

**Georgia State Office**  
355 East Hancock Ave  
Athens, GA 30601

**State Technical Committee Meeting**  
Houston County Government Building  
2030 Kings Chapels Road  
Perry, GA 31069

24 April 2025, 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Time	Topic	Presenters
10:30 AM	Opening Comments & Introductions	Terrance O. Rudolph, NRCS <i>Georgia State Conservationist</i>
10:40 AM	EQIP, CSP, & RCPP Updates	Lee Green, NRCS <i>Assistant State Conservationist - Programs</i>
10:55 AM	Soils Updates	Gary Hankins, NRCS <i>Assistant State Conservationist – Soils</i>
11:10 AM	Easements & Water Resources Updates	Sharon Swagger, NRCS <i>Assistant State Conservationist – Easements &amp; Water Resources</i>
11:25 AM	Outreach Updates	Charlie Grace, NRCS <i>Southwest Region Outreach Coordinator</i>
11:40 AM	RMA Updates	Davina Lee, RMA <i>Director</i>
11:55 AM	TST Updates	Tansel Hudson, NRCS <i>Acting Assistant State Conservationist - TST</i>
12:30 PM	Open Discussion / Q&A Closing Comments / STC Meeting Adjourned	Terrance O. Rudolph, NRCS <i>Georgia State Conservationist</i>

**Georgia State Technical Committee Meeting****24 April 2025****10:30 AM – 01:00 PM****Perry, GA, and MS Teams**

*Presenters:* Terrance O. Rudolph, Lee Green, Gary Hankins, Sharon Swagger, Charlie Grace, Davina Lee, Noah McCoard, Justin Smith, Philip Brown, and Kendric Holder.

*Terrance O. Rudolph, NRCS, Georgia State Conservationist:* Welcome, opening comments, and other updates.

*Lee Green, NRCS, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs:* Discussed updates and news regarding EQIP, EQIP IRA, CSP, CSP-IRA, FY25 Funding Pools, EQIP Disaster Assistance Program, Early Start Waivers, OTI, Payment Limitations, CSP Renewals, RCPP, Eligible Projects for FY25, Agreements, LMR Budget vs. Spending, and Active RCPP Projects.

*Gary Hankins, NRCS, State Soil Scientist:* Discussed Projects Updates, GA's Wetland Team, Conservation Compliance Updates, ESDs, NRI, GLOSS, Overall GA Land Use, Commodity Crops, and Irrigation.

*Sharon Swagger, NRCS, Assistant State Conservationist for Easements & Water Resources:* Discussed NRCS Easements, US-Held Easement FY25 Applications, Entity-Held Applications, Watershed Project Highlights, Emergency Watershed Protection Program, and Easement Repairs and Reforestation.

*Charlie Grace, NRCS, Southwest Region Outreach Coordinator:* Discussed Outreach updates and news, Purpose, Technical and Financial Assistance, GA State Outreach Advisory Board Committee, Administrative Areas, GA Outreach Highlights, and Upcoming GA Outreach Events.

*Davina Lee, RMA, Director:* Discussed updates regarding the Federal Crop Insurance Program, an overview of the last three years, Hurricane Insurance Protection, Crops by Liability, Crops Insured by Written Agreements, Specialty Crops, WFRP/MicroFarm, Tropical Storm Option Basics, overview of 2024 Hurricane Season, and upcoming Events and Dates of Importance.

*Noah McCoard, NRCS, State Biologist:* Discussed updates regarding the Monarch, Conservation Practice Standards, Scenarios, Wildlife and Forestry Subcommittee, Opportunities for Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat Planting, and Riparian Buffers.

*Justin Smith, NRCS, State Forester:* Discussed updates regarding Tree/Shrub Establishment, Forest Stand Improvement, Prescribed Burning, and Silvopasture.

*Philip Brown, NRCS, State Grazing Specialist:* Discussed updates regarding Bale Grazing Project, Agroforestry Project, Native Warm Season Grass Establishment, Grazed Cropland Project, Partners, and Nutrient Concentration in Feeding Areas.



*Kendric Holder, NRCS, State Agronomist:* Discussed updates regarding the current condition of Agronomy, Guidance for Field Offices, Recent and Upcoming Trainings, Developing Agronomic Practices, Revamping Conservation Practices, and the Certified Planner Process.

*Questions and Comments from the Committee / Open Discussion*

*Terrance O. Rudolph, NRCS, Georgia State Conservationist:* Closing statements. Next GA STCM will take place in July 2025.

Meeting was adjourned.

# Table of Contents and Contact Info.

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# GEORGIA NRCS PROGAMS

**Lee Green**  
**Assistant State**  
**Conservationist for Programs**  
**April 24, 2025**



## FY 2025 ALLOCATIONS

### ➤ **EQIP GENERAL**

- INITIAL ALLOCATION: \$36,946,431
- ADDITIONAL FUNDS: \$20,520,900
- EQIP DISASTER ASSISTANCE: \$5,000,000
- TOTAL: **\$62,467,331.00**

### ➤ ~~**EQIP-IRA**~~

- ~~EQIP-IRA: \$62,714,093~~

### ➤ **CSP GENERAL**

- CSP GENERAL: \$24,850,000

### ➤ ~~**CSP-IRA**~~

- ~~CSP-IRA: \$22,269,000~~

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# ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is NRCS' flagship conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands.

EQIP provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers and forest landowners to address natural resource concerns, such as:

- Improved water and air quality;
- Conserved ground and surface water;
- Increased soil health ;
- Reduced soil erosion and sedimentation;
- Improved or created wildlife habitat; and
- Mitigation against drought and increasing weather volatility



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# FY 2025 EQIP FUNDING POOLS

AFO-CAFO	CROPLAND SOIL EROSION- STRUCTURAL	LONGLEAF PINE INITIATIVE
BFR AFO-CAFO	EQIP-CIC CROPLAND (CONVENTIONAL & ORGANIC)	<del>MCINTOSH SEED GRAZING &amp; FORESTRY-SDFR</del>
SDFR AFO-CAFO	EQIP-CIC FORESTRY & WILDLIFE	ORGANIC TRANSITION INITIATIVE
AFO-CAFO WASTE STORAGE FACILITY CLOSURE INITIATIVE	EQIP-CIC PASTURELAND (LIVESTOCK OPERATIONS)	SEASONAL HIGH TUNNEL
AQUATIC WILDLIFE	GRAZING WATER QUALITY	SMALL SCALE FARM
IRRIGATION (CROPLAND IRRIGATED)	HURRICANE HELENE ACT NOW	<del>STRIKEFORCE FORESTRY</del>
BFR IRRIGATION (CROPLAND IRRIGATED)	BFR HURRICANE HELENE ACT NOW	TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE
SDFR IRRIGATION (CROPLAND IRRIGATED)	SDFR HURRICANE HELENE ACT NOW	WLFW-NORTHERN BOBWHITE
CPAs, CEMAs, DIAs ACT NOW	HURRICANE HELENE PHASE II	WLFW-GT
CROPLAND NON-IRRIGATED	PASTURE	FORESTRY
BFR CROPLAND NON-IRRIGATED	BFR PASTURE	BFR FORESTRY
SDFR CROPLAND NON-IRRIGATED	SDFR PASTURE	SDFR FORESTRY

# FY 2025 EQIP Inflation Reduction ACT (IRA) FUNDING POOLS

<del>CLIMATE SMART SOIL HEALTH COVER CROP IRA ACT NOW</del>	<del>CPAS, DIAS, &amp; CEMAS ACT NOW</del>	<del>BFR CLIMATE SMART GRAZING IRA ACT NOW</del>
<del>BFR CLIMATE SMART SOIL HEALTH COVER CROP IRA ACT NOW</del>	<del>CLIMATE SMART SOIL HEALTH IRA ACT NOW</del>	<del>SDFR CLIMATE SMART GRAZING IRA ACT NOW</del>
<del>SDFR CLIMATE SMART SOIL HEALTH COVER CROP IRA ACT NOW</del>	<del>BFR CLIMATE SMART SOIL HEALTH IRA ACT NOW</del>	<del>CLIMATE SMART AGROFORESTRY</del>
<del>CLIMATE SMART ENERGY IRA ACT NOW</del>	<del>SDFR CLIMATE SMART SOIL HEALTH IRA ACT NOW</del>	<del>BFR CLIMATE SMART AGROFORESTRY</del>
<del>BFR CLIMATE SMART ENERGY IRA ACT NOW</del>	<del>SDFR CLIMATE SMART ENERGY IRA ACT NOW</del>	<del>SDFR CLIMATE SMART AGROFORESTRY</del>

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Through the EQIP Disaster Assistance Program, Georgia offered a special signup with a cutoff date of November 15, 2024, to assist livestock producers affected by Hurricane Helene.

The sign-up was limited to the following practices :

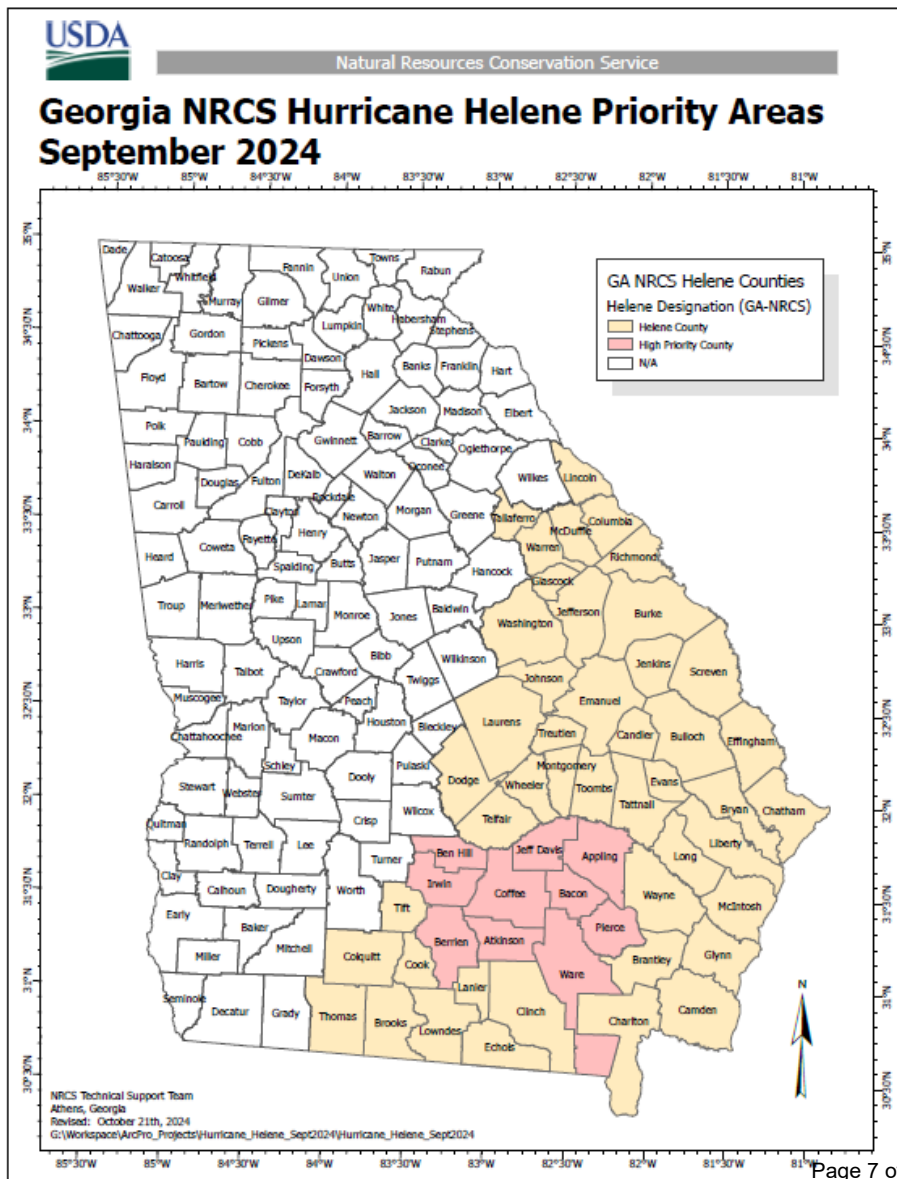
- CPS 368: Emergency Animal Mortality Management – Burial, Composting (Passive), Disposal at a Landfill or Render, or Burning to Ash
- CPS 360: Waste Facility Closure, Soil Remediation
- CPS 500: Obstruction Removal – Removal and Disposal of Wood Structures (Large)
- CPS 484: Mulching- Natural Material Full Coverage
- CPS 342: Critical Area Planting

Optional if applicable– 318 Short Term Storage of Animal Waste & By-Products

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# HURRICANE HELENE EQIP DISASTER ASSISTANCE



**The EQIP Disaster Assistance was only available to producers whose operations are located in:** Appling, Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Bryan, Bulloch, Burke, Camden, Candler, Charlton, Chatham, Clinch, Coffee, Colquitt, Columbia, Cook, Dodge, Echols, Effingham, Emanuel, Evans, Glascock, Glynn, Irwin, Jeff Davis, Jefferson, Jenkins, Johnson, Lanier, Laurens, Liberty, Lincoln, Long, Lowndes, McDuffie, McIntosh, Montgomery, Pierce, Richmond, Screven, Taliaferro, Tattnall, Telfair, Thomas, Tift, Toombs, Treutlen, Ware, Warren, Washington, Wayne, and Wheeler Counties.

# 2018 FARM BILL

## Hurricane Helene EQIP Disaster Assistance

71 Applications received; 57 Contracts Obligated For \$4.6 million

- Hurricane Helene – 52 contract; \$4,210,826; 269.6 acres
  - Beginning Farmer Hurricane Helene -4 Contracts \$305,138; 13.2 acres
  - Socially Disadvantaged Hurricane Helene - 1 Contract; \$144,912; 6.3 acres
- 
- **Note:** States are expected to obligate allocations, install all conservation practices, and fully compensate clients within 60 to 90 days of receipt of the allocation.

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## General EQIP Hurricane Helene Phase II

GA-NRCS is offering assistance through General EQIP for the replacement of irrigation practices damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Helene

- CPS 326 Clearing and Snagging
- CPS 342 Critical Area Planting
- CPS 430 Irrigation Pipeline
- CPS 441 Irrigation System, Microirrigation
- CPS 442 Sprinkler System
- CPS 462 Precision Land Forming and Smoothing
- CPS 484 Mulching
- CPS 533 Pumping Plant

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## EARLY START WAIVER

NRCS may grant early start waivers based on an evaluation of the specific circumstances for which the applicant is requesting the waiver and a determination that the applicant did not start the conservation practice or activity before approval of the waiver.

- (1) Approved waiver does not guarantee contract approval;
- (2) Conservation practices or activities must meet NRCS standards and specifications; and
- (3) Applicant must maintain eligibility, or the applicant will be ineligible to receive payments.

Note: Conservation practices or activities completed before contract obligation but after the waiver has expired are not eligible for payment.

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## Organic Transition Initiative (OTI)

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help you transition to organic through the multi-agency Organic Transition Initiative (OTI).
- Through OTI, NRCS will hire new organic experts to support NRCS staff and host hands-on organic trainings and assist field staff with organic related questions.

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## How does OTI work?

It supports conservation activities and practices required for organic certification and may provide foregone income reimbursement for dips in production during the transition period.

The National Organic Standards support composting, outdoor access for livestock, and organic nutrient management which are all covered through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program under the new standard.

Flexible education and training activities can include field days, working alongside organic experts and more. You can work with NRCS field staff, approved technical service providers, and other approved organic partners.

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# Payment Limitations

- A person or legal entity may not receive, directly or indirectly, payments that, in the aggregate, exceed \$450,000 for all EQIP contracts entered during FY2019–24.
- Note: Payment limitations are not applicable to contracts obligated during FY2025.
- Contracts associated with the National Organic Initiative that were obligated during the 2018 Farm Bill period may not exceed \$140,000 in aggregate.

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# CSP FY 2025





## Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

### **Focus:**

CSP primarily focuses on:

- Rewarding farmers and ranchers who are already implementing conservation practices.
- Encouraging further improvement: It incentivizes producers to adopt additional conservation activities and enhance their existing efforts.

### **Key Features:**

- Technical and financial assistance: Provides both technical and financial support to help producers implement conservation practices.
- Emphasis on whole-farm planning: CSP encourages a holistic approach to conservation, considering the entire farm or ranch operation.

## **FY2025 CSP Classic**

- Total Applications: 805
- Total Eligible or Pending Applications: 665
- As of today, Current Funds Available: \$19,908,768.00

## FY2025 CSP Classic Fund Pools

- There are separate pools for Ag Land (cropland and pasture) and Non-Industrial Private Forestland (NIPF) (forestry)
- Ag Land:
  - Beginning Farmer/Rancher (BFR)
  - Socially Disadvantaged Farmer/Rancher (SDFR)
  - Area 1 General Ag Land
  - Area 2 General Ag Land
  - Area 3 General Ag Land
  - Area 4 General Ag Land

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## FY2025 CSP Classic Fund Pools

- NIPF:
  - Beginning Farmer/Rancher (BFR)
  - Socially Disadvantaged Farmer/Rancher (SDFR)
  - Area 1 General NIPF
  - Area 2 General NIPF
  - Area 3 General NIPF
  - Area 4 General NIPF
- Note: Both Ag Land and NIPF BFR and SDFR pools are subdivided by Area

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# FY2025 CSP Classic

- Changes from FY2024 CSP Classic:
  - IRA funding is not available at this time, not sure if it will be available for this fiscal year
    - Due to President's Executive Order

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## **FY2025 CSP Classic**

- Changes from FY2024 CSP Classic:
  - No payment limitation, but contract limitation still applies
    - Payment limitation: Across all FB2018 CSP contracts (including individuals and as members of an entity)
      - » It was \$200,000 for Individuals and \$400,000 for Joint Ventures (Business Type 02, and 03)
    - Contract limitations: Total allowed for any contract
      - » \$200,000 for Individuals and \$400,000 for Joint Ventures (Business 02 and 03)

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## **FY2026 CSP Renewals**

- Letters were sent to participants of 169 FY2021 active CSP contracts notifying them of the option to apply for renewal.
- To date, there are 23 applications
- The deadline to submit the CPA-1200 (Conservation Program Applications) and CPA-1248 (Conservation Stewardship Program Contract Renewal Offer Worksheet) is 06/20/25.
- Note: these applications will not be processed until after October 1, 2025.

# RCPP FY 2025





# Overview

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns.

Through RCPP, NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners to implement projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to conservation challenges and provide measurable improvements and outcomes tied to the resource concerns they seek to address.

Partners apply to NRCS for RCPP project awards. Once projects are selected, NRCS works with partners to set aside a certain pool of funding for an awarded project. Producers, landowners, and partners then enter into producer contracts and supplemental agreements with NRCS to carry out agreed-to conservation activities.

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## **Benefits & How it Works?**

RCPP makes available a variety of NRCS conservation activities to help partners, ag producers, and private landowners address local and regional natural resource challenges.

Partners apply to NRCS for RCPP project awards. Once projects are selected, NRCS works with partners to set aside a certain pool of funding for an awarded project. Producers, landowners, and partners then enter into producer contracts and supplemental agreements with NRCS to carry out agreed-to conservation activities.

