



JULY 2022 TO JUNE 2023

# ANNUAL REPORT

FLINT RIVER SOIL  
AND WATER  
CONSERVATION  
DISTRICT

DRAFT COPY

[flintriverswcd.org](http://flintriverswcd.org)

# FLINT RIVER SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District serves farmers, landowners, partners, and citizens by facilitating the transfer of conservation-driven technology and widespread implementation across southwest Georgia and beyond, while acting as a grassroots leader and local voice for stewardship of natural resources benefitting current and future generations of Georgians. The District aims to work closely with strategic partners to approach conservation in a cutting-edge and forward-thinking way, with a focus on local impact and empowerment for local stewardship.



*Farmers are stewards of the land, and their adoptions of technology-driven conservation practices opens new opportunities for sustainable crop production.*

*-Marty McLendon, Chairman*



## ABOUT

The Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District is comprised of farmers, landowners, and community leaders that are dedicated to the conservation, wise use, and protection of natural resources in the Flint River Basin.

Over the last 15 years, the Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District has had over \$24 million in direct conservation impact.

# HIGHLIGHTS

## SEPTEMBER 2022

FRSWCD and FRF partner with GACD and the Georgia Foundation for Agriculture in the Fall 2022 STEM Challenge focused on water conservation practices.

## JULY 2022

Harrison Shinn in Walton County receives the FRSWCD \$500 scholarship at the Natural Resources Conservation Workshop.

## August 2022

Garrett Bridges joins the FRSWCD as the newest Supervisor for Miller County.

## DECEMBER 2022

Senator Ossof honors Chairman Marty McLendon for his work in agriculture and conservation with a commendation entered into the Official Congressional Record.

## JANUARY 2023

Supervisor Wayne Thomas is honored by fellow Supervisors as he steps down from his role after nearly 34 years as a FRSWCD Supervisor.

## MARCH 2023

FRSWCD, in partnership with Golden Peanut Company, host two soil health field days to promote the expansion of the Re:Generations Program in the southeast.

## APRIL 2023

The FRSWCD announces Pataula Charter Academy student Bhumi Patel as winner of the annual FRSWCD Poster Contest

## MAY 2023

The FRSWCD hires a Soil Health Coordinator to lead dynamic outreach efforts of the growing soil health initiatives of the District.

## MAY 2023

FRSWCD Executive Director Perri Cooper presents on sustainable agriculture at the Georgia Climate Conference in Athens, Georgia.

