

Projects . Successes . Partnerships

 **NRCS** Louisiana
Conservation Update
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June 2013



**Irrigation
Tailwater
Recovery**
Calcasieu Parish Success

**Stories from the Field
Improved Grazing Land
in St. Helena Parish**

**Bringing Back Longleaf Pine
in Washington Parish**

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

HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND

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On the Cover



Johnny Hensgens is the first farmer in his area to construct an irrigation tailwater recovery system. To learn more, see pages 4 and 5.

Below, left to right: Eric Jones, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician; Johnny Hensgens, Calcasieu Parish producer; and Wendall Meaux, NRCS Agricultural Engineer. Meaux and Jones worked closely with Hensgens to design and implement his irrigation tailwater recovery system.

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If you would like to receive monthly issues of the Conservation Update, please send your mailing address or e-mail address to:

Holly Martien
State Public Affairs Specialist
USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service
3737 Government Street
Alexandria, Louisiana 71302
or
holly.martien@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



Quote of the Month

“When the well’s dry, we know the worth of water.”

Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard’s Almanack, 1746. One of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America.

In Louisiana, it seems everywhere you turn you see a lake or a river or a bayou. It would appear that we have an unending, everlasting source of water—but we don’t.

In recent years, we have seen drought touch our farmlands. While we have not suffered as badly as our neighbors to the west, we have seen what too little water can do to our crops, grazing lands, and animals.

In this issue of Conservation Update, we offer a success story of one producer in Calcasieu Parish who took control of his water and installed an irrigation tailwater recovery system. While this has been done for years in other states, it is a relatively new practice for Louisiana’s farmers. This producer not only recovered and reused irrigation water on his farm, he is doing his part to reduce further depletion of the aquifer, he kept soil and nutrients from leaving his farm, and he saved a lot of money. A win for the environment, a win for the farming community, and a win for the farmer.

If you are interested in learning more about irrigation tailwater recovery or you would like to talk to one of our professional conservationists about resource concerns on your farm or ranch, contact our local office. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service is dedicated to helping farmers and ranchers, like you, conserve and protect your natural resources.

Sarah Haymaker
State Conservationist
Louisiana



State Conservationist Kevin Norton is on detail assignment to Washington, DC, to work on Senator Debbie Stabenow’s staff to help draft the language of our nation’s next Farm Bill. Sarah Haymaker is serving as State Conservationist until Kevin Norton’s return.

Upcoming Events

Jun 27–30
Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting - Look for the NRCS Exhibit at the 91st Annual Meeting of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation being held in New Orleans on June 27–30.



NRCs District Conservationist Frank Chapman with producer Johnny Hensgens.



Irrigation Tailwater Recovery System

in·no·va·tor

trailblazer
groundbreaker

An innovator is a pioneer—someone who introduces something new—someone who is the first to try a new idea or process.

A fish pond? Not exactly . . .

“My neighbors thought I was building a large fish pond at first, but when I explained to them that I could reuse my irrigation water, they became very interested in how they could save water—and money—as well.”

Johnny Hensgens is the first farmer in his area to construct an irrigation tailwater recovery system. Tailwater is the surface runoff resulting from crop irrigation.

Hensgens farms between 975 and 1,000 acres of rice in Calcasieu Parish. About three years ago, he began thinking about recycling the water that was being used on his farm. He visited the local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office and found that NRCS offers technical and financial assistance for a tailwater recovery conservation practice through

the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

“An irrigation tailwater recovery system collects, stores, and transports irrigation tailwater for reuse on the farm through the irrigation system,” says Frank Chapman, District Conservationist in Lake Charles. “The system collects water and stores it in a pond such as the one on Mr. Hensgens’ farm.”

Irrigation tailwater runoff can cost farmers in many ways. Continual irrigation from the local aquifer can lower the levels of the aquifer and possibly cause salt water intrusion in the aquifer. In Calcasieu Parish where Hensgens’ farm is located, irrigation water is captured from the Chicot aquifer. The Chicot aquifer is the largest and most extensively pumped aquifer in the state. By adopting practices like tailwater recovery, farmers like Hensgens can help to keep the aquifers at healthy levels.

Saving Water

Saving Soil

Saving Nutrients

Saving Money

To find out more about tailwater recovery systems or the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, visit your local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office. An office directory is included on the last page of this publication.

