



United States Department of Agriculture

Louisiana's Conservation Update

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Helping People Help the Land

www.la.nrcs.usda.gov

January 2014

We're Nuts About Pecans! in Natchitoches Parish

**Tribute to
Conservationist
Steve Cruse**

**Louisiana
Named
StrikeForce
State**

**Louisiana Pine Snake
Cooperative Conservation Agreement
Partnership**

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

Projects · Successes · Partnerships



Table of Contents

Louisiana Ag Facts2

2012 Pecan Production in Louisiana

Notes from the State Conservationist3

Tribute to Conservationist Steve Cruse

We're Nuts!4

Julie and Mark Swanson are nuts about pecans in Natchitoches Parish

Around the State6

- StrikeForce Designation for 44 Louisiana Parishes
- 2014 LACD Convention

Partner Spotlight6

Cooperative Conservation Agreement

Contact Information8

Call us with your questions

On the Cover



Shelled pecans, whole pecans, pecan pieces, pecan candy, pecan coffee, pecan pralines, pecan cookbooks, pecan crackers, pecan oil— you can find it all at Natchitoches Pecans. To find out more about Julie and Mark Swanson’s pecan orchard, see pages 4 and 5.

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

If you would like to receive monthly issues of the Conservation Update, please send your mailing address or e-mail address to:

Holly Martien
State Public Affairs Specialist
USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service
3737 Government Street
Alexandria, Louisiana 71302
or
holly.martien@la.usda.gov

USDA
Natural Resources
Conservation Service
3737 Government Street
Alexandria, Louisiana 71302
(318) 473-7751

Louisiana Ag Facts

2012 Louisiana Summary of Agriculture and Natural Resources, LSU AgCenter, <http://www.lsuagcenter.com/agsummary/home>.

2012 Pecan Production in Louisiana

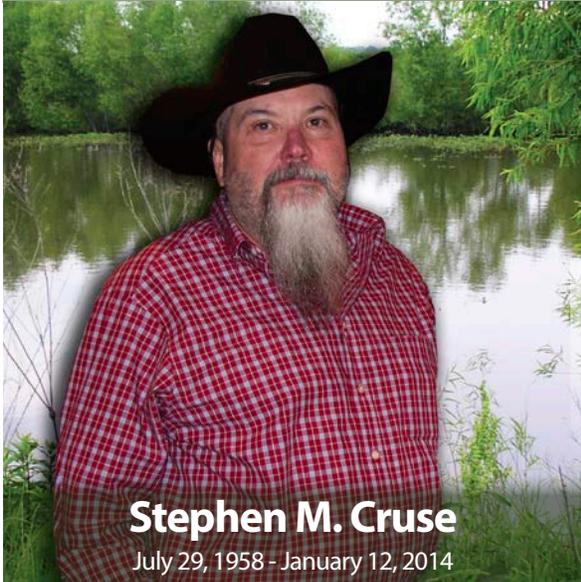
Pecans	Number of Producers	Acres	Yield per Acre	Total Production	Gross Farm Value
Improved	444	8,730	580.79	5,070,291 pounds	\$8,873,009
Native	10,238	15,198	499.43	7,590,110 pounds	\$5,692,583



