



**“If we take care of the land,
it will take care of us.”**
-First NRCS Chief Hugh Hammond Bennett



helping people, help the land / helping people, help the land



2013 STATE STORY

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Helping People Help the Land

Athens, Georgia
December 2013



Mission

Continuing our Legacy of Conservation

Helping People, Help the Land

For almost 80 years we have provided leadership in a partnership effort to help America's private land owners and managers conserve their soil, water, air, land and other natural resources.

The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) was established by an act of the 74th Congress on April 27, 1935 when Congress passed Public Law 46 (Soil Conservation Act) which declared that soil erosion was a menace to the national welfare and authorized broad powers to the new agency to attack the problem.

Our name was changed October 20, 1994, as part of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994, to the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

From the date of our establishment, NRCS employees have provided technical assistance based on sound science, suited to a customer's specific needs and we have provided financial assistance for many conservation practices and will continue to do so.

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Did you know?

NRCS has provided technical assistance to producers in 2013 to develop 2,161 conservation plans on 305,860 acres throughout the state. See feature stories at www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov. Click on news/success stories.



NRCS Organizational Structure



State Conservationist

Administrative Assistant to the
State Conservationist

Office Automation Clerk

AREA 1
Assistant State
Conservationist
for Field Operations

AREA 2
Assistant State
Conservationist
for Field Operations

AREA 3
Assistant State
Conservationist
for Field Operations

AREA 4
Assistant State
Conservationist
for Field Operations

State
Conservation
Engineer

State
Administrative
Officer

Assistant State
Conservationist
(Programs)

Assistant State
Conservationist
(Operations)

State Public
Affairs
Specialist

State
Soil Scientist

State
Resource
Conservationist

Key NRCS Staff in Georgia



State Public Affairs Specialist

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State Resource Conservationist

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Assistant State Conservationist for Operations

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*Complete directory available
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Georgia NRCS Administrative Areas

Area 1 - Griffin

Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations - *Michael Watson*

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Area 2 - Athens

Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations - *Jack Lewis*

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Area 3 - Americus

Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations - *Floyd Hooker*

Phone: 229 924-0544 Fax: 855 409-5061

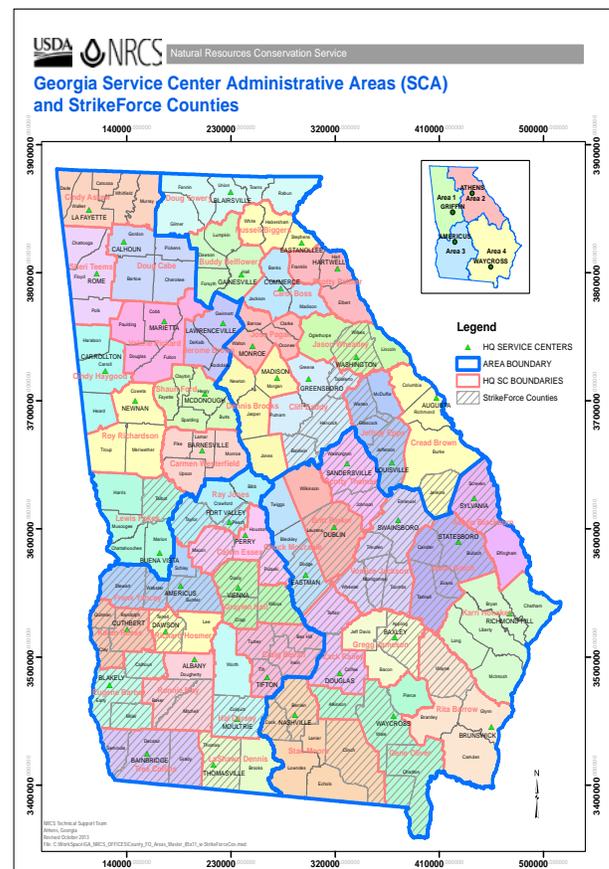
E-mail: floyd.hooker@ga.usda.gov

Area 4 - Waycross

Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations - *Sidney Lanier*

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Designated District Conservationists

Area	Soil and Water Conservation District	NRCS District Conservationist
1	Catoosa County	Cindy P. Askew, LaFayette
	Coosa River	Sheri E. Teems, Rome
	Limestone Valley	Cindy P. Askew, LaFayette
	West Georgia	Cindy Haygood, Carrollton
	Fulton County	Valerie Pickard, Marietta
	Cobb County	Valerie Pickard, Marietta
	Gwinnett County	Jerome Brown, Lawrenceville
	Henry County	Shaun Ford, McDonough
	Clayton County	Shaun Ford, McDonough
	Pine Mountain	Lewis Fokes, Jr., Buena Vista
	Rockdale County	Jerome Brown, Lawrenceville
	DeKalb County	Jerome Brown, Lawrenceville
	Roosevelt	Rory Richardson, Newnan
	Towaliga	Carmen Westerfield, Barnesville
Lamar County	Carmen Westerfield, Barnesville	
2	Blue Ridge Mountain	Douglas Towery, Blairsville
	Hall County	Carol Boss (Acting), Gainesville
	Stephens County	Ryan Burgess (Acting), Eastanollee
	Upper Chattahoochee River	Ryan Burgess (Acting), Eastanollee
	Broad River	Scotty Palmer, Hartwell
	Lincoln County	Jason Wheatley, Washington
	McDuffie County	Jeffrey Epps, Louisville
	Oconee River	Carol Boss, Commerce
	Piedmont	Dennis Brooks, Madison
	Warren County	Jeffrey Epps, Louisville
	Brier Creek	J. Cread Brown, Augusta
	Columbia County	J. Cread Brown, Augusta
	Upper Ocmulgee River	Dennis B. Brooks, Madison
	Walton County	Jose' V. Pagan, Monroe
3	Ocmulgee River	Calvin Essex, Perry
	Flint River	Marcus Collins, Bainbridge
	Lower Chattahoochee River	Richard Hosmer, Dawson
	Middle South Georgia	Hal Darsey, Moultrie
4	Alapaha	Stan Moore, Nashville
	Altamaha	Zack Railey, Douglas
	Satilla River	Rita Barrow, Brunswick
	Coastal	Karri Honaker, Richmond Hill
	Ogeechee River	Jason Gatch, Statesboro
	Ohoopsee River	Vontice Jackson, Swainsboro
	Central Georgia	Chuck McCranie, Eastman

Assistant State Conservationists for Field Operations

Area 1	Griffin	Michael Watson	Area 2	Athens	Jack Lewis
Area 3	Americus	Floyd Hooker	Area 4	Waycross	Sidney Lanier

District Conservationists



Last Name	First Name	Telephone
Askew	Cindy	706-638-2207
Barber	Eugene	229-723-3825
Barrow	Rita	912-265-8092
Bevan	Craig	229-382-4776
Boss	Carol	706-335-7145
Brooks	Dennis	706-342-1315
Brown	Cread	706-554-5183
Brown	Jerome	770-963-9288
Burgess	Ryan	706-779-2134
Cabe	Doug	706-629-2582
Collins	Marcus	229-246-8282
Darsey	Hal	229-985-5399
Dennis	LaShawn	229-263-4909
Essex	Calvin	478-987-2280
Fokes	Lewis	229-649-3131
Gatch	Jason	912-871-2600
Hall	Graylen	229-268-4131
Haygood	Cindy	770-832-8942
Honaker	Karri	912-459-2350
Hosmer	Richard	229-995-5811
Jackson	Vontice	478-237-8037
Jameson	Gregg	912-367-4368
Jones	Ray	478-827-0016
Long	Paul	229-985-5399
May	Ronnie	229-430-8509
McCranie	Charles V.	478-374-8140
Moore	Stan	912-367-7679
Oliver	Harold E.	912-459-2070
Pagan	Jose'	770-267-1359

Last Name	First Name	Telephone
Palmer	Scotty	706-376-5451
Parker	Britt S.	478-275-0425
Pickard	Valerie	770-792-0594
Railey	Zack	912-384-4811
Reese	Karen	229-732-3001
Richardson	Rory	770-251-4283
Teems	Sheri	706-291-5651
Thomas	Scotty	478-552-6073
Towery	Doug	706-745-2794
Westerfield	Carmen	770-358-3223
Yancey	Frank	229-924-4056



Agricultural Conservation Experienced Services

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Program Description

Georgia's NRCS entered into the ACES program in 2008. To date, Georgia has allocated nearly \$2,177,057 into the Agricultural Conservation Experienced Services (ACES) program. This program is designed to meet employers' needs for competent workers by providing access to individuals age 55 and older, and to enhance lifelong employment opportunities of experienced workers through training, job placement, education, research and advocacy.

