

## September 2015 Soil & Water News

### **Commission Board Meeting, GACD Annual Meeting**

The State Commission board met on Friday, August 28 to discuss several items including approving annual plans of work for the 40 districts and approving the agency's FY17 budget. The Georgia Association of Conservation Districts' Board also met on August 28<sup>th</sup> to set the date and location for its annual meeting, which will be held February 25-27, 2016 at the Jekyll Island Convention Center. More information on items addressed at Friday's board meeting can be found [here](#).

### **Georgia's Section 319(h) Nonpoint Source Implementation Grant**

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD) receives an annual grant under Section 319(h) of the Clean Water Act to help prevent, control and/or abate nonpoint source pollution in support of **Georgia's Nonpoint Source Management Program**. GAEPD then conducts a competitive process to fund **eligible projects that will lead to direct reductions in pollutant loads and measurable water quality improvements in impaired waters** throughout the State.

The grant's **cost-share** policy requires a **maximum of 60% Federal dollars** and a **minimum of 40% non-federal cash or in-kind Match** toward the total project cost. Currently, the **maximum Federal award** to any individual project is **\$400,000**, which requires a minimum local Match of \$266,667, resulting in a total project cost of \$666,667. There is no minimum Federal award amount that a project can receive. The **maximum duration** of any individual grant is limited to **three years** to achieve the project goals and objectives. Applications will be accepted through November 2, 2015. More information can be found at the EPD website, [here](#).

### **DNR Releases Georgia Landowner's Guide**

The GA-DNR released the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of this very helpful guide for local, state, and federal programs and assistance available.

The guide can be found online at:  
<http://www.georgiawildlife.com/LandownersGuide>

### **Avian Influenza Information at Georgia Department of Agriculture**

Avian influenza poses a serious potential threat to the state's \$28 billion poultry industry. Regularly updated information on the disease and how to combat its spread can be found at the Department of Agriculture's website, [here](#).

### **Steve Singletary inducted into NACD Southeast Region Hall of Fame**

Former State Commission board member and current Flint River District Supervisor Steve Singletary was inducted into the NACD Southeast Region's Hall of Fame on Monday August 3 in Tupelo, Mississippi. As described at the luncheon ceremony:

"Mr. Singletary has set an example for many others through his tireless enthusiasm towards the conservation of our precious natural resources. Serving as a District Supervisor for the Flint River SWCD for over 36 years, he is also a past president of the Georgia Association of Conservation Districts (GACD). His remarkable commitment to the preservation of our natural resources and education of our youth in the field of conservation has been endless."

### **GACD Group III Tours Down To Earth Energy Company and Wiley Farm at Summer Meeting**

GACD, Georgia Association of Conservation Districts, held its Summer Group III Meeting on August 11, 2015 in Walton County. The meeting began at the Down to Earth Energy Company and concluded at Wiley Farm. The meeting was attended by District Soil and Water Conservation Supervisors representing the GACDS Group III, GSWCC and NRCS staff, and others from various agencies.

Down to Earth Energy Company, located in Walton County, is owned and operated by Mr. Rick Huszagh and Mrs. Crista Carrell. The company produces biodiesel and has recently added an environmentally friendly lighter fluid to its lineup. Huszagh gave a history of the company to the group and then gave them a tour of the facilities.

Following the tour, the group traveled to nearby Wiley farm to hold a business session. Mr. Brent Dykes, Executive Director of Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission, Mr. Terrance Rudolph, Georgia State Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and GACD President, Dan Bennett, gave brief updates on conservation topics.

### **Cobb County SWCD Urban/Ag Field Day**

The Cobb County SWCD along with other conservation partners will be hosting the Erosion Control and Agricultural Expo on April 29th, 2016, a regional exposition to showcase the latest technology in the fields of erosion control and agriculture at Jim R Miller Park in Marietta, Georgia. This event is planned as a free, rain or shine event including lunch and technical field demonstrations and lectures over the entire event space of the park. More details to come via email blasts and on [www.cobbswcd.org](http://www.cobbswcd.org).

### **Manual for Erosion Control and Updating ESC Training Curriculum**

As called for in House Bill 397, the Erosion and Sediment Control Overview Council must now approve the most current version of the Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control before December 1, 2015. Currently, the 5th Edition or the 6th Edition of the manual can be used on development sites. The version that is approved by the Overview Council will become effective January 1, 2016.

