



United States Department of Agriculture

# Louisiana Conservation Update

June 2016

## It Takes a Special Kind of Person

**Story from the Field**  
Conservation for  
Healthy Cows  
in Union Parish

Projects • Successes • Partnerships



The Conservation Update is distributed monthly by mail and e-mail.

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On the Cover



Darrel Ray Sinagra is running a successful dairy in Tangipahoa Parish. To find out more about how NRCS helped make this possible, see pages 4 and 5.

New Feature

New Partnership with TWILA

NRCS has a brand new partnership with "This Week in Louisiana Agriculture" (TWILA) to bring you even more of the conservation story featured in each monthly issue of the Louisiana Conservation Update. Check your local listings for program times or visit the TWILA website at http://www.twilatv.org/.



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## Notes from the State Conservationist

One of the great things about my job is being able to travel around the state and see the countryside that makes up the unique, beautiful Louisiana that we know and love. Recently in my travels to and from Baton Rouge, I noticed a field of corn and it seemed to grow before my eyes. In the span of about 4 days I would say that corn grew at least a foot!

I'm not sure if that is exactly true, but I'm sure you would agree summer is officially here. The long days and high temperatures usher in some of the best parts of summer. Home grown tomatoes, peaches from north Louisiana and sweet corn from Avoyelles Parish are reason enough to love this time of year.



I know the summer months are very busy for our producers and for NRCS employees alike. We are working to make our processes flow even more smoothly by inviting every producer to sign-up for Client Gateway. If you have not heard of it, it is an on-line method for our producers to file and sign important paperwork on-line and return it to the NRCS office without ever having to leave your home or office. This can help you save time and energy. Want to learn more? Ask your local District Conservationist for more information.

This month also marked a milestone with one of our most successful programs, the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). As we closed out the very last WRP easement, I think back on how much we have accomplished with and through this program. Roughly 286,306 acres were enrolled in 900 easements. A testament to the success of WRP is the recent de-listing of the Louisiana Black Bear from the endangered species list. Although WRP is no longer, the program lives on in the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).

As always, I'm proud of what we are able to accomplish when we work side-by-side with our customers and partners. Our district offices are busy obligating Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) 2016 funds. I'm looking forward to what the rest of the summer has in store!

Kevin D. Norton  
State Conservationist



## Tangipahoa Parish Facts

There are 1,070 farms in Tangipahoa Parish.

106,710 acres of land is in farms.

34% is cropland, 37% is pastureland and 22% is woodland.

Milk is the #1 commodity of the parish.

<http://www.agcensus.usda.gov>

# Its Takes a Special Kind of

If you can imagine just about 20 years ago the Florida parishes were home to about 600 family-farm style dairies. Today, there are between 125 to 150 dairies state-wide. With the number of dairies dwindling, there is a bright spot that graces the rolling green landscape in Tangipahoa Parish, Darryl Sinagra's farm.

26 years ago, Darryl Sinagra began his journey in the dairy business and has worked hard literally every day since to be successful. "It's a seven day a week job," explained Darryl. "We start our day at 4 a.m. to milk the cows, which usually takes about three and a half hours, then we take care of feeding the calves and other work around the farm." The day is not nearly over because about three in the afternoon the process starts all over again. With 300 head of cattle, 200 of those are milked twice a day.

The Sinagra's started working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in the late 90's when they installed their first lagoon. Today the Sinagra's have installed a new system, thanks to NRCS, that completely re-worked their irrigation system.

Brandon Bates, District Conservationist, for the Amite Field Office explains, "We are using a zero discharge system. We want to keep all his agricultural waste on his property." Bates goes on to say, "Not only to contain it but to utilize the waste to help him fertilize the pastures which in turn helps his day to day operation by cutting down the cost to fertilize the land."

According to Bates, dairies are a bit different when it comes to conservation planning. "As a District Conservationist, you really work hand-in-hand with the land owner

from the beginning to the end of the process. Not only meeting their conservation goals but also helping them stay in business by being more productive and using less energy," said Bates.

Conservation is paramount to Sinagra which is why he uses a "no till" policy. He doesn't like to see his pasture land washed away. "So I stopped plowing, there is less runoff and less wash-out of the soil," he explained.

