

Another Conservation Success Story...

Effingham County, Georgia

April 2011

Diversification keeps operation profitable

Bucky Morel is a third generation farmer who owns and manages Winfield Farms in Effingham County. He is continuing the family operation that was started by his grandfather T.W. Morel.



The Morel family has worked with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Ogeechee River Soil and Water Conservation District for many years. Bucky's Grandfather T.W. Morel started working with NRCS in the 1950's on projects to improve drainage on his farm. T.W. Morel was honored as the 1955 Effingham County conservationist of the year for his work in conservation.

The farm currently has 900 acres of corn, grain sorghum, hay, peanuts and soybeans and 300 head of Black Angus cattle. Winfield Farms has always utilized diversification to improve their profits. Morel's Father and Grandfather grew hogs in years past to supplement their income from their row crop and cat-



One of the heavy use areas installed on the Winfield Farms in Kildare.

tle operation. In 2006, Morel decided to further diversify his farming operation by purchasing heavy equipment to construct irrigation ponds and clear land. He also purchased a sawmill to cut lumber to supplement his income and use on the farm.

When Soil Conservationist Phil Hall visited the Morel family farm he saw where Morel needed help. "Morel was having water quality issues where he watered his cattle. The cows had killed the grass that surrounded the water trough. When the tanks ran over and when it rained, the area around the troughs became degraded with mud and manure. Mr. Morel had the same problems where he was feeding his cattle. He was not getting uniform grazing," said Hall.

"Morel had several areas on his farm that were causing water quality issues. I discussed best management practices alternatives with Mr. Morel that would reduce these issues. We discussed possible cost share through the Ebenezer Creek 319 Project as well as Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)," Hall said.

Morel's applications were accepted and he utilized EQIP, 319 grants and Partners for Wildlife Program to install conservation practices such as cover crops, minimum tillage, heavy use areas, stream crossings and use-exclusion fencing. He manages the wildlife on his farm by not harvesting part of the grain crop along the edges of his fields and by planting sunflowers. He manages his timber by removing damaged and diseased trees. These trees are milled at his sawmill and used on the farm. Bucky also plans to retrofit his pivots to make them more efficient.

Morel likes EQIP and the 319 Project because they have allowed him, "to install conservation practices that improved the natural resources on the farm. The financial assistance they provided allowed me to address the conservation issues in a timely matter providing the farm with many great benefits. The cross fencing has allowed me to prescribe graze and has improved my pastures health and quality; the concrete heavy



Charles Branch (left) an Agricultural Conservation Enrollees/Seniors employee and Bucky Morel standing in front of a peanut combine while taken a break from harvesting peanuts.

use area has cut down the mud and manure problems I was having around my watering and feeding areas; I was able to fence my cattle out of the pond, which was close to a large wetland, and replace it with a new watering facility with fresh water," said Morel.

Morel recommends the NRCS and its partners to his friends and neighbors. He says, "conservation not only helps protect and improve our natural resources but also makes farms, more efficient and profitable."

Morel's conservation philosophy started when he was a child. "I remember my grandfa-

"Conservation not only help protect and improve our natural resources but also makes farms more, efficient and profitable," said Bucky Morel.

ther and father working with NRCS on conservation practices. My family taught me the value of natural resources and how important it was to enhance and protect them. I will soon become a father for the first time and I plan to teach him the values and importance of natural resources.

I hope he continues the conservation work that my grandfather, father and I have installed on our family farm and also teaches other generations about our most valuable asset, natural resources," said Morel.

In 2009, Bucky Morel became the second member of the Morel family to win the Effingham County Conservationist of the Year.

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