

helping people help the land



“If we take care of the land,
it will take care of us”

— First NRCS Chief Hugh Hammond Bennett



helping people help the land



Mission

75 Years of Helping People Help the Land

For over 75 years we have provided leadership in a partnership effort to help America's private land owners and managers conserve their soil, water, air, plants, animals and other natural resources.

The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) was established by an act of the 74th Congress on April 27, 1935 when Congress passed Public Law 46 (Soil Conservation Act) which declared that soil erosion was a menace to the national welfare and authorized broad powers to the new agency to attack the problem.

Our name was changed October 20, 1994, as part of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994, to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

From the date of our establishment, NRCS employees have provided technical assistance based on sound science, suited to a customer's specific needs and we have provided financial assistance for many conservation practices and will continue to do so.

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Did you know?

NRCS has provided technical assistance to producers in 2011 to develop 2,299 conservation plans on 333,838 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

AREA 1
Assistant State
Conservationist
for Field Operations

AREA 2
Assistant State
Conservationist
for Field Operations

AREA 3
Assistant State
Conservationist
for Field Operations

AREA 4
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

State
Resource
Conservationist



Designated District Conservationists

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

Assistant State Conservationists for Field Operations

Area 1	Griffin	Michael Watson	Area 2	Athens	Jack Lewis
Area 3	Americus	Floyd Hooker	Area 4	Waycross	David Ferrell



District Conservationists

Last Name	First Name	Telephone
Askew	Cindy	706-638-2207
Austin	James	912-459-2350
Barrow	Rita	912-265-8092
Belflower	George (Buddy)	770-536-6981
Bevan	Craig	478-625-7771
Biggers	Russell	706-886-8223
Blackburn	Austin V.	912-564-2207
Boss	Carol	706-335-7145
Brooks	Dennis	706-342-1315
Brown	Cread	706-554-5183
Cabe	Doug	706-629-2582
Cleland	Steve	229-723-3825
Collins	Marcus	229-246-8282
Essex	Calvin	478-987-2280
Ferguson	Forrest	706-376-2876
Fokes	Lewis	229-649-3131
Hall	Graylen	229-268-9106
Haygood	Cindy	770-832-8942
Hosmer	Richard	229-995-5811
Jackson	Vontice	229-430-8509
Jones	Ray	478-956-6490
Keel	Kevin	770-251-4283
Lanier	Sidney C.	478-237-8037
Leidner	Mary	229-382-4776
McCranie	Charles V.	478-374-8140
Moore	Stan	229-686-2363
Pagan	Jose	770-267-1359
Palmer	Scotty	706-453-7021
Parker	Britt S.	478-275-0425

Last Name	First Name	Telephone
Pickard	Valerie	770-792-0647
Railey	Zack	912-384-4811
Reese	Karen	229-732-6211
Richardson	Rory	229-263-4909
Teems	Sheri	706-291-5651
Thrift	William G.	912-871-2605
Towery	Doug	706-745-2794
Westerfield	Carmen	770-358-3223



Agricultural Conservation Enrollees/Seniors

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Program Description

To date, Georgia Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has put nearly \$620,000 into the Agricultural Conservation Enrollees/Seniors (ACES) program. This program is 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 administered by the USDA-NRCS from a bigger program run by the National Older Worker Career Center (NOWCC), a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Arlington, VA. Georgia currently has 11 ACES employees across the state.

2011 Highlight

Georgia has 11 ACES employees working throughout the state. The state is divided into four areas. Each area has at least two ACES.

Georgia NRCS has expended nearly \$620,000.00 into the ACES program to date.

ACES have greatly benefited Georgia's NRCS with the implementation of conservation practices and data input.



Agricultural Water Enhancement Program

Program Manager: Vacant
Phone: 706 546-2272
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E-mail:

Program Description

The Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) is a voluntary conservation initiative that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to implement agricultural water enhancement activities on agricultural land for the purposes of conserving surface and ground water and improving water quality.

As part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), AWEP operates through contracts with producers to plan and implement conservation practices in project areas established through partnership agreements.

Under AWEP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) enters into partnership agreements with eligible entities that want to promote ground and surface water conservation or improve water quality on agricultural lands. The Secretary of Agriculture has delegated the authority for AWEP to the NRCS Chief.

