



Athens
Georgia
December 2008

2008-2009 Program Guide

The Evolution of Conservation

GEORGIA



The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) constantly changes to meet the needs of its customers, both small and large. As the farm economy constantly evolves, the NRCS will be there to continue its role to assist the stewards of Georgia's natural resources.

Helping People Help the Land

Mission

Helping People Help the Land

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Did you know?

NRCS has provided technical assistance to producers in 2008 to develop 3,350 conservation plans on 329,902 acres throughout the state. See feature stories at www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov. Click on news/success stories.

NRCS Organizational Structure



State Conservationist

Administrative Assistant to the State Conservationist

Office Automation Clerk

Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations

State Conservation Engineer

State Administrative Officer

Assistant State Conservationist (Programs)

Assistant State Conservationist (Operations)

State Public Affairs Specialist

State Soil Scientist

Assistant State Conservationist (Water Resources)

State Resource Conservationist

Plant Materials Specialist

Key NRCS Staff in Georgia

State Public Affairs Specialist - Mary Ann McQuinn

Phone: 706 546-2272 Fax: 706 546-2120

E-mail: mary.mcquinn@ga.usda.gov

State Resource Conservationist - Maryann Trent

Phone: 706 546-2114 Fax: 706 546-2275

E-mail: maryann.trent@ga.usda.gov

Assistant State Conservationist for Programs - Vacant

Phone: 706 546-2272 Fax: 706 546-2120

E-mail: @ga.usda.gov

Assistant State Conservationist for Operations - Dot Harris

Phone: 706 546-2272 Fax: 706 546-2120

E-mail: dot.harris@ga.usda.gov

Assistant State Conservationist for Water Resources - Jimmy Bramblett

Phone: 706 546-2277 Fax: 706 546-2145

E-mail: jimmy.bramblett@ga.usda.gov

State Conservation Engineer - Henry McFarland

Phone: 706 546-2277 Fax: 706 546-2145

E-mail: henry.mcfarland@ga.usda.gov

State Soil Scientist/NRI Team Leader - Edward Ealy

Phone: 706 546-2278 Fax: 706 546-2145

E-mail: edward.ealy@ga.usda.gov

State Administrative Officer - Sharon Gipson

Phone: 706 546-2272 Fax: 706 546-2120

E-mail: sharon.gipson@ga.usda.gov

****Complete directory available online at www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov*

Georgia NRCS Administrative Areas

Area 1 - Griffin

Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations - Michael Watson

Phone: 770 227-1026 Fax: 770 227-1511

E-mail: michael.watson@ga.usda.gov

Area 2 - Athens

Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations - Earl Brantley

Phone: 706 546-2039 Fax: 706 546-2253

E-mail: earl.brantley@ga.usda.gov

Area 3 - Americus

Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations - Natasha Brown

Phone: 229 924-0042 Fax: 229 924-0013

E-mail: natasha.brown@ga.usda.gov

Area 4 - Waycross

Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations - David Ferrell

Phone: 912 283-5598 Fax: 912 283-8648

E-mail: david.ferrell@ga.usda.gov

Natural Resources Conservation Service Administrative Areas Georgia



Designated District Conservationists

Area	Soil and Water Conservation District	NRCS District Conservationist
1	Catoosa County Coosa River Limestone Valley West Georgia Fulton County Cobb County Gwinnett County Henry County Clayton County Pine Mountain Rockdale County DeKalb County Roosevelt Towaliga Lamar County	Cindy P. Askew, LaFayette Sheri E. Teems, Rome Cindy P. Askew, LaFayette Sam Sharpe, Carrollton Valerie Pickard, Marietta Valerie Pickard, Marietta Julius George, Lawrenceville Vacant, McDonough Vacant, McDonough Jack L. Fokes, Jr., Buena Vista Julius George, Lawrenceville Julius George, Lawrenceville Kevin Keel, Newnan Carmen Westerfield, Barnesville Carmen Westerfield, Barnesville
2	Blue Ridge Mountain Hall County Stephens County Upper Chattahoochee River Broad River Lincoln County McDuffie County Oconee River Piedmont Warren County Brier Creek Columbia County Upper Ocmulgee River Walton County	Douglas Towery, Blairsville George Belflower, Gainesville Russell F. Biggers, Eastanollee Russell F. Biggers, Eastanollee Forrest W. Ferguson, Hartwell Rory Richardson, Washington Craig Bevan, Louisville Carol Boss, Commerce Dennis Brooks, Madison Craig Bevan, Louisville J. Cread Brown, Augusta J. Cread Brown, Augusta Dennis B. Brooks, Madison Jose' V. Pagan, Monroe
3	Ocmulgee River Flint River Lower Chattahoochee River Middle South Georgia	Calvin Essex, Perry Eddie Glover, Albany Lyndon McCavitt, Dawson Mary Leidner, Tifton
4	Alapaha Altamaha Satilla River Coastal Ogeechee River Ohooppee River Central Georgia	Harold B. Simpson, Jr., Nashville Bo Bannister, Douglas Rita Barrow, Brunswick James Austin, Richmond Hill William G. Thrift, Statesboro Sidney Lanier, Swainsboro Chuck McCranie, Eastman

Assistant State Conservationists for Field Operations

Area 1	Griffin	Michael Watson	Area 2	Athens	Earl Brantley
Area 3	Americus	Natasha Brown	Area 4	Waycross	David Ferrell

