



Helping People Help the Land

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Local conservation districts approve custom-designed conservation plans developed by NRCS personnel who provide technical expertise to farmers to help them with their natural resource concerns.

Producers may also be eligible for cost-share assistance to install the recommended practices through the Conservation Security Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, and others.

The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program helps prevent the conversion of working agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.

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Spring 2006
Legislative Report
Georgia

Senator Saxby Chambliss

Conservation Security Program

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) was expanded to a nationwide program in 2005 with farmers in 220 watersheds being eligible for participation.

Georgia was fortunate to have five watersheds in the southwestern corner of the state which were eligible for the Program.

Four information meetings were conducted to explain the program to interested producers. One hundred twenty applications were submitted and 111 were selected for funding. These one hundred eleven contracts will divide \$2.7 million in CSP payments annually to protect over 85,000 acres enrolled in the program.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

In 2005, approximately 1200 Georgia Farmers benefited from \$15.5 million in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) cost share funds. Georgia livestock producers received over 64% of the EQIP dollars.

Those involved with Confined Animal Feeding Operations will install 173 Waste Storage Facilities,

87 Mortality Facilities, and 45 Composting Facilities. Grazing operators will use their EQIP funds to install 226 miles of fence, 304 Heavy Use Areas, and 383 Livestock Watering Facilities.

Interest in addressing water conservation issues continued to rise in 2004. Over \$950,000 in EQIP funds were approved for water contracts.

These funds will be used to retrofit irrigation systems to more efficient low pressure systems.

Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program

The Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP) is a permanent easement program designed to help keep farmers and ranchers in agriculture. This program provides matching funds to state, tribal, or local governments or private organizations with existing farmland protection programs to purchase conservation easements or other interests in lands.

In 2005, seven proposals were received from sponsors to protect 1,200 acres of farmland located in 4 different counties with a conservation easement value of \$3.2 million. Six proposals were selected and will pro-

2005 Quick Facts for Georgia

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	13,485
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$22,301,689
* Conservation Security Program	\$3.7 Million
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$15.9 Million
* Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program	\$1,500,000
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$415,000
* Grassland Reserve Program	\$786,689
Community Nutrient Management Facilities	4
Conservation Partnership Initiative	1
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$8,491,937
Technical Service Providers are providing service to 81 producers.	
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$3,657,369
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	131,823 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	221,084 acres

vide permanent protection of 1,147 acres of Georgia farmland. These farms are located in Carroll, Clarke, and Oconee Counties.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

Georgia received \$415,000 in Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) funds this year. 105 contracts were approved in 53 counties. WHIP contracts seek to improve one of four priority wildlife habitats: 1) Early Successional Plant Habitat; 2) Longleaf Pine Ecosystems; 3) Riparian Forest Buffers; and 4) Upland Hardwood Communities. Typical practices to accomplish this include longleaf pine planting, forest openings, field borders, and hedgerow planting.

Management of invasive species was targeted by 30 participants who will use \$44,000 in WHIP cost-share. Targeted invasive species include wild privet and Congo grass. Other practices included Longleaf Pine planting on 48 farms and Upland Wildlife Habitat on 46 sites.

Resource Conservation & Development

Over 40 years ago, Congress established a unique program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture that empowered rural people to help themselves. The USDA focus was to assist local people by providing tools and technical support to stabilize and grow their own communities while protecting and developing natural resources.

To carry out the RC&D concept, diverse groups of local volunteers (The RC&D Council) are brought together in a unique partnership to find solutions to their problems.

During 2005, RC&D Councils in Georgia created 8 businesses, and 29 new jobs for the state of Georgia. They planned 3 watersheds totaling over 433,000 acres; in addition to administering the technical and

financial assistance for some 2,200 acres of wildlife habitat creation. It is also estimated that RC&D Councils implemented 263 projects totaling over \$12 million in assistance during the year.

Soil Surveys

One hundred and thirty one Georgia counties have published soil surveys; 11 counties have completed surveys that will be published; 11 are presently being surveyed; 1 county has been updated; and 2 other updates are in progress. There are 52 survey areas (92 counties) with a Soil Survey Geographic database.

Technical Service Providers

Fiscal Year 2005 saw continuation and expansion of the Technical Service Provider (TSP) Program in Georgia. An improved website (<http://techreg.usda.gov>) consolidates all Technical Service Provider activity, including web-based self-certification, and Certification Agreements.

Eighty- nine individuals have been certified to provide technical services in Georgia. This is up from 54 two years ago, and 76 last year. Eighty Georgia producers received technical assistance on Environmental Quality Incentives Program contracts impacting on more than 30,000 acres this year, and another 40 received services from state agency personnel working under TSP agreements with NRCS.

Watershed Operations Program

Since 1952, 77 small watershed projects have been approved for operations in Georgia. \$189 million of water quality improvements, soil erosion reduction, flood protection, recreation, and wildlife habitat establishment have been planned on 5.2 million acres.

There are currently two active flood prevention projects and seven active watershed protection projects. In 2005, long-term contracts were

completed with 20 landowners for almost \$1 million.

The following are active watershed protection projects: Lower Little Tallapoosa River Watershed - Carroll County South Chickamauga Creek Watershed - Walker and Catoosa Counties Piscola Creek Watershed - Brooks County Turkey Creek Watershed - Dooly County Five Points Area Watershed - Macon County Tobesofkee Creek Watershed - Lamar and Monroe Counties.

Watershed Rehabilitation Program

Since 1953, 357 project dams have been built in Georgia. The Georgia Safe Dams Program has categorized 146 of these as "High Hazard," indicating a potential loss of life if the dam fails. Preliminary investigations indicate that some \$85 million will be needed to upgrade these structures and ensure compliance with current dam safety legislation. NRCS project dams annually provides \$19 million in benefits including flood protection, water based recreation, and municipal water supply.

One of the major issues involved with aging dams is the safety and health of people downstream from the dams.

Many dams were originally built in rural areas. Homes, businesses, and roads have now been built downstream; increased damages would occur if they were to fail.

Congress passed legislation in 2000 authorizing NRCS to provide financial and technical assistance for rehabilitation of dams originally constructed under NRCS water resources programs.

During 2005, NRCS upgraded Yellow River Watershed Dam No. 17 for \$1.75 million. Four dams are currently working their way through the design phase toward upgrade, and the hazard classification was documented on 10 additional watershed dams.



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Senator Johnny Isakson

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Congressman Jack Kingston

Dedication Held For Kingston Conservation Center

by Don White, Coastal Georgia RC&D

A dedication ceremony was held May 21, 2005 for the Coastal



Georgia RC&D Council's new Jack Kingston Conservation Center.

The Council named this building after Congressman Kingston because of his continuing support of the conservation efforts of the Council, the Coastal Soil and Water Conservation District and its sister districts, the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and the USDA-NRCS.

Each of these conservation organizations has offices in the new center. Other conservation organizations in the center are the Georgia Department of Natural Resources's Coastal Resources Division and the Coastal Rivers Water Planning and



2005 Quick Facts for Congressional District 1

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	2,608
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$1,735,794
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$1,712,595
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$23,199
Number of Community Nutrient Management Facilities	2
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$1,111,513
Technical Service Providers providing assistance to 7 producers	
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$1,666,175
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	20,892 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	35,899 acres

Policy Center. The congressman attended the dedication along with his family and staff.