In an effort to begin the process, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia has been secured to complete an analysis of the differences between the 5th Edition and the 6th Edition of the manual and to develop a draft Proposed Manual that includes the most important elements of both editions. This draft Proposed Manual will be released for public comment and a facilitated public meeting will be held. A Proposed Manual will be developed by the Institute based on comments received. This Proposed Manual will be brought to the Overview Council for review, discussion, and final approval.

For planning purposes, it is anticipated that the public meeting will be held in early October and an Overview Council meeting in early November. These meetings will be announced publicly once dates are finalized. The GA Soil and Water Conservation Commission will be serving as administrative support to the Council, so check the agency website for specific dates and times.

The Education and Certification department will also soon be performing a complete overhaul on its course material. Revisions to the courses will include input from approved trainers, and the test questions will also be updated. More information to follow on the Commission website in the near future.

### **Staffing Changes/Openings at GSWCC**

The GSWCC has undergone several changes in staffing in recent months:

Rahn Milligan resigned as Region III Regional Representative on April 15<sup>th</sup>, and Jason Mallard has resigned as Resource Specialist effective August 1. Dustin Rushing will serve as Acting Regional Representative in Statesboro.

Jessica Bee and Brady Hart were promoted from the Region I office to fill vacant positions as Resource Specialist in the Athens Region II office and E&S Technical Specialist in the Athens state office, respectively.

Carrie Fowler resigned as NPS Specialist at the end of May.

Bob Hanner transferred from the GASWCC to EPD at the end of the fiscal year.

Gail Hull has retired from her position as Administrative Assistant in the Athens Region II office as of July 31; the Commission is currently working to fill that opening.

Greg Walker has been hired as Erosion and Sediment Control Specialist position in the Calhoun Region I office, effective September 1.

### **Watershed Activities - Bond Sale and Construction**

The Soque River dam rehabilitation project represents an opportunity to upgrade 3 dams in Habersham County for dam safety compliance. Rehab designs are complete and Phillips and Jordan were selected as the successful contractor to perform the rehab construction for Soque River dams 29, 34, and 36. They received the notice to proceed on July 6, 2015.

The rehabilitation design for Little River dam 31 in Fulton County is in progress with preliminary design to be complete Fall 2015. Additional bond funding in the amount of 2.4 million has been approved for use in construction.

Bond funding consisting of 3 million dollars has also been approved for the design and construction upgrade of Palmetto dam 1 in Harris County. A design firm for Palmetto 1 will be selected in Fall 2015.

A portion of these funds will be re-directed in order to participate in the NRCS rehab program to remove the Salacoa 77 dam, which has a failed dam back slope.

The Commission is working with NRCS through cooperative agreements to fund engineering assessments for 61 of our high hazard dams across the state. Contracts are currently in progress to begin assessments on 26 dams. These documents will be completed in the next 9 months providing data on downstream hazards, hydrology information and preliminary design alternatives with cost estimates for dam Rehab upgrades.

### **State Budget Update**

With the passage of House Bill 397, the agency was attached for administrative purposes to the Department of Agriculture as of July 1, 2015. Coordination efforts between the Department, the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, and Commission staff have been productive. Conservation Districts will not see a change in the level of administrative or technical support they receive from the Conservation Commission, and the agency still maintains its core functions and programs.

All state agencies are required to submit a flat budget request for the FY17 budget year (July 1, 2016 thru June 30, 2017). GSWCC will submit a state bond request for watershed dam rehabilitation projects, though. This continues to be good news and agency leaders remain hopeful that Georgia will continue to see its economy grow.

## **Soil and Water Conservation District Websites**

- Altamaha SWCD <http://www.altamahaswcd.org>
- Cobb County SWCD <http://cobbswcd.org>

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

Visit the Conservation Commission website at [www.gaswcc.org](http://www.gaswcc.org) for the latest news and updates to Commission activities.

**Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission**

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**State Board**

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 Harold Fallin (Vice-Chairman) Thomaston, Georgia  
 Drew Echols, Alto, Georgia  
 Bob Martin, Ocilla, Georgia  
 Jason Winters, Lyerly, Georgia

**GSWCC Executive Staff**

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