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

PARTNERS in Conservation in their own words

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The Conservation Update is distributed monthly by mail and e-mail.
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The Pumping Plant and Irrigation System Efficiency Evaluation tests the efficiency of on-farm irrigation pumps. This conservation tool is offered by the LSU AgCenter in partnership with Ducks Unlimited (DU) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This partnership is one of many partnerships in Louisiana aimed at helping agricultural producers conserve and improve natural resources while ensuring sustainability. To learn more about conservation partnerships in Louisiana, see pages 4 and 5.

Follow us on Twitter: http://twitter.com/NRCS_Louisiana
Follow us on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/user/LouisianaNRCS
Notes from the State Conservationist

The conservation partnership in Louisiana continues to grow and reflect the changes and needs of our diverse resource base, ag and forest producers, and our population. Within the vast network of conservation partners we have a broad range of expertise. Among the partnership’s membership are biologists, foresters, economists, agronomists, plant scientists, wildlife specialists, range conservationists, and soil scientists representing private organizations; coalitions; and local, state, and federal agencies.

Ag producers are familiar with the “traditional” partnership between the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). NRCS and SWCDs have worked side-by-side for over 78 years helping farmers and ranchers conserve natural resources. Built around the objective of treating each acre of land within its needs and capabilities, NRCS and SWCDs work with each farmer, rancher, or forest land owner to build a conservation plan that works within their goals and objectives. You can see the footprints of success all across our wonderful state.

In recent years, new resource concerns have brought new conservation partners to the table. Featured in this issue of Conservation Update are a few of these partnerships. There are many others working to advance conservation and stewardship across our state. We hope to highlight others throughout the year. Each partner brings unique skill sets and resources to Louisiana’s farmers and ranchers. In this issue, we have featured the LSU AgCenter, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, Ducks Unlimited, and National Wild Turkey Federation.

Kevin Norton
State Conservationist
Louisiana

Soil Health

What’s critical about soil health now?

- World population is projected to increase from 7 billion in 2013 to more than 9 billion in 2050. To sustain this level of growth, food production will need to rise by 70 percent.
- Between 1982–2007, 14 million acres of prime farmland in the U.S. were lost to development.
- Improving soil health is key to long-term, sustainable agricultural production.

From: USDA NRCS Soil Health Key Points Fact Sheet. For more information on soil health, go to: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/soils/health/

Speaking of Partnerships

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) partnered with the Cooperative Extension Service and the National Conference on Cover Crops and Soil Health in Omaha, Nebraska, to host over 200 simultaneous Cover Crops and Soil Health Forums across the United States. To read more about this partnership and Louisiana’s forum, go to page 7.

Soil health matters because:

- Healthy soils are high-performing, productive soils.
- Healthy soils reduce production costs—and improve profits.
- Healthy soils protect natural resources on and off the farm.
- Healthy soils can reduce nutrient loading and sediment runoff, increase efficiencies, and sustain wildlife habitat.
Conservationists

“What’s good for rice is good for ducks!”

The Ducks Unlimited (DU) Rice Stewardship Program works to sustain rice production through stewardship of land, water and waterfowl resources. That makes for an easy partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and together we are reaching rice producers, raising the bar of conservation on production agriculture, and making a difference for producers, the environment, and wintering waterfowl. Rice and ducks go together, naturally . . . and so do DU and NRCS!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) provides technical assistance to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) in development of local policy for conservation programs and issues. USFWS also assists NRCS with determining land eligibility, ranking applications, and restoration planning within the Wetlands Reserve Program and performs a consultation role with Swampbuster (wetland mitigation) determinations. The Service occasionally piggybacks its Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program with USDA programs in cooperative habitat restoration as well.

“Habitat restoration via conservation programs is generally a win-win-win situation for the landowner, their children, and the taxpayer.”

The Louisiana National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) biologist and forester are dedicated to working in concert with NRCS employees, state and federal agencies, NGO’s, and private landowners throughout the state to establish new partnerships to deliver conservation practices such as Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Activity Plans (CAP 142). Through the Longleaf Pine Initiative, longleaf pine ecosystem restoration and maintenance will be encouraged through NRCS’ Environmental Quality Incentives Program, private grants, and other USDA initiatives.

“NWTF’s new conservation initiative is Save the Habitat, Save the Hunt.”

“The habitat restoration via conservation programs is generally a win-win-win situation for the landowner, their children, and the taxpayer.”

For more information about our partners . . .

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
http://www.fws.gov/lafayette/pfw_program.html

National Wild Turkey Federation
www.nwtf.org

Ducks Unlimited - Louisiana
http://www.ducks.org/louisiana

National Wild Turkey Federation

Ducks Unlimited

LSU AgCenter

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality

Conservationists
Louisiana’s Master Farmer Program is a partnership of five agricultural entities—USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Louisiana State University Ag Center, Louisiana Farm Bureau, Louisiana Cattlemen’s Association and Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, which has the authority by law through the Commissioner of Agriculture to approve Master Farmer certification. The program focuses on helping agricultural producers voluntarily address environmental concerns as well as helping them enhance the production and resource management skills.