The center shares a parking lot with the city's police department building and is within view of the city hall and planning department complex, forming a central governmental complex in the city.

It includes an elevator and is fully handicapped accessible throughout.

All of the nine suites in the building are currently leased. The building houses the Bryan County Tax Commissioner, Planning and Zoning, and Engineering and Inspection Departments, and several private businesses.

Currently, the center has a positive cash flow of about \$24,000/year which is used to help support council operations.

The total construction cost of the building was \$719,000. The City of Richmond Hill donated the land for the center--a value of \$80,000.

Coastal Georgia RC&D Council Turns Off Free Flowing Artesian Wells to Conserve Water

by Don White, Coastal Georgia RC&D

Coastal Georgia RC&D Council has completed its free service to repair and install flow controls on free flowing artesian wells in the southern Georgia coast.

The project goal was to conserve water from the Upper Floridan Aquifer, used by three states for drinking water.

Several hundred wells were currently flowing 24 hours/day, seven days/week along the south Georgia coast.

The wells were once used to provide water to now abandoned homesteads or grazing operations.

Because they flow continuously, a flow of 2 gallons per minute is over 1,000,000 gallons of water lost each year.

This project was funded by a \$6,000 Savannah Presbytery Ecology Fund grant and matching \$6,000 Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission grant.

This free service was available to landowners on a voluntary basis. It paid for 100% of materials and labor costs. The free service also allowed cooperating landowners to use as much water from their wells as they needed to achieve their land management goals.

The Council repaired or capped 15 wells. Where repairs were not feasible, the Council employed local well drillers to cap several wells with concrete.

The water saved from the wells treated is 73,835,600 gallons year. Using the rate of \$1.50 per 1000 gallons, the value of the water saved is \$110,753.40 year.

Treating these wells has cost \$12,000, so the project's benefit to cost ratio in the first year alone is \$110,753.40/\$12,000 or 9.2/1.



Because the repairs are a one-time expense but the benefits continue to accumulate, the benefit/cost ratio increases to 18.4/1 in the second year, 27.6/1 in the third year, and into infinity.

An additional 10,512,000 gallons of water per year were saved by landowners who completed their own repairs. These savings were not included in the 73,835,600 gallons / year cited above and achieved through project repair and capping activities.

Wiregrass Trail Regional E911 Project Funded

by Don White, Coastal Georgia RC&D

Coastal Georgia RC&D received approval of its \$488,000 OneGeorgia Grant to fund the Wiregrass Trail Regional Enhanced 911 System for Long, McIntosh, and Tattnall



Enhanced 911 emergency dispatcher station.

Counties. The grant would pay 100% of all E911 startup equipment and services. The Georgia legislature originally made \$3 million available from the State's tobacco fund settlement to the 30 Counties which did not have enhanced 911 services, but funds were only provided for regional projects.

Long and McIntosh were the only counties in the Coastal Georgia RC&D Area which qualified.

Long ranks last of Georgia's 159 counties in per capita income, and McIntosh ranks 153rd (2002 Georgia County Guide). Coastal Georgia RC&D helped lead and facilitate this process for the past year.

When a 911 call is placed, the enhanced 911 system instantly displays a road map showing the location of the call and a color picture of the structure from which it was placed.

Even if the caller is incapacitated, emergency vehicles are dispatched to the correct location.

The current system in Long and McIntosh Counties merely forwards 911 calls to the Sheriff's Dept. which must get location information verbally from a caller and transmit it to emergency responders.

Congressman Sanford Bishop

Program Summaries

Conservation Security Program

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) was expanded to a nationwide program in 2005 with farmers in 220 watersheds being eligible for participation.

Georgia was fortunate to have five watersheds in the southwestern corner of the state which were eligible for the Conservation Security Program.

These watersheds; the Little River, Upper Ochlockonee, Ichawaynochaway, Kinchafoonee-Muckalee, and Middle Flint, cover all or parts of 20 counties.

Four information meetings were conducted to explain the program to interested producers. One hundred twenty applications were submitted and 111 were selected for funding.

These 111 contracts will divide \$2.7 million in CSP payments annually to protect over 85,000 acres enrolled in the program.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

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These funds will be used to retro-fit irrigation systems to more efficient low pressure systems. Also, 2004 was Georgia's first year to receive any EQIP Ground and Surface Water Conservation funds.

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

NRCS and 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.



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2005 Quick Facts for Congressional District 2

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	1,115
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$6,072,991
* Conservation Security Program	\$2,582,370
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$3,401,343
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$72,162
* Grassland Reserve Program	\$17,116
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$1,517,535
Technical Service Providers are providing service to 11 producers.	
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$238,923
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	17,505 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	50,910 acres

The demonstration project, funded with the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) congressional earmark, is a producer-developed cost-share program designed to demonstrate innovative practices on existing forage and livestock operations.

The GGLCC conducted its fourth sign-up for this project in 2005. Each sign-up obligates \$400,000 of improvements on livestock and forage management operations.

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The USDA focus was to assist local people by providing tools and technical support to stabilize and grow their own communities while protecting and developing natural resources.

To carry out the RC&D concept, diverse groups of local volunteers (The RC&D Council) are brought together in a unique partnership to find solutions to their problems. Local people are best able to determine needs and create solutions for their community.

The focus on the local direction and control has made RC&D one of the most successful natural resource programs of the Federal Government. The focus of the program provides for the sustainability of local economies and resources.

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Other practices included Longleaf Pine planting on 48 farms and Upland Wildlife Habitat on 46 sites.

NRCS Assists Chattahoochee County with Information for Land Use Planning

by Lewis Fokes,

DC Buena Vista Field Office

The Buena Vista NRCS Field Office assisted the Chattahoochee County Board of Commissioners with digital aerial maps, topographic maps, soil maps, and soil survey interpretative data on 250 acres of county-owned property.

The county is using this information for land use planning to encourage economic development.

Due to a limited amount of available commercial property outside of Fort Benning, the area is being made available for sale to private individuals or corporations interested in the Chattahoochee County area.



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Congressman Jim Marshall

NRCS Solves Drainage Problem

by Charles McCranie,
District Conservationist

Steve and Sandra Dykes had major drainage problems around their home in Eastman, Georgia.



Steve & Sandra Dykes with their miniature Schnauzer, Gabe

Steve had attempted to have the drainage problem corrected various times but his efforts failed.

The problem had gotten so bad that Sandra was at the point where she was ready to move out until NRCS was contacted.

The couple purchased their home in 1994 and immediately began having major drainage problems due to heavy rains.

Everyone in Georgia refers to 1994 as the year of the great flood which was due to a major hurricane.

Steve and Sandra's home was situated in a low lying area that was surrounded by higher ground elevations in all directions.

During rainy seasons of each year their home would almost be completely surrounded by standing water and they would not even have good vehicle access to their home.

Steve would have to get a five HP pump to remove water out of the yard so that they could have access to the house. They would also have standing water beneath the home



Steve Dykes showing the surface water inlet

2005 Quick Facts for Congressional District 3

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	2,152
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$3,591,771
* Conservation Security Program	\$1,017,630
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$2,485,403
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$78,978
* Grassland Reserve Program	\$9,760
Community Nutrient Management Facilities	1
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$1,207,675
Technical Service Providers are providing service to 110 producers.	
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$972,671
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	36,346 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	57,521 acres

which caused severe mold damage to the home. The family developed health problems from the mold and had to receive medical treatment for allergies.

