

Georgia NRCS Outreach Plan FY 2013



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Outreach Summary

Employees of NRCS in Georgia share the same vision for programs they deliver as our Secretary of Agriculture, "*All clients will be treated fairly and with dignity and respect.*" To accomplish this vision, we are continually gathering new information and developing unique and innovative delivery methods that will assure our success. Assessing our clients' needs is top priority. Those clients with unique circumstances that prevent them from learning about our programs will be provided opportunities to share in the programs for which they qualify.

When barriers to awareness and understanding are found they will be eliminated. In their place, we will implement processes that ensure that everyone can take advantage of USDA programs. Benchmarks are being established that will help us determine our effectiveness. Continual evaluation is necessary because we believe *OUTREACH* never stops and can continually be improved.

Georgia Outreach Mission Statement

To provide services to all people in a manner that improves their understanding of USDA programs and services, increases their participation in USDA programs, and encourages them to participate in resource planning, and the decision-making process.

This will be accomplished by:

- Providing information on USDA programs and services to all groups.
- Gaining the trust and acceptance of underserved individuals and groups.
- Assisting underserved individuals and groups with identifying their natural resource concerns. Providing them with technical and financial assistance available from USDA, partners, and other agencies or organizations that would help them improve their land and/or communities.
- Providing assistance in understanding programs, how to use programs, and completing forms.
- Developing partnerships to assist with reaching underserved customers.

Outreach Target Audiences and Historically Underserved Groups

Beginning Farmer or Rancher

- A Beginning Farmer or Rancher means an individual or entity who:
 - Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of an entity.
 - Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.

Socially Disadvantaged

- A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group, without regard to their individual qualities. These groups consist of the following:
 - American Indians or Alaskan Natives
 - Asians
 - Blacks or African Americans
 - Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders
 - Hispanics

Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher

- A Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher or Forest Owner is an applicant: With direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and Who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years.
- An entity or joint operation can be a Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher if all individual members independently qualify.

Current Outreach Partnership Agreements in Georgia

Albany State University

- Conservation Assistance and Education for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers in Southwest Georgia
 - Working with socially disadvantage farmers to educate them on conservation assistance programs through USDA-NRCS and implementation of these practices on their farms.

Fort Valley State University

- National Conservation Planning Initiative
 - Conducting field days in the state to emphasis the importance and benefits of Conservation Planning for producers.
- Utilizing GIS Technology to Enhance NRCS Outreach Efforts to the Underserved Farming Community in the Development of Farm and Conservation Plans
 - Working with producers to develop Conservations Plans for their property.

Flint River SWCD

- Conduct three (3) informational workshops/meetings for underserved landowners.
- Develop multi-media outreach kit.
- Host Field Day/Demonstration.
- Complete twenty (20) one-on-one field visit meetings with underserved producers.
- Host regional conference
- Present at conferences

Digging Roots Educational Farm, Inc.

- Conduct two (2) “One USDA Farm Field Days” informational meetings for underserved landowners.
- Organize four (4) “One USDA Mini-Field Day” events that scheduled place after 5:00 p.m. on a weekday evening.

Coastal Georgia RC&D Council

- Conduct ten (10) informational meetings for underserved landowners

GA Association of Conservation District Supervisors

- Announce funding availability to forty (40) SWCDs
- Request proposals from SWCDs for mini grants
- Announce SWCD recipients of mini grants at GACDS Annual Meeting
- Coordinate with SWCDs to complete seven (7) local workshops. Workshop dates, times and locations will be posted on both the GACDS and GSWCC websites. Promote mid-year accomplishments on GACDS website and monthly report to membership
- Work with SWCDs to complete eight (8) additional workshops. Workshop dates, times and locations will be posted on both the GACDS and GSWCC websites. Promote project accomplishments on GACDS website and monthly report to membership
- Highlight accomplishments at GACDS Annual Meeting

Upper Ocmulgee River RC&D Council, Inc.

- Conduct three (3) Multicultural Sustainable Agriculture & Leadership Training Conferences for underserved landowners
- Host four (4) “How To Install Conservation Practices” workshops.

Athens Land Trust, Inc.