2011 Highlight

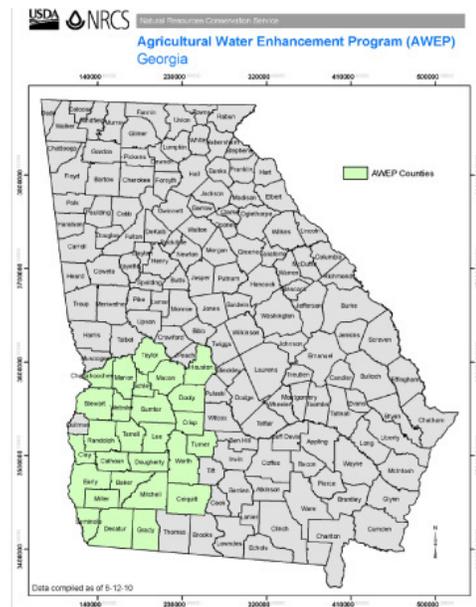
To date, \$1.3 million covering 151 contracts have been obligated. AWEP 2011 funding was available for all AWEP practices including: the low pressure drop nozzle retrofit with end-gun shutoff, remote soil moisture monitoring, sod based rotation and variable rate irrigation.

The AWEP grant funds agricultural water conservation in the Lower Flint River Basin at a 75/25 percent cost share.

The counties eligible for funding include: Baker, Calhoun, Chattahoochee, Clay, Colquitt, Crisp, Dooly, Decatur, Dougherty, Early, Grady, Houston, Lee, Macon, Marion, Miller, Mitchell, Randolph, Schley, Seminole, Stewart, Sumter, Terrell, Taylor, Turner, Webster and Worth.



The bottom picture is the retrofitted irrigation system with the new rotator or wobbler style spray nozzles on drop hoses being monitored by the new remote soil moisture monitor system (above).



Map of 2010 AWEP Counties



Conservation Innovation Grants

Program Manager: Dot Harris
Phone: 706 546-2272
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Program Description

The Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) is a voluntary program intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production.

These projects may be watershed-based, regional, or statewide in scope.

State, tribal, and local governmental entities, non-governmental organizations, and individuals may apply.

Selection will be based on the criteria established in the request for proposals notice, and selected applicants may receive grants of up to 50 percent of the total project cost.

Applicants must provide non-Federal funding for at least 50 percent of the project cost. Up to 50 percent (25 percent of the total project cost) of the applicant's match may be from in-kind contributions. The remainder must be cash.

States may elect to conduct a state level CIG process. Georgia has set aside funding for a State level CIG program beginning in Fiscal year 2010.

2011 Highlights

Georgia had five Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) funded nationally in 2011. Total funding for these five awardees exceeded \$3.1 million. Georgia awardees include:

- National Fish and Wild Foundation for “Accelerating and Sustaining Longleaf Conservation on Private Lands”
- SureHarvest for “Stewardship Index for Specialty Crops”
- AviHome, LLC for “Commercial Demonstration of the Reduction of Ammonia (NH₃) Production and other Environmental Benefits in Poultry Houses through use of a Plenum Flooring System”
- University of Georgia for “Using Solar as an Alternative Energy Source Needed to Power Small Off-Grid Farm Applications”
- Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District for “Irrigation Automation to Improve The Efficiency of Water Resource Management in Row Crop Production and Maintain Aquatic-Based Ecosystem Services in the Lower Flint River Basin of Georgia”



Conservation Stewardship Program

Program Manager: Vacant

Phone: 706 546-2272

Fax: 706 546-2120

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

Program Description

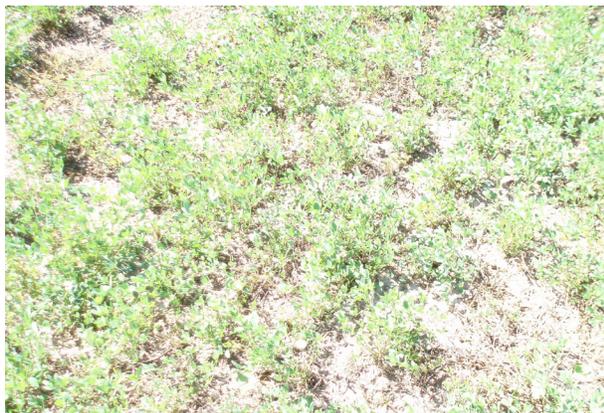
Through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to eligible producers to conserve and enhance soil, water, air and related natural resources on their land.

Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest lands, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe.

It also includes private agricultural land (including cropped woodland, marshes, and agricultural land used for the production of livestock) on which resource concerns related to agricultural production could be addressed.

Participation in the program is voluntary.

CSP encourages land stewards to improve their conservation performance by installing and adopting additional activities.



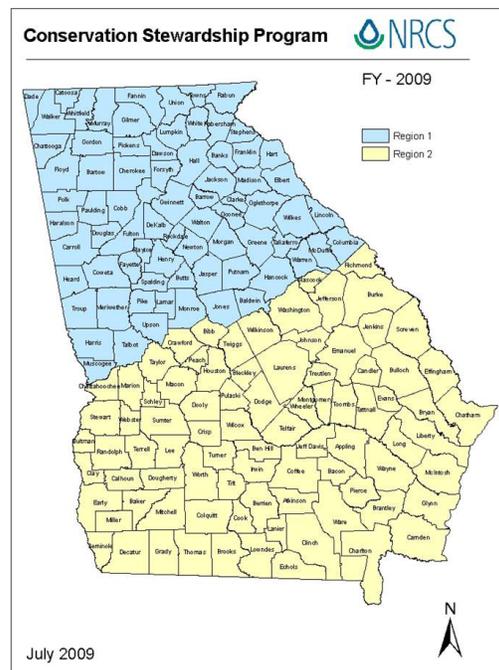
Conservation tillage improves soil health and reduces soil erosion. An additional benefit is the energy savings due to less plowing of the fields.

2011 Highlights

\$20.8 Million was obligated with CSP in 2011 comprising 997 contracts.



Agricultural land can be enrolled in the Conservation Stewardship Program.





Conservation Technical Assistance Program

Program Manager: Dot Harris
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Program Description

The purpose of the Conservation Technical Assistance is to provide technical assistance supported by science-based technology and tools to help people conserve, maintain, and improve their natural resources. Conservation Technical Assistance 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.

Conservation Technical Assistance 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.

2011 Highlights

In fiscal year 2011, in Georgia, there were 2,299 conservation plans written on 333,838 acres.



Soil Conservationist Scotty Thomas, (R) reviewing a conservation plan with a program participant.



NRCS District Conservationist Graylen Hall (L) conducting a farm visit.



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

To learn more, visit the web site at

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

The USDA has implemented a process for registering customers who choose to conduct electronic transactions with USDA agencies. Under this 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.



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



Emergency Watershed Protection Program

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Phone: 706 546-2083
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E-mail:

Program Description

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.



Streambank damaged by storm

2011 Highlights

In 2011, \$4.8 Million was obligated to restore 96 project sites in 30 communities. NRCS-Georgia also responded to an outbreak of tornados across northwest Georgia in April. After evaluating 106 projects sites, NRCS-Georgia has request \$400,000 to assist 8-communities with restoring 66 project sites.



EWP helps avoid the disaster after the disaster by restoring water structures to their pre-storm condition.



An example of streambank stabilization. Horsley Mill Road new bridge was constructed by Carroll County. The actual work done in and around the stream was partially covered by EWP funds.



Emergency Watershed Protection Program - Floodplain Easement Program

Program Description

Section 382 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, Public Law 104-127, amended the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) to provide for the purchase of floodplain easements as an emergency measure. Since 1996, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has purchased floodplain easements on lands that qualify for EWP assistance. Floodplain easements restore, protect, maintain and enhance the functions of the floodplain; conserve natural values including fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention, ground water recharge and open space; reduce long-term federal disaster assistance; and safeguard lives and property from floods, drought and the products of erosion.

NRCS may purchase EWP easements on any floodplain lands that have been impaired within the last twelve months or that have a history of repeated flooding (i.e., flooded at least two times during the past 10 years).

Program Manager: Vacant
Phone: 706 546-2083
Fax: 706 546-2120
E-mail:

2011 Highlights

In 2011, restoration was completed on five EWP floodplain easements, four in Upson County and one in Gordon County, for a total of 515 acres of protected and restored floodplains. Restoration on these areas included fencing, removal of exotic grasses and replanting of native hardwood trees.