District Conservationists & RC&D Coordinators

Alphabetical List of District Conservationists and RC&D Coordinators

Last Name	First Name	Telephone	Last Name	First Name	Telephone
Askew	Cindy	706 638-2207	George	Julius	770-963-9288
Austin	James	912-459-2350	McCavitt	Lyndon	229-995-5811
Bannister	Clemon L. (Bo)	912-384-4811	McCranie	Charles V.	478-374-8140
Barrow	Rita	912-265-8092	Moore	Stan	912-367-7679
Belflower	George (Buddy)	770-536-6981	Napier	Jim	229-924-4056
Bevan	Craig	478-625-7771	Nichols	Elizabeth	912-285-5975
Biggers	Russell	706-886-8223	Oliver	Harold E.	912-459-2070
Blackburn	Austin V.	912-564-2207	Pagan	Jose	770-267-1359
Boss	Carol	706-335-7145	Palmer	Scotty	706-453-7021
Brooks	Dennis	706-342-1315	Parker	Britt S.	478-275-0425
Brown	Cread	706-554-5183	Pickard	Valerie	770-792-0647
Brown	Jerome	770-339-6071	Reese	Karen	229-732-6211
Cabe	Doug	706 625-7044	Richardson	Rory	229-263-4909
Cleland	Steve	229-723-3825	Wilson	Galen	478-552-6073
Collins	Marcus	229-246-8282	Sharpe	Sam	770-832-8942
Essex	Calvin	478-987-2280	Simmons	Machelle	706-629-2582
Ferguson	Forrest	706-376-2876	Simpson	Harold B.	229-686-2363
Futch	Joey A.	912-367-4368	Philip	Smith	229-228-0459
Glover	Eddie	229-430-8509	Teems	Sheri	706-291-5651
Hall	Graylen	229-268-9106	Thompson	Kimberly C.	912-529-6652
Harris,	Jimmie	706-547-4045	Thrift	William G.	912-871-2605
Haygood	Cindy	770-749-0444	Towery	Doug	706 745-2794
Hill	Forrest	706 885-0101	Westerfield	Carmen	770-358-3223
Jones	Luther D.	706-769-7922	Wilson	Galen	478-552-6073
Jones	Ray	478-956-6490	Yancey	Frank	229-723-3841
Keel	Kevin	770-251-4283			
Lanier	Sidney C.	478-237-8037			
Leidner	Mary	229-382-4776			
Long	Paul	229-985-5399			

Agricultural Conservation Enrollees/Seniors

Program Manager: RD Crawley

Phone: 706 546-2313

Fax: 706 546-2275

E-mail: rd.crawley@ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

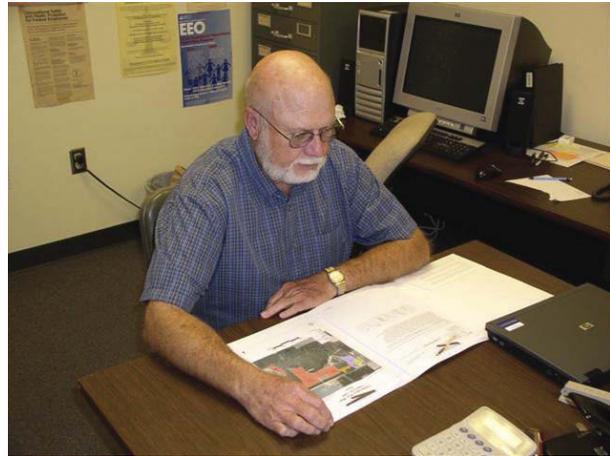
Agricultural Conservation Enrollees/Seniors (ACES) is a program designed to meet employers' needs for competent workers by providing access to individuals age 55 and older, and to enhance lifelong employment opportunities of experienced workers through training, job placement, education, research and advocacy. ACES is a program run by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) from a bigger program run by the National Older Worker Career Center (NOWCC), a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Arlington, VA. It provides national leadership to expand employment and to help shape public and private policy and practice for America's fast-growing population of workers age 55 and over. Today it provides employment to over 600 older workers located at the USDA-Environmental Protection Agency, and other government agencies.

From October 2007 to September 2008, the Vienna Field Office served over 650 customers. As an ACES employee, Bobby Nutt worked closely with a majority of those customers determining their needs and providing a solution to their problems.

Nearly 6,000 acres were placed under a conservation plan during this time period for Dooly County. Nutt reviewed most of those tracts of land with the owners or operators to determine the conservation needs of those tracts.

He then developed the maps needed to start the conservation plan and located the practice needed on that map. He also entered the customer's information into toolkit, developed a file and started the planning process for that customer. Conservation was applied on 3,166 acres of cropland to improve soil quality. He collected and assimilated data, then assisted in the design and layout of those practices used to solve those cropland needs. Conservation was also applied on 3,166 acres to improve water quality in this county.

Nutt helped in the development of the solutions needed to solve those environmental problems by working closely with the soil conservation technician. With his assis-



Bobby Nutt reviewing paperwork in his office.

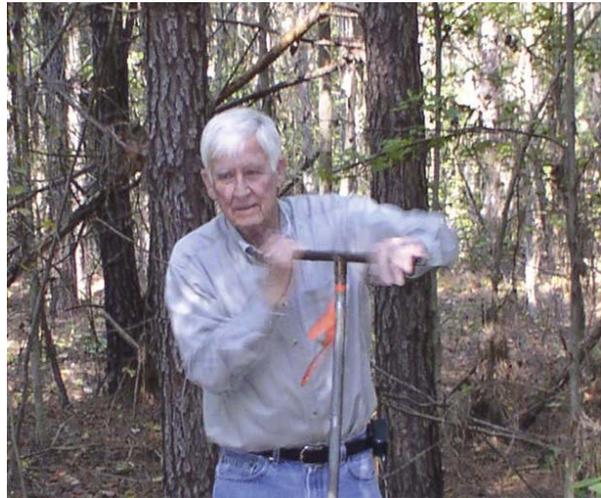
Agricultural Conservation Enrollees/Seniors *Continued*

tance and input 1,050 acres of forest land conservation and 5,000 acres of wildlife habitat management was applied. Nutt was instrumental in the accomplishments of this year's goals and needs of this field office.

Charles Branch, National Older Workers Career Center (NOWCC) employee in the Sylvania-Springfield Field Office, is responsible for part of the field work in the office. His duties include the site investigation, layout, design, installation and checkout of conservation practices. He has over 40 years of experience in this work.

Jimmy Mock is the ACES employee in the Commerce Service Center. During the past year, he has taken applications for farm bill programs, assisted with on-site field visits and helped with the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) administered by the Farm Service Agency.

Mock was also of great help with the Conservation Security Program (CSP) sign-up, preparing updated aerial photos and assisting with office interviews. This is of great significance given that the NRCS was shorthanded during the CSP enrollment/interview period.



Charles Branch digging soil with an auger for pond testing.

