**News Release**

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AGENCY

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Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission

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**State targets voluntary improvements to agricultural**

**water quality for farmers in Settingdown Creek Watershed**

***Goal is to reduce water pollutants in***

***Cherokee, Dawson, Forsyth, and Pickens counties***

**ATHENS, Ga. –** The Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission is providing technical and financial help to poultry and livestock operations in the Settingdown Creek Watershed to complete and update their Nutrient Management Plans.

GSWCC will conduct a free on-farm assessment, offer free soil testing, develop an updated Nutrient Management Plan, and provide an incentive payment for participation in the program. GSWCC will assist in identifying potential funding sources to complete improvements based on the farm assessment. There is no cost to farmers for this service.

Nutrient Management Plans are recommended for all animal feeding operations, including poultry farms. An assessment and updated NMP saves costs while improving soil health and water quality by avoiding the over application of fertilizers to fields, preventing runoff of nutrients into creeks and streams, and improving the disposal of dead animals.

The watershed lies primarily within the boundaries of the Upper Chattahoochee River Soil and Water Conservation District (Dawson and Forsyth counties) but also runs through a portion of the Limestone Valley Soil and Water Conservation District (Cherokee and Pickens counties).

Farmers wishing to take advantage of this free service to update their plans should contact Jessica Bee in the GSWCC Region I office in Calhoun by calling 706-624-1434 or emailing jbee@gaswcc.org.

GSWCC has produced a free manual, *Best Management Practices for Georgia Agriculture*, listing agricultural water quality improvements, which is available online at <http://gaswcc.georgia.gov/best-management-practices-georgia-agriculture>.

The Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission is a non-regulatory state agency that supports Georgia’s 40 Soil and Water Conservation Districts in assisting landowners in protecting and developing their soil and water resources. Additional information is available on the GSWCC website at <http://gaswcc.georgia.gov> or by calling 706-552-4470. # # #