

Walton County Soil and Water Conservation District

Plan of Work FY-2023

District Supervisors: Dan Bennett (Chairman), Crista Carrell, Nathan Malcom, Howard Turner, and Dale Wiley



The Walton County Soil and Water Conservation District works to set priorities and direction for the needs of Walton County's soil and waterways and to educate Walton's citizens on the importance and practices of conservation. This Plan of Work identifies a variety of goals and actions to be pursued in the coming months. This document is nonbinding and intended to serve as an aspirational guideline only; the District will pursue new opportunities and directions as they appear. The District emphasizes engaging partners and community volunteers to achieve these goals.

This Plan of Work is organized as follows:

MAIN IDEA

1. Driving concept

A. Goal

- i) action step

LANDUSE PLANNING - Engage in diverse activities to encourage thoughtful and progressive land use planning across the county

1. Farmland Conservation

A. Build county-wide consciousness and initiatives to protect farmland

- i) inform Walton County government of the NRCS Farm and Ranchland Protection Program and work with Walton County BOC and Land Trusts to get it on an upcoming SPLOST ballot
- ii) do outreach in anticipation of fall vote including community talks, radio, and newspaper pieces

2. Natural Area Conservation

A. Build county-wide consciousness and initiatives to protect natural areas

- i) engage county area planners about green space in master plan/land purchasing
- ii) work with local officials to coordinate maintenance to repair dam and erosion problems at Matthews Park

B. Promote community forestry with Walton County

- i) partner with Monroe Tree Board for Georgia Arbor Day activities

3. Landscaping for Wildlife

A. Promote with homeowners

- i) in partnership with the Walton County Master Gardeners, develop and disseminate outreach campaign promoting importance of providing habitat for wildlife on private properties, particularly the use of native plants for landscape

B. Promote in public areas

- i) continue updating tree trail at Matthews Park with native species
- ii) promote with Monroe DDA and Social Circle DDA for new city plantings

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- iii) promote with Parks and Recreation Dept. for new plantings at all facilities
- iv) combat nonnative invasive plant species at Childers Park and Mathews Park, in partnership with Northeast Georgia Invasive Plant Cooperative

4. Erosion Sediment Control

A. Fulfill the District's responsibility under the Georgia Erosion and Sediment Control Act

- i) review and ratify erosion and sediment control reports on a monthly basis
- ii) periodically review Walton County's, the City of Monroe's, the City of Social Circle's and the City of Loganville's Erosion and Sediment Control programs and for the City of Between and Town of Good Hope
- iii) expend District funds, when necessary, to provide training programs for developers and land users
- iv) the District will work to provide area engineers and land surveyors with web-based soil surveys

EDUCATION - Expend District funds to carry out a comprehensive conservation education program for students and adults in Walton County to introduce them to the concept of soil and water conservation

5. Water Resource Education

A. Support GA Adopt-A-Stream activities in Walton County

- i) continue ongoing stream monitoring and community involvement at the Harris Homestead, Mathews Park and several other sites as staffing is available
- ii) support local educators interested in getting certified/starting their own monitoring efforts

B. Build public interest in water stewardships issues and practices

- i) sponsor rain barrel auction
- ii) promote information on the state water management plan

6. Local Agriculture Promotion

A. Promote and support area farmer's markets to help make them thriving community hubs

- i) supervisors will personally attend and patronize their local market
- ii) sponsor Monroe Market Farm to Table Dinner event
- iii) encourage local growers to be vendors
- iv) create an outreach table at the Monroe Market

B. Promote community awareness and initiatives surrounding urban agriculture

- i) continue to provide technical expertise to Field Garden at the County jail
- ii) continue to spear-head efforts to create community garden in Monroe at Pilot Park



- (1) aid in the promotion of a community garden committee
- (2) aid in the growth of a district bed at the community garden
- (3) aid in the maintenance of the four GACD pollinator demonstration beds

C. Promote the Walton Local Food Alliance

- i) continue to be a part of the alliance
- ii) promote the alliance initiatives and connect with local agricultural partners

7. NRCS Conservation Programs

A. Promote landholder awareness and understanding of available opportunities

- i) engage in targeted outreach during enrollment periods
- ii) continue ongoing outreach at local farmers markets, and other area agriculture hubs such as Boss Bros. Country Store, Tractor Supply, local feed stores

8. Build awareness and knowledge of the agricultural system and the need for soil and water conservation practices

A. Provide education for adult citizens

- i) coordinate workshops/field days for landowner education
- ii) organize additional field day geared towards consumers
- iii) reinstitute Agribusiness Day

B. Support education efforts at area schools

- i) reach out to schools and individual teacher contacts throughout the year for the purpose of providing direct assistance in the operation and maintenance of environmental instruction
- ii) promote Farm Day at the middle school level, with LMS farm day in April 2023 as model
- iii) coordinate hands-on service activities for high school level students, particularly those that support activities of younger students
- iv) coordinate with county 4-H coordinator to enhance hands-on and experiential learning in their programming
- v) aid in maintaining and supporting the GACD Pollinator Habitat Initiative at Walnut Grove Highschool
- vi) Aid in maintaining and supporting school gardens at Harmony Elementary School