Conservation Security Program

Program Manager: Vacant

Phone: 706 546-2272

Fax: 706 546-2120

E-mail: @ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is a voluntary program that rewards farmers with a history of good farmland conservation through stewardship and incentive payments. The program is designed to reward the best conservation stewards of the soil, water and other natural resources in targeted watersheds through 5-10 year contracts. The program provides equitable access to benefits to all producers, regardless of size or type of farm operation.

The Broad River in Northeast Georgia was selected as the 2008 CSP program watershed. The agriculture in this watershed is primarily cattle operations and poultry houses.

An emphasis was placed on conservation practices that limited cattle from water bodies and management of hay land.

Interest was high at all public meeting with 59 applications being selected for funding. These new contracts were for a 5-year period and averaged \$6,500 per contract protecting 10,000 acres.

The 206 existing CSP contracts with Georgia producers continued to provide environmental benefits improving Georgia's soil, water and wildlife by implementing their CSP conservation plans.

These producers were rewarded for this effort through \$4.7 million in CSP payments.

Conservation tillage, cover crops, nutrient and pest management were the primary practices being utilized through the CSP.

Conservation Technical Assistance

Program Manager: Dot Harris

Phone: 706 546-2272

Fax: 706 546-2120

E-mail: dot.harris@ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

The purpose of the Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) Program is to provide technical assistance supported by science-based technology and tools to help people conserve, maintain, and improve their natural resources. The CTA Program provides the technical capability, including direct conservation planning, design, and implementation assistance, that helps people plan and apply conservation on the land. This assistance is provided to individuals, groups, and communities who make natural resource management decisions on private, tribal, and other non-federal lands.

The CTA Program provides the proven and consistent conservation technology and delivery infrastructure needed to achieve the benefits of a healthy and productive landscape, and has the following purposes:

- Reduce soil loss from erosion.
- Solve soil, water quality, water conservation, air quality, and agricultural waste management problems.
- Reduce potential damage caused by excess water and sedimentation or drought.
- Enhance the quality of aquatic and wildlife habitat.
- Improve the long term sustainability of all lands, including cropland, forestland, grazing lands, coastal lands, and developed and/or developing lands.
- Assist others in facilitating changes in land use as needed for natural resource protection and sustainability.

Conservation planning is a process for evaluating resource concerns on the landscape and developing alternatives to overcome the issues. It is the precursor for implementing conservation practices, with or without financial assistance.

In fiscal year 2008, there were 2,622 conservation plans written on 236,076 acres.

E-Government

Program Manager: Dot Harris

Phone: 706 546-2272

Fax: 706 546-2120

E-mail: dot.harris@ga.usda.gov

Landowners and others wanting to do business with the government can now do it online! NRCS is one of three United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Service Center agencies that now offer online services.

To learn more, visit the web site at <http://www.sc.egov.usda.gov>

The USDA has implemented a new process for registering customers who choose to conduct electronic transactions with USDA agencies. This new process was implemented October 21, 2003.

Under the new process, a customer can register for access to eGov applications by visiting:

<http://www.eauth.egov.usda.gov>

At this site, the application will take the customer through a simplified registration process.

When registered, the customer will need to visit their local service center and have their identity verified by presenting one of four forms of identification; state driver's license; state issued identification card; U.S. passport or a military identification card.

The service center staff will then be able to activate the account and provide the customer with access to many current and future eGov applications.

Please note that the USDA will only accept eAuthentication accounts from individuals. The USDA does not have the mechanism to issue accounts to businesses.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program

Program Manager: Jimmy Bramblett

Phone: 706 546-2277

Fax: 706 546-2145

E-mail: jimmy.bramblett@ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

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. An example would be downed trees blocking road crossings at creeks. These impediments cause blockage to creeks or small drainage ways, threatening damage to roads, bridges and other structures and increasing risk to human life.

In 2008, NRCS Georgia completed the final project in a suite of technical and financial assistance projects representing over \$1.8 million dollars of EWP funding.

These funds were used to apply emergency conservation measures in three counties: Gilmer, Rabun, and Towns. Emergency measures included debris removal, stream-bank protection, bioengineering, road and culvert headwall protection and road-slide stabilization.

NRCS is currently offering technical and financial assistance to three other communities: Burke County, Grady County, and Thomas County. Tornadoes, in east central Georgia during March, and Tropical Storm Fay, in southwest Georgia in August, caused significant local damage.

Local units of government have requested NRCS assistance under the agency's EWP Program to remove debris from rivers, streams, and creeks to protect life and property. They also requested help in stabilizing streambanks at bridges, culverts, other road crossings, and utilities to prevent further damage of public infrastructure.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Program Manager: Vacant

Phone: 706 546-2272

Fax: 706 546-2120

E-mail: @ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides a voluntary conservation program for farmers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land.

- *On private lands with farmers and ranchers,*
- *On a voluntary basis,*
- *Using local, state, tribal and federal partnerships,*
- *Providing flexible technical, educational, and financial assistance,*
- *Assisting Farmers and Ranchers in complying with federal, state and tribal environmental laws, and*
- *Encouraging environmental enhancement.*

In 2008, 1,560 farmers benefited from \$18.5 million in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds. Livestock producers received over 65 percent of the EQIP dollars, with cattle operators utilizing \$6.8 million in financial assistance to improve Georgia's water quality.

These livestock producers will implement grazing plans that include rotational grazing; alternative watering facilities, fencing and heavy use areas along with improve pasture plantings.

Water conservation continues to be a primary resource concern in South Georgia as producers sign



Jack McGlaun, a cattle farmer outside the community of Butler, in Taylor County, had several conservation concerns when he called the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service for assistance. He has about 500 acres and runs 70 brood cows and had no rotational grazing plan. Using the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) he planted a mixture of forage and installed cross fencing.

up to retrofit 427 center pivot irrigation systems from high pressure to low pressure systems. This will reduce water usage by

over 20 percent. Sub-surface drip irrigation grew in popularity in 2008 with an additional 14 systems being funded.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program *Continued*

This technology combines the water savings benefits of drip irrigation with the use of Global Positioning Guidance systems on a tractor. The drip tape is buried between the

rows and the GPS is used to plant cotton or peanuts precisely on the row avoiding the buried drip tape. These systems can reduce water usage by over 40 percent.

