

For Immediate Release

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News Release

Second Signup ends May 24, 2013

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION EFFORTS TO SUPPORT LOCAL ECONOMIES AND PRESERVE FARM AND RANCH TRADITIONS

ATHENS, GA, (May 17, 2013)—State Conservationist James E. Tillman Sr., of the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), announced today that financial assistance of \$2.2 million is available under the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) to help sustain breeding populations of the gopher tortoise through the Working Lands For Wildlife (WLFW) Initiative. The signup period starts May 20 and ends May 24.

WLFW is a partnership with farmers, ranchers and forest landowners to use innovative approaches to restore and protect the habitats for an at-risk specie - the gopher tortoise, and other vulnerable game species.

This initiative will assist private landowners in the creation and maintenance of habitat necessary to sustain breeding populations of gopher tortoise in their current range. It focuses on the creation, management and maintenance of pine savanna habitat.

Interested producers and landowners in focal areas can enroll in the WHIP on a continuous basis at their local NRCS field office. To be considered for this sign-up, an application must be received by May 24. NRCS funds from WHIP will share the cost of conservation practices with landowners in areas known to support the gopher tortoise.

For more information about WHIP and other NRCS conservation programs, visit the Georgia NRCS Web site at <http://www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov>, or contact your local NRCS office.

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