# OUTREACH

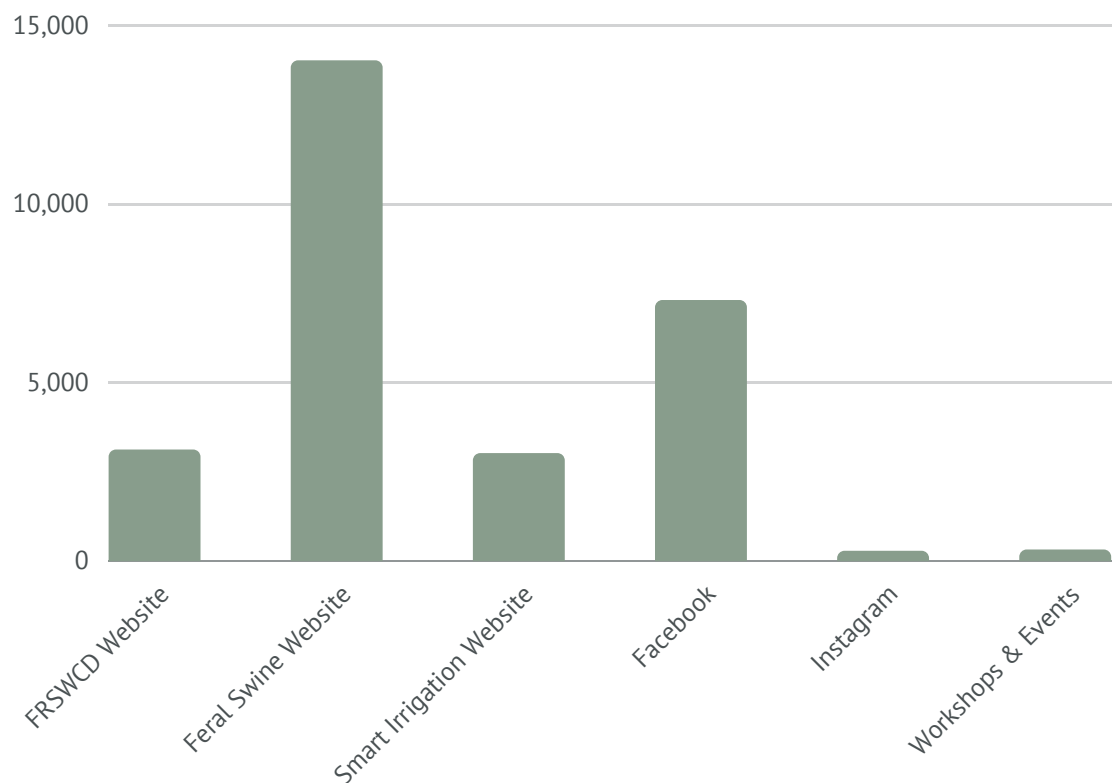
Total Reach this year: 27,951+

## Smart Irrigation Workshop

On February 21, the Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District (FRSWCD) held a Smart Irrigation Field Day in Colquitt, Georgia. Smart Irrigation refers to the application of irrigation water at the time it is needed, in the amount it is needed, where it is needed. This term encompasses many technologies and practices, including irrigation scheduling, remote irrigation control, variable rate irrigation, and more. 30 attendees, ranging from local farmers, USDA personnel, UGA Extension representatives, and other conservation stakeholders convened to learn about the latest research in irrigation technologies, cost-share programs, and to see Smart Irrigation in practice.

