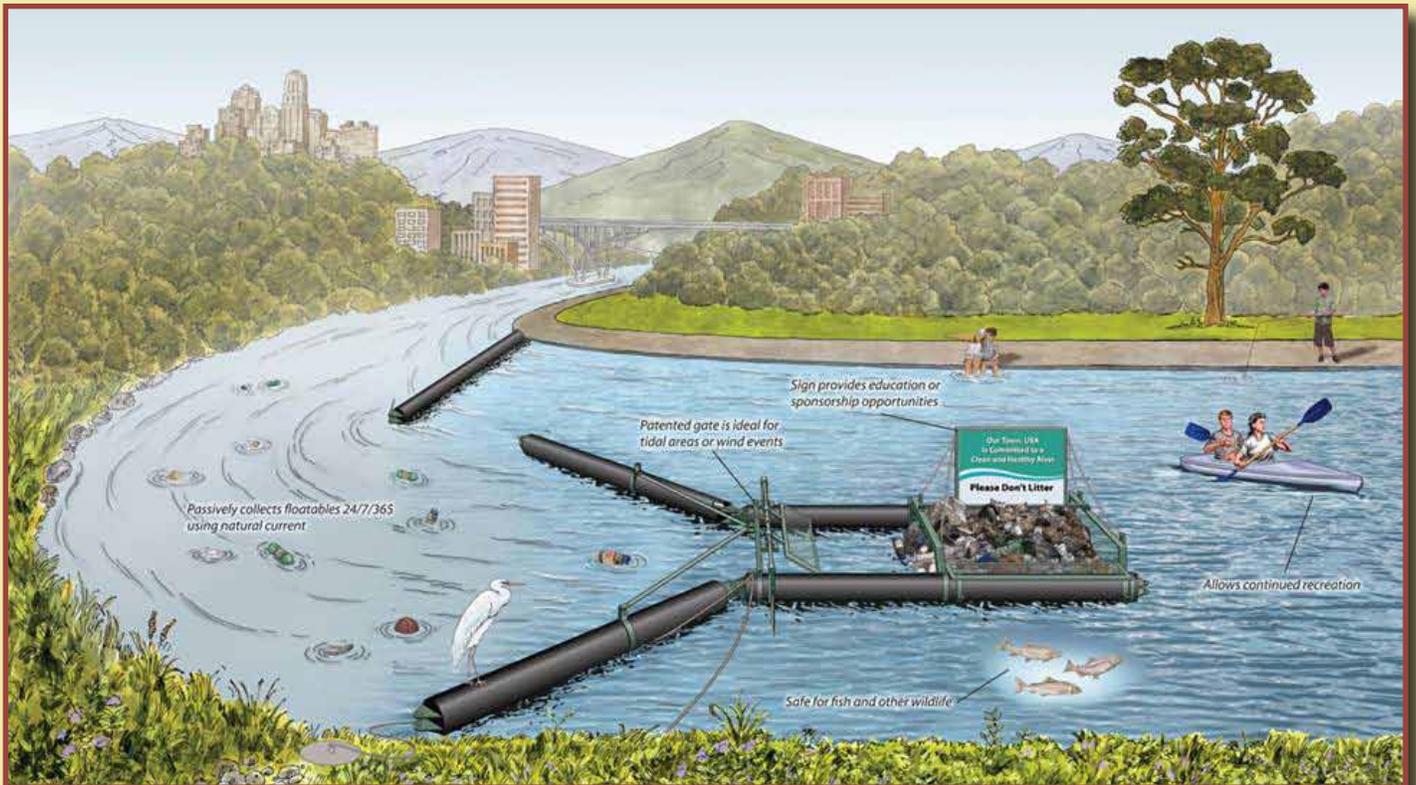
GSWCC REGIONAL OFFICE NEWS

Region III



The Region III office and the metro districts have been promoting the Bandalong Litter Trap at recent meetings in the metro area. Produced in Cleveland, Georgia by Storm Water Systems, the device captures floatable trash in creeks and streams. Several local governments have expressed interest in the device, including DeKalb County, and the cities of Norcross and Austell. Recently, Regional Representative Russell Toning invited Geoffrey Kridel to address the Upper Ocmulgee River RC&D Council to present the Bandalong device and other products that help remove litter from creeks and streams. Toning notes that the second Bandalong Trap in the nation will soon be placed in Waycross, Georgia. Please contact the Region III office with any questions.

