

Another Conservation Success Story...

Baldwin County, Georgia

August 2010

EQIP Helps Small Cattle Farmer Increase Production

Jere Leverett's 110-acre farm borders the Oconee River, which offers a beautiful backdrop to his Baldwin County property.



Soil Conservation Technician Corey New (left) and Jere Leverett (right) stand in front of a heavy use area on Oconee Sands Farm.

Leverett has owned the picturesque Oconee Sands Farm located just a few miles outside of Milledgeville since 1992. At the time, Leverett who grew up on a dairy farm, worked with the Georgia Power Company.

"I probably have a better success rate on my cattle operation. Animal health has improved and the survival rate of calves has increased because of this program."—Jere Leverett

Even though he worked full-time with the power provider, Leverett made it a priority to take care of the land and its surrounding water resources.

Operating a cattle breeding operation near the Oconee River; however, proved to make Leverett's attempts at conservation difficult.

The livestock threatened the Oconee River's water quality each time they'd take a trip to drink from the water.

Leverett says Corey New, a Soil Conservation Technician out of the USDA-

Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Eatonton Field Office, called him just in time and offered Leverett a solution to his dilemma.

"Off and on my whole life, I knew about the cost-share programs.

"Corey actually called me. I think I'd signed up for a little something in the past and he was following up."

This time was different. After encouragement from New, Leverett applied for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and was awarded funds to help protect the Oconee River's water quality.

Leverett installed 2,622 feet of fence along the

Oconee River to prevent his cattle from getting into the water. Before, the 25 or so head would cause soil erosion along the river while trying to drink water.

"The fence creates a buffer between the cattle and river. It helps keep bacteria out of the water," Corey

New said.

To compensate for the loss of the Oconee River's water source, EQIP funding helped Leverett build a heavy use area on the farm with an alternative water source in the form of water troughs.

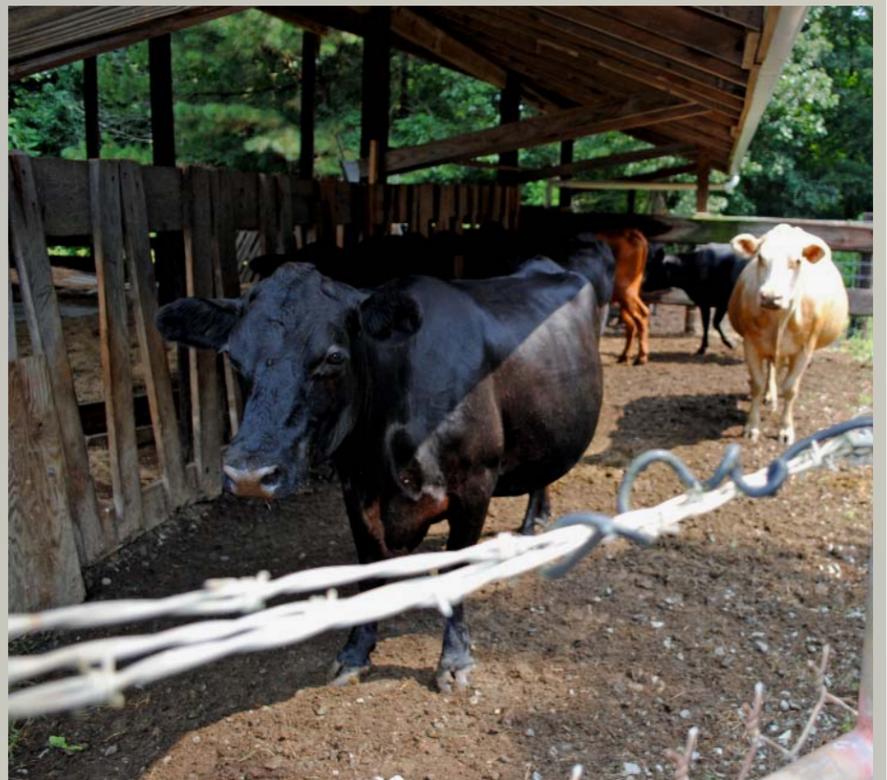
Leverett said the EQIP funds have allowed him to do things that wouldn't have been practical otherwise.



The Oconee River borders Oconee Sands Farms. A fence now serves as a buffer between the cattle and the river.

The Baldwin County farmer said his farming operation has benefited in many ways because of the NRCS's technical assistance.

"I probably have a better success rate on my cattle operation. Animal health has improved and the survival rate of calves has increased because of this program," Leverett said.



This heavy use area serves as shelter for the cattle, as a permanent all weather surface for livestock.

Even though it has taken a few years and many EQIP applications to finally get the assistance he wanted and needed, Leverett says that other farmers should always remain determined when it comes to conservation.

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