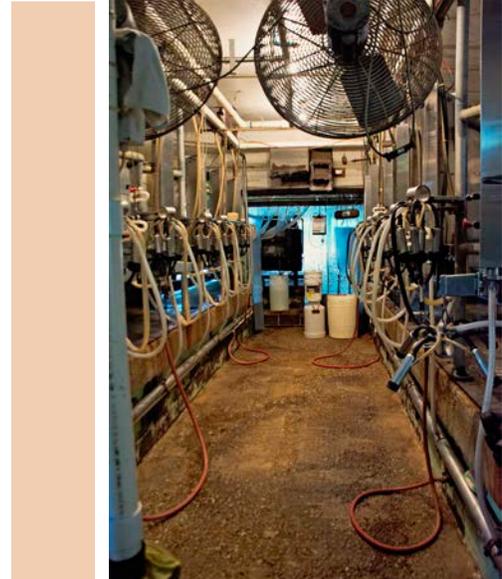
"Everything is connected here, every ditch, every stream and every river they all flow to Lake Pontchartrain and then down to the Gulf of Mexico. We want to keep as much of the soil and nutrients on the land as possible," explained Bates. Helping producers conserve water, improve water quality and better the land is what makes Bates job worthwhile. "Those are some of the reasons I



# Person

joined NRCS, to make a difference. When a land owner comes in and says I would not have been able to utilize this conservation practice without NRCS, that is what makes my day.”

According to Sinagra, “It takes a special kind of person to do this work. When I get up every morning, and I’m working outside with animals, I look around and think this is my office. I’m doing what I love.” And there is no amount of money that can pay for that.



# Story from the Field

## Conservation for Healthy Cows in Union Parish

Submitted by: Stephanie Cruse, District Conservationist, Farmerville FO

Union Parish beef cattle producer, Tommy Bennett visited the Farmerville NRCS Field Office with some specific goals in mind for his 150-acre operation. He wanted to reduce erosion, establish a winter forage base, improve plant conditions while implementing prescribed grazing and improve the quantity and quality of the water for his livestock.

NRCS visited his operation and created a conservation plan. Bennett then applied

for financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to install conservation practices to help him meet his goals.



Bennett installed 1,425 feet of cross fencing to improve pasture management and proper utilization of available forages by allowing better control of grazing. He installed a pipeline and water trough to

provide his livestock with a dependable and good quality source of water. To eliminate his erosion problem in a high traffic area, he installed a heavy use protection pad under the water trough. He also planted clover to establish a winter forage base for the cattle.



## StrikeForce Initiative



## Louisiana Update

### Louisiana StrikeForce Update

Submitted by: Dexter Sapp, NRCS StrikeForce Coordinator

Louisiana is one of seven states that recently entered into a Joint Cooperative Agreement with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC) based out of Atlanta, Georgia. The FSC/Land Assistance Fund partnered with NRCS, with the support of Congresswoman Marcia Fudge's office, for the past 3 years to develop a Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative focused on urban agriculture and cooperative economic development in Cleveland, Ohio's 11th Congressional District. The primary purpose of the project in Cleveland is to assist participants in becoming eligible for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), facilitate access to technical and financial support for NRCS' Seasonal High Tunnel Program, build local capacity, and create other economic based opportunities in the community.

FSC proposes to partner with the NRCS to develop a comparable project in the southern region of the country, including

Louisiana. On May 25, 2016, Kevin Norton, State Conservationist, and Louisiana NRCS StrikeForce Coordinator met with FSC representatives, Bruce Harrell, Monica Knight Smith and Tywan Arrington at the USDA Service Center in Denham Springs to discuss strategies in fulfilling the requirements of the agreement. For Louisiana, the New Orleans (Metro Area) and Baton Rouge will be targeted areas for this urban agricultural initiative. Some of the expected accomplishments and deliverables of the agreement are:

- Contact at least 15 potential participants, including existing urban food producing organizations to integrate and educate participants on NRCS and FSC and expand existing efforts and networks in identified communities.
- Hold at least 3 follow-up meetings with the same 15 potential participants to educate them on the available technical and potential financial assistance to assist in establishing or improving their urban agricultural efforts
- Identify at least 10 municipalities, areas of interest, geographic areas and may layers of identified or partial sites that are feasible for potential high tunnel or urban agricultural

- projects
- Conduct at least 5 outreach/informational meetings to address issues leading to successful adoption of urban agriculture



### Upcoming Meetings

#### July 12, 2016

Undivided Property/StrikeForce Meeting  
Homer, Louisiana

#### August 6, 2016

Big Event  
Grambling State University

#### August 30, 2016

StrikeForce Meeting  
Bernice, Louisiana

For more information, contact Dexter Sapp at 318-473-7688 or by e-mail at [dexter.sapp@la.usda.gov](mailto:dexter.sapp@la.usda.gov)

# Around the State

**May 25, 2016**

## **LPB “Louisiana Public Square - Louisiana Veterans Coming Home”**

On May 25, 2016, Louisiana Public Broadcasting aired the program “Louisiana Public Square - Louisiana Veterans Coming Home”. This show focused on the challenges facing veterans returning from overseas active duty, resources available to assist them and bridging the military/civilian divide. Kevin Norton, State Conservationist, participated as one of the panel members and explained the technical and financial assistance available to veterans who are interested in agricultural production.