The Clayton and Henry County SWCDs celebrated Georgia Arbor Day in February by handing out over 2,500 trees to local citizens. In Clayton County, 250 dogwood and crabapples were given away, and in Henry County 750 crape myrtle, 750 dogwood and 500 crabapple trees were handed out to local residents. This is the 22nd year for the Henry County SWCD tree giveaway and the 2nd year for the Clayton District. Assisting the District were the Georgia Forestry Commission, UGA County Extension Service, GSWCC and the USDA NRCS.



Bandalong Litter Trap, produced by Storm Water Systems



GSWCC REGIONAL OFFICE NEWS

Region IV



The United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with GSWCC, partners with private landowners to fence out livestock from various water bodies and environmentally sensitive areas through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (PFW). A 90% cost share program provides an incentive for landowners to participate in the program while helping to establish riparian buffers that improve water quality and wildlife habitat. In 2010, the Region IV Office has developed nine Partners for Fish and Wildlife proposals for individual landowners. Once complete, these projects will create approximately 40,000 feet of buffer fencing and establish 159 acres of riparian/wildlife buffers.



The Central Georgia Soil and Water Conservation District held its 48th Annual Conservationist of the Year Banquet on March 18 at the Eastman – Dodge County Recreation Department. There were approximately 175 people attending the event, which was sponsored by banks within the district's seven-county area. Following a seafood buffet, awards were presented to the Conservationist of the Year from each county. Award recipients were:

- Bleckley County - Earl and Wanda Barrs
- Dodge County - Jerry Bland
- Johnson County - Franklin Crabb and Freddie Crabb
- Laurens County - Robert Coleman
- Twiggs County - James Sheppard
- Washington County - Marion Meeks
- Wilkinson County - Larry Holiday

The award recipients were each given a framed certificate. Their individual conservation efforts and practices put on their farms and land were discussed along with a presentation showing these practices. Special recognition awards were given to the families

of deceased supervisors Mr. James L. Jackson of Johnson County and Mr. S.C. Cadwell of Dodge County for their distinguished service to their respective county citizens and service as longtime district supervisors. Keynote speaker for the banquet was Mr. Chuck Leavell, noted tree farmer and conservationist on his land in Twiggs County. Mr. Leavell is also a famous musician and author of several books. He discussed the importance of conservation partnerships. Music for the evening was provided by a local band, The Medicine Men.

The Upper Ocmulgee River Soil and Water Conservation District held its Annual Conservationist of the Year meeting on March 16 at the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center in Mansfield. Approximately 40 people attended the event and enjoyed a delicious buffet meal served at the center. The district's accomplishments for 2009 were outlined in its Annual Report distributed to all in attendance. Don and Sherry Smith of Dogwood Sport Horses in Newton County and Bart Ellington of Jasper County were honored for their conservation efforts. The award recipients were also presented a congratulatory letter from the office of State Representative Jim Marshall. Keynote speaker, Mr. Elmo Richardson of Macon, Chairman of the Middle Ocmulgee Water Planning Council, spoke on the background of the Water Planning Council and updated the group on its purpose and efforts. Sponsors of the event included the Jasper County Farm Bureau, Mr. C.L. Cook, Newton Federal Bank and Oldcastle Lawn and Garden.



Wanda Barrs, Governor Perdue, Earl Barrs, and Chuck Leavell

Earl and Wanda Barrs of Gully Branch in Bleckley County were named the State winners of the Governor's Environmental Stewardship Award. Congratulations to Gully Branch on this prestigious award!



