

Another Conservation Success Story...

Bacon County, Georgia

August 2010

Hog Farmer Uses Animal Waste to Expand Hay Production

Doris Whitley is a businesswoman who knows how to run a hog farm.

Whitley's family has owned the hog farm in Alma since 1993. Before that she and her late husband grew tobacco, corn, cotton and peanuts. "I've dabbled here and yonder, if you can call that farming," she said.

"She's producing hogs but she's trying to do it in an environmentally safe way where she doesn't harm the environment."-Joey Futch, District Conservationist



This is one of two hog houses on Whitley Farm.

With the help of her son-in-law, Robert Bennett, Doris Whitley has been able to continue running the hog operation.

The livestock raised on the Bacon County land is shipped to a Carolina Pride Meat Center once each pig reaches 260-280 pounds.

A few years ago, Whitley became concerned about the animal waste and how it was affecting water quality on her farm. After contacting the local USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office in Bacon County, Whitley learned of different options

for taking care of the animal waste and water quality concerns on her farm.

District Conservationist Joey Futch said, "With the size of this operation, they needed a plan. They needed a nutrient management plan." Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the technical assistance provided by the NRCS, Whitley was able to develop and implement a manure transfer plan on the hog farm.

An irrigation system was installed on the farm using a holding pond that Whitley constructed back in the mid-1990s with the help of technical assistance provided by the NRCS.

The NRCS helped purchase a pipeline and pumps that would be used to get the manure to a 16-acre hay field on Whitley's property.

This is how the manure transfer system works. An automatic water system flushes the animal waste from the hog houses and sends that waste to the holding pond where it is pumped out and irrigates the hay field. This waste water is used to grow grass that is cut for hay on the 16-acre hay field.

One hundred and forty tons of hay are produced on that field. Whitley said her hay operation has grown because of the nutrient management plan that the NRCS helped draft. Whitley said, "We wouldn't have been able to do it without the help NRCS provided."

Whitley said her hog and hay operation have benefited in many ways. "It's actually cheaper and requires less labor. It's more convenient," she said. Robert Bennett, Whitley's son-in-law who helps keep the farm running agreed that "It's a lot easier to handle the waste," he added.

Whitley said that while the current plan has done wonders for her farm's sustainability, more pipelines would do even more to help her operation.

Even though making her hog farm business more efficient and more profitable is a major goal for Doris Whitley, the Alma native has been and will always be focused on conserving and protecting natural resources.



District Conservationist Joey Futch and landowner Doris Whitley.

District Conservationist Joey Futch has worked with Whitley and Bennett for several years and admires the family's commitment to



This is the 16 acre hay field on Whitley's farm.

taking care of the environment. "She's producing hogs but she's trying to do it in an environ-



At any given time, there are 1,000 hogs on Whitley's farm.

mentally safe way where she doesn't harm the environment," Futch said.

Whitley said she just hopes that more farmers and landowners take on a commitment to conservation before it's too late. "As long as everybody does what they need to do, things will run well. But if only one does what needs to be done, it causes problems," she said.

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