ACES is a program administered by the USDA-NRCS from a bigger program run by the National Older Worker Career Center (NOWCC), a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization based in Arlington, Virginia.

2013 Highlights

Georgia currently has 27 ACES employees working throughout the state.

These positions are located in the following field offices; Albany, Athens, Bainbridge, Baxley, Blackshear, Blakely, Calhoun, Camilla, Commerce, Dublin, Eastman, Hartwell, Lawrenceville, Lyons, Marietta, Moultrie, Mt. Vernon, Newnan, Quitman, Rochelle, Statesboro, Sylvania, Sylvester, Tifton, Watkinsville and Waynesboro. As of September 2013, Georgia's NRCS entered into a new 12 month ACES agreement and has expended nearly \$222,035. ACES has greatly benefited Georgia's NRCS with the implementation of conservation practices and data input.

ACES Spotlight

Carol Alford has served as an ACES employee for NRCS since January 2013. Having spent her entire life in Gordon County, Carol is often acquainted with visitors or their families when they stop by the office or when we make field visits. Carol's friendly and outgoing personality puts producers and visitors at ease.

Carol has an extensive background in payroll and office management. These skills, combined with her positive attitude, make her an asset to the Calhoun Field Office.

Currently, Carol is working on updating the field office administrative files, researching and preparing outreach mailing lists, reviewing NRCS contract folders, and learning how to review erosion, sediment and pollution control plans.

Carol is always eager to take on new duties and responsibilities, inside or outside the office. Carol is a hard worker, likes to stay busy, and is an asset to our team.



Carol Alford, an ACES employee, works in the Calhoun field office.

Agricultural Water Enhancement Program

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Program Description

The Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) is a voluntary conservation initiative that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to implement agricultural water enhancement activities on agricultural land for the purposes of conserving surface and ground water and improving water quality.

As part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), AWEP operates through contracts with producers to plan and implement conservation practices in project areas established through partnership agreements.

Under AWEP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) enters into partnership agreements with eligible entities that want to promote ground and surface water conservation or improve water quality on agricultural lands. The Secretary of Agriculture has delegated the authority for AWEP to the NRCS Chief.



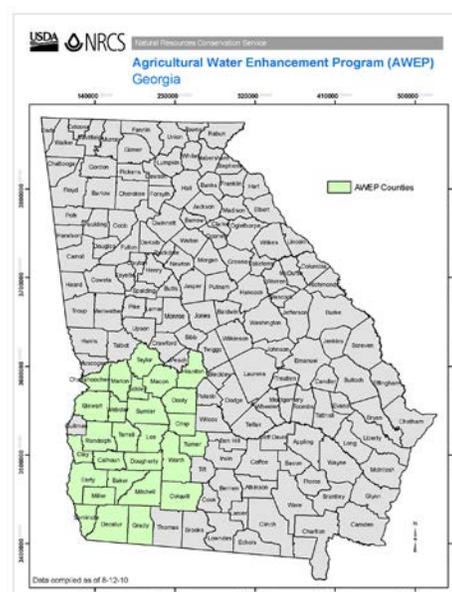
This irrigation system is managed by a moisture monitor funded under AWEP.

2013 Highlights

To date, Georgia's NRCS has obligated \$1,275,441 to cover 171 contracts on a total of 16,917 acres. AWEP 2013 funding provided financial assistance for conservation practices including: the low pressure drop nozzle retrofit with end-gun shutoff, remote soil moisture monitoring, sod based rotation and variable rate irrigation.

The AWEP grant helps provide financial assistance to fund agricultural water conservation projects in the Lower Flint River Basin.

The counties eligible for funding include: Baker, Calhoun, Chattahoochee, Clay, Colquitt, Crisp, Dooly, Decatur, Dougherty, Early, Grady, Houston, Lee, Macon, Marion, Miller, Mitchell, Randolph, Schley, Seminole, Stewart, Sumter, Terrell, Taylor, Turner, Webster and Worth.





Conservation Innovation Grants

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Program Description

The Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) is a voluntary program intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production.

These projects may be watershed-based, regional, or statewide in scope.

State, tribal, and local governmental entities, non-governmental organizations, and individuals may apply.

Selection will be based on the criteria established in the request for proposals notice, and selected applicants may receive grants of up to 50 percent of the total project cost. Applicants must provide non-Federal funding for at least 50 percent of the project cost. Up to 50 percent (25 percent of the total project cost) of the applicant's match may be from in-kind contributions. The remainder must be cash.

2013 Highlights

In 2013, three Conservation Innovation Grants involving Georgia were awarded. Two were selected through a National level competition and one CIG was awarded at the State Level.

Georgia's Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District project was awarded \$725,000 at the National level. The purpose of this project is to develop and deploy advanced irrigation scheduling tools at a reduced cost to make this innovative approach accessible to all producers. The goal is to help up to 50 agricultural producers optimize irrigation scheduling and build a conservation model for the future of agricultural water use in the United States.

The University of Georgia was awarded \$132,764 National level CIG to demonstrate the effectiveness of the MinImob tool to predict and manage nitrogen release from cover crops for beginning farmers. The MinImob tool calculates how much nitrogen should be available based on soil type and other localized parameters.

Demonstrations will be established at five farms over two years and the resulting benefits will be provided to producers through factsheets, field days, workshops, newsletters, and websites.

The National Network of Forest Practitioners was awarded \$399,200 National level CIG for Georgia and 2 other States to provide peer-based outreach to Underserved Landowners in the Black Belt for Longleaf Restoration and Prescribed Fire. This project utilizes community-based outreach techniques to engage underserved landowners in Longleaf Pine restoration and management, including use of controlled burning. The goal is support one hundred twenty landowners in applying for EQIP, forest management plans, or other tangible steps to improve their forest management.

At the State level, Georgia NRCS awarded \$75,000 to Central Savannah River RC&D Council, Inc. to encourage and accelerate the adoption of Fertigation and Chemigation conservation technologies on Georgia farms. The project will establish twenty on-farm demonstration sites throughout the Central Savannah River RC&D Area so that producers can see the benefits of Fertigation.

Conservation Stewardship Program



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Program Description

Through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to eligible producers to conserve and enhance soil, water, air and related natural resources on their land.

Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest lands, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe.

It also includes private agricultural land (including cropped woodland, marshes, and agricultural land used for the production of livestock) on which resource concerns related to agricultural production could be addressed. Participation in the program is voluntary.

CSP encourages land stewards to improve their conservation performance by installing and adopting additional activities.

