



United States Department of Agriculture

# Louisiana's Conservation Update

Natural Resources Conservation Service

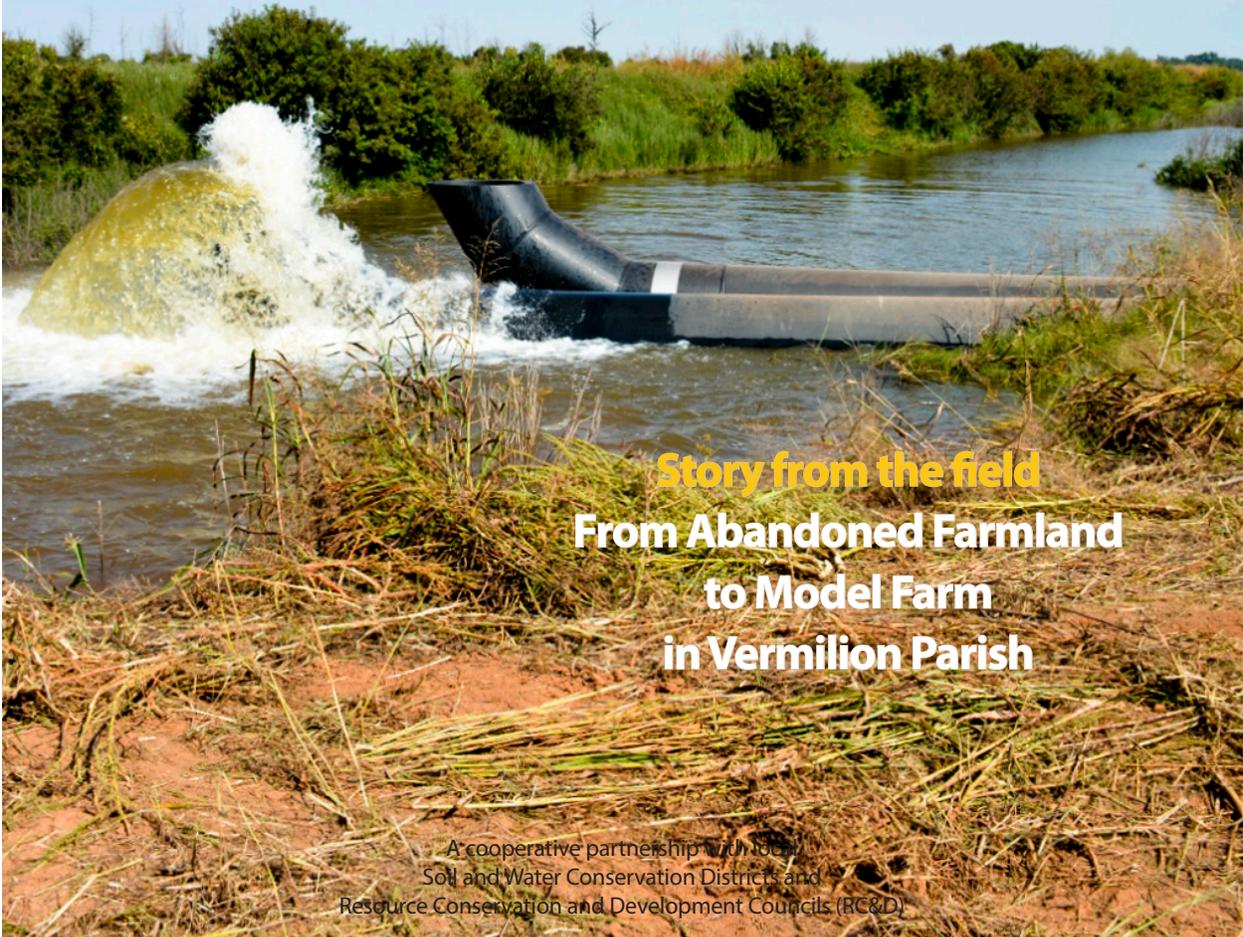
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October 2014

## Red Bayou Comes to Life!

Irrigation Project Completed in Caddo Parish



**Story from the field**  
**From Abandoned Farmland**  
**to Model Farm**  
**in Vermilion Parish**

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

Projects · Successes · Partnerships



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### On the Cover



For many years, the Red River has been proposed as a ready source of irrigation water; however, until recently these waters remained largely untapped. To learn about the Red Bayou Watershed Project that brings Red River water to farmers in the Red Bayou Watershed, 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:

