



United States Department of Agriculture

# Louisiana Conservation Update

November/December 2015

## A Match Made in Heaven...

### Rice and Crawfish, the Perfect Union

#### Soils, Culture and People

A cooperative partnership with local  
Soil and Water Conservation Districts and  
Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D)

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

If you would like to receive monthly issues of the Conservation Update, please send your mailing address or e-mail address to:

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service 3737 Government Street Alexandria, Louisiana 71302

Attention:

Amy Robertson State Public Affairs Specialist amy.robertson@la.usda.gov or

Adele Swearingen adele.swearingen@la.usda.gov

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service 3737 Government Street Alexandria, Louisiana 71302 (318) 473-7751

Table of Contents

Ag Facts.....2
Notes from the State Conservationist .....3
A Match Made in Heaven... Rice and Crawfish, the Perfect Union .....4
International Year of Soils.....6
StrikeForce.....6
Around the State.....7
Upcoming Events.....7
Contact Information .....8

Call us with your questions

On the Cover



The Durand's are successfully farming rice and crawfish in sugarcane country. To find out more about their operation, see pages 4 and 5.



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## Notes from the State Conservationist

The holiday season reminds us to be thankful for the abundant blessings we have in our lives; family, friends, good food and passing on time honored traditions. I trust that our producers, partners, friends and co-workers had a wonderful Thanksgiving and will have a joyful holiday season. With the new year fast approaching, I'm looking forward to great things happening at NRCS.

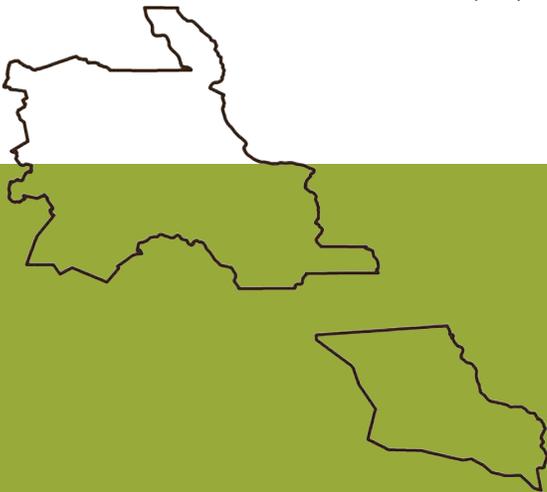
This time of year is also synonymous with hunting, camping, hiking and enjoying the great outdoors. Our state is known as "Sportsman's Paradise" and has some of the best wildlife habitat in the south. Nowhere is that more evident than in the rice fields of central and south Louisiana. As coastal marshes gradually fade from our coast, flooded rice fields play an instrumental role in providing wildlife habitat for ducks, geese, shorebirds, wading birds and secretive marsh birds.

For all of us who enjoy crawfish boils or a good crawfish etouffee; raising crawfish, another valuable product of rice farming, is extremely important. I believe we can all agree that rice is a vital crop, not only for its traditional uses, but also for the productivity of the fields after harvest, with crawfish farming and providing abundant habitat for wildlife.

In this issue we introduce you to Jeff Durand and his brothers C.J. and Greg who carry on the family partnership of rice farming and crawfish production in St. Martin Parish. The Durand family exemplifies the very best of rice production, that includes crawfish farming and vibrant wildlife habitat. The future of farming certainly is in good hands with the Durand family.

Producers in Louisiana continue to lead the way in producers signing up to use NRCS's Conservation Client Gateway, an on-line approach to getting conservation and financial business accomplished. In December, we will participate in the USA Rice Federation conference in New Orleans. I'm also looking forward to the 70th Annual Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts (LACD) Convention in January.

Between signing up new folks for our programs and working with our existing customers, I know we will make great strides in conservation for Louisiana. From our NRCS family to yours, may 2016 be a healthy and prosperous year!