A floodplain easement in Upson County, Georgia, where we fenced cattle out of the floodplain and replanted native hardwoods for restoration and protection of the floodplain on the Flint River.



Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Program Manager: Vacant
Phone: 706 546-2272
Fax: 706 546-2120
E-mail:

Program Description

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.*



Conservation tillage helps reduce soil erosion.

2011 Highlights

In 2011, the EQIP Program was funded at \$14.4 million covering 1,061 contracts.

Practices include retrofitting of irrigation nozzles to reduce water use; fencing to keep livestock out of natural water sources and other practices to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality and increase water quantity.



A retrofitted nozzle allows water to be applied directly to the crops and reduces the amount of water lost due to evaporation.



Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Organic Initiative

Program Description

Organic Initiative funding is provided through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), a voluntary conservation program administered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals.

The 2008 Farm Bill provided for assistance specifically for organic farm operations and those converting to organic production.

Eligible producers include those certified through USDA's National Organic Program, those transitioning to certified organic production, and those who meet organic standards but are exempt from certification because their gross annual organic sales are less than \$5,000.

The program provides up to \$20,000 per year per person or legal entity, with a maximum total of \$80,000 over six years.

2011 Highlights

In 2011, 42 contracts were funded and \$646,600.00 was obligated.



Organic Vegetables



Environmental Quality Incentives Program

High Tunnel Initiative

Program Description

Under this pilot study, NRCS funded up to one high-tunnel per applicant with a maximum size of 2,178 sq. ft. The applicant agrees to maintain the structure and a record system for three years.

High tunnels, sometimes known as hoop houses, help small farmers extend their growing season allowing them to generate income as the temperature gets colder in the fall and winter.

They are used year-round in warmer parts of the country, providing steady incomes to farmers – a significant advantage to owners of small farms, limited-resource farmers and organic producers.

Made of ribs of plastic or metal pipe covered with a layer of plastic sheeting, high tunnels are easy to build, maintain and move.

NRCS is studying whether the use of high tunnels leads to conservation of natural resources.

2010 Highlights

In 2011, 35 high tunnels were approved and funded at a cost of \$202,000.00.



A high tunnel differs from a greenhouse in several ways. Crops must be planted in the ground in a high tunnel and they cannot be heated. The 3-year pilot study will evaluate the natural resource benefits of high tunnels.



A greenhouse differs from a high tunnel in that crops can be raised above the ground.



Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Pigweed Initiative

Program Description

The pilot project is being funded via the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and is targeted to cotton farmers.

Participants worked with NRCS to design a conservation plan and agree to implement several practices that will assist with the control of the glyphosate-resistant pigweed.

General Criteria:

- 1. Participants must meet the regular EQIP eligibility requirements.*
- 2. Individuals, groups of landowners or non-government organizations are eligible but must have evidence of control or ownership of land.*
- 3. Payment rate will be up to \$75.00 per acre for two years.*
- 4. The contracts are for three years with a minimum of 100.0 acres of cropland owned and a maximum of \$13,000 per contract.*

2011 Highlights

In 2011, NRCS funded 7 contracts and obligated \$93,000.00.



Palmer Amaranth, more commonly known as pigweed.



Farm and Ranchland Protection Program

Program Manager: Vacant

Phone: 706 546-2272

Fax: 706 546-2120

E-mail:

Program Description

Farm and Ranchland Protection Program is achieved by working cooperatively with State, Tribal, and local governments and non-governmental organizations; the United States Department of Agriculture is authorized to facilitate and provide funding for the purchase of conservation easements and other interests in eligible land that is subject to a pending offer from an eligible entity. Eligible land is working farm landscapes that have some component of prime, unique, or state-important soils or have other historical or environmental benefits.

2011 Highlights

In 2011, NRCS funded 3 new easements for 340 acres for \$789,358.00.



Farms such as this one are saved from developers through the FRPP



Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

Program Manager: Dennis Chessman
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E-mail: dennis.chessman@ga.usda.gov

Program Description

The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) was founded to provide high quality technical assistance on privately owned grazing lands on a voluntary basis, and to increase the awareness of the importance of grazing land resources.

These objectives are carried out through state-level, broad-based coalitions of landowners, farmer and environmental organizations, universities, and government agencies.