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#### September 2012



#### September 2014



Advertising for bids for the Red Bayou Watershed Project was completed in April 2012. A pre-bid conference was conducted on May 7, 2012. Cecil C. Gassiott, LLC, was awarded the construction contract. The Red Bayou Watershed Construction Contract was certified as complete on August 29, 2014:

# RED BAYOU Watershed Project

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

Follow us on Twitter: [http://twitter.com/NRCS\\_Louisiana](http://twitter.com/NRCS_Louisiana)

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## Notes from the State Conservationist



According to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), almost 60 percent of the world's freshwater withdrawals go towards irrigation uses. A 2010 USGS study\* indicates that during 2009, farmers in Louisiana irrigated approximately 460,000 acres of crops other than rice (cotton, soybeans, sorghum, and berries). According to the same report, farmers withdrew approximately 240 million gallons per day for general irrigation, of which about 180 million gallons a day was groundwater and about 57 million gallons a day was surface water. That is a lot of water.

In many areas of our nation, water has become a limited resource. Historically, Louisiana has been blessed with abundant water supplies. In recent years, drought and potential water legislation has caused many Louisiana agricultural producers to take a closer look at available water.

This issue of the Conservation Update focuses on a unique, landowner-driven project in Caddo Parish—pumping water from the Red River to Red Bayou for irrigation use. Next month, we will feature another landowner-driven project that uses water from the Red River in a gravity-fed system through a series of bayous ultimately bringing irrigation water to farmers in a multi-parish area.

Irrigation is essential for farmers to meet a growing population's ever-increasing demands for food and fiber. Projects such as the Red Bayou Watershed project, featured in this issue, help ensure successful crop production. The Natural Resources Conservation Service helps farmers implement irrigation water management systems to conserve water and energy. If you are interested in learning how to improve your irrigation system, visit your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office.

Kevin D. Norton  
State Conservationist  
Louisiana

\*Water Use in Louisiana 2010, Water Resources Special Report No. 17, page 18. B. Pierre Sargent, U.S. Geological Survey. Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 2011 (revised December 2012).



### Red Bayou Watershed Project Components

**Two pump stations**, each capable of delivering 27,000 gallons per minute, with 6-foot-diameter intakes to draw water from the Red River.

**Two parallel runs** of 48-inch diameter high-density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe totaling 4,960 feet in length to deliver water to Red Bayou.

**Three weirs** in Red Bayou to provide water level control: The first is located approximately

three miles downstream of the discharge point on Red Bayou; the second is located approximately three miles downstream of the first at the town of Gilliam; and the third approximately three miles downstream of Gilliam. The first and third weirs are gated to allow pooled water to be drawn down if necessary.

In order to provide a source of power to the pumps, SWEPCO constructed **four miles of power line to the pumps**.

Additionally, in order to get Red River water to producers whose lands were not adjacent to Red Bayou, **two irrigation supply pipelines were installed:**

- Approximately 8,000 linear feet of 24-inch diameter PVC pipe
- Approximately 1,450 linear feet of 18-inch diameter PVC pipe

# Ag Facts



# RED BAYOU *Comes to Life!*

In recent years, drought conditions in the south have caused many farmers and ranchers sleepless nights wondering how crops and livestock would survive without much-needed rain.

For many years, the Red River has been proposed as a ready source of irrigation water; however, until recently these waters remained largely untapped.

In 1997, as drought conditions were worsening, a small group of landowners in Caddo Parish approached the Caddo Soil and Water Conservation District to ask about the possibility of using Red River water for irrigation. They needed water then, but no one knew it would take 17 years to turn on the pumps.

The Red Bayou Watershed Project is a story of vision, partnership, and



May 1997

April 2000

June 2003

May 2009

August 2009

## TIMELINE

Read about another irrigation project that uses Red River water in next month's *Conservation Update!*

Caddo Soil and Water Conservation District received a request for assistance from local landowners to investigate the possibility of using Red Bayou as a source of irrigation water. The Caddo SWCD requested assistance from NRCS to conduct a feasibility study.

Feasibility study published by NRCS Water Resources Section in Alexandria. Report was delivered to all project sponsors and supporting agencies.

Caddo SWCD makes formal application for federal assistance.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding officially authorized for the Red Bayou Project.

State funding through the Louisiana Office of Capital Outlay officially secured.



## The Red Bayou Watershed Project is a story of vision, partnership, and perseverance.

perseverance. A small group of landowners working with a soil and water conservation district believed they could bring water from the Red River through Red Bayou to the fields of Caddo Parish. Through the years, 12 partner organizations worked together to make the pieces fit—never wavering in their support.