The water caused a termite infestation and there was termite damage to the structure of the house. The septic tank system would also fail to work properly during rainy seasons causing sewage to back up into the house. They could not wash clothes, flush the toilets, bath, or wash dishes.

The backed up sewage from the septic tank system also caused areas of the house to have floor damage. On two different occasions Steve paid to have underground drainage systems installed to correct the problem. The systems failed and did not correct the problem.

The Dykes family battled with this drainage problem over a five year period of time. According to Steve and Sandra they spent at least \$15,000.00 attempting to solve the problem. They also had to replace the floor in areas of the house, remove the mold, and repair the damage caused by termites.

They both had become desperate to correct their drainage problem and had reached a point where they really did not know what to do or who to turn to for advice.

After unsuccessfully attempting to correct their problem for five years, Sandra's father Merle Peacock, a local farmer who had received assistance from NRCS, suggested that she contact Chuck McCranie, the local District Conservationist, for assistance.

Steve and Sandra contacted NRCS and ask a local contractor, Jim Jamieson, to install a drainage system and work with NRCS on the project.

Chuck McCranie, District Conservationist and Jamieson worked closely together on the project.

NRCS surveyed and designed the project with recommendations from the contractor. NRCS helped determine where the outlet needed to be located in order for the system to function properly.

The outlet had to be located on adjoining property owned by Stuckey Timberland. Andy Stone, president of Stuckey Timberland was generous and cooperative with the Dykes family allowing the outlet to be located on Stuckey Timberland property.

The system was installed and is presently draining the area around the home as designed. Steve and Sandra are extremely satisfied with the outcome and are grateful for the valuable assistance NRCS provided.

Marion County Waste Storage Facility Becomes a Reality

by Lewis Fokes, DC Buena Vista FO

The Buena Vista Field Office is currently assisting Peggy Woolam, owner and operator of Bryan's Run Poultry Farm, with construction of a waste storage facility and installing an animal mortality system to meet the latest state and local regulations. Woolam has eight broiler houses in Marion County.

NRCS assisted Woolam with a Comprehensive Nutrient



Peggy Woolam and her brother, Henry Keeble

Management Plan which included a litter storage facility or stack house and also an incinerator to dispose of dead birds.

Woolam was accepted into the Environmental Quality Incentives Program as an outreach participant and received 75% cost-share assis-

tance to help with the cost of installing the stack house and incinerator. By installing these practices Woolam has been able to abide by all regulations that coincide with an AFO permit.

Pine Country Watershed Enhancement Projects

by Kim Thompson, Pine Country RC&D

For the past three years, the Pine Country RC&D Council has been awarded a total of \$1,307,000 from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division used to fund a program that will improve the water quality of impaired streams in three of the Pine Country RC&D Counties.

These streams are the Williamson Swamp Creek in Washington County,



Turkey Creek field day in May 2005.

Turkey Creek in Laurens County, and the Ohoopee River in Johnson County.

This voluntary program is aimed at livestock producers within the watershed that wish to install a variety of practices that will address the increased fecal coliform level in the EPA designated polluted stream segments.

The project is directly impacting 108 landowners that applied for funding to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) on their property. These BMPs will minimize livestock waste runoff.

The completion of these practices will have an impact on 95 miles of stream segments within Johnson, Washington, and Laurens Counties.



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Spring 2006
Legislative Report
Georgia

Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney

Conservation Security Program

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) was expanded to a nationwide program in 2005 with farmers in 220 watersheds being eligible for participation.

Georgia was fortunate to have five watersheds in the southwestern corner of the state which were eligible for the Program. Four information meetings were conducted to explain the program to interested producers.

One hundred twenty applications were submitted and one hundred eleven were selected for funding. These 111 contracts will divide \$2.7 million in CSP payments annually to protect over 85,000 acres enrolled in the program.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

In 2005, approximately 1200 Georgia Farmers benefited from \$15.5 million in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) cost share funds. Georgia livestock producers received over 64% of the EQIP dollars.

Those involved with Confined Animal Feeding Operations will install 173 Waste Storage Facilities, 87 Mortality Facilities, and 45 Composting Facilities. Grazing operators will use their EQIP funds to install 226 miles of fence, 304 Heavy Use Areas, and 383 Livestock Watering Facilities.

Interest in addressing water conservation issues continued to rise in 2004. Over \$950,000 in EQIP funds were approved for water contracts. These funds will be used to retro-fit irrigation systems to more efficient low pressure systems.

Also, 2004 was Georgia's first year to receive any EQIP Ground and Surface Water Conservation funds.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

The Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP) is a permanent easement program designed to help keep farmers and ranchers in agriculture.

This program provides matching funds to state, tribal, or local governments or private organizations with existing farmland protection programs to purchase conservation easements or other interests in lands.

In 2005, seven proposals were received from sponsors to protect 1,200 acres of farmland located in 4 different counties with a conservation easement value of \$3.2 million. Six proposals were selected and will provide permanent protection of 1,147 acres of Georgia farmland. These farms are located in Carroll, Clarke, and Oconee Counties.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

Georgia received \$415,000 in Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) funds this year. 105 con-

2005 Quick Facts for Congressional District 4

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	120
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$86,143
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$86,143
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$5,809

tracts were approved in 53 counties. WHIP contracts seek to improve one of four priority wildlife habitats: 1) Early Successional Plant Habitat; 2) Longleaf Pine Ecosystems; 3) Riparian Forest Buffers; and 4) Upland Hardwood Communities. Typical practices to accomplish this include longleaf pine planting, forest openings, field borders, and hedgerow planting.

Management of invasive species was targeted by 30 participants who will use \$44,000 in WHIP cost-share. Targeted invasive species include wild privet and Congo grass. Other practices included Longleaf Pine planting on 48 farms and Upland Wildlife Habitat on 46 sites.

Resource Conservation & Development

Over 40 years ago, Congress established a unique program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture that empowered rural people to help themselves. The USDA focus was to assist local people by providing tools and technical support to stabilize and grow their own communities while protecting and developing natural resources.

To carry out the RC&D concept, diverse groups of local volunteers (The RC&D Council) are brought together in a unique partnership to find solutions to their problems. Local people are best able to determine needs and create solutions for their community.

The focus on the local direction and control has made RC&D one of the most successful natural resource programs of the Federal Government. The focus of the program provides for the sustainability of local economies and resources.

During 2005, RC&D Councils in Georgia created 8 businesses, and 29 new jobs for the state of Georgia. They planned 3 watersheds totaling over 433,000 acres; in addition to administering the technical and

financial assistance for some 2,200 acres of wildlife habitat creation. It is also estimated that RC&D Councils implemented 263 projects totaling over \$12 million in assistance during the year.

Soil Surveys

One hundred and thirty one Georgia counties have published soil surveys; 11 counties have completed surveys that will be published; 11 are presently being surveyed; 1 county has been updated; and 2 other updates are in progress. There are 52 survey areas (92 counties) with a Soil Survey Geographic database.

Technical Service Providers

Fiscal Year 2005 saw continuation and expansion of the Technical Service Provider (TSP) Program in Georgia. An improved website (<http://techreg.usda.gov>) consolidates all Technical Service Provider activity, including web-based self-certification, and Certification Agreements.

Eighty-nine individuals have been certified to provide technical services in Georgia. This is up from 54 two years ago, and 76 last year.