2013 Highlights

In 2013, more than \$3.5 million was allocated to CSP resulting in a total of 270 contracts designated for the program. Across the state, an estimated 115,820 acres were enrolled in the Conservation Stewardship Program. Soil, water, air and related natural resources will be conserved and enhanced on these properties.



The olive orchard pictured above is currently enrolled in the Conservation Stewardship Program.



Conservation Technical Assistance

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Program Description

The purpose of the Conservation Technical Assistance is to provide technical assistance supported by science-based technology and tools to help people conserve, maintain, and improve their natural resources. Conservation Technical Assistance provides the technical capability, including direct conservation planning, design, and implementation assistance, that helps people plan and apply conservation on the land. This assistance is provided to individuals, groups, and communities who make natural resource management decisions on private, tribal and other non-federal lands.

Conservation Technical Assistance provides the proven and consistent conservation technology and delivery infrastructure needed to achieve the benefits of a healthy and productive landscape, and has the following purposes:

- *Reduce soil loss from erosion.*
- *Solve soil, water quality, water conservation, air quality, and agricultural waste management problems.*
- *Reduce potential damage caused by excess water and sedimentation or drought.*
- *Enhance the quality of aquatic and wildlife habitat.*
- *Improve the long term sustainability of all lands, including cropland, forestland, grazing lands, coastal lands, and developed and/or developing lands.*
- *Assist others in facilitating changes in land use as needed for natural resource protection and sustainability.*

2013 Highlights

In 2013, NRCS Georgia developed 2,161 conservation plans on 305,860 acres



Landowner Ronnie Lee inspects corn with NRCS District Conservationist Rich Hosmer.



State Conservationist James Tillman talks to landowner about rainwater harvesting.



Program Manager: Tansel Hudson

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Do business with the government online!

NRCS is one of three United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Service Center agencies that offers online services.

To learn more, visit the web site at <http://www.sc.egov.usda.gov>.

The USDA has implemented a process for registering customers who choose to conduct electronic transactions with USDA agencies.

Under this process, a customer can register for access to eGov applications by visiting: <http://www.eauth.egov.usda.gov>.

At this site, the application will take the customer through a simplified registration process.

When registered, the customer will need to visit their local service center and have their identity verified by presenting one of four forms of identification; state driver's license; state issued identification card; U.S. passport or a military identification card.

The service center staff will then be able to activate the account and provide the customer with access to many current and future eGov applications.

Please note that the USDA will only accept eAuthentication accounts from individuals. The USDA does not have the mechanism to issue accounts to businesses.



<http://www.eauth.egov.usda.gov>

Emergency Watershed Protection Program

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Program Description

The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program provides local communities with emergency technical and financial assistance to address natural resource concerns resulting from a natural disaster.

An example would be downed trees blocking road crossings at creeks. These impediments cause blockage to creeks or small drainage ways, threatening damage to roads, bridges and other structures and increasing risk to human life.

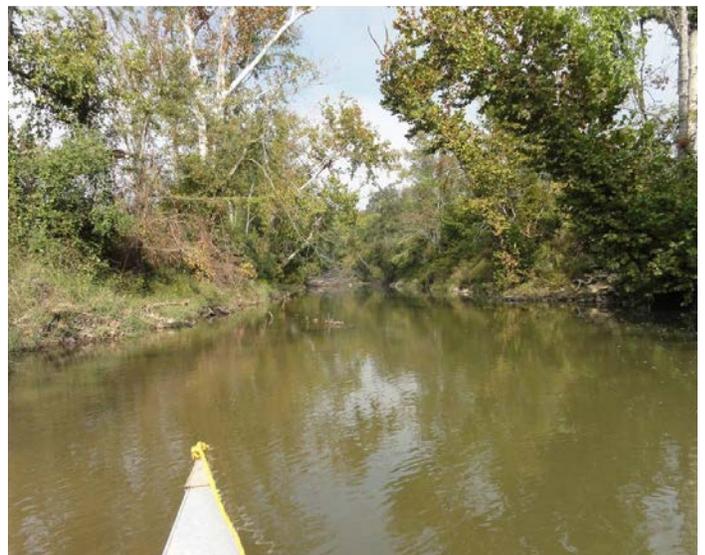
Recent Highlights

In 2012, \$416,000 of EWP funds were obligated to restore 63 project sites in eight communities resulting from damages associated with tornadoes in the spring of 2011. Work consisted primarily of debris removal.

In addition, work on two large EWP sites damaged by floods in 2009 was completed in 2012. One site was streambank stabilization in an impoverished section of Valdosta and the other was repair to the auxiliary spillway of a floodwater retarding dam.



Before: Chickamauga Creek clean-up site in Catoosa County.



After: Chickamauga Creek site where EWP work was completed.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program



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Program Description

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides technical, educational and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water and related natural resource concerns on their lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner.

The program provides assistance to farmers and ranchers in complying with Federal, State, and Tribal environmental laws and encourages environmental enhancement. The purposes of the program are achieved through the implementation of a conservation plan which includes structural, vegetative, and land management practices on eligible land.

Cost-share payments may be made to implement one or more eligible structural or vegetative practices, such as animal waste management facilities, terraces, filter strips, tree planting and permanent wildlife habitat. Incentive payments can be made to implement one or more land management practices, such as residue management, upland wildlife habitat management and grazing land management.



Charles Henry takes a look at a electric pump that helps deliver water to crops. NRCS helped install the energy efficient system.

2013 Highlights

In 2013, Georgia obligated 1,940 EQIP contracts for a sum of \$28,555,111 in financial assistance. The majority of contracts covered the resource concerns of forestry, air quality, water quality and quantity, soil erosion, plant condition, domestic animals, and energy.

Through the technical assistance of NRCS field staff and conservation partners in Georgia and the local work group process facilitated by the conservation districts, EQIP assistance was extended to 153 of the 159 counties in Georgia yielding a 96% state-wide participation in EQIP for 2013.

EQIP Spotlight

It only takes a few to accomplish a lot. Collectively, a small group of six farmers, that includes Charles Henry and Jessie Rhodes, work together to provide fresh produce in their area and surrounding communities. They are the Coastal Georgia Small Farmers Co-Op, Inc.

“Basically, our Co-Op is a bunch of old men. The youngest is 56 years old and the oldest is 74 or 75 years old,” Charles Henry said. Henry wears several hats as a member, the Co-Op manager, and marketing sales lead.

Fellow member and full-time farmer, Jessie Rhodes, helps grow much of what the members sell to local school systems on about 50 acres.

“I grow squash, cucumbers, peas, cabbage, collard, turnips, mustards, and we plant some soy beans and cotton,” Rhodes said.



Environmental Quality Incentives Program

continued

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EQIP Spotlight *continued*

While being in a Co-op helps reduce expenses and provide a network of sharing resources, the group struggled with irrigation.

Rhodes contacted his local NRCS office for options on improving his water system.

An Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contract has helped the farmers improve their way of irrigating. The contract replaced above ground pipeline with an underground system.

Soil Conservationist, Clay DeLoach worked with Rhodes and Henry on the project. “You don’t have your pipe in the way. Everything’s buried and you’re able to move a lot better than having to keep taking it up and putting it back down.”

“They helped with the underground water system and also the solid set system. It’s been a great help...labor wise and field economy,” Rhodes said. A 2012 contract also helped convert the combustion system on the farm’s well from diesel to electric.

The farmers say that having assistance from NRCS has been good and they hope to continue to find ways to conserve resources on their land so that they can continue providing locally grown food to their community.



