



United States Department of Agriculture

Louisiana Conservation Update

September 2016

Taking Conservation to the Next Level



Projects • Successes • Partnerships



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On the Cover



Chip Vosburg is taking conservation to the next level on his operation in Pointe Coupee Parish. Find out how he is using the Conservation Stewardship Program to accomplish this on pages 4 and 5.

The Conservation Update is distributed monthly by mail and e-mail.

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Notes from the State Conservationist

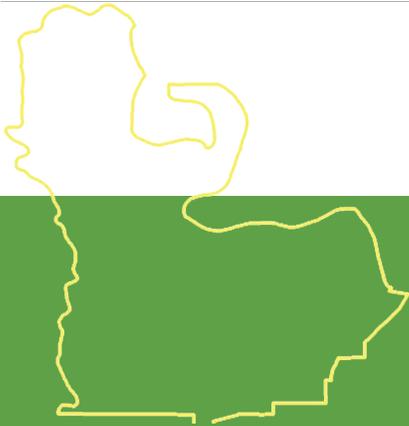
The first day of fall has come and gone, days are getting shorter and there is an ever so slight feel of fall in the air. Just a short drive down any Louisiana highway and you are sure to see the signs of fall all around you. Harvested cotton bundled by the side of the road. Sugar cane, standing tall, patiently waiting, ready to be cut and hauled to a sugar mill. This is a busy time of year in agriculture and it is certainly busy for our NRCS and Soil and Water Conservation District offices throughout the state.



In this issue of the Conservation Update you will meet Chip Vosburg a farmer in Morganza, Louisiana. Chip's operation, Honey Cross Farms, is a perfect example how the NRCS conservation planning process can lead producers to utilize the most efficient and conservation minded practices on their farms. Not only will the land benefit but, the farmer's bottom line will show positive results.

As many of you know, the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is now the largest conservation program in the country. It provides assistance to producers across all of our working agriculture and forestry landscape. In Louisiana the program reaches crop, grazing and forest producers alike. CSP is designed to leverage the historic conservation work of producers just like Mr. Vosburg and help them move to the next level in conservation across their entire operation. Sign-up for CSP is coming soon. In this year's CSP, NRCS is redesigning the program to better fit our conservation work with producers. If you have not explored this program or had no success in previous applications, I would encourage you to stop by your local NRCS office and talk with the District Conservationist and staff. They are ready and willing to work with you to achieve your conservation goals.

Kevin D. Norton
State Conservationist



Pointe Coupee Parish Ag Facts

There are 393 farms in Pointe Coupee Parish.
182,214 acres of land is in farms.
78.9% of the land is in crops, 14.4% is in pastures and 5.1% is forest land.
Soybeans are the #1 commodity of the parish.

<http://www.agcensus.usda.gov>



Taking Conservation to

Deep in the heart of Pointe Coupee Parish, where the rich, alluvial soil provides an abundance of agriculture, lies Honey Cross Farms. Situated between the Atchafalaya and Mississippi rivers this operation is diverse, much like the rest of the parish. Pointe Coupee is known for being able to grow just about anything from cotton and sugarcane to rice and crawfish, some would say this parish can grow it all.

Chip Vosburg, farmer and owner of Honey Cross, couldn't agree more. With a big smile and a "can do" attitude Vosburg radiates a love for his land and for conservation. Although he is relatively new to farming, about three years now, his appreciation and understanding of conservation runs deep.

So how does someone who has never farmed before decide they want to give it a try? The answer to that question, and the unfolding of the story begins with Chip and his family owning crop and woodlands in Morganza for many years. Vosburg started working with the Upper Delta Soil and Water Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 2010 with his desire to improve wildlife habitat on his 3,000 acres of woodlands. Over time Vosburg realized that he wanted to take his property to the next level in conservation. So he decided instead of having tenants farm his crop land he would give it a try himself.

"We realized that owning this land is a real blessing and we also knew that we wanted to leave the land better than we found it and make a real difference in conservation,"

explained Chip. With the help of the local NRCS District Conservationist and staff, Chip has accomplished just that.