Another EQIP highlight was the special effort made to assist landowners in Southeast Georgia that had their lands damaged by the wildfires.

Peach Farmer likes the Micro-irrigation System

Jeff Wainwright manages the daily operations of Taylor Orchard, a 3,000-acre family run orchard just outside Reynolds in Taylor County. He said he had several natural resource concerns he wanted to address.

“I was looking for a more efficient way to irrigate the peach trees without wasting the water, without having so much runoff and without compacting the land. That was our three main goals. Burn less diesel, use less water and get a better job done,” he said.

Using EQIP, Wainwright put a 50-acre block under a micro-irrigation system first year and another 50-acre block the second year. Now he is looking at the savings. “I would say put-

ting in that system, on diesel alone, we saved probably 60%. We probably used 40% less diesel with the drip system than we did with the overhead,” said Wainwright.

Wainwright has noticed that using the micro-irrigation system has helped in two ways. It saves him money (cuts down on diseased fruit) and he has a better quality of fruit that tastes better.

Taylor Orchard has benefited from the application of the conservation treatments under EQIP both long and short term.

“It enables you to set up something long term in a field. If the program was



there and you were financially able you would want every tree you have irrigated under a drip or emitter system.

We have 90% irrigated now, but a lot of it is still with the overhead system and that's not efficient.

I would like to eventually get 60-70% of my farm under drip or emitters. I would feel great.

Look at your fuel savings!

It gives you bigger and more marketable fruit,” said Wainwright.

Farm & Ranch Lands Protection Program

Program Manager: Vacant

Phone: 706 546-2272

Fax: 706 546-2120

E-mail: @ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranchland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with State, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market value for the conservation easement. The program provides matching funds to State, Tribal, or local governmental organizations with existing farmland protection programs to purchase conservation easements or other interests in land.

In 2008, one proposal was selected for funding and will provide permanent protection of 210 acres of farmland in Oconee County. The value of the easements is \$1.1 million. Five additional easements closed in Oconee, Carroll and Walton County. All of the easements utilized funding from the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program along with a match from the Georgia Land Conservation Program.

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

Program Manager: Dennis Chessman

Phone: 706 546-2114

Fax: 706 546-2275

E-mail: dennis.chessman@ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

NRCS in cooperation with 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 through maintenance of healthy forage systems. Accomplishing the objectives is facilitated through on-farm cost-share demonstration projects, area- and state-wide conferences, development and distribution of grazing management resources, and funding of innovative research and land management projects

In 2008, Georgia received approximately \$370,000 from the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) to improve the management and condition of the state's private grazing lands. During the year, demonstration projects begun in 2007 were completed on 26 farms using GLCI funds. The demonstration projects allowed farmers to cost-share on a variety of practices, equipment, and structures targeting specific areas of their forage and livestock systems. The program was promoted and managed by Georgia Grazing Lands Conservation Coalition (GGLCC). In exchange for cost-share funds from GLCI, cooperating producers agree to allow GGLCC access to their farms for tours and field days.

A highlight of the year was the creation of two new NRCS grazing-related positions. Al Hubbard and Philip Brown are Grassland Conservationists stationed in the Carrollton and Washington Field Offices respectively. Al and Philip hit the ground running and have been assisting Field Offices and landowners throughout north Georgia with grazing planning since last winter. These GLCI-funded positions are new to the state.

A grazing system demonstration has been established on about 50 acres at the Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center in Americus. A resident beef cattle herd of about 20 cows and calves are grazing a unique system of native warm season grasses, tall fescue, bermudagrass, bahiagrass, and nine acres of silvopasture. The system will be used to develop recommendations for grazing management and for regular field days.



Cows and calves grazing a unique system of native warm season grasses.

National Resources Inventory

Program Manager: Edward Ealy

Phone: 706 546-2278

Fax: 706 546-2145

E-mail: edward.ealy@ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

The National Resources Inventory (NRI) is a statistical survey of land use and resource condition on nonfederal lands in the United States. It is designed to be consistent over the whole nation and over time.

NRI is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) tool to provide Congress and the Nation with natural resources information - especially concerning the nation's farmland. Since the early 1980's, resource data has been gathered on a random sample of 160-acre land units.

Three points within those units are studied more intensively. As of 2005, this work is divided between three national Remote Sensing Laboratories and local field offices. Field office personnel in Georgia surveyed 1,994 of these points in 2008.

Resource information available in NRI includes:

Crop year 1997 – Land Use in broad categories of Cropland, Pastureland, Forestland, Urban Land, Transportation, Federal Land, and Permanent Water. In addition to the broad categories, land use can be further subdivided into approximately 200 finer categories of crop types, forest types and other types of land use. Resource condition is mainly erosion estimates. In current NRI work, a transition from the Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE) to the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE II) is a major emphasis. Wetland loss and gain is another of NRI's data points.

Crop year 2003 – Broad Land Use, Erosion and Wetlands on the national level (no sub-state estimates available). This data showed Georgia losing prime farmland to development at the third fastest rate in the nation. In good news, the nation showed its first net gain of agricultural wetlands since the NRI began in 1982.

Conservation Effects Assessment Program (CEAP) – This initiative to correlate NRI data with Agricultural Research Service (ARS) study watersheds began with the 2002 Farm Bill. Several very interesting publications have been released through this program. Releases in 2008 are:

*Integrated Landscape Monitoring - Prairie Potholes Pilot: Tier II Study Plan

*Ecosystem Services Derived from Wetland Conservation Practices in the United States Prairie Pothole Region with an Emphasis on the U.S. Department of Agriculture Conservation Reserve and Wetlands Reserve Programs

National Resources Inventory *Continued*

*Interim Report – Assessment of Ecological Services Derived From U.S. Department of Agriculture Conservation Programs in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley: Regional Estimates and Functional Condition Indicator Models

*CEAP Conservation Insight—Estimated Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Benefits to Mixed-Grass Prairie Birds

Effects of the Wetlands Reserve Program on Waterfowl Carrying Capacity in the Rainwater Basin Region of South-Central Nebraska

*CEAP Conservation Insight—Ecological Monitoring Insights from the Wetlands Reserve Program in Missouri

A complete library of CEAP publications since 2002 and all the data listed here can be found at the NRI website: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI/> .

