

Another Conservation Success Story...

Wilkinson County, Georgia

October 2006

Conservation Tillage Saves Soil and Money for Irwinton Native Jason Howell

Jason Howell grew up farming, but it wasn't until 1985 after he graduated from North Georgia Technical School that he began doing

Environmental Quality Incentives Program and more recently the Conservation Security Program. He was interested in saving time and labor and reducing erosion in his fields.

After visiting with neighbors and paying a visit to the local USDA-Natural

Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office, Howell and District Conservationist Britt Parker developed a conservation plan to help take care of the land.

"The main thing was erosion," Howell said when asked about the natural resource concerns he had on his property. He was particularly concerned about cattle walking on the banks of his pond and contributing to soil erosion and degradation of water quality.

Howell was especially interested in conservation tillage because he had heard other farmers were having good results and that it would help him reap more benefits from the Conservation Security Program—a relatively new program that rewards farmers for their conservation efforts.

"I started talking to people that were already doing it and they were saying that it worked well for them," he said. He decided to try it to save time and labor and reduce erosion in the fields.

Today, Howell has all of his 1,200 acres in strip-till and is a big fan!

"We recently got 5 inches of rain here and there is no erosion in the strip-till," Howell said. He also likes strip-till because it reduces the amount of times he has to till his fields. It saves time for one thing. "We used to make 4, 5, or 6 passes through the fields; now, we make one pass," he said.

"In the long-term, it's (conservation tillage) better for the soil as well as to try to save money,"

Howell said. "If you plant crops and let them get to the 'dot' stage, then spray it and plant into it year after year, you won't need water as much. We use less chemicals than we did in the past," he added.

Every time a farmer develops a conservation plan and implements the conservation practices in the plan, it costs him something. Most cost-share programs require a 25 percent match.

The benefits are shared by all citizens—cleaner water and air, and an abundant food supply for generations to come.



it for himself. Howell grows corn, peanuts, cotton, wheat, and rye and has about 80 head of beef cattle near Irwinton, Georgia.

Howell has 1,200 acres of farmland in Wilkinson County and lives on a road named after his grandfather J. D. Howell. "I am a 4th generation farmer and my son will be the 5th," Howell said.

About 4 years ago Howell started hearing about conservation programs that could help his farm operation—programs like the

To address these concerns, NRCS District Conservationist Britt Parker designed a conservation plan that included farming his row crops with conservation tillage and fencing cattle out of his irrigation pond and nearby stream.

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