

# Another Conservation Success Story...

## Whitfield County, Georgia

July 2007

### Conasauga River Alliance Formed With Help of NRCS

The Conasauga River Alliance (CRA) is a non-profit, bi-state, watershed conservation organization. It was organized in 1995 through an ecosystem-based assistance grant provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and implemented by the Limestone Valley Resources Conservation and Development Council (LVRC&D). The primary focus of the Alliance is protection and restoration of the upper Conasauga River, a main water source for residents, industry, agriculture, and biological diversity in north Georgia and southeast Tennessee.

The Conasauga watershed covers portions of Fannin, Gordon, Murray, and Whitfield counties in Georgia and Bradley and Polk counties in Tennessee. A 21 member board of directors, appointed and selected from representatives living in the watershed, set the agenda for CRA activities. The Alliance has a paid Watershed Director, who coordinates installation of river-friendly best management practices, writes grants, and promotes educational and outreach activities that emphasize the value of the Conasauga River as a community asset.

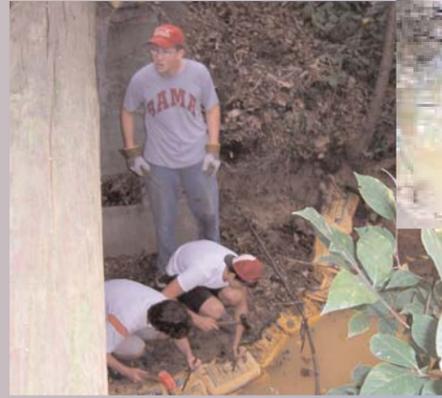
Funding for the Alliance has come primarily through the U.S. Clean Water Act, Section 319 nonpoint source pollution grants, provided by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division. The Alliance also has annual fundraisers, seeks specialty foundation grants and receives in-kind and financial support from numerous partners such as NRCS, LVRC&D, Farm Services Agency, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Georgia Forest Commission, University of Georgia, Dalton State College, Nature Conservancy, local governments, private industries, individuals and others.

Activities of the Alliance are varied, but focus on controlling non-point source pollution and providing river-watershed educational and outreach information. In the past year, CRA has installed several best management practices to address septic system failures, stormwater runoff, streambank erosion, and pasture management. Some highlights include:

- \* Six educational outreach presentations for elementary school students, K-12 teachers, landowners, and stormwater contractors
- \* Two urban streambank restoration projects, one in cooperation with a local Eagle Scout community badge project
- \* Installation and monitoring of a stormwater treatment system in Dalton
- \* Repair of 23 failing septic systems in Murray and Whitfield counties, including minority and single-parent households
- \* Restored and stabilized Varnell Springs, a historic spring site, for public use
- \* Produced brochures, flash cards, and several posters highlighting the Conasauga River's diversity and community assets.

#### Nonpoint Source Implementation Grants, Section 319 (319 Program)

The 319 Program provides formula grants to the states to implement nonpoint source projects and programs in accordance with Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. Formula grants are awarded to a lead agency in each state. States and local organizations are required to provide 40 percent of the total project or program cost.



Local Eagle Scouts assist CRA in an urban streambank restoration program.



Highway runoff is diverted away from Varnell Springs, a popular historic site for residents and visitors.



New stormwater management system generated interest among local businesses and units of government.

Limestone Valley RC&D  
706-625-7044

 **NRCS** Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
706-638-2207

Limestone Valley Soil And Water  
Conservation District