



SOIL & WATER NEWS

Brent Dykes, Executive Director



A Word From the Director

November 2014

During this time of year, I often reflect back over the past twelve months, looking for areas of accomplishment and evaluating areas where improvement is needed. While I find it necessary and confidence-building to celebrate areas of accomplishment, it is just as important to determine to make the necessary changes to ensure success into the future.

I recently participated in the Georgia Rural Water Association's Forests and Drinking Water Forum held in Savannah. This forum brought together local water providers and the forestry industry to demonstrate the strong connection between forests and drinking water and provide examples of collaboration between forest landowners and drinking water providers. These two sectors of the economy definitely benefit from one another, and I congratulate the GRWA on a successful forum that will by all accounts lead to increased communication, interaction and conservation by these groups.

Reflecting back on the success of this forum brought to mind the need for GSWCC and other members of the natural resource conservation community to be fully engaged with the public that surrounds us and to foster greater interaction and understanding by Georgia's citizenry for the need to conserve our natural resources. All sectors of the economy benefit from the conservation efforts taking place across the state.

As part of our commitment to conservation, GSWCC is planning to improve and increase our efforts to spread the conservation message through traditional and contemporary means to provide opportunities for Georgia's citizens to learn how local conservationists in their communities are implementing practices on the ground to conserve soil and water resources. I hope you and your family have a Happy Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas!

Brent Dykes
Executive Director

In this Issue:

GSWCC State Board Actions

Update on Erosion and Sediment Control

TAG Fall Workshop Dec. 11 in Lawrenceville

Telling the Story of Conservation Districts

Wanted: Farmers for Water Quality Project

Staff Taking Meter Readings in South Georgia

NACD Concerns Over 'Waters of the U.S.'

USDA Announcements

Changes at GEFA and UGA Extension

Mark Your Calendars

Around the Districts

Soil and Water Conservation District Websites

GSWCC

Look for Us Online and on Social Media

GSWCC State Board Actions

The GSWCC State Board met on Thursday, Nov. 6 in Helen, Georgia.

Among its actions, the Board appointed Jeff D. Bragg to the DeKalb County Soil and Water Conservation District.



The Board also approved the FY2015 District Annual Plans of Work and discussed the Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control in Georgia.

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 18 in Athens.

Update on Erosion and Sediment Control

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on the Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control in Georgia met on Oct. 9 in Macon and on Oct. 28 in Watkinsville to receive and consider comments concerning the Manual and testing procedures.

At the Oct. 28 meeting, the TAC made recommendations to the GSWCC State Board regarding changes to the 6th edition of the Manual.

Those recommendations are available and can be seen at http://gaswcc.georgia.gov/sites/gaswcc.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/Actions%20taken%20at%20November%206%2C%202014%20Board%20Meeting.pdf.



Public Comments

Public comments may be made until December 18. Anyone wishing to make a comment should email their statement to GreenBookComments@gaswcc.org.

Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control Email List

If you are interested in keeping updated on the Manual, you may subscribe to the GSWCC Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control email list at <http://gaswcc.georgia.gov/technical-advisory-committee-gswcc-erosion-and-sediment-control-program>. Announcement of future meetings of the TAC, as well as updates on decisions made by the GSWCC State Board related to erosion and sediment control, will be sent out to the email list.

TAG Fall Workshop Dec. 11 in Lawrenceville

Team Agriculture Georgia (TAG) is hosting a free one-day workshop for small, beginning, and limited resource farmers on Thursday, December 11 at Gwinnett Technical College, 5150 Sugarloaf Parkway, Lawrenceville, GA 30043. Lunch and all sessions are free. Registration is required to ensure that meals and materials are available for all participants.



Potential Program Topics: Organic/Naturally Grown Certification / Financing Small Farms – AGAware / USDA Program Update / Bee Keeping / Micro Irrigation Systems / Aquaculture

Please register by December 4, 2014. By Mail: USDA-NRCS c/o Jerome Brown, 750 South Perry Street Suite 410, Lawrenceville, Georgia 30046. Call: 770-963-9288. Email: Jerome.Brown@ga.usda.gov • Register online: www.teamaggeorgia.wordpress.com or www.teamaggeorgia.com.

Telling the Story of Conservation Districts

In October, GSWCC Executive Director Brent Dykes spoke to the Georgia Rural Water Association's Fall Conference at Lake Lanier Islands. His talk focused on projects to reduce nonpoint source pollution through the voluntary cooperation of landowners in the Settingdown Creek Watershed and Altamaha River Basin.



