

SOIL & WATER NEWS



July 2010

Brent Dykes, *Executive Director*

Brigitte Clifton, *Editor*

A Word From the Director

GSWCC is the ideal example of an organization that can only work within a system of partners. Even though our mission is to support Georgia conservation, our challenges are national issues such as water quality and availability, soil health, and food production. That's why we rely on a network of agencies to help us preserve Georgia's natural resources for generations to come. From the national advocacy efforts of folks like National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) to the great local work of the Georgia Association of Conservation District Supervisors (GACDS), or the technical assistance of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to the individual field work of local Conservation Districts, we share a common cause, and therefore rely on each other, especially during tougher times, for shared knowledge and efforts.

That's why I'm glad to hear of accomplishments such as *GACDS's recent grant award* to promote pollinator efforts and education, and why we like to take part in activities such as June's *Natural Resources Conservation Workshop* for Georgia high school students (hosted by conservation partner, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College). And it is no overestimation to say that GSWCC would not exist without our dedicated Soil & Water Conservation District Supervisors who use their valuable time and knowledge to help their home districts with their own unique conservation challenges. I am incredibly thankful to these Supervisors for their time and commitment, and I hope to meet and reacquaint myself with each Supervisor at the upcoming *GACDS Supervisor Training* in Dublin on August 20-21.

I hope you enjoy this issue of our quarterly *Georgia Soil & Water News* and note the large array of partnerships represented in its pages. Thank you for helping GSWCC stay true to our shared mission.



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FEATURED PROGRAM

URBAN EROSION & SEDIMENT CONTROL

Certifying All of Georgia's Land Developers and Contractors



In order to address soil and erosion concerns in the urban sector during construction or other land-disturbing activities, House Bill 285 developed the Education and Certification Program in 2003 to be managed and administered by GSWCC. With up-to-date programs that respond to the needs of the state, GSWCC performs the mandatory education and certification training for anyone involved in land development, design, review, permitting, construction, monitoring, inspection, or any land-disturbing activity in Georgia. Since the first course was held in 2005, GSWCC has issued over 60,000 initial certifications and over 21,000 re-certifications.

Program Roles

The Urban Erosion & Sediment Control (E&SC) Program determines the training and testing requirements for certification of those involved in land-disturbing activities and educates those individuals through several levels of certification and recertification courses corresponding to the applicants' involvement in land-disturbing activities. The Program also develops *The Manual for Sediment & Erosion Control in Georgia* (also called the Green Book or *The Manual*) detailing requirements and BMPs, as well as keeping numerous *Technical Detail* documents for reference when establishing compliance.

Newest Developments

E&SC is in the process of revising *The Manual* to reflect new changes in the law, NPDES permits, correct technical errors and outdated information. Those interested in submitting comments regarding revisions to *The Manual* are encouraged to do so by emailing greenbookcomments@gaswcc.org. Comments must be **received** by July 31, 2010.

In order to meet growing demand for course material, E&SC Education & Certification now offers its first self-paced, self-study **online Level II Introduction to Design re-certification course**, which is approved for 4 hours of instruction. GSWCC hopes that this new course will pave the way for more online course offerings that save time and resources for both certification seekers and the E&SC Program.

Effective July 1, the Education & Certification Program has also implemented *significant changes to streamline certification processes*. See the *article* on the next page for details.

For more information on GSWCC's E&SC Program, contact the office at (706) 552-4474 or visit the *Program website*.



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

PROGRAM UPDATES

Erosion & Sediment Control Certification Program Changes

Effective July 1, GSWCC Urban Erosion & Sediment Control will:

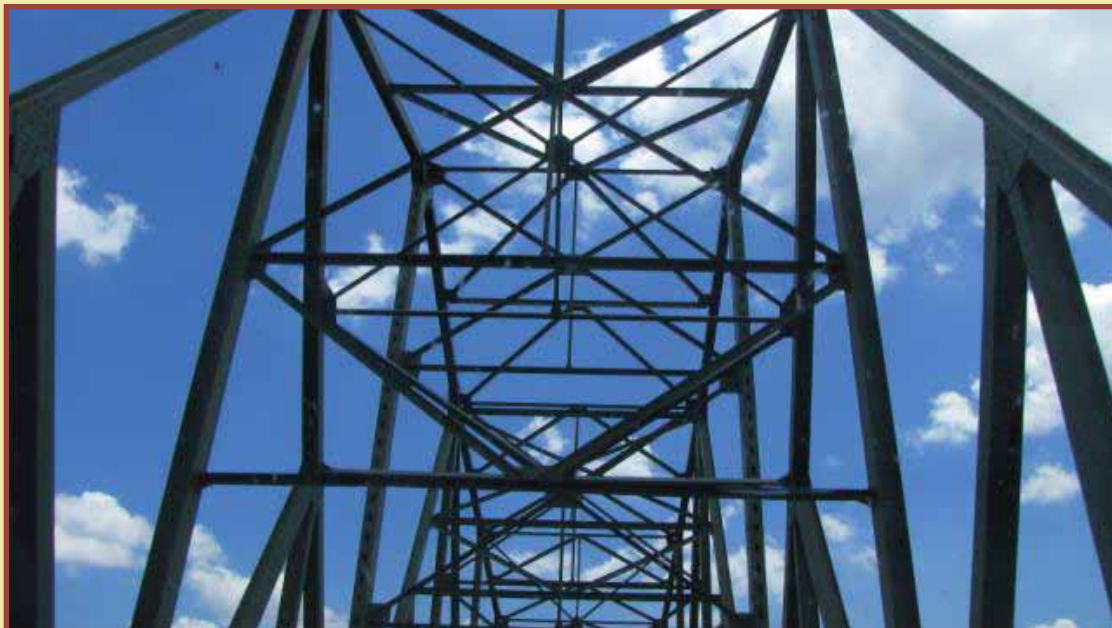
- no longer mail expiration warnings to individuals whose certifications are set to expire within 60 days. However, electronic notifications will be sent to those who have a valid email address registered with GSWCC. If you would like to receive electronic notifications, please call (706) 552-4474 or email certification@gaswcc.org.
- no longer issue new certification cards to those who have met the re-certification requirements. Instead, individuals will receive a re-certification sticker that will extend their certification for another three years. The re-certification sticker will have the individual's name, certification number and the new expiration date. The sticker should be placed on the backside of the current certification card.
- issue replacement cards to individuals who send a self-addressed, stamped envelope and a written request to:
GSWCC
Education and Certification Program
PO Box 1665
Athens GA 30605

Metering Program Funding Update

Through a combination of new and rollover funds, OneGeorgia has granted \$500,000 in funding for GSWCC's Ag Water Metering Program to continue in FY11. The funding will allow the Program to continue collect data and meter maintenance, rotating into Ichawaynochaway, Kichafoonee-Muckalee and Lower Chattahoochee River sub-basins this year, as well as continue to evaluate meter installation needs throughout Georgia. The installation, maintenance, and reading of meters keep the Program's Tech Services Manager, Antonio Fleming, and his team incredibly busy, but the metering is essential, says Fleming, "to give the State a tool for water management and to give the producers the knowledge of how much water they are using from season to season and where it can be conserved or improved." Telemetry metering results are posted weekly on the [GSWCC website](http://gaswcc.org).

Two New Agriculture Grants Funded

Of the four GSWCC 319 grant proposals submitted to GAEPD during the most recent grant cycle, two were recommended to USEPA for funding. The Nonpoint Source Program Specialist and the Middle Coosawattee River Watershed TMDL Implementation Project will provide nearly \$700,000 in additional funding to continue current projects and begin new ones throughout the state. The Middle Coosawattee River Watershed 319 Project is located in Region 1, south of Ellijay.



CONSERVATION DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT



Limestone Valley Soil & Water Conservation District

When you're driving through Gilmer County gazing at the numerous apple orchards, it's easy to see why the county is the apple capitol of Georgia. Great swaths of orchards line the hills and highways, giving this part of the state an idyllic air. Venture further into those hills and forests, and you'll find hundreds of steady streams and babbling brooks, glassy ponds and lakes that, along with the crisper seasons at this elevation, create the environment those apple trees thrive in.

Most agriculture professionals also know the chemical-intensive management apple orchards require. So how do you keep your orchards happy without subjecting those water bodies to chemical runoff? That's one of the challenges the Limestone Valley Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Supervisors spend a lot of time on. Water quality is an area where Limestone Valley SWCD has done an outstanding job lately.