Eighty Georgia producers received technical assistance on EQIP contracts impacting on more than 30,000 acres this year, and another 40 received services from state agency personnel working under TSP agreements with NRCS.

Watershed Operations Program

Since 1952, 77 small watershed projects have been approved for operations in Georgia. \$189 million of water quality improvements, soil erosion reduction, flood protection, recreation, and wildlife habitat establishment have been planned on 5.2 million acres.

There are currently two active flood prevention projects and seven active watershed protection projects. In 2005, long-term contracts were

completed with 20 landowners for almost \$1 million.

The following are active watershed protection projects: Lower Little Tallapoosa River Watershed - Carroll County South Chickamauga Creek Watershed - Walker and Catoosa Counties Piscola Creek Watershed - Brooks County Turkey Creek Watershed - Dooly County Five Points Area Watershed - Macon County Tobesofkee Creek Watershed - Lamar and Monroe Counties.

Watershed Rehabilitation Program

Since 1953, 357 project dams have been built in Georgia. The Georgia Safe Dams Program has categorized 146 of these as "High Hazard," indicating a potential loss of life if the dam fails.

Preliminary investigations indicate that some \$85 million will be needed to upgrade these structures and ensure compliance with current dam safety legislation.

NRCS project dams annually provides \$19 million in benefits including flood protection, water based recreation, and municipal water supply.

One of the major issues involved with aging dams is the safety and health of people downstream from the dams. Many dams were originally built in rural areas. Homes, businesses, and roads have now been built downstream; increased damages would occur if they were to fail.

Congress passed legislation in 2000 authorizing NRCS to provide financial and technical assistance for rehabilitation of dams originally constructed under NRCS water resources programs.

During 2005, NRCS upgraded Yellow River Watershed Dam No. 17 for \$1.75 million. Four dams are currently working their way through the design phase toward upgrade, and the hazard classification was documented on 10 additional watershed dams.



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Spring 2006
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Georgia

Congressman John Lewis

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Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

Georgia received \$415,000 in Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) funds this year. 105 contracts were approved in 53 counties. WHIP contracts seek to improve one

2005 Quick Facts for Congressional District 5

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	172
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$36,714
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$36,714
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$15,110
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	18 acres

of four priority wildlife habitats: 1) Early Successional Plant Habitat; 2) Longleaf Pine Ecosystems; 3) Riparian Forest Buffers; and 4) Upland Hardwood Communities. Typical practices to accomplish this include longleaf pine planting, forest openings, field borders, and hedgerow planting.

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Spring 2006
Legislative Report
Georgia

Congressman Tom Price

Goat Farm Benefits from EQIP Program

by Valerie Pickard
District Conservationist

Charline Cambron of Rosewood Farm in Cobb County is able to prosper in the goat farming business due to the Environmental Quality



Charline Cambron

Incentives Program (EQIP) administered by NRCS.

Charline's family has owned Rosewood Farm since 1958. After her parents passed away, she decided to keep the farm and try her hand at farming.

That's when she contacted NRCS District Conservationist, Valerie Pickard of Marietta.

After sharing her farm plans and concerns, Cambron signed up for the EQIP program.

The EQIP program enabled Rosewood Farm to make more pastureland available to the animals



Baby goat at Rosewood

through improved fencing, nutrient management, stream crossings, use exclusion areas, drilling a new well and putting up a watering trough.

The availability of multiple pastures is crucial for rotational grazing, which is a vital practice needed to avoid parasitic infestations in goats.

Charline currently has a stock of 2 billies, 30 breeders, 33 babies, and 6 yearlings.

She runs the farm with help from her husband, brother and three "guardian" dogs.



Rosewood Farm goats

2005 Quick Facts for Congressional District 6

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	338
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$25,024
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$25,024
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$41,078
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	63 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	78 acres



“Gaurdian Angel” Dog

The three dogs provide additional security for the goats while they are in the pasture.

She breeds the goats twice a year and shows some of the prize goats in addition to working at a full-time job. Charline has been a model of a good farmer.

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Spring 2006
Legislative Report
Georgia

Congressman John Linder

Gwinnett Watershed Dam Rehabilitated

by Steve Leslie

District Conservationist

A multi-year cooperative effort between the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Gwinnett County, Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (GSWCC), Upper Ocmulgee RC&D Council, and Gwinnet Soil and Water Conservation District has resulted in the upgrade of Yellow River Dam Number 17 (Y-17).

This dam was originally constructed in 1967 when Gwinnett was still predominantly rural. As such, it was designed to protect flooding of farmland but because of urbanization, now protects homes and major infrastructure.

This change in land use precipitated the need to evaluate this structure to determine if it should be removed or upgraded to meet more stringent criteria.

Designers and planners involved in this process evaluated many alternatives including some as drastic as removal of the dam and purchasing the homes in the downstream failure zone.

A unique aspect of this approximately 40-acre lake is its location; Y-17 is located within Collins Hill Park and provides all residents the benefits of seclusion and respite in a hustle and bustle world.



Dam under construction



The completed Yellow River Dam Number 17

Through both the desires of local residents and economic analysis, it was determined the best alternative was to upgrade the structure.

Approximately \$1.7 million dollars, six months of construction, and several years of planning have yielded a safer dam.

Y-17 is now armored with a roller compacted concrete overlay to protect the dam and its downstream residents from a sudden deluge of water caused by a failure. Except for the visible armoring on the top of the

2005 Quick Facts for Congressional District 7

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	951
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$88,020
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$80,044
* Grassland Reserve Program	\$7,976
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$120,823
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	287 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	1,306 acres

dam, residents might never know this change has taken place; because the lake is in a park setting, the decision was made to cover the back steps with earth fill and vegetation.

This dam is the first of its kind in Georgia. There are ongoing cooperative efforts between NRCS and Gwinnett County to complete the rehabilitation of two additional dams in 2006.

Many are benefiting from the tireless efforts in cooperation and coordination spearheaded by Jimmy Bramblett, NRCS, Water Resources Program Leader and Sam Fleming, Gwinnett County, Department of Public Utilities.

NRCS on Hmong Radio

by Steve Leslie, District Conservationist

Sometimes the path to a particular goal is a winding one. As Asian American and Pacific Islander Program Manager for Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Georgia, one of Steve Leslie's goals is outreach to the Asian community.

Back in April, Leslie received a request from James Tillman, NRCS State Conservationist for Georgia, to find out information about the Hmong Community in Gwinnett in order to relay it to a new resident, PaSee Yang.

The Hmong tribesmen are natives of Southeast Asia, mostly in Laos and Cambodia, with a tradition of agriculture.

In researching information on the Hmong community of Gwinnett on the internet, Leslie located a site on the Hmong Culture Organization,

offered to speak with Yang and asked for information NRCS.

Leslie sent information on various NRCS conservation programs, and in the course of the communications, was told about a weekly half hour Hmong-language radio show broadcast out of Conyers, GA.

Xiong suggested that they meet to put together a show on NRCS services available to the Hmong community. They met in late May, together with Jeff McLeod of the Rural Development Agency, and the first information was broadcast the following Saturday.

NRCS and the Rural Development Agency have received a couple of inquiries as a result of the radio programs.

NRCS on Display at the Cherokee County Fair

*by Mabelle Simmons
District Conservationist*

In order to promote public awareness and education, local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees and volunteers create a display booth at the Cherokee County, GA Fair each year.

