



United States Department of Agriculture

Louisiana Conservation Update

Growing Grass-Fed Beef in Grant Parish



**Healthy Soils
Clean and Capture Water**

**USDA Grant Provides
Educational Opportunity for
Urban New Orleans School**

Projects • Successes • Partnerships



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On the Cover



John Butterfield always dreamed of owning a farm. Find out how he is working with NRCS to make his farm the best it can be on pages 4 and 5.

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Notes from the State Conservationist

This month marks the 80th anniversary of Black Sunday, a day when a great dust storm boiled up on the drought ravaged Great Plains and sent eastward the cloud that bore witness of the environmental, social and economic devastation affecting the region. In just a few short weeks following this event, Congress and President Roosevelt established the Soil Conservation Service.

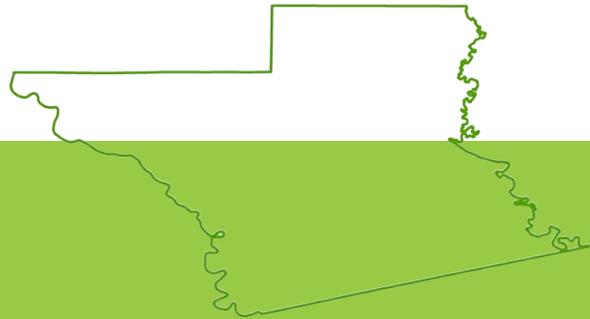
In the beginning of this movement, the early conservationist worked under the following stated objective: "The basic physical objective of the soil conservation activities by Department agencies shall be the use of each acre of agricultural land within its capabilities and the treatment of each acre of agricultural land in accordance with its needs for protection and improvement." Over the years, we have seen agriculture production and technology progress, and our tools, and our programs change. Our customers have become more diverse and an increased level of accountability is required by the public. However, our adherence to this imbedded philosophy of helping each private land steward with each acre of their land continues to drive our service to our customers and our nation's food security.



As I look across our wonderful state, I marvel at all that has been and continues to be accomplished with our farmers, ranchers, forest land owners and our coastal land stewards. We are producing crops on our most suitable soils and with the advances in plant genetics and production techniques achieving per acre yields that were unimaginable 25 years ago. We are returning wetlands on soils that were ultimately unsuitable for annual production due to ponding and flooding. We have pine forests in areas cropped and scarred by gullies from water erosion. We have coastal basins that have the necessary protection to build land where once there seemed little hope to stem the loss of marsh.

Although the Dust Bowl occurred some distance from here, the conservation needs of our state, land and producers have been no less challenging. I encourage you to visit our local offices and find out more about the technical and financial assistance that NRCS has available.

Kevin D. Norton
State Conservationist



Grant Parish Ag Facts

There are 238 farms in Grant Parish
47,977 acres of land is in farms
32% is in pastureland and 23.8% is forestland
Forestry is the #1 commodity of the parish

From: www.agcensus.usda.gov



Growing Grass-Fed Beef in Grant Parish

John Butterfield comes from a long line of agricultural laborers, 17 generations of them to be exact.

Butterfield is the owner of Butterfield Farm, a family owned and operated grass-fed beef operation in Grant Parish, Louisiana. His cows eat two things, their mama's milk and grass.

"Agriculture is in my blood," said Butterfield. "Owning a farm has always been my dream."

Butterfield's father was raised on a dairy farm in Iowa. In 1953, he left farming and Iowa behind and moved to Louisiana to pursue other opportunities. Although Butterfield didn't grow up on a farm, he

spent his life trying to get back to the farm.

Butterfield was raised in the city of Alexandria, Louisiana. His family moved to rural Grant Parish when he was in junior high school and bought one dairy cow. He spent every day milking the cow until he graduated from high school.

"While friends of mine spent their time milking, thinking of ways to get off of the farm, I spent my time figuring out how to buy two cows to milk," said Butterfield.

For years, Butterfield worked and saved to be able to purchase some land for a farm. He also spent the last 15 years bailing hay for other people to earn extra money to buy

a tractor, while working full time as a contractor.

Five years ago, Butterfield was finally able to make his dream a reality when he purchased 46 acres of timber land in Grant Parish. Once he had the land, the real work began. He had to clear it, burn it, build some fences and plant grass before he could put cattle on it.

