

Another Conservation Success Story...

Hancock County, Georgia

November 2010

EQIP Makes Life Easier for Farmer

Upon retiring from the United Parcel Service after 35 years Bedell and Geneva Finley bought a 23-acre farm outside of Sparta in Hancock County in 2003. The farm had 131 pecan trees and a large pasture with barbed wire fencing that required bush hogging twice a year. A friend recommended that Finley get some cattle to keep from having to bush hog the pasture.

The Finleys started their cattle farm with only nine cows - three Polled Herefords and six Black Baldies. Today they have 25 head of cattle - Black Angus, Black Baldies and Polled Herfords, and are able to have this number of cattle on their farm due to the recommendations of the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to follow a rotational grazing system.

Finley had an idea of what he wanted to do on the farm and he knew he needed assistance. "I got with the county extension person, Greg Glover, here in Hancock County. I had to register the farm with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and then I found out what programs were available for my farm. That's when I called Mr. Palmer (Scotty Palmer, district conservationist in Greene County) and told him what my plans were for the farm and what I wanted to do. He and Roger Webb (soil conservation technician in Greene County) came over and we sat down with my business plan and they discussed the different programs that



A heavy use area with one feeding trough.

were available for me to use on our farm," said Finley.

When Palmer first visited Finley Farms, he had a few concerns. "I guess my concerns were that the livestock were over-grazing the vegetation that was present and that water was being hauled to the livestock. Mr. Finley agreed with our recommendations to cross fence to practice rotational grazing and to install watering facilities in each newly divided



Bedell Finley

"Since my beginning in farming with EQIP the NRCS has been very helpful." — Bedell Finley

pasture," said Palmer.

With this information Finley was off and running, installing each practice recommended in his 2009 contract. Under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Finley put in cross fencing for grazing, installed heavy use areas for feeding and watering, drilled a 270-foot deep well which pumps 18 gallons of water a minute to different watering areas in the pastures, planted long leaf pines on the back of his land and planted clover in his pastures.

Finley is moving very quickly on his contract. "The last practice to be installed under this contract is a winter feeder facility, and he has started that. Bedell has been real timely about installing all the planned practices in the contract," said Palmer. "Once the winter feeder is in, I plan on using the manure to fertilize the fields," said Finley.

Finley believes that EQIP has benefited him and the cattle. "It's less stressful on me, less stressful on the cows; it's more efficient; it's just a better way of farming. The rotational grazing - moving the cows from one area to another - is easier. It's mostly a better way of farming all the way around. Less labor intense,

the water is already there for the cows; they drink it down, then it fills itself up - just more efficient to do it this way. Before I had the water lines, I had to tote water with buckets or keep the troughs filled up with the water hose. This way it's automatic and more efficient," said Finley.

Finley's philosophy for future generations would be for them to take a look at farming today not farming in their grandfather's time. "I think a lot of the new generation thinks of farming as labor intensive practices; the plowing, the hands-on everything is done manual by hand and not by machines; it's not done efficiently like the practices I've installed. I would like for them to see the conservation practices that makes farming easier and less labor intense. That it's not as tough as it use to be years ago when they talked to their father or grandfathers about how they had to stay at it from sunup to sundown, behind a plow and how they did it labor intensive. It's more efficient with machinery, pipe lines and wells and things of this nature that make it much easier," said Finley.

Finley added a grateful acknowledgement to the NRCS. "Since my beginning in farming with EQIP the NRCS has been very helpful. Mr. Palmer, Mr. Roger Webb and Mr. Luther Jones (Oconee River Resource and Development coordinator) they have been a great help to me. They have worked with me diligently in implementing the program and any question or problems I had, they were here to make sure I got it right. The help I needed - I got," said Finley.

Finley was honored at a banquet in October by the Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District as Conservationist of The Year for Hancock County.



A heavy use area with one water trough containing the automatic shut off

Oconee River RC&D
706-769-7022

 **NRCS** Natural Resources
Conservation Service
706-453-7021

Piedmont Soil And Water
Conservation District