(Pictured left to right) Soil Conservationist Clay DeLoach, Jessie Rhodes and Charles Henry

Environmental Quality Incentives Program



Longleaf Pine Initiative

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Program Description

Longleaf pine forests once encompassed more than 90 million acres of the North American landscape. Today, only three percent, or 3.4 million acres, remain and, yet, Longleaf pine forests represent some of the world's most biologically diverse ecosystems. The Longleaf pine ecosystem provides critical habitat for 29 threatened and endangered species.

The Longleaf Pine Initiative began when an interdepartmental Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among USDA, the Department of Interior and the Department of Defense identified the longleaf pine ecosystem as a priority resource concern.

As part of the initiative, NRCS and its conservation partners in nine states are helping private landowners improve the sustainability and profitability of Longleaf pine forest ecosystems.

The following important conservation practices improve the forests' health: forest stand improvement, prescribed burning, restoration and management of rare or declining habitats, and tree/shrub establishment. NRCS Farm Bill conservation programs provide landowners technical and financial assistance.

States involved in the initiative include Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia.

2013 Highlights

In 2013, 220 contracts were approved under the Longleaf Pine Initiative in Georgia for \$3,459,449 on 1,633 acres.



Tim Allen stands by a longleaf tree planted on his farm under the LLPI in Pulaski County.



The longleaf pine tree pictured above is roughly one year old.



Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Organic Initiative

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Program Description

Organic Initiative funding is provided through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), a voluntary conservation program administered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals.

The 2008 Farm Bill provided for assistance specifically for organic farm operations and those converting to organic production.

Eligible producers include those certified through USDA's National Organic Program, those transitioning to certified organic production, and those who meet organic standards but are exempt from certification because their gross annual organic sales are less than \$5,000.

The program provides up to \$20,000 per year per person or legal entity, with a maximum total of \$80,000 over six years.

2013 Highlights

In 2013, 29 organic operations were approved for EQIP contracts under the Organic Initiative. NRCS Georgia obligated \$483,239 for 985 acres. Of the 29 contracts, 10 were approved for certified organic operations and 19 were approved for transitioning farms.



Cabbage grown on a farm in Oglethorpe County.



Organic squash grown on a farm in Screven County.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program



High Tunnel Initiative

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Program Description

Under this initiative, NRCS funded up to two high-tunnels per applicant with a maximum size of 2,178 sq. ft. The applicant agrees to maintain the structure and a record system for three years. The Initiative may assist producers in addressing a resource concern by:

- 1. Improving plant quality*
- 2. Improving soil quality*
- 3. Reducing nutrient and pesticide transportation*
- 4. Improving air quality through reduced transportation inputs*
- 5. Reducing energy use by providing consumers with a local source of fresh produce*

High tunnels, sometimes known as hoop houses, may also help small farmers by extending their growing season allowing them to generate income as the temperature gets colder in the fall and winter.

Made of ribs of plastic or metal pipe covered with a layer of plastic sheeting, high tunnels are easy to build, maintain and move.



2013 Highlights

In 2013, 129 high tunnels were approved and funded at a cost of \$733,670 on 779 acres.

A high tunnel differs from a greenhouse in several ways. Crops must be planted in the ground in a high tunnel and they cannot be artificially heated. A greenhouse differs from a high tunnel in that crops can be raised above the ground.



Pictures show a high tunnel located in Northeast Georgia.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program



On-Farm Energy Initiative

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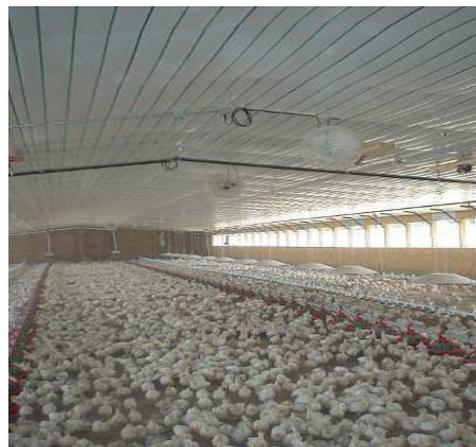
Program Description

The EQIP On-Farm Energy Initiative enables producers to identify ways to conserve energy on the farm through an Agricultural Energy Management Plan (AgEMP), also known as an on-farm energy audit; and by providing financial and technical assistance to help the producer implement various measures and practices recommended in an on-farm energy audit.

The On-Farm Energy Initiative will provide financial assistance to producers for an on-farm energy audit and for implementation of practices to improve and conserve energy.

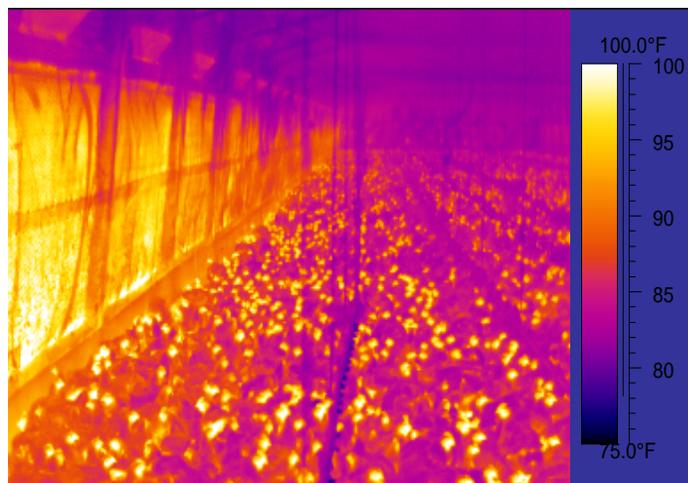
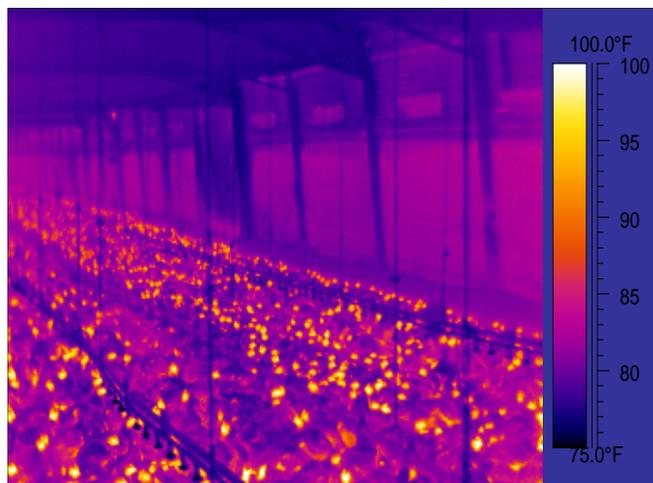
2013 Highlights

NRCS Georgia approved 29 On-Farm Energy contracts on 765 acres for a total of \$478,239.



Researchers are hoping to find ways to use unused attic space as a solar collector to harness heated air.

Photo Courtesy: John Worley, University of Georgia



The On-Farm Energy Initiative helps producers like poultry farmers conserve energy. Pictured are photos that show how heat curtains work to warm birds while also saving on energy consumption.

Photo Courtesy: John Worley, University of Georgia

Farm & Ranch Lands Protection Program

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Program Description

The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and rangeland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with State, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners.

USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market value for the conservation easement.

The program provides matching funds to State, Tribal, or local governmental organizations with existing farmland protection programs to purchase conservation easements or other interests in land.

2013 Highlights

Georgia's NRCS did not enroll any new contracts in FRPP in 2013. However, we continued to monitor the closed, older easements and will continue working with our partners to build a better foundation for future years

The most recent FRPP contract was funded for \$175,000 on 45 acres in 2012. The contract was approved for a cattle operation in Oconee County. The landowners agreed to place 45 acres, pasture land and forested areas, into the FRPP. An additional five FRPP contracts were funded through the Oconee County Board of Commissioners. These contracts encompass more than 400 acres.