- Visit NRCS field offices in the region to meet with NRCS field staff
- (1) Meet with local organizations to develop contact list and publicize the program to contacts (2) Release tentative workshop schedule for the coming year, (3) Publicize first workshop
- Conduct six (6) educational workshop/site visit

Two Rivers RC&D Council, Inc.

- Compile mailing list and media outlet contacts to reach target audience
- Contract and develop training products (How-To videos, PowerPoints, Bookmarks, BMP Installation circulars, etc.)
- Develop Participant Questionnaire as metric to quantify project’s success
- Conduct four (4) “after hours” workshops using training products and partners

City of Adel

- Conduct ten (10) outreach informational meetings for underserved landowners.
- Conduct ten (10) one-on-one meetings with diverse producers for demonstration project sites.
- Host four (4) regional development sessions with USDA, state, local and community organizations.

Lower Chattahoochee River SWCD

- Hold three (3) Outreach Demonstrations/Workshops informational meetings for underserved landowners.

Broad River SWCD

- Organize organic farming, micro irrigation, and grazing workshop
- Host four (4) regional targeted program delivery workshops
- Co-host one (1) small farm conference
- Provide financial assistance to support agriculture related training workshops statewide
- Provide financial assistance to youth groups for agricultural related opportunities and career paths

Communications Plan

Communication and Documentation

- Information about programs and events will be disseminated to the public through media contacts, NRCS website, posting flyers, and local media contact lists.
- Information about participation in the programs and at the events will be collected for reporting internally and externally on the level of participation and the success of event.

Action	Tasks	Timeframe
Newsletter	Work with Public Affairs Team to develop articles for the newsletter	Quarterly
Meet with state Civil Rights Committee	Attend state Civil Rights Committee meetings in an advisory capacity	Quarterly
Update the Georgia NRCS Outreach website	Work with Public Affairs Team on implementing changes to the Outreach portion of the Georgia NRCS website	Ongoing
Outreach Materials	Work with Public Affairs Team on developing more Outreach materials for distribution to producers	Ongoing
Area Staff Meetings	Attend area staff meetings to advise field employees on Outreach efforts going on in the state	Ongoing
Media Contact List	Work with Public Affairs Team and District Conservationist on the media contact list for the different areas	Ongoing

Programs and Services

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Programs

The Legislative Branch of the government authorizes the USDA, through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), to administer and deliver programs that help local entities identify and solve problems that affect the Natural Resources.

Agricultural Water Enhancement Programs – AWEP

- The Agricultural Water Enhancement Program is a voluntary conservation program that provides financial and technical assistance to assist agricultural producers. The assistance provided enables producers to implement agricultural water enhancement activities that are consistent with State water law on agricultural land for the purposes of conserving surface and ground water and improving water quality.

Conservation Technical Assistance – CTA

- Conservation Technical Assistance is provided to district cooperators and other land users in the planning and application of conservation treatment to control erosion and improve the quantity and quality of soil resources, improve and conserve water, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, conserve energy, improve woodland, pasture and range conditions, and reduce upstream flooding; all to protect and enhance the natural resource base.

Conservation Stewardship Program – CSP

- Conservation Stewardship Program is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on Tribal and private working lands. Working lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pasture, and range land, as well as forested land that is an incidental part of an agriculture operation. The program provides equitable access to benefits to all producers, regardless of size of operation, crops produced, or geographic location.

Conservation Reserve Program – CRP (Farm Service Agency)

- The Conservation Reserve Program reduces soil erosion, protects the nation's ability to produce food and fiber, reduces sedimentation in streams and lakes, improves water quality, establishes wildlife habitat, and enhances forest and wetland resources. It encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as tame or native grasses, wildlife plantings, trees, filterstrips, or riparian buffers. Farmers receive an annual rental payment for the term of the multi-year contract. Cost sharing is provided to establish the vegetative cover practices.