“The LSU AgCenter believes that sustainability is a combination of conservation and productivity.”

The LSU AgCenter is very excited with the current direction of cover crop research. What started out as a question from a producer has turned into a collaborative endeavor for Louisiana’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and LSU AgCenter to be able to better serve Louisiana producers. The warmer weather that is experienced in the mid-south makes it necessary to understand the potential for cover crops to improve crop yield, soil quality, and the environment—with an overall goal for producers to have a positive experience with NRCS cost share incentives.

“We are improving water quality for the citizens of Louisiana.”

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality’s (LDEQ) Nonpoint Source Program and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) collaborate by leveraging resources and funds to restore impaired water bodies caused by nonpoint source pollution from agricultural sources. Our goal is to monitor and document water quality improvement after placement of conservation practices which can lead to delisting and publication of success stories.

“By becoming a part of Louisiana’s Master Farmer Program, Louisiana’s farmers are taking a progressive approach to ensure farm sustainability.”
Congratulations to Annie's Project Graduates

Ten women graduated in the first two classes of Annie's Project in Louisiana: Catherine LaCour, Morganza; Carlyn Morales, Glynn; Katie Ramagos, White Castle; Dana Fairchild, Port Allen; Beth Toups, Baton Rouge; Hali LeBlanc, Port Allen; Brianna Compton, Jennings; Mary Broussard, New Iberia; Nicolette Gordon, Baton Rouge; and Sunyani Gordon, Baton Rouge.

Annie's Project is an educational program dedicated to strengthening women's roles in the modern farm enterprise. Through six educational sessions, these women gained in-depth knowledge in risk assessments, human factors in farming, grain marketing, insurance for the family and farm business, crop insurance, farm transition planning, financial statement, farm tax issues and accounting, legal issues, retirement planning and business planning.

The next session of Annie's Project will be conducted in Hammond, Louisiana in July. To find out more about Annie's Project or to register for the next session, contact Deborah Cross-Young, Annie's Project Louisiana State Coordinator, dcross@agcenter.lsu.edu or (225) 281-9470.

Jan 16
LaSalle SWCD Seedling Sale
The LaSalle Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) conducted its annual tree seedling sale on January 16, 2014. A record number of seedlings were sold this year — 5,400! Species sold included longleaf pine, crabapple, mayhaw, persimmon, bald cypress, native sweet pecan, cherrybark oak, white oak, sawtooth oak, live oak, nuttall oak, green ash, and river birch. For more information, call the LaSalle SWCD at (318) 992-2235.

Jan 31
Plant Science Workshop
On January 31, 2014, staff from the Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center conducted a workshop in the Larose Upper Elementary school library to teach approximately 75 students and school staff the important role of native plants in conservation of our natural resources. Staff used conservation plants from the Plant Materials Center as part of the hands-on workshop.

Feb 3–7
Bogue Chitto-Pearl River Tree Seedling Sale
The Bogue Chitto Pearl River Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) hosted their annual tree seedling sale on February 3-7. This year, they sold over 1,200 seedlings. Species sold included Ashe magnolia, chinquapin oak, crabapple, dogwood, sassafras, yellow poplar, and western mayhaw. For more information, call the Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD at (985) 839-5688, ext. 3.

Mar 18-20
State of the Coast 2014
From the Field

Conserving Water and Saving Money in Morehouse Parish

Chris Carter of Chris Carter Farms in Collinston, Louisiana, contacted NRCS’ Bastrop Field Office to learn more about irrigation water management through the PHAUCET program.

The PHAUCET (Pipe Hole and Universal Crown Evaluation Tool) program was designed to calculate existing irrigation system performance and define alternatives for improving irrigation efficiency. PHAUCET assists farmers determine the sizes of the holes in the polypipe that best distribute the available water. The program also helps farmers improve timeliness of watering fields having different row lengths.

NRCS employees in the Bastrop Field Office provided PHAUCET training to Mr. Carter, and now he uses PHAUCET in all of his fields. He is saving money and water by not applying more water than is necessary on his crops. He is so pleased with the results, he is also encouraging other producers in the parish to use the PHAUCET program.

Submitted by: Eran Robinson, District Conservationist, Bastrop Field Office

Feb 18

Cover Crops and Soil Health Forum

Alexandria, Louisiana

On February 18, 2014, a Cover Crops and Soil Health Forum was hosted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Alexandria, Louisiana. This forum was one of over 200 events conducted simultaneously across the nation to promote conversations on cover crops and soil health. These events gave farmers and other agricultural professionals an opportunity to share their thoughts with other forum participants and engage in local conversations on cover crops and soil health. During Louisiana’s event, NRCS conservationists discussed the prospects for cover crops and soil health improvements and provided a demonstration of NRCS’ rainfall simulator trailer.

For more information about cover crops and soil health, contact an NRCS office near you. See the back cover of this publication for a list of offices.
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