



SOIL & WATER NEWS

Brent Dykes, Executive Director



A Word From the Director

May 2014

One of my favorite authors is Dr. Seuss.

The Dr. Seuss book, *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*, is a good description of the past six months that the agency and the 40 local conservation districts have experienced.

As a result of the legislative process, GSWCC remains a stand-alone state natural resource agency for FY15. The past six months has brought to light the important role that GSWCC plays in the implementation of on-the-ground conservation practices and the delivery of technical assistance to landowners across the state.

In the months to come, be on the look-out for increased publicity of local conservation district activities and opportunities for you to join in local and statewide efforts to ensure the wise use of Georgia's natural resources.

As fellow Georgians, we all have a responsibility to make water and land use decisions in light of the lessons learned from past generations, and at the same time mindful of the next generation.

Count on the Conservation Commission and Georgia's 40 Conservation Districts to be your partner in these efforts!



Brent Dykes
Executive Director

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District Supervisor Appointments

At the April 2014 meeting of the GSWCC State Board, the board considered nominations forwarded from the state's 40 Soil and Water Conservation Districts and appointed the following District Supervisors:

GSWCC Region I

Catoosa County SWCD: Marshall Taylor, Jackie M. "Bobby" Piemons

Coosa River SWCD: Roger Neal (Walker County), Milton Stewart (Gordon County), Johnny Groover (Polk County), Jim Smith (Paulding County), Tom Black (Dade County), Jim Parker (Chattooga County), Davis Nelson (Bartow County)

Roosevelt SWCD: Glen Gosa (Meriwether County)

West Georgia SWCD: Buddy Burns (Coweta County), Denney Rogers (Heard County)

GSWCC Region II

Broad River SWCD: Carol Hodgkins (Banks County), Laura Bass (Elbert County), E.H. Reid (Forsyth County), Gilbert Barrett (Habersham County), Kenneth Beasley (Lumpkin County), Edsel Nix (White County), Charles Brown (Hart County), Russ Yeany (Oglethorpe County), Herman Wheatley (Wilkes County)

Columbia County SWCD: Rick Crawford, John Shearhouse

Gwinnett County SWCD: Jim Steele

Hall County SWCD: Jane Hemmer

Lincoln County SWCD: Marcus Mathews, Olin Reed

McDuffie County SWCD: Donald Palmer, Roger Burton

Oconee River SWCD: Bernard Garrett (Oconee County), Tony Embrick (Jackson County)

Upper Chattahoochee River SWCD: Charlie Tatum (Dawson County)

Stephens County SWCD: Jeanette Jamieson

GSWCC Region IV

Central Georgia SWCD: James McCranie (Dodge County), Harry David Green (Laurens County), Wendell Glenn Waller (Washington County), Alton V. White III (Twiggs County), Dan Dixon (Wilkinson County), Robert Veal Jr. (Johnson County), Paul Fleming English (Bleckley County)

Lamar County SWCD: Chad Thompson, Andy Battle Bush

Piedmont SWCD: Stanley Jackson (Taliaferro County), Larry Eley (Greene County), Patrick Hardy (Morgan County)

Towaliga SWCD: Harold D. Fallin (Upson County), Walter Clifford Futral Jr. (Spalding County), James Vernon Ham (Monroe County), Arthur Thomas Presley (Butts County), Rex J. Yerkes (Pike County)

District Supervisor Appointments (continued)

GSWCC Region IV (continued)

Upper Ocmulgee River SWCD: Phillip Malone Standard (Newton County), Charlie Lane (Jasper County)

Walton County SWCD: Cristina Carrell, Howard Turner

GSWCC Region V

Ocmulgee River SWCD: Jack McGlaun (Taylor County)

Flint River SWCD: Chris Moore (Baker County)

Lower Chattahoochee River SWCD: Julian “Sonny” Thaggard (Lee County)

Georgia Envirothon

Congratulations to Appling County, 2014 Georgia Envirothon Champions.

The Georgia Envirothon is an annual competition for high school-aged students. The program consists of one-day regional competitions and a two-day state competition, which was held this year on April 16.



In 2014, regional competitions were held at the Newman Wetland Center in Clayton County, Little Ocmulgee State Park near McRae, and at the Whitehall Forest in Athens-Clarke County. The state competition to determine the state champion was held at the University of Georgia Griffin Campus, which was won this year by Appling County. Planning is already underway for next year’s competition. If you are interested in becoming involved in this educational and fun activity, you can learn more at <http://www.georgiaenvirothon.org>.

Water Quality Improvement



GSWCC is working on several projects to improve water quality in Georgia.

Cedar Creek and Folsom Creek Watersheds

GSWCC staff are working with local stakeholders and organizations in the Cedar Creek Watershed and Folsom Creek Watershed to monitor impaired streams and identify sources of pollution. The project is located in the Ocmulgee River Basin within the boundaries of Wilcox County. Although there is no cookie-cutter approach to developing a watershed plan, plans that seek to identify and address threats or impairments to water quality have some common elements. So far, a GIS assessment has been completed and a dashboard assessment of the watershed is underway. Limited cost-share funding will be available to correct non-point source pollution once the plan is approved by GAEPD.

Settingdown Creek Watershed and Altamaha River Basin

GSWCC is beginning a pilot Multi-phased Nutrient Management Planning Initiative in the Settingdown Creek Watershed and the Altamaha River Basin. GSWCC Staff can provide technical help to update Nutrient Management Plans (NMPs) and identify sources of cost-share assistance to complete improvements based on farm assessments. Once the pilot project is rolled out in these areas, GSWCC will roll out the program statewide. Learn more by emailing Carrie Fowler at cfowler@gaswcc.org.

Natural Resources Conservation Workshop



Available to Georgia's rising 10th, 11th, and 12th graders, the annual Natural Resources Conservation Workshop is sponsored by the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission. This year's workshop will be June 8 - 12, 2014.

Held at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, the summer workshop focuses on the value, protection, and conservation of Georgia's wildlife, forestry, soil, and water resources, including conservation in Georgia's mining industry. It is a unique opportunity for students, especially those who live in urban areas, to build an appreciation for the state's great natural resources.

- More than \$18,000 in college scholarships will be awarded during the workshop.
- Features field trips, classroom instruction, and recreational activities.

Local Soil and Water Conservation Districts provide scholarships to assist students in attending this camp, and GSWCC staff assist in providing leadership for the residential camp.

You can learn more about the NRCW through your local Soil and Water Conservation District, GSWCC Regional Offices or online at <http://gaswcc.georgia.gov/natural-resources-conservation-workshop>.

TAG Workshop on May 29



Team Agriculture Georgia (TAG) is holding a free one-day workshop for small, beginning, and limited resource farmers on May 29 in Douglas starting at 7:30 a.m. Topics will include Grazing Management, Organic Certification, Financing Small Farms, Olive Production, and USDA/Farm Bill update.

Lunch will be provided. To attend the workshop, TAG is requesting registrations be received by May 19. You may register by calling 404-232-3675 or emailing sherri.wilson@gdol.ga.gov.

Urban Update - Technical Advisory Committee

As part of GSWCC's re-opening of the Manual (6th Edition) and testing procedures for public comment, and in an effort to increase membership on the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), GSWCC solicited applications through May 9 from individuals interested in serving on the TAC to represent various stakeholder groups that have an interest in urban erosion control. The role of TAC members is to receive public comment on the Manual (6th Edition), and testing procedures, provide technical expertise, and evaluate potential options in order to provide technical recommendations to the GSWCC State Board for their consideration for adoption.

The GSWCC State Board is now considering the applications received. Following the appointment of new TAC members by the GSWCC State Board, the updated TAC will begin holding public meetings, and GSWCC will begin a formal public comment process on the *Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control in Georgia*, 6th Edition and testing procedures.

You can stay updated on activities of the TAC on the GSWCC website at <http://gaswcc.georgia.gov/technical-advisory-committee-gswcc-erosion-and-sediment-control-program>

Urban Update - Approved Trainers

Anyone involved in land development, design, review, permitting, construction, monitoring, inspection, or any land-disturbing activity in Georgia must meet education requirements and be certified by the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission program.

At the April meeting of the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission State Board, the following individuals were added to the list of approved trainers:

Trainer Level I - Jean Brown, Fred Halterman, Tommy Holland, Brian Kent, Gilberto Huertas, Jon Lovejoy, Gail Mead, Dwayne Ratliff, Catherine Samay, Raymond Scott

Trainer Level II - Tommy Holland, Catherine Samay

If you have additional questions about certified trainers or training courses, you may contact the Urban Lands Erosion and Sediment Control Program by phone at 706-552-4474 or by emailing certification@gaswcc.org.

Dam Maintenance and Rehabilitation



GSWCC continues to make progress in its dam rehabilitation program. At South River Dam 29 in Madison County, major construction has been completed. For this project, the total cost will be approximately \$1,900,000.