Follow us on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/LouisianaNRCS>

Follow us on Twitter: http://twitter.com/NRCS_Louisiana

Notes from the State Conservationist



**Happier
than a peach
orchard
boar hog.**

Steve Cruse

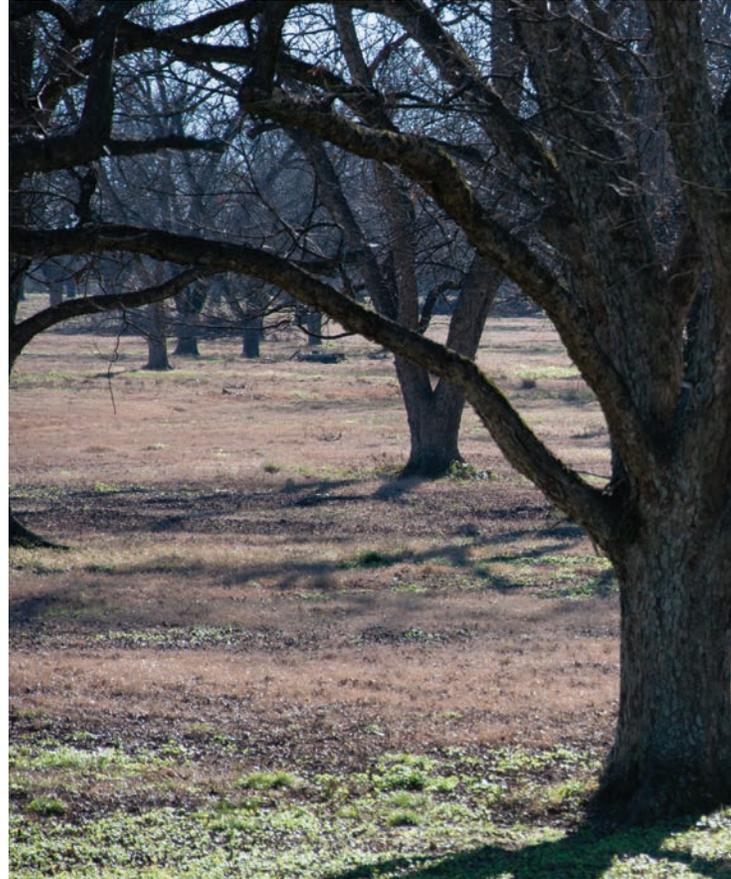
On January 12, we lost a member of our NRCS family—Steve Cruse. Steve was a dedicated conservationist and family man. Those of you who knew Steve will remember him as a brilliant, honest, hard-working, straight talking, down-to-earth cowboy, who was loyal to his friends and loved his family above all else. He often shared stories of his girls, his animals, and his farm, and his stories were always peppered with “Cruse-isms” that would make you laugh—and make you think.

Steve’s career with the Natural Resources Conservation Service spanned 33 years. He began his career as a Soil Conservationist then served as District Conservationist, Wetlands Reserve Program Team Lead, Area Conservationist, and Assistant State Conservationist for Programs. Under his leadership, hundreds of thousands of acres of wetlands were restored and thousands of conservation practices were implemented. His boots have left an indelible footprint across the landscape of Louisiana.

Everyone had a unique and different experience with Steve—stories to tell and challenges conquered. I observed over the years that within the first thirty minutes of meeting a person, Steve found a way to connect and relate to them on a personal level—an admirable quality that was just plain Steve through and through. His guiding hand left a legacy of young conservationists—or “young bears” as Steve called them—trained and ready to deliver conservation to producers in Louisiana. His conservation ethic and positive influence will be felt throughout the conservation community for many, many years.

He truly lived a life making a positive difference on the land and within our larger conservation family. To put it in Steve’s words (although, he would be too humble to say this about himself)—his accomplishments were as diverse as a “bucket full of spotted puppies” (he did it all)—he was “finer than a frog hair split four ways” (there is no finer man)—and he will be missed more than I can say.

Kevin Norton
State Conservationist
Louisiana



“Conservation is making the most of what you’ve got.”

Mark Swanson

We’re Nuts . . . About Pecans!

Shelled pecans, whole pecans, pecan pieces, pecan candy, pecan coffee, pecan pralines, pecan cookbooks, pecan crackers, pecan oil— you can find it all at Natchitoches Pecans!

“We love working for ourselves,” said Julie Swanson. “We call most of the shots, it keeps you grounded, and—like the sign says out front . . . we’re nuts . . . about pecans!”

Julie and Mark Swanson (and family) own 368 acres of Little Eva Plantation in Natchitoches Parish and lease 100 more. On these acres, they grow some of the best pecans you will ever find—and a herd of 200 cows.