Emergency Conservation Program – ECP (Farm Service Agency)

- The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) is for the restoration of conservation practices damaged by severe weather.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program – EQIP

- The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. It provides a conservation program for farmers, ranchers and owners of private, non-industrial forest land that promotes agricultural production, forest management and environmental quality as compatible national goals. Through EQIP, farmers may receive financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land. EQIP provides technical, educational, and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides assistance to farmers and ranchers in complying with Federal, State, and tribal environmental laws, and encourages environmental enhancement. The purposes of the program are achieved through the implementation of a conservation plan which includes structural, vegetative, and land management practices on eligible land.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program – FRPP

- The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) is a voluntary program designed to protect agricultural use and related conservation values of eligible land by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land. The program protects valuable farm and ranch lands for future generations. This is achieved by working cooperatively with State, Tribal, and local governments and non-governmental organizations; the United States Department of Agriculture is authorized to facilitate and provide funding for the purchase of conservation easements and other interests in eligible land that is subject to a pending offer from an eligible entity.

Grassland Reserve Program – GRP

- The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) is a voluntary program that assists landowners and operators in protecting grazing uses and related conservation values on eligible private grazing, range, and pasture land. The program emphasizes support for working grazing operations; maintaining and improving plant and animal biodiversity; and protection of grasslands and shrublands from the threat of conversion to uses other than grazing. Participants choosing to enroll voluntarily limit future use of the land for a certain time frame while retaining the right to conduct common grazing practices.

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative – GLCI Conservation of Private Grazing Lands – CPGL

- The Grazing Land Conservation Initiative and the Conservation of Private Grazing Lands legislation work hand in hand to ensure that technical, educational, and related assistance are provided to people that own private grazing lands. Heightened technical assistance offers producers an opportunity to improve grazing land management, protect soil from erosive wind and water, use more energy efficient ways to produce livestock and feed, conserve water, provide habitat for wildlife, sustain forage and grazing plants, use plants to sequester greenhouse gases and increase soil organic matter, and using grazing lands as a source of biomass energy and raw materials for industrial products.

Healthy Forests Reserve Program – HFRP

- The Healthy Forests Reserve Program is a voluntary program established for the purpose of restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems to: 1) promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species, 2) improve biodiversity; and, 3) enhance carbon sequestration. Program implementation has been delegated by the Secretary of Agriculture to the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Plant Materials Program – PMC

- The purpose of the program is to provide native plants that can help solve natural resource problems. Beneficial uses for which plant material may be developed include biomass production, carbon sequestration, erosion reduction, wetland restoration, water quality improvement, streambank and riparian area protection, coastal dune stabilization, and other special conservation treatment needs. Scientists at the Plant Materials Center seek out plants that show promise for meeting an identified conservation need and test their performance. After species are proven, they are released to the private sector for commercial production. The work at the Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center is carried out cooperatively with state and Federal agencies, commercial businesses, and seed and nursery associations.

Soil Survey Program – SS

- The National Cooperative Soil Survey Program is a partnership led by NRCS of Federal land management agencies, state agricultural experiment stations and state and local units of government that provide soil survey information necessary for understanding, managing, conserving and sustaining the nation's limited soil resources.

Wetland Reserve Program – WRP

- The Wetlands Reserve Program is a voluntary program that assists landowners in restoring, protecting, and enhancing wetlands on eligible private or tribal lands while maximizing wildlife habitat benefits. The emphasis of WRP is to protect, restore, and enhance functions and values of wetland ecosystems on privately owned lands to attain habitat for migratory birds and other wetland-dependent wildlife and protection and improvement of water quality. Agricultural production ceases from lands enrolled in WRP, but WRP lands are usually marginal agricultural lands poorly suited for efficient agricultural productions.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program – WHIP

- The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program provides financial incentives to develop habitat for fish and wildlife on private lands. The Natural Resources Conservation Service administers WHIP to provide both technical assistance and up to 75 percent cost-share assistance to establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat. Participants agree to implement a wildlife habitat development plan and NRCS agrees to provide cost-share assistance for the initial implementation of wildlife habitat development practices.

Georgia Outreach Goals and Strategies

GOAL 1: Inform and educate the underserved about NRCS programs and services that could be beneficial to them concerning eligibility to participate in NRCS Programs.