This is a continuing tradition dating back at least fifteen years.

This year's booth won a fourth place ribbon, with a theme of Grazing Land Management for Water

Quality through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).

The NRCS booth has won ribbons

for two of the past three years.

In addition to the booth, there are handouts and pamphlets on display for various NRCS

environmental programs and concerns.

Average attendance at the fair is approximately 30,000 people per year. NRCS employees are proud to be able to reach out to so many people on a regular basis.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

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NRCS booth at the Cherokee County Fair promotes environmental awareness and education.

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which is based in Winder, Georgia. An email to the group was answered by Young Xiong, President. Xiong



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Spring 2006
Legislative Report
Georgia

Congressman Lynn Westmoreland

The Glover Family Farm

by Valerie Pickard

District Conservationist, Marietta

Skip and Cookie Glover of Douglasville, GA are proud pioneers and teachers of chemical-free farming. Skip's family has owned the 50-acre farm for over 100 years.

It was originally a cattle and corn operation, then slowly trans-



Skip Glover of Douglasville, Georgia.

formed into a natural farming/market operation.

The interest in organic farming began with Skip's father in the 60's. He became inspired to find alternative approaches to insect and nutrient management after reading *Silent Spring* by Rachael Carson.

This also led to natural soil building techniques.

The farm grows a variety of vegetables, herbs, honey and flowers while respecting the environment and the countryside.

Of the 50 acres, only approximately 10 are in use for farming, free range chickens and goats.

The rest of the acreage is left in a natural state for local wildlife.

The farm also supports several different on-going educational programs that involve both children and adults.

Currently, they have an "organic apprentice," Jordan Merrell from Utah working with them.

Jordan plans to move to Peru after his apprenticeship to teach English and Chemical-Free Farming.

The Glovers have an on-going relationship with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and



Jordan Merrell, Organic Apprentice

2005 Quick Facts for Congressional District 8

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	1,473
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$2,262,005
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$686,113
* Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program	\$1,291,250
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$19,650
* Grassland Reserve Program	\$264,992
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$529,825
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	13,106 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	15,432 acres

local employees. They have hosted NRCS workshops and worked to establish the No-Till program locally.

They are currently working with the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for help in establishing fencing to exclude the animals from the stream bank.

UGA Soils Lab- Bledsoe Farm

by Carol Oliver, Barnesville

A soils lab was held at the Bledsoe Farm in Pike County on September 12, 2005.



Students identify soil horizons.

The Crop and Soil Science class of Larry M. Shuman, at the Griffin campus of the University of Georgia, consists of eight students all pursuing a degree in Environmental Sciences.

The objective of the lab, taught by Jim Lathem, NRCS Soil Scientist, was for the students to describe a soil profile by identifying soil horizons.



Jim Lathem teaches students to conduct a soil profile at the UGA Soil Lab.

They were to use skills taught in preceding labs on soil texture and color and were to evaluate other soil and landscape characteristics observed in the field

Emergency Conservation Program in Talbot County

by Lewis Fokes,

District Conservationist, Buena Vista

NRCS has been assisting numerous landowners in Talbot County to correct problems caused by last year's hurricanes.

Jack McClung, County Technician, has been working with landowner Tom Finley to plan the needed repairs on his beef cattle farm in southern Talbot County.

Mr. Finley applied for assistance through the Emergency Conservation Program administered by the Farm Service Agency.

NRCS provided the technical assistance to assess the damage and to plan the corrective work. Cost-share funds were approved to remove debris and repair fence damage.

EQIP in Muscogee County

by Lewis Fokes, DC, Buena Vista

NRCS assisted David Barfield in developing a conservation plan on his beef cattle operation in Muscogee County.

Mr. Barfield applied for assistance under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to develop a planned grazing system.

The EQIP program's cost-share funds will enable him to install cross fences, exclude cattle from a pond and wetland, and provide an alternative source of livestock water with heavy use protection.

These improvements will assist him in better managing his operation as well as protecting water quality.

Poultry Waste Management: Upper Middle Chattahoochee Watershed Project

By Susan Pullen, Rolling Hills RC&D

The Poultry Waste Management Program is about to begin its 3rd year of successful operation.

Twenty-five farmers have signed up to participate in this project since its inception in September, 2003.

Of the 25, 13 have been serviced, and three structures have been built.

Additionally, two more contracts are ready to be signed in the near future.

Our original goal was to service 20 farmers; but 25 farmers have signed up for the project.

Litter storage is a problem for a lot of farmers. Many don't have a way to store it until it can be safely applied.

This program has been instrumental in addressing water quality concerns in the watershed area by installing much needed structures to control runoff.

The project has also completed construction of its largest facility. The stackhouse/composter combination building is located on a ten-house broiler farm in Heard County.

The building is approximately 40 feet wide on one end, nearly 300 feet long and approximately 65 feet wide on the other end.

It houses 12 compost bins, six on each side of the building. This structure, and others like it, will help growers manage their litter, and store it in a covered area until there is a suitable time for it to be applied to the land.

Carroll County Farms receive Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program Funding

Conservation easements in the amount of \$796,500 were purchased on three Carroll County farms under the Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRRP)

These easements will result in 719 acres of farmland being permanently protected.



Fred Dilbeck, Soil Conservationist, stands atop the newly cleared dam.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

In 2005, approximately 1200 Georgia Farmers benefited from \$15.5 million in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) cost share funds.

Georgia livestock producers received over 64% of the EQIP dollars.

Those involved with Confined Animal Feeding Operations will install 173 Waste Storage Facilities, 87 Mortality Facilities, and 45 Composting Facilities.

Grazing operators will use their EQIP funds to install 226 miles of fence, 304 Heavy Use Areas, and 383 Livestock Watering Facilities.

Interest in addressing water conservation issues continued to rise in 2004. Over \$950,000 in EQIP funds were approved for water contracts.

These funds will be used to retrofit irrigation systems to more efficient low pressure systems.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

The Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP) is a permanent easement program designed to help keep farmers and ranchers in agriculture.

This program provides matching funds to state, tribal, or local governments or private organizations with existing farmland protection programs to purchase conservation easements or other interests in lands.

In 2005, seven proposals were received from sponsors to protect 1,200 acres of farmland located in 4 different counties with a conservation easement value of \$3.2 million.

Six proposals were selected and will provide permanent protection of 1,147 acres of Georgia farmland. These farms are located in Carroll, Clarke, and Oconee Counties.

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

NRCS and 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.

The demonstration project, funded with the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) congressional earmark, is a producer-developed cost-share program designed to demonstrate innovative practices on existing forage and livestock operations.

The GGLCC conducted its fourth sign-up for this project in 2005.

Each sign-up obligates \$400,000 of improvements on livestock and forage management operations.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

Georgia received \$415,000 in Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) funds this year. 105 contracts were approved in 53 counties.

WHIP contracts seek to improve one of four priority wildlife habitats: 1) Early Successional Plant Habitat; 2) Longleaf Pine Ecosystems; 3) Riparian Forest Buffers; and 4) Upland Hardwood Communities.

Typical practices to accomplish this include longleaf pine planting, forest openings, field borders, and hedgerow planting.

Management of invasive species was targeted by 30 participants who

will use \$44,000 in WHIP cost-share. Targeted invasive species include wild privet and Congo grass. Other practices included Longleaf Pine planting on 48 farms and Upland Wildlife Habitat on 46 sites.