In Georgia, NRCS in cooperation with the Georgia Grazing Lands Conservation Coalition (GGLCC) works to promote adoption of grassland management practices that facilitate improved soil and water quality while increasing the sustainability of private grasslands in the state.



Healthy grazing lands improve animal health.

2011 Highlights

In 2011, Georgia NRCS received \$362,000 through GLCI for providing technical assistance on grazing lands.

GGLCC completed all demo farm projects and will continue to conduct field days on the participant farms during the coming year. Practices installed and highlighted include establishment of novel forages on the Coastal Plain and Piedmont, installation of a low pressure water misting system for dairy cow cooling, and a livestock purchase to create a multi-species grazing system for weed management and improved forage utilization.

In addition to the two full time grazing land specialists supported by GLCI, the grazing lands technical assistance provided by NRCS conservationists and technicians in Field Offices throughout the state in 2011 was paid for in part by GLCI funds. Producer education programs on forage, pasture and livestock management were conducted by the grazing land specialists in counties all around the state.

The Coastal Plain Grazing System Demonstration completed its fourth year, and was enhanced with the installation of additional fence to improve grazing management, and the addition of three new troughs with heavy use area protection. During the course of the project, we have been able to show that hay feeding on the Coastal Plain can be significantly reduced by the average beef cattle producer with relatively minor changes to their grazing system.



Grasslands Reserve Program

Program Manager: Vacant
Phone: 706 546-2272
Fax: 706 546-2120
E-mail:

Program Description

The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) is a voluntary conservation program that emphasizes support for working grazing operations, enhancement of plant and animal biodiversity and protection of grassland under threat of conversion to other uses.

Participants voluntarily limit future development and cropping uses of the land while retaining the right to conduct common grazing practices and operations related to the production of forage and seeding, subject to certain restrictions during nesting seasons of bird species that are in significant decline or are protected under Federal or State law.

A grazing management plan is required for participants.

2011 Highlights

GRP allows for conservation easements and for rental contracts.

In 2011, Georgia NRCS enrolled 4 new properties in easements for 71 acres in Oconee, Morgan, and Walton County; and 320 acres in 10 or 15-year rental contracts.

The Grassland Reserve Program ensures that grazing land will be available for generations to come.



The Grassland Reserve Program ensures that grazing land will be available for generations to come.



Healthy Forest Reserve Program

Program Manager: Vacant
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E-mail:

Program Description

The Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP) is a voluntary program established for the purpose of restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems to: 1) promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species, 2) improve biodiversity; and 3) enhance carbon sequestration. Program implementation has been delegated to the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

2011 Highlights

In 2011, work was continued on the six HFRP applicants selected for funding.

These projects, totaling over 1,000 acres, will include restoration of habitat for the Gopher Tortoise and other state recognized species of conservation concern.

The proposed restoration will be longleaf pine planting, controlling hardwoods in existing longleaf pine stands and prescribed burning.



Thinning out weaker saplings and young trees allows healthier, stronger trees to thrive.



National Resources Inventory

Program Manager: Edward Ealy
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Program Description

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 segments, with three intensively studied points within those segments. As data are collected for each crop year, approximately 71,500 segments are utilized.

In 2011, the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act (RCA) **Interactive Data Website** was launched. The Website brings together NRI information with other statistics and reports of USDA. This information is a valuable way to access state-level and higher estimates of considerable interest. Its address is <http://soils.usda.gov/survey/rca/viewer/>.

2011 also saw Georgia personnel gathering on-site data for grazing lands. This information will be used to assess pasture condition and conservation. This is Georgia's third year of participation in the **NRI Grazing Land On-Site Study**.

NRI results are available at 5 year intervals from 1982 through 2007. A few Georgia data highlights:

Crop year 2007 – Forestland continues to be the dominant land-use in Georgia with 21,963,900, $\pm 409,200$ acres of Georgia's 37,740,000 acres devoted to it. 2007 was the first NRI estimate that showed Georgia with more developed land ($4,639,900 \pm 220,600$ acres) than cropland ($3,995,000 \pm 415,300$ acres). Georgia's cropland has steadily declined from a high of $6,580,100 \pm 210,600$ acres 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. A complete library of CEAP publications since 2002 can be found at the NRI website: www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI/. www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI/



Plant Materials Program

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Program Description

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.