For Ellijay River Dam 1 in Gilmer County, bids were received on November and a notice to proceed went out January 8. This project is essentially a grading project where upgraded dam safety requirements will be achieved by increasing the width of the existing auxiliary spillway. It is expected to take approximately 120 days to complete construction.

At Soque Dams 29-34-36 in Habersham County, rehabilitation designs are in progress for these three dams and are expected to be completed soon. Construction should start in September-October 2014. Roller compacted concrete will be used for the structural modification of this dam. Project cost is expected to be around \$6,000,000, including design. Seventeen structures that are located in the breach zone below these dams will benefit from this rehabilitation project.

Not all the work on the dams requires major rehabilitation. A significant part of maintaining the districts' 357 watershed dams in Georgia requires regular maintenance. In many cases, this means mowing, cutting down small trees that may sprout on the dams, and ensuring that stabilizing vegetation is encouraged.

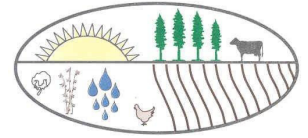
For example, in Pickens County, the re-vegetation of Sharp Mountain Dams 13-27-31 was completed in October 2013. This gives the dams a longer life and precludes the need for more costly rehabilitation projects.

Looking ahead, GSWCC is working with NRCS in a cooperative effort to provide assistance in the preparation of plans to maintain additional dams in calendar year 2014.

We anticipate that this agreement will also include breach studies, emergency action plans, and concept designs for additional dams for future funding requests for dam rehabilitation.

GACDS 2014 Annual Meeting

In January, the Georgia Association of Conservation District Supervisors met at the Macon Centreplex Convention Center and the Marriott Macon City Center for their annual meeting. The meeting started with opening remarks by Zippy Duvall, president of the Georgia Farm Bureau.



Chris Clark, President and CEO of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, spoke on improving Georgia's competitiveness as well as the Chamber's plan to increase spending on goods and services provided by companies in Georgia. The idea is to encourage "Georgia first" when purchasing goods or services. The Chamber has announced a Georgia2Georgia program stemming from Governor Nation Deal and the Department of Economic Development's Georgia Competitiveness Initiative. Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture Gary Black addressed the assembly and talked about changes to the GATE, as well as efforts his agency is making to support agriculture and agri-business in Georgia.

At the GACDS Awards & Hall of Fame Dinner, the late George Hillsman was inducted into the GACDS Hall of Fame, while DeKalb Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor Dell MacGregor won the District Supervisor of the Year Award. Broad River and Coastal were both awarded District of the Year for their outstanding programs. GSWCC's Kim Chapman was honored with GACDS Superior Professional Support trophy in recognition of her professional contributions in soil and water conservation.

Richard Sims, Acting Regional Conservationist - Southeast, provided the keynote address, filling in for Earl Garber, NACD President, who was unable to attend due to severe weather in Louisiana. Mr. Sims outlined upcoming conservation goals and discussed how the new Farm Bill would affect efforts in the future. Jon Huffmaster, Legislative Director for the Georgia Farm Bureau, talked to the group about legislation impacting Georgia's farmers and conservationists. Dr. Rick Lanford, GACDS State Chaplain, was recognized by GACDS for his outstanding service to the organization over the past years. Four breakout sessions covered the Erosion and Sediment Control's Green Book updates, a Legislative update, the GeorgiaGrown program, and a discussion on the upcoming district supervisors' elections.

Each year, GACDS schedules a conservation-related tour in conjunction with the meeting. This year, meeting attendees toured Camp John Hope, Cleveland Tree Farm and Cleveland Organics, Pearson Farm, Flint Williams Farm, Lanes Southern Orchards, and Super Sod. Besides visiting a peach packing house, the supervisors learned about the challenges of growing organic pecans, as well as visiting a relatively new farmer and learning more about his experiences. The groups finished at the Super Sod farm and saw how the company is conserving water with their newly constructed office building that funnels rain water from their roof to an above-ground holding tank. They also learned about the company's new Drivable Grass, a permeable plantable pavement, which qualifies for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) credits.

You can keep current on GACDS activities at their website <http://www.gacds.org>.



From left to right, Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black, Georgia Farm Bureau Legislative Director Jon Huffmaster, and Georgia Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Chris Clark address GACDS in Macon, Ga.

Around the Districts

The **Catoosa County Conservation District** presented LeBron O'Donald a plaque recognizing his 50 years as a Conservation District Supervisor. **Fulton County SWCD** launched its new district website, which can be found at <http://www.fultonswcd.com>. Representatives from UGA Cooperative Extension, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Forestry, Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission, Rolling Hills RC&D Council traveled to Carrollton for a workshop sponsored by the **West Georgia SWCD** to explain what each agency does and how they can help with farm and farm business.

Hall County SWCD sponsored a Forage Field Day at the Muddy H Dairy followed by lunch and presentations at Jaemor Farms.

Coastal SWCD, along with Coastal Georgia RC&D, sponsored a free educational opportunity to explore the opportunities available in the growing agritourism industry and arranged for a visit to a working farm that hosts thousands of people annually. **Coastal SWCD** also sponsored a workshop focused on irrigation basics as well as technical and financial assistance available to small agricultural producers at the SINERR's Long Tabby Educational Lab on Sapelo Island. Sponsored by the Georgia Cattlemen's Association Region XV, as well as the **Satilla River SWCD** and NRCS, a forage and livestock meeting was held in Odum that focused on storage methods for forage, nutrient inputs, cover crops, as well as a brief update on the Farm Bill.

A grazing and forage field day was held at Gully Branch farm located in Bleckley County under the sponsorship of the Georgia Grazing Lands Conservation Coalition, along with the **Central Georgia SWCD**, GSWCC, Natural Resources Conservation Service, UGA Cooperative Extension Service, Georgia Cattlemen's Association, Georgia Association of Conservation District Supervisors, Pine Country RC&D, and Two Rivers RC&D. **Central Georgia SWCD** held its 52nd Annual Conservationist of the Year banquet at the First Baptist Church in Cochran. Representing the **Central Georgia SWCD**, GSWCC's David Hall visited Northwest Laurens Elementary school, located in Dudley, Georgia, to help kindergarten students learn about the basics of soil quality and the importance of soil. Two Rivers RC&D and the **Piedmont SWCD** sponsored a pasture walk in Sparta that discussed utilizing winter annual forages, winter feeding strategies, and grass-fed beef production. The **Rockdale SWCD** held a bus tour designed to give hands-on training needed to implement farm conservation practices.

Lower Chattahoochee River SWCD held a Forestry and Land Management Workshop in Americus where attendees learned about best management practices in forestry, wildlife habitat, forage, grazing, the new Farm Bill, and current water issues. **Middle South Georgia SWCD** held an essay contest on the 2014 stewardship theme "Dig Deeper: Mysteries in the Soil" that was open to high school seniors in the district with prizes that included a scholarship sponsored by the district and the Abraham Baldwin College Foundation. The **Ocmulgee River SWCD and Central Georgia SWCDs** jointly hosted an advanced irrigation management workshop centered on the advances in irrigation technology including filtration systems for irrigation, fertigation and chemigation, irrigation scheduling, drip irrigation, and variable rate irrigation. **Central Georgia SWCD** held their annual Gully Branch Field Day for Bleckley County fifth grade students hosted by Earl and Wanda Barrs.

Information on Soil and Water Conservation District activities can be found at <http://gaswcc.georgia.gov/soil-water-conservation-districts>.

USDA Programs

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) - Application deadline is June 6. ACEP provides technical and financial assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits. Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) applications are accepted only from eligible partners. NRCS does not accept ACEP-ALE directly from producers.

Wetlands Reserve Easement (WRE) are accepted directly from producers on eligible lands. Wetlands reserve easements would restore and enhance wetlands and improve habitat. Eligible lands for ACEP-WRE include farmed or converted wetlands that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored. Agreements will be evaluated starting in late August.

North Georgia Irrigation Pilot Program (NGIPP) - Sign-up deadline is June 20.

The two areas of improvement are water conservation - for irrigation improvements to reduce strain on area aquifers; and water quantity - to increase availability of water sources for irrigation. NRCS has identified 46 Georgia counties where producers are eligible to apply for this program. More information on these programs is available online at <http://www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov> or visit your local NRCS office.



Renewed Biomass Crop Assistance Program. USDA-FSA has announced support for agriculture producers and energy facilities working to turn renewable biomass materials into clean energy. The support comes through the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP), which was reauthorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and will resume this summer. BCAP provides financial assistance for establishing a new perennial crop, payments to maintain a crop as it matures until harvest, payments to mitigate the cost of harvesting and transporting the materials to the end-use facility. Information on funding availability will be published in an upcoming Federal Register notice. For more information on BCAP and other FSA programs, visit a local FSA office or go online to www.fsa.usda.gov.

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.waltoncountyyga.org/WConserve/wcswc.html>

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 – Keegan Malone, Email Region4@gaswcc.org, 478-445-5766

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

Communications / Information Resource Specialist – Michael Wald, Email mwald@gaswcc.org, 706-552-4489

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