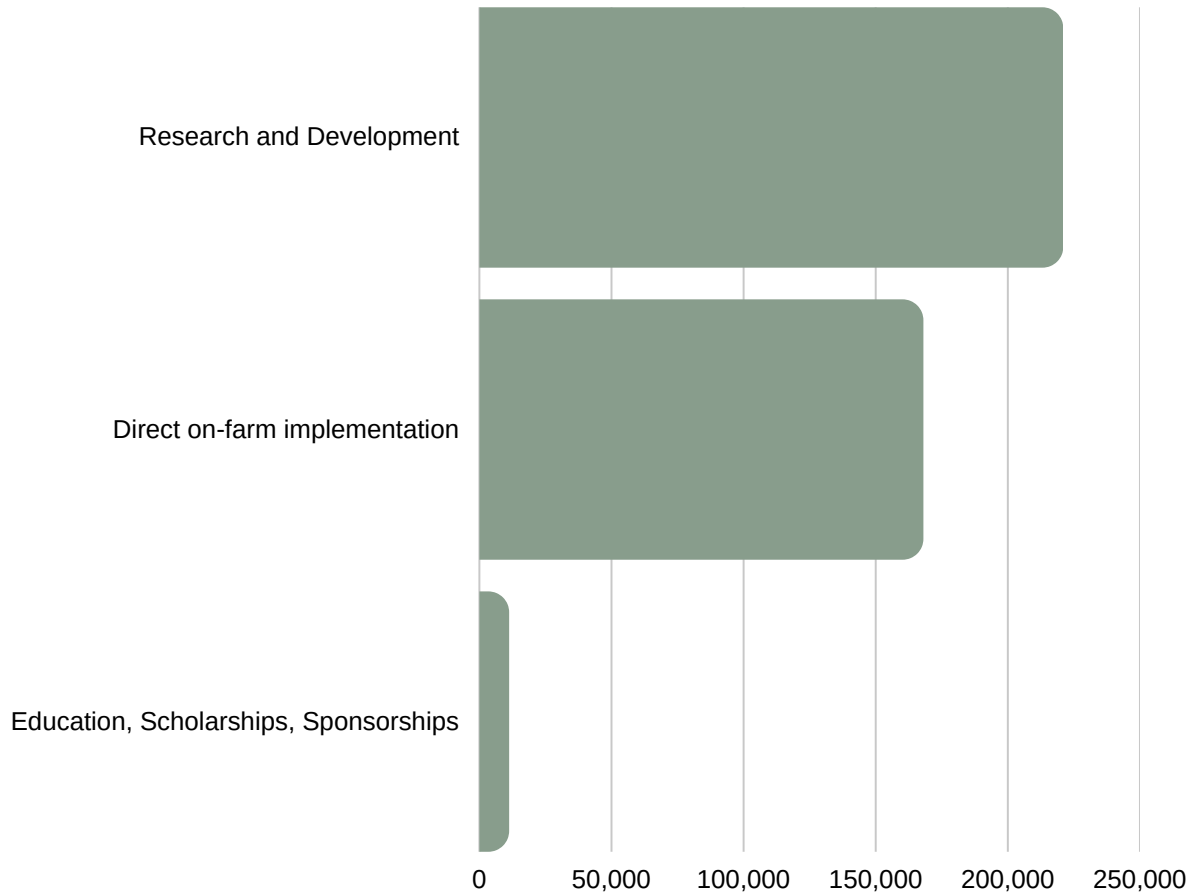
## Soil Health Workshops

On February 27 and March 16 the FRSWCD hosted a Soil Health Field Day in Metter and Leary, respectively. The events were held in partnership with Golden Peanut Company held a Soil Health Field Day in Leary, Georgia. Soil Health refers to the ability for soil to perform its functions and how they are being preserved for future use. This term encompasses many practices on the farm, including planting cover crops, reducing soil disturbance, preventing erosion, and more.

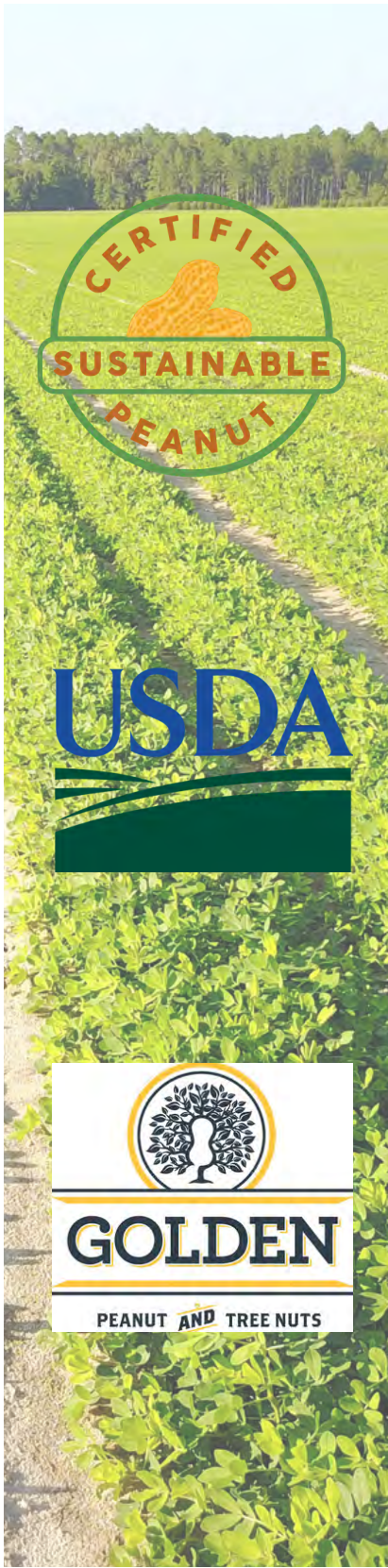


# CONSERVATION DOLLARS AT WORK

Total impact this year: \$399,192



# PEANUT SUSTAINABILITY



In March, the FRSWCD and USDA AMS finalized a Contract for Agreement for Service in which USDA AMS will conduct verifications of the annual peanut sustainability survey collected by the FRSWCD in collaboration with the National Peanut Research Lab. Training and the inaugural verifications will take place next year.

Since 2016, the FRSWCD has administered the Peanut Sustainability Partnership Initiative, conducting voluntary surveys on an annual basis and aggregating data for analysis of the overall sustainability of the peanut industry.

In September, the FRSWCD and ADM/ Golden Peanut Company entered into an agreement as a technical assistance partners to expand the Re:Generations program to peanut production in the Southeast.



The program pays farmers directly for on-farm sustainability practices, such as cover cropping, no-till, and other conservation practices that reduce overall carbon intensity. This spring, the FRSWCD renewed this agreement for the 2023 crop year.