Darren Boudreaux was the District Conservationist in Pointe Coupee when Chip first started working with NRCS. Today Darren is an NRCS Program Liaison, working directly with DCs in the southern part of the state. Darren recalls Chip visiting the office many times seeking advice about farming and conservation methods. Eventually Chip was recruited to serve on the Upper Delta Soil and Water Conservation District. As a board member Chip's eyes were opened to all the technical expertise and programs NRCS has to offer.

"If I was giving advice to someone else who wanted to start farming," said Chip, "The first thing I would tell them to do is go see NRCS. I think the most significant impact NRCS makes is working with each farmer and their unique piece of land to develop a conservation plan." Chip's conservation plan was invaluable to him as he started his journey in farming.

Vosburg has utilized several NRCS programs successfully. From planting native grasses and forming buffers to improve wildlife habitat with the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) installing grade stabilization structures that help reduce soil erosion, to implementing no till and planting cover crops through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). It is apparent Vosburg is committed to conservation.

But one conservation program stands tall above the rest for Chip, the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). "By



the Next Level

improving the quality of the land, it also improves the quality of wildlife and then in return that improves the quality of the experience we have outdoors." Chip explains, "CSP is taking this farm to the next level, enhancing conservation on the ground, everything here has been improved."

Boudreaux completely agrees, "CSP has been and continues to be an incredibly important program for our agency and for our producers. CSP is now the largest conservation program in the country." Boudreaux goes on to say, "It is making a tremendous impact on the ground, in the environment, and ultimately in our communities as a whole because of the conservation efforts that CSP is putting into place by reducing the use of fertilizer, improving soil health, and soil, water and air quality benefits everyone." And for the farmer, Darren says this program gives you the most bang for your buck.

Chip echoes Darren's' sentiments that CSP has taken his operation to the next level of conservation. "That is huge for us, improving the land, having a positive impact, but also using conservation efforts to help our bottom line," said Vosburg. "Just like any business you have to make a profit and although we have only been farming a few years I can say that in addition to improving the health of the land we have seen an increase in our yields and ultimately our bottom line."

You can look no further to find a better example of a great working relationship than with the District Conservationist

and Chip. The current DC, Candis Voorhies has played an integral role in helping Chip achieve his stewardship goals. The relationship between a local District Conservationist and the local producer is paramount. "There is no way we could have accomplished on our land what we have without NRCS, no way," said Chip.

"If I had to give advice on how to start farming or how a farmer could increase conservation on their land I would say go to your local NRCS office and talk to your DC." Chip says, "You've got to start somewhere and NRCS is definitely the best place to start."

CSP Practices Installed

- Riparian forest buffer
- Forest stand improvement for wildlife habitat and soil quality
- Forest wildlife structures
- High level integrated pest management
- Use drift reducing nozzles, low pressures, lower boom height, and adjuvants to reduce pesticide drift
- GPS, targeted spray application (Smart Sprayer, or other chemical application electronic control technology
- Apply nutrients no more than 30 days prior to planned planting

Louisiana StrikeForce Update

Submitted by: Dexter Sapp, NRCS StrikeForce Coordinator

On August 18 – 20, 2016, Louisiana’s NRCS StrikeForce Coordinator participated in the 49th Anniversary Celebration of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund event that was held in Birmingham and Epes, Alabama. Louisiana NRCS is one of 7 states that entered into a Joint fiscal year 2017 Cooperative Agreement with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC) in which the Federation has specific urban agricultural deliverables to perform. As a part of the meeting in Birmingham, a roundtable discussion between the Federation and NRCS representatives from the 7 states was held to talk about the implementation of the deliverables.

On Friday, August 19th workshops, trainings and panel discussions took place at the Federation’s Rural Training and Research Center in Epes, Alabama. During the meeting, the Louisiana StrikeForce Coordinator met a native Louisianan living legend, former

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young.



