



United States Department of Agriculture

Louisiana Conservation Update

Restoring Wetland Habitat on the Banks of the Red River in Natchitoches Parish

Soil with Spunk

Story from the Field
Trinity Island Sand
Live Oak Planting

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



Natchitoches Parish cattle producer, Ned Henry Jr., enrolled 410 acres of land into the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program under the Wetlands Reserve component. Find out about his efforts on pages 4 and 5.

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Notes from the State Conservationist

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) was created with the 2014 Farm Bill. It combined three separate easement programs - the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), and the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP). Just like in the previous programs, ACEP provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits.

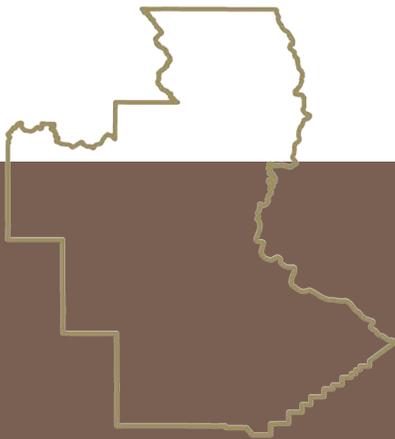


In this month's issue of the Conservation Update, you will read about a cattle farmer who after having problems with flooding on some pastureland, visited the Natchitoches Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) office looking for assistance. After receiving technical assistance, he worked with NRCS to enroll this pasture in the Wetlands Reserve Easements component of ACEP. This area that he was no longer able to graze cattle on because of the flooding, will now attract native wildlife and migratory birds.

Also in this issue, is a column about a farmer in Sabine Parish who knows the benefits of healthy soils. This is part of a series that will be covered in the Conservation Update this year on International Year of Soils by Ashton Ebarb, a NRCS Earth Team volunteer here in Louisiana.

2015 is shaping up to be a great year for conservation in Louisiana. NRCS and the SWCDs are eager to help you with all of your conservation needs. Visit your local office to find out more about the technical and financial assistance that NRCS has available.

Kevin D. Norton
State Conservationist
Louisiana



Natchitoches Parish Ag Facts

There are 630 farms in Natchitoches Parish
200,979 acres of land is in farms, 44% is in pastureland
Poultry is the #1 commodity of the parish

From: www.agcensus.usda.gov

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program Success

Restoring Wetland Habitat on the Banks of the Red River

in Natchitoches Parish

Ned Henry, Jr. is a second generation cattle producer in Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana. Henry grew up helping his father on his cattle ranch and that is where his passion for cattle began.

“Cattle is in my blood,” said Henry. “After graduating from high school, I knew I wanted to spend my life working with cattle.”

Henry worked with his father for several years before renting some land adjacent to his father’s and purchasing some cows of his own. Now, Henry’s ranch consists of 700 acres.

Because some of his land is on a sandbar left behind when the Red River changed its course, it has always been susceptible to seasonal flooding. After work was completed on the river to make it navigable, the level of the river increased which lead to more backwater flooding. Henry’s land began to flood more often, which wasn’t good for his cows.

Henry knew exactly where to go for assistance. His relationship with the Natchitoches Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service began in the mid-80’s. Back then, they helped him convert some agricultural land to pasture and fix