“In ten years, the system will pay for itself . . .” Johnny Hensgens

Aside from the conservation benefits, Hensgens is saving a lot of money as a result of the tailwater recovery system. After completion of the system, Hensgens found that he spent 50 percent less a year on irrigation expenses. He said the system saves him about \$30,000 a year.

“In ten years, the system will pay for itself, and I don’t have to draw from the aquifer.”

With this source of extra water, Hensgens plans to incorporate furrow irrigation of soybean fields as needed during excessively dry periods. He also plans to build a second tailwater recovery system on his land in the future.

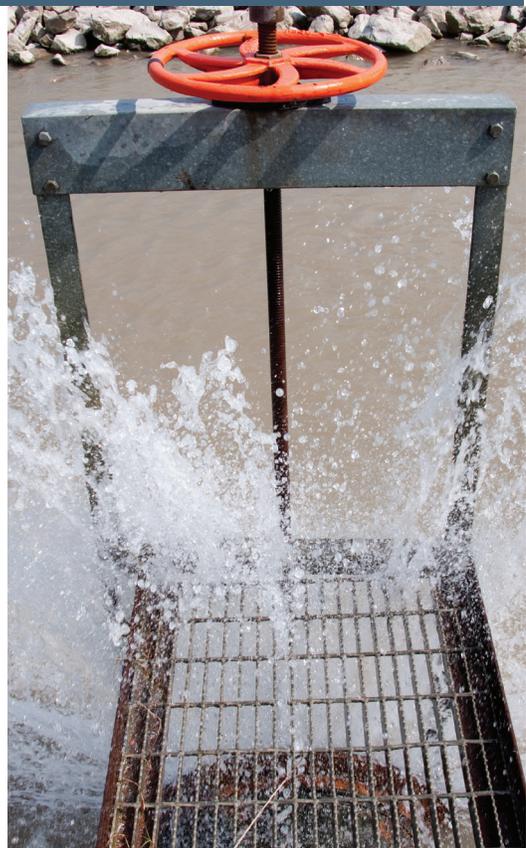
Hensgens says, “As a rice producer, conservation is a major concern—we have to protect the water and the soil.”



This is a QR Code. Download a free QR Code reader for your smartphone, then use your phone’s camera to read the QR Code. Scanning this QR Code will take you to a video featuring Johnny Hensgens.

Or go to . . .
http://nrclsloisiana.smugmug.com/Other/Johnny-Hensgens-Tailwater/30169923_2DXNzb#li=2594862503&k=qTSnZZ8
to view the video.

Johnny Hensgens Conservationist



Around the State

May 21-22

Little Vermilion Bay Vegetative Plantings

Over the course of two days, volunteers assisted the Vermilion Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) install 6,250 plugs of California bulrush between the terraces in Little Vermilion Bay for a total project length of 18,750 linear feet. The main objective of the project was to vegetate the mud flats between the terraces to increase stability, lessen erosion, create habitat for wildlife, and provide a seed source for natural regeneration. This project was sponsored by the Vermilion SWCD in cooperation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry's Office of Soil and Water Conservation, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, University of Louisiana at Lafayette Americorps, Louisiana State University Collegiate 4-H, E.A. McIlhenney, and Vermilion Corporation.



Jun 4-7

Louisiana FFA State Convention

The 84th Annual Louisiana FFA State Convention was held in Alexandria at the Riverfront Center on June 4-7, 2013. NRCS hosted an exhibit at the Career Show during the convention. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service employees, representing a wide range of available careers, staffed the exhibit.

Jun 6-7

NRCS Student Intern Orientation Workshop

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Louisiana recently welcomed four new student interns who will be working in field offices across the state. Over the course of June 6-7, across 3 parishes, and on several soil types, NRCS state, area, and field office staff discussed various land uses—including cotton, corn, soybeans, rice, sugarcane, sweet potatoes, as well as forest and pasture land. The group interviewed two landowners who explained their cropping systems, the resource concerns they encountered, and the solutions that NRCS offered them.