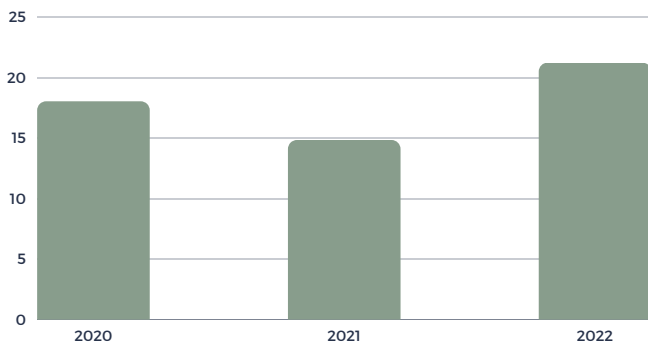
# FERAL SWINE CONTROL

**TOTAL BUDGET: \$2,100,000**

The Feral Swine Control Pilot Project was established through the 2018 Farm Bill to address the growing problem of feral swine through removal and research efforts. Feral swine are an invasive species that cause significant economic and environmental damage to landowners through loss of crops, risk of disease to livestock, and damage to infrastructure, trees, water ways, and native wildlife habitat. **This project worked with landowners and farmers in Calhoun County, Georgia to conduct coordinated aerial and ground control efforts focused on whole sounder removal, as well as research centered on natural resource concerns, on 63,000 contiguous acres in partnership with USDA-APHIS.**

## Project Findings

RESULTS ARE PRELIMINARY & RESEARCH AND CONTROL IS ONGOING



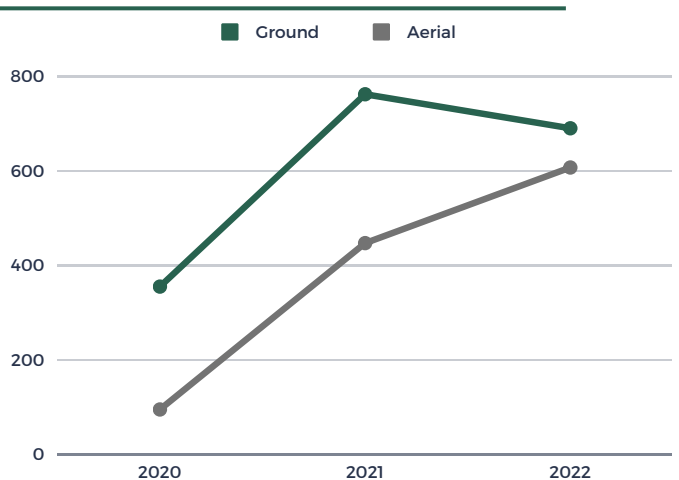
Percentage of water samples, on average, with feral swine E. Coli present

### FERAL SWINE NEGATIVELY IMPACT WATER QUALITY

Continuous water-quality monitoring sensors have proven an effective method of showing impact of feral swine on water quality, demonstrated by observed spikes in turbidity during continuous flow conditions. Consistently, through both low- and high-flow conditions, the site with the least removal efforts had the highest turbidity.

### REMOVAL NUMBERS ARE IMPORTANT ONLY IN THE CONTEXT OF POPULATION CHANGE

USDA-APHIS personnel track removal of feral swine in detail, including sex, age, method, and location of each removal. However, removal numbers alone do not shed light on project impact. Over half a million images taken over two years on passive camera grids in the project area are being analyzed for both feral swine and native wildlife population estimates, and how they've changed throughout the project period.



Aerial and ground removal totals current through Oct 2022

# 34 DAYS

on average before a Judas Pig was observed with another sounder

# 77.5%

Average reported decrease in feral swine damage since launch of project. Future analysis will include 2022 and 2023 growing season.

# 89%

increase in site visits to [georgiaferalswine.com](http://georgiaferalswine.com) since project launch, for a total of 29k visits through May 2023.

# SPRING CREEK

**TOTAL BUDGET: \$152,595**

*In partnership with the Georgia Power Foundation and Bonneville Environmental Foundation, the Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District launched a project in 2022 to provide outreach, education, and cost share for the adoption of smart irrigation practices specifically in the Spring Creek Watershed, which encompasses 303(d) listed waterways.*

So far this year, the project has

- Provided outreach and education through an field day focused on smart irrigation practices and technologies (pictured).
- Identified candidates for cost-share activities.