Kevin D. Norton  
State Conservationist

## St. Martin Parish Ag Facts

There are 340 farms in St. Martin Parish  
75,909 acres of land is in farms  
76.7% is cropland and 8.9% is forestland  
Sugarcane is the #1 commodity of the parish

From [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)



# A Mat Rice and Cra



Driving down Hwy 347 passing massive Live Oaks dripping with Spanish moss is a sea of sugar cane, as far as the eye can see. Standing in the midst of all this sugar is an island of rice, the Durand family rice farm, or as it is known in the spring, THE place to buy crawfish (Teche Valley Seafood). Jeff Durand his two brothers, CJ and Greg along with his three sisters (Margot, Joanna and Connie) work side-by-side to grow rice, farm crawfish and provide habitat for wildlife on their property located in St. Martinville.

1980 was a watershed year for the Durand family. It was the year they began growing rice in earnest but, their love of the land started many years before.

“Our dad and his brother cleared some of the property we farm today; he had someone else growing rice in the 60’s and 70’s and we farmed crawfish,” explained Jeff. “As soon as we were old enough to start going to the ponds, all

my brothers and sisters would go after school and run crawfish traps.”

At one point, the farmer that was growing rice on our land retired and the next farmer started growing soybeans that hurt the crawfish business. “So that’s when we decided that we would grow rice ourselves,” said Jeff. “We also cleared some more family property at that time and continued to grow the family farm.”

Over the years, the operation has changed and adapted. At one point crawfish was the biggest crop but today more acres are devoted to rice production. The Durand’s plant about 900 to 950 acres a year and rest about one quarter of the land, usually 250 to 300 acres, that is left idle. They also “double crop” the rice making two cuttings, known as a ratoon. Jeff goes on to say, “Almost half of our acres are harvested twice.”

NRCS programs have played an integral role in helping the Durand’s reach their

conservation goals. “We first started utilizing NRCS programs in the late 80’s and we’ve been partnering ever since,” explained Jeff.

From opportunities like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative (MBHI) ... NRCS programs have made all the difference to the Durand’s.

“The technical assistance has really been helpful,” said CJ. The conservation practices used by the Durand’s have set them apart from other producers. “We do a lot of no till or minimum till on our farm; we try to improve the quality of our soil,” explained CJ.

The brothers use a chain harrow that disturbs very little soil, laying the rice stubble on the ground and leaving it to decompose over the winter. By leaving residue on the surface during

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## wfish, the Perfect Union



the winter months, water quality has significantly improved. Muddy surface water pumped in is almost clear by the time it runs off the property.

“We’ve done a lot of laser leveling; we have moved a lot of dirt,” said Jeff. “One rice field had 32 levees but after the laser leveling that field now has three levees, which is huge for water conservation.”

Through EQIP, the Durand’s have incorporated practices including grade stabilization structures, underground irrigation pipelines and conservation crop rotation that have made significant improvements to the land and increased their production of rice and crawfish.

So what about wildlife on the Durand farm? “We have lots of it,” laughed Greg.

The rice and crawfish fields create great wetland habitat. Over 250 different species of birds have been documented on the property. The timing of the rice harvest is perfect for migrating birds along their routes in the fall and spring. Not to mention other abundant wildlife including deer, otters, bob cats, raccoons, alligators and even bald eagles.

Looking to the future, the Durand’s have a singular purpose, “Our next conservation effort is examining our soil quality and working to get it at an optimum balance,” explained Greg. “More than anything else we want this land to be healthy and productive for the next generation.”





2015  
International  
Year of Soils

### Soils, Culture and People

Submitted by: Mitchell Mouton, Assistant State Soil Scientist

Soil has been a part of human culture and society from the very beginning. Most of the material used in the making of traditional art comes from soil. Color pigments used to make paint, dyes and ink; sand and mineral to create glass and clay used to make ceramics comes from soil. Most of the permanent writings from early societies were preserved on clay tablets. The tablets were engraved with a sharp object while they were still wet and then dried and hardened allowing them to last for ages.

In present times, soil still has an impact on our culture. The state of Louisiana has many different landscapes consisting of marshes, prairies, swamps and hills with

very diverse soils. The soil types found on these landscapes have had a direct effect on the unique cultures found in Louisiana, particularly the soils of the coastal prairie and marshes and its influence on Cajun culture.