**May 26, 2016**

## **Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Partnership Project Announcement**

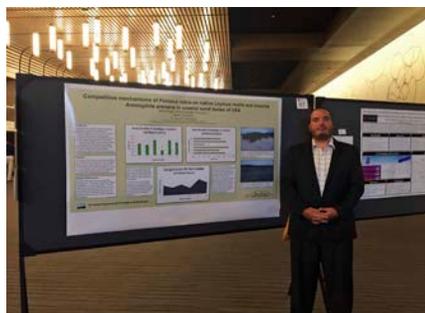
The NRCS and the US Forest Service announced the Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Partnership to increase and enhance longleaf pine acreage in the Kisatchie National Forest, Ft. Polk and adjacent private lands on May 26, 2016. Project partners include the Department of Defense, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, National Wild Turkey Federation, The Nature Conservancy, Louisiana Forestry Association and USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services.



**June 1 - 3, 2016**

## **CRCL’s State of the Coast Conference**

The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana held their biennial State of the Coast Conference on June 1 - 3, 2016, at the Ernest Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, Louisiana. Governor Jon Bel Edwards opened the conference stating his continued support for coastal restoration in Louisiana. Topics covered over the course of the conference included sediment diversions, deltaic processes, 2017 Coastal Master Plan and many more. Garret Thomassie, Curt Riche and Dan Pingel from the Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center presented posters during the conference.



**June 7, 2016**

## **Alexandria Farmer’s Market Kids Club Launch**

NRCS participated in the launch of the Alexandria Farmer’s Market Kids Club launch on June 7, 2016, at the Alexandria Farmer’s Market. NRCS discussed the different layers of the soil with attendees and helped children create an edible soil profile. Mike Lindsey, State Soil Scientist also educated attendees on soil health.



**June 8, 2016**

## **Louisiana Forestry Teacher’s Tour**

NRCS participated in the Louisiana Forestry Teacher’s Tour on June 8, 2016, at the Kisatchie Forest in Rapides Parish. Mike Lindsey, State Soil Scientist, John Pitre, State Resource Conservationist and Dustin Farmer ACEP Program Manager discussed wetlands with the group and in particular, ways to identify a wetland using soils and vegetation.



**June 17, 2016**

## **Southern University’s BAYOU Program**

The BAYOU summer program through Southern University gives high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to get out in the field and learn first-hand about different career options related to agriculture. Recently the group spent the day with three NRCS employees, Macandol Parker, Stacey Domingue and Samuel Terry and toured a farmers market, cattle operation and a sugar cane farm in New Iberia.



# Conservation Reflections



Terraces, less than two years old on contour cultivated field in East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana in 1947.

**For a current list of our offices visit**  
**<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/la/contact/local/>**

## Upcoming Events

**July 13, 2016**

**LSU AgCenter's Northeast Louisiana Rice Field Day**

The Northeast Louisiana Rice Field day is July 13, 2016, in the Oak Ridge area, starting at 9:00 am and ending at noon at the Rayville Civic Center. For more information, contact Keith Collins at 318-728-3216.

**July 14, 2016**

**LSU Agcenter's Dean Lee Research and Extension Center Row Crop Field Day**

LSU Agcenter will be hosting a Row Crop Field Day at the Dean Lee Research Station, located at 8105 Tom Bowman Drive in Alexandria, Louisiana, from 8:00 am - 1:00 pm. For more information, contact Daniel Stephenson at [dsteph6@lsu.edu](mailto:dsteph6@lsu.edu).

**July 20, 2016**

**LSU Agcenter's Sugarcane Field Day**

The LSU AgCenter will be hosting a Sugarcane Field Day at the Sugar Research Station located at 5755 LSU Ag Road in Saint Gabriel, Louisiana on July 20, 2016, from 8:00 am - 1:00 pm. For more information, contact Patrick Bollich at 225-765-2876.

**Visit our web site at:**  
**[www.la.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.la.nrcs.usda.gov)**

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