Next year, as we conclude the project, we anticipate

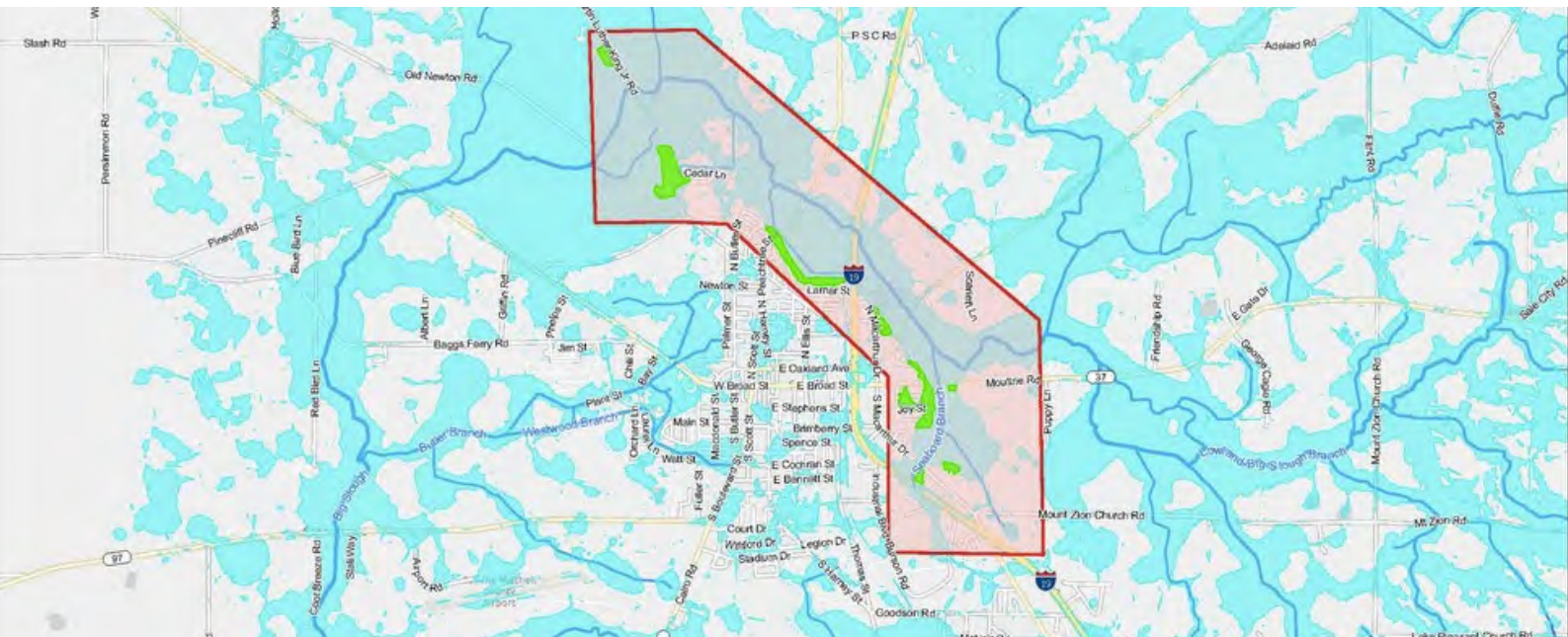
- Executing a virtual outreach campaign coinciding with Smart Irrigation Month.
- Executing and implementing 5 cost-share contracts.





# WATERSHED OPERATIONS AND FLOOD PREVENTION PROGRAM

TOTAL BUDGET: \$31,165,000



In agreements finalized this year with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District is serving as a local sponsor of three Watershed Operations and Flood Prevention Programs within the District. Activities for the watershed projects this year encompassed Watershed Plan development including public meetings, stakeholder engagement, data collection, and Agency meetings. Once approved, the vast majority of the total \$31 million dollar budget will go towards implementation of these Watershed Plans.

**Mitchell County** project will survey Big Slough for potential canals, dams, and existing culverts to improve flow and prevent flooding that negatively impacts hundreds of forested, ag and public easement acres.

**Dougherty County** project will consider improved agricultural and industrial water use efficiencies, source switching, and adoption of improved irrigation technologies to maintain flow at Radium Springs.