Like most cultures, the Cajun culture has been greatly influenced by their local environment. The soils of the coastal prairie are on a level to nearly level landscape and have a clayey subsurface or clay pan. These features allow water to be held for long periods of time at consistent depths which makes these soils ideal for rice and crawfish production. These prairie soils also provide excellent habitat for migratory gamebirds.

The soils of the coastal marsh are level, very poorly drained, have a mixture of mineral and organic soils and can be fresh, brackish or saline. Most of these areas support native vegetation and have a diverse wetland wildlife habitat which is ideal for hunting waterfowl, fresh and

saltwater fish, alligators and other game.

The soils found in the coastal prairie and marshes have helped sustain and influence Cajun culture and traditions. From the cultivation of rice as the main staple grain crop, to the abundance of wildlife used in traditional cuisine, the soil has had a major influence on how Cajuns have lived their lives.

Soil is part of our daily lives and has an influence on our culture and traditions. Soil is a natural resource that should be used wisely to support future generations.

"The soil is the great connector of our lives, the source and destination of all." - Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America*, 1977

StrikeForce Initiative



for Rural Growth and Opportunity

Louisiana  
Update

### Upcoming StrikeForce Activities

#### December 12 Colfax, Louisiana

The Campti Field of Dreams is sponsoring a StrikeForce planning session for economic growth and prosperity in Grant Parish on Saturday, December 12, 2015, from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm at the Colfax City Hall, 1208 Main Street, in Colfax, Louisiana. The event is free, however registration is required. To register, contact Donna Isaacs at 318-332-7791 or Carolyn Baines at 318-730-7527.

#### December 16 Lecompte, Louisiana

The Campti Field of Dreams is sponsoring a StrikeForce Meeting on Wednesday, December 16, 2015, at the LeCompte

Town Hall located at 1302 Weems Avenue in Lecompte, Louisiana, from 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

#### December 19 New Orleans, Louisiana

The Sankofa Fresh Stop Market will be holding a Grand Opening on Saturday, December 19, 2015, from 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. The market is located at 5029 St. Claude Avenue in the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans, Louisiana.

#### January 14 Coushatta, Louisiana

The Campti Field of Dreams is sponsoring a StrikeForce Meeting at the Red River Parish Library located at 2022 Alonzo Street in Coushatta, Louisiana, at 9:00 am on Thursday, January 14, 2016.

## Upcoming Events

#### January 10-13 Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts 70th Annual Convention

The Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts will be holding their 70th Annual Convention at the Wyndham Gardens Hotel on January 10 -13, 2016. For more information, or to register contact Rose Sharbeno at 337-239-2193 Ext. 3 or by e-mail at [rose.sharbeno@la.nacdnet.net](mailto:rose.sharbeno@la.nacdnet.net)

#### January 15 & 16 Ag Expo

Look for the NRCS exhibit at Ag Expo on January 15 & 16, 2016 at the Ike Hamilton Expo Center in West Monroe, Louisiana.

# Around the State

## October 22 High Tunnel Workshop

NRCS, Farm Service Agency, and Rural Development partnered with the Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance (CLEDA) and the Business Acceleration System to host a workshop covering financial assistance available for small-scale producers. Topics included high tunnels and supporting conservation practices, program eligibility and funding timeframe, operating loans, and crop insurance options. In February of 2016, Louisiana Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE), the LSU AgCenter, and NRCS will host a series of technical high tunnel workshops. Please keep an eye out for dates and times for these workshops across Louisiana. Tunnel Production Can Help Sustain Your Farm.



## November 12 Longleaf Pine Field Day

The National Wild Turkey Federation hosted a longleaf pine field day on the farm of David Daigle in Beauregard Parish on November 12, 2015.



## November 13 Louisiana Women in Agriculture Conference

Acadiana RC&D and Capitol RC&D hosted the annual Louisiana Women in Agriculture Conference on Friday, November 13, 2015, at the Louisiana School for Agricultural Sciences in Bunkie, Louisiana.

## November 17 - 19 Soil Health Workshops

A series of soil health workshops were held across the state on November 17 -19, 2015. These very successful workshops were led by Ray Archuleta. Participants learned about the principles of soil health, utilizing cover crops and were able to view a demonstration of these principles using the rainfall simulation trailer. Attendees then travelled to a local producer's farm to see a soil health management field evaluation.