Strategies:

- Work with District Conservationist in counties where there is a decline in program participation and have been identified as needing further outreach assistance.
- Work with District Conservationists in the state to increase potential Hispanic participation within their area.
- Feature minority farmers that are participating in the WRP and feature in the Minority Landowners Magazine.
- With assistance from district conservationists, conduct informal workshops to better inform the underserved about NRCS programs.
- Partner with community based organizations, RC&D's, 1890 Land Grant Universities, and other community groups to address barriers that limit participation in USDA programs.

GOAL 2: Coordinate all outreach activities and provide statewide leadership.

Strategies:

- Revise the State Outreach Plan.
- Identify NRCS programs and eligibility requirements in order to reach underserved customers.
- Develop one process for the state to use to evaluate program delivery and outreach efforts to clients.
- Produce a quarterly newsletter to better inform employees of outreach initiatives.

GOAL 3: Provide current client base data for each county in the State to determine the number of underserved in each county.

Strategy:

- Provide demographic data for each county.

GOAL 4: Increase participation of historically underserved farmers and ranchers in all NRCS programs and services.

Strategies:

- Conduct one Community Based Leadership workshop aimed at educating small and limited resource farmers and ranchers about the various ways in which local people can participate in farm bill programs.
- Utilize information from workshop to better inform field employees on how to improve service to a diverse customer base.
- Utilize farmers, ranchers, and landowners to identify potential nominees for the Small Farmer Awards.

GOAL 5: Coordinate state wide outreach efforts.

Strategies:

- Provide a report to the ASTC/Programs of the outreach review and actions taken.
- Continue to identify barriers and actions to remove barriers that restrict or limit participation in NRCS programs.
- Talk with landowners and facilitate one session in each area to discuss barriers.
- Provide Farm Bill information at meetings.
- Conduct door-to-door outreach in rural areas throughout the state in order to reach the underserved community.
- Work with Community Based Organizations, educational institutions, and agricultural partners to discuss and distribute information on Farm Bill programs.

Georgia Outreach Team

FY 2013

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Outreach Barriers and Methods of Removal

Beginning, Small, Socially Disadvantaged, and Limited Resource Farmers

Barriers	Actions to Remove Barriers
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. May have less formal education than the norm, but considerable farming experience. 2. May be wary of government programs and people who represent government agencies. 3. Many are 50 years old or older. The older farmers may be wary of agency representatives that are younger. 4. Don't welcome bureaucratic printed materials. 5. Probably don't watch a lot of TV. 6. Role of the community church may play an important role in decision making for the individual farmer. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One-on-one farm visits: NRCS reps should <u>listen</u> to these farmers and learn from their experience, then share some program options that may fit their needs. 2. NRCS representatives should dress appropriately when working with these farmers, i.e., don't look like a bureaucrat. Identify community leaders and involve them in passing the message. 3. The NRCS reps are getting older too; this may not be much of a problem right now. However, older, more experienced NRCS employees need to guide and work closely with younger, less experienced employees when reaching out to these customers. Teaming up for initial meetings may remove the barrier. 4. Forget mailing bureaucratic program documents to these farmers. Keep printed materials simple and clear, one-page fact sheets, extra sheets to put in church bulletins, tri-fold brochures. Don't mail these items, leave them with customers after a visit, hand them out at meetings or when these customers come to materials reviewed by FAMU contact for clarity and using them only in conjunction with a visit or a meeting. 5. Provide radio spots to locally popular radio stations. Keep these spots simple and direct. 6. Recognize that the local church and functions at the church may provide opportunities to communicate programs and services.

