A cooperative partnership with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D)

Projects • Successes • Partnerships
Notes from the State Conservationist ..................3
Coastal Facts .........................................3
Shoreline Protection Innovators ..........................4
Around the State ........................................6
Conservation Activities from Around the State
Story from the Field .....................................7
Clean Water, Healthy Cows
StrikeForce Initiative .................................7
Contact Information ...................................8
Call us with your questions

Louisiana's coastal shorelines are disappearing. To find out how NRCS is working to find new ways to protect these shoreline, through CWPPRA, see pages 4 and 5.

Are you interested in volunteering for conservation? Contact your local NRCS office and ask about the Earth Team Volunteer Program.
Notes from the State Conservationist

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) program. CWPPRA is a truly unique program that created a rare partnership of five federal agencies and the state of Louisiana. As a task force member, NRCS values our state and local partners and works to elevate projects that serve their interests in coastal restoration. The wetlands of coastal Louisiana provide a variety of benefits worth billions of dollars that serve the nation, as well as improve the local economy here in Louisiana. CWPPRA provides jobs for local people on construction crews that build the projects; materials and equipment used on the projects are bought from local sources; and the value of the restored and protected land is priceless to the landowners, land users and residents of these coastal parishes. Nowhere else in the country is something of this magnitude happening through an effective interagency partnership.

NRCS has a long-standing tradition of working with private landowners to conserve all of our natural resources in efficient, smart and sustainable ways. Without the assistance of our core partners, the local soil and water conservation districts, we would not be able to accomplish our mission of “Helping People Help the Land”. The soil and water conservation districts are NRCS’s first line in working with private landowners to get sound conservation practices on the ground. They work with us every day to carry out all of our conservation efforts, including those in coastal Louisiana.

Over the course of the CWPPRA program, NRCS and the soil and water conservation districts have worked with private landowners in the same manner. We listen to their concerns and work with them to plan potential projects for funding under this program. Planning and implementation of the CWPPRA projects would not be possible without the support, partnership and stewardship of the private landowners in coastal Louisiana.

As a partnership, we continue to be proud of what Louisiana is doing to conserve, protect and restore its bountiful natural resources. It’s not often that you see efficient and effective partnerships between so many federal, state, and local agencies, as well as private landowners. We will strive to maintain, energize and expand this partnership to meet the changing needs for our growing world population.

Kevin D. Norton
State Conservationist
Louisiana

Louisiana has 37% of the estuarine herbaceous marshes in the contiguous United States and accounts for 90% of coastal wetland loss in the lower 48 states.

Between 2004 - 2008, hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike transformed approximately 328 square miles of marsh to open water - an amount that exceeded the total land loss for the approximate 25 year period between 1978 - 2004.

If coastal loss were to occur at a constant rate, it would equate to losing an area the size of a football field per hour.

Information collected from:
The Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) was enacted in 1990 to provide for the long-term conservation of Louisiana’s coastal wetlands. The CWPPRA Program is managed by the CWPPRA Task Force which consists of five federal agencies: the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service; and the National Marine Fisheries Service; along with the state of Louisiana represented by the Governor’s Office of Coastal Activities. Since that time, 100 projects have been constructed. NRCS is the federal sponsor for 39 of these projects.

Louisiana is home to approximately 37 percent of estuarine herbaceous marshes in the contiguous United States. However, it is suffering 90 percent of the Nation’s coastal wetland loss. One of the largest contributors of wetland loss is shoreline erosion.

To help combat eroding shorelines across the Louisiana coast, projects have been designed using various techniques such as rock revetment, foreshore rock dikes, concrete panels and bulkheads.

There are shoreline areas in Louisiana where these typical techniques won’t work because of unstable soil conditions, subsurface obstructions, and accessibility problems. In 2009, the CWPPRA Task Force approved funding for a demonstration project, LA-16 Non-Rock Alternatives to Shoreline Portection, to identify and test alternative methods of shoreline protection.

“Finding solutions that work in unstable conditions is imperative in the fight against coastal erosion,” said Loland Broussard, project manager for NRCS. The process began in early 2012, with the advertisement of a request for proposals. Once the proposals were received, the proposals were narrowed down to the top three: the Wave Attenuation Device, Integrated Shoreline Solutions - Wave Screen System, and Buoyancy Compensated Erosion Control Modular System.

Living Shoreline Solutions, Inc. developed the Wave Attenuation Device. This device consists of...
individual modular units supported by each other at the base. Each unit is a three-sided pyramid shaped concrete structure with angled sides and triangular-shaped openings on each side. The units are placed in a double-row parallel to the shoreline. They are designed so that waves that pass through the structure and their destructive energy are significantly reduced before reaching the shoreline.