"Landowners in this District are very interested in conservation measures," says District Supervisor Mark Holden. "[Lately], we've been focusing on water quality through 319 grants." In 2009, the Upper Coosawattee watershed area of the district put over \$1 million in 319 cost-share funds into water quality, the large majority of that work occurring in Gilmer County. Using the 319 grant steering committee in partnership with the Limestone Valley SWCD and the technical assistance of NRCS, 41 landowners within the watershed contracted with GSWCC to rein in non point source pollution from agricultural runoff, including a chemical storage facility at one apple orchard to facilitate chemical mixing and contain possible spills, and several projects with the area's poultry farmers. Building stack houses, incinerators, and composters are a few examples of simple best management practices (BMPs) that go a long way toward keeping the area's many streams and lakes healthy.

The success of the SWCD in the Upper Coosawattee helped earn the District an additional 319 Project grant of \$500,000 for the Middle Coosawattee this year. While the application process for funding projects in this area will not be underway until 2011, Holden says he expects the same sorts of BMPs will be funded, and he expects the same enthusiastic landowner participation. "With the terrific participation and enthusiasm from landowners in the Upper Coosawattee project," Holden adds, "we don't have any reason to believe this new project won't be just as successful."

While the 319 Program has been a big part of the District's conservation plan recently, other projects underway prove that Limestone Valley is committed to conservation. In Murray and Whitfield counties, the SWCD is working with the technical assistance of NRCS on comprehensive nutrient management plans for landowners who seek guidance from their local issuing authorities. The Pickens County area is also working with GSWCC's Watershed Dams Program to acquire financial assistance for equipment and prison labor to clean up and perform maintenance on the County's dams.

SWCD Supervisors, along with GSWCC Region I Representative Keith Gilmer, recently met with the Gilmer County Commission Chairman to encourage him to sign an updated Soil and Erosion Control Ordinance for the county. After discussing with the Chairman how the county's local issuing authority would be lost without an updated ordinance and how the county would be tremendously affected, the ordinance was placed on the agenda, and the resolution passed within two weeks, says Holden.

Overall, the Limestone Valley SWCD residents are "extremely receptive" to the conservation measures available, stresses Holden, who met with the mayor of the city of Jasper during this month's SWCD meeting. The mayor is especially concerned about water issues, and the SWCD is glad to help.

With poultry being the number one industry in the area requiring conservation management and apples a close second, Holden notes a trend toward vineyards in his area, with 86 dedicated acres, and growing. "Right now, vineyards are new to our area," Holden says, "but we feel it will be another ag practice we can partner with to try to help put practices on the ground that will improve soil and water issues but also bring some tourism to the North Georgia area through this new industry." The commitment of Limestone Valley SWCD toward sustainable growth through sound soil and water conservation practices helps to ensure that the area's idyllic setting and agriculture will thrive for many years to come.



GSWCC REGIONAL OFFICE NEWS

Region II

In cooperation with the Broad River SWCD, USDA-NRCS, and Madison County Board of Commissioners, Region II recently completed a **Riparian and Streambank Restoration Project** using grant funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Madison County Board of Commissioners expressed interest in alleviating the loss of property and restoring the streambank and riparian areas of Holly Creek adjacent to Moon Guest Road after mandated renovations to the stream culverts, coupled with heavy rains, caused extreme erosion. Upon the completion of this project, approximately 60,000 cubic feet of stream bank was created along Holly Creek.



Holly Creek streambank before



Holly Creek streambank after



On the season's opening day, May 8, the **Athens Farmers Market began participating in the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program. A grant from the Oconee River RC&D Council has allowed the market to acquire a wireless device that can read the Electronic Business Transfer (EBT) cards distributed by SNAP. Following a Georgia Department of Human Services suggestion,

the Athens Farmers Market is exchanging customers' EBT dollars for wooden tokens that can then be used for EBT-eligible purchases from the market vendors. The RC&D grant also provides \$800 for promoting the EBT program, which the Athens Farmers Market used in partnership with students at the University of Georgia's College of Public Health to create promotional materials highlighting the nutritional and community benefits of buying local foods, postcards to be mailed to the target community, and bus ads through the Athens Transit Advertising Program. "We feel like [EBT users] should at least have the opportunity to buy fresh food, and what better place to buy it than a farmers market?" says market manager Jan Kozak.