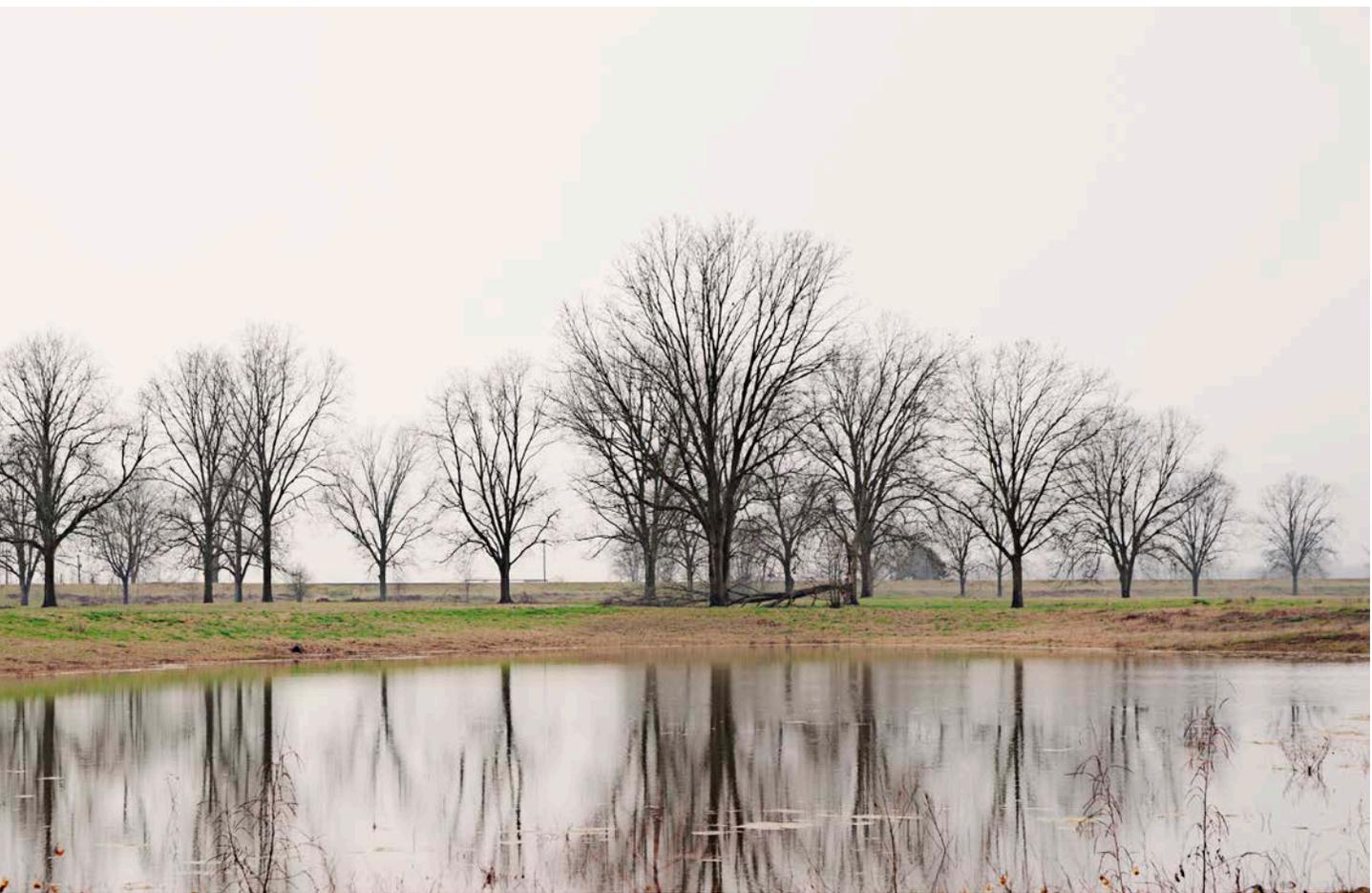
some ravines and wash-outs. This time, they helped him enroll 410 acres of his land into the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) under the wetlands reserve easement component.

Since this part of his land was no longer going to be used to graze cattle, he worked with the Natchitoches SWCD and NRCS to create approximately 37 acres of shallow water areas and plant trees to achieve his goal of creating habitat for native wildlife and migratory birds. Species planted include willow oak, sweet gum, live oak, overcup oak, nuttall oak, bald cypress, tupelo gum, water oak, bitter pecan, green ash, red maple and persimmon. A water control structure was also installed to help manage the water during periods of flooding and drawdown.

“Working with Mr. Henry to convert this area of pasture to a wetland has been a rewarding experience,” said Adam Foster, Wetland Reserve Program Technician with the Natchitoches SWCD. “The stand of trees will provide habitat for several different wildlife species, including white tail deer. The shallow water area includes a water control structure that helps with water management that will help promote the growth of beneficial wetland plant species.”



**“Conservat
the land an
grandchild**



tion is important to me. I just want to improve
and leave it in better condition for my children and
ren.” Ned Henry, Jr.



Soil with Spunk

Phillip Sneed's soil has spunk.

For more than a century, generations of the Sneed family have used their knowledge, skill and strategic planning to keep their soil spunky and thriving in Sabine Parish in west central Louisiana. Today that soil supports the bermudagrass Phillip Jr.'s approximately 50 cows depend upon. With his own family, Phillip Jr. continues the tradition of farming like his grandfather before him. He has worked to expand, maintain and improve his family's legacy with help from the special resource called soil.

"There is no routine to famring," said Phillip Jr.

Each morning Phillip Jr. told me he has to assess his farm. Are there calving problems? Have any trees fallen? Is the equipment functioning properly?

He tends to whatever needs unexpectedly but inevitably appear that day. Weather permitting, he can do whatever he wants to accomplish too. Sometimes the weather doesn't allow for this. What is a farmer to do? Plow right on through with what can be accomplished. Work never runs dry on the farm.

For Phillip Jr. soil is vital to maintaining his farm. His Braford and red and black Angus cows depend on bermudagrass supported by the soil.

"It's like a ripple effect," said Phillip Jr.'s wife Ashley Sneed.

Soil supports clean water and healthy grass which supports healthy cows and so on.

Phillip Jr. said his bermudagrass, Little Phillip No. 1, nourishes his cows with protein. He avoids using hormones or similar products for his cows. High

protein from grass means the cows grow naturally and need less grain to support their health.

To best grow grass for the cows, healthy soil is a must. Phillip Jr. regularly has soil tested by sending samples to Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. Results indicate if his soil needs nutrients or if it is nutrient-rich. He recommends soil testing to anyone who wants improved soil quality.

Nitrogen is the main nutrient Phillip Jr. says he replenishes. Adding fertilizer and planting clover, which uses nitrogen from air to restore nitrogen to soil, he ensures his soil continues to thrive, that his farm thrives.