Plant Materials Program

Center Manager: Mike Owsley

Phone: 229-924-4499

Fax: 229-924-0013

E-mail: mike.owsley@ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

The Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center (PMC) is a branch of the USDA-NRCS. It is one of 27 plant materials centers located throughout the United States. The Center is located on the Northwest corner of Americus, Georgia, in Southwestern Georgia and is approximately 40 miles North of Albany. Areas served include Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina and parts of Tennessee and Florida. Its mission is to develop plant materials and state-of-the-art plant science technology to solve natural resource problems and meet the objectives of environmental programs. The emphasis of the PMC is using native plants, developing test and release and providing superior adapted plants to commercial growers along with production and management technology.

The PMC worked with 13 different studies in the past year. Some of the highlights are as follows;

- Increasing a promising line of big bluestem for possible future use as forage and/or biofuel.

- A cattle rotation study was conducted with Dennis Chessman, grazing specialist, NRCS Athens, to demonstrate a year-round cattle grazing system and silvopasture establishment.

- Assisted Dr. Brad Morris PhD in Agronomy, legumes researcher with USDA-Agriculture Researcher Station (ARS) Griffin, studying legumes for future pharmaceutical use.

- A Bobwhite Restoration Study was done between Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the NRCS biologists in Alabama and Georgia on 10 acres at the PMC.

- The PMC worked on a future release with South Carolina called Penn Center switchgrass for use along South Carolina coastal area between high marsh and maritime forest. Staff located and hope to collect seed from sweetgrass population on Sapelo Island, to help support the basket making industry along the coast.



New release Muckalee Woolgrass
(Constructed wetlands)

Plant Materials Program Continued

- Three field days were held covering CP-36 training and training on prescribed burns for NRCS and others.

- PMC staff participated in ecological site descriptions in South Carolina with a Regional team to describe understory and overstory of longleaf pine communities.

- PMC had a total of 23 presentations and/or training events, produced 13 technical documents and released two new plants.

- Five new field plantings were established.

- Six field plantings in Alabama and Georgia were evaluated.



CP36 field day conducted in March 2008



Native grass and forbes for Wildlife in Summer 2008

Resource Conservation & Development

Program Manager: Jimmy Bramblett

Phone: 706 546-2277

Fax: 706 546-2145

E-mail: jimmy.bramblett@ga.usda.gov

Introduction

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 Resource Conservation & Development (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 local needs, and create local solutions for their Community. The focus on the local direction and control has made RC&D one of the most successful rural development programs of the Federal Government.

During 2008, RC&D Councils increased 35 businesses for the state of Georgia. They completed 11 watershed, or area-wide plans, totaling over 47,000 acres. It is also estimated that RC&D Councils implemented 265 projects totaling over \$14 million in assistance during the year.

This year, Georgia's 11 RC&D Councils completed Area Plans for their respective jurisdictions. Area Plans are guideposts to direct Council activities. To complete an Area Plan, each Council solicited public input about resource and economic needs from individuals and organizations within their Council Area. Over 1,200 individuals supported the process by offering suggestions on how the quality of life can be improved within their respective area. As a result, Georgia's eleven RC&D Councils have identified over 600 new projects to pursue between 2008 and 2013. Examples of projects Councils will be pursuing include, but are not limited to:

- Water Quality Improvement Projects
- Wildlife Enhancement Projects
- Energy Conservation Projects
- Economic Development Projects
- Water Supply Projects
- Conservation Education Assistance
- History and Tourism Projects, and
- Philanthropic Assistance

Resource Conservation & Development *Continued*

The diversity of RC&D is unmatched by any other organization. As 501(c)3 non-profit organizations, RC&D Councils enjoy the support of a full-time federal employee, along with additional program resources from the federal government. At the same time, RC&D Councils enjoy flexibility to provide local assistance in many ways beyond the ability of all units of government.

RC&D Councils in Georgia

Central Savannah River
501 N. Main St., Wrens,
Georgia 30833
(706) 706 547-4045
Fax: (706) 547-7606

Chestatee-Chattahoochee
170 Scoggins Drive, Demorest,
Georgia 30535
(706) 894-1591
Fax: (706) 894-1597

Coastal Georgia
185 Richard Davis Dr., Ste 204
Richmond Hill, GA 31324
(912) 459-2070
Fax: (912) 459-2071

Golden Triangle
822-R Jesse Johnson Street
Blakely, Georgia 39823
(229) 723-3841
Fax: (229) 723-3842
www.enhancinggeorgia.org

Limestone Valley
125 Red Bud Road, Suite 7
Calhoun, Georgia 30701
(706) 625-7044
Fax: (706) 625-9943

Oconee River
P.O. Box 247
Watkinsville, Georgia 30677
(706) 769-7922
Fax: (706) 769-3184

Pine Country
105 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive
Soperton, Georgia 30457
(912) 529-6652
Fax: (912) 529-6000

Rolling Hills
203 Legion Road
Dallas, Georgia 30132
(770) 505-4288
rlnghills@netscape.net

Seven Rivers
239 N.E. Park Avenue, Suite E
Baxley, Georgia 31513
(912) 367-7679
Fax: (912) 367-1184

Two Rivers
100 Ridley Avenue
LaGrange, Georgia 30240
(706) 885-0101
Fax: (706) 885-0103
www.tworiversrcd.org

Upper Ocmulgee River
750 S. Perry Street, Suite 212
Lawrenceville, Georgia 30045
(770) 339-6071
(678) 442-1329

Soil Survey

Program Manager: Edward Ealy

Phone: 706 546-2272

Fax: 706 546-2145

E-mail: edward.ealy@ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

The Soil Survey Program is authorized under law and regulation, and guided by executive order and secretary's memoranda. The Agriculture Appropriation Act of 1896 established the soil survey, and subsequent laws (1903, 1928, and 1935) clarified the purpose. In 1966, Congress expanded the scope and further clarified the intent of the Soil Survey Program in Public Law 89 560, known as the Soil Survey for Resource Planning and Development Act. This law, now codified under the Public Health and Welfare 42 USC, provides detailed expectations for the soil survey program and is the principal basis for the soil survey mission.