<p>7. May not be appropriately targeted to get NRCS program and service information.</p> <p>8. NRCS Service Center may not be conveniently located for LRF clients.</p> <p>9. May not have the same view or perspective of farming, partnerships, etc., as NRCS.</p> <p>10. May not have made it on the NRCS radar screen.</p> <p>11. LRF's may learn better from their neighbors, rather than a government rep.</p> <p>12. May still not feel comfortable coming to a Service Center or dealing with NRCS.</p> <p>13. LRF's aren't familiar with NRCS programs, services or policies.</p> <p>14. NRCS policy may not appear to fit LRF needs.</p> <p>15. NRCS may not always follow through to assure opportunities for participation.</p> <p>16. We may not keep track of our customers.</p> <p>17. May not have the resources to participate in programs.</p> <p>18. Conservation practices may be too restrictive or costly.</p>	<p>7. Develop an outreach plan specifically for minority, limited resource farmers.</p> <p>8. Use computer technology to bring office to customer as much as possible.</p> <p>9. We need training and to read available books that will educate us on our minority, limited resource farmers.</p> <p>10. Identify and locate LRF customers: use Ag-Census and minority farms registry.</p> <p>11. Support formation of farmer networks and mentoring programs for small farmers.</p> <p>12. We need training on how to effectively reach out to these customers.</p> <p>13. Provide training and information on policy and locally led conservation programs to help increase participation.</p> <p>14. Develop LRF farm policy and technical services that reflect the circumstances LRF's face.</p> <p>15. Develop innovative ways to improve access to learning opportunities and to encourage participation.</p> <p>16. Periodically update customer profile information and mailing list.</p> <p>17. Look at the possibility of increased cost-share rates. Look at the possibility of other agencies providing additional cost-share.</p> <p>18. Look at ways to implement BMP's with low cost structures or methods.</p>
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Native American Indians

Barriers	Actions to Remove Barriers
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. May be suspicious of Federal programs and agency representatives. 2. Cultural morals and tribal governmental practices may be barriers to participation in farm bill programs. 3. Tribe has reservations about taxation under the farm bill programs. Individuals do not want to be taxed. 4. Language. 5. Native American Indian ranchers and farmers may receive information mainly from local radio stations. 6. Tribal members may read local newspapers rather than the major newspapers. 7. Owing to experience or unfamiliarity with these clients, NRCS personnel may feel somewhat uncomfortable dealing with Native American Indian customers. 8. Native American Indian ranchers and farmers may receive information mainly from local radio stations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NRCS in Georgia should train all field staff and conservation partners working with Native American Indians on the locally lead conservation process and how it relates to tribes, tribal law, etc. Involve tribal leaders. 2. Make sure key agency representatives are trained on USDA programs, interpersonal skills, effective communication techniques, and Native American Indian culture. States work with tribes to provide training. 3. Resolve issue with facts from an authoritative source. 4. Schedule follow-up meetings with tribes to discuss how to continue meeting their needs. 5. Staff assignments should take into consideration. 6. Work with Native American representatives closely to include non-English speaking members in discussions through translators. 7. Provide radio spots to local stations. Work with tribal representative to develop spots. 8. Provide information to local newspapers and work with staff and editors to develop information that is likely to be printed.

9. Tribal members may read local newspapers rather than the major newspapers.	9. Provide training and one-on-one opportunities accompanied by an experienced person.
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Hispanic Americans

Barriers	Actions to Remove Barriers
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language: may not speak or read English. 2. Spanish speaking farmers may not speak and read the same Spanish. There are language differences between Hispanic Americans from Puerto Rico, Cuba, and those from elsewhere. 3. Cultural differences must be accommodated: for example, Hispanic men may be reluctant to wear glasses, therefore the Hispanic news media prefer articles and releases in 14 point type. 4. Hispanic customers may listen to their local Spanish speaking radio and TV stations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Printed materials and radio and television public service announcements should be provided in Spanish. 2. Not only that, translations should meet the needs of the different Hispanic customers, i.e., Puerto Rican, Cuban or other. Differences in the Spanish language should be recognized and accommodated. 3. Provide releases and articles to Hispanic news media in appropriate type size. Check with individual papers before submittal. 4. Target these stations with radio and TV spots.

Women

Barriers	Actions to Remove Barriers
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. May be wary of male attitudes towards them. 2. May not be recognized as primary business manager on the farm. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give female customers the same serious and courteous consideration as we should be giving all customers. 2. Assume, unless you know differently, that the female farmer is your primary client who manages the farm business with full authority.

Disabled Customers

Barriers	Actions to Remove Barriers
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. May not have easy access to our offices.2. May not be adequately served by NRCS.3. May not know about our programs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ensure that physically challenged clients are appropriately accommodated at agency locations.2. Develop innovative ways for disabled customers to participate in our programs.3. Identify potential clients and provide information in appropriate format.