The Georgia Rural Water Association (GRWA) is a non-profit organization representing rural systems throughout the State of Georgia in regard to drinking water and wastewater needs. Active Members consist of public and non-public water and wastewater systems. Corporate and Associate Member support and participation is the foundation of GRWA's Partnership Program for rural systems.

Later in the month, Mr. Dykes spoke to the Coastal Advisory Council and updated the Council on accomplishments and future plans for the Coastal, Ogeechee River, and Satilla River SWCDs. The Council is charged with developing annual themes and funding criteria for the Coastal Incentive Grant Program and providing a communication loop between the Coastal Management Program and coastal citizens.

GSWCC continues to look for opportunities to tell the story of the important role that Soil and Water Conservation Districts play in the conservation and improvement of the state's natural resources.

Wanted: Farmers for Water Quality Project

The Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission is looking for additional livestock and poultry agricultural producers interested in receiving technical and financial help to complete or update their nutrient management plans in the Settingdown Creek and Altamaha River Basin areas.

Funded under a GA-EPD water quality (319 program) grant to improve water quality in these two areas, GSWCC will conduct a free on-farm assessment, offer free soil testing, develop an updated Nutrient Management Plan, and provide an incentive payment for participation in the program. GSWCC will assist in identifying potential funding sources to complete improvements based on the farm assessment. There is no cost to farmers for this service. Nutrient Management Plans are recommended for all animal feeding operations, including poultry farms. An assessment and updated NMP saves costs while improving soil health and water quality by avoiding the over application of fertilizers to fields, preventing runoff of nutrients into creeks and streams, and improving the disposal of dead animals.

Farmers located in the Settingdown Creek Watershed wishing to take advantage of this free service to update their plans should contact Jessica Bee in the GSWCC Region I office in Calhoun by calling 706-624-1434 or emailing jbee@gaswcc.org. Farmers located in the Altamaha River Basin wishing to take advantage of this free service to update their plans should contact Jason Mallard in the GSWCC Region III office in Statesboro to set up a time to complete an on-farm assessment by calling 912-681-5241 or emailing jmallard@gaswcc.org.



Staff Taking Meter Readings in South Georgia

If you see people in state vehicles out in the crop fields of South Georgia over the next few weeks, they may be GSWCC and Georgia Forestry Commission staff.

Agricultural irrigation wells and surface water pumps permitted by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD) must have a measurement device installed, with the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (GSWCC) having oversight of the program. Since 2003, over 11,000 meters have been installed to monitor agricultural water usage in Georgia.

During the months of November and December, GSWCC staff, assisted by Georgia Forestry Commission employees, will be collecting data from the meters installed on irrigation systems. These data assist policy makers in better understanding agricultural water use in the state and help agricultural producers improve efficiency in their use of water resources. GSWCC staff will also be completing routine maintenance of one quarter of the meters installed.

If a farmer thinks they see activity that they may feel is suspicious in any of their fields, they should feel free to ask the person for proper identification. All staff collecting readings from the meters carry state identification and will be glad to show it.

In addition, anyone is welcome to contact the GSWCC Office in Dawson at 229-995-6001 if they have questions about the metering program.



NACD Concerns Over 'Waters of the U.S.'

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) recently submitted comments on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Proposed Rule defining "Waters of the United States" under the Clean Water Act (CWA).

"We support the mutual goal of clean water and acknowledge the successes of the Clean Water Act throughout its 40-year existence," said NACD President Earl Garber. "While we appreciate the opportunity to provide our input on the proposed rule, we are asking the EPA and Army Corps to take additional time to obtain local input for any rule making. To that end, we are requesting that the current version of the rule be withdrawn."

NACD's policy opposes any measure that expands jurisdiction of the CWA and supports the decisions of the Supreme Court to leave the management of non-navigable waters in the hands of landowners and local governments. An expansion of CWA jurisdiction would take away from the current voluntary approach to conservation, which promotes collaboration in a large-scale manner.

NACD also expressed concerns and requested additional clarification on the following definitions: tributaries, adjacency, other waters, and significant nexus. This concern was recently affirmed by the EPA's Science Advisory Board in its recommendation that additional clarification and analysis of key components of the underlying connectivity report is needed.

To view NACD's press release and link to the full comments, you can go to <http://www.nacdnet.org/news/newsroom/2014/nacd-expresses-concerns-on-waters-of-the-u-s-proposed-rule>.



