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NRCS HONORS VOLUNTEERS DURING NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

ATHENS, GA (April 10, 2012) --USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is celebrating National Volunteer Week April 15-21 by honoring Earth Team volunteers and expressing appreciation for their dedicated service and commitment to conservation. The Earth Team is NRCS' volunteer workforce. In fiscal year 2011, nationally 22,000 Earth Team volunteers donated 435,653 hours of service totaling \$9.3 million.

NRCS State Conservationist James E. Tillman, Sr., said, "The Earth Team volunteer are making an environmental impact in Georgia." Last year, 169 volunteers donated a total of 5,899 hours in Georgia. "That's worth \$126,002 of benefit to our customers and savings to the taxpayers," said Tillman. "These are impressive numbers and we are grateful for the help, but also recognize that more conservation work needs to be done."

Created in 1985, the Earth Team program offers many opportunities to individuals over the age of 14 interested in helping improve the Nation's natural resources. Earth Team volunteers help NRCS conservationists offer private landowners and others a range of services, from conservation technical assistance to teaching and generating awareness about conservation through the use of community projects. Over a half-million Earth Team volunteers have donated \$336 million worth of time helping NRCS with its conservation mission since being formed in 1985.

"The NRCS theme for this year puts it best," said Tillman. "We are 'Celebrating Earth Team Volunteers in Action.' Earth Team volunteers allow us to stretch available resources and help us put additional conservation practices on the ground. Their volunteer efforts help us improve our land and wildlife habitats, clean our water and air, and help us improve the environment for everyone."

Tillman hopes National Volunteer Week will motivate others to volunteer to help NRCS with our conservation mission. "Earth Team volunteers work closely with our staff and they play an important role in our state's conservation work. They take on a variety of conservation assignments and many Earth Team volunteers tell us they find their volunteer work enjoyable and personally very rewarding," said Tillman.

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Helping People Help the Land

To learn more about the Earth Team Volunteer Program, go to:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/people/volunteers> or by calling (toll-free) 888-526-3227.

For more information on NRCS visit www.nrcs.usda.gov.

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*Note: The Value of Volunteer Time to the Agency is \$21.36 an hour as established by the Independent Sector and utilized by the Federal Interagency Team for Volunteerism. The \$314 million figure uses 2010 dollars.