



United States Department of Agriculture

# Louisiana Conservation Update

January 2016

## Growing Change in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans

Story from the Field  
Solar Powered Success in  
Evangeline Parish

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

Projects • Successes • Partnerships



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### On the Cover



David Young is successfully farming in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans. To find out more about his operation, see pages 4 and 5.

The Conservation Update is distributed monthly by mail and e-mail.

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3737 Government Street  
Alexandria, Louisiana 71302

**Attention:**  
Amy Robertson  
State Public Affairs Specialist  
amy.robertson@la.usda.gov  
or  
Adele Swearingen  
adele.swearingen@la.usda.gov

USDA  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
3737 Government Street  
Alexandria, Louisiana 71302  
(318) 473-7751



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## Notes from the State Conservationist

A new year brings a fresh, new perspective to the way many of us view our surroundings. This time of year begs reflection on the accomplishments of the year before and new goals for the year ahead. We have set the bar high for NRCS in 2016. I am confident we can meet our goals by approaching challenges and opportunities creatively. Also by continuing to work side-by-side with our customers and partners to reach new heights and put strong conservation practices on the ground across our wonderful state.

In this issue of Conservation Update we meet David Young, an urban farmer, who is determined to bring fresh and affordable produce to the Lower Ninth Ward. Young has built an oasis in an area of New Orleans that is considered a “food desert.” USDA defines a food desert as, “Urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. Instead of supermarkets and grocery stores, these communities may have no food access or are served only by fast food restaurants and convenience stores that offer few healthy, affordable food options.” Besides helping start a farmer’s market, Young is passionate about teaching others to garden and by offering a “sharing lot” program that subsidizes the cost for someone to grow their own food. Young not only utilizes a high tunnel, he is also a bee keeper with 30 hives, as well as, raises goats, ducks and chickens.



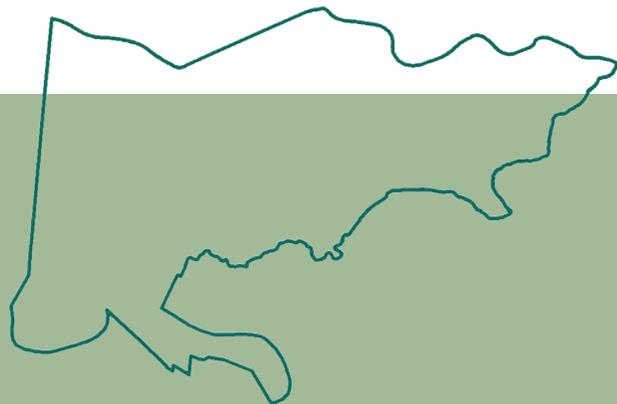
Also, in the next few issues you will notice a re-dedicated effort in promoting one of our greatest tools, Conservation Stewardship Program, CSP. We have countless success stories from producers across the state who are effectively using CSP to enhance their conservation systems across their agriculture and forest lands.

You will also see changes in the Conservation Update, beginning with this issue. “Conservation Reflections” is a spot dedicated for pictures of all types of conservation efforts in Louisiana. In fact, if you have a historic photo that you would like featured in the Conservation Update, send it our way. You never know, you could see your picture in the next issue!

Of more immediate concern, I would also like to encourage folks to send in their applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - Wetlands Reserve Easements (ACEP – WRE). This year NRCS is making available up to \$17 million in financial and technical assistance through ACEP-WRE. The deadline to apply for 2016 funding consideration is Monday, February 29th.

All Louisiana NRCS and Soil and Water Conservation District employees are excited about what lies ahead for our collective conservation efforts this year. Central to our success will be you- the private land steward. Please take time to visit one of our 44 field offices located across the state and meet your local District Conservationist and find out how we can assist you and how you can get more involved in the conservation efforts in your community.

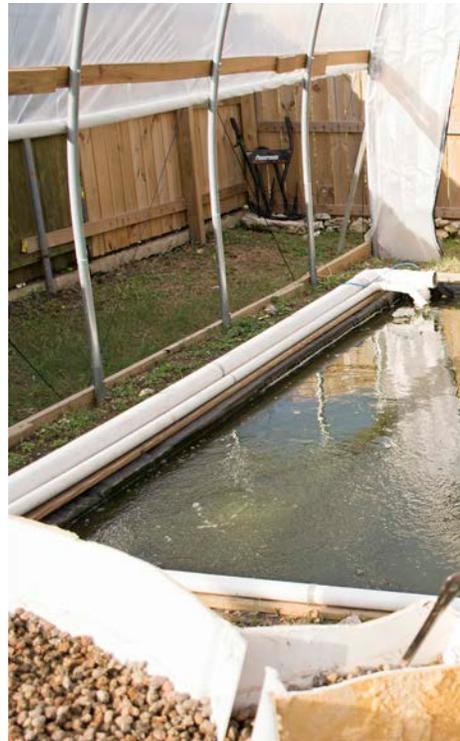
Kevin D. Norton  
State Conservationist



# Orleans Parish Ag Facts

There are 14 farms in Orleans Parish  
111 acres of land is in farms  
Home gardens account for most of the agriculture

From [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)



## Growing Change in the Lower Ninth Ward

In the summer of 2008, David Young was invited to travel to New Orleans to help re-build houses in areas devastated by Hurricane Katrina for what he thought was only going to be for a week, but turned into so much more.

Although discouraged from visiting the Lower Ninth Ward while volunteering, Young did just that. He spent time visiting with the people that had come back and were trying to start their lives over again.

"I found there was a much greater need in the Lower Ninth Ward than just housing," said Young.

So that is when he bought his first lot and planted his first garden with the intent of feeding himself. However, he soon realized that others were harvesting the food from the garden and they obviously had a greater need for the food than he did himself.

In 2012, Young won an award and was able to use the prize money to purchase another lot which has 30 fruit and citrus trees on it.

Since then, he has expanded his operation covering 30 lots scattered throughout the Lower Ninth Ward. He raises goats, ducks and chickens in addition to the fruits and vegetables that are grown.

"For the first two years that I farmed, I noticed that there were no bees. So, out of necessity, I became a beekeeper," said Young. He found that there was a high demand in New Orleans for local raw honey, so he has expanded his beekeeping operation and now has 30 hives which produce approximately \$10,000 worth of honey each year. He is hoping to further expand this part of his operation.

The money he makes from honey sales are used to purchase what is needed to grow the food that is given away. Last year, Young was able to give away 2500 pounds of food.

He also helped start a local farmer's market that doesn't have any vendor fees and the prices of the food are kept low to help make food available to the people in this "food desert" who either don't have their own transportation or who can't afford to

drive across town to buy food. It also allows these same people an opportunity to sell what they have grown.

In an area of his farm, there is a sharing lots program that subsidizes the costs for someone to grow their own food. During the first year of the program, they are provided with a 20' x 40' lot, water, seed, plants and training. For the second year, they are asked to reimburse one-half the operating expenses and the 3rd year and beyond they should be self-sufficient and able to cover all of the costs.

Recently, the LSU AgCenter started an educational center on another area of his farm.

Young is a first-time customer of NRCS. Last year when NRCS offered special funding through EQIP for high tunnel installation in the Greater New Orleans Metropolitan Area, Young visited the local office and submitted an application. His application was one of six that the office received and he is the first to have finished construction.



# d of New Orleans

One of the things he is raising inside of of the high tunnel is catfish that he will market for sale. In addition, they provide fertilizer for his closed-loop aquaculture system.

The water from the pond is pumped through the two grow beds. The bacteria that grows breaks the ammonia in the waste down into nitrates and nitrites that the plants in the grow beds need and the water is circulated back into the pond cleaner than when it left. It takes a year for the bacteria to fully grow so over the course of the next eight months he will slowly add grow beds on the lot as the catfish increase in size.

Anything that is traditionally grown in the

ground can be grown in the grow beds. By using this closed loop system he is able to conserve 90% of the water that would be used if he grew the plants in the traditional way in the ground.

Conservation is important to Young and can be seen throughout his entire operation through the conservation of water in his aquaculture system, his use of recycled and repurposed materials for his grow beds and using his goats to keep grass and weeds clipped.

What Young started and is continuing to do for this area of New Orleans is truly growing change for the people of the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans.



# Story from the Field

## Solar-Powered Success in Evangeline Parish

Submitted by: Kayla Hebert, former Soil Conservationist, Ville Platte FO

Michael O'Quin initially visited the Ville Platte Field Office looking for ways to address erosion issues on his farm and improve his ability to water his livestock. At the time of his visit, water for his livestock was being pumped from a water well using a gasoline pump and then transported to troughs which consumed time, labor and energy.

Once a conservation plan was developed, O'Quin began making improvements to his farm through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). He solved the erosion issues by installing heavy use protection areas for his troughs, winter feeding areas and one gate crossing. He will have a shaded

area in his southern field once his tree establishment matures.



To address the issue of improving his livestock operation and providing a better source of water for his livestock, O'Quin installed a water well, water pipeline, troughs, and solar powered

water pumping plant. By installing all of these conservation practices, O'Quin substantially improved the quality of water for his livestock by keeping them away from drainage ditches.

Once everything was installed, O'Quin agreed to host a field day on his farm so that local producers could learn more about the benefits of installing conservation practices, in particular solar powered watering systems.



