



Athens
Georgia
December 2004

2004 Accomplishments and Guide to the

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service



2004: The Year of No-till

Georgia farmers reached a major milestone in 2004. For the first time, over 1 million acres of row crops were produced with no-till/strip-till! Cotton, pictured above, makes up the most no-till/strip till in Georgia with over 523,000 acres (or 40%) of the cotton acreage. Twenty years ago, only about 700 acres were planted using no-till.

Mission

*Georgia NRCS
works with people through a
partnership effort to
conserve and
protect natural resources.*

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Organizational Structure

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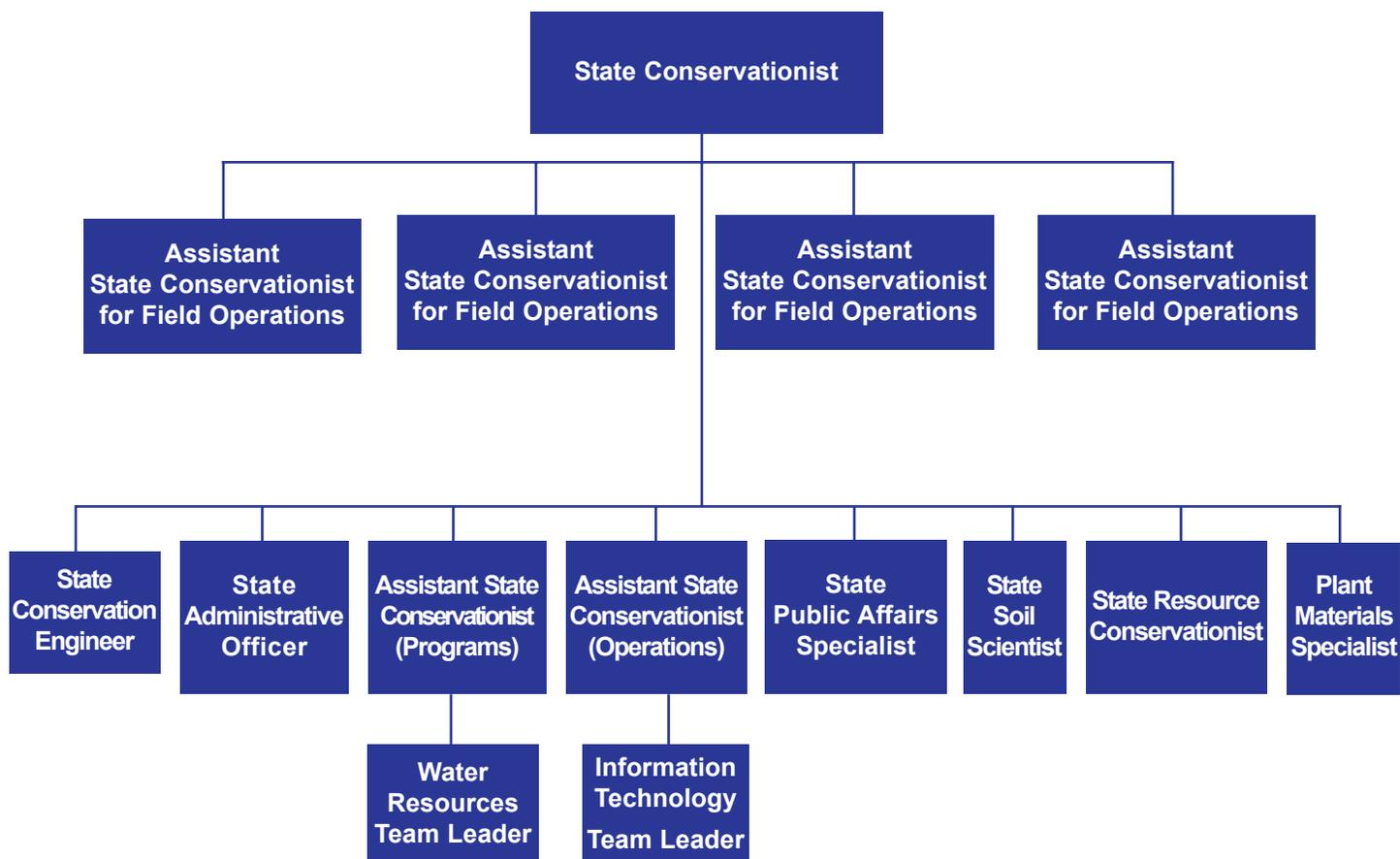
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Area 4 - Waycross

Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations - David Ferrell

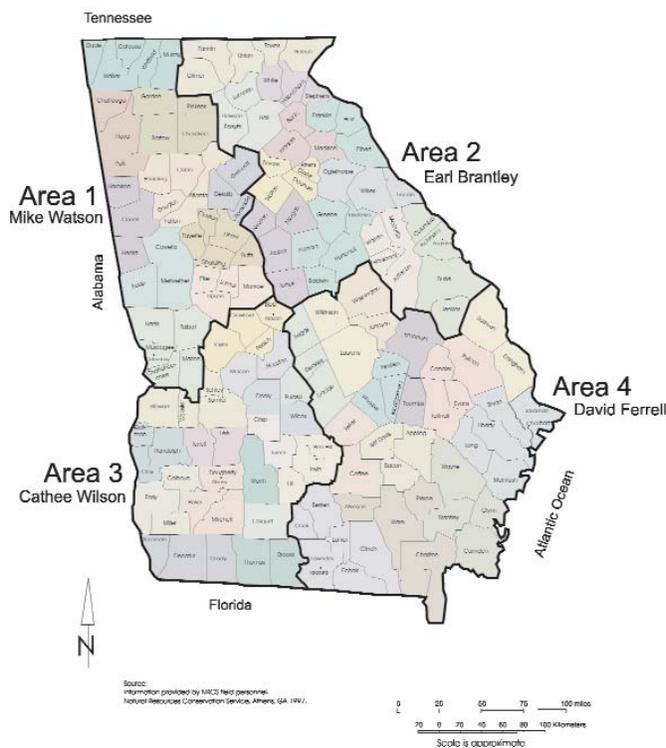
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U.S. Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Legend



Designated District Conservationists

Area	Soil and Water Conservation District	NRCS District Conservationist
1	Catoosa County Coosa River Limestone Valley West Georgia Clayton County Cobb County DeKalb County Fulton County Gwinnett County Henry County Lamar County Pine Mountain Rockdale County Roosevelt Towaliga	Cindy P. Askew, LaFayette Sheri E. Teems, Rome Michele Simmons, Calhoun Sam Sharpe, Carrollton Vacant, McDonough Valerie Pickard, Marietta Stephen C. Leslie, Lawrenceville Valerie Pickard, Marietta Stephen C. Leslie, Lawrenceville Vacant, McDonough Carmen Westerfield, Barnesville Jack L. Fokes, Jr., Buena Vista Stephen C. Leslie, Lawrenceville Kevin Keel, Newnan Carmen Westerfield, Barnesville
2	Blue Ridge Mountain Hall County Stephens County Upper Chattahoochee River Broad River Lincoln County McDuffie County Oconee River Piedmont Warren County Brier Creek Columbia County Upper Ocmulgee River Walton County	Douglas Towery, Blairsville George Belflower, Gainesville Russell F. Biggers, Toccoa Russell F. Biggers, Toccoa Forrest W. Ferguson, Hartwell Joseph M. Riley, Washington J. Russell Young, Louisville Carol Boss, Commerce Dennis Brooks, Greensboro J. Russell Young, Louisville J. Russell Young, Louisville Leon Brooks, Augusta Dennis B. Brooks, Madison Jose' V. Pagan, Monroe
3	Ocmulgee River Flint River Lower Chattahoochee River Middle South Georgia	Ray Jones, Byron Eddie Glover, Albany Lyndon McCavitt, Dawson Mary Leidner, Tifton
4	Alapaha Altamaha Satilla River Coastal Ogeechee River Ohoopie River Central Georgia	Harold B. Simpson, Jr., Nashville Bo Bannister, Douglas Kristin Smith, Brunswick Rebecca Stephens, Richmond Hill William G. Thrift, Statesboro Sidney Lanier, Swainsboro Britt S. Parker, Dublin

Assistant State Conservationists for Field Operations

Area 1	Griffin	Michael Watson	Area 2	Athens	Earl Brantley
Area 3	Americus	Charlie Frear	Area 4	Waycross	David Ferrell

District Conservationists & RC&D Coordinators

Alphabetical List of District Conservationists and RC&D Coordinators

Last Name	First Name	Telephone			
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Brown	Jerome	229 723-3841	Richardson	Rory	229-263-4909
Cabe	Doug	706 625-9943	Riley	Joseph	706-678-2630
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Keel	Kevin	770-251-4283	White	Donald F	912-459-2070
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Leidner	Mary	229-382-4776			
Leslie	Steve	770-963-9288			
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Conservation Security Program

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Program Highlights

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) was introduced in 18 watersheds nation wide in 2004. Georgia's Little River Watershed, located in the Tifton area, was one of those selected for participation.