Once he got the land ready to farm, he visited the Grant Parish Soil and Water Conservation District and NRCS office in Colfax because he wanted a pond. Instead, he left with an appointment for the district conservationist to visit his farm to work on a conservation plan for his landfarm.

Through conservation technical assistance and funding from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Butterfield has been installing conservation practices on his farm since 2011.

He began by building cross-fencing to divide his pastures so



“I want my farm to be the best that it can be.” John Butterfield



he could apply rotational grazing practices. Butterfield’s cows are rotated between five areas of pasture every seven days so that overgrazing is not a problem. He installed pipelines and watering facilities to ensure that his cattle have an ample water supply in each pasture. Heavy use area protection has also been installed to protect areas of high traffic against erosion.

His pastures have been planted with clover to provide diverse forage for his cattle. Since the clover is a legume it can transfer nitrogen from the air to the soil to feed other plants.

The work on his farm is not finished yet. He currently has plans to install a water control structure and a few creek crossings. Because he wants his farm to be the best it can be, he continually educates himself on the best management practices for his operation. Butterfield attends local workshops, demonstrations, and field days. He has also attended several grass-fed beef conferences at Texas A&M and was recently certified as a Louisiana Master Cattle Producer.

Butterfield said, “I always knew I would have a place like this. Now that I have a farm, I’m going to work on growing it.”





2015
International
Year of Soils

Healthy Soils Clean and Capture Water

Submitted by: Mitchell Mouton, Assistant State Soil Scientist and Mike Lindsey, State Soil Scientist

The way we utilize and care for our soils determines whether they are “healthy” and can serve a range of environmental functions to their maximum capacity. Healthy soils not only ensure we have adequate food and fiber, but act as environmental regulators of nutrients and water. Healthy soils regulate water by controlling where rain, snowmelt, and irrigation water go. Water and dissolved solutes flow over the land, or into and through the soil. Water that flows over the land as runoff has a potential to carry harmful chemicals, fertilizers, and soil particles into nearby lakes and streams.

Healthy soils allow more water to infiltrate into the soil rather than runoff. Most infiltration is through the soil pores and spaces between soil aggregates or clods. Soil pores can range in size from small microscopic holes, large worm holes to animal burrows. An ideal soil has a distribution of pores with various sizes so that it can both filter water and allow it to pass through it.

The minerals and microbes in soil are responsible for filtering, buffering, degrading, immobilizing, and detoxifying organic and inorganic materials, including industrial and municipal by-products and atmospheric deposits.

Soils generally consist of an array of minerals that have negatively charged particles. This allows soils to capture positively charged ions like calcium, magnesium and potassium from water. These ions are now available to plants.

This process also removes other harmful pollutants.

Healthy soils are a living ecosystem. They are teeming with billions of bacteria, fungi and other microbes that form a symbiotic ecosystem. These tiny critters help soil to be the largest bioreactor on the planet. They can transform and decompose certain types of chemicals. Examples include transforming organic forms of nitrogen into ammonium ions while others change ammonium into nitrate. In wet or flooded environments some microbes convert nitrate to nitrogen gas. Microbes can also decompose some organic pollutants.

The ability of our soils to clean and capture water has an impact on the purity of the water that reaches our lakes and streams. Soil is the world’s biggest water filter and learning to utilize this natural system will improve the health of ourselves and the environment.

StrikeForce Initiative



Louisiana
Update

for Rural Growth and Opportunity

USDA Grant Provides Learning Opportunity for Urban New Orleans School

Submitted by: Sarah Haymaker, Acting State Public Affairs Specialist

When I arrived at Carter G. Woodson Middle School, part of KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) Central City Academy in New Orleans, it was a perfect spring day - and strangely quiet. I had never been to the Central City area of New Orleans and wasn’t quite sure what to expect. Tucked in the middle of a mixed commercial and residential area still struggling to recover from the effects of Hurricane Katrina, is a beautiful, state of the art middle school.

As I made my way into the school and to the schoolyard behind, I was again struck by the quiet at 9:30 am on Monday morning. I asked a passing maintenance worker, “Is it spring break?” “No,” she replied. “The kids are here, but they’re busy.” She explained to me that the

students are very focused during class time and have longer days, and a longer school year than regular public schools. As I wandered through the garden taking pictures and preparing for the arrival of all the special guests for the ribbon cutting ceremony, I was struck by the markers clearly made by students not only identifying the plants in the beds, but about the garden itself. Several had statements about working hard and respecting the garden. I took notice of my



surroundings - I could see the skyline of downtown New Orleans while standing in the greenhouse and an open area that maybe would serve as a community park immediately across the road. This garden is clearly a bright spot in a somewhat blighted urban area.

