

Another Conservation Success Story...

Wayne County, Georgia

October 2009

Greenview Farms Continues Conservation Efforts



Jonny Harris, president of Greenview Farms Inc.

Located in Wayne County outside of Screven is a family farm that has been operating since 1860. "Great-grandfather's farm started out at 765 acres. The farm has 1,100 acres of timberland, 1,000 acres in row crops and 700 in pasture," according to Jonny Harris, president of Greenview Farms, Inc.

Harris went on to say, "I was born on the farm. I've spent some time off the farm in public works and I worked shift work for a period of time, but I've always farmed. I'm a fifth generation farmer."

Harris came to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for some help with his fences. Greenview Farms has about 12 miles of streams running through pasturelands.

When the fences were installed, neither the cattle's health nor the water quality were considered. "We come from an era when the fence law came into effect. We put up fences to keep cattle in and out of the woods; they were put up with streams involved — that was the watering source," said Harris.

Using the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), fences, heavy use areas, and watering facilities are being installed to help with the cattle and water quality. "We're trying to fence those areas off at about two-miles a year. We are trying to improve the water quality, the land, and the high pressure areas; it's a continuing process," said Harris.

When all the fences are installed, the farm will need alternate watering sources. The farm

has 56 watering facilities, but it needs about ten more "It's an ongoing process. We'll do this with or without the assistance of the NRCS. I'll thank them for the assistance. One thing the assistance through EQIP really does for us, it allows us to complete those programmed jobs and allows us to do some non programmed jobs which are equally as important."

"I've known about the NRCS all of my life. I learned about the NRCS from my father and grandfather," said Harris.

Harris likes the flexibility of EQIP. It allows him to do a conservation project through the NRCS or on his own. "It comes with a certain amount of flexibility on how you can manage things," said Harris.

Harris has been advised by Rita Barrow, district conservationist for the NRCS in Brunswick that if he installs practices according to the standards of the NRCS, the NRCS can help.

"Rita came into a stand of timber that I was already doing the requirement for a program on my own. She said if you do it like this we can put you in the program so I did about 300 acres. That's what I like; you know we've got a group of people who have a genuine interest in seeing me do a better job. Not just on my farm but all the farms. We have used EQIP in our forest operation, our cattle operation and our row crop operation — we've used EQIP on all facets of our operations," said Harris

Harris has seen the benefits of EQIP and will continue to see the benefits in the future. "We were able to go to strip tillage farming. Every year we realize more and more benefits from that practice. The cross fencing, the management of the pastures, the rotation, keeping the cattle out of the streams and getting the fresh water, the herds health, the timberland -- they have assisted us in burns (prescribed burns). It has been beneficial in so

"It (EQIP) has been beneficial in so many ways that it would take a while to describe them all. There are benefits that we won't realize right now or don't realize we've got and there will be some more coming up in the years to come as long as we follow these practices."—Jonny Harris

many ways that it would take a while to describe them all. There are benefits that we won't realize right now or don't realize we've got and there will be some more coming up in the years to come as long as we follow these practices."

"I think one thing that makes the Harris family unique is their commitment to manage all their resources — soil, water, timber, wildlife, and cattle — equally well and they follows best management practices in all aspects of the farming operation. The Harris family demonstrates that a farmer can have a highly productive farm and provide substantial environmental benefits at the same time," said Barrow.

Harris' conservation philosophy is simple. "Leave it better than you found it. Use the resources that are available to you to maintain and care for the land."

Greenview Farms is so embedded with conservation that it won the Governor's Agricultural Environmental Stewardship Award in 2007 and this year it's a finalist in the 2009 National Cattlemen Association Environmental Stewardship Award to be announced in February 2010.



Barrow (middle) reviews some facts before she is interviewed by Brad Bulla (left) of J. Wallace Communications, Grapevine, TX about Harris' conservation stewardship as Harris looks on.

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