

Another Conservation Success Story...

Montgomery County, Georgia

November 2008

Small Farmer gets Assistance through the Small Farmers Initiative

James Drinks owns a small, 45-acre farm just outside the town of Uvalda in Montgomery County. Like his father and grandfather before him, he raises beef cattle, 20 head of beef at any given time.

Drinks was concerned initially about his cutover woodland. It was a tangled mess not

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producing anything of value. He needed a fence to keep his cattle in the pasture and also to help keep them out of the pond.

Drinks built the two-acre pond himself several years ago with technical assistance from the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Drinks also needed a way to feed his cattle better. His pasture was not producing any for

age for cattle because of too many trees.

He heard from other farmers about the successes the NRCS was having with conservation in his community.

Drinks decided to ask the Farm Service Agency if he could get help with making conservation improvements on his farm. They referred him to the NRCS.

“About 1998 he was approved for a cost share program for the cutover woodland under the Forestry Incentive Program,” said Sidney Lanier, district conservationist for the NRCS in Swainsboro.

“Using the Small Farmers Initiative with the Environment Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the NRCS was able to help Mr. Drinks,” said Lanier.



One of the new fences that was installed to keep the cattle out of the pond.

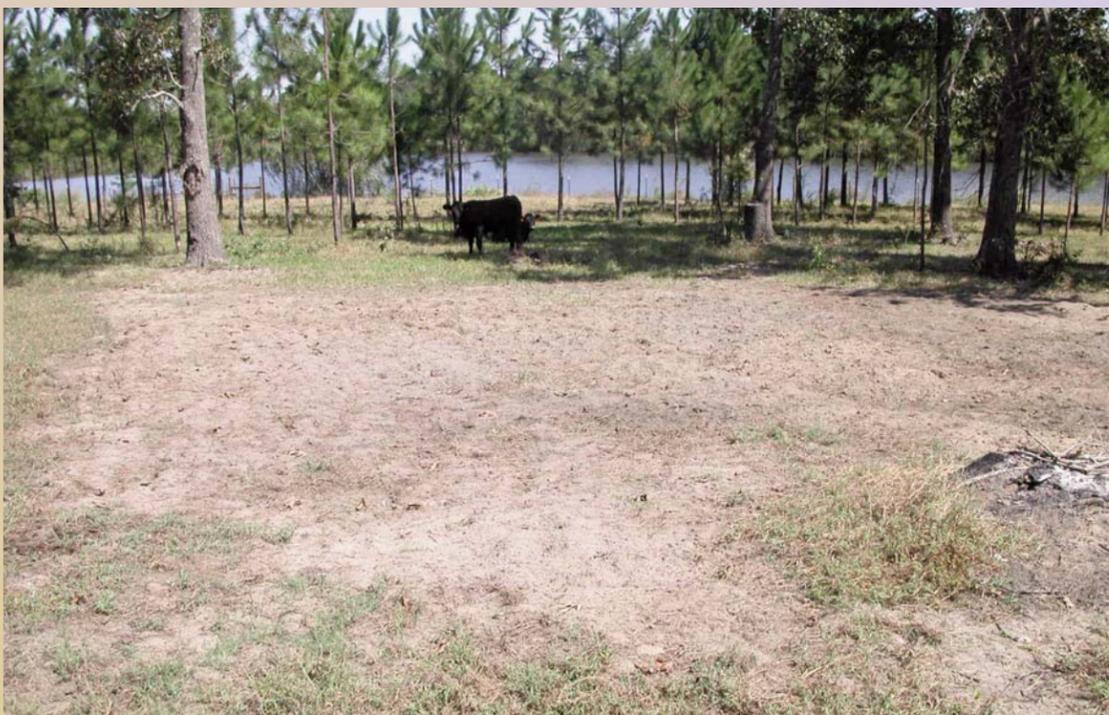
The NRCS also assisted Drinks with fencing, his wetlands and grasses for grazing. “We helped with his fencing to keep the livestock out of the wetland and to help the cattle graze more efficiently. Using the silvopasture method, two acres of his pasture has been thinned of the trees and planted in bahia grass for grazing,” said Lanier.

Lanier went on to say, “He had an eroding cropland field that has been sprigged in Tift 85 Bermuda (grass) for a pasture and/or hay and he plans to install a pipeline, water trough and heavy use area soon.”

Drinks said that funding helped him utilize conservation practices that he could not have implemented otherwise. “EQIP (funds) paid a good part of what I had to do. With the high cost of material, if it had not been for the program I do not know what I would have done,” said Drinks.

All of the conservation treatments have benefited Drinks’ farm. “I’ll be able to get the type of grasses I need for the livestock. The cattle are fenced out of the pond and the waterway is cleaner. Other farmers allow cattle in their ponds—that’s not good conservation,” said Drinks.

Drinks tells future generations that work is the key to conservation. “Try and conserve the resources we have. If we want to have any natural resources, we need to work at it. The NRCS has the knowledge to help,” said Drinks.



One of the pastures where the heavy use area and water station will be installed in the near future. One of his cows is grazing in the forested area. His pond is in the background.

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Ochopee River Soil And Water
Conservation District