

Another Conservation Success Story...

Hall County, Georgia

July 2011

Hall Couple Earns Farm Family of the Year Distinction

Allen and Doris Conner wanted to start their own business and they say the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) played a big role in making their plan a success.



The Hall County Soil and Water Conservation District named the Conners "Farm Family of the Year" for 2010.

The Conners take pride in their Gainesville Farm that they officially started operating in 2004. The Conners have three chicken houses on their property that is home to a pullet breeding operation. The couple also has a cattle and a custom hay operation. The Conners also operated Conner's Lime and Litter; a custom poultry house cleanout service for many years.

As the Conners expanded and added more to their operation, they faced conservation concerns that they needed to address. They contacted the area's NRCS District Conservationist, Buddy Belflower, for technical assistance.

With the technical assistance provided by Belflower and an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contract to assist with the cost to conserve, the Conners set out to make their conservation plans a reality.

First, the Conners needed an incinerator to dispose of dead birds in an environmentally friendly manner.

To address water quality and erosion control, fencing was installed to keep the cattle out of the creeks and streams located around the property. They also installed a stream crossing to provide access for cattle to pastures across the creek.

The Conners were also part of an innovative stream restoration project that used natural channel design principles to restore the eroding areas on the stream that the Conners excluded their cattle from.

Because those water sources were excluded, an alternative water source was necessary for the cattle.

Four heavy-use areas were built in different pastures that include watering troughs. The heavy use area surface of concrete or gravel prevents erosion and protects water quality.

A well and pipelines were also installed so that water could be transferred to the different pastures on the Conner farm.

"I couldn't have done a lot of these projects without the cost-sharing—like the fencing around the creeks wouldn't have gotten done. A lot of the plans are great ideas but if it's all coming out of your pocket, it won't happen", said Conner.

A rotational grazing method has also been implemented on the farm. EQIP funds helped offset the cost of installing cross-fencing to separate the various pastures.

Nutrient management has been a concern of the Conners long before they built their own poultry houses.

Working with NRCS and the UGA Extension Office, Allen has taken soil samples and litter samples and developed Nutrient Management Plans for the farmers he works for as well as on his home farm and the land he rents for pasture and hay production. His well maintained spreader trucks are calibrated to put out the right amount of poultry litter on his customers' fields.

The Conners have done such a great job of maintaining their property that they were awarded the honor of being named "Farm Family of the Year" in 2010 for the Hall County Soil and Water Conservation District.

"We try to recognize the people who have done the most conservation work," said Belflower.

But becoming "Farm Family of the Year" was not an overnight success for the Conners. Years before they were nominated for the title, the Conners took steps to ensure that their farming operation in Hall County measured up to their very high expectations,



Allen Conner, his wife, Doris, and District Conservationist Buddy Belflower.

"They plant trees, flowers and all the equipment is clean and well maintained. It's very apparent that they take pride in caring for their land and they take conservation of all their resources seriously."

"They are a very good example of conservation,"—Buddy Belflower

Conner said that they take conservation seriously because agriculture's sustainability depends on it.

"What you get passed to you, improve it and pass it on so the next generation will have it."



The Conners run a pullet breeding operation and raise a few cattle on their Hall County property.

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Hall County Soil And Water Conservation District

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