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# **Steps in the RCPP Process**

## **RCPP Announcement Partners Submit Proposal**

### **Proposals are Processed**

- Reviewed by State
- Proposals are Ranked
- Reviewed by NHQ

### **Selected by NHQ (National Headquarters)**

- Chief of NRCS selects Proposals
- Awardees are announced/notified

### **Start negotiations with Partners**

- FA- Financial Assistance
- TA-Technical Assistance

### **State Office Announcement**

Producers/Partners start contract implementation Financial Assistance

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## Eligible projects for FY25

### Approved Agreements (2018 Farm Bill)

- Tall Timbers (1960)-Expiring
- The Georgia Conservancy (2061) –Expiring
- The Conservation Fund (2419)
- US Endowment for Forestry & Communities (2574)
- **FY25 is the last rollout for projects 1960 and 2061.**

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# FY 2025 projects

Due to recent executive orders, the FY 2025 Projects have been paused.  
They were all funded under IRA.

3077 Georgia Sentinel  
Landscape Climate Smart  
Forest Conservation

• ~~Total allocated FA budget: \$1,755,000~~

2945 Managing Native  
Vegetation for Climate  
Mitigation through Grassland  
Bird Conservation in Georgia  
and Mississippi

• ~~Total Allocated FA Budget: \$9,375,000~~

3118 Partnership to Advance  
Climate-Resilient Longleaf  
Restoration and  
Conservation on Private  
Lands in Alabama and  
Georgia

• ~~Total Allocated FA Budget : \$6,375000~~

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## **Lead Partner-Tall Timbers (1960-Agreement )**

To Improve upland and wetland wildlife habitat, especially for T&E species and improve water quality and quantity in the Apalachee Bay-ST. Marks Watershed, and the Aucilla Watershed.

### **Eligible Counties:**

Brooks, Grady, & Thomas

### **Eligible Practices :**

Prescribed burning- Firebreak- Fuel break- Tree/shrub establishment- Tree/shrub site preparation-Forest stand improvement- Restoration of rare or declining natural communities- Brush management- Herbaceous weed control- Critical area planting- Riparian forest buffer-Streambank and shoreline protection- Upland wildlife habitat management- and Wildlife habitat planting

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## Partner-The Georgia Conservancy (2061-Agreement)

The Georgia Conservancy and partners plan to expand prescribed fire efforts in these focus areas to improve longleaf pine ecosystem management. This funding is a portion of the GSL project, which collectively invests almost \$4.3 million, complements Department of Defense Sentinel Landscape activities in Georgia, and supports Georgia's Gopher Tortoise Initiative goals

## Eligible Counties

- Appling, Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Bibb, Brantley, Bryan, Bulloch, Burke, Camden, Candler, Charlton, Chatham, Chattahoochee, Coffee, Columbia, Dodge, Dooly, Dougherty, Effingham, Emanuel, Evans, Glascock, Glynn, Houston, Irwin, Jeff Davis, Jefferson, Jenkins, Lanier, Laurens, Liberty, Long, Lowndes, Macon, Marion, McIntosh, Montgomery, Muscogee, Pierce, Pulaski, Richmond, Schley, Screven, Sumter, Talbot, Tattnall, Taylor, Telfair, Toombs, Treutlen, Turner, Twiggs, Ware, Warren, Wayne, Wheeler, Wilcox, and Worth.

## Eligible Practices

Prescribed Burning & Firebreak

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## **Partner-The Conservation Fund (2419-Agreement)**

The Conservation Fund's, Working Farms Fund project, will permanently protect significant farmland across the Atlanta metropolitan "foodshed", and create conservation opportunities for ambitious, diverse farmers to build a resilient regional food system by integrating sustainable farm practices into their production.

## **Eligible Counties**

Harris, Jasper, Lamar, Meriwether, Newton, and Rockdale counties.

## **Eligible Practices**

Wildlife habitat planting, cover crops, high tunnel systems, cross fencing, conservation crop rotation, residue and tillage management, no-till, stream habitat improvement and management, micro-irrigation, conservation cover, heavy use area protection, hedgerow planting, irrigation water management, nutrient management, pasture and hay planting, riparian forest buffer, structures for wildlife, water well, watering facility, stream crossing, etc.

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## **Partner-U.S Endowment for Forestry & Communities (2574-Agreement)**

The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, the Georgia Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative seeks to permanently protect at least 65 viable gopher tortoise populations and 100,000 acres of habitat in Georgia, while managing that land to maintain its habitat value.

### **Eligible Counties**

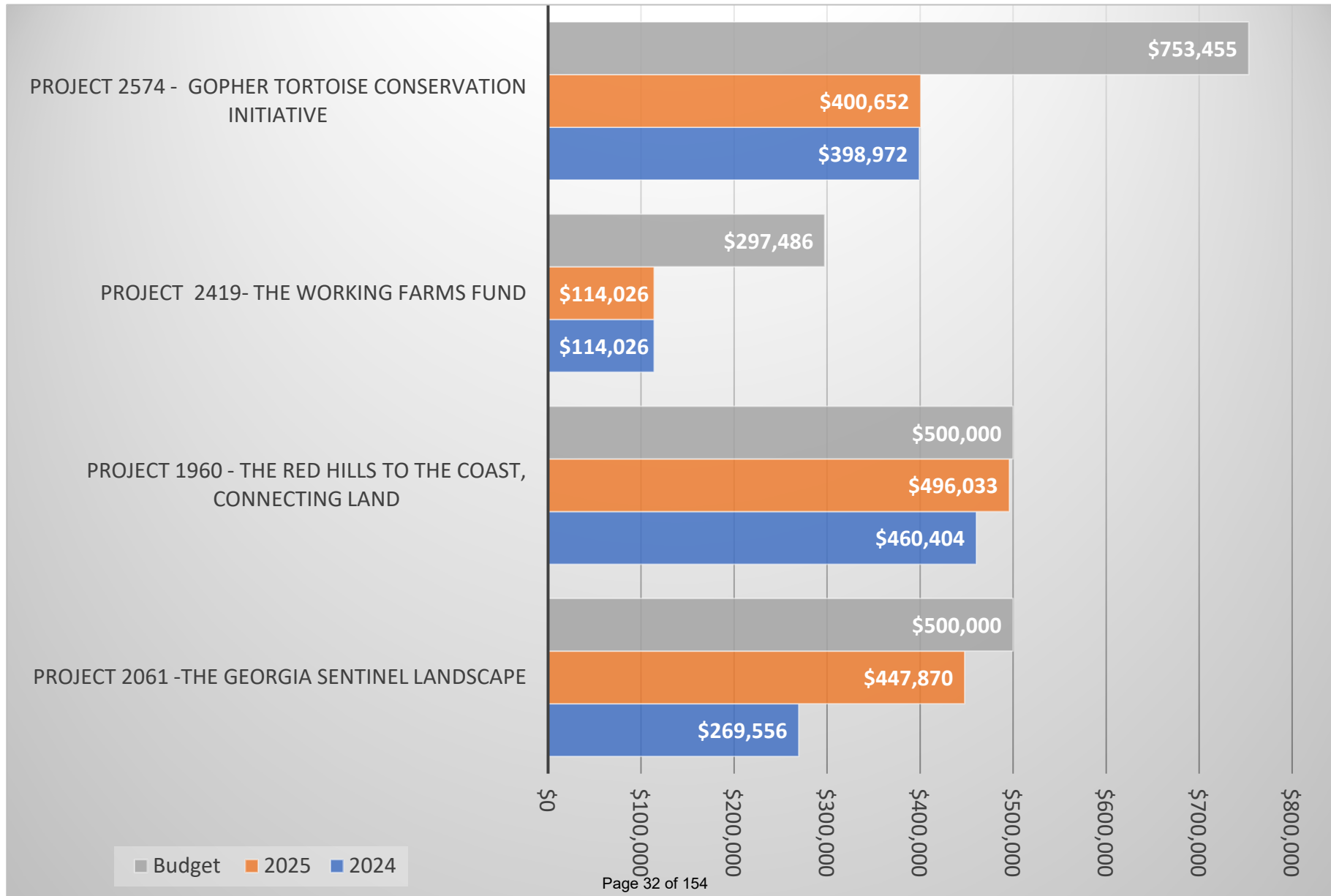
Appling, Atkinson, Bacon, Baker, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Bryan, Bulloch, Burke, Calhoun, Camden, Candler, Charlton, Chatham, Chattahoochee, Clay, Coffee, Colquitt, Columbia, Cook, Crisp, Decatur, Dodge, Dooly, Dougherty, Early, Echols, Effingham, Emanuel, Evans, Glynn, Grady, Irwin, Jeff Davis, Jenkins, Johnson, Lanier, Laurens, Lee, Liberty, Long, Lowndes, Macon, Marion, McDuffie, McIntosh, Miller, Mitchell, Montgomery, Muscogee, Pierce, Quitman, Randolph, Richmond, Schley, Screven, Seminole, Stewart, Sumter, Talbot, Tattnall, Taylor, Telfair, Terrell, Thomas, Tift, Toombs, Treutlen, Turner, Ware, Wayne, Webster, Wheeler, Wilcox and Worth counties.

### **Eligible Practices**

Prescribed Burn, Firebreak, Tree/Shrub site prep, Tree/Shrub site establishment of longleaf seedlings, forest thinning, and invasive species removal.



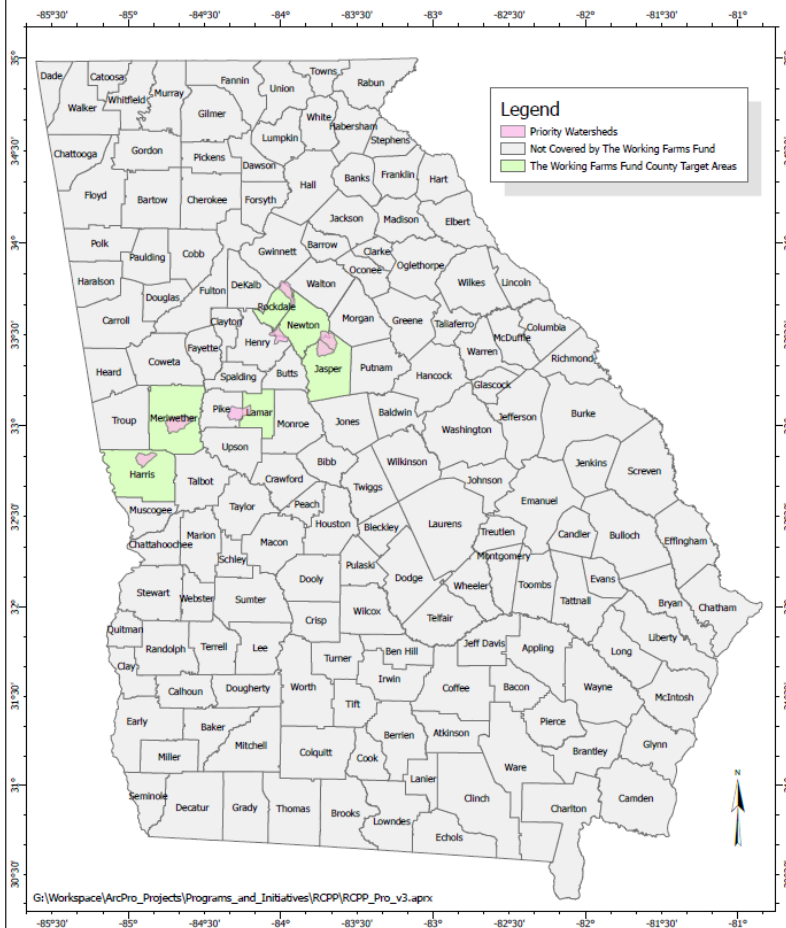
# LMR Budget VS. Spending



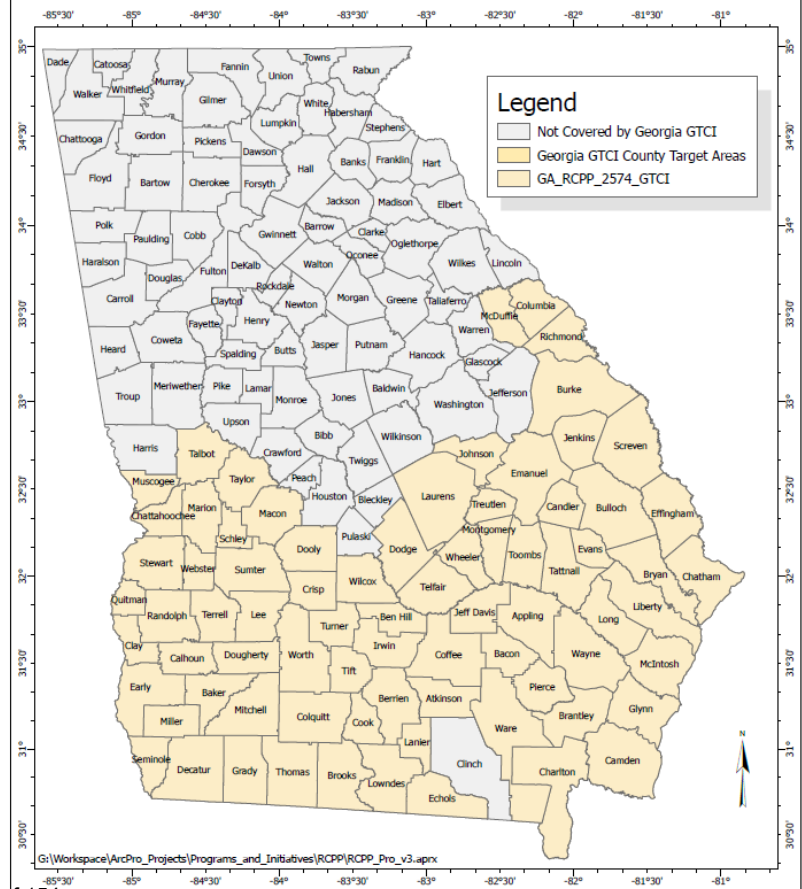


# Active RCPP Projects

## The Working Farms Fund RCPP-2419 FY-2025 Focus Areas



## Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative (GTCl) Georgia NRCS RCPP 2574 FY 2025 Focus Areas





# Questions??????



## Additional Information:

**Georgia NRCS EQIP website:**

**<http://www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>**

**National NRCS EQIP website:**

**<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/>**

***“Helping People to Help the Land”***



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**Tyler Wilhite**  
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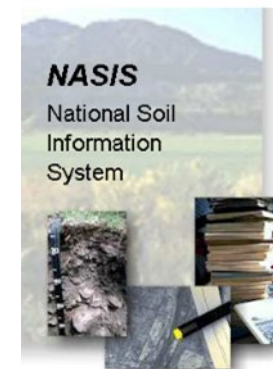
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Specialist



**Teri Nehls**  
CSP  
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## STAC Soils Update

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Nelson Velazquez, Soil Scientist

Steve Lawrence, ACES Soil Scientist



Dee Pederson, Assistant State Soil Scientist

Jesse Gray, GIS Specialist



Dan Wallace, State Resource Inventory Coordinator

Debreanna Taylor, Pathways Student Soil Scientist

Retired –12/31/24



# Projects Update

- 179 Early Coordination Requests FY24
- 149 Early Coordination Requests FY25 thus far
- 31 FPPA Requests Completed FY24
- 21 FPPA Requests Completed FY25 thus far  
[Farmland Protection Policy Act | Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](#)
- UGA Forest Productivity projects (*3-year project, will improve site index and other forestry data*)
- Soil Health Assistance (*Rainfall Simulator, Soil Health Courses, Collaboration, etc.*)
- Web Soil Survey Customer Service Requests

# Projects Update

## ➤ Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs)

- ✓ <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/technical-assistance/ecological-sciences/ecological-site-descriptions>
- ✓ *Web Soil Survey*

## ➤ National Resource Inventory (NRI)

- ✓ *Grazing Lands Onsite (GLOSS) – approx. 20 sites*
- ✓ *Local Data Collection*
- ✓ [National Resources Inventory \(NRI\) | Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/nri)

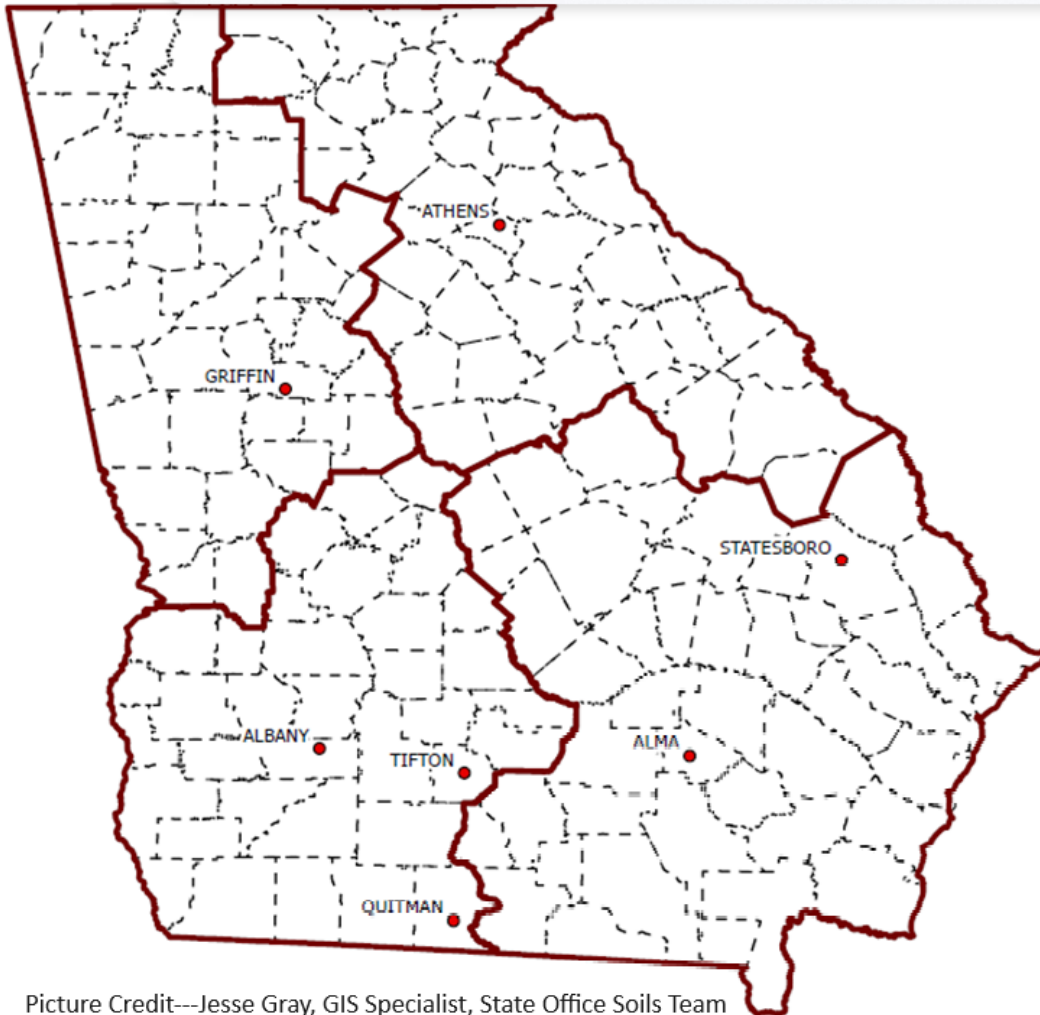


# Georgia's Wetland Team

Gary Hankins --- WT Lead

Staff Performing Day-to-Day FOs

- Steven L'heureux (SCT, Area IV)
- Jake Newton (NRS, Area IV)
- Zach Gibbs (Area Biologist, Area III)
- Alvin Perez (RSS, Area III)
- Mike Henderson (ARSS, Area I)
- Kaitlyn Meadows (NRS, Area II)