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Contact your local office for more information on this new way to work with NRCS.



United States Department of Agriculture

# Contact Our Offices

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

Parish	Field Office	Soil and Water Conservation District	Address	Telephone
Acadia	Crowley	Acadia SWCD	157 Cherokee Drive, Suite C, Crowley, LA 70526	(337) 783-5823, ext. 3
Allen	Oberlin	Allen SWCD	309 North 1st Street, Suite 1, Oberlin, LA 70655	(337) 639-4850, ext. 3
Ascension	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD and New River SWCD	2259 Business Park Boulevard, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
Assumption	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD	2259 Business Park Boulevard, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
Avoyelles	Marksville	Avoyelles SWCD	629 Tunica Drive West, Marksville, LA 71351	(318) 253-9445, ext. 3
Beauregard	DeRidder	Calcasieu SWCD	597 Mahlon Street, Suite B, DeRidder, LA 70634	(337) 463-8555, ext. 3
Bienville	Minden	Saline SWCD	216B Broadway, Minden, LA 71055	(318) 377-3950, ext. 3
Bossier	Benton	Bodcau SWCD	200 Burt Boulevard, Suite 101, Benton, LA 71006-4901	(318) 965-2185, ext. 3
Caddo	Shreveport	Caddo SWCD	1402 Hawn Avenue, Shreveport, LA 71107	(318) 676-3461, ext. 3
Calcasieu	Lake Charles	Gulf Coast SWCD	5417 Gerstner Memorial Drive, Lake Charles, LA 70601	(337) 474-1583, ext. 3
Caldwell	Columbia	Boeuf and Dugdemona SWCD	7128 Highway 165 South, Suite 2, Columbia, LA 71418	(318) 649-2651, ext. 3
Cameron	Lake Charles	Gulf Coast SWCD	5417 Gerstner Memorial Drive, Lake Charles, LA 70601	(337) 474-1583, ext. 3
Catahoula	Jonesville	Catahoula SWCD	3545 4th Street, Jonesville, LA 71343	(318) 339-4239, ext. 3
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DeSoto	Mansfield	DeSoto SWCD	332 Lake Road, Mansfield, LA 71052	(318) 872-4949, ext. 3
East Baton Rouge	Denham Springs	Capital SWCD	907 Florida Boulevard, SW, Denham Springs, LA 70726	(225) 665-4253, ext. 3
East Carroll	Lake Providence	East Carroll SWCD	406 Lake Street, Suite C, Lake Providence, LA 71254	(318) 559-2604, ext. 3
East Feliciana	Clinton	Feliciana SWCD	9752 Plank Road South, Clinton, LA 70722	(225) 683-5496, ext. 3
Evangeline	Ville Platte	Evangeline SWCD	205 Court Street, Ville Platte, LA 70586	(337) 363-6602, ext. 3
Franklin	Winnsboro	Northeast SWCD	616 Riser Road, Winnsboro, LA 71295	(318) 435-6743, ext. 3
Grant	Colfax	Grant SWCD	510 Main Street, Colfax, LA 71417	(318) 627-9903, ext. 3
Iberia	New Iberia	Iberia SWCD	2617 Northside Road, Suite 600, New Iberia, LA 70563	(337) 369-6623, ext. 3
Iberville	Addis	Lower Delta SWCD	7747 Highway 1 South, Addis, LA 70710	(225) 687-2184, ext. 3
Jackson	Ruston	Dugdemona SWCD	1412 Celebrity Drive, Ruston, LA 71270	(318) 255-3136, ext. 3
Jefferson	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
Jefferson Davis	Jennings	Jefferson Davis SWCD	2003 Port Drive, Jennings, LA 70546	(337) 824-0975, ext. 3
Lafayette	Lafayette	Lafayette SWCD	905 Jefferson Street, Suite 310, Lafayette, LA 70501-7913	(337) 262-6601, ext. 3
Lafourche	Thibodaux	Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD	143 Laura Drive, Thibodaux, LA 70301	(985) 447-3871, ext. 3
LaSalle	Jonesville	LaSalle SWCD	3545 4th Street, Jonesville, LA 71343	(318) 339-4239, ext. 3
Lincoln	Ruston	D'Arbonne SWCD	1412 Celebrity Drive, Ruston, LA 71270	(318) 255-3136, ext. 3