### StrikeForce Initiative



## Louisiana Update

for Rural Growth and Opportunity

## Sankofa Fresh Stop Market Grand Opening December, 19, 2015

Located in the heart of the lower ninth ward in New Orleans is Sankofa Fresh Stop Market. A locally run farmers market that offers fresh produce at reasonable prices for the community. Sankofa comes from the Akan language of Ghana and translates literally to SAN (return), KO (go), FA (look, seek and take). In the Akan culture, the Sankofa represents the importance of respecting the wisdom of the past while planning and working for the future.

On Saturday, December 19, 2015, Sankofa celebrated their grand opening and NRCS was there to be part of the festivities. Kevin Norton, NRCS State Conservationist, spoke during the ribbon cutting ceremony



and Dexter Sapp, NRCS StrikeForce coordinator, provided information about upcoming NRCS events in the New Orleans area. Children of all ages participated in the creating healthy soils hands-on activities at the NRCS booth.



Sankofa Fresh Stop Market is located on St. Claude Avenue in New Orleans and is open every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1p.m. The market has a wide variety of fresh fruits, vegetables and hand-made items. There is no admission fee and everyone is welcome. For more information about Sankofa Fresh Stop Market visit <http://www.sankofanola.org/>



## Around the State

### December 11, 2015 State Conservationist Receives Award at USA Rice Conference

On December 11, 2015, USA Rice presented the Sixth Annual USA Rice Distinguished Conservation Achievement Award to Kevin Norton, state conservationist for Louisiana NRCS. Leo Lagrande, chairman of the USA Rice Farmers' Conservation Committee, presented the award at the annual Rice Awards luncheon held during the 2015 USA Rice Outlook Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Photo courtesy of USA Rice



### January 10 - 12 70th Annual LACD Convention

The Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts hosted their 70th annual convention in Lafayette, Louisiana on January 10 - 12, 2016. Over 200 people attended from conservation districts across the state. During the general session, attendees learned about a vision for the future from Dr. Dan Seibert, Executive Director of the National Watershed Coalition. Other speakers during the session were Kevin Norton, state conservationist, NRCS; Craig McCain, state executive director, Farm Service Agency; Earl Garber, immediate past president, National Association of Conservation Districts; and Joey Breaux, ag. environmental specialist, Louisiana

Department of Ag and Forestry, Office of Soil and Water Conservation.



A special luncheon was hosted during the convention on Tuesday, January 12, recognizing the farmers who were certified as Master Farmers in 2015.

### January 15 - 16, 2016 Ag Expo

NRCS exhibited at Ag Expo in West Monroe, Louisiana, on January 15 -16, 2016. Approximately 12,000 visited the trade show this year. This event provides a way to educate the public on the many ways agriculture touches daily lives.

### January 22, 2016 LFA Tree Giveaway

The Louisiana Forestry Association held their annual tree giveaway celebrating Arbor Day on the morning of January 22, 2016, in Alexandria, Louisiana. Kevin Norton, state conservationist and Amy Robertson, state public affairs specialist assisted the association in giving away the trees.



## Upcoming Events

### 2016 High Tunnel Production Workshops

NRCS in partnership with the LSU AgCenter will be hosting FREE high tunnel workshops across the state.

#### February 16, 2016

Sanchez Multipurpose Center  
1616 Caffin Avenue  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70117  
1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

#### February 18, 2016

LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens Conference Center  
4560 Essen Lane  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70809  
1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

#### February 23, 2016

LSU AgCenter Dean Lee Research Station Meeting Room  
8105 Tom Bowman Drive  
Alexandria, Louisiana 71302  
1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

#### February 24, 2016

LSU Agcenter Red River Research Station Auditorium  
262 Research Station Drive  
Bossier City, Louisiana 71112  
1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

#### March 1, 2016

LSU AgCenter Office Meeting Room  
1006 South Lake Arthur Avenue  
Jennings, Louisiana 70546  
1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Please register in advance for this free workshop at <http://lahightunnelworkshop.eventbrite.com>

For more information on the high tunnel workshops contact Ann Savage, [asavage@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:asavage@agcenter.lsu.edu) or by phone at 225-578-1037 or Carl Motsenbocker, [cmotsenbocker@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:cmotsenbocker@agcenter.lsu.edu) or by phone at 225-578-1036

## Programs Reminders

### ACEP-WRE Sign-up Deadline for 2016 Funding

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service is making available up to \$17 million in financial and technical assistance through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - Wetlands Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE). Private landowners across the state are encouraged to apply. **Applications must be received by Monday, February 29th to be considered for 2016 funding.**

Contact your local NRCS office today for more information!

## Conservation Reflections



Cultivating cotton in a field that had been in pasture for 24 years until this year (1953). Photo taken in Batchelor, Louisiana, in Pointe Coupee Parish.

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<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/la/>

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