**Calhoun County** project will assess improved agricultural irrigation water supply to ensure long term sustainability of the county's economic engine--agriculture-- while also protecting aquatic and wildlife habitat.

# EDUCATION GRANTS

## Total Budget: \$3,000

Each year, the FRSWCD provides educators with funds for projects to expand knowledge and teach the importance of the environment to K-12 students. The FRSWCD approved 3 education grants for the 2022-2023 school year.

- **4C Academy in Dougherty County** used the education grant along with funding from the Georgia Native Plant Society and Monarchs Across Georgia to plan and install a native plant garden with students in the Ag Pathways program, grades 9-12. With a wide variety of native plants, the garden will become an additional component to the agriculture education area for students, staff and visitors to learn about the importance of native plants and natural pollinators.
- **International Studies Elementary Charter School in Dougherty County** leveraged the education grant to build an earthworm farm to expand the current school garden and aquaculture koi pond projects. This will enable students to learn about soil health and soil composition, as well as the role of decomposers in soil productivity. In March, the International Studies School Garden was the backdrop of a media event announcing USDA's Local Food for School Cooperative Agreement in Georgia with special guests Under Secretary Moffitt, Deputy Under Secretary Dean, and Senator Ossoff (pictured below).
- **Southwest Georgia Academy in Early County** used education grant funding to add a nature trail constructed by 10th grade students into the outdoor classroom. Landscaped with native trees and ornamentals, the trail will serve as a forestry and natural resource lab for all students.



# OTHER PROJECTS

## **Annual Education Programming**

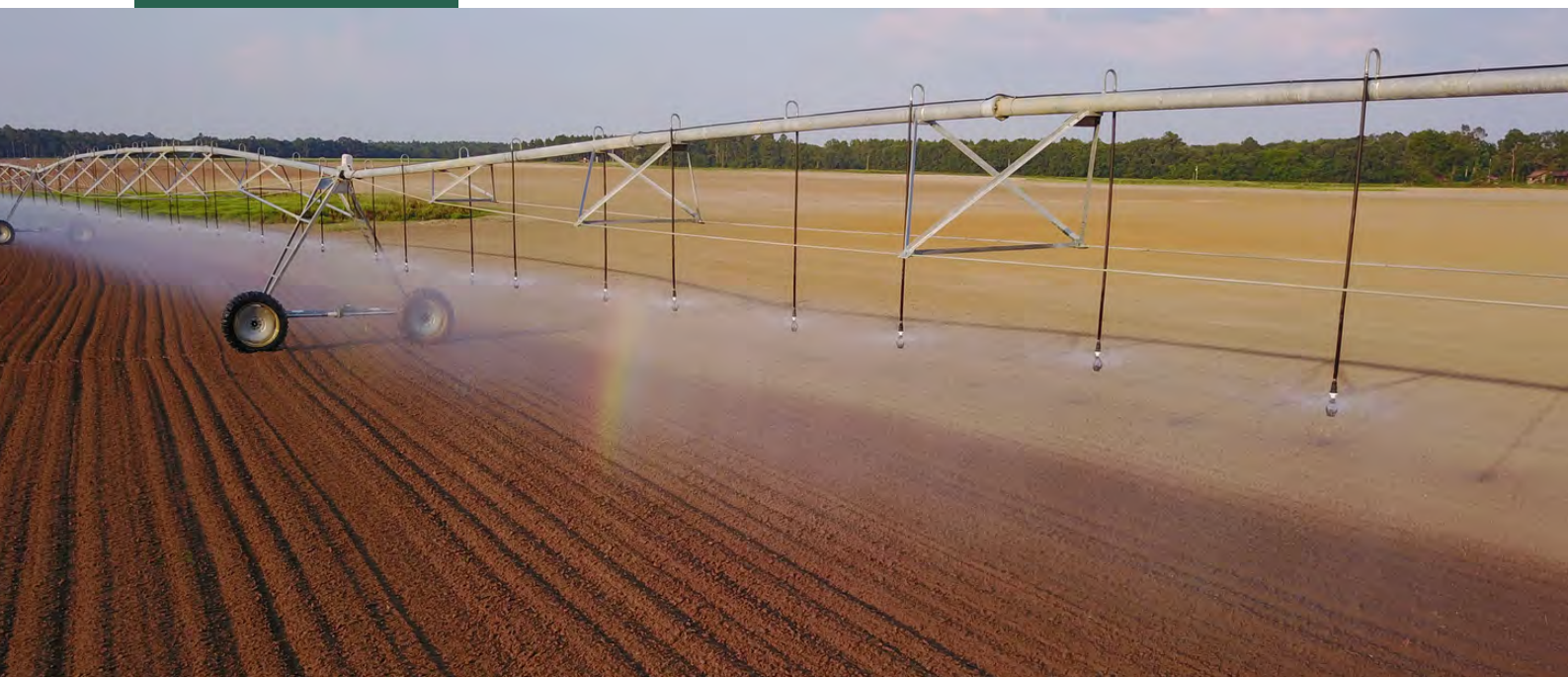
The FRSWCD hosts a suite of youth education and outreach activities annually. This year, the winner of the 2023 poster contest was Bhumi Patel of Pataula Charter Academy in Calhoun County, the FRSWCD sponsored the 4-H20 camp this June, and sponsored 5 students to attend the Natural Resources Conservation Workshop Camp in June.