This new conservation program seeks to reward farmers that are utilizing sound conservation practices on their farms.

Environmental benefits provided improve soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources throughout the country.

The 37 selected CSP participants in the Little River Watershed

contracted to implement a conservation plan for a minimum of 5 years on over 32,000 acres.

These plans identified the conservation practices and enhancements that will be implement each year of the contract.



Ken Hall, a third generation cotton farmer from Sylvester, was an early CSP participant.

Typical conservation practices include strip till, cover crop, nutrient & pest management and irrigation water management.

The acres enrolled included 10,330 acres of cropland, 19,904 acres of irrigated cropland and 1748 acres of pasture.

Participants shared in \$915,000 of CSP payments made in September. These payments were made on a per acre enrolled basis using a combination of:

Conservation Security Program Continued

Stewardship Payment — a percentage of the annual rental value

Existing Practice Payment — 25% of the Stewardship payment

New Practice Payment — 50% cost share for installing an eligible practice

Environmental Enhancement — selected conservation enhancements that provide increased environmental benefit

The average CSP participant enrolled 864 acres and will receive over \$25,000 in FY-2004.



Ken Hall, Sr. (left) is a life-time conservationist.



Brian Ponder, another CSP participant, and a board member of the local soil and water conservation district, emcees an appreciation ceremony on the Ken Hall farm.

E-Government

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NRCS will now be making payments to landowners for Farm Bill programs under their jurisdiction--such as EQIP, WHIP, CSP& FRPP. It is imperative that providers are registered in SCIMS database. All payments will be transmitted electronically to a designated bank account.

The United States Department of Agriculture implemented the new process for registering customers who choose to conduct electronic transactions with USDA agencies on October 21, 2003.

Under the new process, a customer can register for access to eGov applications by visiting <http://www.eauth.egov.usda.gov>

At this site, the application will take the customer through a simplified registration process.

When registered, the customer will need to visit their local service center and have their identity verified by presenting one of four forms of id; State Drivers License; State issued identification card; US passport or a Military ID.

The service center staff will then be able to activate the account and provide the customer with access to many current and future eGov applications.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program

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Program Highlights

Georgia received over \$2.79 million dollars in EWP funding in November of 2004. These funds will be used to apply emergency conservation measures in three counties: Gilmer, Rabun, and Towns. These counties suffered damage as a result of Hurricane Ivan, Jeanne, and other storms that occurred in 2004. Emergency measures will include debris removal, streambank protection, bioengineering, and road and culvert headwall protection.

The Emergency Watershed Protection Program provides local communities with emergency technical and financial assistance to address natural resource concerns resulting from a natural disaster. An example would be downed trees blocking road crossings at creeks. These impediments cause blockage to creeks or small drainage ways, threatening damage to roads, bridges and other structures and increased risk to human life.

The EWP provides assistance in assessing the problem and potential damage, identifying alternatives to mitigate the situation and providing financial resources to remove the impediment.

NRCS may be involved in three types of emergencies:

- Presidential/Federally declared disaster
- State declared disaster
- Local disaster

Cost-Share

75% NRCS

25% Sponsor (Usually state or local governments)

Funding

Funding for EWP comes in the form of supplemental appropriations from Congress on an "as-needed" basis when a disaster occurs.



Clear Creek Road in Gilmer County is instrumental to the county due to it connecting the southeastern part of the county to the southwestern side (school buses, emergency vehicles, postal service, etc.). During hurricane Ivan, about 14 inches of rain fell in 5.5 hours across much of the southern portion of the county.