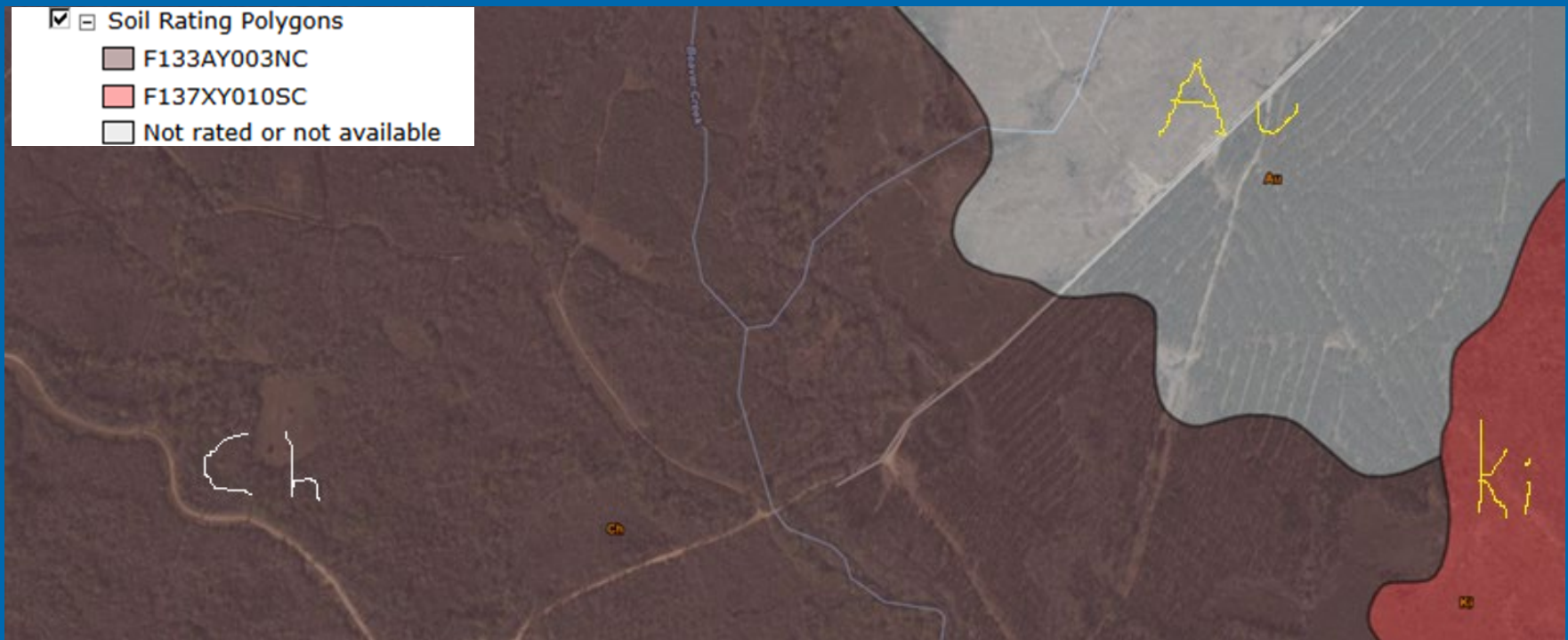
Picture Credit---Jesse Gray, GIS Specialist, State Office Soils Team

# Conservation Compliance Update

- 707 Wetland Determination Requests—FY24
- 742 HEL Determination Requests —FY24
- 236 HEL Determination Requests—FY25
- 197 Wetland Determination Requests---FY25



# Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs)



Crawford and Taylor Counties, Georgia

Map unit symbol	Map unit name	Component name (percent)	Ecological site
Au	Augusta sandy loam, rarely flooded	Augusta (95%)	
		Kinston (5%)	
Ch	Chenneby silt loam, frequently flooded	Chenneby (95%)	F133AY003NC — Small Brownwater River Floodplain
		Kinston (5%)	F136XY610GA — Flood plain forest, wet
Ki	Kinston silt loam, occasionally flooded	Kinston (100%)	F137XY010SC — Flood Plains And Seepage Swamps
			F137XY010SC — Flood Plains And Seepage Swamps



# Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs)

➤ <https://edit.jornada.nmsu.edu/catalogs/esd/137X/PX137X00X010>

## Flood Plains And Seepage Swamps - PROVISIONAL

HOME / ESD CATALOG / MLRA 137X / ECOLOGICAL SITE PX137X00X010

USC METR

### General information

### Physiographic features

### Climatic features

### Water features

### Soil features

### Ecological dynamics

### Interpretations

### Supporting information

### Reference sheet

### Print options

### All Sections

### General information

**Provisional.** A provisional ecological site description has undergone quality control and quality assurance review. It contains a working state and transition model and enough information to identify the ecological site.

### MLRA notes

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 137X—Carolina and Georgia Sand Hills

MLRA 137 covers approximately 8,665 square miles (22,450 square kilometers) in the states of South Carolina (44 percent), Georgia (34 percent), and North Carolina (21 percent).

The Sand Hills region occurs below the "fall line", which delineates the older crystalline rocks of the Southern Piedmont (MLRA 136) from the younger sediments of the Southern Coastal Plain (MLRA 133A). The term "fall line" came about because the rivers of the Piedmont cut downward through hard bedrock to meet the lower Coastal Plain sediments. The elevational change is evident in the waterfalls and rapids that occur along this transitional line.

This region is composed of mainly of unconsolidated sediments deposited during the Cretaceous period. Overlying these sediments is the late Miocene to early Pliocene Pinehurst Formation. The Pinehurst Formation is of windblown or eolian origin. Soils in this formation are the subject of this ecological site. Deposits of kaolin and high-silica sands are found across the area and are often mined.

## Ecological dynamics

The Flood plains and seepage swamps site includes woody wetland vegetation occurring on seepage streamheads and along small streams. The native vegetation occurs as forests and woodlands with an evergreen shrub stratum and canopy dominated by Pond Pine (*Pinus serotina*), Atlantic White Cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*), and/or hardwoods such as Sweet Bay (*Magnolia virginiana*), Swamp Black Gum (*Nyssa biflora*), and Tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). The ecological dynamics of the site is influenced by the amount and duration of saturation or flooding and the frequency and intensity of wildland fire. Damming by beavers or by humans can lead to the establishment of linear ponds called Coastal Plain Semipermanent Impoundments. These ponds support aquatic vegetation, but when dams fail, the site is available for ruderal wetland graminoid plants. This successional vegetation is called Wet Meadow & Marsh in the state transition diagram. The Wet Meadow & Marsh can succeed to the reference state, as the vegetation continues to recover.



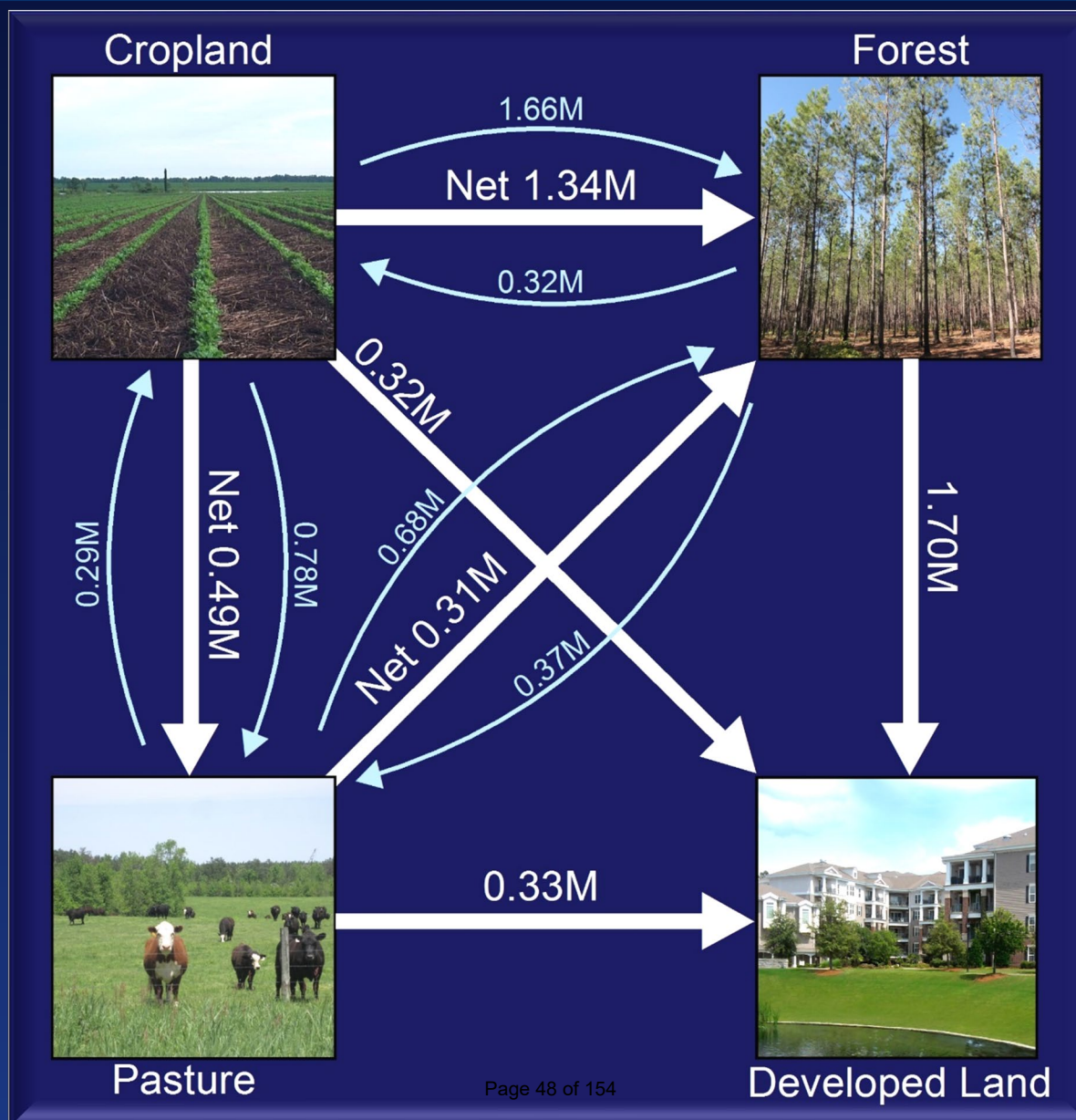
# NRI Purpose & Procedures

- **Purpose:** Statistically survey land use and resource condition change over time.
- **Mandate:** Soil & Water Resources Conservation Act, 1977 (RCA).

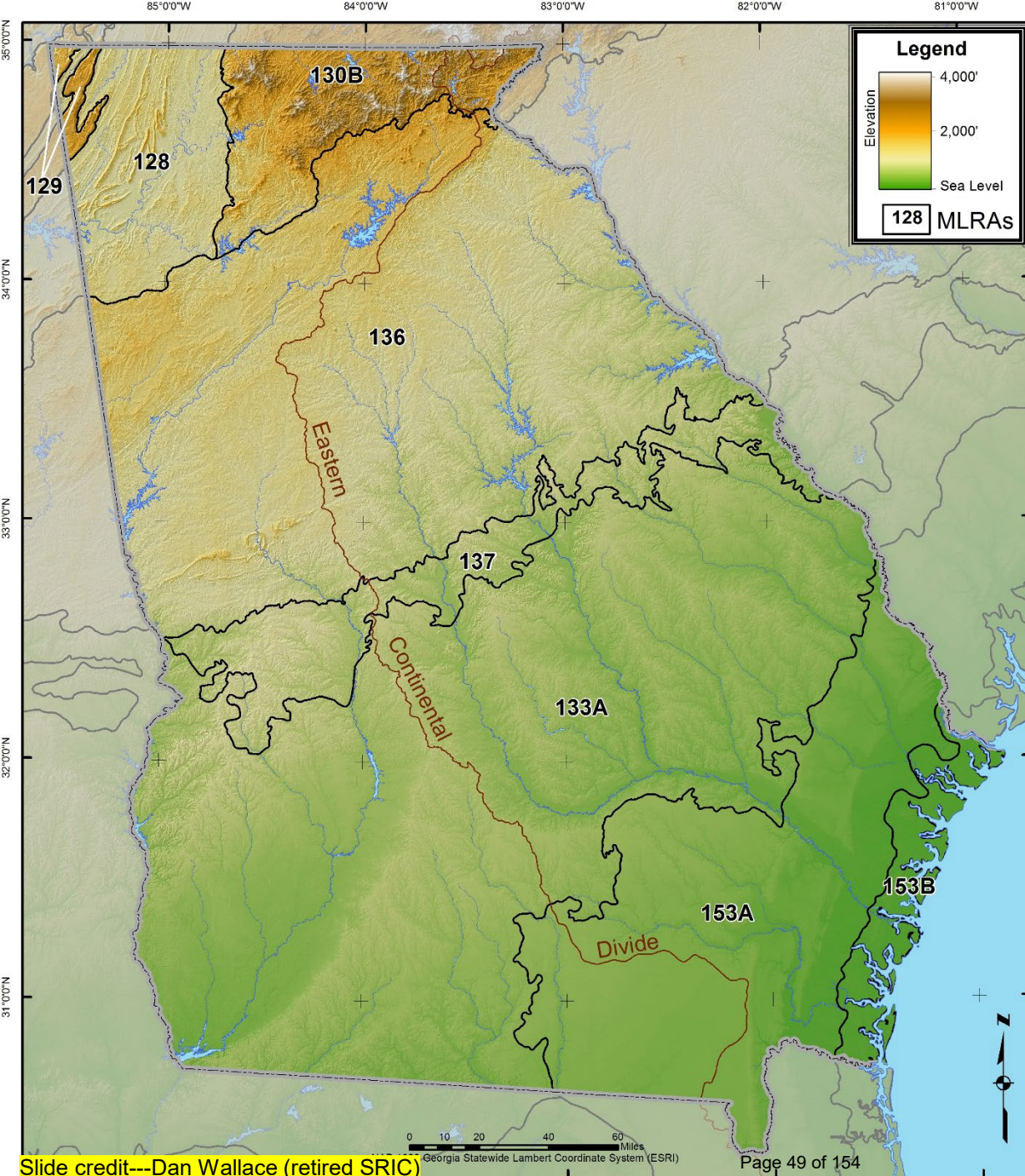


Example of 160 acre NRI sample segment containing three subsample points.

United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service







# Land & Surface Water Resource

## Major Land Resource Areas

Symbol	Name
128	Southern Appalachian Ridges and Valleys 1,806,700 ac.
129	Sand Mountain 147,100 ac.
130B	Southern Blue Ridge 1,689,900 ac.
133A	Southern Coastal Plain 14,382,900 ac.
136	Southern Piedmont 10,969,400 ac.
137	Carolina and Georgia Sand Hills 2,010,100 ac.
153A	Atlantic Coast Flatwoods 5,633,500 ac.
153B	Tidewater Area 1,100,900 ac.
Total	37,740,500 ac.



## GLOSS\* Step 1: Landowner Permission

- Screen for land use change or oddballs
- Laborious
- Often unsuccessful
- Through field office
- Tricky logistics

\*We usually say “NRI Grazing” when we’re referring to this activity but Grazing Land On Site Study (GLOSS) is the official name



## GLOSS Step 2: Crew & Equipment Logistics

- Don't show up without CASI
- Keep track of gate closing and hole filling and bull patience
- Schedule well in advance
- Ensure plant ID skills before anything
- Communicate, communicate, communicate



# GLOSS Step 3: Actual Collection

---

- Proceed orderly fashion through protocols
  - Follow NRI advice on photographing & plot setup
  - Familiarize with intricacies well beforehand – truncated tapes must be accounted for before many protocols will open
  - GA likes 4 person crew – Leader/Grunt, 2 Plant specialists, and a soil scientist. Have done with as few as 2 person crew. Would not attempt alone. Time 2-4 hours.
- 



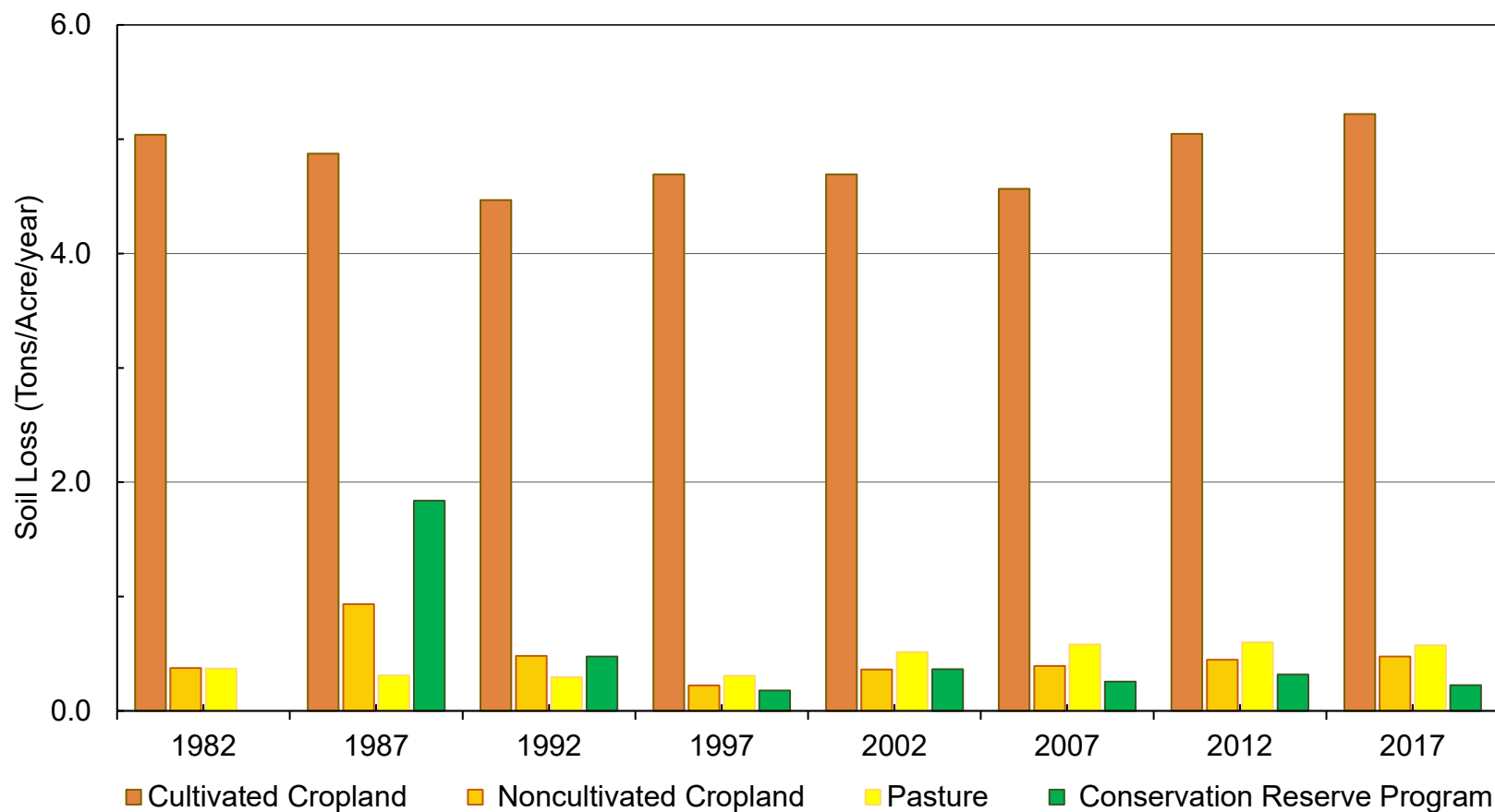


# GLOSS Step 4: Follow Up

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- Air dry forage samples
- Assemble and enter data not in CASI at end of field collection day
- Upload photographs
- Data review





## Georgia NRI Estimated Erosion Rate\* 1982 – 2017

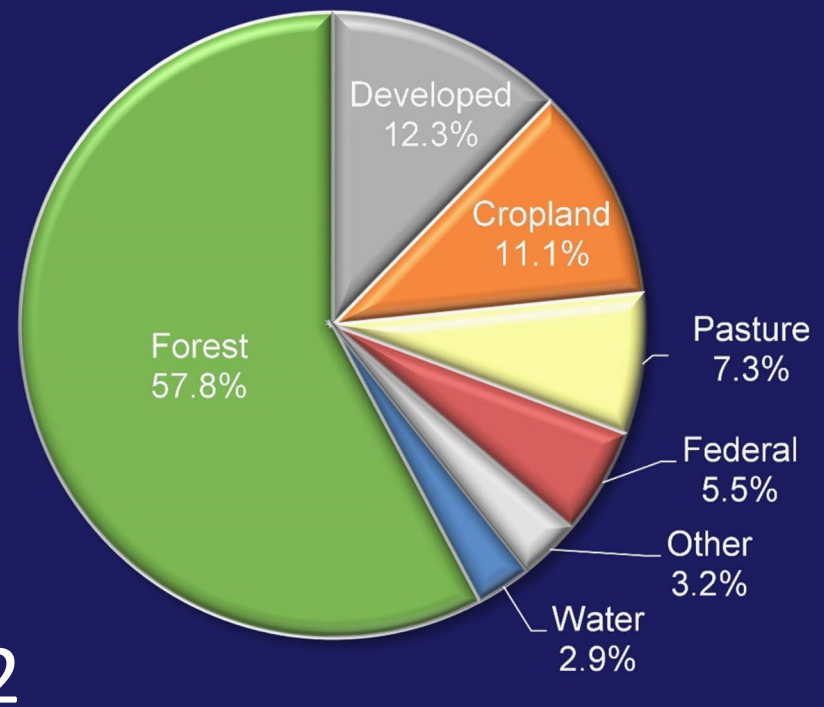
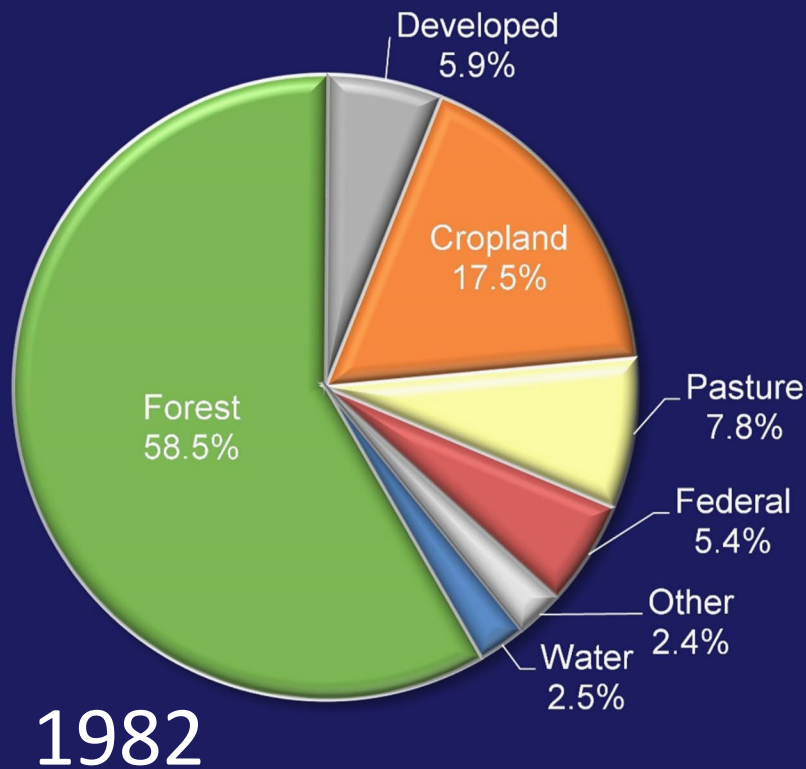
\*Margin of error for 2017 estimate is  $\pm 0.31$  t/ac/yr

Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service

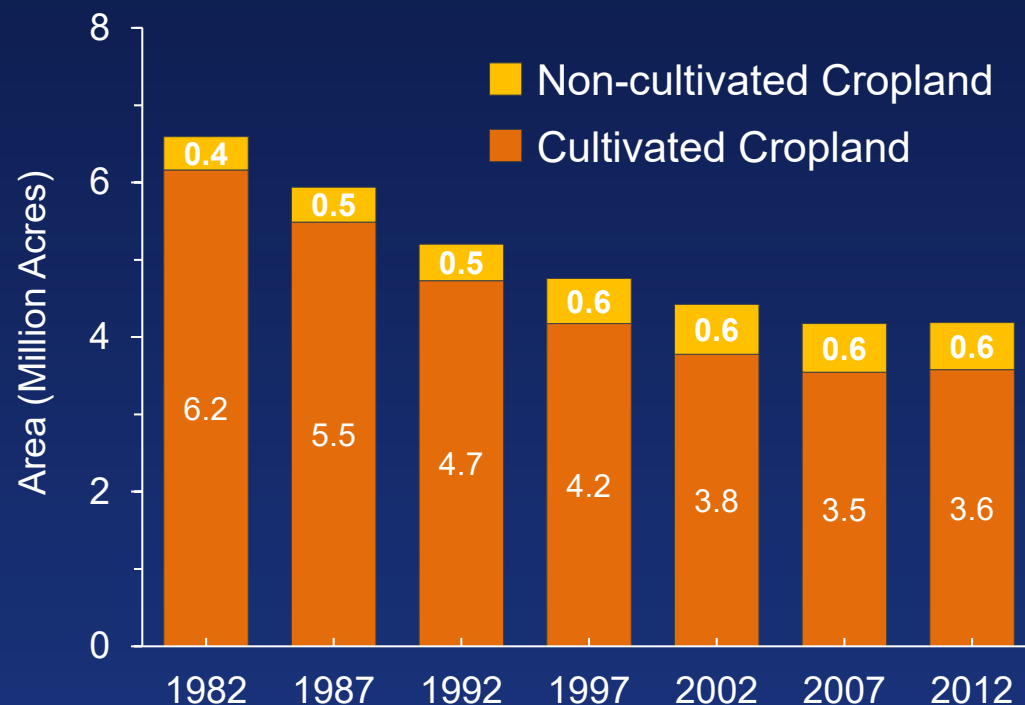
[nrcs.usda.gov](https://nrcs.usda.gov)



# Overall Georgia Land Use 1982 & 2012



# Cropland 1982 to 2012

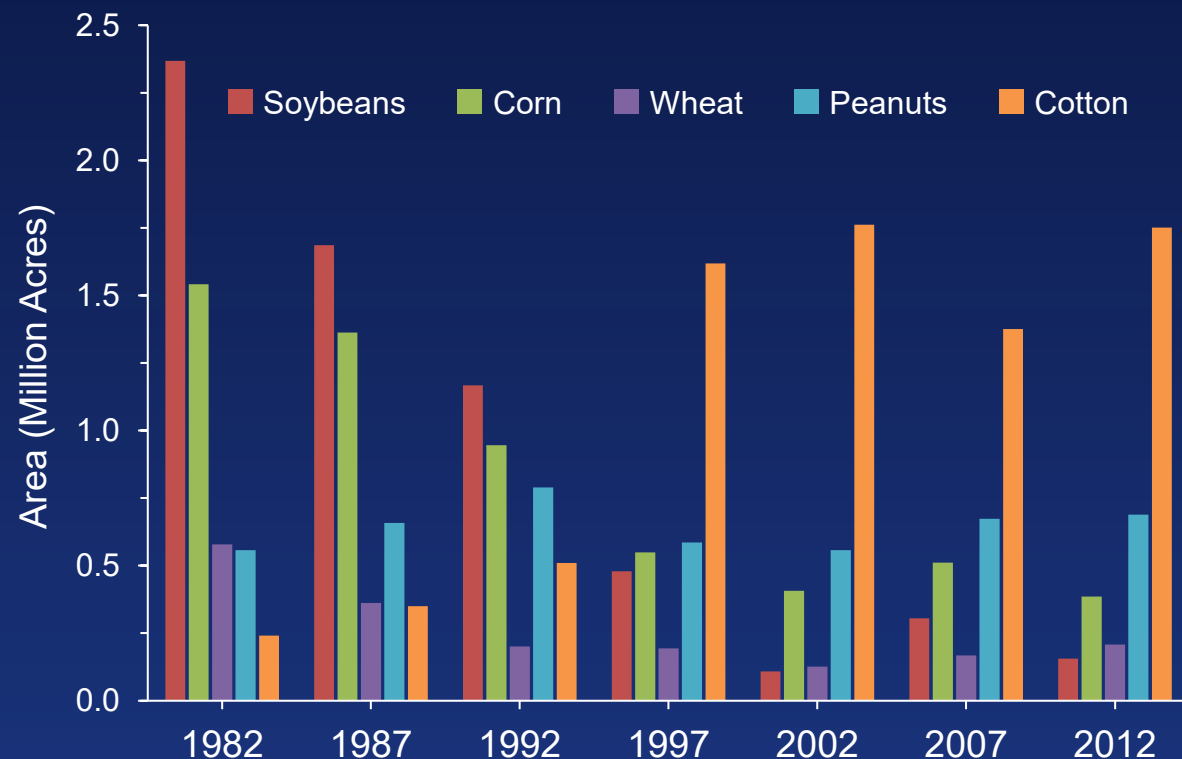


Wheat on cultivated cropland in the Southern Piedmont.



Vineyard, an example of non-cultivated cropland, in the Southern Blue Ridge.

# Top 5 Commodity Crops by Year







United States  
Department of  
Agriculture



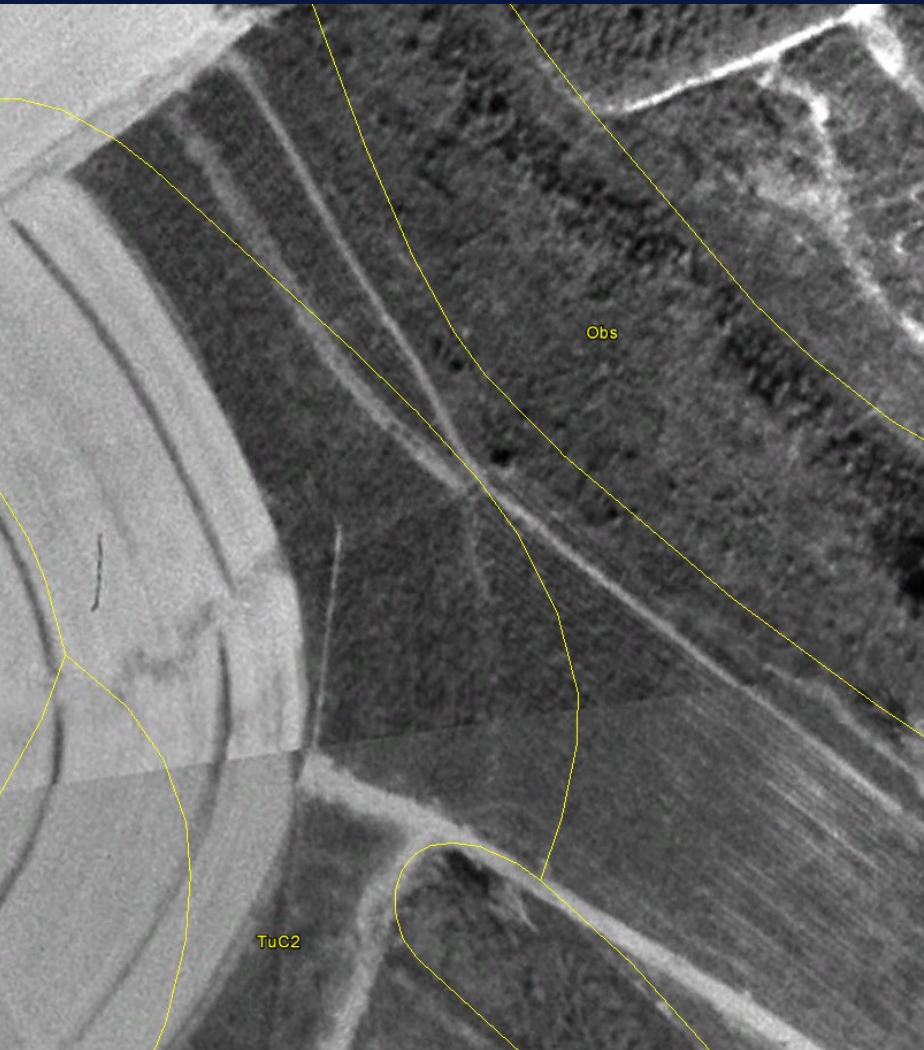
United States Department of Agriculture

## Georgia's Land: Its Use and Condition

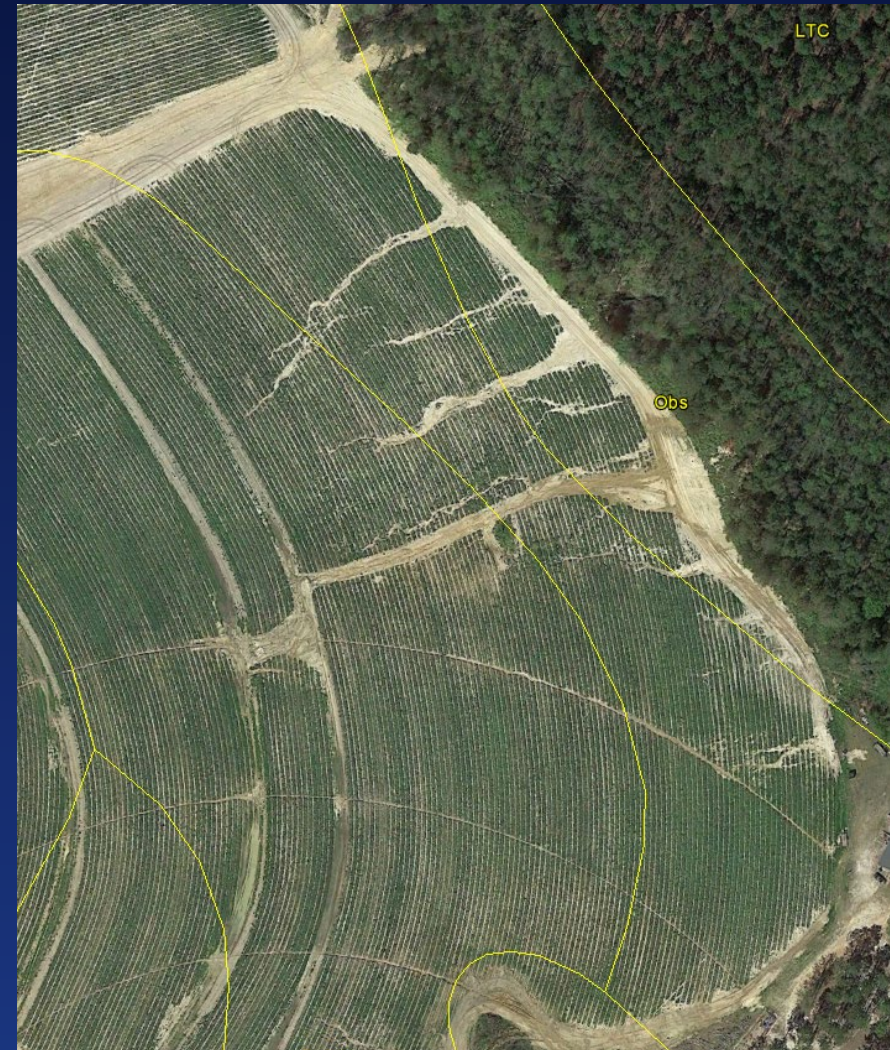


# Irrigation has changed fields:

Before Center Pivot, 1999



After Center Pivot, 2014



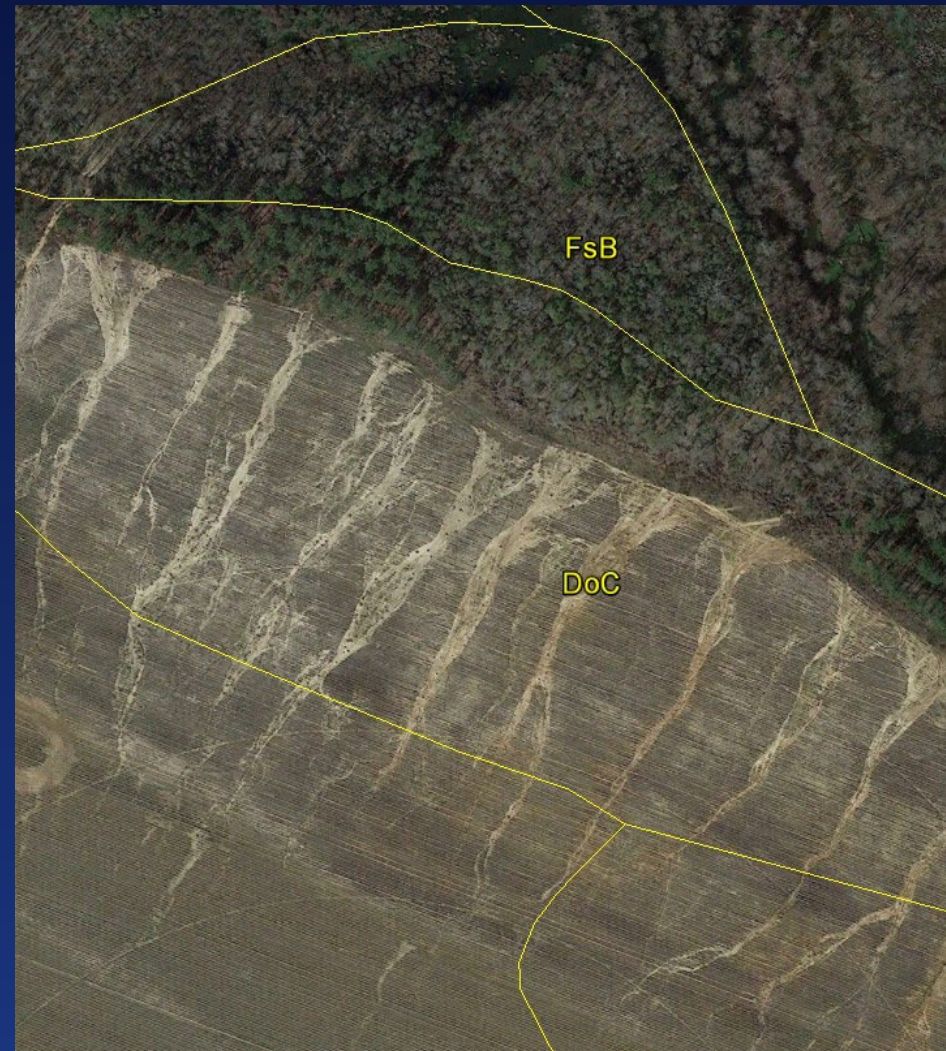


# Irrigation has changed fields:

Before Center Pivot, 2009



After Center Pivot, 2014





# Questions







Natural Resources Conservation Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



# GA STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE SPRING 2025

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FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION  
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center



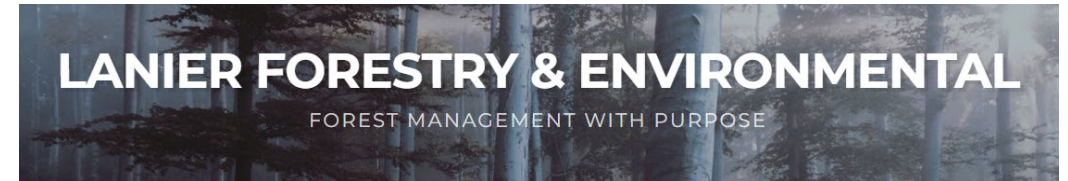


# AFFILIATES AND PARTNERS



ANNALISE SAMPSON  
Farmland Protection Associate

MALLORY O'STEEN  
GA Program Manager



Warnell School of Forestry  
& Natural Resources  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA





# NRCS EASEMENTS – GEORGIA THROUGH FY 2024

164 Forested Wetlands: 68,796 acres

50 Working Farms: 6,902 acres

12 Working Forests: 25,088 acres

8 Special Habitats: 2,317 acres

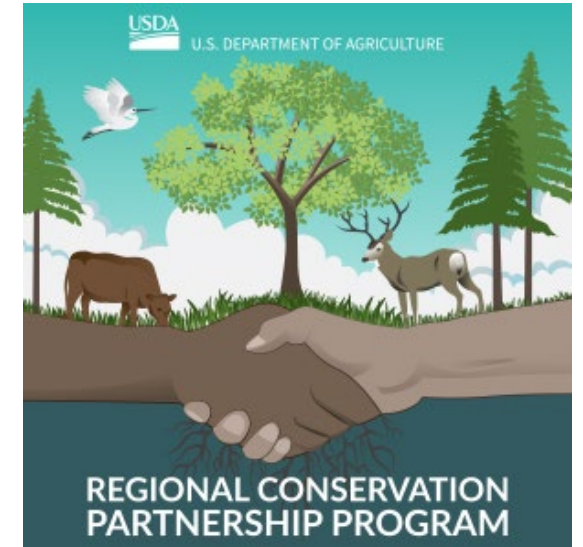
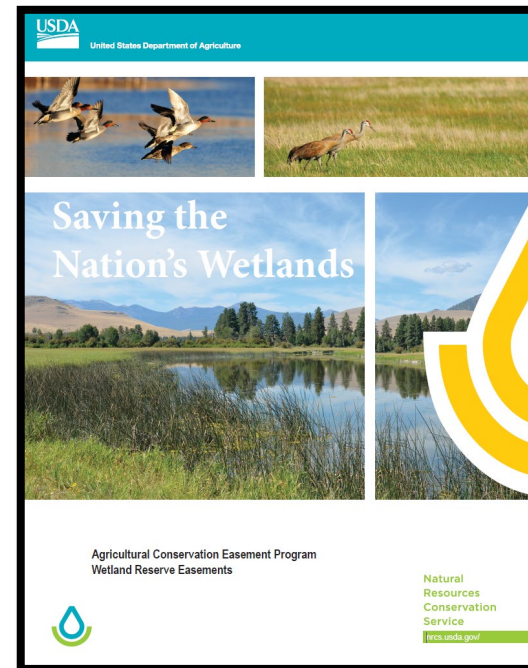
234 easements

103,103 acres

# US-HELD EASEMENT FY 25 APPLICATIONS

Program	County	Acreage	Easement value
ACEP-WRE	Calhoun	2,014.90	\$3,828,310.00
	Early	319	\$606,100.00
	Randolph	193.02	\$366,738.00
	Long	310.90	\$497,440.00
	Long	274.21	\$438,736.00
	Calhoun	257.98	\$490,162.00
	Sumter	124.59	\$236,721.00
			\$6,464,207.00

Program	County	Acreage	Easement value
RCPP US-HELD	Chattahoochee	422	\$845,000
	Decatur	495.55	\$900,000
			\$1,745,000







# ENTITY-HELD APPLICATIONS

Program	County	Acreage Estimate	NRCS Share 50% of FMV
ACEP ALE	Dougherty	99.00	\$135,000
ACEP ALE	Early	579.70	\$543,500
ACEP ALE	Early	459.90	\$431,000
ACEP ALE	Newton	191.00	\$475,000
ACEP ALE	Morgan	100.00	\$440,000
ACEP ALE	Morgan	68.39	\$245,000
ACEP ALE	Morgan	127.00	\$415,000
ACEP ALE	Morgan	225	\$675,000
ACEP ALE	Oconee	40	\$260,000
ACEP ALE	Oconee	69.25	\$560,000
			<b>\$4,179,500</b>

Georgia Alabama Land Trust		
County	Acreage Estimate	NRCS Share (max 50% of FMV)
Tatnall	144.97	\$ 114,164.00
Tatnall	274.08	\$ 232,500.00
Tatnall	198.00	\$ 195,000.00
Madison-Morgan Conservancy, Inc.		
County	Acreage Estimate	NRCS Share (max 50% of FMV)
Newton	195.93	\$ 382,500.00
Newton	68.82	\$ 262,500.00
Athens Land Trust		
County	Acreage Estimate	NRCS Share (max 50% of FMV)
Harris	52.4	\$155,000.00
Jasper	69.9	\$165,000.00
The Conservation Fund		
County	Acreage Estimate	NRCS Share (max 50% of FMV)
Lamar	89.62	\$ 182,500.00
Meriwether	175	\$ 350,000.00
	<b>1,268.72</b>	<b>\$ 2,039,164.00</b>





# Natural Resources Conservation Service

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

*"A true  
conservationist is  
a man who knows  
that the world is  
not given by  
his fathers, but  
borrowed from his  
children."*

*- john james audubon*



*"Conservation will ultimately  
boil down to rewarding the  
private landowner who  
conserves the public  
interest."*



**FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION**  
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center





# Watershed project highlights



Watershed Protection  
and Flood Prevention  
Operations (WFPO)  
Program



# Etowah River 13-A Russell Creek Reservoir

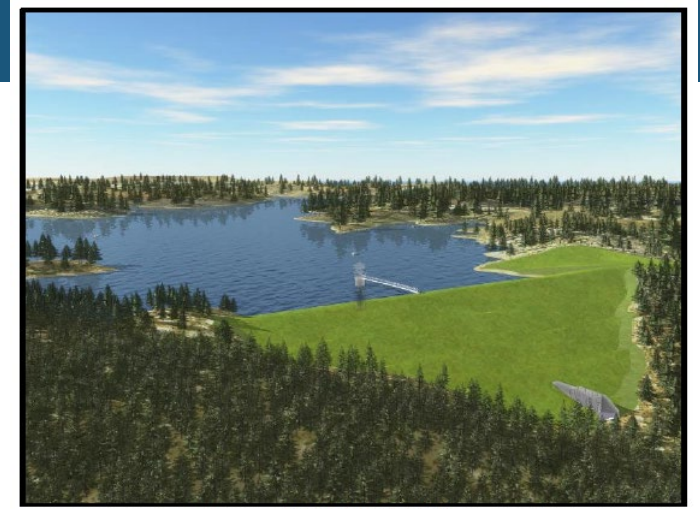
- FIRST Watershed Plan-EIS AUTHORIZED in 15 years.



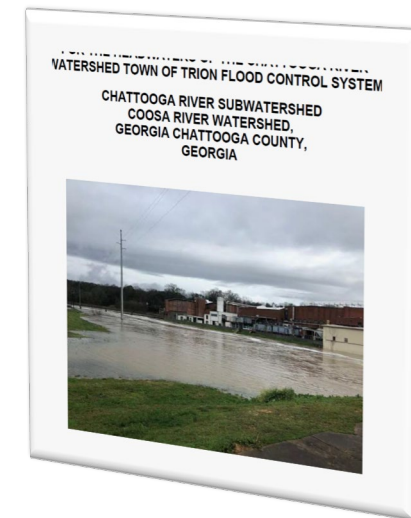


# Other Projects of Note

- **Lower Little Tallapoosa River 25-A** – Final EIS, ready for Record of Decision and then will go for Authorization
- **Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District** – 3 projects, over \$75 million
  - Radium Springs, Middle Ichauway-Spring Creek, Big Slough/Mitchell County
- **Headwaters of the Chattooga River**
- Several in Preliminary Investigation and Feasibility, plus a bunch of Rehabilitations!



Proposed LLTR 25A Reservoir



**Draft Watershed Plan and Environmental Assessment**  
for the  
**Radium Springs Springshed and Water Resource Management Project**  
Dougherty, Crisp, Lee, Mitchell, Sumter, Terrell  
Webster, and Worth Counties, GA



PREPARED BY:  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
  
IN COOPERATION WITH:  
Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District  
February 2025

# Hurricane Helene

Emergency Watershed  
Protection Program

Easement Repairs and  
Reforestation

# EASEMENTS AND WATER RESOURCES

Conservation, Protection, Restoration, Installation, Rehabilitation



**Sharon Swagger**

Assistant State Conservationist



**Krisha Whiting**

Ecologist



**Olivia Smith**

Natural Resource Specialist



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706-546-2203

**Etowah River Watershed Dam No. 13-A**

<b>PROJECT FACT SHEET</b>	
<b>NAME</b>	<b>Etowah River Watershed Dam No. 13-A</b> <i>aka Russell Creek Reservoir Multi-Purpose Project</i>
<b>COST</b>	\$63,682,767 Total** \$40,174,088 Federal**
<b>LOCATION</b>	Etowah River Reach/Coosa River Watershed Dawson County, Georgia Congressional District 9
<b>SPONSOR(S)</b>	Etowah Water & Sewer Authority (EWSA)
<b>AUTHORIZATION</b>	Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 <i>P.L. 83-566, 68 Stat. 666, (16 U.S.C. 1001 et seq)</i> <i>and as further amended by Section 313 of</i> <i>Public Law 106-472.</i>
<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Etowah River serves as the predominate water supply source for Dawson County, GA.</li><li>• The Etowah River is biologically diverse and is home to federally protected and vulnerable wildlife species.</li><li>• Sponsor is permitted to pump water from the Etowah River into the Russell Creek Reservoir to store raw water.</li><li>• The existing Etowah River Watershed Dam No. 13, built in 1957, which creates the Russell Creek Reservoir, does not store enough raw water to meet the current water needs, especially during drought.</li><li>• During periods of drought in the Etowah River, there is no availability to pump water into the Reservoir for water storage.</li><li>• There is already stress on the aquatic community due to drought. Removal of additional water to fill the Russell Creek Reservoir is a compounding concern.</li><li>• The existing dam and associated infrastructure do not meet current safety standards and threatens downstream structures.</li><li>• As the rural community grows, there is an increase in water storage needs to meet the environmental, social, cultural, and economic needs.</li><li>• The project will address two of the eight authorized WFPO program purposes: Flood Prevention and Agricultural Water Management for Rural Communities.</li></ul>



## Etowah River Watershed Dam No. 13-A

<p><b>PROJECT MEASURES (PROPOSED ACTION)</b></p>	<p>Use P.L. 83-566 and sponsor funds to install works of improvement for a pumped storage water supply reservoir to provide raw water for the rural community of Dawson County, Georgia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Modification to the 1957 NRCS watershed dam on Russell Creek by raising the existing 50-foot-high dam structure and replacing with a new 110-foot-high earthen dam.</li><li>• Construction of 2.6 linear mile pressurized raw water pipeline.</li><li>• Improvement of the existing Etowah River Raw Water Intake and Pump Station.</li><li>• Upgrades at the existing Hightower Water Treatment Plant required to operate the reservoir system</li></ul> <p>The Proposed Action includes the most cost-effective and least environmentally damaging measures to meet the purpose and need and the WFPO program purposes by increasing water storage capacity at the Russell Creek Reservoir. Raising the dam crest and increasing the water storage capacity of the Russell Creek Reservoir (from 11 acres to 132 acres) will allow the withdrawal of additional raw water from the Etowah River during periods of high flow, so when drought does occur, the sponsor can withdraw water from the reservoir to meet the rural water user needs. This increased capacity will allow the reservoir to provide about 225 days of drought protection for the rural water users. Operation of the reservoir during drought periods and low flows in the Etowah River also keeps the water in the river and sustains the vulnerable, threatened, and endangered aquatic species.</p> <p>The Proposed Action will meet the program purposes and needs by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increasing water storage capacity of the reservoir to provide a reliable raw water storage source.</li><li>• Ensuring safety standards are met and provide flood protection for downstream structures.</li><li>• Reducing compounding stress on the aquatic environment in the Etowah River.</li></ul>
--	---



**Etowah River Watershed Dam No. 13-A**

<b>ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL DATA</b>	<p><b>Total Project Cost: \$63,682,767</b> P.L. 83-566 Funds: \$40,174,088 Other Funds: \$23,508,679 Annual O&amp;M Costs*: \$100,000</p> <p>P.L. 83-566 Funds: \$40,174,088**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engineering: \$1,305,000</li><li>• Construction: \$38,869,088<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Dam Modification: \$27,605,108</li><li>○ Infrastructure modifications: \$11,639,979</li></ul></li></ul> <p>Other Funds: \$23,508,679**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engineering: \$2,727,281</li><li>• Real Property Rights: \$7,064,886</li><li>• Construction: \$5,535,913<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Dam Modification: \$1,998,225</li><li>○ Infrastructure modifications: \$3,537,687</li></ul></li><li>• Project Administration: \$8,180,663</li></ul> <p><b>FEDERAL COST-SHARE 63%**</b> <b>NON-FEDERAL COST-SHARE 37%</b></p> <p>*The project will be operated and maintained by EWSA. No federal costs for O&amp;M ** The total cost of the Etowah River Watershed Dam No. 13-A was planned, evaluated, and authorized at an estimated \$63,682,767; however, with cost changes over time (2020-2025), the total project cost is now projected to be \$95,782,160. As Federal funds are appropriated and become available, \$68,372,715 will be paid with Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program funds, and \$27,409,445 will be paid by sponsors through local funding, an average of a 70/30% cost-share.</p>
<b>BENEFITS</b>	<p>Agricultural Water Management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 40-years of benefits.</li><li>• 23,078 direct beneficiaries.</li><li>• \$2,071,727 in Watershed Protection Damage Reduction Benefits</li></ul> <p>Flood Prevention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 100-years of benefits.</li><li>• 35 direct beneficiaries</li><li>• \$16,876 in Flood Damage Reduction Benefits</li></ul>

## Etowah River Watershed Dam No. 13-A

<b>BENEFIT-TO-COST RATIO</b>	<b>1.2:1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates significant value for the project</li> </ul>
<b>PROJECT LIFE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Period of Analysis: 105 years</li> <li>Installation Period: 5 years</li> <li>Evaluation period: 100 years</li> </ul>
<b>PROJECT CONCERNS</b>	<p>Environmental:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long-term but minor adverse effects on streams and wetlands and hardwood forests.</li> <li>Potential impacts to federally protect fish species.</li> <li>A variety of required mitigation and voluntary conservation measures will address effects.</li> </ul> <p>Controversial Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development in the area because of reservoir; however, population growth is already happening without the reservoir.</li> <li>Public access to reservoir for recreation. EWSA is planning for limited public access for recreation, but this was not part of the WFPO project.</li> </ul> <p>Unusual Interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Litigation due to the three-decade old tri-state water dispute between Georgia, Florida, and Alabama limits additional water supply options.</li> <li>Georgia has a Water Supply Program that has committed low interest loans to support EWSA during project implementation.</li> </ul>
<p>This WFPO project is in <b>COMPLIANCE</b> with executive orders, public laws, and other statutes governing the formulation of water resources projects.</p>	

*Charlie Grace*

*Georgia Southwest Region Outreach  
Coordinator*

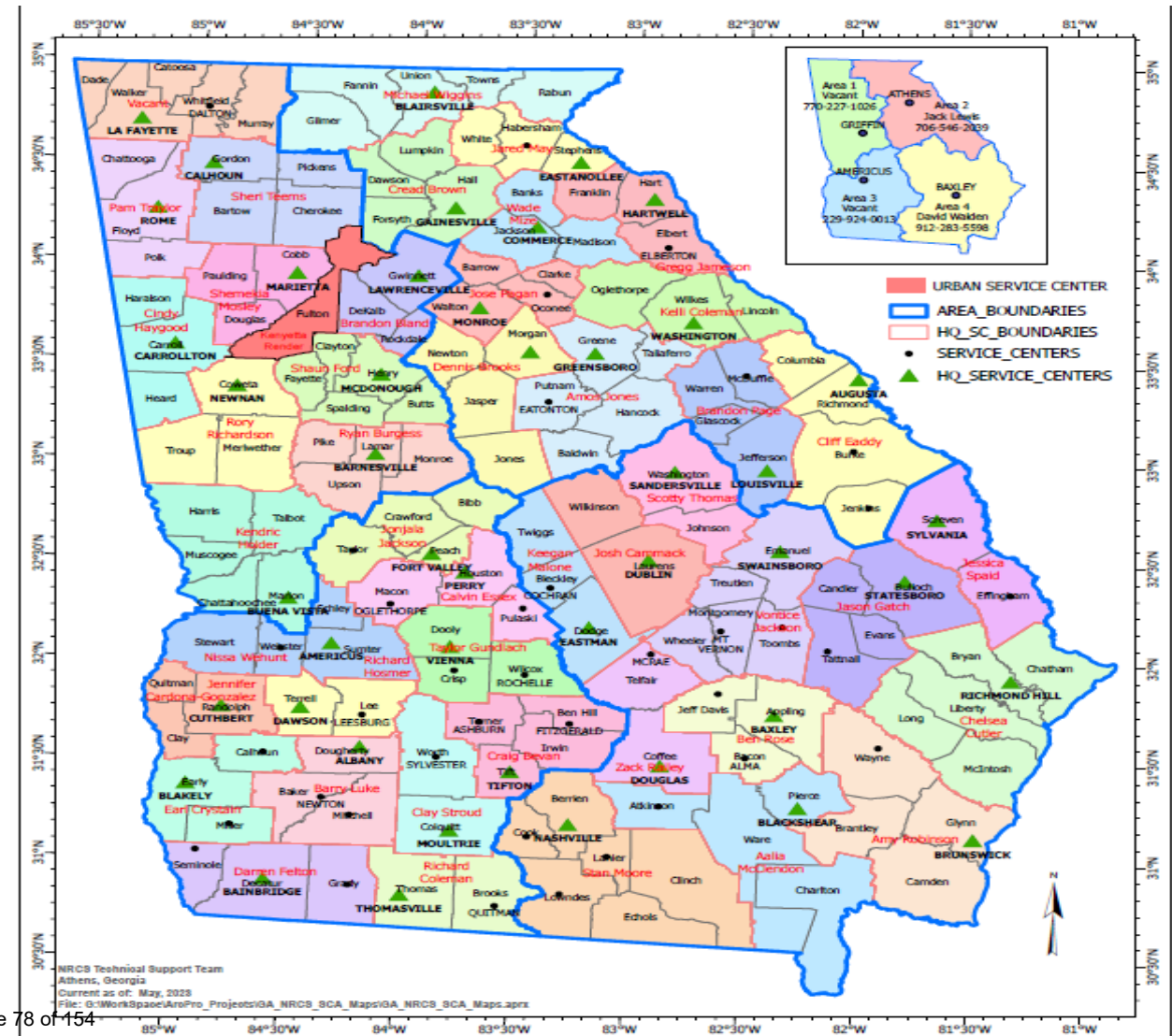
[charlie.grace@usda.gov](mailto:charlie.grace@usda.gov)



# Natural Resources Conservation Service

## Purpose

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a federal agency that promotes voluntary conservation practices through programs that provides technical and financial assistance on their land. We have offices that cover 159 counties of Georgia, which works with 40 local conservation soil and water districts, partners, and stakeholders to serve farmers, landowners, and ranchers across the state.



## What is Outreach?

- Outreach is conducting business to ensure that NRCS programs and services are made accessible to all customers.
- Outreach is an integral part of NRCS program and service delivery. Effective outreach helps to ensure that information services and programs reaches all existing and potential customers in a timely and fair manner.
- Outreach involves crafting messages and informational materials with language and services that speaks to groups and populations and aids them in understanding the mission, processes, goals, obligations and eligibility issues inherent in the work of the agency.
- Outreach extends in *both directions*- it is about relationship building.



## **NRCS technical and financial assistance is delivered through five business lines:**

- Conservation Planning and Technical Consultation
- Conservation Implementation
- Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment
- Natural Resource Technology Transfer
- Financial Assistance

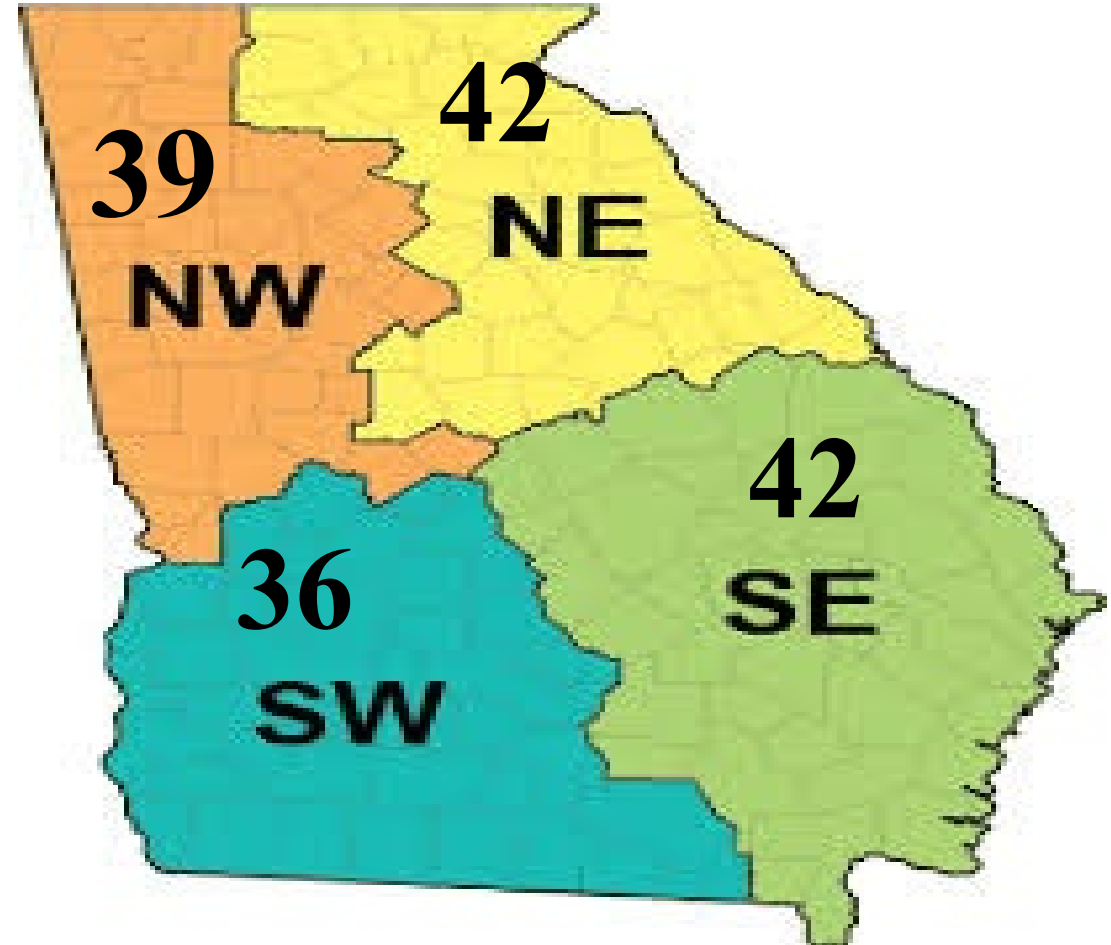
## **NRCS three fundamental principles guide how NRCS conducts business:**

- Service – Giving customers the best products and service NRCS employees can provide; customer needs are as important to conservation as our understanding of natural resources.
- Partnerships – Building effective relationships with other agencies and organizations that share NRCS objectives.
- Technical Excellence – Delivering up-to-date and easily accessible science-based information and technology.

## **Georgia State Outreach Advisory Board Committee:**

- **Charlie Grace, Board Chair & Georgia State Southwest Outreach Coordinator, USDA NRCS**
- **Darron Felton Jr, Area Resource Conservationist, USDA NRCS**
- **Vontice Jackson, Southeast Region Outreach Coordinator, USDA NRCS**
- **Dr. James Brown, Professor & ANR Program Leader, FVSU Cooperative Extension**
- **James Morgan, Southeast ANR Program Development Coordinator, UGA Cooperative Extension**
- **Dr. Carolyn Rollins, Area Director, AG Connection**
- **Dr. James Lewis, Program Manager, AG Connection**
- **Luther Jones, USDA NRCS Agriculture Conservation Experience Service (ACES)**
- **Tiffany Woods, Southeast Director of Private Lands Forestry Program, National Wildlife Federation**
- **Alfred Greenlee, SFCG President, NRCS Earth Team Volunteer, & Green Oak Farm Owner**
- **Carolyn Ford, SFCG Secretary & Roe Edwards Farm, Owner**
- **Noreen Whitehead, Chapter Chair, Georgia Women in Agriculture**
- **Brendia King, SFCG Member, USDA NRCS Earth Team Volunteer & Kingsland Farm**
- **Danna Harris, Executive Director, Next Steps Youth Entrepreneur Program**
- **Felicia Burke, Agriculture Outreach Manager, Southwest Georgia Project**
- **James Lee, Executive Director, Alliance of Asian American Farmers Association**
- **Taylor Sinquefield, Soil Health Coordinator, Flint River Soil & Water Conservation District**
- **Leanne Hopper, Regional Program Manager, Southwest Georgia Association of Conservation Districts**
- **Tyrah Ward & Benjamin Sterling, McIntosh Seeds**
- **Vivek Bist, University of Georgia Extension, Agricultural & Natural Resources Agent**

- Marlina Tonge, NW Outreach Coordinator (Area 1)
- Kaneisha Miller, NE Outreach Coordinator (Area 2)
- Charlie Grace, SW Outreach Coordinator (Area 3)
- Vontice Jackson, SE Outreach Coordinator





# Georgia NRCS Administrative Areas 1 & 2

The map displays the 159 counties of Georgia, each color-coded. A thick blue outline delineates the 'Area 1' region in the northwest. The legend on the left lists the counties in the following order: Barrow, Butts, Carroll, Catoosa, Chattahoochee, Chatterjee, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, Dade, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Floyd, Fulton, Gordon, Gwinnett, Harrison, Hardey, Heard, Henry, Lamar, Marion, Meriwether, Monroe, Murray, Muscogee, Paulding, Pickens, Pike, Polk, Rockdale, Spalding, Talbot, Troup, Upson, Walker, and Whitfield. A north arrow is positioned to the left of the main map. An inset map of Georgia in the bottom left corner shows the state's outline with the Area 1 region highlighted in blue.

The map displays the 159 counties of Georgia, each color-coded. A legend on the left lists the counties in a single column. A table at the bottom right lists the counties in three columns. The map includes a north arrow and a scale bar. The map is titled 'Georgia Counties' and 'Area2 Counties'.

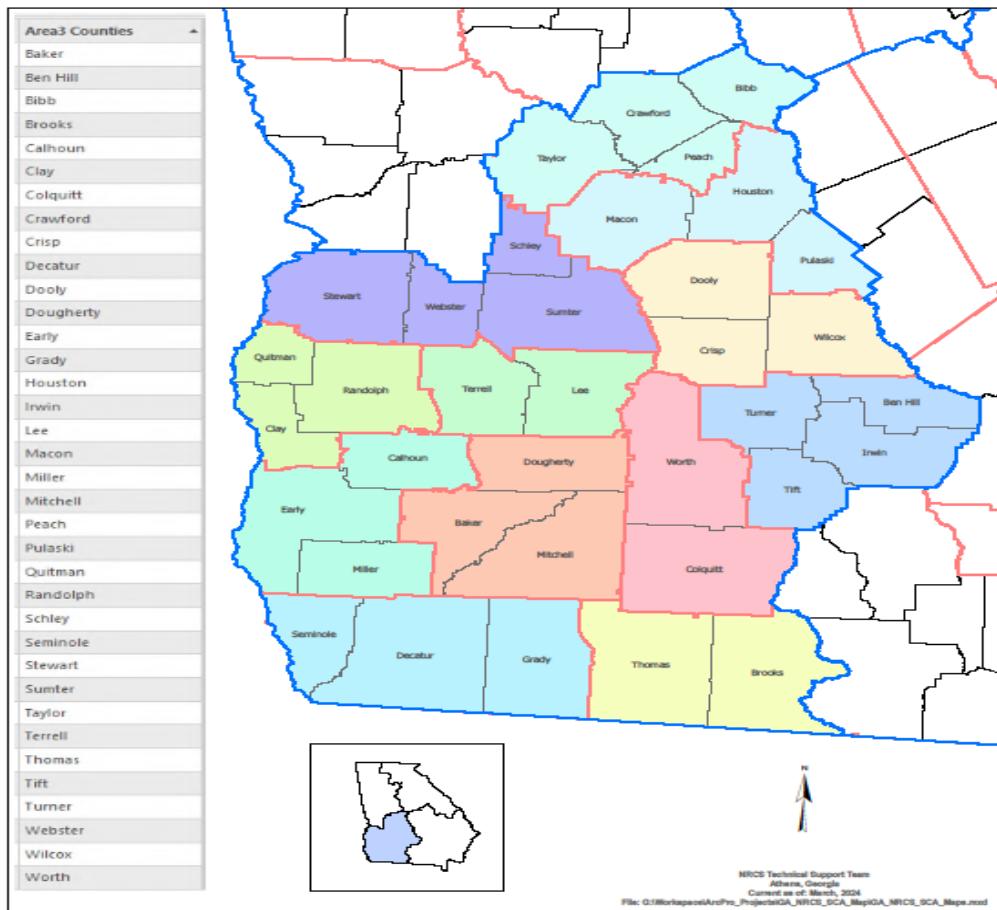
Area2 Counties			
Baldwin	Hart	McDuffie	
Banks	Jackson	Morgan	
Barrow	Jasper	Newton	Taliaferro
Burke	Jefferson	Oconee	Town
Clarke	Jenkins	Oglethorpe	Union
Columbia	Jones	Putnam	Walton
Dawson	Lincoln	Itabun	Warren
Elbert	Lumpkin	Richmond	White
Fannin	Madison	Stephens	Wilkes



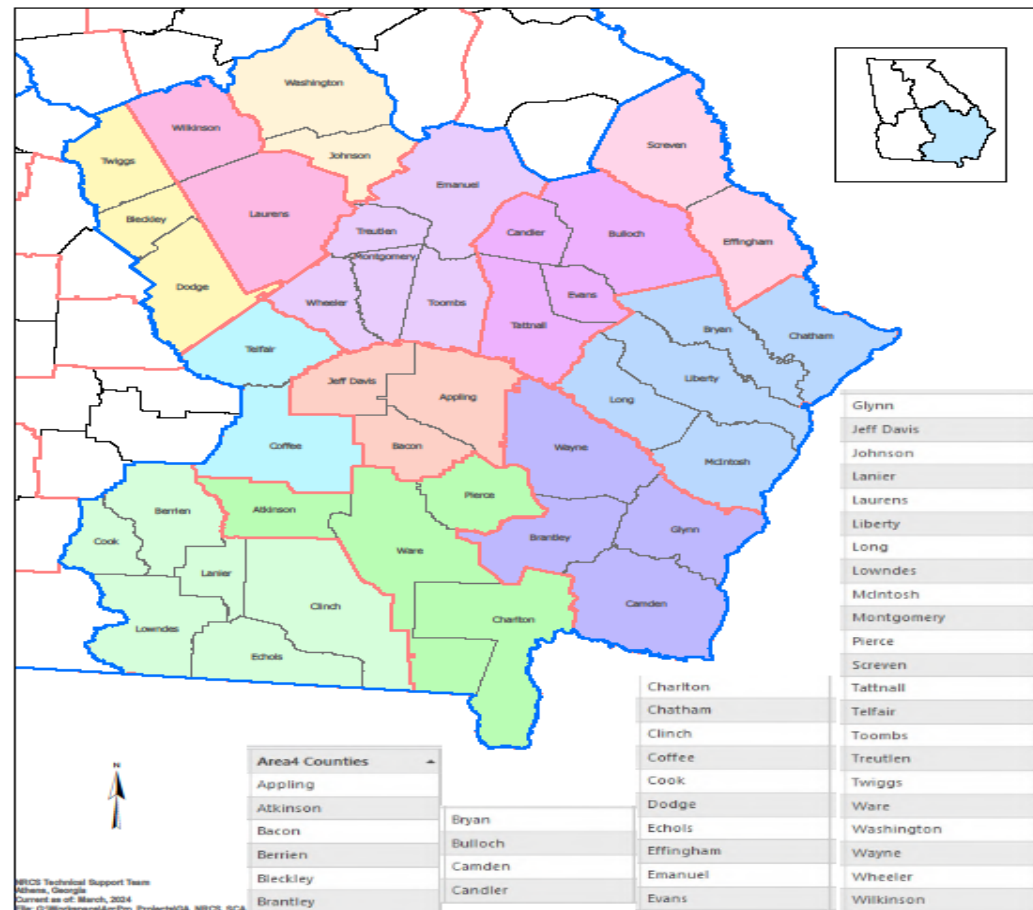
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# Georgia NRCS Administrative Areas 3 & 4

## Georgia NRCS Administrative Area 3



## Georgia NRCS Administrative Area 4



## Area 1, Marlina Tonge

- **Booth set-up: 3**
- **Event presentations: 3**
- **Field/Farm Visits: 10**
- **New Customers- CD: 0**
- **Total attendees: 1,785**

## Area 3, Charlie Grace

- **Booth set-up: 18**
- **Event presentations: 45**
- **Farm visits: 53**
- **New Customers-CD: 95**
- **Total Attendees: 14,412**

## Area 2, Kaneisha Miller

- **Booth set-up: 8**
- **Event presentations: 10**
- **Field/Farm Visits: 4**
- **New Customers- CD: 0**
- **Total attendees: 2049**

## Area 4, Vontice Jackson

- **Booth set-up: 8**
- **Event presentations: 15**
- **Farm visits: 3**
- **New Customers-CD: 0**
- **Total Attendees: 15,000**





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## Natural Resources Conservation Service

# NRCS Georgia Outreach Sign-In Sheet





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# Georgia Outreach Highlights







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## Georgia NRCS Area 3 Earth Team Volunteers:

- Alfred Greenlee
- Brendia King
- Isaiah Smith
- Joshua Smith
- Kyeron Simmons
- Paula Davenport

# Georgia Outreach Upcoming Events

- **Area 1**, June 27, 2025, NRCS Conservation Conference & Field Day-UGA Griffin Campus
- **Area 2**, Get Started with Conservation-Houston County Extension Office
- **Area 4**, April 25, 2025, Forage Update-Ross Bowen Agricultural Complex- Lyons, GA
- **Area 3**, September 18, 2025, USDA NRCS Southwest Regional Conservation Conference & Field Day- Roe Edwards Farm-Smithville, GA
- USDA NRCS Conservation Training Programs Series via Zoom, May 15, 2025, July 17, 2025, September 25, 2025, & November 13, 2025

## Natural Resources Conservation Service

- **Online Resources:**
  - [Usda.gov](https://www.usda.gov)
  - [Farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov)
  - [Newfarmers.usda.gov](https://www.newfarmers.usda.gov)
  - [Nrcs.usda.gov](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov)
- **How to contact us in Georgia:**
  - Office: (229) 268-9106
  - Cell: (229) 591-9919
  - Email: [charlie.grace@usda.gov](mailto:charlie.grace@usda.gov)







# Natural Resources Conservation Service

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Presents

## FARMERS, RANCHERS, AND FOREST LANDOWNERS' CONSERVATION CONFERENCE/FIELD DAY

**September 18, 2025**  
**8:30 am – 3:00 pm**

**Partner:** Southern Farmers Collaborative Group

**Theme:**

**Building on Innovation: Conservation, Forestry, Livestock, Soil Health, and Adapting Chestnut for the Future**



**Location:** Roe Edwards Farm, LLC, 330 Boo Cosby Road, Smithville, GA 31787

**Registration:** Starts at 8:00 am

**Free Outdoor Event and Lunch Provided**

**Registration Link:** <https://forms.gle/HWmDs2o9rDx6anyPA>



### WORKSHOP TOPICS/PRESENTATIONS:

- USDA Programs
- Biomass/Cover Crops
- Forestry & Agroforestry
- Disaster Preparedness
- Farm Raised Chickens & Eggs
- UGA/Pesticide Safety (Earn 1 Hour Credit)



### FARM TOURS/LIVE DEMONSTRATIONS:

- Horizon/Profile Soil Pit
- Irrigation Water Conservation & Installation
- Chestnut Crop/Orchard
- Livestock (Cattle & Pasture)
- Pole Barns
- Grazing & Conservation Practices
- Vegetable Production & Soil Health
- CRP-Timber
- NRCS Rainfall Simulator
- Vendors/Exhibitors



### FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Charlie Grace, Chair  
USDA NRCS

NRCS Southwest Area 3 Outreach Coordinator  
(229) 591-9919 or [charlie.grace@usda.gov](mailto:charlie.grace@usda.gov)

Vontice Jackson, co-chair  
USDA NRCS

NRCS Southeast Area 4 Outreach Coordinator  
(229) 218-1981 or [vontice.jackson@usda.gov](mailto:vontice.jackson@usda.gov)

If you need a special accommodation to attend this event, please contact Charlie Grace at (229) 591-9919 or [charlie.grace@usda.gov](mailto:charlie.grace@usda.gov) no less than 14 days prior to the event.

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United States Department of Agriculture

# The Federal Crop Insurance Program

Serving America's agricultural producers through effective, market-based risk management tools to strengthen the economic stability of agricultural producers and rural communities.

Valdosta Regional Office  
USDA Risk Management Agency



## Topics:

- Overview of the last 3 years
- Available crop insurance products
- Hurricane Insurance Protection –  
Wind Index/Tropical Storm Option





# Georgia Insurance Experience

Crop Year	Policies	Total Liability	Total Premium	Total Indemnity
2022	18,975	\$2.37B	\$309.98M	\$287.46M
2023	19,750	\$2.32B	\$292.64M	\$284.40M
2024	21,649	\$2.45B	\$296.51M	\$512.47M
Totals	60,374	\$7.16B	\$899.13M	\$1.08B

# Top 10 Crops by Liability\*

Commodity	Liability
Cotton	\$853.41M
Peanuts	\$768.66M
Corn	\$201.11M
Pecans	\$146.29M
Blueberries	\$120.05M
Nursery (NVS)	\$62.11M
Onions	\$54.38M
Soybeans	\$49.03M
Pecan Trees	\$35.91M
Pasture, Rangeland, Forage	\$35.85M

\*CY2024

# Traditional Row Crops

Cabbage, Canola, Corn, Cotton, Grain  
Sorghum, Oats, Peanuts, Popcorn, Rye,  
Sesame, Soybeans, Tobacco, and Wheat

Other Programs:

PRF, Apiculture, Livestock, Dairy

*Note: Program availability varies by county and is subject to change.  
Where not available, most crops may be insured by written agreement.  
See a crop insurance agent.*



# Specialty Crops

Apples, Blueberries, Citrus, Florida Fruit Tree, FM Tomato, FM Sweet Corn, Nursery Value Select, Onions, Peach, Pecans, Pecan Tree, Pepper, and Potato

## Other Programs:

- Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP)/MicroFarm

*Note: Program availability varies by county and is subject to change. Where not available, most crops may be insured by written agreement. See a crop insurance agent.*

# Written Agreements

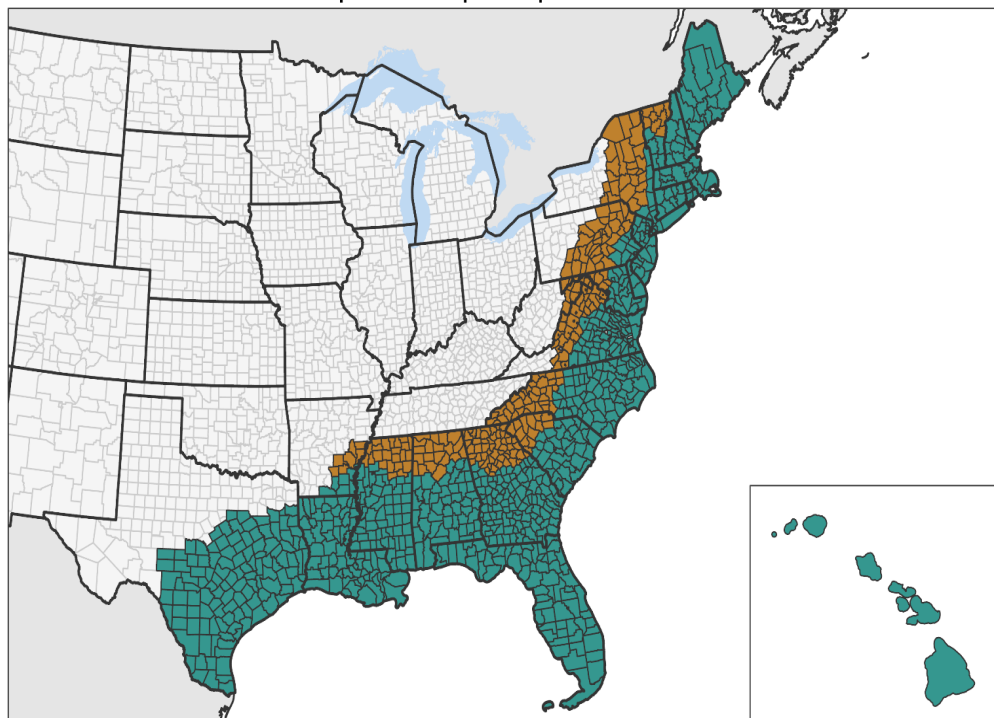
Insurance not available for a commodity in your county?

- RMA may individually insure you for any crop or practice that has an existing insurance program in another county
- Written agreements may not be available for pilot programs or for policies that exclude them
- You must have produced the crop (or a similar crop) in the county or area for at least three years



# HIP-WI / Tropical Storm Option

## RMA Hurricane Insurance Program - Wind Index Tropical Storm Option Expansion Counties



Expansion HIP-WI Counties Current Available HIP-WI Counties

The information displayed in this map is intended to serve as an aid in displaying data provided or stored by the Risk Management Agency. It does not modify, replace or supersede any USDA published policy provisions or procedures.

Maps created by USDA Risk Management Agency are for spatial and visual context for depicting the basic information for "where". Maps are not considered a survey. General Reference Only

-- Public Information --

Map Creation Date: January 24, 2023

Layer Credits: USDA

Source: County Boundaries - USCB, USDA Risk Management Agency - System of Analytics

Data Current Date: January 24, 2023

Map Projection: USA Contiguous Albers Equal Area Conic

RMA Product Management

- Endorsement available for most crop program/counties in VRO
  - if probability of occurrence during insurance period is > than 2%
- Not available for livestock, PRF, area plans, or WFRP/Micro Farm programs
- Covers the base policy deductible up to 95 percent of crop value
- Premium subsidy fixed at 65%
- Triggers:
  - Hurricane – hurricane force winds recorded in county or adjacent county – 100% payment
  - Tropical Storm Option – TS winds (34+ knots) and 5.9" rainfall over period storm is in the county – 50% payment per occurrence



# Tropical Storm Option Basics

- Must be a named storm which intersects county or adjacent county
- Must also have at least 5.9 inches of rain in 4 days (**new CY2025: Final Rainfall amount for a tropical storm includes all days during which the tropical storm is present within the county**)
- Must be between planting and end of insurance period
- Data from NOAA-CPC and NOAA-IBTrACS
- NOAA-CPC data is used for current Rainfall Insurance programs
- NOAA-IBTrACS data is used for current HIP-WI program
- Payment is equal to 50% of liability
- Counties hit twice or also by a hurricane will receive no more than 100% of liability

# 2024 Hurricane Season

## 2024 Hurricanes\* with HIP-WI/TS Triggers

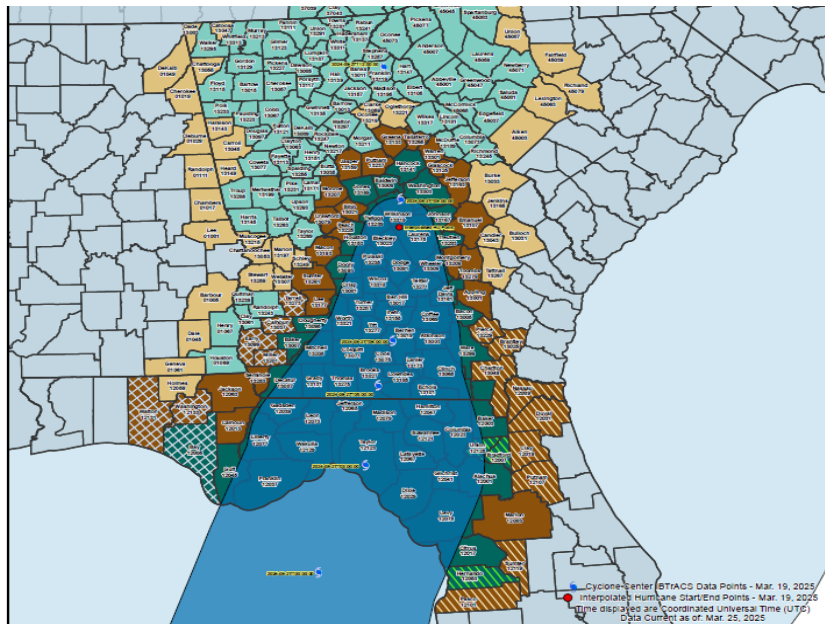
Hurricane	Date	States
Beryl	8-Jul	TX
Debby	5-Aug	FL, GA, NC, SC
Francine	11-Sep	LA, MS
Helene	26-Sep	AL, FL, GA, NC, SC, VA
Milton	10-Oct	FL

\* As of 11/1/2024

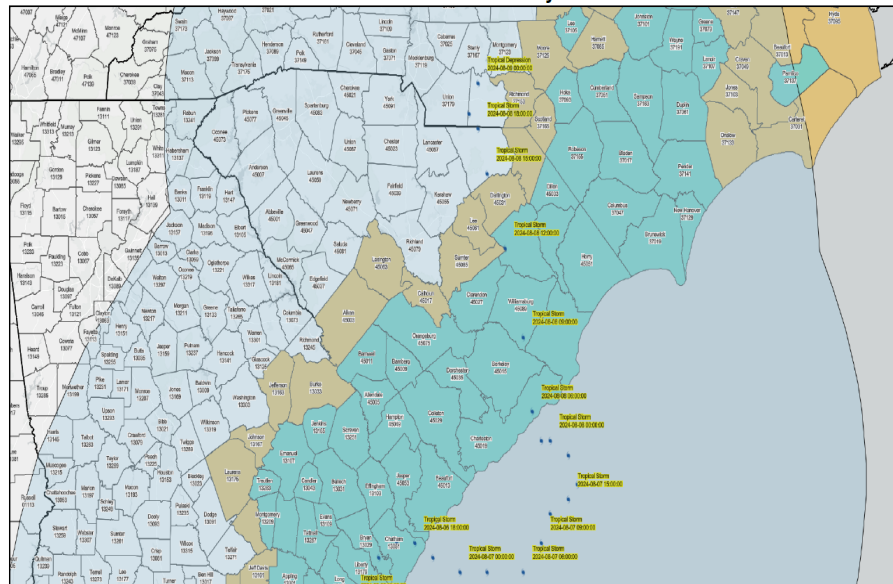
State	Policies	Liabilities	Indemnitees
AL	1,667	65,010,279	5,091,985
FL	2,256	418,023,849	195,481,636
GA	6,390	322,577,434	264,159,836
LA	3,393	326,394,810	128,669,517
MS	959	95,510,542	212,802
NC	8,591	351,931,613	109,387,894
SC	3,531	147,257,057	63,213,671
TX	3,885	203,026,205	100,449,906
VA	1,634	51,224,279	60,663
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,306</b>	<b>1,980,956,068</b>	<b>866,727,910</b>

\*Data as of 03/03/2025

## Hurricane Insurance Protection – Wind Index (HIP-WI) Endorsement Reinsurance Year 2024 Hurricane Helene



## Hurricane Insurance Protection – Wind Index (HIP-WI) Endorsement 2024 Hurricane Debby



Map Creation Date: Tue Mar 11 2025  
Layer Credits: USDA Census Bureau  
Source: USDA Risk Management Agency  
Map Projection: Web Mercator Auxiliary Sphere (WMAS)  
RMA Map Viewer Application

The information displayed in this map is intended to serve as an aid in displaying data provided or stored by the Risk Management Agency. It does not modify, replace or supersede any USDA published policy provisions or procedures. Maps created by USDA Risk Management Agency are for spatial and visual context for depicting the basic information for "where". Maps are not considered a survey. General Reference Only.

# Upcoming:

## Sales Closing Dates:

- May 1 – Nursery Value Select
- May 15 – Pecan Tree

## Events:

- HIP-WI webinar
  - May 14 at 3pm (Microsoft Teams)

## Past Event

- NVS webinar held April 8, 2025
  - Recording available on [www.rma.usda.gov](http://www.rma.usda.gov)





# How to find more information

## [www.rma.usda.gov](http://www.rma.usda.gov)



[Policy & Procedure](#) ▾ [RMALocal](#) ▾ [Tools & Reports](#) ▾ [About Crop Insurance](#) ▾ [News & Events](#) ▾

Search this site



### Are you a nursery grower looking to improve your coverage?

The Nursery Value Select (NVS) pilot program is available in all states and counties.

[Go to NVS resources](#)

### Insurance Rates, Yields, and More

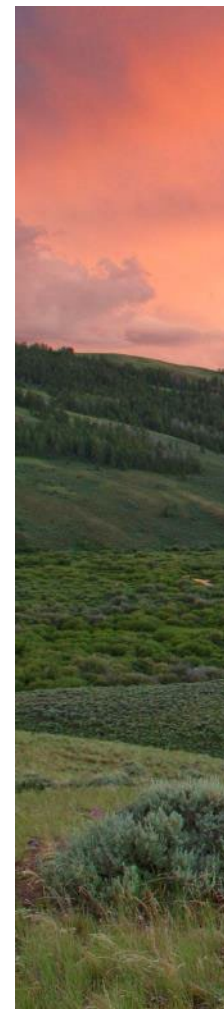
Current and historical crop insurance data.

[Go to Actuarial Documents](#)

### Find a Policy Document

Policies, handbooks, memos, and other resources.

[Go to Policy & Procedure](#)



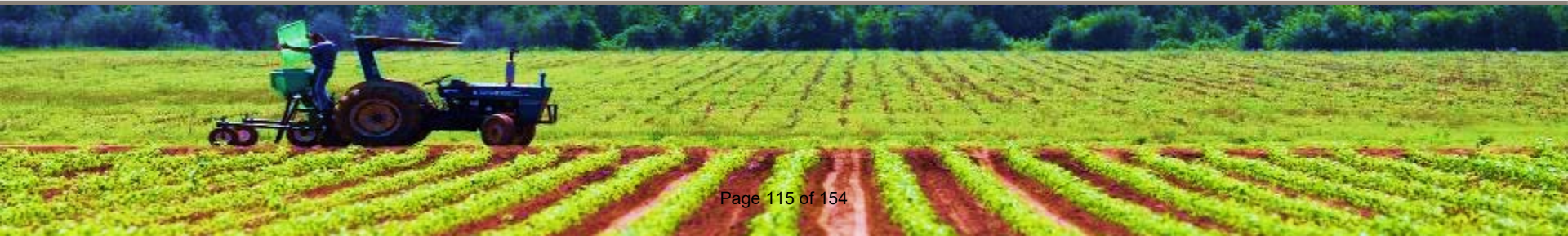


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# Thank You

## Questions or Concerns??

Contact the  
Valdosta Regional Office  
[rsoga@usda.gov](mailto:rsoga@usda.gov)  
229-242-7235

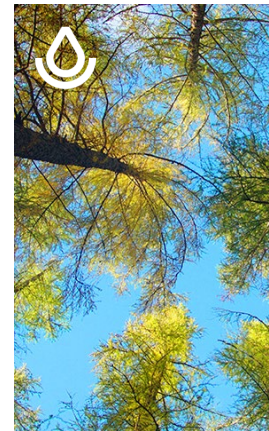






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## Natural Resources Conservation Service



State Technical Committee – Wildlife Updates  
Noah McCoard, State Biologist  
April 2025

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# Monarch



**Monarch could become listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act**

**NRCS and USFWS Conference Opinion**



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# Monarch



## USFWS will work with NRCS to provide voluntary conservation recommendations

- Field Borders
- Hedgerow Plantings



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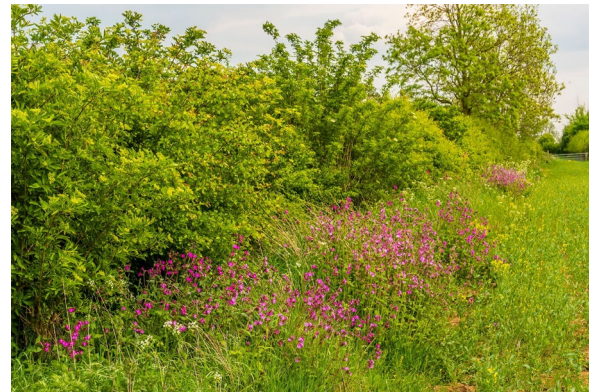
# Conservation Practice Standards

## Currently under revision

- **395 - Stream Habitat Management**

## Developing new Implementation Requirements

- **422 - Hedgerow Planting**
- **646 - Seasonal Water Management**



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# Scenarios

**Pollinator Habitat:**

**~~327-Conservation Cover~~**

**420-Wildlife Habitat Planting**



# Scenarios



## New- Interplanting with potted plants or shrubs

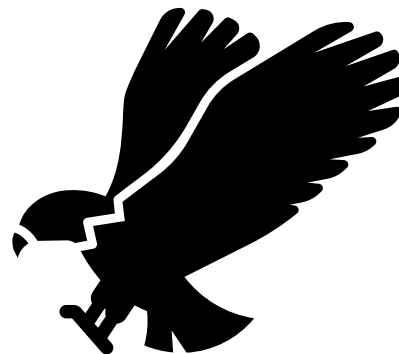
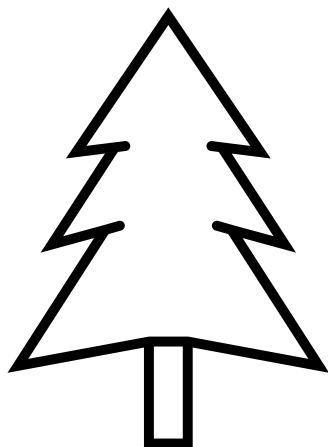


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# Wildlife and Forestry Subcommittee





# Opportunities for Wildlife



# 420 Wildlife Habitat Planting



**Improvement or restoration of wildlife habitat and/or native plant communities**

**Low diversity**



**High diversity**



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# Benefits



## Wildlife Habitat



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# Benefits

## Pollination Beneficial Insects



# Benefits



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# Riparian Buffers



**Establish herbaceous plants (Riparian Herbaceous Cover 390), trees and/or shrubs (Riparian Forest Buffer 391) located adjacent to a water body.**



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# Benefits



## Wildlife habitat



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# Benefits

## Water quality







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## Contact Information:



Noah McCoard, State Biologist

[Noah.McCoard@usda.gov](mailto:Noah.McCoard@usda.gov)

Office: 706-546-2089

Mobile: 706-340-2488



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A photograph of a pine forest with tall, slender trees and a ground covered in dry, brown pine needles and sparse vegetation. The sky is visible through the canopy.

# State Technical Committee Meeting Forestry April 24, 2025

The logo for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), featuring a large, stylized yellow letter "N" on a dark background.

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Justin G. Smith, State Forester

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# 612 - Tree/Shrub Establishment



612	Tree/Shrub Establishment-(Source Water Protection)						15 Years
	Hardwood Hand Planting-bare root 1/	Acre	\$378.21		\$453.85		
	Conifer, High Density-Containerized 2/	Acre	\$219.66		\$263.59		
	Conifer, Low Density-Containerized 3/	Acre	\$182.39		\$218.87		
	Hardwood Hand Planting-bare root-protected 4/	Acre	\$1,149.76		\$1,379.72		
	Shrub Planting 5/	Acre	\$147.32		\$176.78		
	High Density-Hand Plant BR 6/	Acre	\$210.31		\$252.37		
	High Density Mech Planting 7/	Acre	\$216.94		\$260.33		
1/ Improving hardwood forest setting by hand planting 300 trees per acre, or more of hardwood tree seedlings. A Forest Management plan is required prior to payment.							
2/Plant containerized high density longleaf pine seedlings on all forestry acres that are eligible for planting. A range of 544 trees per acre to 622 trees per acre. This is for longleaf establishment only. A Forest Management plan is required prior to payment.							
3/Plant containerized low density longleaf pines on all forestry acres that are eligible for planting. A range of 302-454 trees per acre will be planted for <i>WLFW GopherTortoises Program only</i> . A Forest Management plan is required prior to payment.							
4/Hardwood seedlings will be planted at minimum of 12X12 spacing by hand method at 300 trees per acre with protected tree tubes. ALL forestry acres are eligible for payment. Sites will be hand planted. A Forest management plan is required prior to payment.							
5/Shrubs are planted to provide a more diverse habitat in uplands or bottomlands. The site lacks ground level habitat structure and diversity for wildlife. Maximum of 200 shrubs per acre. May be planted in groups of approximately 50 shrubs with 4 groups per acre, randomly scattered.							
6/High Density - Hand planting of bare root loblolly or slash Pine tree seedlings after the site has been prepared for seedling growth and establishment. A range of 454 trees per acre to 622 trees per acre. A Forest Management plan is required prior to payment.							
7/High Density - Mechanical planting of bare root loblolly or slash Pine tree seedlings after the site has been prepared for seedling growth and establishment. A range of 454 trees per acre to 622 trees per acre. A Forest Management plan is required prior to payment.							



- Updated tree establishment range for lower planting rates to accommodate changing markets and conditions
- One of our most utilized forestry practices



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# 666 - Forest Stand Improvement

666	Forest Stand Improvement						10 Years
	Pre-Commercial Thinning-Mechanical 1/	Acre	\$105.71		\$126.85		
	Creating Patch Clearcuts 2/	Acre	\$440.98		\$529.18		
	Competition Control - Mechanical, Light Equipment 3/	Acre	\$48.38		\$58.05		
	Timber Stand Improvement Chemical Ground 4/	Acre	\$39.03		\$46.83		
	Timber Stand Improvement - Chemical Aerial 5/	Acre	\$73.11		\$87.72		
	Band Spray 6/	Acre	\$20.47		\$24.57		
	Understory Treatment, Hand Crew 7/	Acre	\$93.43		\$112.12		
	Tree Marking 8/	Acre	\$125.34	\$30,000.00	\$150.41	\$30,000.00	
1/Hand Tool/ Adjusting the stocking of a young, non-merchantable stand of trees. The operation is supervised by a registered forester. Hand tool equipment only can be utilized to treat pre-commercial forest stand. Used to improve the wildlife habitat and tree health by utilizing hand tools.							
1/Mechanical/ Adjusting the stocking of a young, non-merchantable stand of trees. The operation is supervised by a registered forester. Mechanical equipment is utilized to treat pre-commercial forest stand. Used to improve the wildlife habitat and tree health by mechanical equipment.							
2/Creating 2 acre patches in over-mature and/or degraded stands using hand tools such as chainsaws.							
3/ Control vegetation to reduce stocking level or remove competing vegetation. The vegetation to be controlled is small enough that it can be mowed or shredded. The work can be done by mowing or shredding strips through the stand, mowing between planted rows, etc. Multiple payment exception NOT authorized. This scenario is used to adjust the stocking level and/or competition with desired tree species.							
4/Using ground applied chemicals to release young desirable trees from competing and/or overtopping vegetation. Resource concerns include: Undesirable plant productivity and health, and Wildlife habitat degradation. This scenario is used to treat competition with desired tree species, not intended for competition with groundcover. Multiple payment exception NOT authorized.							
5/Using aerially applied chemicals to release desirable trees from competing and/or overtopping vegetation. Resource concerns include: Undesirable plant productivity and health, and Wildlife habitat degradation. This scenario is not intended for competition with groundcover. Multiple payment exception NOT authorized.							
8/Treating individual stems of selected trees using treatments such as injection or basal bark spraying. Used on sites where it is not feasible to use a commercial operation to remove them from the site such as rocky terrain, steep slopes, wet sites, and small harvest area size. Intended for treatment of stems at least 4 inches in diameter.							
6/ Ground applied, chemical band spray treatment to release young, desirable trees from competing and/or overtopping vegetation.							
7/ Treatment of undesirable competition by hand application of selective chemicals through backpack sprayers or other hand applications. Chemicals should be tailored to site to help preserve native grasses, forbs and other herbaceous cover beneficial to wildlife.							
8/ All treatment acres shall be marked with the intent of the practice to facilitate harvesting. The treatment area will have harvest trees marked so the residual stand, after harvest is 30 BA to 70 BA.							



- Created tree-marking scenario to facilitate thinning for forest health and wildlife objectives



# 338 – Prescribed Burning



338	Prescribed Burning						1 Year
	Prescribed Burn 1/	Acre		\$32.15		\$38.58	
1/Burn according to designed burn plan and NRCS Prescribed Burning (338) standard and specifications. Site prep burns are included. Constructed firebreak cost is not included in cost of burn. Clients are responsible for obtaining all permits and clearances as required by law and regulation. Clients must be informed in writing of their potential liability.							

- Simplified to only have one scenario that can be utilized in any prescribed burning application from site-prep to understory burning
- One of our most contracted practices, but also one of the most cancelled in contracts from not being able to complete
- Barriers to prescribed burning????



# 381 - Silvopasture



381	<b>Silvopasture-(Source Water Protection)</b>						20 Years
	<b>Introduced Perennial Grasses, Commercial 1/</b>	Acre	\$213.93		\$256.72		
	<b>Bareroot Conifer, Pasture 2/</b>	Acre	\$126.61		\$150.20		
<p>1/Commercial thinning of an existing stand of trees followed by establishment of introduced grasses. Thinning will be to a basal area of 30 to 50. Cost includes grass establishment. For the Sandhills, Coastal Plain, and Flatwoods Regions Bahiagrass is the recommended forage species. For the Ridge and Valley and Blue Ridge Regions Orchardgrass and/or Tall Fescue are the recommended forage species. Tall Fescue can be used as the chosen forage species throughout the Piedmont, but Bahiagrass is also acceptable in the lower Piedmont.</p> <p>2/The establishment of trees into an existing pasture where adequate native grasses or introduced forage is present. See Silvopasture jobsheets for trees per acre criteria of single, double, or triple row silvopasture system being established. Typical alley arrangement is 40 feet and 200 trees per acre are established</p>							



- 2018 – 2024 only 38 contracts with silvopasture, some are still active and not yet completed and at least 4 were cancelled before starting
- Philip and I are working on improving the Implementation Requirement
- Looking for practice scenarios that would fit single tree rows near fencing that would utilize poly wire wrapped around the individual tree tube that would accompany each tree

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United States Department of Agriculture

## Contact Information:

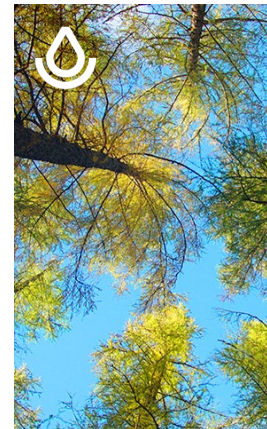
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# State Technical Committee Update

**Philip Brown**  
**USDA – NRCS**  
**Athens, GA**

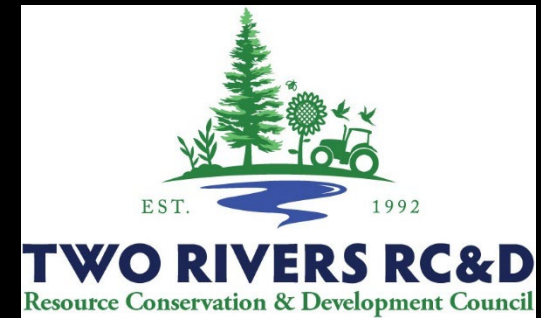


# Overview

- Bale Grazing Project
- Agroforestry Project
- Native Warm Season Grass Establishment
- Grazed Cropland Project



# Partners



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

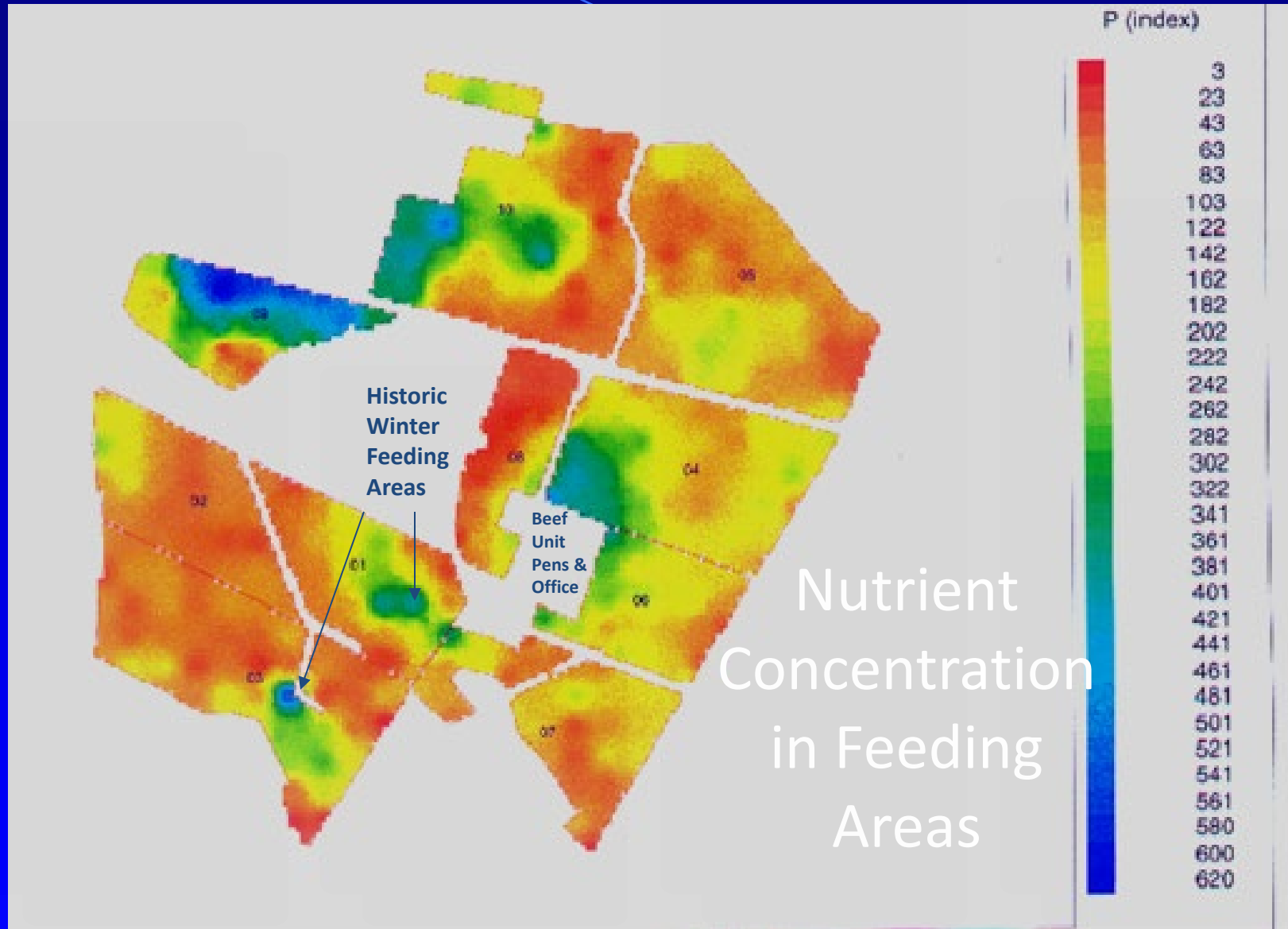


# Bale Grazing – Is it a viable Alternative?

- Feeding technique of setting bales on pasture in “bulk” quantities and feeding in a planned, controlled, sequential manner
- Distributes nutrients and organic matter across treated area
- Proper siting still needed - soils and surface water
- Reduces traffic on saturated soils
- Reduces time and equipment operation associated with feeding events
- Initial information developed out of the Upper Great Plains
- Picked up interest in the Southeast based on work by Dr. Greg Halich at the University of Kentucky

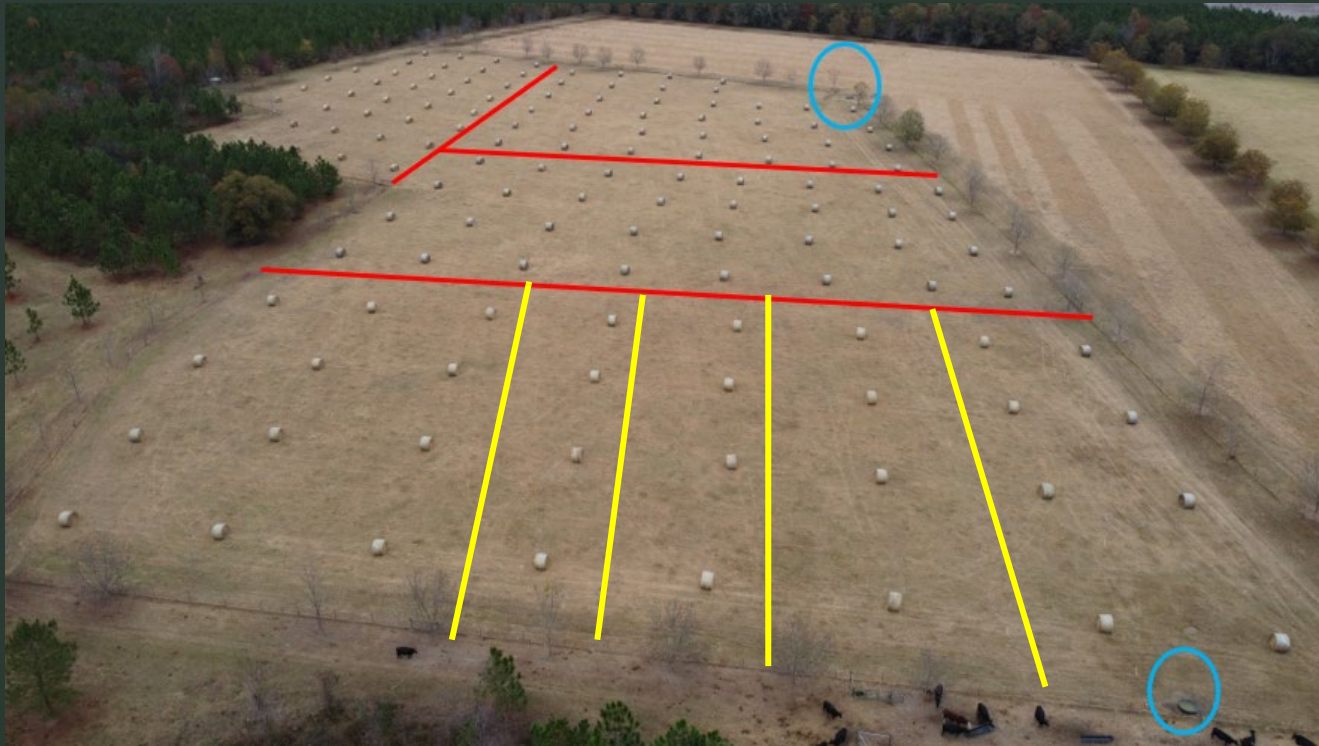
Credit: Hay and Forage Grower Magazine

# CEFS Beef Unit, 1999













• **Bale Grazing Acres in Georgia To This Point (via Rolling Hills RC&D:**

- **Bleckley Co. - 20**
- **Carroll Co. – 17**
- **Irwin Co. - 40**
- **Polk Co. - 15**
- **Lincoln Co. - 40**
- **Washington Co. - 30**
- **Wilkes Co. - 15**
- **Total 177 Acres**

- **CSP Acres - ± 1,500 acres since 2021**



Agroforestry – Low Density tree plantings that provide distributed shade throughout pastures – facilitates more intensive grazing management

Madison Co.  
Bleckley Co.  
Irwin Co.  
Johnson Co.  
Lamar Co.  
Carroll Co.  
Oconee Co.











## Native Warm Season Grass Establishment

- lower input forage systems
- Focusing on earlier planting than traditionally recommended
  - February and Early March
- Rye Cover Crop ahead of planting
- Big Bluestem and Indiangrass combinations
- Imazapic tolerant switchgrass – “Tusca”
- Eastern Gammagrass



## Big Bluestem & Indiangrass Mix – JCPMC - Americus, GA





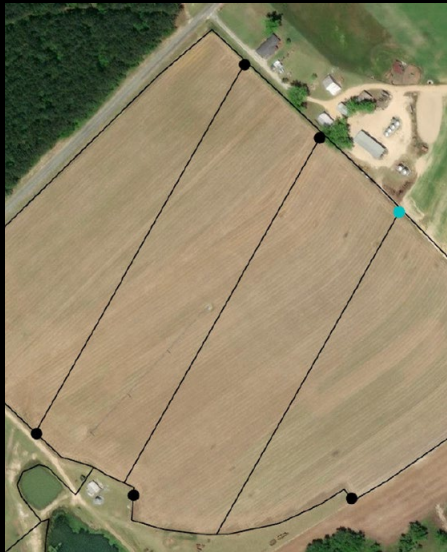






- Sites in:
  - Madison Co.
  - Marion Co.
  - Pike Co.
  - Wilkes Co.
  - Paulding
- 
- Has been difficult to locate good sites...





- Irrigated – Grazed Cropland – Bleckley Co.

# Wrapping UP

- Bale Grazing – likely to become an EQIP Scenario in the next year or two. Demonstration sites are winding down
- Agroforestry – potential for one or two more sites to be established. Monitoring survival and livestock damage. Field Days / Pasture Walks at some point
- Native Warm Season Grasses – additional sites need. Good progress made related to establishment
- Integrated Crop – Livestock Systems – will continue to look at Nitrogen credits – GA Conservation Tillage Alliance has proposed a field day this year