In order to determine more specific information on sunn hemp as a green manure and cover crop for the Southeast, the Jimmy Carter PMC has established a replicated study in Americus.

2011 Highlights

The PMC worked with 13 different studies and 7 field plantings in Alabama and Georgia. Among the projects are:

- Produced document entitled Native Understory Forbs and Grasses for Pollinator and Insect Utilization in Southeastern Longleaf Pine Ecosystems
- Conducted bobwhite quail restoration study
- Helped develop a nature trail in Hawkinsville, as part of riverfront dedication.
- Established new replicated pollinator study to determine herbicide uses in pollinator planting.
- Conducted switchgrass growth study for agronomists and grazing specialists
- Completed literature search on important cover crops of the Southeastern US for national publication.



Soil Survey

Program Description

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).

2011 Highlights

The Georgia NRCS soil staff published the soil survey for Paulding and Webster Counties. The Soil Survey Geographic (SURRGO) data (digitized soil survey) for Greene and Screven Counties were posted on our Website.

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All digitized soil surveys are available to the public through the web soil survey, an interactive, Web-based delivery system at www.soil-datamart.nrcs.usda.gov/.

The Georgia soil survey field staff in coordination with other soil survey field staff across the continuous United States completed the soil sampling for the Rapid Assessment of U.S. Soil Carbon for Conservation Planning and Modeling. This is a nationwide effort by the NRCS, Soil Survey Division, to inventory soil carbon stocks. The products to be delivered from this study are:

- Improved maps and knowledge about the distribution of soil carbon stocks
- Scientifically and statistically defensible inventory of the effects of soil properties, agricultural management, land use and ecosystem properties on soil carbon stocks
- Soil Survey databases, selectable by land use and management, on soil carbon levels and related properties.
- Land use and management based data that will help conservation planning by estimating gains or losses of soil carbon from land use and management changes.
- Publicly accessible soil carbon database for model development and validation.

Georgia soil survey, NRI, and grazing lands staff completed the first ecological site description (ESD) in the eastern U.S. The ESD has undergone agency review and is currently out for external review. The Southern Atlantic Lowland Longleaf Pine, Loamy Aquic Udults, Rise ecological site is found in the Atlantic Coast Flatwoods Major Land Resource Area (153A). As more ESD's are drafted in the eastern U.S., they will serve as conservation planning tools.



Technical Service Providers

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Program Description

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.

2011 Highlights

Georgia obligated \$501,542 through TSP agreements and through the Agricultural Conservation Enrollees/Seniors (ACES) Program in 2011.

Fifteen agreements were developed with counties, soil and water conservation districts and the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission. With these agreements, valuable assistance is provided to NRCS field offices to assist staff in conservation practice installation funded through the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

The ACES program, coordinated through the National Older Worker Career Center, provides technical assistance to field offices. RD Crawley, Resource Conservationist (706-546-2313) is the program liaison for the ACES agreement.



Watershed Rehabilitation Program

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Program Description

The Watershed Rehabilitation Program assists sponsors with upgrading and rehabilitating structures to bring them into compliance with current dam safety criteria and to extend the useful life of the structure. The cost share rate is 65 percent of the total project cost (not to exceed 100 percent of construction) for NRCS and 35 percent for sponsors. Generally dams need upgrades due to development in the downstream flood plain that has resulted in a change of hazard classification of the dam and thus a change in the design storm the structure is required to store and/or pass without overtopping and failure.



Rehabilitation of the South River #15 dam will prevent flooding.

2011 Highlights

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 \$16 million under this program to upgrade eleven watershed dams. Additionally, 55 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.