The authorities define the mission of the Soil Survey Program. Taken together, the authorities direct the Secretary of Agriculture to:

- 1. make an inventory of the soil resources of the United States;*
- 2. keep the soil survey relevant to ever-changing needs;*
- 3. interpret the information and make it available in a useful form; and*
- 4. promote the soil survey and provide technical assistance in its use for a wide range of community planning and resource development issues related to non-farm and farm uses.*

The soil survey program of the United States is a cooperative effort conducted by Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and other Federal agencies in collaboration with states and other entities. Leadership for the Federal part of the National Cooperative Soil Survey is delegated to the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service by the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment (7 CFR 2.61).

The NRCS will complete the initial inventory of all the soils in Georgia in 2011. After the initial inventory is completed, the Georgia Cooperative Soil Survey will begin to focus toward the three remaining core mission functions mentioned above.

Nationally, efforts have already begun within the Soil Survey Division to redirect its focus toward continually improving soil survey information to meet ever-changing needs for new data and analysis, delivering soil survey analysis and data in more useful forms to a more

diverse clientele, promoting soil survey, and providing technical assistance in its use. The focus will be to deliver the soil survey on a Major Land Resources Area (MLRA) basis and remove the political boundaries from the initial soil inventory.

Soil Survey Continued

To achieve this mission, the NRCS has begun to restructure the soil survey program that focuses on initial mapping to a program that will focus on updating and maintaining the soil inventory gathered over the past five decades.

When the initial soil inventory is completed the NRCS will have reduced the number of Soil Survey offices in the United States, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands and the Pacific Basin, from 255 to 144 MLRA Soil Survey Offices (SSO). Georgia will have three MLRA SSOs.

The Griffin, GA. SSO will have soil survey update and maintenance responsibilities in the Piedmont (MLRA 136) for Georgia and Alabama.

The Richmond Hill, GA. SSO will have soil survey update and maintenance responsibilities of the Tidewater and Atlantic Coast Flatwoods (MLRA 153A & 153B) in Georgia, South Carolina and Florida.

The Tifton, GA. SSO will have soil survey update and maintenance responsibilities in the Coastal Plain (MLRA 133A)

of Georgia and a small area in North West Florida.

The update and maintenance for the Carolina and Georgia Sand Hills (MLRA 137) in Georgia will be the responsibility of the Bishopville, SC MLRA SSO.

The update and maintenance for the Blue Ridge (MLRA 130B) in Georgia will be the responsibility of the MLRA SSO in Ashville, NC.

The update and maintenance for the Ridge and Valley (MLRA 128) in Georgia will be the responsibility of the Knoxville, TN MLRA SSO; and the Sand Mountain (MLRA 129) in Georgia will be the responsibility of the Normal, AL MLRA SSO.

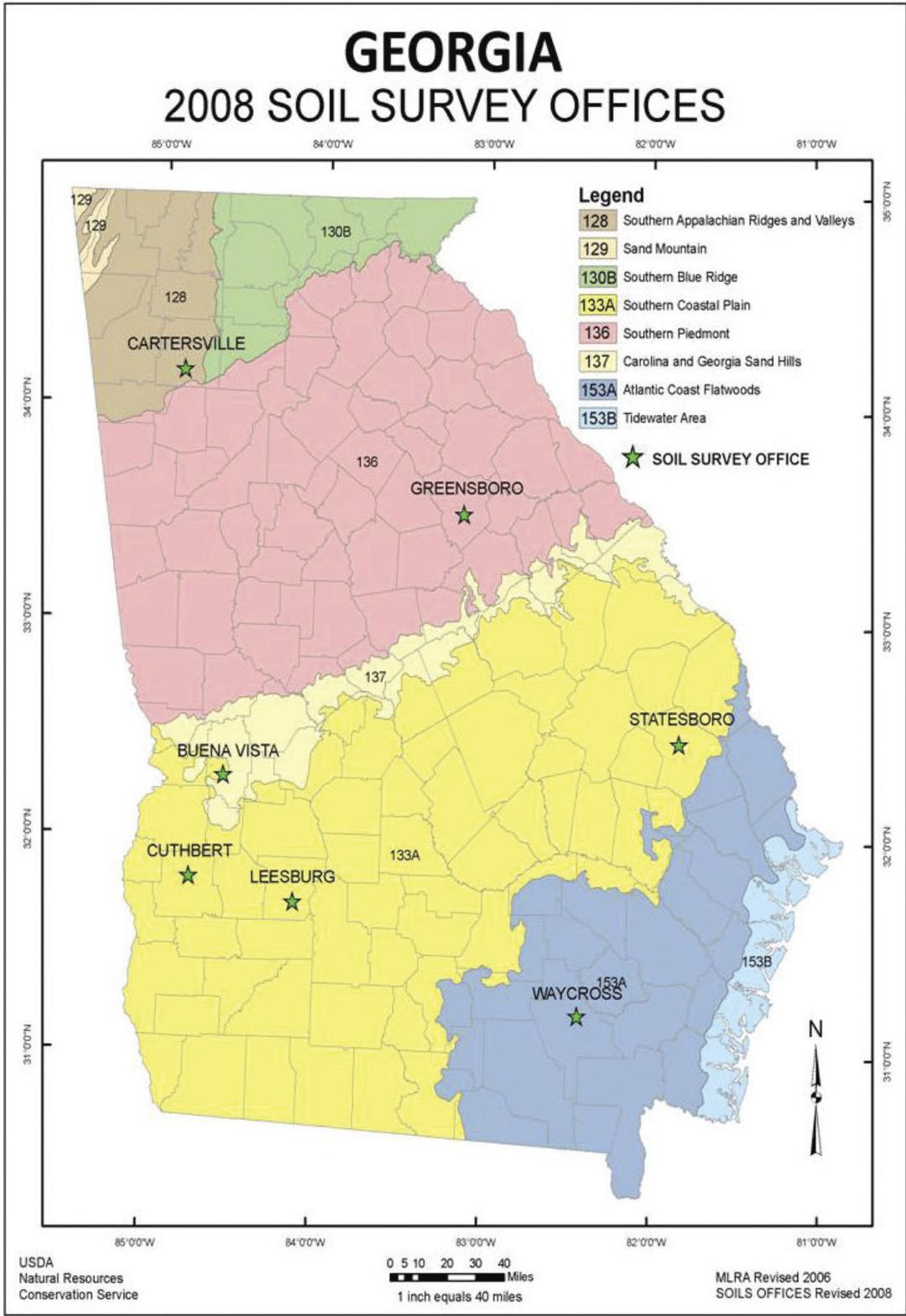
In FY 2008 the Georgia Cooperative soil survey published new or updated soil surveys for Effingham, Fulton and Monroe Counties; completed field work in Webster County and posted the SSURGO (Soil Survey Geographic Database) for Ware County.