The land pictured above is enrolled in FRPP for a total of 45 acres in Oconee County.

Grasslands Reserve Program



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Program Description

The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) is a voluntary conservation program that emphasizes support for working grazing operations, enhancement of plant and animal biodiversity and protection of grassland under threat of conversion to other uses.

Participants voluntarily limit future development and cropping uses of the land while retaining the right to conduct common grazing practices and operations related to the production of forage and seeding, subject to certain restrictions during nesting seasons of bird species that are in significant decline or are protected under Federal or State law. A grazing management plan is required for participants.



This portion of the GRP easement includes tall fescue and clover.

2013 Highlights

While there were not any new contracts funded in 2013, Georgia's NRCS team worked with landowners to monitor closed easements.

To date, some of Georgia NRCS' open contracts include four rental contracts on a total of 175 acres. These contracts total \$16,558. Three of the contracts were for 10 years and one contract was for 15 years.



Nearly 175 acres on Braswell Farm are enrolled in GRP in Jackson County.

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

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Program Description

NRCS in cooperation with the Georgia Grazing Lands Conservation Coalition (GGLCC) encourage forage and livestock producers to adopt practices that promote the efficient use of their grazing land resources, while conserving soil and protecting water quality through maintenance of healthy forage systems. Accomplishing the objectives is facilitated through on-farm financial assistance demonstration projects, area and state-wide conferences, development and distribution of grazing management resources, and funding of innovative research and land management projects.

Several years ago, the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service estimated the seasonal forage production area on private land in the state at 4.3 million acres, with an annual value of approximately \$254 million, making forages a major economic crop for Georgia.

2013 Highlights

In 2013 the national Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative underwent change, and became the National Grazing Lands Coalition (NatGLC). While NatGLC has undergone transition, GGLCC has maintained its efforts along with NRCS, and other partners, to promote efficient use of grazing land resources.



Beef cattle grazing native warm season grasses.

2013 Highlights *continued*

GGLCC continues to monitor several on farm demonstration projects regarding multi-species grazing, use of red clover, hairy vetch, forage brassicas, and alfalfa interseeded with bermudagrass. Demonstration projects related to the use of temporary electric fence for grazing management have also continued, and the GGLCC, NRCS, Auburn University partnership in the use of the forage testing system NutBal has also continued.

In 2013, GGLCC partnered with the University of Georgia and NRCS to establish the “Better Grazing” project. This project will allow for the side-by-side comparison of different grazing management strategies, and allow researchers to collect data regarding economics and conservation of the various strategies implemented.

NRCS, GGLCC, and other partners in 2013 conducted multiple producer education programs on forage, pasture and livestock management throughout the state capped off by the Advanced Grazing School held in November. In total over 600 producers were reached via 17 grazing lands outreach events.



Planting for winter grazing in Madison County that includes cereal rye, turnips and crimson clover

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Program Description

The National Resources Inventory (NRI) is a statistical survey of land use and resource condition on nonfederal lands in the United States. It is designed to be consistent over the whole nation and over time.

NRI is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) tool to provide Congress and the Nation with natural resources information - especially concerning the nation's farmland. Since the early 1980's, resource data have been gathered on a random sample of 160-acre land segments, with three intensively studied points within those segments. As data are collected for each crop year, approximately 71,500 segments are utilized nationally.

Prior Research

NRI statistical estimates are available for multi-year intervals from 1982 through 2010 for most of the United States. A few highlights for Georgia of the most recent data:

2010 Results— Forestland continues to be the dominant land-use in Georgia with 22 million acres (± 0.4 million) of Georgia's 34.6 million acres of non-federal land devoted to it (Figure 1).

2007 was the first NRI estimate that showed Georgia with more developed land (4.5 million acres $\pm .2$ million) than cropland (4.2 million acres $\pm .3$ million). Georgia's cropland has steadily declined from a high of around 6.6 million in 1982 (Figure 2). However, the rate of cropland loss slowed significantly between 2007 and 2010. Much more information is available at the NRI website: www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI/.

2013 Highlights

In 2013, NRCS collected NRI data describing conditions in 2011 and 2012 for the whole nation. Georgia personnel collected crop history and erosion estimations for about 1,880 points. Field office local knowledge provides the key to accurate estimation of natural resource conditions around the nation.

2013 also saw Georgia personnel continue participation in on-site data collection for both the NRI Grazing Land On-Site Study and Soil Monitoring Network. This information will be used for long-term assessment of soil and grazing resources. We appreciate 16 private landowners allowing access to their fields for these on-site measurements. The first national results from these studies, for rangelands, is available on the NRI website under Rangeland Resource Assessment. www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI/

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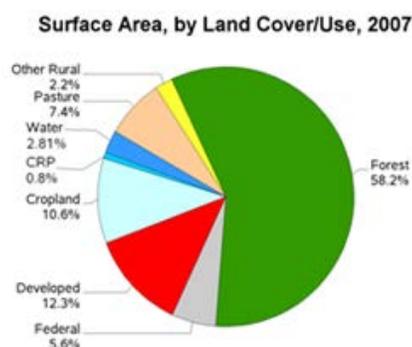


Figure 1



National Resource Inventory

continued

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2013 Highlights *continued*

Resources Conservation Act Data Viewer: NRCS has compiled NRI data, conservation expenditure and National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) data into one convenient location. This effort was accomplished in fulfilling the reporting requirements of the Resources Conservation Act. This tool is located on the internet at:

<https://web-review.sc.egov.usda.gov/soils/survey/rca/viewer/>.

Conservation Effects Assessment Program (CEAP) – this initiative to assess the effectiveness of conservation efforts began with the 2002 Farm Bill. It proceeds by correlating NRI data with Agricultural Research Service (ARS) study watersheds. A complete library of CEAP publications since 2002 can be found at the NRI website: www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI/

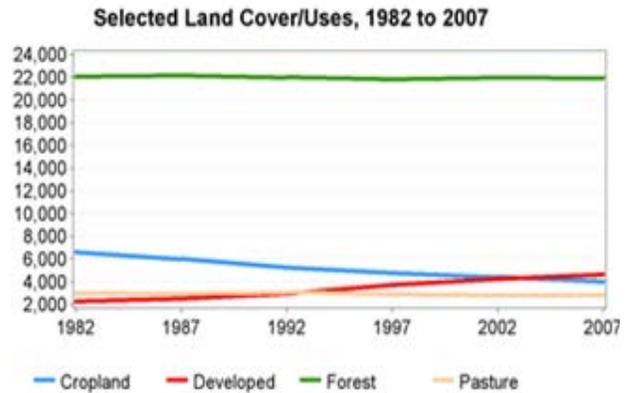


Figure 2



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Program Description

The Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center (PMC) is a branch of the USDA-NRCS. It is one of 27 plant materials centers located throughout the United States. The Center is located on the Northwest corner of Americus in Southwestern Georgia and is approximately 40 miles North of Albany.

Areas served by the center include Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina and parts of Tennessee and Florida. Its mission is to develop plant materials and state-of-the-art plant science technology to solve natural resource problems and meet the objectives of environmental programs. The emphasis of the PMC is using native plants, developing test and release and providing superior adapted plants to commercial growers along with production and management technology.



Malcome Kirkland, agronomist with the PMC in Americus and Lee Davis, Dooley County farmer, discuss using native warm season grasses in cattle rotation systems.

