

Georgia: Overview

Through the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering financial and technical assistance to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners interested in improving water quality and aquatic habitats in priority watersheds with impaired streams. NRCS will help producers implement conservation and management practices through a systems approach to control and trap nutrient and manure runoff. Qualified producers will receive assistance for installing conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips and terraces. For over 75 years, NRCS has provided agricultural producers with assistance to implement voluntary conservation practices that protect natural resources while maintaining production and profits.

Georgia

Priority Watersheds

Deep Creek:

Lower Deep Creek Watershed encompasses 32,025 acres of land in the northwest part of Turner County, southwest Georgia. Deep Creek is used primarily for fishing. The land around the watershed is about 60 percent crop, pasture, range and other associated agriculture use. About 35 percent of the watershed is forested. The other 15 percent is commercial or communities such as the county seat Ashburn. Access to these communities and the watershed is through State highways 107, 112 and 159, with the watershed being just east of I-75 at Ashburn. The county population is around 8,930 residents.

Piscola Creek:

Upper Piscola Creek Watershed encompasses 25,936 acres of land in the southeast part of Thomas and western part of Brooks Counties in southwest Georgia. The land around the watershed is about 75 percent



photo by Georgia NRCS

By fencing cattle out of the streams and creeks through a practice called exclusion fencing, the watersheds improve and the water quality is higher with out the excess nutrients.

crop, pasture, range and other associated agriculture use. About 20 percent of the watershed is forested. The other five percent is commercial or communities.

Middle Piscola Creek Watershed encompasses 38,520 acres of land in the southeast part of Thomas and western part of Brooks Counties in southwest Georgia. The land around the watershed is about 69 percent

The National Water Quality Initiative will work in selected watersheds to help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners improve water quality and aquatic habitats in impaired streams.

crop, pasture, range and other associated agriculture use. About 25 percent of the watershed is forested. The other six percent is commercial or communities.

Lower Piscola Creek Watershed encompasses 41,242 acres of land in the

southcentral part of Brooks County, southwest Georgia. The land around the watershed is about 64 percent crop, pasture, range and other associated agriculture use. About 29 percent of the watershed is forested. The other seven percent is commercial or communities such as the county seat Quitman.

Access to the communities and the watershed around both the Middle and Lower Piscola Creek Watershed is through U.S. highway 84 and 221 or State highways 364 and 333. Both of the watershed areas are designated for fishing. The population of Thomas County is around 44,720 residents and Brooks County is 16,243 residents. The source for the land data is the 2006 National Land Cover Database (NLCD).

Conservation Funding and Practices

NRCS conservation professionals will provide technical assistance and planning tools to determine which conservation actions will provide the best results to improve water quality

on your land. Nutrient management systems, erosion control, conservation tillage, pest management, and buffers systems are just some of the practices being offered as part of the National Water Quality Initiative. To help install these conservation practices, financial assistance to share in the cost of these conservation practices is available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Partnerships

NRCS identified priority watersheds through the help of local partnerships and state water quality agencies. Partners sometimes offer financial assistance in addition to NRCS programs. NRCS will continue to coordinate with local and state agencies, conservation districts, nongovernmental organizations and others to implement this initiative. This strategic approach will leverage funds and provide streamlined assistance to help individual agricultural producers take needed actions to reduce the flow of sediment, nutrients and other runoff into impaired waterways.

Producer Benefits

Water quality conservation practices benefit agricultural producers by lowering input costs and enhancing the productivity of working lands. Conservation investments are good for all Americans because well managed farms limit pollution from runoff, produce food and fiber, sustain rural economies, and provide food security to the Nation. All across the country—farmers, ranchers and forest landowners are voluntarily taking action and putting conservation on the ground to improve water quality on millions of acres!

Public Benefits

NRCS is proud to be involved in a nationwide effort with landowners and communities to improve and protect our water resources. The landowners and farmers participating in the initiative will receive conservation payments to work on the land in a sustainable way which provides cleaner water. In addition to the financial assistance, the land will remain productive

into the future. Communities benefit by having clean waterways, safer drinking water and healthy habitat for fish and wildlife.

How to Apply

Almost every county in the Nation has a **USDA Service Center**. To get started, make an appointment at your local office. You will need to establish eligibility and farm records for your land. NRCS will help you complete an application while explaining which conservation practices are available in your watershed. Remember to check with your local NRCS office to see if you are located in a selected watershed. All applications for funding consideration, during fiscal year 2013, must be received by June 21, 2013.

For more Information

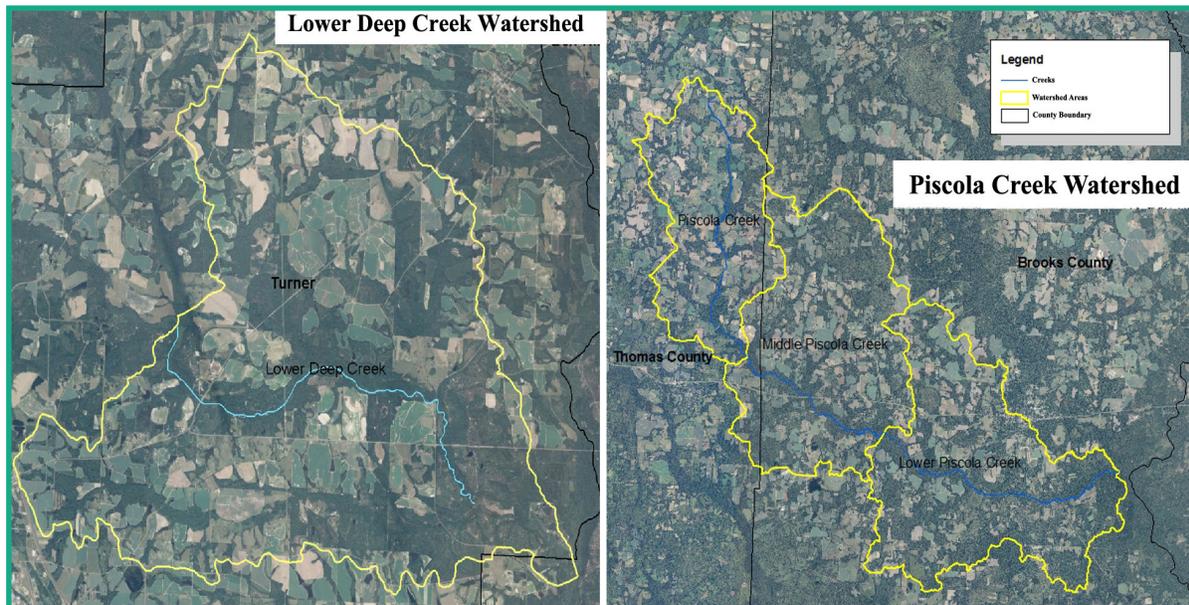
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Maps by Joe Perry, Resource Conservationist, Athens

Above are maps of the four priority watersheds in Georgia. Left is Lower Deep Creek, located in Turner County and right is the Upper and Middle Piscola Creek, located in Thomas and Brooks Counties and Lower Piscola Creek located in Brooks County.



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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