This was devastating to not only the creeks, but also anything near the creek - farms, businesses, roads, homes, etc.! This bridge was only a few years old. NRCS EWP funds will be removing debris above and below the bridge, and providing headwall protection.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

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Program Highlights

The primary purpose of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is to promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals and to optimize environmental benefits:

- On private lands with farmers and ranchers,
- On a voluntary basis,
- Using local, state, tribal and federal partnerships,
- Providing flexible technical, educational, and financial assistance,
- Assisting farmers and ranchers in complying with federal, state and tribal environmental laws, and,
- Encouraging environmental enhancement.



In 2004, 1,154 Georgia farmers utilized over \$13.3 million in EQIP cost share. The funds were distributed through 26 funding units, which generally followed Georgia's SWCD boundaries. Selected participants sought to address one of Georgia's four resource concerns:

1. Soil Quality
2. Water Quality as related to confined feeding operations
3. Water Quality as related to grazing operations
4. Water Conservation

Georgia livestock producers received over 73% of the EQIP dollars which exceeded the national goal of 60%.

Those involved with Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) will install 173 Waste Storage Facilities, 87 Animal Mortality Facilities (incinerators) and 45 Composting Facilities.

Grazing operators will use their EQIP funds to install 226 miles of fence, 304 Heavy Use Areas and 383 Livestock Watering Facilities.

Concerns over the best use of EQIP funds in promoting conservation tillage brought about some significant changes in eligibility.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program Continued...

In order to improve the environmental benefits derived from this practice, farmers agreed to use conservation tillage for all crops in the same field for the duration of the contract.

In addition, farmers who previously adopted a conservation tillage system on other farms were not eligible.

While many folks thought these changes would reduce the interest in this practice, it was still the second highest funded EQIP practice in 2004.

Over \$1.6 million was approved to complete conservation tillage under the new guidelines on 54,000 acres. This also includes over 44,000 acres of cover crops.



Interest in addressing water conservation concerns continued to rise in 2004. Over \$950,000 in EQIP funds were approved for Water Conservation contracts.



These funds will be used to retro-fit 174 exiting pivot systems to more efficient medium or low pressure systems with drop nozzles, end gun shut off and the development of irrigation water management plans.

Also, 2004 was Georgia's first year to receive any of the EQIP Ground and Surface Water Conservation funds.

These funds had to be directed toward conservation practices that resulted in a net savings in water use.

In order to maximize these savings 21 Variable Rate Irrigation (VRI) systems were funded. A VRI system allows for water to be applied in areas that need irriga-

tion, while areas that are not cropped or could use a lower rate receive little or no water.

The potential water conservation varies from field to field, but could range from 5% to 35%.



EQIP Continued



EQIP continues to be the main source of financial assistance for Georgia producers addressing resource concerns on their farms.

Demand was high in 2004 with EQIP dollars only being available for one out of every two applications.

Subtle changes in the 2004 program resulted in increased environmental benefits, while reaching all segments of the agriculture community in Georgia.

Conservation Innovation Grants

University of Georgia Research Foundation, Inc.

\$501,850

Demonstration of Variable-Rate Irrigation for Water Conservation and Application Optimization

In rural and farm communities, efficient water use is critical for sustainable economic development. Optimal irrigation efficiency can lead to substantial water conservation and increased crop yields.

The purpose of this project is to demonstrate the use, benefits, and effectiveness of an innovative variable-rate irrigation system designed to improve irrigation management, enhance water conservation, and attain optimal application efficiency.



University of Georgia Research Foundation, Inc.

\$60,000

Using Cropping Alternatives to Improve Water Quality in High-Nutrient Status Farms



In the Southern Piedmont region of Georgia, many farm fields have high soil test phosphorous levels which may result in increased risk of phosphorous contamination to surface water bodies.

The purpose of this project is to demonstrate the effectiveness of three different cropping systems in reducing nutrient flow into streams, thereby improving water quality and profitability for landowners and increasing the probability of adoption.

Farm & Ranchlands Protection Program

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Program Highlights

The Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP) is a permanent easement program designed to help keep farmers and ranchers in agriculture.

The program provides matching funds to state, tribal, or local governments or private organizations with existing farmland protection programs to purchase conservation easements or other interests in land.

This was the third year that the program was available in Georgia. Final purchase of easements occurred on two sites that were accepted into the program last year

A 57-acre farm in Oconee County was permanently protected in March of 2004. A dedication celebration was held to commemorate the first FRPP farm in the county.



Over 50 individuals participated in the event. Presentations were made by Tommy Ervin, Georgia Secretary of Agriculture, along with other local government officials.

This easement, sponsored by the Athens Land Trust, marked the first time Georgia Greenspace funds were used as a local match. This serves as a shining example of government at all levels working with the private sector to achieve success in farm land preservation.

The second closing was on a 75-acre Walker County farm in which the owners were facing pressure to sell as a result of a severe illness in the family. As medical bills began to increase, local investors continued to inquire about the availability of this farm that has been in the family for over 175 years.

Working with the Georgia Land Trust, a conservation easement was purchased using FRPP funds and GLT matching funds. This effort has allowed this Walker County farm family to meet their financial obligation while keeping their farm.

Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program Continued

Georgia NRCS received requests for funding from three separate entities in 2004. A total of 7 separate farms were submitted for funding consideration.

The Carroll County commissioners submitted 3 farms encompassing 750 acres which were selected for funding.

Matching funds were being provided by the citizens of Carroll County who approved use of SPLOST funds to protect farmland.



This marked the first time in the state that local funds were used as a match in purchasing conservation easements to protect farm land.

Carroll County is to be applauded for leading the way in protecting and preserving farm land.

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

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Program Highlights

NRCS and the Georgia Grazing Lands Conservation Coalition (GGLCC) encourage forage and livestock producers to adopt practices that promote the efficient use of their grazing land resources, while conserving soil and protecting water quality.

The GGLCC practice demonstration project, which is funded with the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) congressional earmark, is a producer developed cost-share program designed to demonstrate innovative practices on existing forage and livestock operations.

Several producers involved in the project applied practices well beyond the allowed funding; demonstrating that a little seed money encourages producers to address many farm-related resource concerns. To date, this project has assisted 65 producers throughout Georgia.

NRCS Model Farm Project:

The Georgia NRCS 'Model Farm' project is winding down with three of fifteen projects remaining to be completed.

Two of the remaining projects are emphasizing the simultaneous production of timber and forage products on the same acreage.

The Model Farm project focuses on economic efficiency through the use of proven production and conservation practices.

When an operation is selected to participate, its weakest economic 'link in the chain' is identified and addressed, along with other needed management changes. Economic

performance data collected prior to and after the Model Farm plan is applied is analyzed by the University of Georgia to give NRCS a dollars and 'sense' approach to selling conservation.

To date, \$929,000 of Georgia's GLCI Congressional Earmark has been used for practice demonstration on producer farms.



National Resources Inventory

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Program Highlights

The National Resources Inventory (NRI) is a statistically based survey that has been designed and implemented using scientific principles to assess the trends of soil, water, and related resource conditions on nonfederal lands in the United States.

NRI is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's tool to provide Congress natural resource information. Section 302 of the 1972 Rural Development Act and legislation in 1977 and 1985, requires USDA to report to Congress on natural resource conditions.

Since the early 1970s, resource data has been gathered on random samples of 160-acre land tracts called Primary Sample Units (PSUs). The entire 1997 NRI database is now available to the public on CD.

Resource information available in NRI includes:

Land Use - Cropland, Forestland, Pastureland, Urban Land, Transportation, Federal, Wetlands · Water Erosion · Developed Land · Land Cover - Forest, Grass, Water, Crops · Prime Farmland

Data is electronically recorded and transmitted to the Statistical Laboratory at Iowa State University (ISU). At ISU, data from the nation is reviewed, edited and stored. NRCS utilizes its Online Analysis System program to analyze NRI data based on a variety of factors selected by the user.

The program contains data for survey years 1982, 1987, 1992, and 1997, 2001 and 2002. Data can be viewed at the national, regional, state and sub-state levels.

In 2004 the NRCS established Regional Remote Sensing Laboratories in Greensboro, NC, Portland, OR, and Ft. Worth, TX to handle all the remote sensing and field collection data for the annual inventory.

The 2004 NRI data collection will begin in the summer of 2005. The 2005 NRI will begin after the 2004 inventory is completed.

Plant Materials Program

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Program Highlights

In 2004, the Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center in Americus, Georgia released three native germplasm releases. The three native plant releases were: 'Newberry' germplasm indiagrass, 'Union' germplasm Purpletop, and 'Durham' germplasm switchgrass

For the first time we are partnering with the U.S. Forest Service (Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests) in South Carolina and the South Carolina Native Plant Society to release two plants that were collected in the National Forests.

These plants are drastically needed to restore eroding sites in the National Forests in South Carolina. 'Union' germplasm Purpletop seed was collected in Union County, South Carolina by members of the South Carolina Native Plant Society and employees of the U.S. Forest Service in South Carolina. An official release ceremony is being planned at the National Forests Headquarters in Columbia, South Carolina.



Durham Germplasm will be primarily used for erosion, wildlife habitat improvement, and native plant restoration in North Carolina.

Current studies address the Farm Bill Programs, Grazing Lands, Water Quality, Native Grasses for the Southeast, Wetland Plant Information, Cover Crops for the Southeast, and Carbon Sequestration.

Wildlife Field Day

A wildlife field tour was conducted on September 21, 2004 at the Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center prior to the Plant Materials Center Technical Committee meeting. Approximately 60 people participated in the tour. Many partners sponsored and participated in the event.

Plant Materials Technology is Now Online

Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center is a Leader in plant technology development and transfer of information.

For more information visit <http://www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/pmc/pmc.html> or <http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov> or contact the Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center at 229-924-4499, e-mail at mike.owsley@ga.usda.gov or Donald Surrency at 706-595-1339 ext. 3, e-mail at don.surrency@ga.usda.gov.

Resource Conservation & Development

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Introduction

Over 40 years ago, Congress established a unique program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture that empowered rural people to help themselves. The USDA focus was to assist local people by providing tools and technical support to stabilize and grow their own communities while protecting and developing natural resources. To carry out the RC&D concept, diverse groups of local volunteers (The RC&D Council) are brought together in a unique partnership to find solutions to their problems. Local people are best able to determine needs and create solutions for their Community. The focus on local direction and control has made RC&D one of the most successful rural development programs of the Federal Government. The focus of the program provides for the sustainability of local economies and resources.

The RC&D Council Program in Georgia consists of 11 Council areas comprising 127 counties of Georgia's 159 counties. The Natural Resource Conservation Service provides technical and administrative support through NRCS personnel including a full-time coordinator. There are currently over 260 projects totaling over \$12 million to help local landowners and local communities implement projects across Georgia.

Georgia RC&D Councils

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Soil Survey

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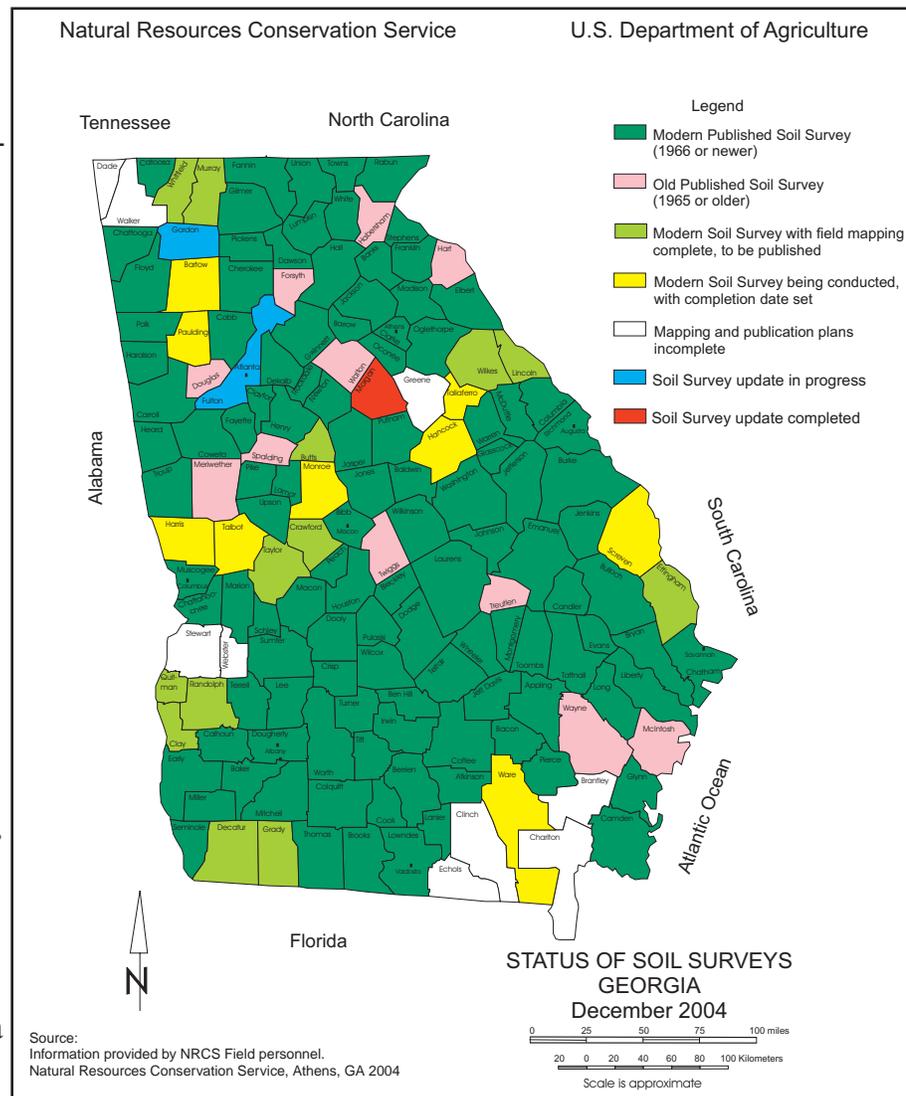
Program Highlights

Soil surveys provide a comprehensive inventory of soil resources and conditions that describe soil erodibility, soil productivity and properties that affect suitability for many uses. NRCS is authorized by Congress to conduct a soil survey of the nation and territories including the Pacific Basin, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In Georgia, 129 counties have published soil surveys; 12 counties have completed soil surveys that are in the process of being published; 10 are presently being surveyed, 1 county has been updated, and 2 other updates are in progress.

In FY-2004, 277,571 acres were surveyed for a cumulative total of 35,886,572 acres, or 94 percent of the state. NRCS soil scientists in Georgia have updated 2,438,355 of the 35 million acres.

One of the major goals is to enhance partnerships to map and digitized soil data on the remaining acres. During the year, our Soils Team digitized 9 soil survey areas for SSURGO (Soil Survey Geographic Database). There are now 39 soil survey areas (61 counties) with a SSURGO database.



Technical Service Providers

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Program Highlights

Fiscal Year 2004 saw the addition of a successful Technical Service Provider (TSP) program in Georgia. To support the program, an improved web site (<http://techeg.usda.gov>) provided a one-stop location for all Technical Service Provider activity nationwide.

The site offers a web-based self-certification, access to the Technical Service Provider Newsletter (TSP Express), Technical Service Provider Certification Agreements, and customer progress reporting by TSPs.

Currently 76 individuals have been certified to provide technical services in Georgia with another 16 pending.

A new milestone was set with 80 Georgia producers selecting TSPs to provide assistance on Environmental Quality Incentive Program contracts impacting over 30,000 acres.

NRCS and nine Soil and Water Conservation Districts entered into Contribution agreements to hire additional staff for District Offices. The additional staff members will assist with program delivery for Farm Bill activities.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division, continues to provide wildlife conservation planning assistance. Assistance is provided by a Wildlife Biologist employed through the program.

Watershed Operations Program

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Program Highlights

Since 1952, a total of 73 small watershed projects have been approved for operations in Georgia. There are currently two active flood prevention projects and seven active watershed protection projects.

In 2003, Georgia used the Watershed Program to develop a plan that will assist landowners in the Tobesofkee Creek Watershed in addressing water quality impairments and soil erosion.

Two additional watershed projects (Chattooga River Watershed and Big Cedar Creek Watershed) are being initiated to address local concerns associated with water quality impairments.

Through the watershed program, more than 160,000 acres of land are receiving flood prevention benefits from the installation of 357 floodwater retarding structures.

Over 4,000 acres of critically eroding areas have been treated and 280 long-term contracts have been signed to treat approximately 45,000 acres. These projects are annually providing \$17,000,000 worth of benefits.

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, Public Law 83-566 (commonly referred to as PL-566) authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to cooperate with state and local agencies in planning and implementing works of improvement of soil conservation, and for other purposes (water quality, water supply, flood prevention, etc.).

PL-566 requires the development of watershed scale plan for improvement that is physically, economically, socially, and environmentally sound. This program is designed to "supplement present agricultural soil and water conservation programs."

Since 1954, Georgia has been providing technical and financial assistance under this program. A total of 73 small watershed projects have been approved for operations to date.

There are currently two active flood prevention projects.

There are seven active watershed protection projects in the implementation phase.

Watershed Rehabilitation Program

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Program Highlights

Since 1953, 357 project dams have been built in Georgia. The Georgia Safe Dams Program has categorized 146 of these as “High Hazard,” indicating a potential loss of life if the dam were to fail. Preliminary investigations indicate that some \$85 million will be needed to upgrade these structures and ensure compliance with current dam safety legislation.

NRCS project dams annually provide \$19 million of benefits to local communities by providing flood protection, water based recreation, municipal water supply, and other water uses.

One of the major issues involved with aging dams is the safety and health of an estimated 15,000 people downstream from the dams.

Many dams were originally built in rural areas to protect agricultural lands, but homes, businesses, and roads have now been built downstream thereby increasing the impacts if they were to fail.

Congress passed legislation in 2000 that authorized NRCS to provide financial and technical assistance for rehabilitation of dams that were originally constructed under NRCS water resource programs.

To date, Georgia has received \$6.2 million in construction cost-share funds to help communities with rehabilitating aging flood control dams this past year.

The \$6.2 million in federal construction funds will be utilized to upgrade dams in the Yellow River Resource Conservation & Development Project area located in Gwinnett County.

The federal dollars will cover 65% of the construction costs and the sponsors (the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners, the Gwinnett Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Upper Ocmulgee River RC&D Council) will provide the remaining 35% of the cost to upgrade the dams.



Watershed Planning Program

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Program Highlights

The Watershed Program helps sponsoring organizations in the development of a plan on watersheds 250,000 acres or less.

During planning, problems such as water quality, flooding, water and land management, and sedimentation are evaluated and works of improvement are proposed to alleviate problems.

The resulting watershed plans estimate benefits, costs, cost-sharing rates, and arrange for operation and maintenance necessary to justify Federal assistance to install works of improvement.

In 2004, NRCS in Georgia was providing technical watershed planning assistance to 11 local communities with over \$350,000 in technical assistance.

Wetlands Reserve Program

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Program Highlights

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to restore, enhance, and protect wetlands. Landowners have the option of enrolling lands through permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreement.

2004 saw interest in the Wetland Reserve Program continue on a steady pace as 7 landowners were approved to enroll 1872 acres. Jenkins and Burke counties continue to lead the way in enrolling acres into the WRP with an additional 4 sites and 1330 acres, making these counties have the highest acreage and number of sites in the state.

Restoration work continued on other sites previously enrolled into the WRP, with ditch plugs, tree plantings and some new micro topography work being completed. Micro topography work creates shallow (1 – 3 feet) depressions through out a wetland area that is flat. These depressions create areas of open water, which will be maintained during dry periods.

Closing of conservation easements took place on 4 other sites around the state. The Mid-Ohio site along the Savannah River in Burke County lies adjacent to an older 2700 acre WRP site. The combination of these two sites has protected almost 4000 acres of riparian wetland along 3 miles of the river.

Changes in the WRP selection criteria improved the site selection and allow for targeting of sites that meet both national and state concerns. These criteria strengthen consideration of waterfowl movement, endangered species habitat, restoration of wetland hydrology and likelihood of restoration success.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

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Program Highlights

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program for people who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat primarily on private land. Through WHIP, USDA's NRCS provides both technical assistance and up to 75 percent cost-share assistance to establish and improve wildlife habitat.



Bob White Quail

WHIP agreements between NRCS and the participant last up to 7 years from the date the agreement is signed. WHIP has proven to be a highly effective and widely accepted program across the country.

By targeting wildlife habitat projects on specific areas, WHIP provides assistance to conservation minded landowners who are to meet the specific eligibility requirements of other USDA conservation programs.

Four priority habitat types were chosen for WHIP contracts. These habitats were; early successional plant habitats, longleaf pine ecosystem, riparian forest buffers and upland hardwood communities.

Georgia received \$415,000 in WHIP funds for this year. One hundred and five (105) contracts were approved in 53 counties.

The major practices implemented were; prescribe burning, disking, longleaf pine planting, NWSG planting and tree and shrub planting.

Partnering with the Georgia DNR (private lands program) and GFC (Forest Stewardship program), wildlife plans were developed to efficiently utilize WHIP money on the ground.