Recent Highlights

In recent years, the PMC worked with 10 different studies and seven field plantings in Alabama and Georgia

Accomplishments Include:

- Conducted 7 technology transfer presentations
- Produced 8 technical and 4 non-technical documents. Release Brochures on Union purpletop grass, AU Sunup crimson clover, AU Early Cover hairy vetch, Flageo marshhay cordgrass, and Dove proso millet were written
- Continued bobwhite quail restoration study
- Continued pollinator study to determine herbicide uses in pollinator planting
- Continued switchgrass growth study for agronomists and grazing specialists
- In cooperation with Jim Lathem, produced new Wetland Plant Identification compact disc entitled Georgia Wetland Plants Version 4.0



A field of AU Sunup Crimson Clover at the PMC.

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Program Description

The Soil Survey Program was established by the Agriculture Appropriation Act of 1896 and is guided by executive orders and Secretary's memoranda. Subsequent legislation (1903, 1928, and 1935) clarified the purpose. In 1966, Congress expanded the scope and further clarified the intent of the Soil Survey Program in Public Law 89-560, known as the Soil Survey for Resource Planning and Development Act.

Taken together, the authorities direct the Secretary of Agriculture to:

- 1. Make an inventory of the soil resources of the United States;*
- 2. Keep the soil survey relevant to ever-changing needs;*
- 3. Interpret the information and make it available in a useful form; and*
- 4. Promote the soil survey and provide technical assistance in its use for a wide range of community planning and resource development issues related to both non-farm and farm uses.*

The soil survey program of the United States is a cooperative effort conducted by Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and other Federal agencies in collaboration with states and other entities. Leadership for the Federal part of the National Cooperative Soil Survey is delegated to the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service by the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment (7 CFR 2.61).

2013 Highlights

At the end of 2012 soil surveys were completed and published to the Web Soil Survey for all but five soil survey areas, which included nine counties. 2013 saw the completion of activities for all of these soil surveys. Eight of the nine counties were published to the Web Soil Survey in 2013.

The final soil survey for Georgia, which was Bartow County, was published to the Web Soil Survey January 15, 2014. As of January 15, 2014, soil survey maps and information are completed and publicly available on the Web Soil Survey for all Georgia Counties.

This is a milestone accomplishment resulting from many years of work from dedicated people, both within NRCS and from cooperating partners. With the completion of the initial soil survey, we are now beginning the process to build on that foundation by analyzing, improving, and updating the work that has been done over the last 50 years, bringing the information up to current and consistent standards. ***Continues on next page.***



The soil pictured above is located in the Piedmont region of Georgia.

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2013 Highlights *continued*

This process has been named Soil Data Join Recorrelation and is designed to improve quality, consistency, and completeness of the data, both within individual survey areas and also across county and state lines. In 2013, NRCS soil scientists completed work on projects to update the soils data for over 2.6 million acres in Georgia.

Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs) are part of an emerging system to address relationships and interactions between soils and vegetative communities and their responses to disturbances and management. Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina ESD and soil survey staff continued work on ecological site development in the Carolina and Georgia Sand Hills Major Land Resource Area (MLRA 137) in 2013.

Also part of the soil survey program, Resource Soil Scientists continued to provide technical assistance throughout the year and throughout the state, both to NRCS staff and external customers. Heavy emphasis has been on assistance to field offices with wetland and highly erodible land issues.

Soils information for Georgia can be accessed through the Web Soil Survey, which is an interactive, web-based delivery system for soil survey products that includes maps and data. The Web Soil Survey resides at <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/>.



Soil Scientist Stephon Thomas demonstrates how to sample soil types in the field.



Technical Service Providers

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Program Description

The Technical Service Provider (TSP) program was outlined in the 2002 Farm Bill. The TSP program requires the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to allow producers to receive technical assistance by individuals and entities other than NRCS.

This provision is designed to ensure NRCS has the capacity to address the significant workload associated with implementing Farm Bill programs. TSP assistance is another tool for NRCS to use in the implementation of conservation programs.

2013 Highlights

Georgia obligated funds through TSP agreements and through the Agricultural Conservation Enrollments/Seniors (ACES) Program in 2013.

Over \$11,507 was spent on Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs) in FY 13.

Agreements were developed with counties, Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission. With these agreements, valuable assistance is provided to NRCS field offices to assist staff in conservation practice installation funded through the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

Looking ahead to FY 14, the following CAPs will be offered; Pollinator Habitat Enhancement-146, Transition from Irrigated to Dryland Farming and Ranching-134, Forest Mgt Plan-106, Comprehensive Nutrient Mgt-102, Nutrient Mgt-104, Integrated Pest Mgt-114, Irrigated Water Mgt-118, Agricultural Energy Mgt Headquarters-122, Ag Energy Mgt Landscape-124, Drainage Water Mgt-130, Organic Transition-138, Fish and Wildlife Mgt-142, Integrated Pest Mgt Herbicide Resistance Weed-154, Grazing Mgt-110.

Watershed Rehabilitation Program



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Program Description

The Watershed Rehabilitation Program helps sponsoring organizations in the development of a plan on watersheds 250,000 acres or less. Resource concerns associated with impaired water quality, limited water supply, flooding, land management, sedimentation, recreation, and fish and wildlife habitats are eligible for evaluation.

Watershed Plans and Environmental Assessments propose alternative courses of action to alleviate identified problems. Public benefits, costs, and cost-sharing rates are identified as a necessary prerequisite to justify Federal financial assistance for installing works of improvement.



Rehabilitation of the Marbury Creek-22 dam will prevent flooding.

2013 Program Highlights

This year, NRCS Georgia provided technical assistance to our partners for operations and maintenance on existing structures. Previous year work was completed on rehabilitation of 4 watershed dams using ARRA funds. The projects are located in Barrow, Jackson and Madison Counties. The total cost for the rehabilitation work, including design and construction was \$5,518,254.35. The costs were split, 65% NRCS and 35% Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (GSWCC). Work completed included:

- Marbury Creek 22 in Barrow County–Widened auxiliary spillway and flattened front and back slopes of dam.
- Little Sandy Trail 1 in Madison County – Widened

auxiliary spillway, raised top of dam, and modified riser structure.