From 1997 to 2014, public meetings were hosted to gather input. Problems identified at these meetings included lack of dependable water, soil erosion

and sedimentation, inefficient irrigation systems, poor water quality, and degraded fish and wildlife habitat.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service completed feasibility studies; designs were developed; funding was secured; permits were obtained; ancient cultural resources were found, and as a result, the project area was moved; land was donated for wetland mitigation; electricity was brought to the sight; pump stations were constructed; pipelines were run; and

weirs were constructed. When road blocks occurred, partners worked together to find alternatives.

On September 30, 2014, the Caddo Soil and Water Conservation District hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony on the banks of the Red River at the Red Bayou pumps. The ribbon was cut and the pumps turned on for the Red Bayou Watershed Project—bringing Red Bayou to life and crop-sustaining Red River water to farms in the Red Bayou Watershed.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provided voluntary, incentive-based conservation to the producers in the Red Bayou Watershed, and since 2011 the following practices have been installed:

- Residue Management, Mulch Till: 345 acres
- Residue Management., Strip Till: 709 acres
- Residue Management, Ridge Till: 793.6 acres
- Structure for Water Control: 23
- Grade Stabilization Structure: 2
- Irrigation Pipeline: 29,516 feet (5.6 miles)
- Irrigation Land Leveling: 174.7 acres
- Irrigation System, sprinkler (Center Pivot): 912.5 acres with 4 systems
- Irrigation Water Management: 1,083.6 acres
- Pumping Plant: 6



## Project Partners



Caddo Soil and Water Conservation District	North Caddo Irrigation District	Caddo Parish Commission
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	Red River Waterway Commission	Caddo Levee District
Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry	Red River Valley Association	Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation
State of Louisiana – FP&C	Red River Research Station - LSU AgCenter	Twin Valley RC&D

# Conservationists

# Around the State

## Sep 27

### National Hunting and Fishing Day:

On September 27, 2014, almost 4,000 people came through the gates at the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' National Hunting and Fishing Day event in Woodworth, Louisiana. Over 500 people visited the NRCS tent and learned about ducks and duck habitat during the event. After visiting all four learning stations, attendees were able to participate in the NRCS duck races.



## Sep 29

### McNeese State University Career Fair:

Personnel from the Lake Charles Field Office, along with personnel from Louisiana NRCS Human Resources, participated in the McNeese State University Fall Career Fair on September 29, 2014. Over 70 students visited the NRCS table and requested information on career opportunities.



## Sep 30

### Red Bayou Watershed Project

#### Ribbon Cutting Ceremony:

On September 30, 2014, the Caddo Soil and Water Conservation District hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony to mark the completion of the construction of the Red Bayou Watershed Project.



## Oct 3

### Secretary Vilsack Visits Louisiana:

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack visited Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on October 3, 2014, to announce a \$91 million loan guarantee to help finance an innovative advanced biofuel plant in Rapides Parish, Louisiana. USDA has reached an agreement with Silicon Valley Bank to provide a \$91 million Biorefinery Assistance Program loan guarantee to Cool Planet to help the company finish construction on a biofuel plant at the Port of Alexandria in Louisiana. Representatives of Louisiana's conservation partnership were on hand to greet the Secretary and hear his remarks.



## Oct 4

### Boy Scout 2014 Scoutfest:

NRCS participated in the 2014 Boy Scout Scoutfest held at Camp Avondale in Clinton, Louisiana on October 4, 2014. Scouts that visited the NRCS tent learned about ducks and duck habitat. Attendees were also able to participate in the NRCS duck races.

## Oct 7

### Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden

#### Visits Louisiana:

Agriculture Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden visited Louisiana on October 6-7, 2014, to offer a keynote address at the Women in Agribusiness Summit in New Orleans and to announce that USDA will improve farm loans by expanding eligibility and increasing lending limits to help more beginning and family farmers. As part of this effort, USDA is raising the borrowing limit for the microloan program from \$35,000 to \$50,000; simplifying the lending processes; updating required farming experience; and expanding eligible business entities. The changes will become effective November 7. While in Louisiana, Deputy Secretary Harden visited the Thompson farm in Franklinton, Louisiana. Mikeal and Rhonda Thompson and their son Justin have worked with the Farm Service Agency since 2000 and the Natural Resources Conservation Service since 2006.