All digitized soil surveys are available to the public through the web soil survey, an interactive, web-

based delivery system. Soil survey reports and soil data downloads are available at

<http://www.soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/>. More information can be found at <http://www.soils.usda.gov/>.

Soil Survey Continued



Technical Service Providers

Program Manager: Maryann Trent

Phone: 706 546-2114

Fax: 706 546-2275

E-mail: maryann.trent@ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

The Technical Service Provider (TSP) program was outlined in the 2002 Farm Bill. The TSP program requires the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to allow producers to receive technical assistance by individuals and entities other than NRCS. This provision is designed to ensure NRCS has the capacity to address the significant workload associated with implementing Farm Bill programs. TSP assistance is another tool for NRCS to use in the implementation of conservation programs.

In fiscal year 2008, NRCS obligated \$334,426.00 in the TSP program throughout Georgia. These funds were disbursed to seventeen counties for use in the Agricultural Conservation Enrollees/Seniors (ACES) program, National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) agreement, Georgia Forestry Commission agreement (GFC), Department of Natural Resources agreement and the Ogeechee SWCD Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP). Through these obligated funds, hundreds of conservation practices have been installed.

The installations of practices such as cover crop, critical area planting, fence, hedgerow planting, irrigation water management, nutrient management, pasture and hayland planting, prescribe grazing, residue management, riparian forest buffer, heavy use area, well, pipeline, tank and trough and stream crossing, and the use of the CNMP have afforded Georgia's NRCS another avenue to help people help the land.

Watershed Planning Program

Program Manager: Jimmy Bramblett

Phone: 706 546-2277

Fax: 706 546-2145

E-mail: jimmy.bramblett@ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

The Watershed Program helps sponsoring organizations in the development of a plan on watersheds 250,000 acres or less. Resource concerns associated with impaired water quality, limited water supply, flooding, land management, sedimentation, recreation, and fish and wildlife habitats are eligible for evaluation. Watershed Plans and Environmental Assessments propose alternative courses of action to alleviate identified problems. Public benefits, costs, and cost-sharing rates are identified as a necessary prerequisite to justify Federal financial assistance for installing works of improvement.

In 2008, NRCS in Georgia provided technical assistance to nine communities with technical watershed planning assistance.

Community needs for water supply projects have become the most common resource concern generating request for assistance from NRCS.

Other community scale resource concerns addressed this year include water quality degradation, agricultural irrigation deficiencies, and excessive erosion.

Three watershed, or area-wide, plans were completed during the year; two for water quality (Upper Alapaha Watershed and Upper Withlacoochee Watershed), and one for erosion control (Fort Benning).



Multiple purpose reservoir

Watershed Rehabilitation Program

Program Manager: Jimmy Bramblett

Phone: 706 546-2277

Fax: 706 546-2145

E-mail: jimmy.bramblett@ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

The Watershed Program helps sponsoring organizations in the development of a plan on watersheds 250,000 acres or less. Resource concerns associated with impaired water quality, limited water supply, flooding, land management, sedimentation, recreation, and fish and wildlife habitats are eligible for evaluation. Watershed Plans and Environmental Assessments propose alternative courses of action to alleviate identified problems. Public benefits, costs, and cost-sharing rates are identified as a necessary prerequisite to justify Federal financial assistance for installing works of improvement.

Since 1953, 357 project dams have been built in Georgia. Currently, 189 of these are “High Hazard,” indicating a potential loss of life if the dam were to fail. Preliminary investigations indicate that some \$120 million will be needed to upgrade these structures and ensure compliance with current dam safety legislation.

NRCS project dams annually provide \$21 million of benefits to local communities by providing flood protection, water based recreation, municipal water supply, and other water uses. Property values for land associated with these floodwater retarding structures have also increased. Homes and property adjacent to one of these reservoirs averages 25% higher than home and property without such amenities.

One of the major issues involved with aging dams is the safety and health of an estimated 17,000 people downstream from the dams. Many dams were originally built in rural areas to protect agricultural lands; but homes, business, and roads have now been built downstream thereby increasing the impacts if they were to fail. Congress passed legislation in 2000 that authorized NRCS to provide financial and technical assistance for rehabilitation of dams that were originally constructed under NRCS water resource programs.

Since 2002, NRCS-Georgia has secured \$11 million under this program to upgrade six watershed dams. In 2008, construction for public safety was completed on Yellow River Watershed Structure No. 15 (Y-15). NRCS invested almost \$3 million in this project, which took \$4.1 million to complete.



Y-15 Upgraded Gwinnett County

Watershed Rehabilitation Program Continued

Additionally, 44 dams have been, or are being, analyzed to determine the extent of downstream hazards. Emergency Action Plans are being developed on all of these dams to help protect Georgia residents living below these structures.