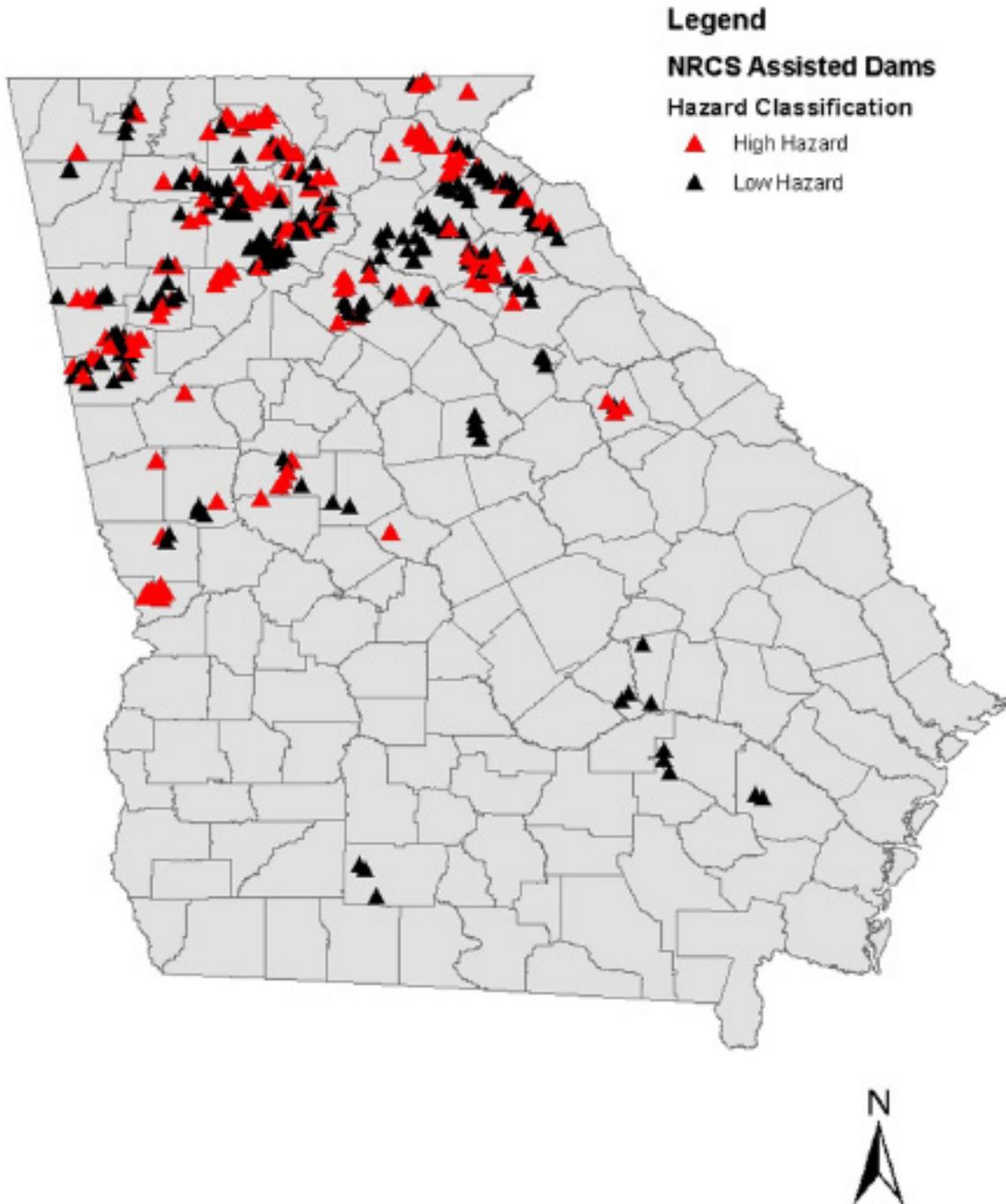
- Sandy Creek 15 in Jackson County – Installed 180’ wide reinforced concrete labyrinth weir, raised top of dam and closed existing vegetated spillway.
- South River 4 in Madison County – Installed 54’ wide reinforced concrete labyrinth weir, raised top of dam, repaired existing riser and closed existing vegetated spillway.



Watershed Rehabilitation Program

continued

NRCS Historically Assisted Dams



Wetlands Reserve Program

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Program Description

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. NRCS provides landowners the technical and financial support to make restoration possible.

The NRCS goal is to restore the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled in the program. This program offers landowners an opportunity to establish long-term conservation and wildlife habitat protection.

2013 Highlights

In 2013, 9 new contracts were approved for WRP to restore 4,667 acres of private lands. Roughly \$8.6 million were obligated for those contracts.

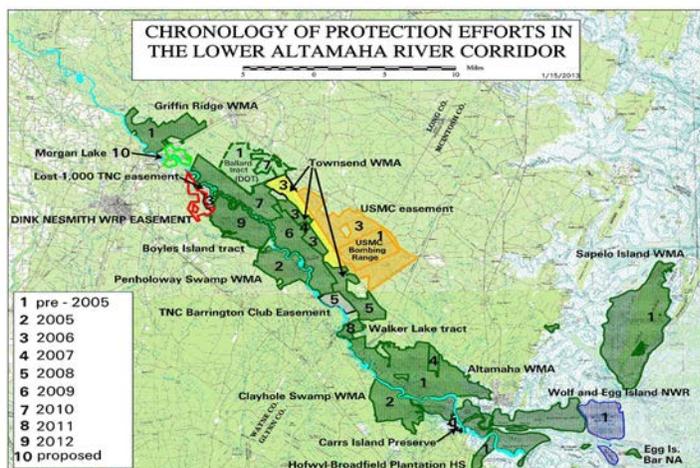
WRP Spotlight

In September 2013, a Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) agreement was signed between a landowner and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, providing another area of protected land to the Lower Altamaha River Corridor.

Commonly referred to as “Whaley Lake,” the 1,700-acre proposed permanent easement owned by the NeSmith Family Partnership will add to the 35 miles of existing, contiguous protection of the Lower Altamaha River Corridor.

The Lower Altamaha River Corridor, which is identified as a high priority area in the State Wildlife Action Plan, will be protected contiguously by conservation easements or state and federal ownership for over 35 miles, from the Intercostal Waterway near Wolf and Egg Island National Wildlife Refuges all the way up to Griffin Ridge Wildlife Management Area.

Continues on next page



The NeSmith WRP easement, shown in red on the above map, is a key piece to the Lower Altamaha River Corridor Protection Effort. Map courtesy of GA Dept. of Natural Resources.



Wetlands Reserve Program

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WRP Spotlight *continued*

This corridor is part of the Fort Stewart/Altamaha Longleaf Partnership priority area as well, which touts partnerships from private landowners to Land Trusts and The Nature Conservancy, to State Governments, including Wildlife Resources and Coastal Resource Divisions of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the Georgia Forestry Commission to federal agencies, including the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of the Army and the US Marine Corps.

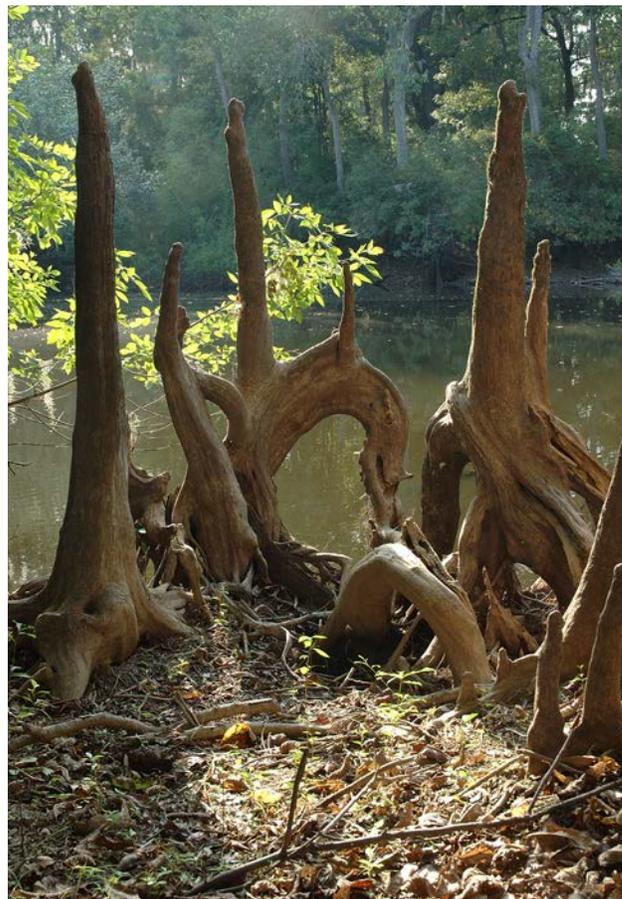
This easement will significantly benefit the at-risk wildlife species that depend on the Altamaha River Corridor, such as Wood Storks and Bald Eagles, and it will ensure that these habitats are fully restored and protected for the long-term.



A flooded area on the Whaley Lake property. Photo courtesy of Mr. Dink NeSmith.