Livingston	Denham Springs	Capital SWCD	907 Florida Boulevard, SW, Denham Springs, LA 70726	(225) 665-4253, ext. 3
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Morehouse	Bastrop	Morehouse SWCD	9604 Marlatt Street, Bastrop, LA 71220	(318) 283-7626, ext. 3
Natchitoches	Natchitoches	Natchitoches SWCD	6949 Louisiana Highway 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, LA 71457	(318) 357-8366, ext. 3
Orleans	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
Quachita	Monroe	D'Arbonne/Boeuf River SWCD	2410 Old Sterling Road, Suite B, Monroe, LA 71203-2668	(318) 343-4467, ext. 3
Plaquemines	New Orleans	Plaquemines SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
Pointe Coupee	New Roads	Upper Delta SWCD	180 East Main Street, New Roads, LA 70760	(225) 638-7746, ext. 3
Rapides	Alexandria	Rapides SWCD	3734 Government Street, Building C, Alexandria, LA 71303	(318) 473-7856, ext. 3
Red River	Coushatta	Red River SWCD	1311 Ringgold Avenue, Coushatta, LA 71019	(318) 932-4352, ext. 3
Richland	Rayville	Boeuf River SWCD	141 Industrial Loop, Rayville, LA 71269	(318) 728-4451, ext. 3
Sabine	Many	Sabine SWCD	570 Highway 171 By Pass, Many, LA 71449	(318) 256-3491
St. Bernard	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
St. Charles	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
St. Helena	Amite	Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD	805 West Oak Street, Suite 1, Amite, LA 70422-2820	(985) 748-8751, ext. 3
St. James	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD and New River SWCD	2259 Business Park Boulevard, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
St. John	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
St. Landry	Opelousas	St. Landry SWCD	5832 I-49 North Service Road, Opelousas, LA 70570	(337) 942-2530, ext. 3
St. Martin	Lafayette	St. Martin SWCD	905 Jefferson Street, Suite 310, Lafayette, LA 70501-7913	(337) 262-6601, ext. 3
St. Mary	Franklin	St. Mary SWCD	500 Main Street, Franklin, LA 70538	(337) 828-1461, ext. 3
St. Tammany	Franklinton	Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD	1111 Washington Street, Franklinton, LA 70438	(985) 839-5688, ext. 3
Tangipahoa	Amite	Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD	805 West Oak Street, Suite 1, Amite, LA 70422-2820	(985) 748-8751, ext. 3
Tensas	St. Joseph	Tensas-Concordia SWCD	1223 Plank Road, St. Joseph, LA 71366	(318) 766-3502, ext. 3
Terrebonne	Thibodaux	Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD	143 Laura Drive, Thibodaux, LA 70301	(985) 447-3871, ext. 3
Union	Farmerville	D'Arbonne SWCD	501 Glory Road, Farmerville, LA 71241	(318) 368-8021
Vermilion	Abbeville	Vermilion SWCD	3221 Veterans Memorial Drive, Suite H, Abbeville, LA 70510	(337) 893-5664, ext. 3
Vernon	Leesville	Calcasieu SWCD	205 North 5th Street, Leesville, LA 71446	(337) 239-2193
Washington	Franklinton	Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD	1111 Washington Street, Franklinton, LA 70438	(985) 839-5688, ext. 3
Webster	Minden	Dorcheat SWCD	216B Broadway, Minden, LA 71055	(318) 377-3950, ext. 3
West Baton Rouge	Addis	Upper Delta SWCD	7747 Highway 1, South, Addis, LA 70710	(225) 687-2184, ext. 3
West Carroll	Oak Grove	West Carroll SWCD	208 South Constitution Street, Oak Grove, LA 71263	(318) 428-9303, ext. 3
West Feliciana	Clinton	Feliciana SWCD	9752 Plank Road South, Clinton, LA 70722	(225) 683-5496, ext. 3
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