While Julie comes from a farming family, Mark had never farmed until 1986. They like to say, they learned a lot by trial and error. Julie’s pre-vet degree and Mark’s degree in agronomy from Louisiana Tech helped a lot, but both agree they really learned how to be successful on a nut

farm from their mistakes. Both say “hard work and staying the course” is secret to their success.

“It is important to prepare for growth—(with a good product) it can get away from you in a hurry,” said Julie. “Our gift shop adds value to our product, and our mail order business grows each year. We evaluate our progress each year to examine what worked and what did not—and as a result, this year we added a social media push . . . Facebook, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Twitter.”

For more information on Natchitoches Pecans, go to: <http://www.natchitochespecans.com>





For more information about Louisiana pecans, go to the Louisiana Pecan Growers Association webpage: <http://www.lapga.com>

“We grew our business in steps, and we use everything we have,” said Mark. “Last year, we even sold pecan shell residue for mulch.”

Ultimately, the success of their nut farm depends on their crop, and the Swansons recognize the importance of caring for the land to ensure a good crop. They keep a healthy cover crop of Bermuda under their trees and rye grass volunteers in winter months. They fertilize their trees in January with chicken litter, and cattle graze under the pecan trees after harvest from January/February until September. They calve two times a year, with the largest calving in the

spring. The calves are sold in the fall before the cows are moved from the trees.

Their cattle operation first brought the Swansons to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Through NRCS’ Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Swansons installed water troughs and heavy use area protection pads, fenced out sloughs, and ran water to pastures.

“Conservation is making the most of what you’ve got,” said Mark Swanson. “We do our best to take care of the land, our trees, and our cattle—and we leave the rest to the man above.”



Julie and Mark Swanson Conservationists

Around the State

Jan 17

Louisiana Named StrikeForce State—44 Parishes Targeted for Enhanced Outreach by USDA

In 2010, USDA launched a pilot project—USDA's StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity—in Arkansas, Georgia, and Mississippi to help increase economic opportunities in poverty-stricken rural areas. Since 2010, StrikeForce efforts expanded into persistent poverty counties in Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, North

Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Virginia. On January 17, 2014, forty-four parishes in Louisiana were added to USDA StrikeForce efforts, along with persistent poverty counties in Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia. Louisiana's designated StrikeForce parishes are: Acadia, Allen, Avoyelles, Bienville, Caddo, Caldwell, Catahoula, Claiborne, Concordia, DeSoto, East Baton Rouge, East Carroll, East Feliciana, Evangeline, Franklin, Grant, Iberia, Iberville, Jackson, Jefferson Davis, Lincoln, Madison, Morehouse,

Natchitoches, Orleans, Ouachita, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, Red River, Richland, St. Bernard, St. Helena, St. James, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Tangipahoa, Tensas, Union, Washington, Webster, West Carroll, West Feliciana, and Winn. The Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, and Rural Development will work with ag producers, communities, and partners in these parishes to identify needs, collaborate on solutions, and implement programs to make a positive economic difference.

To learn more about USDA's StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity, go to: http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=STRIKE_FORCE

Partner Spotlight

Louisiana Pine Snake Cooperative Conservation Agreement Partners

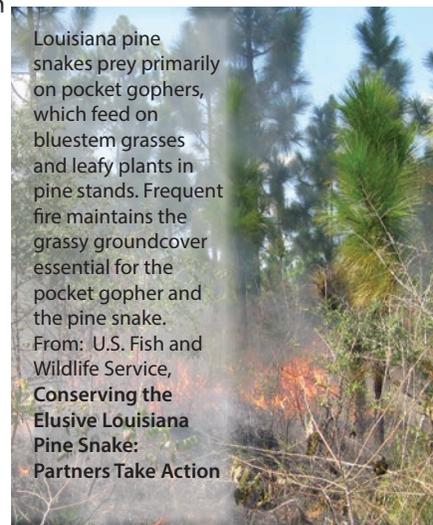
The Louisiana pine snake (*Pituophis ruthveni*) is recognized as one of the rarest snakes in North America. It is a candidate species for federal listing as threatened or endangered. In 2003, a Cooperative Conservation Agreement was signed as a cooperative effort among private, state, and federal agencies in order to collectively implement proactive conservation measures and habitat management guidelines throughout a significant portion of the snake's known range. In 2013, this agreement was amended

based on current habitat threats, implemented management action, and significant new information derived from research, threats assessments, and habitat modeling.

Cooperators in the Cooperative Conservation Agreement are:

- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**
- **USDA Forest Service**
Angelina and Sabine National Forests, the Southern Research Station in Texas, and Kisatchie National Forest in Louisiana
- **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service** in Louisiana
- **U.S. Department of Defense**
Fort Polk and the Joint Readiness Training Center in Louisiana
- **Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries**
- **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department**
- **Association of Zoos and Aquariums**

State and federal partners are working with private landowners on private lands and on public lands in targeted areas to implement conservation practices to conserve the snake and its habitat. Non-governmental partners are working to sustain captive populations of Louisiana pine snakes as population colonies for breeding.



Louisiana pine snakes prey primarily on pocket gophers, which feed on bluestem grasses and leafy plants in pine stands. Frequent fire maintains the grassy groundcover essential for the pocket gopher and the pine snake. From: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, **Conserving the Elusive Louisiana Pine Snake: Partners Take Action**

To learn more about the Louisiana pine snake and the Cooperative Conservation Agreement, go to: <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/news/2013/058.html>

Helping People Help the Land

Jan 8-10 Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts Annual Convention - Lafayette, Louisiana

The Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts hosted their 68th annual convention in Lafayette, Louisiana, on January 8-10, 2014. Over 200 people attended from conservation districts across Louisiana. Sessions focused on water challenges for agriculture in Louisiana, and a wide variety of presenters offered thought-provoking information on the most pressing water issues. Presenters included Mark Davis, Director of Tulane University Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy; Dr. Mike Strain, DVM, Commission of Agriculture and Forestry; Jason Weller, Chief, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; Edward Swaim, Resources Division Manager, Arkansas Natural Resources Commission; Dr. Bill Branch, Agriculture Engineer Consultant and Extension Volunteer; Matthew Reonas, Ph.D., Outreach Education and Research, Office of Conservation, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources; James Devitt, Attorney, Deputy General Counsel, Louisiana



Department of Natural Resources, Michele Laur, USDA NRCS Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Restoration Team; Jerome Zeringue, Executive Director, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana; Richard Raynie, Senior Scientist, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana; and Bryan P. Piazza, Ph.D., Director of Freshwater and Marine Science, The Nature Conservancy, Louisiana Office.

A special luncheon was hosted during the convention on Thursday, January 9, recognizing the 29 farmers who were certified as Master Farmers in 2013.





United States Department of Agriculture

Contact Our Offices

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

Parish	Field Office	Soil and Water Conservation District	Address	Telephone
Acadia	Crowley	Acadia SWCD	157 Cherokee Drive, Suite C, Crowley, LA 70526	(337) 783-5823, ext. 3
Allen	Oberlin	Allen SWCD	309 North 1st Street, Suite 1, Oberlin, LA 70655	(337) 639-4850, ext. 3
Ascension	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD and New River SWCD	2438 Highway 1 South, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
Assumption	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD	2438 Highway 1 South, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
Avoyelles	Marksville	Avoyelles SWCD	629 Tunica Drive West, Marksville, LA 71351	(318) 253-9445, ext. 3
Beauregard	DeRidder	Calcasieu SWCD	597 Mahlon Street, Suite B, DeRidder, LA 70634	(337) 463-8555, ext. 3
Bienville	Minden	Saline SWCD	216B Broadway, Minden, LA 71055	(318) 377-3950, ext. 3
Bossier	Benton	Bodcau SWCD	200 Burt Boulevard, Suite 101, Benton, LA 71006-4901	(318) 965-2185, ext. 3
Caddo	Shreveport	Caddo SWCD	1402 Hawn Avenue, Shreveport, LA 71107	(318) 676-3461, ext. 3
Calcasieu	Lake Charles	Gulf Coast SWCD	5417 Gerstner Memorial Drive, Lake Charles, LA 70601	(337) 474-1583, ext. 3
Caldwell	Columbia	Boeuf and Dugdemona SWCD	7128 Highway 165 South, Suite 2, Columbia, LA 71418	(318) 649-2651, ext. 3
Cameron	Lake Charles	Gulf Coast SWCD	5417 Gerstner Memorial Drive, Lake Charles, LA 70601	(337) 474-1583, ext. 3
Catahoula	Jonesville	Catahoula SWCD	3545 4th Street, Jonesville, LA 71343	(318) 339-4239, ext. 3
Claiborne	Minden	D'Arbonne SWCD	216B Broadway, Minden, LA 71055	(318) 377-3950, ext. 3
Concordia	Ferriday	Tensas-Concordia SWCD	8331 Highway 84, Ferriday, LA 71334	(318) 757-2455, ext. 3
DeSoto	Mansfield	DeSoto SWCD	332 Lake Road, Mansfield, LA 71052	(318) 872-4949, ext. 3
East Baton Rouge	Denham Springs	Capital SWCD	907 Florida Boulevard, SW, Denham Springs, LA 70726	(225) 664-1430, ext. 3
East Carroll	Lake Providence	East Carroll SWCD	406 Lake Street, Suite C, Lake Providence, LA 71254	(318) 559-2604, ext. 3
East Feliciana	Clinton	Feliciana SWCD	9752 Plank Road South, Clinton, LA 70722	(225) 683-5496, ext. 3
Evangeline	Ville Platte	Evangeline SWCD	205 Court Street, Ville Platte, LA 70586	(337) 363-6602, ext. 3
Franklin	Winnsboro	Northeast SWCD	616 Riser Road, Winnsboro, LA 71295	(318) 435-6743, ext. 3
Grant	Colfax	Grant SWCD	510 Main Street, Colfax, LA 71417	(318) 627-9903, ext. 3
Iberia	New Iberia	Iberia SWCD	2617 Northside Road, Suite 600, New Iberia, LA 70563	(337) 369-6623, ext. 3
Iberville	Addis	Lower Delta SWCD	7747 Highway 1 South, Addis, LA 70710	(225) 687-2184, ext. 3
Jackson	Ruston	Dugdemona SWCD	1412 Celebrity Drive, Ruston, LA 71270	(318) 255-3136, ext. 3
Jefferson	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
Jefferson Davis	Jennings	Jefferson Davis SWCD	2003 Port Drive, Jennings, LA 70546	(337) 824-0975, ext. 3
Lafayette	Lafayette	Lafayette SWCD	905 Jefferson Street, Suite 310, Lafayette, LA 70501-7913	(337) 262-6601, ext. 3
Lafourche	Thibodaux	Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD	143 Laura Drive, Thibodaux, LA 70301	(985) 447-3871, ext. 3
LaSalle	Jonesville	LaSalle SWCD	3545 4th Street, Jonesville, LA 71343	(318) 339-4239, ext. 3
Lincoln	Ruston	D'Arbonne SWCD	1412 Celebrity Drive, Ruston, LA 71270	(318) 255-3136, ext. 3
Livingston	Denham Springs	Capital SWCD	907 Florida Boulevard, SW, Denham Springs, LA 70726	(225) 664-1430, ext. 3
Madison	Tallulah	Madison SWCD	1900 Crothers Drive, Tallulah, LA 71282	(318) 574-4158, ext. 3
Morehouse	Bastrop	Morehouse SWCD	9604 Marlatt Street, Bastrop, LA 71220	(318) 283-7626, ext. 3
Natchitoches	Natchitoches	Natchitoches SWCD	6949 Louisiana Highway 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, LA 71457	(318) 357-8366, ext. 3
Orleans	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