The level of landscape protection achieved on the Lower Altamaha River Corridor is a model for other high priority areas in our state.

For more information on WRP please visit our website at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ga/programs/easements/wetlands/>.



The unique configuration of these cypress knees is an example of the aesthetic value on the Whaley Lake property, combined with the resource value. Photo courtesy of Mr. Dink NeSmith.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program



Working Lands for Wildlife

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Program Description

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) develops or improves wildlife habitat on privately owned land. Through WHIP, NRCS provides both technical assistance and up to 75 percent cost-share assistance to establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat.

WHIP is a voluntary program for people who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat primarily on private land.

Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) is a new partnership between NRCS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to combat the decline of seven specific wildlife species whose decline can be reversed and will benefit other species with similar habitat needs.

2013 Highlights

The gopher tortoise is considered a keystone species, and an indicator of longleaf pine ecosystem health. Its burrows provide vital habitat and shelter for many endangered species.

In addition, gopher tortoise serves as vector for seed dispersal, helping to maintain biological diversity.

More than 80 percent of gopher tortoise habitat is in private or corporate ownership.

Georgia NRCS has awarded Working Lands for Wildlife participants 203 contracts for \$4,295,286 on 30,007 acres for 2012.



The gopher tortoise is a keystone species that will benefit from WLFW efforts.

Social Media Outreach

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Description

NRCS Georgia has always worked to appeal to our customer base. In the past, traditional farmers have been are main focus. However, with ever-changing technology and a shift towards web-based interaction, we are broadening our outreach efforts to include social media.

In the last year, NRCS Georgia's Public Affairs staff has established and continues to manage social media pages on Twitter and YouTube. We have also rolled-out an email subscription system, GovDelivery, that allows customers to personally tailor the service to fit their individual interests and needs.

We are excited to see how much these endeavors have grown in the last year and look forward to reaching more customers through social media.



NRCS Georgia created its Twitter page @USDA_NRCS_GA in December 2012.

2013 Twitter Highlights



Top Three Tweets and Retweets

 **USDA-NRCS Georgia** @USDA_NRCS_GA Aug 6
 Learn why the #FarmBill is important to > 100 U.S. bird species. Read the latest #StateoftheBirds report: ow.ly/nFEjX

This tweet was retweeted by 5 public users and reached 26,736 users.

 **USDA-NRCS Georgia** @USDA_NRCS_GA Oct 28
 2014 EQIP funding signup due by Dec. 6, 2013. Go to tinyurl.com/kexmwm for more information.

This tweet was retweeted by 4 public users and reached 2,543 users.

 **USDA-NRCS Georgia** @USDA_NRCS_GA Dec 5
 "We owe our existence to our living and life-giving soil." Chief Jason Weller, #NRCS. Unlock the Secrets in the soil: tinyurl.com/cqodbrs

This tweet was retweeted by 3 public users and reached 1,308 users.

Total Tweets

510



Followers

378

Social Media Outreach



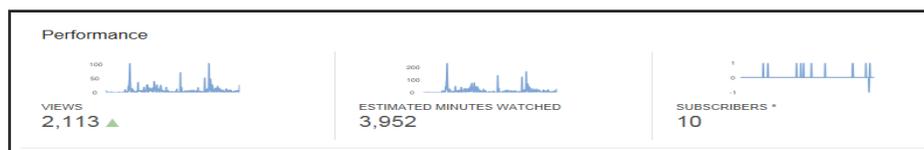
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2013 YouTube Highlights



Top Three Videos	Views
Natural Resources Conservation Workshop	508
Multicultural Agriculture and Metro-Atlanta	308
StrikeForce Meeting Highlights Efforts for Rural Growth	273



2013 GovDelivery Highlights



NRCS Georgia's experience with the email subscription service GovDelivery has been successful. Since beginning use last spring, subscriptions have grown to include roughly 4,500 subscribers. GovDelivery allows us to give customers relevant and timely information.

If you're interested in subscribing to NRCS Georgia's alert system. Please visit <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDANRCS/subscriber/new> to sign up!

StrikeForce Initiative

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StrikeForce Discription

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack initiated the “One USDA” or “StrikeForce” Initiative in 16 select states across the US, including Georgia, to establish a sound USDA footing to help alleviate persistent poverty conditions in rural America.

The mission of StrikeForce is to provide basic technical support by identifying and leveraging federal, state, municipal, and community-based resources with the goal of helping persistent poverty communities succeed.

In Georgia, 60 counties have been designated as part of the Strikeforce area. Refer to Figure 1 to see a map of these targeted counties.

Personnel representing USDA in Georgia, who have sensitivity towards working with communities with limited resources and information, were selected to lead this approach.

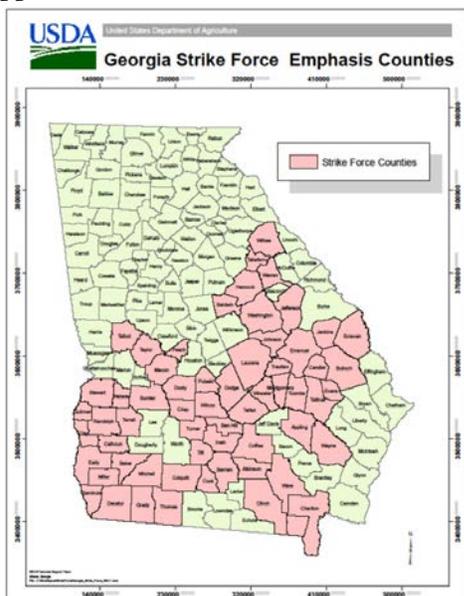


Figure 1

2013 Program Highlights

NRCS Georgia partners with several Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in StrikeForce areas to reach new customers.

Since FY 2010, NRCS Georgia has approved 50 Outreach Agreements. In 2013, 10 agreements were funded for \$374,966 of NRCS funds with \$126,864 in matching funds from the partners.

These agreements have been very effective in reaching the StrikeForce Initiative’s targeted audience. Figure 2 shows the growth in event participation during the last three fiscal cycles.

Fiscal Year	Number of Events	Percent Change in Events	Number of Participants	Percent Change in Participants
FY 2011	43	N/A	19,745	N/A
FY 2012	78	81%	23,252	18%
FY 2013	105	35%	32,989	42%

Figure 2

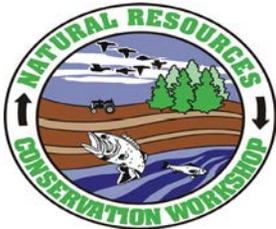


The USDA Office of Communications visited Georgia to showcase USDA assistance in Baker County.

Natural Resources Conservation Workshop

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Georgia Soil & Water Conservation Commission
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E-mail: lcrosson@gaswcc.org

Natural Resources Conservation Workshop



Have the Best Summer Experience!

Enjoy Learning about Natural Resources
June 8-12, 2014

Over **\$19,000** worth of scholarships will be awarded at the workshop!!!

Available to Georgia's rising 10th, 11th, and 12th graders.
(Students who have previously attended the workshop are not eligible).

- Located at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) in Tifton, GA
- Featuring field trips, classroom instruction, and recreational activities



The workshop focuses on the value, protection, and conservation of Georgia's wildlife, forestry, soil, and water resources, including conservation in Georgia's mining industry.

Download an application or find more information at our website www.abac.edu/nrcw

Natural Resources Conservation Workshop
Phone: (229) 391-5072 Fax: (229) 391-4791
SPONSORED BY:
GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICT SUPERVISORS
GEORGIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION SOCIETY
ABRAHAM BALDWIN AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE