



Spring 2008
Legislative
Report
Georgia



Helping People Help the Land

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Senator Johnny Isakson

Environmental Quality Incentives Program Helps Restore Okefenokee Basin

by *Mary Ann McQuinn,
State Public Affairs Specialist*

On April 16, 2007, a tree fell on a power line near Waycross, and ignited the largest wildfire in Georgia's recorded history.

The Georgia Bay Complex burned and negatively impacted wildlife habitat on 441,705 acres in Georgia and destroyed 18 structures. In Florida, another 122,745 acres were destroyed.

Much of the destruction occurred in the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge and a large "Cypress Dome" known as the Roundabout Swamp.

Cypress domes are forested wetlands, dominated by bald cypress, that provide habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife species.

Eventually, more than 3,300 people from 44 states would bring the fire under control--but the landscape was devastated. The Georgia Forestry Commission estimates that over \$8 million is needed to reforest non-industrial private land.

Longleaf pines once covered most of the southeast coastal plain and provided habitat for the gopher tortoise, flatwoods salamanders and striped newts which are now considered threatened or endangered species. This natural disaster caused loss of this valuable habitat. Restoration around the Okefenokee Swamp was tar-

geted to restore the "Longleaf Pine" ecosystem.

Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, \$1.4 million in cost-share funds will be used to restore more than 3,500 acres of Longleaf Pine in Georgia.



All that remains of this Carolina Bay after the fire swept through. WRP funds will be used to re-establish cypress trees.



Longleaf Pine seedling is natively adapted to withstand wildfire. This tiny seedling is proof.

2007 Quick Facts for Georgia

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	1,451
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$22,876,000
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$15,800,000
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$326,000
* Conservation Security Program	\$4,750,000
* Farm & Ranch Land Protection Program	\$1,000,000
* Wetland Reserve Program	\$1,000,000
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$10,975,436
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$5,930,447
Forty-nine Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.	

Conservation on the Ground

Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	178,612 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	216,502 acres

Conservation Planning

NRCS has provided technical assistance to producers in 2007 to develop 3,078 conservation plans on 347,327 acres throughout the state.

Conservation Security Program

While there was no new Conservation Security Program 2007 sign up, 206 producers continued to provide environmental benefits improving Georgia's soil, water and wildlife by implementing their CSP conservation plans. These producers were rewarded for this effort through \$4.7 million in CSP payments.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

In 2007, approximately 1,100 Georgia farmers benefited from \$15.3 million in Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) financial assistance funds. Livestock producers received over 70% of these EQIP dollars.

Two hundred and nineteen contracts were developed to retro-fit high pressure irrigation center pivots to low pressure systems with drops; and several micro irrigation systems along with some solid set systems to assist small scale farmers.

EQIP funds were used to help restore the wildlife habitat lost in the fires. Landowners in Ware County, close to the Okefenokee Swamp, were able to utilize EQIP funds to replant 3,500 acres of trees that included 1,800 acres of long leaf pine.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program

Georgia received over \$2.79 million dollars of EWP funding in November of 2004. These funds are being used to apply emergency conservation measures in three counties: Gilmer, Rabun, and Towns.

These counties suffered damage as a result of Hurricane Ivan, Jeanne, and other storms that occurred in 2004.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

In 2007, three proposals were selected for funding providing permanent protection of 180 acres of farmland in Bartow, Oconee and Walton Counties at a valued of \$3.3 million.

The Georgia Land Conservation Program funding was used as a match for the first time.

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

NRCS and the Georgia Grazing Lands Conservation Coalition (GGLCC) encourage forage and livestock producers to adopt practices to promote the efficient use of their grazing land, while conserving soil and protecting water quality.

Plant Materials Program

The Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center (PMC) has eight active studies involving plants native to the Southeast with emphasis on seeding rates, establishment, growth, management and culture of native warm season grasses.

The PMC entered into agreement with the Wildlife Federation to look at seeding techniques of Native Warm Season Grasses into existing pastures.

Resource Conservation & Development

During 2007, RC&D Councils in Georgia created or retained 36 businesses across the state of Georgia. Five watersheds were planned benefiting 48,885 acres of land and water.

It is also estimated that RC&D Councils implemented 260 projects totaling over \$14 million in assistance.

Technical Service Providers

Seventy-four individuals and organizations are certified through the Technical Service Provider (TSP) program to provide technical services in Georgia.

Twenty-eight Georgia producers were funded to receive technical assistance on EQIP contracts on Residue Management and Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans this year.

Watershed Planning and Surveys Program

In 2007, NRCS provided \$65,000 in technical assistance to three communities. A water supply reservoir, to service 30,000 people, is being planned for Dawson County with the Etowah Water and Sewer Authority.

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division has provided \$200,000 to NRCS to conduct watershed planning in the Upper Alapaha River and the Upper Withlacoochee River Watersheds.

Watershed Operations Program

Since 1952, a total of 77 small watershed projects have been approved for operations in Georgia. Some \$189 million

of water quality improvements, soil erosion reduction, flood protection, recreation, and wildlife habitat establishment have been planned on 5.2 million acres.

NRCS has received over \$7 million to help local landowners install conservation practices for water quality improvement.

Watershed Dam Operation and Maintenance

To date, the maintenance on 93 dams has been brought up to date. Since 1953, 357 NRCS Assisted Project Dams have been constructed.

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One hundred eighty-nine of 357 project dams are "High Hazard," indicating a potential loss of life if the dam were to fail. Since 2002, NRCS-Georgia has secured \$9.5 million to upgrade six watershed dams.

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In 2007 the Wetlands Reserve Program targeted enrollment of Carolina Bays located in Jenkins and Screven Counties. Carolina Bays are elliptical wetlands that have several unique features making them particularly desirable for restoration and protection. This year's program utilized \$1 million in WRP funds to place easement on 7 different Carolina Bays totaling 1,300 acres.

WRP funds were used to help restore acreage damaged by the fires in Roundabout Swamp in Atkinson County. Landowners agreed to plant Long leaf pine on land that was deemed suitable and the remaining acres were planted in cypress.

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2007 Quick Facts for Congressional District 1

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Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$3,266,132
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$3,132,064
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$92,445
* Conservation Security Program	\$41,623

Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds \$1,462,591

Total RG&D Funds Brought to the State \$571,863

Six Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.

Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	32,121 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	43,952 acres

Conservation Planning

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Congressman Sanford Bishop

Silvopasture Maximizes Land Use in Early County

by *Mary Ann McQuinn,*
State Public Affairs Specialist

You might not think of a former New Jersey field engineer with International Business Machines (IBM) as a leader in conservation farming, but when it comes to Mack Evans of Jakin, that's not all that will surprise you.

Evans purchased some land in the late 70's that had been in his wife's family for more than 100 years and planted it in loblolly pine. "For me, it was an investment," he said. "After doing some research, I found that farmers can make more money out of saw timber," he added.

Evans came back to Jakin in 2003 to manage his trees—after spending another 5 years with Eastman Kodak. Evans thinned his pine stand in 1996 and again in 1999 and was receiving a "nice income" without managing his farm.

Evans, who said he gets all of his farm information from the internet, was surfing the web one day looking for information on removing understory vegetation and discovered silvopasture. "I would go on the web at night. I found silvopasture on a USDA web site." Silvopasture is an agroforestry practice that combines trees, forage plants and livestock management.

Evans called USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) District Conservationist Joe

Wilson, who said "Mack that's a great idea!" Current District Conservationist Steven Cleland echoed the sentiment and recommended silvopasture as a good conservation practice because it maximizes the use of the land while helping conserve the natural resources.

Evans, who bought his first herd of cattle in 2003, said that he has noticed his trees growing faster since he adopted silvopasture. He received cost-share funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to help plant pasture grass.

Evans, who hosts field days on his farm to teach other farmers, said that he wishes farmers would take better advantage of the research being done at universities. "Farmers out here don't use the universities as much as they should—the researchers do the work and it just sits on the shelf," he said.

Evans was selected as a participant in the 2005 Georgia Agri-Leaders Forum, whose mission is to provide a forum for developing individual leaders skilled in communications, educated in local, national, and world affairs, familiar with the changing needs of our society, and prepared to meet the present and future challenges.

Evans' progressive approach to resource management through the implementation of a silvopasture system has been observed and praised by individuals at the local, state, regional, and national levels.

2007 Quick Facts for Congressional District 2	
Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	2,421
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$5,817,669
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$3,255,791
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$25,044
* Conservation Security Program	\$2,536,834
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$2,180,857
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$1,827,599
Twelve Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers	
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	37,106 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	44,557 acres

Conservation Planning

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Conservation Security Program

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Resource Conservation & Development

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Watershed Rehabilitation Program

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Wetlands Reserve Program

In 2007 the Wetlands Reserve Program targeted enrollment of Carolina Bays located in Jenkins and Screven Counties. Carolina Bays are elliptical wetlands that have several unique features making them particularly desirable for restoration and protection. This year's program utilized \$1 million in WRP funds to place easement on 7 different Carolina Bays totaling 1,300 acres.

WRP funds were used to help restore acreage damaged by the fires in Roundabout Swamp in Atkinson County. Landowners agreed to plant Long leaf pine on land that was deemed suitable and the remaining acres were planted in cypress.

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Congressman Lynn Westmoreland

Longview Farm is Conservation Pioneer in Coweta County

by Kevin Keel, District Conservationist

David Brown, owner of Longview Farm is a conservation pioneer in the Senoia community of Coweta County. Brown's property contains over 400 acres, mainly consisting of hayland, pastureland, and cattle.

A conservation goal of Brown's was to improve water quality and benefit fish and wildlife resources in the watershed and improve habitat conditions for several federally listed threatened and endangered mussels found in Coweta County.

"I consider the wildlife on my farm to be a great value," said Brown. Brown and his wife Rita purchased the Longview Farm in 1991. The farm was in eroded badly due to improper timber management.

A retired District Conservationist with the USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Brown sought funding through the Fish and Wildlife Partners Program and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). The project involved the installation of nearly one mile of fence to exclude Brown's 125 cows from streams and a lake on Longview Farm.

In addition to the fencing, controlled access watering ramps were installed to allow the cattle to continue to utilize water from the streams and lake while

protecting these waters from further degradation. A 35 feet riparian buffer of natural regeneration and native vegetation was restored along each side of the Little White Oak Creek and associated wetland areas.

Within a year, Brown had almost half of the acreage cleared, fenced and planted to prevent further erosion. Brown continues to thin timber on the farm every 5 years.

Longview Farm has been toured by conservation officials and other farmers in the area who are seeking to incorporate similar practices on their farms.

A farmer for 60 years, Brown's credits the conservation knowledge gained over many years in giving him the ability to recognize the numerous benefits this project presented. "My greatest accomplishment has been using the knowledge I gained to establish a self-supporting farm from over 400 acres of cut-over timberland," said Brown.

Brown credits NRCS, the Georgia Soil and Water Commission, West Georgia Soil and Water Conservation District and the Georgia Forestry Commission for partnering to complete the this project.



2007 Quick Facts for Congressional District 3	
Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	11,294
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$2,792,600
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$2,729,501
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$63,099
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$1,281,943
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$249,808
Four Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.	
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	47,606 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	57,207 acres

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Congressman Hank Johnson

Environmental Quality Incentives Program Helps Restore Okefenokee Basin

by *Mary Ann McQuinn,*
State Public Affairs Specialist

On April 16, 2007, a tree fell on a power line near Waycross, and ignited the largest wildfire in Georgia's recorded history.

The Georgia Bay Complex burned and negatively impacted wildlife habitat on 441,705 acres in Georgia and destroyed 18 structures. In Florida, another 122,745 acres were destroyed.

Much of the destruction occurred in the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge and a large "Cypress Dome" known as the Roundabout Swamp. Cypress domes are forested wetlands, dominated by bald cypress, that provide habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife species.

Eventually, more than 3,300 people from 44 states would bring the fire under control--but the landscape was devastated. The Georgia Forestry Commission estimates that over \$8 million is needed to reforest non-industrial private land.

Longleaf pines once covered most of the southeast coastal plain and provided habitat for the gopher tortoise, flatwoods salamanders and striped newts which are now considered threatened or endangered species. This natural disaster caused loss of this valuable habitat. Restoration around the Okefenokee Swamp was targeted to restore the "Longleaf Pine" ecosystem.

Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, \$1.4 million in cost-share funds will be used to restore more than 3,500 acres of Longleaf Pine in Georgia.



All that remains of this Carolina Bay after the fire swept through. WRP funds will be used to reestablish cypress trees.



This Longleaf Pine seedling survived the fire and is starting to grow again. Fire stimulates the growth of Longleaf Pine, helps to prune back branches on mature trees and keeps the undergrowth in check.

2007 Quick Facts for Congressional District 4

Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$1,340
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$1,340
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$2,066
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$1,900
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	6 acres

Conservation Planning

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Conservation Security Program

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Two hundred and nineteen contracts were developed to retro-fit high pressure irrigation center pivots to low pressure systems with drops; and several micro irrigation systems along with some solid set systems to assist small scale farmers.

EQIP funds were used to help restore the wildlife habitat lost in the fires. Landowners in Ware County, close to the Okefenokee Swamp, were able to utilize EQIP funds to replant 3,500 acres of trees that included 1,800 acres of long leaf pine.

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The Georgia Land Conservation Program funding was used as a match for the first time.

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Congressman John Lewis

Atlanta Native Plants – 10 Years After the Olympic Games

Ten years after the Olympics Games were held in Atlanta, the city has not only grown as a hub for commerce, but also as a leader in urban conservation.

In the spring of 1996, Atlanta became the first location in the nation to explore the use of native plants in an urban setting. The Atlanta native plants project (now known as the Grant Park Walking Tour) was a project of the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Georgia to reintroduce native plants to Grant Park. Thirty species of native plants were introduced for beautification and to control soil erosion in locations where vegetation was difficult to establish. Some of the plants were tested on rocky soils that retain little moisture, while others were planted in wet, poorly drained soils. Each plant was selected for its suitability to an extreme growing condition.

Not only were the native plants a welcome addition to Grant Park because of their natural beauty and their ability to grow on abused soil, but they came just in time for all of Atlanta’s visitors to enjoy during the 1996 Olympic Games.

“The purpose of this project was to promote native plants as a way to address urban resource concerns and to beautify the city for the ’96 Olympic Games,” said Valerie Pickard, District Conservationist, Urban Conservation Agronomist, for this project in 1996. “In 1994, we submitted a proposal, which made its way to the Atlanta Committee For the Olympic Games and it was approved. This project allowed us to use NRCS’ Jimmy Carter

Plants Materials Center as a support mechanism to assemble plant species and eight other plant materials centers and commercial sources for the actual propagation of plants.”

Native plants help to preserve and improve the environment. In addition to addressing erosion issues, native plants can restore healthy conditions to wetland areas, create nesting sites, filter bacteria from ground water supplies and offer shelter to tender plants and animals. Possibly the most attractive feature of native plants as it relates to the Olympic Games project is their heartiness. Because they have genetically adapted to Georgia soils and climates, native species require little to no maintenance and are more resistant to disease.

The AmeriCorps Team assisted with locating, propagating, harvesting and planting NRCS plant materials. In all, approximately 175,000 native plants were propagated or commercially purchased for use on urban sites: 13 Atlanta city parks, including Centennial Olympic Park and other Olympic venues. Ten years later, the plants are still thriving.

“We weren’t sure if the natives were going to live because of smog, pollution and no watering,” said Pickard. “Just look at how they’re still thriving. Not many people know that these plants can function outside of wooded areas. This project made more of a green-friendly environment for people who enjoy the urban parks.”

2007 Quick Facts for Congressional District 5	
Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	172
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$27,768
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$27,768
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$23,394
One Technical Service Provider is providing service to producers.	
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	0 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	0 acres

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Congressman Tom Price

Conservation Farming Through the Generations

John Bennett Jr. of Bennett Farms in Waleska, Cherokee County, is a third generation “model” of conservation farming. His family has owned and operated their farm for approximately 100 years.

It began with his grandfather who was a row cropper. Then his father took over the farm and began to convert from row cropping to pastures and poultry.

His father first realized the value of utilizing assistance from federally sponsored programs to improve the quality of his land.

He received assistance to install drainage tiles in some of his pasture areas.

This allowed him to utilize more of his land for his beef cattle.

After John took over the farm, one of his main goals was to “preserve and improve the land for his grandchildren.” He has been actively involved with the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for many years now.

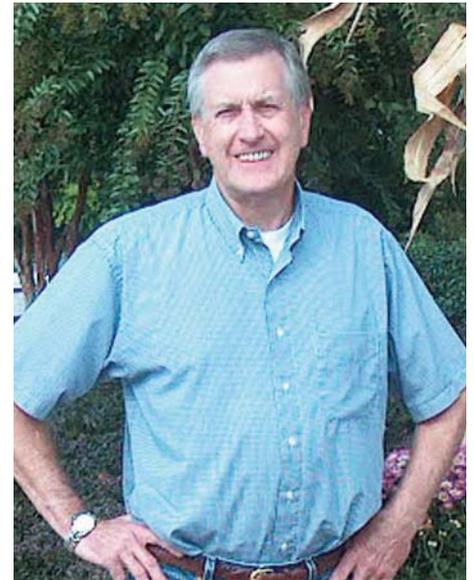
He has received technical and financial assistance for fencing, heavy use areas, stream crossings, prescribed grazing, nutrient and pest management and a poultry litter stack house.

He has also been approved for assistance with an animal mortality incinerator, which he expects to start working on

this winter. By installing the modern incinerator, he will be reducing soil pollution and improving the land.

When asked if he feels the EQIP program is meeting the needs of the farming community, he replied “Yes, it’s a very good program that gives a lot of encouragement in today’s economy.”

He also stated, “The local NRCS people have been very helpful, and I’m pleased to be working with such a good group.”



John Bennett, Jr. of Bennett Farms in Cherokee County is a third generation farmer.

2007 Quick Facts for Congressional District 6

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance 1,819

Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds \$53,788

Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State \$58,257

One Technical Service Provider is providing service to producers.

Conservation on the Ground

Total Acres with Conservation Treatments 38 acres

Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned 94 acres

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Congressman John Linder

Aesthetics Play a Key Role in Dam Rehabilitation

by Gregg Huddock, Golder Associates, Inc.
Jimmy Bramblett, NRCS-Georgia

The Yellow River Watershed Dam No. 17 (Y-17) is located approximately 30 miles northeast of Atlanta. The dam is part of a 92-acre facility owned and operated by the Gwinnett County Department of Parks and Recreation. Gwinnett County, in suburban Atlanta, has been one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas over the past 20 years.

The county's population was approximately 44,000 residents when most of the 14 NRCS assisted floodwater retarding structures were built in the 1960's.

Today, Gwinnett County's population is estimated at 700,794. As a result of this rapid development, the Y-17 structure, which was originally constructed to protect rural pasture and farmland, now protects recently constructed subdivisions, apartment complexes, office parks, retail businesses, and a high school located downstream of the dam.

This development caused the classification of the dam to change from low hazard to high hazard.

The Y-17 structure consists of an earthen embankment dam approximately 30 ft (9 m) high and 900 ft. long. Studies of the Y-17 structure determined that the existing 200 feet wide vegetated earthen spillway was inadequate for the design flows.

An alternatives assessment determined that the most cost effective solution



Aerial view with downstream hazards

was to armor the entire downstream slope and abutments of the dam with roller-compacted concrete (RCC).

The RCC forms a spillway approximately 550 ft wide that overtops the dam and allows the existing earthen spillway to be abandoned.

The spillway is asymmetric and designed to correspond with the varying topography along the downstream abutments.

The total project cost was \$2.1 million. Approximately 65% of the funding for the project was provided by the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed Rehabilitation Program since the structure was originally constructed by them.



Completed structure

2007 Quick Facts for Congressional District 7

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	1,368
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$196,920
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$46,920
* Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program	\$150,000
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$103,269
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$152,030
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Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	422 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	458 acres

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Georgia received \$335,000 in Wildlife Habitat Incentives program (WHIP) funds in 2007 approving 46 contracts in 23 counties. Management for Bob White Quail continues to be the primary use of these funds. Other practices included Longleaf Pine planting and Upland Wildlife Habitat Management.

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Congressman Jim Marshall

Grazing Land Improved in Jasper County

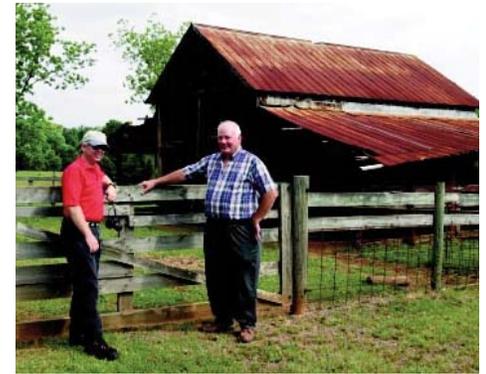
According to Henry Bell, the high point of his GGLCC demonstration project has been watching his 'MaxQ' tall fescue grow, and seeing his cows respond to it.

Bell observes that cattle on MaxQ are out in the pasture grazing during the heat of the day when cattle on 'Kentucky 31' tall fescue are in the shade.

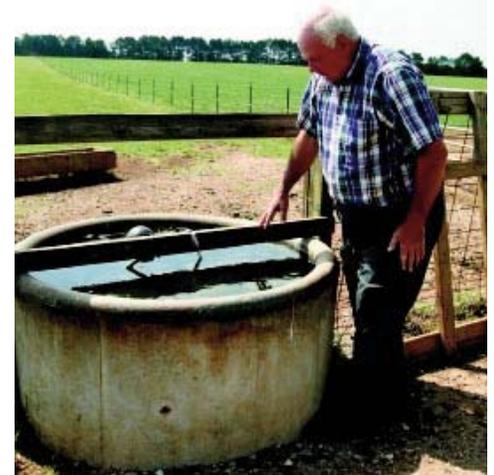
He documents that cattle on MaxQ are in better body condition than cattle on Kentucky 31.

When asked how his operation and management had changed as a result of identifying and addressing problem areas on the farm Bell replied, "I think I have more productive pastures for the cattle, better facilities for the working pens, the barns are more functional, and I pay a lot more attention to what the grass is doing so I can utilize rotational grazing for its intended benefits. My cows are grazing better pastures and live in a cleaner and safer environment."

"The application process really made me think about the big picture for the cattle and the farm, instead of putting band aids on things to correct a specific problem or area, and then having to do it again later," observes Bell.



NRCS Service Employee, Ray Spencer, and Henry Bell.



Henry Bell and his new watering trough.

2007 Quick Facts for Congressional District 8

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	1,173
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$3,150,661
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$971,897
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$7,390
* Conservation Security Program	\$2,171,374
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$795,970
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$276,200
Three Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.	
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	15,576 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	17,306 acres

Conservation Planning

NRCS has provided technical assistance to producers in 2007 to develop 3,078 conservation plans on 347,327 acres throughout the state.

Conservation Security Program

While there was no new Conservation Security Program 2007 sign up, 206 producers continued to provide environmental benefits improving Georgia's soil, water and wildlife buy implementing their CSP conservation plans. These producers were rewarded for this effort through \$4.7 million in CSP payments.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

In 2007, approximately 1,100 Georgia farmers benefited from \$15.3 million in Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) financial assistance funds.

Livestock producers received over 70% of these EQIP dollars.

Two hundred and nineteen contracts were developed to retro-fit high pressure irrigation center pivots to low pressure systems with drops; and several micro irrigation systems along with some solid set systems to assist small scale farmers.

EQIP funds were used to help restore the wildlife habitat lost in the fires. Landowners in Ware County, close to the Okefenokee Swamp, were able to utilize EQIP funds to replant 3,500 acres of trees that included 1,800 acres of long leaf pine.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program

Georgia received over \$2.79 million dollars of EWP funding in November of 2004. These funds are being used to apply emergency conservation measures in three counties: Gilmer, Rabun, and Towns.

These counties suffered damage as a result of Hurricane Ivan, Jeanne, and other storms that occurred in 2004.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

In 2007, three proposals were selected for funding providing permanent protection of 180 acres of farmland in Bartow, Oconee and Walton Counties at a valued of \$3.3 million.

The Georgia Land Conservation Program funding was used as a match for the first time.

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

NRCS and the Georgia Grazing Lands Conservation Coalition (GGLCC) encourage forage and livestock producers to adopt practices to promote the efficient use of their grazing land, while conserving soil and protecting water quality.

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The Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center (PMC) has eight active studies involving plants native to the Southeast with emphasis on seeding rates, establishment, growth, management and culture of native warm season grasses.

The PMC entered into agreement with the Wildlife Federation to look at seeding techniques of Native Warm Season Grasses into existing pastures.

Resource Conservation & Development

During 2007, RC&D Councils in Georgia created or retained 36 businesses across the state of Georgia. Five watersheds were planned benefiting 48,885 acres of land and water.

It is also estimated that RC&D Councils implemented 260 projects totaling over \$14 million in assistance.

Technical Service Providers

Seventy-four individuals and organizations are certified through the Technical Service Provider (TSP) program to provide technical services in Georgia.

Twenty-eight Georgia producers were funded to receive technical assistance on EQIP contracts on Residue Management and Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans this year.

Watershed Planning and Surveys Program

In 2007, NRCS provided \$65,000 in technical assistance to three communities. A water supply reservoir, to service 30,000 people, is being planned for Dawson County with the Etowah Water and Sewer Authority.

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division has provided \$200,000 to NRCS to conduct watershed planning in the Upper Alapaha River and the Upper Withlacoochee River Watersheds.

Watershed Operations Program

Since 1952, a total of 77 small watershed projects have been approved for operations in Georgia. Some \$189 million

of water quality improvements, soil erosion reduction, flood protection, recreation, and wildlife habitat establishment have been planned on 5.2 million acres.

NRCS has received over \$7 million to help local landowners install conservation practices for water quality improvement.

Watershed Dam Operation and Maintenance

To date, the maintenance on 93 dams has been brought up to date. Since 1953, 357 NRCS Assisted Project Dams have been constructed.

Watershed Rehabilitation Program

One hundred eighty-nine of 357 project dams are "High Hazard," indicating a potential loss of life if the dam were to fail. Since 2002, NRCS-Georgia has secured \$9.5 million to upgrade six watershed dams.

Additionally, 45 dams have been, or are being, analyzed to determine the extent of downstream hazards. Emergency Action Plans will be developed to help protect residents living below these structures.

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In 2007 the Wetlands Reserve Program targeted enrollment of Carolina Bays located in Jenkins and Screven Counties. Carolina Bays are elliptical wetlands that have several unique features making them particularly desirable for restoration and protection. This year's program utilized \$1 million in WRP funds to place easement on 7 different Carolina Bays totaling 1,300 acres.

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Congressman Nathan Deal

Restoration of Lumpkin County Farm

Don Hunt, of Lumpkin County, purchased an old worn out farm with numerous gullies, overgrown pastures, and several “trash piles.” As he described it “I had gullies that were deeper than my tractor, and my pastures were overgrown and in poor condition. I knew I wanted a pond and other improvements.”

He had the goal to restore it to a productive farm while protecting the natural resources, and providing an enjoyable place for his family to live. He sought help from the county agent in Lumpkin County who referred him to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

NRCS helped Hunt develop a conservation plan that included practices to control erosion and protect and improve his pastures and woodlands.

The plan contained the following practices: Forest Harvesting and Management; Nutrient Management; Pest Management; Critical Area Planting; Diversions; Forest Stand Improvement; Ponds; Fishpond Management; Access Road; and Sediment Basins.

Hunt noted that “taking care of a tract of land is much more management, labor, and capital intensive than most people realize. It can be a full-time job just by

itself!” He was glad to have help from NRCS, stating the best thing about NRCS programs is “having access to someone who would actually come out to my farm and look at my problems and listen to my ideas on the ground.”

After improvements, Hunt states “certainly the pond is the highlight of what we have done. My entire family as well as the wildlife on the farm all enjoy it. Also, taking the eroded gullies and restoring them to a productive area was very important.”



This pond is the highlight of Don Hunt’s conservation improvements on his property which everyone in his family enjoys, but for different reasons.

2007 Quick Facts for Congressional District 9

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	2,559
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$2,976,676
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$2,972,521
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$4,155

Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds **\$1,285,914**

Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State **\$506,532**

Thirteen Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.

Conservation on the Ground

Total Acres with Conservation Treatments **18,291 acres**

Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned **22,158 acres**

Conservation Planning

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Conservation Security Program

While there was no new Conservation Security Program 2007 sign up, 206 producers continued to provide environmental benefits improving Georgia's soil, water and wildlife by implementing their CSP conservation plans. These producers were rewarded for this effort through \$4.7 million in CSP payments.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

In 2007, approximately 1,100 Georgia farmers benefited from \$15.3 million in Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) financial assistance funds. Livestock producers received over 70% of these EQIP dollars.

Two hundred and nineteen contracts were developed to retro-fit high pressure irrigation center pivots to low pressure systems with drops; and several micro irrigation systems along with some solid set systems to assist small scale farmers.

EQIP funds were used to help restore the wildlife habitat lost in the fires. Landowners in Ware County, close to the Okefenokee Swamp, were able to utilize EQIP funds to replant 3,500 acres of trees that included 1,800 acres of long leaf pine.

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Watershed Planning and Surveys Program

In 2007, NRCS provided \$65,000 in technical assistance to three communities. A water supply reservoir, to service 30,000 people, is being planned for Dawson County with the Etowah Water and Sewer Authority.

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Watershed Rehabilitation Program

One hundred eighty-nine of 357 project dams are "High Hazard," indicating a potential loss of life if the dam were to fail. Since 2002, NRCS-Georgia has secured \$9.5 million to upgrade six watershed dams.

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Congressman Paul Broun

Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program Saves Family Farm in Oconee

For three generations, the Breedlove family in Oconee County raised their children on the family homestead. Ann (Breedlove) Powers wanted to do the same thing. Rising property taxes, increasing pressure to sell to developers in this highly lucrative market, and the cost of maintaining the farm was making hanging onto the land more difficult.

That's when the Powers family heard about something called the Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP) and made a visit to the United States Department of Agriculture Service Center in Watkinsville.

The first step was to develop a conservation plan for the farm with the help of the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS provides the technical expertise on the land that helps determine the best use of all their resources in a way that conserves the natural resources for future generations. To participate in the federal conservation programs, you must have a conservation plan.

Cost-share programs from USDA's Farm Service Agency, NRCS, the Georgia Forestry Commission and others helped provide the funds to implement the farm renovation. Large riparian buffers were established and alternate water sources for



livestock were constructed to help keep water clean and safe. Trees were planted to provide habitat for wildlife. Nutrient and pest management assistance is provided on an ongoing basis.

Now the heart of the farm, the home place, has been preserved through the joint efforts of the Athens Land Trust, Oconee County, the Georgia Greenspace Program, USDA-NRCS, the Oconee County Partnership for Farmland Protection and, of course, the Powers themselves.

The development rights for 60 acres has been purchased using funds from Oconee County's Greenspace grant and USDA-NRCS's Farmland Protection Program. These rights are held in perpetuity by the Athens Land Trust through a conservation easement.

The fourth generation, Frances and Will Powers, agreed to carry on the agricultural heritage of their ancestors and have ensured that the agricultural benefits will be available to residents of Oconee County for generations to come.

2007 Quick Facts for Congressional District 10

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	772
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$1,567,286
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$1,417,286
* Farm And Ranch Land Protection Program	\$150,000
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$793,985
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$1,829,085
One Technical Service Provider is providing service to producers.	
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	11,937 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	18,832 acres

Conservation Planning

NRCS has provided technical assistance to producers in 2007 to develop 3,078 conservation plans on 347,327 acres throughout the state.

Conservation Security Program

While there was no new Conservation Security Program 2007 sign up, 206 producers continued to provide environmental benefits improving Georgia's soil, water and wildlife buy implementing their CSP conservation plans. These producers were rewarded for this effort through \$4.7 million in CSP payments.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

In 2007, approximately 1,100 Georgia farmers benefited from \$15.3 million in Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) financial assistance funds. Livestock producers received over 70% of these EQIP dollars.

Two hundred and nineteen contracts were developed to retro-fit high pressure irrigation center pivots to low pressure systems with drops; and several micro irrigation systems along with some solid set systems to assist small scale farmers.

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Technical Service Providers

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Twenty-eight Georgia producers were funded to receive technical assistance on EQIP contracts on Residue Management and Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans this year.

Watershed Planning and Surveys Program

In 2007, NRCS provided \$65,000 in technical assistance to three communities. A water supply reservoir, to service 30,000 people, is being planned for Dawson County with the Etowah Water and Sewer Authority.

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Additionally, 45 dams have been, or are being, analyzed to determine the extent of downstream hazards. Emergency Action Plans will be developed to help protect residents living below these structures.

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In 2007 the Wetlands Reserve Program targeted enrollment of Carolina Bays located in Jenkins and Screven Counties. Carolina Bays are elliptical wetlands that have several unique features making them particularly desirable for restoration and protection. This year's program utilized \$1 million in WRP funds to place easement on 7 different Carolina Bays totaling 1,300 acres.

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Congressman Phil Gingrey

All-Natural Cattle Farm Benefits from NRCS and EQIP

By Valerie Pickard,
District Conservationist

Nora Goodman owns and operates a 200-acre farm in Temple. She breeds and raises "all natural" beef cattle.

The cattle receive no hormones or antibiotics. There are currently approximately 100 head of cattle and 50 stocker calves on the farm.

Goodman, along with one full-time employee, handles the day-to-day operations of cattle and haying quite efficiently. Any extra hay that is produced is baled to be sold.

There are four natural springs on her property. One of the springs feeds a 10-12 acre lake that is situated behind her home.

The areas of the property that don't have easy access to spring water, have drilled wells for the cattle's watering needs.

Thanks to the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), she has received technical and financial assistance to help improve her land and her farming techniques. Goodman has received help for cross fencing, wells, watering systems

and streambank exclusions. These Best Management Practices (BMP's) have enabled her to more efficiently rotate the cattle's grazing. She has also been approved for the Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP).

Goodman is currently experimenting with a natural fertilizer and plans to purchase a square baler for the hay that is to be sold.

She also selects the best time of year for breeding to insure that the cattle have the best grass.

Goodman has stated, "NRCS' Valerie Pickard (District Conservationist) has been very interested in my farm and is very knowledgeable and helpful."



Nora Goodman breeds and raises "all natural" beef cattle in Temple.

2007 Quick Facts for Congressional District 11

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	2,442
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$1,411,809
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$760,320
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$51,489
* Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program	\$600,000
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$453,190
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$126,253
Two Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.	

Conservation on the Ground

Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	11,934 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	11,575 acres

Conservation Planning

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Spring 2008
Legislative
Report
Georgia



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Producers may also be eligible for cost-share assistance to install the recommended practices through the Conservation Security Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, the Wetlands Reserve Program and others.

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Congressman John Barrow

Wildlife Habitat Improved on Working Farm in Taliaferro

Stan Jackson wanted to utilize his land for beef cattle and, at the same time, promote wildlife habitat management.

The livestock had access to the entire farm including woodlands, streams, and ponds. Jackson wanted to better manage his forage production and encourage wildlife habitat development.

Utilizing the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) program he installed over 6,000 feet of electric fence to exclude the livestock from wildlife areas.

Two hundred and thirty acres of pasture have been overseeded with clover to improve the nutrient availability to other grasses and to provide extra forage for the livestock and wildlife.

In addition, the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) program is being utilized to convert 300 acres of a pine monoculture to prime wildlife habitat by installing permanent wildlife food plots.

Prescribed burns and light disking will be conducted annually throughout the area to encourage native early successional vegetation growth.



Stan Jackson in one of his food plots.



6,000 feet of electric fence has been installed (above) and 230 acres overseeded with clover (below).



2007 Quick Facts for Congressional District 12	
Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	7,163
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$2,108,108
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$1,025,304
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$82,804
* Wetland Reserve Program	\$1,000,000
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$3,211,728
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$320,000
Four Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.	
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	14,236 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	17,863 acres

Conservation Planning

NRCS has provided technical assistance to producers in 2007 to develop 3,078 conservation plans on 347,327 acres throughout the state.

Conservation Security Program

While there was no new Conservation Security Program 2007 sign up, 206 producers continued to provide environmental benefits improving Georgia's soil, water and wildlife buy implementing their CSP conservation plans. These producers were rewarded for this effort through \$4.7 million in CSP payments.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

In 2007, approximately 1,100 Georgia farmers benefited from \$15.3 million in Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) financial assistance funds.

Livestock producers received over 70% of these EQIP dollars.

Two hundred and nineteen contracts were developed to retro-fit high pressure irrigation center pivots to low pressure systems with drops; and several micro irrigation systems along with some solid set systems to assist small scale farmers.