## **No Till Drill**

In June, the FRSWCD purchased a new Great Plains no till drill, which will be available to farmers for use through an agreement with the Mitchell County Cattleman's Association.

## **GACD Technical Assistance Agreement**

This year, the FRSWCD continued a two-year agreement with the Georgia Association of Conservation Districts to provide additional support and technical assistance in local NRCS offices in southwest Georgia.





# FLINT RIVER FRESH

FRSWCD provides annual cash and in-kind administration and program oversight support to Flint River Fresh, the FRSWCD Urban Agriculture program.

Flint River Fresh is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with the mission to increase access to fresh, local, affordable, healthy food for our neighbors, create new economic opportunities for local farmers, develop young people through agriculture, and conserve natural resources for future generations.

Flint River Fresh annual highlights include:

- Donating over 49,000 lbs of locally grown or sourced produce to those in need through community partnerships
- Maintaining existing and growing new community farm sites across 4 counties in southwest Georgia
- Direct produce purchases from over 40 farms in southwest Georgia and the Florida panhandle, resulting in over 8,300 produce bag giveaways
- over 520 students engaged in youth agriculture and education initiatives
- Successful 2022 Capital Campaign, resulting in over \$100,000 raised to continue urban agriculture initiatives
- Recipient of the 2022 4C Academy Community Partner of the Year Award

visit [flintriverfresh.org](https://flintriverfresh.org) to see the full 2022 Impact Report

# DISTRICT SUPERVISORS

The Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District is comprised of farmers, landowners, and community leaders that are dedicated to the conservation, wise use, and protection of natural resources in the Flint River Basin.

Shane Kelley, Baker County

*Vacant*, Baker County

Marty McLendon, Calhoun County

Graham Ginn, Calhoun County

*Vacant*, Decatur County

Pete Miller, Decatur County

Jacob Paschal, Dougherty County

Keith Cromartie, Dougherty County

Steve Singletary, Early County

Buster Haddock, Early County

John Harrell, Grady County

Sammy Perkins, Grady County

Wesley Vann, Miller County

Garrett Bridges, Miller County

David Holton, Mitchell County

Casey Cox Kerr, Mitchell County

Steve Bailey, Seminole County

Judson Hornsby, Seminole County

## Our Team

Perri Cooper

*Executive Director*

Abby Davis

*Smart Irrigation and*

*Education Coordinator*

Taylor Sinquefield

*Soil Health Coordinator*

Chelsea Langley

*ASG, Operations Coordinator*

Fredando Jackson

*FRF Executive Director*

Aretha Wimberly

*FRF Director of Community Engagement*

Jordan Parker

*FRF Farm to School Coordinator*

# OUR PARTNERS



College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



GEORGIA  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DIVISION



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA  
EXTENSION



THE JONES CENTER AT  
ICHAUWAY

The University of Georgia

WARNELL  
SCHOOL OF FORESTRY & NATURAL RESOURCES



GEORGIA  
Water  
PLANNING & POLICY  
CENTER  
ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY



Destination Ag  
ABAC's Georgia Museum of Agriculture



BONNEVILLE  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
FOUNDATION



FLINT RIVER FRESH