Mr. Young has the Andrew J. Young Foundation which in part, promotes more just and prosperous communities in the U.S. and globally by developing and supporting new generations of multiracial leadership. The Andrew J. Young Foundation has partnered with an organization called Hatponics. Hatponics has set a goal to feed 20 million by the year 2020. Through practicing and advancing sustainable agriculture, Hatponics is working towards their goal domestically and internationally.

One of the components of the Hatponics operation, which was shown during their presentation, involves a commercial hydroponic bed and associated aquaculture system

that produces both vegetables and fish in the same operation. Concurrent workshops on Land Retention & Heir Property, Forestry, Co-op Development and Regional Marketing were also held. The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/ Land Assistance Fund is moving forward in developing a Regional Marketing System (RMS) that will initially link a network of cooperatives located in 4 southern states. It was stated during the Marketing Workshop that the RMS would like to include Louisiana in the network which could benefit Louisiana’s vegetable and truck crop producers.

Upcoming Meetings

October 13, 2016
StrikeForce Follow-up Meeting
Galilee Baptist Church
Houghton, Louisiana
5:30 PM

October TBA, 2016
StrikeForce Meeting
Farmerville, Louisiana

For more information, contact Dexter Sapp at 318-473-7688 or by e-mail at dexter.sapp@la.usda.gov

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Around the State

September 6, 2016 Soil Health and Cover Crops on a Rice/Crawfish Rotation

A recent workshop was held at the LSU AgCenter in Rayne, Louisiana to discuss soil health and cover crop uses to improve productivity and reduce input costs for the unique cropping system in southwest Louisiana.



Acadia Soil and Water Conservation District board member, Earl Garber, helped organize the meeting and bring Ray Archuleta, Conservation Agronomist with the NRCS East National Technology Center to

southwest Louisiana to speak to producers about adopting cover crops and soil health techniques to the unique rice/crawfish rotation.

September 16, 2016 Forestry BMP Workshop

Trailblazer RC&D hosted a Forestry BMP Workshop at Origin Bank in Ruston, Louisiana, on September 16, 2016. Participants listened to various speakers and then were able to attend a field trip to the Jones Tree Farm south of Simsboro, Louisiana.



September 24, 2016 National Hunting and Fishing Day

NRCS participated in LDWF's National Hunting and Fishing Day in Woodworth, Louisiana on September 24, 2016. Visitors to the NRCS tent were able to paint a fish or insect mold and learn about Louisiana's coastal wetlands and the valuable wildlife and fisheries habitat it provides.



Save the Date

Louisiana Women in Agriculture Conference
February 9 - 10, 2017
Alexandria, Louisiana



New Format



Networking



***Nationally Recognized
Speakers***

More Details Coming Soon!

For a current list of our offices visit

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/la/contact/local/>

Upcoming Events

October 19 - 20, 2016

**High Tunnel Pest Exclusion and
Proper Use of Alternative Insecticides
Workshops**

NRCS, LSU AgCenter, Southern
AgCenter and SARE will be hosting two
workshops in October on High Tunnel
Pest Exclusion.

October 19
LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens
Burden Conference Room

4560 Essen Lane
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70809
1:30 - 4:00 pm

October 20, 2016
LSU AgCenter Dean Lee Extension Office
8208 Tom Bowman Drive
Alexandria, Louisiana 71302
1:30 - 4:00 pm

Please register in advance for the free
workshops at [http://lahighttunnelpest.
eventbrite.com](http://lahighttunnelpest.eventbrite.com).

For more information, contact Dr. Carl
Motsenbocker at [cmotsenbocker@
agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:cmotsenbocker@agcenter.lsu.edu) or by phone at 225-
578-1036.

October 20, 2016
Beef Cattle & Forage Field Day

The LSU AgCenter will be hosting a Beef
Cattle & Forage Field day on October 20,
2016, at the Dean Lee Research Station.
Please contact Glen Gentry at [GGentry@
agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:GGentry@agcenter.lsu.edu) for more information.

Visit our web site at:
www.la.nrcs.usda.gov

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