On June 24, Blue Ridge Mountain, Broad River, Hall County, and Stephens County SWCDs, along with various sponsors, including GSWCC, held a **Small and Beginning Farmers Training at Lynn Pugh's Cane Creek Farm**, a small organic producer in Cumming. Informative talks and demonstrations on farm equipment, hoop houses, micro-irrigation, raised bed production, farmers markets, marketing, soil science, and wildlife were given by subject matter experts from NRCS, GA Organics, UGA, and other agricultural groups. The event was well-attended and very well organized, and attendees came away with a terrific overview of small farm operations, as well as a full belly from a tasty lunch sponsored by Ag Georgia Farm Credit.



GSWCC REGIONAL OFFICE NEWS

Region III

The Gwinnett County SWCD, in partnership with the Upper Ocmulgee River RC&D Council, co-hosted a **Small and Beginning Farmers Field Day** in April at Dillwood Farm outside of Loganville.

Over 125 attended to learn more about organic farming techniques, wildlife management, irrigation and weed control. Those partnering at the event included GSWCC, Fort Valley State University, UGA Cooperative Extension Service, Georgia Master Gardeners, and the USDA-NRCS. Dillwood Farm, which has over 70 acres under cultivation, supplies fresh vegetables to farmers' markets and restaurants in the Atlanta area.



Small Farmers Field Day, Dillwood Farm, Loganville



GSWCC display at Children's Ag Day in Rockdale County

On June 29, the Rockdale County Extension Service hosted **Children's Agricultural Day at the Farmer's Market**. Fresh produce from the local Farmer's Market and an array of animals, such as a horse, goat, llama, cow and chickens, were enjoyed by an estimated 350 youths and adults. The Rockdale County SWCD teamed up with GSWCC and Rockdale County Department of General Services & Engineering to provide an informative exhibit that included activity booklets and posters providing information relating to water conservation, healthy eating habits, photosynthesis, insects, mammals and cloud identification. GSWCC staffers Ben Ruzowicz and Melissa Echevarria, along with Warren Kelly from Rockdale County General Services and Engineering, encouraged youths to explore soils, plant growth, agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) and current water usage guidelines. The event was such a success that another event has been scheduled for *July 17* at the Rockdale County extension office on Parker Road from 9am to 1pm.



Llama encounter at Children's Ag Day in Rockdale County

GSWCC REGIONAL OFFICE NEWS



Region IV

Approximately 50 individuals attended the **Central Georgia SWCD Conservation Field Day** at Bradbury Farms in Bleckley County on June 24. Representatives from GSWCC, NRCS, DNR, and Bradbury Farms presented information on soil structure and composition, chemical and fertilizer injections with center pivot applications, precision and no-till farming techniques, irrigation auditing and testing, and turkey and bobwhite quail management. Agency representatives also shared updates on available conservation programs and information on the Ag Water Metering program. Lunch was provided by Scott's Barbeque in Cochran and was sponsored by AgGeorgia Farm Credit.



The **Irrigation Energy Conservation Workshop** sponsored by the Piedmont SWCD took place at Bob Patrick's Putnam County farm in June. District Chairman Pat Hardy welcomed everyone to the event, and District Supervisor Larry Eley discussed the availability and benefits of the District's no-till equipment. Jack Rattray of the GSWCC also explained the purpose and benefits of the MIL and demonstrated the irrigation system.



Irrigation Energy Conservation Workshop, Putnam County

Bradbury Farms is operated by Tom and Nell Bradbury and has become a showplace for existing and innovative conservation practices. The farm is managed for timber production, crop production, and wildlife habitat with an emphasis on bobwhite quail. Bradbury Farms was named the winner of the Governor's Agricultural Environmental Stewardship Award for District III in 2009.



Region V

Mitchell County's **Stripling Irrigation Research Park 2010 Field Day** in June involved a field tour and a summary of the Park's research. Demonstrations included subsurface drip irrigation for cotton, irrigated peanut varieties and corn, drip irrigation and tomato spotted wilt virus for tomato and pepper, irrigated sweet corn for yield and quality, soil moisture and monitoring systems, variable-rate irrigation, and remote sensing for crop stress.



Stripling Irrigation Research Park 2010 Field Day, Mitchell County



GSWCC REGIONAL OFFICE NEWS

Region VI

The **GACDS Group V Summer Meeting** was held in June at the Southeast Georgia Research and Education Center in Midville, Georgia.