EQIP funds were used to help restore the wildlife habitat lost in the fires. Landowners in Ware County, close to the Okefenokee Swamp, were able to utilize EQIP funds to replant 3,500 acres of trees that included 1,800 acres of long leaf pine.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program

Georgia received over \$2.79 million dollars of EWP funding in November of 2004. These funds are being used to apply emergency conservation measures in three counties: Gilmer, Rabun, and Towns.

These counties suffered damage as a result of Hurricane Ivan, Jeanne, and other storms that occurred in 2004.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

In 2007, three proposals were selected for funding providing permanent protection of 180 acres of farmland in Bartow, Oconee and Walton Counties at a valued of \$3.3 million.

The Georgia Land Conservation Program funding was used as a match for the first time.

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

NRCS and the Georgia Grazing Lands Conservation Coalition (GGLCC) encourage forage and livestock producers to adopt practices to promote the efficient use of their grazing land, while conserving soil and protecting water quality.

Plant Materials Program

The Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center (PMC) has eight active studies involving plants native to the Southeast with emphasis on seeding rates, establishment, growth, management and culture of native warm season grasses.

The PMC entered into agreement with the Wildlife Federation to look at seeding techniques of Native Warm Season Grasses into existing pastures.

Resource Conservation & Development

During 2007, RC&D Councils in Georgia created or retained 36 businesses across the state of Georgia. Five watersheds were planned benefiting 48,885 acres of land and water.

It is also estimated that RC&D Councils implemented 260 projects totaling over \$14 million in assistance.

Technical Service Providers

Seventy-four individuals and organizations are certified through the Technical Service Provider (TSP) program to provide technical services in Georgia.

Twenty-eight Georgia producers were funded to receive technical assistance on EQIP contracts on Residue Management and Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans this year.

Watershed Planning and Surveys Program

In 2007, NRCS provided \$65,000 in technical assistance to three communities. A water supply reservoir, to service 30,000 people, is being planned for Dawson County with the Etowah Water and Sewer Authority.

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division has provided \$200,000 to NRCS to conduct watershed planning in the Upper Alapaha River and the Upper Withlacoochee River Watersheds.

Watershed Operations Program

Since 1952, a total of 77 small watershed projects have been approved for operations in Georgia. Some \$189 million

of water quality improvements, soil erosion reduction, flood protection, recreation, and wildlife habitat establishment have been planned on 5.2 million acres.

NRCS has received over \$7 million to help local landowners install conservation practices for water quality improvement.

Watershed Dam Operation and Maintenance

To date, the maintenance on 93 dams has been brought up to date. Since 1953, 357 NRCS Assisted Project Dams have been constructed.

Watershed Rehabilitation Program

One hundred eighty-nine of 357 project dams are "High Hazard," indicating a potential loss of life if the dam were to fail. Since 2002, NRCS-Georgia has secured \$9.5 million to upgrade six watershed dams.

Additionally, 45 dams have been, or are being, analyzed to determine the extent of downstream hazards. Emergency Action Plans will be developed to help protect residents living below these structures.

Wetlands Reserve Program

In 2007 the Wetlands Reserve Program targeted enrollment of Carolina Bays located in Jenkins and Screven Counties. Carolina Bays are elliptical wetlands that have several unique features making them particularly desirable for restoration and protection. This year's program utilized \$1 million in WRP funds to place easement on 7 different Carolina Bays totaling 1,300 acres.

WRP funds were used to help restore acreage damaged by the fires in Roundabout Swamp in Atkinson County. Landowners agreed to plant Long leaf pine on land that was deemed suitable and the remaining acres were planted in cypress.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

Georgia received \$327,000 in Wildlife Habitat Incentives program (WHIP) funds in 2007 approving 46 contracts in 23 counties. Management for Bob White Quail continues to be the primary use of these funds. Other practices included Longleaf Pine planting and Upland Wildlife Habitat Management.

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Congressman David Scott

The Glover Family Pioneers Organic Farming in Douglas County

Skip and Cookie Glover of Douglasville are proud pioneers and teachers of chemical-free farming. Glover's family has owned the 50 acre farm for over 100 years. It was originally a cattle and corn operation then was slowly transformed into a natural farming/market operation.

The interest in organic farming began with Skip's father in the 60's. He became inspired to find alternative approaches to insect and nutrient management after reading Silent Spring by Rachael Carson. This also led to natural soil building techniques.

The farm grows a variety of vegetables, herbs, honey and flowers while respecting the environment and the countryside. Of the 50 acres, only approximately 10 are in use for farming, free range chickens and goats. The rest of the acreage is left in a natural state for wildlife.

The farm also supports several different on-going educational programs for children and adults. Currently, they have an, "organic apprentice," Jordan Merrell from Utah working with them. Merrell plans to move to Peru after his apprenticeship to teach English and Chemical-Free Farming.

The Glovers have had a great, on-going relationship with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and local employees. They have hosted NRCS workshops and worked to establish the no-till conservation practices locally.

They are currently utilizing the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to help establish the fencing to exclude animals from the stream.

In addition to their full-time farming and educational duties, they are also actively involved with the Farmers Fresh Food Network, Cottonmill Farmers Market, Piedmont Green Market, Heifer International and the National Immigrant Farming Initiative.

Skip and Cookie are truly an inspiration to growers everywhere.



Skip Glover in front of his market building in Douglas County

2007 Quick Facts for Congressional District 13

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	172
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$65,526
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$65,526

Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$120,726
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Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$10,920
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One Technical Service Provider is providing service to producers.

Conservation on the Ground

Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	1,282 acres
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Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	1,326 acres
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