OUR CONSERVATION PARTNERS

Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) Application Deadline Extended to May 17

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and GSWCC announce an additional call for applications for the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program, offering up to \$422,000 in fiscal year 2010 to small, underserved, organic, and sustainable agricultural producers to implement water conservation best management practices. AWEP will provide both technical and financial assistance to farmers interested in improving the water quality and quantity of their operations in 21 counties across Northeast Georgia, including Banks, Elbert, Franklin, Hart, Madison, Oglethorpe, and Wilkes. The financial assistance can include payments for management activities and cost-share for the installation of certain conservation practices including microirrigation systems, irrigation water management plans, roof runoff management, irrigation reservoir planning, and others. To apply before May 17, producers should first contact an NRCS office located at a local USDA Service Center.

“The Conservation Commission is pleased to be involved in a program like AWEP, which reaches out to small, often underserved, producers. This program is an excellent opportunity to expand education and outreach through innovative means of water conservation,” says GSWCC Executive Director Brent Dykes. More information on the AWEP program can be found on the *NRCS website* or by contacting GSWCC’s Region II office at (706) 542-9233.



Natural Resources Conservation Workshop to be Held in Tifton

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton will host this year’s 49th Annual Natural Resources Conservation Workshop (NRCW) June 13 -17, for rising 10th-12th grade students from around Georgia.

The NRCW targets students with a desire to learn more about Georgia’s natural resources and the opportunities and responsibilities they provide. More than \$17,000 in scholarships will be awarded during this workshop.

This workshop gives students a unique, one-of-a-kind opportunity to learn about Georgia’s natural resources—soil, water, air, plants, minerals and animals—from experts in each respected field, utilizing classroom and field trip activities to help interested young people learn the basic

principles and responsible use of our natural resources.

Students attending the workshop will get a taste of college life while gaining valuable insight into career opportunities through advisors and instructors consisting of professional personnel from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Georgia Forestry Commission, Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission and other organizations.

“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. This is a wonderful opportunity for our students to gain access to one of the valuable scholarships to further advance their education,” states Workshop Director Dennis Brooks.

The 2010 workshop tuition is \$150 per student and is usually sponsored by local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, local businesses, and individuals. Applications and information are available *online*, or visit us on *Facebook*. You can contact your county offices of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission, Georgia Forestry Commission, Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Division, UGA Cooperative Extension Service and participating organizations for more information. Application deadline is June 4, 2010.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For more information on these events, contact the corresponding Regional Representative listed below.

April 20

Forestry Field Day at Bartram Forest, Baldwin County
Piedmont SWCD, Oconee River RC&D, Region IV

Grazing Land Field Day, Wayne County
NRCS Seven Rivers RC&D

April 22

Earth Day
ConserveGeorgia.org

Upper Ochlockonee Field Day, Meigs, GA
GSWCC Region V

Small Farmers Field Day, Loganville, GA
Gwinnett County SWCD & Upper Ocmulgee River
RC&D, Region III

April 23

FFA Career Trade Show, Macon, GA
USDA, Farm Service Agency

April 25-May 2

NACD Stewardship Week
nacdn.net.org/stewardship/2010

May 12

Watershed Dam Field Day, Pike County
Lamar and Towaliga SWCD, Region IV

May 20

AG After Hours, Lamar County
Lamar SWCD, Region IV

June 2

Soil & Water Conservation Expo, DeKalb County
DeKalb County SWCD, Region III

June 13-17

Natural Resources Conservation Workshop,
Tifton, GA
NRCW

June 24

Benefits of No-Till Field Day, Bleckley County
Central GA SWCD, Region IV



Region I

Rome Office - Keith Gilmer
Region1@gaswcc.org - (706) 295-6131

Region II

Athens Office - Robert Amos
Region2@gaswcc.org - (706) 542-9233

Region III

Conyers Office - Russell Tanning
Region3@gaswcc.org - (770) 761-3020

Region IV

Milledgeville Office - Keegan Malone
Region4@gaswcc.org - (478) 445-5766

Region V

Dawson Office - Tony Black
Region5@gaswcc.org - (229) 995-6001

Region VI

Statesboro Office - Rahn Milligan
Region6@gaswcc.org - (912) 681-5241