Watershed Rehabilitation Program

continued

NRCS Assisted Dams



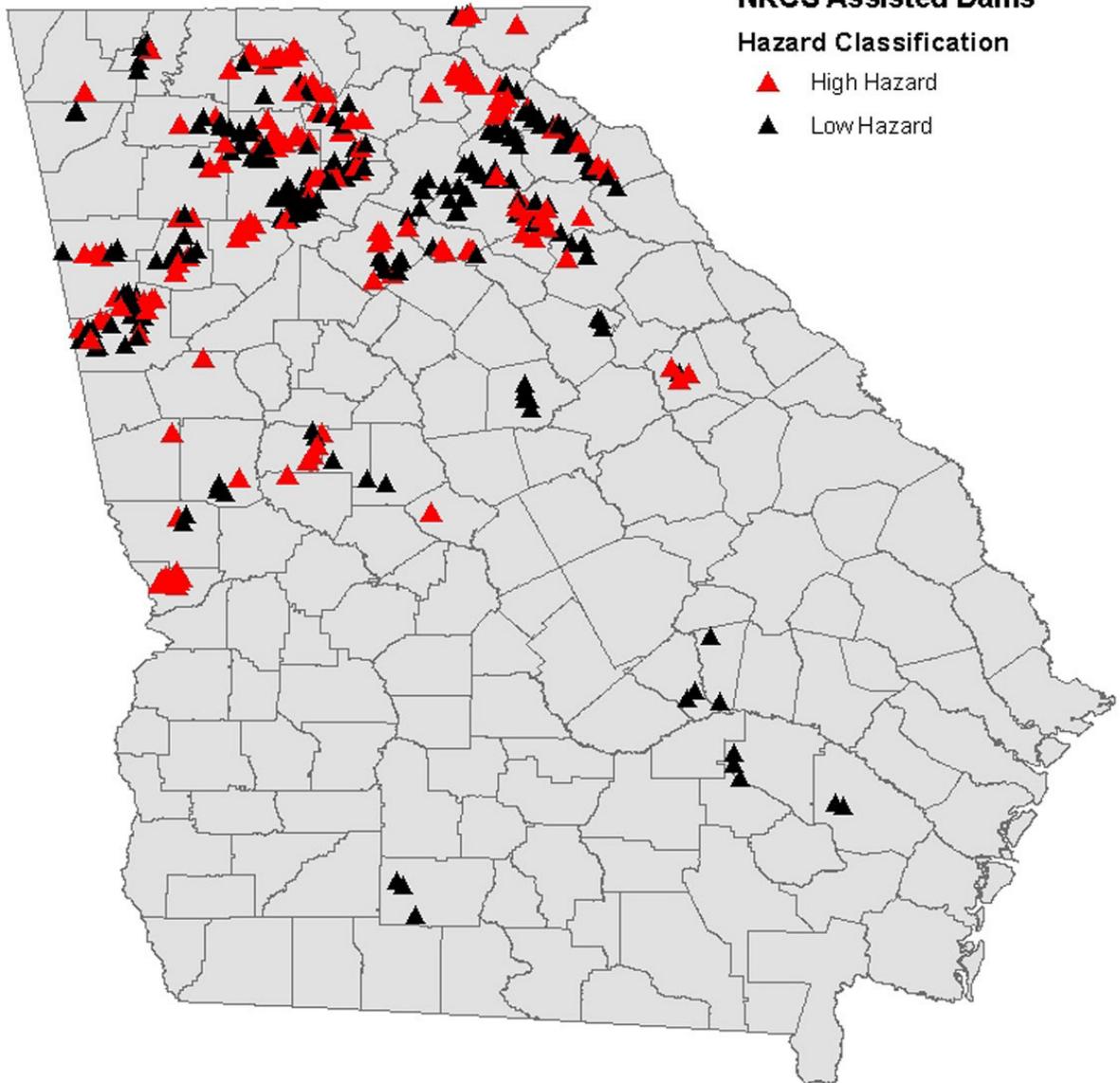
Legend

NRCS Assisted Dams

Hazard Classification

▲ High Hazard

▲ Low Hazard





Wetlands Reserve Program

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Program Description

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.

2011 Highlights

In 2011, 5,089 acres across 13 new properties were enrolled in easements. One application for a conversion from a 30-year easement to a permanent easement over 249 acre was processed. We obligated funds for 5,740 acres of restoration. We completed restoration on hundreds of acres in existing WRP easements.

Restoration included tree planting, cattle exclusion and the construction of ditch plugs that restores the hydrology in wetlands that were drained years ago.



A crop field in southwest Georgia converted back to a wetland.



Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

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Program Description

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 WHIP is a voluntary program for people who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat primarily on private land.

2011 Highlights

Georgia funded 50 contracts totaling \$435,617 million in Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) funds this year.



Under WHIP, this wetland area in northwest Georgia is managed for water fowl.



Deer in the morning mist enjoying their wildlife habitat.