9. Consumer Waste Reduction

A. Support the activities of Keep Walton Beautiful

- i) promote and attend events
- ii) District will continue Adopt-A-Mile participation
- iii) Walton Green School Initiative
- iv) Document Destruction Day
- v) Rivers Alive River Clean-up

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B. Engage in activities and initiatives to build awareness and action on food waste issues

- i) work with Recycling Center Director to further composting at county schools
- ii) engage Monroe Downtown Food businesses in food waste audit

10. General Natural Resource Education

A. Promote public understanding for the need for soil and water stewardship by purchasing and distributing conservation education materials and programs during Stewardship Week i)

- contact area schools in spring 2023 and make them aware of available materials ii) review 2022 materials provided by NACD and develop template of Stewardship Week activities for select grade levels and share with area teachers

B. Build student engagement in the Envirothon competition

- i) promote program among area teachers
- ii) identify a team sponsor for the 2022-2023 school year

C. Boost Walton County student involvement in GA DNR Wildlife Resource Division, GACD and NACD poster and photo competitions

- i) make info and deadlines available to teachers and facilitate submissions

D. Maintain and improve the Julian E. Brown Environmental Study Area at Mathews Park as a facility for instruction and study by both youths and adults

- i) develop and install updated educational signage
- ii) develop new interpretive pamphlet for visitors

11. Help to empower and inform the next generation of conservation leaders

A. Encourage district participation in the NRC Workshop at ABAC

- i) sponsor attendance of up to six students with additional efforts to find sponsorship for more
- ii) develop and distribute promotional packets to encourage participation by electronic and hard copy
- iii) encourage local organizations to sponsor additional students to attend

B. Provide scholarship opportunities for students interested in natural resources careers i)

- administer the Julian Emerson Brown Conservation Scholarship Fund and select a qualified Walton County student as the recipient of the college scholarship, making it available to all high schools and homeschoolers in Walton County
- ii) provide area schools with applications and build awareness of availability of GACD scholarship opportunities

C. Enhance opportunities for District adults to attend educational conferences i)

- recruit and cover costs of attendance for at least three motivated citizens to attend conferences such as: Georgia Organics, Sunbelt Ag Expo, Farm to School, and GMFA conference



ORGANIZATIONAL MAINTENANCE

12. Accountability

A. Acquire information from Walton County citizens on conservation issues that they would like to have addressed

- i) make concerns and question forms available at every outreach event, in Extension Office, NRCS Office, and around the county

B. Encourage community presence at regular meetings

- i) add new names to notification list
- ii) add legislators, county officials, district commissioners and councilmen and women

C. Maintain good records of activities

- i) develop forms and standard procedures for documenting activities
- ii) keep records of vital statistics around numbers of volunteers, service hours, grants applied for and received, presentations, outreach events, educational events at schools, District signage

D. Maximize fiscal responsibility

- i) provide for oversight of District funds by the annual review of expenditures and income
- ii) provide a detailed financial report/audit to the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission at the end of each fiscal year

E. Maintain professional presence of the District across the county

- i) conduct annual maintenance program on district signs and other promotional displays

13. Equity in service

A. The District prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status

B. The District aims to serve the entire County

- i) the District will consciously geographically distribute its efforts and seek partners and projects that in engage all the municipalities and communities located within the county

14. Funding

A. Seek outside sources of income to strengthen and support District activities and programs

- i) seek fifty Affiliate Members at \$50 membership each to support Walton County Conservation District's activities
- ii) request approximately \$17,000 in funding from the Walton County Board of Commissioners to carry out district programs
- iii) actively pursue and apply for grants to support District actions

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15. Recognizing Conservation Efforts

A. Expend District funds to conduct special programs to recognize individuals and groups for their contributions to soil and water conservation in Walton County

- i) select and present Conservationist of the Year Award
- ii) conduct Annual Meeting in November to report the District's accomplishments
- iii) encourage School District to apply for Golden Radish Award

16. Statewide and National Networking

A. Sustain participation/membership in groups that promote soil and water conservation goals

- i) maintain membership in and pay membership dues to the National Association of Conservation Districts, the Georgia Association of Conservation Districts, the National Conservation District Employee Association, and the Oconee River Resource Conservation and Development Council, Georgia Organics, Georgia Urban Forest Council
- ii) cooperate with these groups and other districts to jointly promote soil and water conservation goals

B. Seek out new local and statewide partnerships to support all District activities and goals.

17. Support District Supervisors

A. Provide financial resources to improve DS knowledge of conservation issues B. Assist supervisors with financial resources to individually promote the programs of the District

18. Conservation Policy Awareness

- #### **A. Promote dialogue with elected representatives on the county, state and federal levels**
- i) expend funds for meeting expenses to keep leaders informed of conservation concerns and programs
 - ii) attend GACD Conservation Day at the Georgia State Capitol in 2023