## Oct 10

### St. Charles Parish School's 8th Grade Wetland Training:

On October 10, 2014, Lyfon Morris and Brandon Waltman, Soil Scientists with the Denham Springs MLRA Soil Survey Office, assisted the New Orleans NRCS Field Office by giving a soils presentation to 240 eighth grade science students as part of the St. Charles Parish Schools wetland training. Students were given hands-on training with soil characteristics such as soil texture and color. The presentation took place at the Wetland Watchers Park near the LaBranche Wetlands in St. Charles Parish.

## Story from the Field

### From Abandoned Farmland to Model Farm

When Dale and Christine Vidrine acquired 985 acres of farm land in Vermilion Parish, the property had been farmed for many years and had numerous resource concerns. The state of the land had made it economically unfeasible for the previous tenants to continue farming, and they abandoned it. Dale and Christine Vidrine knew if they could address the conservation concerns of this land, they could make the property healthy again and profitable.

The Vidrine's farm is located in the Bayou Grand Marais Watershed—a focus area of the Gulf of Mexico Initiative (GoMI). The Bayou Grand Marais Watershed was selected as a focus area for GoMI because of its proximity to the Gulf of Mexico and because it has substantial agriculture-

related nutrient and sediment loading. This watershed is located in the north-central portion of Vermilion Parish. A majority of the land use in this watershed includes irrigated cropland—predominately rice in rotation. The watershed consists of 30,975 acres of cropland; 3,777 acres of pasture; 1,332 acres of forestland; and 1,133 acres of urban land. Much of this land is badly in need of proper conservation measures.

With assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service through the Gulf of Mexico Initiative, Dale and Christine Vidrine applied the needed conservation practices to their farm. Among these practices were nutrient management, irrigation land leveling, grade stabilization structures, and irrigation pipeline. The practices are not only improving their bottom line, but they will improve water quality, increase water conservation, and increase wildlife habitat in the Bayou Grand Marais Watershed.

Both Dale and Christine have been certified by the Louisiana Department of Agriculture as Louisiana Master

Farmers, and their farm is now a model farm for conservation. Installation of conservation practices on the Vidrine farm has ensured sustainability and profitability for Dale and Christine—and an improved ecosystem in the Gulf of Mexico.



Submitted by Mitzi Dohrman, Vermilion Soil and Water Conservation District

StrikeForce Initiative



Louisiana Update

for Rural Growth and Opportunity

The Natural Resources Conservation Service recently entered into agreements with three grassroots organizations to conduct StrikeForce outreach meetings in 20 StrikeForce designated parishes during the upcoming year: Louisiana Association of Cooperatives, Campti Field of Dreams, and Trailblazer RC&D. These organizations will also host multi-parish soil health field days and conservation field days in targeted StrikeForce parishes. During the outreach meetings and field days, USDA agencies will discuss financial and technical opportunities that are available through each agency. Date/location/registration information on these meetings will be posted monthly in the *Conservation Update*. For more information about StrikeForce, visit: [www.usda.gov/strikeforce](http://www.usda.gov/strikeforce)

## Upcoming Events

### StrikeForce Meetings

The Louisiana Association of Cooperatives will host StrikeForce outreach meetings in the following parishes:

10/27/2014 - Orleans/St. Bernard  
11/13/2014 - St. Landry/Avoyelles  
11/18/2014 - Iberia/St. Martinville  
12/9/2014 - Tangipahoa  
12/16/2014 - Allen

Call (504) 319-1085 to register for these meetings.

Trailblazer RC&D is working with Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center and the LSU AgCenter to host a StrikeForce outreach meeting at the LSU AgCenter Union Parish Extension Auditorium in Farmerville, Louisiana on 10/30/2014. Contact Odis Hill, (318) 237-3517, to register.

### Oct 28

**Ocean Commotion:** The Louisiana Sea Grant College Program will host Ocean Commotion on October 28, 2014, at the Pete Maravich Assembly Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Both NRCS and the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry – Office of Soil and Water Conservation will participate in this event. This event will educate over 2,500 K-8 students in the Baton Rouge area on aquatic animals, plants, and minerals.

### Nov 14

**Louisiana Women in Agriculture Conference:** The 2014 Louisiana Women in Agriculture Conference will be hosted on November 14, 2014, at the LSU AgCenter in Napoleonville, Louisiana. For more information, contact Angie Fogleman at Acadiana RC&D at (337) 262-1776.



# Contact Our Offices

Visit our web site at:  
[www.la.nrcs.usda.gov](http://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) 665-4253, 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) 665-4253, 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

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