Comment Period Now Open for Proposed Changes to CSP

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced proposed changes to the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), one of USDA's largest conservation programs for working agricultural lands. There are several changes to the CSP from the farm bill, most notably the reduction of the enrollment cap from about 12.8 million acres to 10 million acres per fiscal year. The rule authorizes the program from FY2014 to FY2018 with the goal of \$18/acre average. Producers awarded CSP contracts will now have to meet two priority resource concerns, rather than the previous requirement of just one, with the hopes of increasing the program's overall effectiveness. The rule also establishes the role of CSP as one of the programs to help the Regional Conservation Partnership Program accomplish its purposes. USDA published an interim final rule containing the statutory changes to CSP in the Federal Register. USDA is seeking public comment on the rule through Jan. 5, 2015. The public comments will be used to finalize the interim final rule. USDA will publish a final rule, which will establish the program's policy for the life of the 2014 Farm Bill. To view the rule on the Federal Register and to submit a Formal Comment, go to <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2014/11/05/2014-26295/conservation-stewardship-program-csp-interim-rule>.

ACEP – December 18 is the sign-up deadline for this year's Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). To be considered for the fiscal year 2015 program, applications must be submitted by December 18, 2014. ACEP-WRE applications are accepted directly from producers on eligible lands.

EQIP – December 19 is the sign-up deadline for the 2015 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Georgia producers who wish to be considered for financial assistance should apply by December 19, 2014. Local Work Groups have been meeting across the state to set funding priorities. In previous years, customers had to make multiple office visits to apply for the different sign ups under EQIP as funding became available. This year, Georgia's NRCS team is streamlining that process, giving producers an opportunity to apply for all general EQIP, as well as special initiatives such as the Longleaf Pine, National Water Quality, On-Farm Energy, Organic, Seasonal High Tunnel, StrikeForce, Working Lands for Wildlife, and the North Georgia Irrigation Pilot Project, by making one visit to their local USDA Service Center. More information on NRCS conservation programs can be found at <http://www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov> under the Programs tab.

ARC and PLC – Nov. 17 to March 31 – Farm owners and producers have the opportunity to choose between the new 2014 Farm Bill established programs, Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC), between Nov. 17, 2014, through March 31, 2015. The new programs, designed to help producers better manage risk, usher in one of the most significant reforms to U.S. farm programs in decades. Farm owners and producers can access the online resources, available at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc>, from the convenience of their home computer or mobile device at any time.

Changes at GEFA and UGA Extension

Laura Perry Johnson will become the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Associate Dean of Extension beginning Jan. 1, 2015. She has been with the CAES for 25 years, most recently serving as district extension director for Southwest Georgia.

Fuller Callaway has been selected as the Georgia Land Conservation Program (GLCP) manager at Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA). In this role, Callaway will support the GLCP's mission to permanently protect Georgia's land and water resources and to provide financing to local governments, conservation organizations, and landowners for permanent land conservation projects.

Mark Your Calendars

December 3, 2014 – Longleaf Pine Conservation Field Day. Hosted by Fort Stewart/Altamaha Longleaf Pine Partnership at Plant Hatch & Moody Forest Natural Area. For details, contact Randy Tate, 404-664-0586 or email randy@longleafalliance.org.

December 5, 2014 - Erosion and Sediment Plan Review Informational Meeting. Sponsored by Towaliga Soil and Water Conservation District and Two Rivers RC&D, this meeting will cover LIA responsibilities, checklist procedures, and basic timeline for plan reviews. The meeting will be held at the Garden Patch Restaurant in Barnesville, Ga. beginning with registration at 10:30 a.m. Lunch will follow the meeting. Pre-register by Dec. 3 by contacting Heather Dickey at 478-445-5766 or email hickey@gaswcc.org or contact Kyle Penny at 770-358-0787 or email Kyle.Penny@ga.usda.gov.

December 11, 2014 - TAG Fall Workshop. Free one-day workshop for small, beginning, and limited resource farmers at on Thursday, December 11 at Gwinnett Technical College. Register by December 4, 2014. By Mail: USDA-NRCS c/o Jerome Brown, 750 South Perry Street Suite 410, Lawrenceville, Georgia 30046. Call: 770-963-9288. Email: Jerome.Brown@ga.usda.gov • Register online: www.teamaggeorgia.wordpress.com or www.teamaggeorgia.com.

Around the Districts

Cobb County SWCD sponsored a Youth Conservation Field Day for 3rd and 4th Graders at Terrell Community Garden in Austell. Students moved between stations that included demonstrations of soil conservation, high tunnels, watershed stewardship, and gardening/planting.

Roosevelt SWCD held its annual Youth Wildlife Field Day at Troup County High School in LaGrange at the Marvin H. Jones Memorial Outdoor Learning Center. Several conservation agencies participated in the event that allowed area 4th Graders to have a hands-on learning experience outside of their own classrooms.