Royal Engineers & Consultants, Inc., developed the Integrated Shoreline Solutions - Wave Screen System. This structure is a continuous linear feature consisting of two parallel vertical walls of perforated HDPE sheeting supported by steel pilings. The bottoms of the vertical walls are positioned 1 - 1.5 feet above the water bottom. Two walls are installed parallel to each other in a straight configuration parallel to the shoreline.

The Buoyancy Compensated Erosion Control Modular System was developed by Jansen, Inc. This structure consists of individual modular units placed adjacent to each other in a linear fashion to form a continuous unit parallel to the shoreline. Each unit is a 4-sided styrofoam-filled concrete shell with a sloped front and back and has an enclosed bottom. Individual units are held to each other using winched cables and are secured in place with pin piles.

Construction of all three sections was completed in 2014. The project will be monitored for its effectiveness by scientists at the NRCS and the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority for three years.

“If these products work like we think they will, then scientists and engineers, like myself, will be able to better plan and design effective shoreline protection projects across the entire coast”, said Broussard.

For more information on CWPPRA, including all of the projects, visit www.lacoast.gov.
January 11-13
Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts 69th Annual Convention: The Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts hosted their 69th annual convention in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on January 11 – 13, 2015. Over 200 people attended from conservation districts across Louisiana. During the general session, attendees learned about soil health from Ray Archuleta, Conservation Agronomist, Natural Resources Conservation Service. Other speakers during the general session were Dr. Chip Groat, President/CEO, The Water Institute of the Gulf; Dr. Mike Strain, DVM, Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry; and Donavon Taves, East Carroll Soil and Water Conservation District and LACD 1st Vice President.

February 1 - 4
National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Convention: More than 900 conservation leaders from around the country attended the National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting in New Orleans February 1-4. The four day meeting included educational sessions, workshops and panel discussions on the past, present and future of conservation on America’s private lands. New at the NACD Annual meeting this year was a student career workshop where Gulf area college students were invited to attend the general session and a workshop with NRCS leaders, national and state partners, and private sector representatives to learn about careers in conservation. Louisiana’s own Earl Garber, Acadia SWCD board member, presided over the meeting, completing his two-year term as the NACD President.

February 2
USDA Deputy Secretary Visits New Orleans: USDA Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden made the most of her trip to New Orleans on Monday, February 2. Deputy Harden began the morning at Recirculating Farms Coalition in the heart of New Orleans to celebrate urban agriculture communities and the award of a New and Beginning Farmers grant received by the organization. As former Chief Executive Officer of NACD, Deputy Harden served as the annual meeting luncheon keynote speaker where she reflected on her time working with the conservation districts around the country, the relationships she cherished, and reminded the country’s conservation leaders to remember our history and keep looking toward the future of the conservation partnerships. The Deputy concluded the whirlwind day by hosting a small roundtable discussion on the importance of trade, primarily export opportunities, with diverse agricultural leaders from all parts of the state.

A special luncheon was hosted during the convention on Tuesday, January 12, recognizing the farmers who were certified as Master Farmers in 2014.
Clean Water, Healthy Cows
Gary Landry has approximately 450 head of cattle on his 2,844 acre farm in Lafourche Parish.

Landry’s cows were drinking water from a canal on his property, which was causing streambank erosion and water quality problems. Additionally, in dry periods the canal would dry up and his cows didn’t have a source of water. When this happened, Mr. Landry would have to move all of his cattle to another place.

Landry visited the NRCS Thibodaux Field Office looking for some assistance with his problems. Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, NRCS was able to help Landry install 17,027 feet of pipeline from a meter tied to the city water system and eight water troughs with limestone pads for the troughs.

Landry is also trying to incorporate conservation in other ways. He is currently working on becoming a certified Louisiana Master Farmer. To become a certified Louisiana Master Farmer, participants must complete three phases of training including classroom instruction, attending a conservation-based field day where best management practices are demonstrated and discussed, and requesting a farm-specific Resource Management System (RMS) level conservation plan through their district conservationist with NRCS.

 StrikeForce Initiative

FY 2015 Update:
NRCS has been involved with seven StrikeForce meetings so far this year. These meetings were held in Iberia, Natchitoches, St. Bernard, St. Helena, St. Landry, Union and West Carroll Parishes. As a result, USDA has received 40 requests for assistance.

NRCS StrikeForce Coordinator, Dexter Sapp, recently assisted the Addis NRCS Field Office with a Grazing Land Workshop on January 31, 2015. Over 50 people attended the workshop, with some coming from as far away as Mississippi.

To view the story from TWILA TV visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYMQPV7tHno.