

Our Featured Customers

State: Florida

Featured Customer: Gwinn Brothers

Date: February 2008

Meet the Gwinn

Suwannee County, Florida



Number of Main Farming Watermelons; Peanuts; Iron
Acres owned: 380 Rented: 757 Enterprise: Clay Peas; Beef Cattle

The Gwinn Brothers are Suwannee County farmers that practice what NRCS promotes - good conservation! By following the NRCS developed conservation plan for their 1137 acre farm, the Gwinn Brothers have been able to improve water quality, enhance water quantity, reduce soil erosion, improve animal and plant health, and enhance wildlife habitat on their farm. Conservation practices that have been implemented on the Gwinn Brothers Farm include 442 – Irrigation System, Sprinkler; 516 – Pipeline; 614 – Watering Facility; 603 – Herbaceous Wind Barriers; 328 – Conservation Crop Rotation; 340 – Cover Crop; 528 – Prescribed Grazing; 590 – Nutrient Management; 595 – Pest Management; 449 – Irrigation Water Management; and 645 – Upland Wildlife Habitat Management.



Donell and Robert Gwinn are brothers who have been farming together under the entity known as Gwinn Brothers Farm for over 25 years. They have a rich farming heritage in Suwannee County. The Gwinn Brothers are highly esteemed, well respected farmers throughout the farming community of Suwannee County, as well as numerous other farming communities throughout Florida and South Georgia. Crops produced by the Gwinn

Brothers include watermelons, peanuts, iron clay peas, bahiagrass seed, hay, and beef cattle. The crop that brings the Gwinn Brothers the most notoriety around Suwannee County is their watermelons. The Gwinn Brothers operate a packing house in McAlpin, FL during watermelon season where they employ numerous individuals, mostly high school students needing summer employment. Their watermelons are enjoyed both locally and throughout the eastern United States.

The Gwinn Brothers not only produce great tasting watermelons, they do an exceptional job producing their other crops. By utilizing cover crops and herbaceous wind barriers, they are able to conserve many tons of soil by protecting the soil from wind erosion that is so prevalent in North Florida during the early spring. NRCS Practice Code 645 – Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, helps the Gwinn Brothers improve and enhance wildlife habitat on their farm. By following their NRCS developed nutrient and pest management plans, the Gwinn Brothers work to protect and improve water quality. NRCS Practice Code 449 – Irrigation Water Management, is very important to the Gwinn Brothers. They just recently participated in an Irrigation Retrofit Initiative through EQIP to retrofit their existing center pivot irrigation systems in order to increase the application efficiency and distribution uniformity of those irrigation systems, all in an effort to conserve water. Along with their row crop farming operation, the Gwinn Brothers manage a 70 head beef cattle operation. They follow an NRCS developed prescribed grazing plan to assist with this effort, which helps them improve animal and plant health on their farm. Here again, through their efforts to conserve soil and water on cropland, improve

wildlife habitat, improve water quality, and implement prescribed grazing practices on pastureland, the Gwinn Brothers prove they are trying to implement the best possible conservation practices on their farm.

In addition to the effort the Gwinn Brothers are putting forth towards managing their cropland, pastureland, and wildlife land, the Gwinn Brothers recently embraced and implemented the new technology of precision agriculture on their farm to take their farm management to a new level. The Gwinn brothers installed GPS systems in several of their tractors. The GPS systems are used for precision planting, precision nutrient application, and precision pesticide application. This addition has helped the Gwinn Brothers save thousands of dollars in fertilizer and pesticide costs, while adding tremendous environmental benefits, especially to water quality. The Gwinn Brothers now have peace of mind that they are doing the very best job possible with their nutrient and pest management, here again, all in an effort to improve soil and water quality.

The Gwinn brothers are also active in agriculture leadership within their community. It has already been noted that the Gwinn Brothers are well respected and highly esteemed by their farming peers; however, they are also well respected by various government, state, and local agencies that look to them for assistance in their efforts to conserve and protect the natural resources of Suwannee County. The Gwinn Brothers are presently participating in a Row Crop Best Management Practices (BMP) farm demonstration project sponsored by the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, and have participated in similar demonstrations, field days, and educational events in the past. The Gwinn Brothers presently participate in a voluntary program sponsored by the Florida Farm Bureau known as CARES – County Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship and have also been recognized by the Suwannee County Conservation District as Conservation Farmer of the Year. Additionally, Mr. Donell Gwinn has served as a District Supervisor for the Suwannee County Conservation District and is presently serving as an Advisor to the Suwannee County Farm Service Agency County Operating Committee. The Gwinns won the 2006 Lloyd Wright Small Farmer Award given in Indianapolis at the Black NRCS Employees Annual Conference this past year.

The Gwinn Brothers are definitely exceptional farmers. They have put forth tremendous effort to implement the best possible conservation and best management practices available on their farm. They have embraced technology and now utilize it daily in their farming operation. They have been and continue to be actively involved in agriculture leadership throughout their community and state. Their operation is diversified, yet simple. Conservation to the Gwinn Brothers is more than an idea, it is a way of life, and good conservation has been paramount to the Gwinn Brothers' farming success. The Gwinn Brothers attribute good conservation as a key factor in enabling them to enjoy the quality of life associated with doing what they love to do – FARM!

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