Conservation Security Program

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) was expanded to a nationwide program in 2005 with farmers in 220 watersheds being eligible for participation.

Georgia was fortunate to have five watersheds in the southwestern corner of the state which were eligible for the Program.

Four information meetings were conducted to explain the program to interested producers.

One hundred twenty applications were submitted and one hundred eleven were selected for funding.

These 111 contracts will divide \$2.7 million in CSP payments annually to protect over 85,000 acres enrolled in the program.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program

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.

Georgia received over \$2.79 million dollars in EWP funding in November of 2004. These funds are being used to apply emergency conservation measures in three counties: Gilmer, Rabun, and Towns.

These counties suffered damage as a result of Hurricane Ivan, Jeanne, and other storms that occurred in 2004.

Emergency measures include debris removal, streambank protection, bioengineering, road and culvert headwall protection, and road-slide stabilization.

Congressman Charlie Norwood



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Spring 2006
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Georgia

North Broad Watershed Rehabilitation Underway

Since 1953, 357 NRCS Assisted Project Dams have been constructed.

Most dams provide flood protection benefits to communities downstream. As man-made structures, these dams need regular maintenance.

After years of neglect, many local sponsors (with financial assistance from the state) have allocated approximately \$200,000 for much needed maintenance.



Swath created by gyro-tech machine.



The gyro-tech is a unique machine that can mulch trees. What used to take weeks can now be done in hours.



Markers like this one were common sight in the 60's.

NRCS provides technical assistance with identification of maintenance needed.

These photos are from a recent work site in the North Fork Broad River Watershed in Franklin County.

2005 Quick Facts for Congressional District 9

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	802
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$3,488,780
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$3,100,405
* Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program	\$158,400
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$89,508
* Grassland Reserve Program	\$32,967
* Community Nutrient Management Facilities	\$107,500
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$975,440
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$193,920
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	19,909 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	23,054 acres



New cattle watering system

He describes himself as a general handyman and full-time beef cattle farmer.

Burton currently has approximately 150 acres designated as pasture land, of which, 60+ acres has been cleared since 1991.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) has helped him with cross-fencing to establish three new paddocks for his stock.

Currently EQIP is helping him with prescribed grazing, more fencing, gates and proper establishment of a heavy-use area at the watering troughs. James has also made use of the No-Till Program in order to help establish the newer pastures.

A Good Day on the Farm

Approximately four years ago, Teri and Barry West decided to try full-time poultry farming.

They purchased a 40-acre farm in Gordon County, to begin raising broilers for GoldKist. Barry even put his “singer-songwriter” career on temporary hold in order to dedicate enough time to establishment of the poultry operation.



Interior of stackhouse.

After some time and lots of hard work, they now have an established and successful poultry operation. Unfortunately, having four full-size poultry houses also generates a lot of waste.

That’s where the EQIP came to help. Through the EQIP cost-share and the technical advice of Machel Simmons, District Conservationist in



Well designed stream crossing.

Calhoun GA, the West’s were able to build a composter/combo stackhouse for their waste.

The stackhouse allows composting of both the chicken litter and the dead birds. Composting is much more desirable, both economically and environmentally than disposing of waste in pits.

Although it’s long, hard work, Teri quotes, “A bad day on the farm is better than a good day in retail”.

Conasauga River Alliance

The Conasauga River Alliance (CRA) is a non-profit organization, founded in 1997, dedicated to the protection and restoration of the magnificent Conasauga watershed.

The Alliance’s major funding source is provided by a Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division, Section 319 (Non-Point Source Pollution) grant.

In addition to the grant, the Alliance has held fundraisers and is supported (in-kind) by

Limestone Valley Resource Conservation and Development Council (LVRCD), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and USDA/Forest Service.

The Conasauga watershed area consists of Whitfield, Murray, Fannin and Gordon counties in Georgia and two counties in Tennessee. CRA is managed by a volunteer Board of Directors from the watershed area.

They, in turn, supervise the Watershed Director who puts the Best Management Practices (BMP’s) on the ground and handles most of the administrative work.

LVRCD assists with grant management requirements, some office space and some of the technical and administrative work. The role of CRA is varied, but focuses mainly on non-



Eagle Scout/ CRA Streambank Repair Work.

point source pollution and educational outreach.

In the past year CRA has had many BMP’s, projects, workshops and outreach opportunities.



Stabilization of Historic Spring site.



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Spring 2006
Legislative Report
Georgia

Congressman Nathan Deal

EWP Report

by Robyn Ledford, Soil Conservation Technician

When Hurricane Ivan hit Gilmer County, September 16, 2004, it left 14 inches of rain in less than 10 hours at the head, and throughout the Clear Creek, in the Cartecay Watershed.

Not only were homes destroyed, but bridges, roads, and all types of agricultural operations were destroyed as well.

Streams were blocked with trees, many already weakened by a recent infestation of pine beetles.

Streambeds were filled with rock and rerouted into new channels while other streams were “dammed up” due to blockages of trees, tires, lawnmowers, etc.

When the immediate emergency has passed, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP), makes an assessment of the damage to life and property. If life and property are threatened, NRCS can help “avoid the disaster after the disaster.”



Above: Streambed filled with stone and diverted towards a house.

Below: Stream put back in place and area re-established in grass.



NRCS Helps Cattle Farmer

James Burton, of Walker County has been working with various NRCS conservation programs since 1991.

The Burton family started share cropping the farm several generations back. The farm has been handed down to James.

2005 Quick Facts for Congressional District 10

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	903
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	1,925,024
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$1,593,338
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$23,813
* Grassland Reserve Program	\$307,873
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$462,654
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	9,702 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	11,348 acres



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Spring 2006
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Georgia

Congressman Phil Gingrey

Haralson County Success by Sam Sharpe District Conservationist

Jeff Watson is a second generation landowner of approximately 83 acres in Haralson County.

The majority of the property is in hardwoods with a 10-acre tract that is predominately Loblolly pine. There is an 11-acre open area that is managed for wildlife. A small portion is planted as a food plot while the remaining is allowed to go native.

Jeff applied for, and received cost-share funding through the WHIP program. This funding enabled him to complete non-commercial thinning on his property to improve the wildlife habitat.

He still has to do some prescribed burning to complete the project. This 83-acre tract has been set aside for wildlife, with an emphasis on deer and turkey.

Jeff's son is disabled and wheelchair bound, so Jeff built an observation tower with handicapped accessibility so that his son could enjoy observing the wildlife. (The observation tower was not part of the cost-share funding).



Non-commercial thinning.



Wildlife observation tower with handicapped accessibility.

Pond Problem Leads to Conservation Plan

by Kevin Keel
District Conservationist

80-year old Florence Byrd, owns and operates a 35-acre cattle farm in Meriwether County. She and her hus-

2005 Quick Facts for Congressional District 11

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	317
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	1,048,023
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$893,097
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$13,182
* Grassland Reserve Program	\$141,744
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$253,083

Conservation on the Ground

Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	8,370 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	9,395 acres

band ran the farm together until his death, when she took over the daily operation.

Elvinia Butler, Soil Conservation Technician in the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Office in Newnan, Georgia, first met Ms. Byrd when she called with issues related to a pond problem.

