

Another Conservation Success Story...

Dawson County, Georgia

July 2005



Conservation Buffer

Ben Overstreet poses beside a conservation buffer adjacent to a whole tree revetment installed on a previously eroded stream-bank section of the Etowah River--upstream of Atlanta.



Whole Tree Streambank Revetment on the Etowah River

The revetment has been so successful that it has gained national attention. A video crew shot a news story that was broadcast throughout the southeast.



Stackhouse/Bird Composter

Ben was one of the first farmers in Georgia to construct a stackhouse/dead bird composter.



No-till Corn

Overstreet, a leading conservationist, was the first farmer in Georgia to produce 200 BU of corn using no-till.

Soil Erosion/Water Quality/Waste Management Problem!

The Etowah River runs through the farm of Ben and Mary Joe Overstreet in the lower end of Dawson County. With a 77,000+ acre watershed, the Etowah is a big river with huge storm flows that has led to erosion for many years. Increased development in the watershed has only added to the problem.

Mr. Overstreet says that probably 100 feet or more of his pasture has washed away in a big curve in the river adjacent to his property over the past 40 years. He has tried planting different species on the bank but nothing ever gets to stay there long enough to stabilize the bank before it washes out again.

Conservation Solution!

With technical assistance from USDA-NRCS and partnering with the Upper Etowah River Alliance to do a demonstration site for a Best Management Practice, Mr. Overstreet installed a whole tree revetment on a washed out section of the river bank that was 400 feet long and about 12 feet deep.

Buddy Belflower, NRCS District Conservationist, learned about the successful use of whole tree revetments in North Carolina. Mr. Overstreet is a great conservationist and conservation leader for the community, and is always eager to learn and implement new techniques that will help protect the resources on his farm and others.

Belflower and Overstreet went to North Carolina to learn first-hand about whole tree revetment and then came back and installed it on the Overstreet farm.

After the river bank was stabilized, Mr. Overstreet installed a fence about 50 feet from the bank and planted an assortment of hardwood trees in the buffer area to provide wildlife habitat along the river. He placed a 3 ft. square of non-woven filter fabric around the base of each tree to help reduce the weed and grass competition and give the trees a head start. Many of the trees have grown to over 10 feet tall in just two years, according to Overstreet.

“We wanted to protect the river bank not only for the sake of our pasture and seed field but also to protect the water and the river downstream.

One of our concerns was where to get the trees to protect the river bank without taking erosion protection away from some other part of the farm. Luckily we were able to get enough trees off the fence rows to do the job.” Overstreet is a district supervisor with the Upper Chattahoochee River Soil and Water Conservation District and has been farming all his life.

His son-in-law farms with him and his grandson will continue the tradition when he graduates from the University of Georgia. With conservationists like these, the farm is in good hands!

“The river bank was washing away. Not only was it taking part of our soil with it every year, it was dumping that soil some where that it wasn’t supposed to be down stream and causing problems there.”—Ben Overstreet

“We wanted to protect the river bank not only for the sake of our pasture and seed field but also to protect the water and the river downstream.

One of our concerns was where to get the trees to protect the river bank without taking erosion protection away from some other part of the farm.

Luckily we were able to get enough trees off the fence rows to do the job.”—Ben Overstreet

Chestatee Chattahoochee RC&D
770 536-1221

 **NRCS** Natural Resources
Conservation Service
770 536-6981

Upper Chattahoochee River Soil And Water
Conservation District

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.