Billy Sims was honored as 2014 Conservationist of the Year by **West Georgia SWCD** at their Annual Appreciation Banquet. The District Supervisors celebrated the 76th anniversary of the District.

A Field Day for forest landowners was held at the Arrowhead Lodge in Elbert County and sponsored by **Broad River SWCD**. Participants learned about managing their wildlife, selling timber, wildfire mitigation, forest health, and more.



Coastal SWCD sponsored a workshop on maintaining unpaved roads with an emphasis on water quality. City and county officials responsible for the maintenance of unpaved roads were encouraged to attend the workshop at the John W. Stevens Wetlands Education Center in Richmond Hill. **Coastal SWCD** marked the 20th anniversary of Coastfest, an annual festival organized by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and held at their headquarters on the Brunswick River in Brunswick, GA. The annual event showcases all things coastal and this year more than 80 organizations had booths and activities for families to enjoy and learn. From its inception in 1994 where fewer than 500 people attended, the event has grown over the years and this year was attended by 9,495 children and adults.



Around the Districts

Ogeechee River SWCD sponsored a seminar on Soil Health at the Bulloch County Center for Agriculture in Statesboro.

A free workshop on properly managing ponds, as well as information on regulatory requirements relating to the renovation or construction of ponds, was offered by **Ohoopsee River SWCD** at The Stanley Lodge in Toombs County.



Satilla River SWCD sponsored a workshop on maintaining unpaved roads with an emphasis on water quality. The workshop was held at Coastal Pines Technical College in Jesup.

Approximately 200 people attended the 53rd annual Conservationist of the Year banquet held at Rock Eagle and sponsored by **Piedmont SWCD** in partnership with local banks, businesses, and organizations that provide financial contributions to fund the event. Conservationist of the Year Awards were given to: Nicholls Family Farm - Joe and Daphne Nicholls (Baldwin County), C.L. Mutt Rhodes, Jr. and C.L. Lee Rhodes III -Rhodes Timber (Greene County), Fort Creek Farm owned and operated by Bob and Susan Woodall and managed by Chris Jackson (Hancock County), Idone Angus Farm -Mrs. Dartha K. Idone (Jones County), Robert Frank Glosson Jr. -Rockside Farms (Morgan County), and Chad Davis (Putnam County).

More than 85 members and guests of the **Walton County SWCD** honored outstanding youth and local conservationists at their annual meeting. Receiving the group's highest award, Don and Edith Shedd were named Walton County Conservationists of the Year.



Mrs. Missy Garner was named Warren County's Conservationist of the Year by the **Warren County SWCD**. The award was presented at the district's annual program recently for her achievements in soil and water conservation on her farm.

Soil and Water Conservation District Websites

- Altamaha SWCD <http://www.altamahaswcd.org>
- Cobb County SWCD <http://cobbswcd.org>
- Flint River SWCD <http://flintriverswcd.org>
- Fulton County SWCD <http://www.fultonswcd.com>
- Hall County SWCD <http://www.hallswcd.org>
- Henry County SWCD <http://ofig.org/old2/hcswcd>
- Towaliga SWCD <http://www.towaliga.com>
- Walton County SWCD <http://www.waltoncountyga.org/WConserve/wcswc.html>

GSWCC

Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission State Board

Phone: 706-552-4470 Email: gsbcc@gaswcc.org

Garland Thompson (Chairman) Douglas, Georgia

Carl E. Brack, Carrollton, Georgia

David T. Hays, Covington, Georgia

GSWCC Executive Staff

Brent Dykes (Executive Director), Athens, Georgia, Email: bdykes@gaswcc.org

Dave Eigenberg (Deputy Executive Director), Dawson, Georgia, Email: deigenberg@gaswcc.org

GSWCC Regions

Region I Calhoun Office – John Loughridge, Email Region1@gaswcc.org, 706-624-1434

Region II Athens Office – Robert Amos, Email Region2@gaswcc.org, 706-552-4479

Region III Statesboro Office – Rahn Milligan, Email Region3@gaswcc.org, 912-681-5241

Region IV Milledgeville Office – Vacant, Email Region4@gaswcc.org, 478-445-5766

Region V Dawson Office – Luke Crosson, Email Region5@gaswcc.org, 229-995-6001

Look for Us Online and on Social Media



<http://www.gacds.org>



<http://gaswcc.georgia.gov>



<https://www.facebook.com/GaSoilandWater>



<https://twitter.com/GaSoilandWater>