The event hosted more than 65 SWCD Supervisors, State and Federal agency representatives, and invited guests. Anthony Black, superintendent of the facility, provided attendees with an opportunity to tour the Research and Education Center as well as see the latest research on multiple varieties of energy grasses. Following the tour, Rolling Hills RC&D Coordinator Cindy Haygood presented information on Farm Estate Planning, and GA Agricultural Land Trust Executive Director John Pershing provided insight into Conservation Easements. Afterward, Jerry Holcomb, Coastal SWCD Supervisor, explained his involvement and activities with the Urban and Community Forestry Program. Updates from GACDS President David Jackson, GSWCC Executive Director Brent Dykes, NRCS State Conservationist James Tillman, and GACDS Executive Director Crista Carrell concluded the event, followed by officer elections.



Tour of SE GA Research & Education Center, Midville, GA



OUR CONSERVATION PARTNERS



Natural Resources Conservation Workshop Wrap-Up

GSWCC is proud to be a partner in the Natural Resource Conservation Workshop, held each year in Tifton. During the week of June 13, 155 students representing 77 Georgia counties, including 8 students from the Virgin Islands, converged on the ABAC campus for the 49th Annual NRCW camp.

During NRCW, GSWCC, in partnership with GACDS, taught a Backyard Conservation class, a first for NRCW. GACDS and GSWCC sought to offer a course that educated campers on forms of conservation that can be applied on a large or small scale, regardless of whether the student lived on a 2,000 acre farm or in an urban apartment. GSWCC worked with Crista Carrell, GACDS Executive Director, to develop course materials for vermicomposting, or worm composting, demonstrating how a small space

can be utilized to create a nutrient rich soil amendment produced naturally from everyday food scraps and newspaper.

The hands-on vermicomposting class was very popular with the students and advisors. In addition to making their own worm bins, which they were able to take home at the end of the week, students learned about the conservation districts and programs, such as community forestry, that the districts support. Congratulations to Ocmulgee River for sponsoring the most students and Limestone Valley for the greatest increase in sponsorships since 2009. Each district will receive a \$150 award. Additionally, Region I's Limestone Valley and Blue Ridge SWCDs each furnished a bus to transport students to the Workshop. Approximately 70 students who would not have been able to attend otherwise took advantage of the two buses.



Georgia Association of Conservation District Supervisors Receives Grant for Pollination Assistance

GACDS has been awarded a \$7,500 Georgia Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant for the Honey and Pollinator Habitat Promotion Program. GACDS will use this award to educate the public and promote programs that emphasize the necessity of healthy pollinator habitat to agricultural production, increase the sales of Georgia honey, and recruit new beekeepers to contribute to the sustainability of the beekeeping industry. Georgia's agricultural productivity is directly related to the health of honey bees, as more than 90 food, fiber, and seed crops rely on honey bees for pollination. Many of Georgia's specialty crops, such as watermelons, peaches, and strawberries, are heavily dependent upon honey bees. Details about specific activities and pollinator promotion are forthcoming from Crista Carrell, GACDS Executive Director.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

July 16

Summer Conservation Tour, Fannin County
Blue Ridge SWCD, Region I

July 17

Children's Agricultural Day, Rockdale County
Rockdale County SWCD, Region III
Cindee Sweda - (770) 278-7373

July 20

Community Forestry Roundtable: Stormwater
Management Basics, Jefferson, GA
City of Jefferson, Jefferson Heritage Tree Council, Region II
Connie Head - (706) 202-5279

July 22

1st Annual 2010 SHINES Recognition Program, Adel, GA
Upper Suwannee River Partnership, Region V
Angela Wall - awall@sgrc.us - (229) 333-5277 x145

July 29

Cedar & Bull Creek 319 Farm Tour, Claxton, GA
Ogeechee River SWCD, Coastal Georgia RC&D Council,
NRCS, Region VI
Diane Griffin - dgriffin@gaswcc.org - (912) 681-5241
Event flyer online

August 20-21

GACDS Supervisor Training, Dublin, GA
GACDS, GSWCC, NRCS
gacds.org/supervisor-training.php

September 2

Biomass Forestry Informative Meeting, Warrenton, GA
Warren County SWCD, Region IV
GSWCC Region IV office - (478) 445-5766



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 Tinning
Region3@gaswcc.org - (770) 761-3020

Region IV

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

Region V

Dawson Office - Luke Crosson
Region5@gaswcc.org - (229) 995-6001

Region VI

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



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