

# Another Conservation Success Story...

## Calhoun County, Georgia

March 2008

### Practices Improve Health of Land

McLendon Acres, Inc. is a family owned and operated diversified agricultural production company that includes Martin (Marty) L. McLendon, his wife Tracie, and other members of their family. His direct portion of the operation encompasses approximately 8,000 acres on which canola, corn, cotton, peanuts, pecans, sorghum, soybeans, hay, timber, and wheat are grown.

At a young age, McLendon felt that it was his calling to enter into the farming profession and actually use farm equipment versus just selling it as his father and grandfather did. His grandfather started Randolph Tractor Company, a John Deere sales and service dealership, in Cuthbert.

McLendon started his farming career in 1978 with limited equipment and a pickup truck, and he relied on the help of a neighboring farmer to get his crop in and harvested each year. In 1980, he had accumulated enough equipment to go out on his own. Today, he has expanded his operation so that his entire family is involved.

Due to the intensity and scope of agricultural production in southwest Georgia, natural resource concerns such as soil erosion and sediment control, nutrient and pest management, and water quality are management priorities for area farming operations. McLendon has hit each one of these concerns head-on.

McLendon sought assistance from USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to increase the implementation of conservation practices on his farm over a wide variety of natural resource concerns and he has utilized many innovative practices to improve

production efficiency and provide area demonstration sites for education and outreach.

He employs the cost-share incentives of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to implement additional conservation practices such as conservation tillage, grassed waterways, terraces, and field borders. McLendon stated that, "EQIP provides an excellent opportunity for agricultural producers to engage in conservation practices by sharing the initial cost of implementation. It also serves as a tool to promote innovative conservation practices to area producers."

McLendon used conservation tillage to increase the organic matter content in the soil, water infiltration, and nutrient uptake at the root zone. He leaves 30% to 50% of residue on the field following planting. The increased organic matter helps to reduce soil temperature and conserve moisture during the hot summer months of southwest Georgia

He used the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) to establish planted pine on



Martin (Marty) L. McLendon; "To sustain agriculture in southwest Georgia, agricultural producers will need to integrate conservation practices into their farm operation. Conservation and innovation go hand-in-hand and need to be employed effectively to improve the farm economy and offset land development pressure."

Conservation District (SWCD) and owner/operator of McLendon Acres, Inc., has led the effort to implement irrigation water management practices in the region.

Irrigation water management practices employed in the area include the conversion of irrigation systems from high to low pressure drop nozzles with end gun shutoffs, the installation of Variable Rate Irrigation systems, and the implementation of

remote soil moisture monitoring with a 100 square mile wireless broadband telemetry network deployed by the Flint River SWCD.

Also, the Flint River SWCD Irrigation Reservoir Program constructed two irrigation reservoirs (7.9 acres and 19.5 acres) for the purpose of capturing surface runoff.

McLendon has a strong belief that we need to act now to save our natural resources for the future. "The natural resources of the Lower Flint River Basin are being strained to support the needs of farmers and the environment. Anything we can do to ensure that the water resources of the Lower Flint River Basin will be around for our children, grandchildren, and future generations is a worthwhile endeavor," said McLendon.

Working with the Georgia Forestry Commission and GA Department of Natural Resources, McLendon has also developed a Forest Stewardship Plan.

The success of this farm is due to his devotion to the land, hard work and ability to run this operation with wise business decisions. Congratulations to Marty McLendon for being the District IV 2008 Environmental Stewardship Award Winner.

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previously cropped acreage to reduce erosion and sedimentation problems.

As a Tier III participant in the Conservation Security Program (CSP), McLendon Acres, Inc. addresses soil and water quality as well as air, plant, animal and human resources in their operation. CSP qualification is based on practices already implemented in a farm operation.

Additional practices utilized by McLendon include zone nutrient testing, petiole testing, Trimble RTK auto-steer on their tractors, wildlife refuge habitat, and many other conservation measures promoted by NRCS.

Recent years of drought have brought water conservation to the forefront of resource concerns. McLendon, as both the chairman of the Flint River Soil and Water



A Variable Rate Irrigation system running with sprinklers cut-off over non-cropped areas. This system helps conserve water by keeping the spray closer to the ground with less evaporation.

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Flint River Soil And Water  
Conservation District  
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