Elvinia, along with Kevin Keel, District Conservationist, provided technical assistance to repair the problem pond which led to conversations about conservation concepts on the farm. This led to discussions about the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which Ms. Byrd applied for. A contract was secured for her as a participant in the EQIP program. And, because she met the Limited Resource Producer criteria, she was able to receive the maximum benefits of the program.

Eighty-five percent of the planned conservation practices have been installed in the past year-and-a-half. Those practices include installation of a well, pipeline, watering troughs, fencing, gates, and clover planting.

These improvements have helped make life a little easier for Ms. Byrd, as well as improving the quality of her farm product.

Landscape Plan completed for Rome Sculpture Garden at Myrtle Hill Cemetery

by Sheri Teems

District Conservationist

With the assistance of the UGA College of Environment and Design, Rolling Hills RC&D provided a conceptual landscape plan to the City of Rome for a sculpture garden.

The site is across South Broad Street from Myrtle Hill Cemetery in South Rome. It will serve as a mini park as well as provide much needed parking for visitors to Myrtle Hill Cemetery.

Currently, the site is covered in privet and kudzu.

Jim Dixon, Rome Assistant City Manager, and Ron Sitterding provided guidance on this project, identifying the local needs and opportunity for this plan to apply to the South Rome revitalization plan.

Alex Nagel, a landscape architect intern for Rolling Hills RC&D, designed and completed the plan. Alex is a graduate student at the University of Georgia.

A cross walk will connect the park to the Cemetery by providing safe pedestrian traffic between them. Four plazas will include seating and spaces for sculptures by local artists. Two will have water features.

The plazas will be enclosed by stone walls designed to match the existing stone wall that was originally laid by Italian masons. A large lawn will provide space for picnics, family gatherings, performances, and other events as well as temporary parking. Grass pavers will be used in this multi use area to accommodate the added weight for parking as needed. In addition, there are two permanent parking areas.

The plant materials chosen in the design will consist of native tree species, wildflowers, and grasses. The plant selection was determined to simulate the nature of Myrtle Hill Cemetery.

Funding for this project was provided through a grant from the Georgia Forestry Commission's Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program.



Landscape plan for Rome Sculpture Garden.

The design was based upon guidance from the Model Urban Forest Book, published by the Georgia Forestry Commission.

Successful WHIP in Heard County

Jeff Lindsey and Robert McMillian of Heard County purchased some "rough" cutover property a couple of years ago to promote wildlife habitat. Since that time, they have applied for and received cost share funding through the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).

This funding has enabled them to install water bars to reduce erosion on the access roads. Additionally, they have created forest openings that will be planted to warm season native grasses when the planting date is correct.

They have also planted long leaf pine on about 50 acres, and will be doing a non-commercial thinning next year on an existing stand that is overstocked. Their goal is to promote wildlife.

Emergency Conservation Program Helps Hurricane Survivors in Talbot County

by Lewis Fokes

District Conservationist

NRCS has been assisting numerous landowners in Talbot County to correct problems caused by last year's hurricanes.

Jack McClung, County Technician, has been working with landowner Tom Finley to plan the needed repairs on his beef cattle farm in southern Talbot County.

Mr. Finley applied for assistance through the Emergency Conservation Program administered by the Farm Service Agency. NRCS provided the technical assistance to assess the damage and to plan the corrective work. Cost-share funds were approved to remove debris and repair fence damage.

Two years down the road, after the felled trees have partially decomposed, the first of two prescribed burns will be implemented.

The burns will help keep the understory vegetation in early succession and return nutrients to the soil.

These practices not only benefit quail but also deer, turkey, and many non-game species.

Dan is pleased with the progress so far and said, "By utilizing the EQIP program and NRCS' working land knowledge, I am on tract to reach my goals and one of them being to hunt quail on the Lockett Farm again."

Coastal Georgia RC&D Council Lowers ISO Ratings and Insurance Premiums.

by Don White, Coastal GA RC&D Council

Coastal Georgia RC&D Council has been working the last 2 years on projects to reduce the Insurance Service Organization (ISO) Ratings which measure fire departments' capabilities and help determine homeowner insurance rates.

The Council received \$57,600 in Georgia Forestry Commission / US Forest Service grants to hire an ISO Consultant Mr. Skip Starling to lower these ratings.

We first started working with Mr. Starling when he was Fire Chief in Effingham County where he successfully lowered the ISO ratings for all the fire departments in the County.

When Mr. Starling left the County to launch his own business ISOChanger.com we became his largest customer.

To date, he has successfully lowered the ISO ratings for 32 departments in 8 counties (Bryan, Camden, Effingham, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Tattnall, and Wayne) working with our Council.

Typically these departments have dropped their ISO rating of 7-9 to

4or 5, reducing homeowner premiums by about 50%.

Each of these Counties had their ISO Ratings and homeowner insurance rates lowered by:

-Using dry fire hydrants provided by the Coastal Georgia RC&D Council using Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority or Georgia Coastal Management Program grants totaling \$61,350, or

-Using our ISO Consultant to guide them using Council grants from the Georgia Forestry Commission, or

-Using both our dry hydrants and ISO Consultant funded by grants obtained by the Council.

We have calculated an ISO savings of about \$400/year for the average home from a one time ISO consultant cost of \$1-2/ home. The estimated annual insurance premium savings for residential structures in these 8 counties is \$28,190,000 per year.

This cash savings from one project of one RC&D Council is over half the annual appropriation of \$51,200,000 supporting all 375 RC&D Councils in the nation.

There are additional savings for commercial structures, but their rates are too variable to estimate the savings accurately, so we have left them out of our calculations.

There are also 16 additional stations still working on their ISO reductions. A majority are expected to complete this work and add additional insurance savings to the above totals.

Clean Water Act (319) Grant Funded Projects

by Don White, Coastal Georgia RC&D

The Council is writing its final report for the Altamaha River and Ebenezer Creek 319 projects this month. A \$362,000 GA EPD/EPA 319 Grant helped cost-share agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) in 6 impaired subwatersheds

of the Altamaha River: Ochoopee River, Mushroom Creek, Goose Creek, Doctors Creek, Penholoway Creek, and Turnpike Creek. Included were parts of Tattnall, Long, Wayne, Toombs, and Telfair Counties.

Cost-sharing was based on the formula: 60% federal / 40% producer. A separate \$92,000 319 grant helped fund BMPs in the Ebenezer Creek 319 Project in Effingham County.

Both projects were designed to reduce the nutrients and animal waste contributing to low dissolved oxygen levels and high fecal coliform counts measured in the project streams.

The BMPs funded included fencing cattle out of streams, developing alternative water sources, converting annually tilled cropland to permanent hay and pasture land, conservation tillage, and stackhouses to prevent rain from washing the nutrients in poultry waste into streams.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

In 2005, approximately 1200 Georgia Farmers benefited from \$15.5 million in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) cost share funds. Georgia livestock producers received over 64% of the EQIP dollars.

Those involved with Confined Animal Feeding Operations will install 173 Waste Storage Facilities, 87 Mortality Facilities, and 45 Composting Facilities.

Grazing operators will use their EQIP funds to install 226 miles of fence, 304 Heavy Use Areas, and 383 Livestock Watering Facilities.

Interest in addressing water conservation issues continued to rise in 2004.

Over \$950,000 in EQIP funds were approved for water contracts. These funds will be used to retro-fit irrigation systems to more efficient low pressure systems.



