

# Another Conservation Success Story...

## Wheeler County, Georgia

October 2006

### Benefits of Strip-tilling Changes Farming Operation in Wheeler County

Mr. Emmitt Gillis has been a district supervisor with the Ochoopee River Soil & Water Conservation District for 20 years.

He worked on the family farm when he was nine years old. After serving in the U. S. Army, he started farming in 1947 and has acquired over 500 acres in Wheeler County that is in cropland, pastureland, and woodland.

Mr. Gillis is 77 years old and does all of the farm work with no outside help. His wife, Jewell, helps with the farm paper work, besides making great biscuits.

Emmitt plants 46 acres of corn, 112 acres of soybeans, small grain and 51 acres of peanuts.

Mr. Gillis has 60 head of brood cows and manages 50 acres of pastureland and 50 acres of hayland. He has 4 center pivots and irrigates all of the crops.

Mr. Gillis averages 200 bushels per acre of corn, 60 bushels per acre of soybeans, and 5,000 lbs. per acre of peanuts.

His best peanut yield was 6,400 lbs. per acre.

Emmitt has won numerous awards for production efficiency on the district and state levels for soybean, corn and peanut yields.

He bought his first farm by a loan from the Farmers Home Administration. He paid the 30 year loan in 10 years and won the farm family of the year award.

His farm is manicured and one weed is one too many. It is a pleasure to work with him with his conservation needs and he is always open to new ideas.

His entire farm is done with conservation tillage practices and farming is done on the contour.

He has observed the benefits of strip till from other farmers and has done some strip tilling to see what type of equipment will fit his farming operation.

He is sold on the benefits of strip till and continues to use it in his farming operation.



**Above: Emmitt Gillis among his crops. Gillis has won numerous awards for production efficiency on the district and state levels for soybean, corn, and peanut yields.**



**Left: Emmitt Gillis with NRCS District Conservationist, Alex Comegys.**

### What is Conservation Tillage?

Conservation Tillage is a conservation practice where crops are grown with minimal disturbance of the soil. All residue from prior crops and winter cover crops remains on the surface. The following crop is planted into existing residue.

The new crop is planted into this residue or small strips of tilled soil. Weeds are controlled with cover crops or herbicides rather than by cultivation. Methods described as no-till, strip-till, incomplete tillage, reduced tillage, or conservation tillage differ from each other primarily in the degree to which the soil is disturbed prior to planting.

With conservation tillage, a minimum of 30% residue must remain after the next crop is planted. Crops grown without tillage use water more efficiently; more rainfall or irrigation water is captured in the soil; the water-holding capacity of the soil increases; and water losses from runoff and evaporation are reduced.

**Pine Country RC&D  
912-459-2070**

 **NRCS** Natural Resources  
Conservation Service

**912-583-4432**

**Ochoopee River  
Soil & Water District**