Quachita	Monroe	D'Arbonne/Boeuf River SWCD	2410 Old Sterling Road, Suite B, Monroe, LA 71203-2668	(318) 343-4467, ext. 3
Plaquemines	New Orleans	Plaquemines SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
Pointe Coupee	New Roads	Upper Delta SWCD	180 East Main Street, New Roads, LA 70760	(225) 638-7746, ext. 3
Rapides	Alexandria	Rapides SWCD	3734 Government Street, Building C, Alexandria, LA 71303	(318) 473-7856, ext. 3
Red River	Coushatta	Red River SWCD	1311 Ringgold Avenue, Coushatta, LA 71019	(318) 932-4352, ext. 3
Richland	Rayville	Boeuf River SWCD	141 Industrial Loop, Rayville, LA 71269	(318) 728-4451, ext. 3
Sabine	Many	Sabine SWCD	570 Highway 171 By Pass, Many, LA 71449	(318) 256-3491
St. Bernard	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
St. Charles	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
St. Helena	Amite	Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD	805 West Oak Street, Suite 1, Amite, LA 70422-2820	(985) 748-8751, ext. 3
St. James	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD and New River SWCD	2438 Highway 1 South, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
St. John	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
St. Landry	Opelousas	St. Landry SWCD	5832 I-49 North Service Road, Opelousas, LA 70570	(337) 942-2530, ext. 3
St. Martin	Lafayette	St. Martin SWCD	905 Jefferson Street, Suite 310, Lafayette, LA 70501-7913	(337) 262-6601, ext. 3
St. Mary	Franklin	St. Mary SWCD	500 Main Street, Franklin, LA 70538	(337) 828-1461, ext. 3
St. Tammany	Franklinton	Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD	1111 Washington Street, Franklinton, LA 70438	(985) 839-5688, ext. 3
Tangipahoa	Amite	Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD	805 West Oak Street, Suite 1, Amite, LA 70422-2820	(985) 748-8751, ext. 3
Tensas	St. Joseph	Tensas-Concordia SWCD	1223 Plank Road, St. Joseph, LA 71366	(318) 766-3502, ext. 3
Terrebonne	Thibodaux	Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD	143 Laura Drive, Thibodaux, LA 70301	(985) 447-3871, ext. 3
Union	Farmerville	D'Arbonne SWCD	501 Glory Road, Farmerville, LA 71241	(318) 368-8021
Vermilion	Abbeville	Vermilion SWCD	3221 Veterans Memorial Drive, Suite H, Abbeville, LA 70510	(337) 893-5664, ext. 3
Vernon	Leesville	Calcasieu SWCD	205 North 5th Street, Leesville, LA 71446	(337) 239-2193
Washington	Franklinton	Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD	1111 Washington Street, Franklinton, LA 70438	(985) 839-5688, ext. 3
Webster	Minden	Dorcheat SWCD	216B Broadway, Minden, LA 71055	(318) 377-3950, ext. 3
West Baton Rouge	Addis	Upper Delta SWCD	7747 Highway 1, South, Addis, LA 70710	(225) 687-2184, ext. 3
West Carroll	Oak Grove	West Carroll SWCD	208 South Constitution Street, Oak Grove, LA 71263	(318) 428-9303, ext. 3
West Feliciana	Clinton	Feliciana SWCD	9752 Plank Road South, Clinton, LA 70722	(225) 683-5496, ext. 3
Winn	Natchitoches	Dugdemona SWCD	6949 Louisiana Highway 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, LA 71457	(318) 357-8366, ext. 3

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers. If you believe you experienced discrimination when obtaining services from USDA, participating in a USDA program, or participating in a program that receives financial assistance from USDA, you may file a complaint with USDA. Information about how to file a discrimination complaint is available from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex (including gender identity and expression), marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) To file a complaint of discrimination, complete, sign, and mail a program discrimination complaint form, available at any USDA office location or online at www.ascr.usda.gov, or write to: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410. Or call toll free at (866) 632-9992 (voice) to obtain additional information, the appropriate office or to request documents. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.