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Spring 2006
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Georgia

Congressman John Barrow

Pre-Commercial Thinning Will Benefit Warren County Wildlife

By Cread Brown, DC, Warren County

Dan Crumpton, a Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District supervisor and owner of the Lockett

Farm, is always looking for ways to enhance wildlife habitat.

At a Warren County District meeting last winter, Dan learned that the NRCS would be offering landowners the opportunity to compete for cost-share through the EQIP Program to assist with thinning pre-commercial sized pines.

Automatically Dan thought of the Lockett Farm. As a young man, Dan and his son hunted quail in the cotton

fields that are now overstocked pine stands.

The thick pines offer little benefit to wildlife other than low quality cover. By reducing the stem count, sunlight would reach the forest floor and set off an early successional



Dan Crumpton, Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District supervisor, and Cread Brown, District Conservationist.

flush of herbaceous vegetation. Quail desperately need this vegetation for food and cover.

Thinning the pines would also improve the timber quality in the remaining stand.

As it turned out, Dan was approved for the EQIP Program. In late September, the thinning crew pulled out of the Lockett Farm after two days of hard sawing.

2005 Quick Facts for Congressional District 12

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	2,457
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$1,197,453
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$1,126,978
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$64,175
* Grassland Reserve Program	\$6,300
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$2,170,610
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$231,080

Conservation on the Ground

Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	5,919 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	15,559 acres



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Spring 2006
Legislative Report
Georgia

Congressman David Scott

Conservation Security Program

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) was expanded to a nationwide program in 2005 with farmers in 220 watersheds being eligible for participation.

Georgia was fortunate to have five watersheds in the southwestern corner of the state which were eligible for the Program. Four information meetings were conducted to explain the program to interested producers.

One hundred twenty applications were submitted and 111 were selected for funding. These one hundred eleven contracts will divide \$2.7 million in CSP payments annually to protect over 85,000 acres enrolled in the program.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

In 2005, approximately 1200 Georgia Farmers benefited from \$15.5 million in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) cost share funds. Georgia livestock producers received over 64% of the EQIP dollars. Those involved with Confined Animal Feeding Operations will install 173 Waste Storage Facilities, 87 Mortality Facilities, and 45 Composting Facilities. Grazing operators will use their EQIP funds to install 226 miles of fence, 304 Heavy Use Areas, and 383 Livestock Watering Facilities.

Interest in addressing water conservation issues continued to rise in 2004. Over \$950,000 in EQIP funds were approved for water contracts. These funds will be used to retro-fit irrigation systems to more efficient low pressure systems. Also, 2004 was Georgia's first year to receive any EQIP Ground and Surface Water Conservation funds.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

The Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP) is a permanent easement program designed to help keep farmers and ranchers in agriculture. This program provides matching funds to state, tribal, or local governments or private organizations with existing farmland protection programs to purchase conservation easements or other interests in lands.

In 2005, seven proposals were received from sponsors to protect 1,200 acres of farmland located in 4 different counties with a conservation easement value of \$3.2 million. Six proposals were selected and will provide permanent protection of 1,147 acres of Georgia farmland. These farms are located in Carroll, Clarke, and Oconee Counties.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program Georgia received \$415,000 in Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) funds this year. 105 contracts were approved in 53 counties.

2005 Quick Facts for Congressional District 13

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	230
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$12,866
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$12,866
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$80,784
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	525 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	577 acres

WHIP contracts seek to improve one of four priority wildlife habitats: 1) Early Successional Plant Habitat; 2) Longleaf Pine Ecosystems; 3) Riparian Forest Buffers; and 4) Upland Hardwood Communities. Typical practices to accomplish this include longleaf pine planting, forest openings, field borders, and hedgerow planting.

Management of invasive species was targeted by 30 participants who will use \$44,000 in WHIP cost-share. Targeted invasive species include wild privet and Congo grass. Other practices included Longleaf Pine planting on 48 farms and Upland Wildlife Habitat on 46 sites.

Resource Conservation & Development

Over 40 years ago, Congress established a unique program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture that empowered rural people to help themselves.

The USDA focus was to assist local people by providing tools and technical support to stabilize and grow their own communities while protecting and developing natural resources.

To carry out the RC&D concept, diverse groups of local volunteers (The RC&D Council) are brought together in a unique partnership to find solutions to their problems.

Local people are best able to determine needs and create solutions for their community.

The focus on the local direction and control has made RC&D one of the most successful natural resource programs of the Federal Government.

The focus of the program provides for the sustainability of local economies and resources.

During 2005, RC&D Councils in Georgia created 8 businesses, and 29 new jobs for the state of Georgia.

They planned 3 watersheds totaling over 433,000 acres; in addition to administering the technical and finan-

cial assistance for some 2,200 acres of wildlife habitat creation. It is also estimated that RC&D Councils implemented 263 projects totaling over \$12 million in assistance during the year.

Soil Surveys

One hundred and thirty one Georgia counties have published soil surveys; 11 counties have completed surveys that will be published; 11 are presently being surveyed; 1 county has been updated; and 2 other updates are in progress. There are 52 survey areas (92 counties) with a Soil Survey Geographic database.

Technical Service Providers

Fiscal Year 2005 saw continuation and expansion of the Technical Service Provider (TSP) Program in Georgia. An improved website (<http://techreg.usda.gov>) consolidates all Technical Service Provider activity, including web-based self-certification, and Certification Agreements.

Eighty- nine individuals have been certified to provide technical services in Georgia. This is up from 54 two years ago, and 76 last year.

Eighty Georgia producers received technical assistance on Environmental Quality Incentives Program contracts impacting on more than 30,000 acres this year, and another 40 received services from state agency personnel working under TSP agreements with NRCS.

Watershed Operations Program

Since 1952, 77 small watershed projects have been approved for operations in Georgia. \$189 million of water quality improvements, soil erosion reduction, flood protection, recreation, and wildlife habitat establishment have been planned on 5.2 million acres.

There are currently two active flood prevention projects and seven active watershed protection projects. In 2005, long-term contracts were

completed with 20 landowners for almost \$1 million.

The following are active watershed protections projects: Lower Little Tallapoosa River Watershed - Carroll County South Chickamauga Creek Watershed - Walker and Catoosa Counties Piscola Creek Watershed - Brooks County Turkey Creek Watershed - Dooly County Five Points Area Watershed - Macon County Tobesofkee Creek Watershed - Lamar and Monroe Counties.

Watershed Rehabilitation Program

Since 1953, 357 project dams have been built in Georgia. The Georgia Safe Dams Program has categorized 146 of these as "High Hazard," indicating a potential loss of life if the dam fails.

Preliminary investigations indicate that some \$85 million will be needed to upgrade these structures and ensure compliance with current dam safety legislation.

NRCS project dams annually provides \$19 million in benefits including flood protection, water based recreation, and municipal water supply.

One of the major issues involved with aging dams is the safety and health of people downstream from the dams. Many dams were originally built in rural areas. Homes, businesses, and roads have now been built downstream; increased damages would occur if they were to fail.

Congress passed legislation in 2000 authorizing NRCS to provide financial and technical assistance for rehabilitation of dams originally constructed under NRCS water resources programs.

During 2005, NRCS upgraded Yellow River Watershed Dam No. 17 for \$1.75 million. Four dams are currently working their way through the design phase toward upgrade, and the hazard classification was documented on 10 additional watershed dams.