Phillip Jr. and Ashley have also installed gate pads with help from NRCS and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) in places where they and the cows travel through the fields. Gate pads are a mixture of broken rock, and prevent the trodden soil from eroding. They have also installed water troughs and feeding pads. Like the rocks, these prevent erosion.

Phillip Jr. divides his field for grazing rotations to prevent overgrazing that could lead to erosion too. In this way, he ensures the support of his soil, so his soil can in turn support his farm.

"Animal health is also improved when livestock no longer have to suffer the negative effects of continually bogging down in deep mud on these areas... By preventing soil erosion, one of our nation's most valuable resources is protected. Soil is the basis for all growing and living things. Not only do agricultural and forestry products depend on our soils, but surface water quality in our rivers, lakes and oceans is directly related to soil erosion," said Chris Ebel, NRCS Rangeland Management Specialist.

Phillip Jr.'s efforts have been recognized more than once. He has earned the 2009 O.E. Williams Jr. Farmer of the Year for Sabine Parish, 2010 Louisiana Master Farmer Certification and 2011 Louisiana Forage and Grassland Council (LFGC) Master Forage Producer awards.

"Farming is hard work but rewarding," Phillip Jr. said.

The setting sun is one of his favorite things while working on the farm. Each day, sunlight paints the fields he and his family have devoted their lives to sustaining.

Phillip Jr. plans to expand his 141 acre farm further, maybe even pass the tradition onto his sons Blake, 8, and Mason, 3.

With support from soil, and a little spunk, the family is sure to thrive for a century more.

Submitted by: Ashton Ebarb, NRCS Earth Team Volunteer, Alexandria State Office



Ashton Ebarb is a Earth Team volunteer with the Public Affairs Section at the State Office. She is currently working on getting her Ph.D. in mass communications.

Upcoming Events

Helping People Help the Land

April 7 - 9

Soil Health Workshops: NRCS has planned a series of soil health workshops across the state. Farmers and ranchers are invited to participate and learn more about the importance of soil health, cover crops and forage management in pasture and row crop production. Pre-registration is not required and there is no cost to attend.

Guest speakers will include Ray Archuleta, Conservation Agronomist from the NRCS East National Technology Center in Greensboro, North Carolina, as well as several soil health and cover crop specialists with the LSU AgCenter. NRCS will also demonstrate the benefits of improving soil health and cover with a rainfall simulations trailer.

The workshops will be held from 9:00 am - 12:30 pm on the following dates and locations:

April 7

**Red River Research Station,
262 Research Station Drive,
Bossier City, Louisiana 71112**

April 8

**DeWitt Livestock Facility,
100 Gregg Marshall Drive,
Alexandria, Louisiana 71302**

April 9

**Pointe Coupee Multi-Use Center,
1400 Major Parkway,
New Roads, Louisiana 70760**

If you have any questions, or for more information, please contact Michael Lindsey at (318) 473-7757 or by e-mail at michael.lindsey@la.usda.gov.



April 10

Southwest Louisiana Grazingland Field Day: Join NRCS on Friday, April 10, 2015 at Jay Duhon Farms for a grazingland field day. Participants will have the opportunity to learn about beef cattle nutrition, grazing system comparisons, soil health cool season forages. Lunch will be provided by the Gulf Coast SWCD. For more information, call 337-474-1583 x.3.

Story from the Field

Trinity Island Sand Live Oak Planting

On February 3, 2015, Blaise Pezold, Lafourche-Terrebonne Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Technician, led a small group of three Earth Team volunteers out to the Isles Dernieres (last islands in French) south of the city of Houma, Louisiana. The team successfully planted 100 Sand Live Oak (*Quercus geminata*) on Trinity Island, the largest island in the barrier island chain.



These islands are highly important to neo-tropical migrating soing birds, nesting brown pelicans and terns. The trees were planted to evaluate the potential use of this species in coastal restoration. It often grows in xeric soils and can colonize windy coastal dunes and barrier islands. It is found in the southeastern United States along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, but has not been recorded in Louisiana since the 1930's. It is highly resistant to saline environments and could provide a greater defensive barrier for Louisiana's low profile dune systems.

This reintroduction of Sand Live Oak to the barrier islands of Louisiana is part of a larger effort of the NRCS, Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD, Bayou Land RC&D, LDAF/OSWC and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Coastal Division.

Submitted by: Andrea Harris, District Conservationist, Thibodaux Field Office

StrikeForce Initiative



Louisiana Update

for Rural Growth and Opportunity

Upcoming StrikeForce Meetings

Thursday, March 26, 2015

9:00 am

Central Louisiana Business Incubator
1501 A Wimbledon Blvd.,
Alexandria, Louisiana 71301
9:00 am

Wednesday, April 1, 2015

9:00 am

Red River Parsh Library
410 East Carroll Street
Coushatta, Louisiana 71019



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	2259 Business Park Boulevard, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
Assumption	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD	2259 Business Park Boulevard, 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
Ouachita	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	2259 Business Park Boulevard, 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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