I looked up from taking pictures and two students approached me. “Hello miss. Our teacher sent us out here to keep you company,” said 7th grader Keyira Powell. Keyira was accompanied by a small 6th grader named Clifton Desilva who mostly stood in silence while Keyira, clearly a school ambassador, began telling me about all the wonderful things that happen at KIPP, including the gardening club which she is not currently a part of, but has immediate plans to join when she finishes her current drama and art activities, while pursuing her own blog and potential video series. Remember this child’s name, she is going to do great things one day.

I began to direct my questions to Clifton to put him at ease and engage him. And

when he began talking about the garden, he came to life, showing great excitement and enthusiasm about the garden. With pride he showed me the new rock he had put out along the sidewalk the day before to keep people out of the garden.

“Is it to keep people like me out of the garden?” I asked. “Well, yes,” he said “but mostly it’s to try to keep the kids out. This is where we play, but I don’t want them playing in our garden. They need to respect the garden.”

Clifton’s favorite part of gardening at the school is planting tomatoes, watering the plants, making decisions and keeping people out of it. He told me he has learned so much that he has been able to share with his mother that he inspired her to start a garden at their home where he is now teaching her to garden as well. He told me the gardening club meets twice a week, Thursdays after school and on Sunday afternoons.



“Sundays? You must be really dedicated to come here on a Sunday. Do you live nearby?” I asked. “No,” he replied. “We live across the river, my Mom brings me here on Sunday afternoons to work.”

I was dumbfounded. A child and a parent that are so dedicated to learning and understanding gardening and where their food comes from, something so foreign to some in the city, yet so simple to many of us, that they dedicate a Sunday afternoon to come across the river to work in a small school garden was absolutely inspirational to me. And then I remembered that USDA NRCS and the office of Civil Rights was providing this neat little greenhouse

in the corner to expand educational opportunities for these kids.



As the formal program began leading up to the actual ribbon cutting on the greenhouse, Dr. Joe Leonard, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, spoke about the importance of connecting kids with healthy food, understanding where food comes from and laying the foundation for young people to grow into healthy adults. As he reminisced on his time as an educator in the New Orleans school system, I began to understand the special significance this particular greenhouse had for him. USDA has provided grants for many schools across the country for these greenhouses and Dr. Leonard had visited several in March, but this one clearly was special.

Elora Turner, Special Education instructor and Garden Club sponsor, spoke about what the garden meant to the school, the students and the philosophies and the teaching methods at KIPP. When she began to compare plants in the garden to students in the school, I was moved. A successful garden must have plants with a healthy root system, you start from the ground up. Plants don’t grow from the top down and education and student development doesn’t happen that way either. You start with a good foundation, or root system, for the students in the form of mentors in the community willing to volunteer their time and share their knowledge, partners willing to provide sponsorships or grants such as USDA and private businesses and of course parents and teachers that encourage the students to grow. Not only are they learning the growing process of plants, they are learning where their food comes from and healthy eating habits.

There are inherent life lessons learned in the garden along the way. The students pick the plants to grow and have, so far, had as many failures as successes. But they are learning from mistakes and celebrate small successes. Elora said that even problems in the classroom can be turned to success in the garden, where patience, trial and error and responsibility can be learned. 8th grade students and garden club members Tonea Perkins and Javell Desalle said they were “learning by teaching others” and had learned a lot about “patience, hard work, and determination.”

And then Tonea and Javell cut the ribbon on the greenhouse. And the children cheered. Elora made a passing comment about finding new mentors that could teach them about using this new greenhouse. Clifton said to a classmate “we’ll be using it to grow tomatoes is what we’ll be doing,” and like that, it was over. And I didn’t want to leave or the children to go back to class because they were so captivating. And they were so excited that USDA had expanded their garden. And it made me so proud that we were a part, in a very small way, of something that could truly influence a young mind in the form of a simple school garden.



To learn more about KIPP New Orleans Schools visit www.kippneworleans.org. To learn more about USDA StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity visit www.usda.gov/strikeforce. To see interviews and video of the garden, visit This Week in Agriculture at www.twilatv.org or see the clip at www.youtube.com/watch?v=PsLMwGO8pAM&feature=player_embedded1201.



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
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	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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