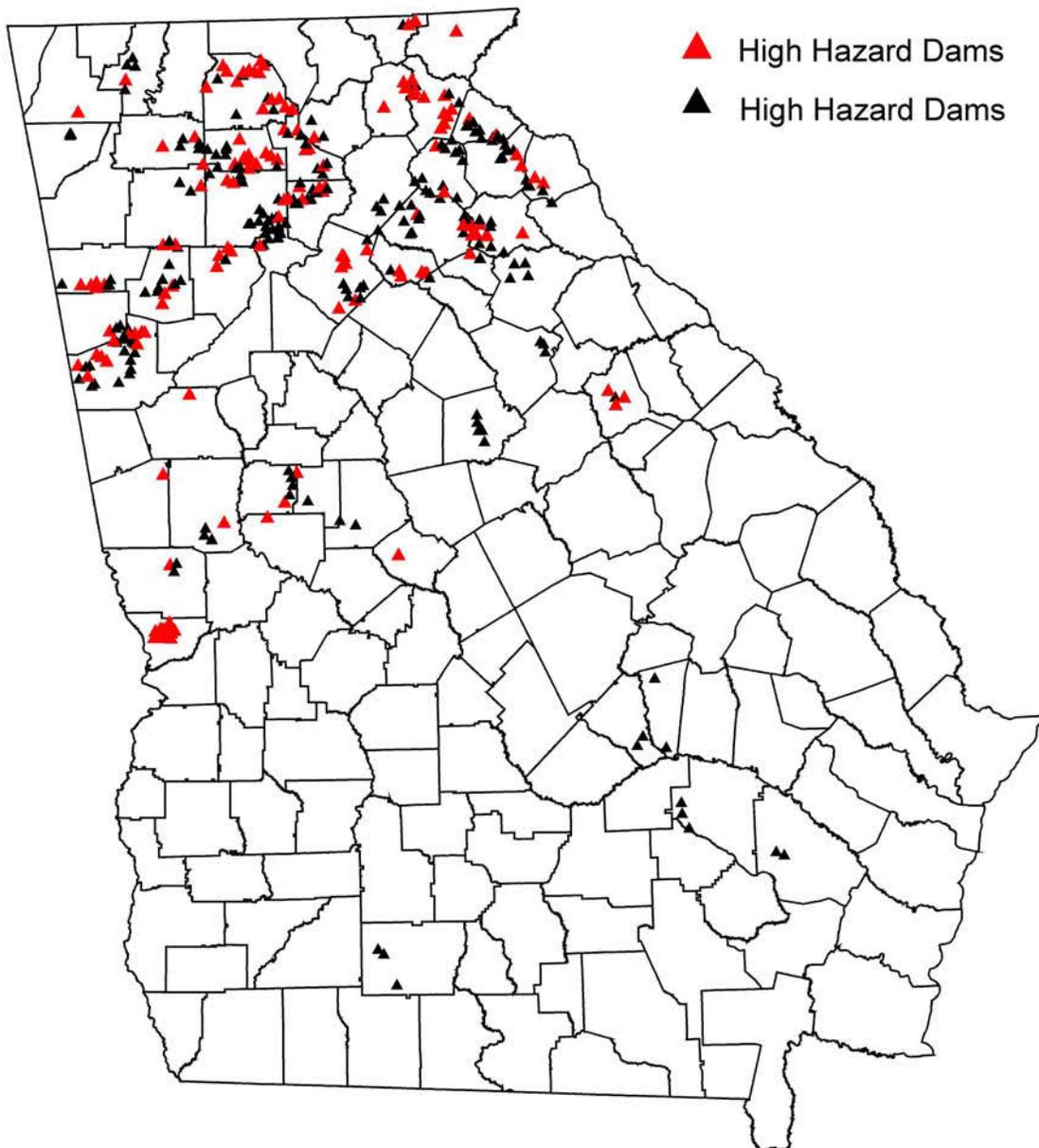
Y-17 Upgrade Gwinnett County

Watershed Rehabilitation Program *Continued*

NRCS Assisted Dams



Hazard Classification



November 2006



Watershed Operations Program

Program Manager: Jimmy Bramblett

Phone: 706 546-2277

Fax: 706 546-2145

E-mail: jimmy.bramblett@ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

The Watershed Program helps sponsoring organizations in the development of a plan on watersheds of 250,000 acres or less. During planning, problems such as water quality, flooding, water and land management, and sedimentation are evaluated and works of improvement are proposed to alleviate problems. The resulting watershed plans estimates benefits, costs and cost-sharing rates. The plans arrange operation and maintenance necessary to justify Federal assistance to install works of improvement.

Watershed Operations Program

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

The following watershed projects are active watershed protection projects for water quality: 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; and Tobesofkee Creek Watershed - Lamar and Monroe Counties

NRCS-Georgia has received over \$7 million to help local landowners install conservation practices for water quality improvement in the above projects. Through 2008, just over \$4 million of financial assistance has been provided to landowners.

Watershed Dam Operation and Maintenance

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 \$150,000 for much needed maintenance. To date, the maintenance on 112 dams has been brought up to date. NRCS provides technical assistance with identification of maintenance needed.



Larry Coburn a former soil conservationist with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service in Georgia and a farmer in Putnam County pose at water crossing

Wetland Reserve Program

Program Manager: Vacant

Phone: 706 546-2272

Fax: 706 546-2120

E-mail: @ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. NRCS provides landowners the technical and financial support to make restoration possible. The NRCS goal is to restore the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled in the program. This program offers landowners an opportunity to establish long-term conservation and wildlife habitat protection.

In 2008, 598 new acres were signed up under the wetlands reserve program.

An additional 8,000 acres were restored, or are in the process of restoration. These acres occurred in existing WRP easements. Restoration included removing culverts that impede flood water movement in bottomland hardwoods and replacing with low water crossings and the construction of ditch plugs to restore the hydrology in wetlands that were drained years ago. Due to the land being burned by the fire in April 2007, in January and February 2008, the NRCS assisted land owners who planted 550,000 Cypress trees and 50,000 Longleaf Pines in Roundabout Swamp, Atkinson County.



Individual carrying Bald Cypress on their back for planting.



L to R: Congressman Jack Kingston, Lynn Nichols, district conservationist for the NRCS, David Lamm, assistant state conservationist – programs, James E. Tillman, Sr. state conservationist, David Ferrell, assistant state conservationist for area four walk Roundabout Swamp.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

Program Manager: Vacant

Phone: 706 546-2272

Fax: 706 546-2120

E-mail: @ga.usda.gov

Program Highlights

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) develops or improves wildlife habitat on privately owned land. Through WHIP, NRCS provides both technical assistance and up to 75 percent cost-share assistance to establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat. The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program for people who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat primarily on private land.

Georgia received \$727,000 in Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) funds this year. Ninety-four (94) contracts were approved in 44 counties.

Tree and Shrub plantings, prescribed burning and early successional habitat management continue to be the primary practices being used to improve Georgia's wildlife on private lands.

Wildlife habitat damaged or destroyed in the wildfires of 2007 was targeted for restoration efforts using WHIP funds.

These areas will be planted to Longleaf Pine.