Jun 12

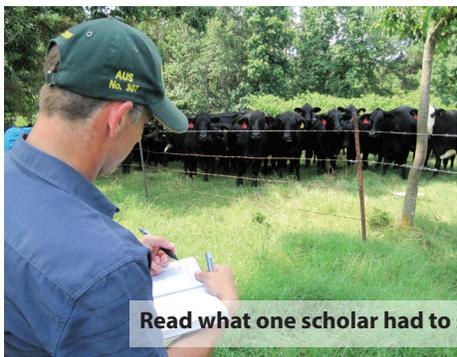
Franklin Parish Livestock Field Day

On June 12, 2013, NRCS with the Northeast Soil and Water Conservation District, Louisiana State University AgCenter, and the Louisiana Master Farmer Program hosted a Livestock Field Day at the farm of Marvin Cruse in Winnsboro, Louisiana. Attendees learned about clover establishment and management, NRCS program assistance, and the Louisiana Master Farmer Program and heard an update on Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plans. They also participated in a pasture walk.

Jun 16-21

Nuffield Scholars Tour

June 16-21, 2013, eight Nuffield Australia Farming Scholars visited Louisiana to learn about farming practices in Louisiana. Nuffield Australia offers scholarships to Australian producers to spend time in various countries investigating agricultural marketing, trade and environmental issues, and experiencing the social and cultural aspects of each region. The scholars visited farms and agricultural businesses throughout northeast Louisiana. The Natural Resources Conservation Service participated in the tour and provided information on conservation practices on the farms and ranches visited. Hosts for the scholars included Reggie Skains, Malcolm Echols, Lannie Philley, Lynn Robertson, Jeff Landry, Anthony Yakaboski, Rich Hill and Wayne Pruitt. Sponsors for the Louisiana tour included Northeast Economic Development Alliance, Kay and Jim Shipp, Union Parish Chamber of Commerce, and Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts.



Read what one scholar had to say about their visit: <http://carlysnuffield.blogspot.com.au/>

Stories from the Field

Grass, Grass, Grass— Everywhere!

On Ladale Thompson's beef cattle farm in St. Helena Parish you see grass everywhere, but it hasn't always been that way. Over time, the hilly soils developed hard pans due to cattle traffic. These hard pans prevent water from moving down to plant roots, and the grass suffers.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provided technical and financial assistance to Mr. Thompson



through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, practice 548 "Grazing Lands Mechanical Treatment."

Mr. Thompson renovated his pastures and is seeing excellent results. Even shortly after the renovation began, there was much more grass production.

District Conservationist Tony Beaubouef says, "The practice is being noticed, and many more producers have been signing up for assistance."

Submitted by Donny Latiolais, Tangipahoa-St. Helena Project 319 Technician, Amite Field Office



Bringing Back Longleaf Pines in Washington Parish

Carol and Clayton Knight are working with the Franklinton Field Office to restore a longleaf pine ecosystem on their land to benefit the gopher tortoise and other associated species.

Longleaf pine forests are some of the world's most biologically diverse ecosystems, and provide critical habitat for 29 threatened and endangered species, including the gopher tortoise. The gopher tortoise is considered a keystone species, and an indicator of longleaf pine ecosystem health.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service is providing technical and financial assistance for tree planting, conservation cover, prescribed burning, and control of

cogongrass through the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program.

After one year, some former fields and loblolly sites have been established to longleaf pines, the first controlled burns have been implemented, wildflowers are established, cogongrass has been sprayed, and wild turkeys are starting to establish nesting sites.

"We are pleased with the results. It is nice to see longleaf pines with their dark shiny green color when we drive up our driveway," said Mr. Knight. "We are restoring the habitat because it is what was there originally. Now, our son is taking up the cause, and he also enjoys the beauty of the longleaf pines."

Submitted by Kevin Stilley, District Conservationist, NRCS Franklinton Field Office



Contact Our Offices

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	2274 Highway 70, Suite C, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
Assumption	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD	2274 Highway 70, Suite C, 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	1400 Highway 14, Suite B, Lake Charles, LA 70601	(337) 436-5020, 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	1400 Highway 14, Suite B, Lake Charles, LA 70601	(337) 436-5020, 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	211 Washington Avenue, Mansfield, LA 71052	(318) 872-4949, ext. 3
East Baton Rouge	Denham Springs	Capital SWCD	2191 Tower Drive, Denham Springs, LA 70726	(225) 664-1430, 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	2191 Tower Drive, Denham Springs, LA 70726	(225) 664-1430, ext. 3
Madison	Tallulah	Madison SWCD	1900 Crothers Drive, Tallulah, LA 71282	(318) 574-4158, ext. 3
Morehouse	Bastrop	Morehouse SWCD	9604 Marlatt Street, Bastrop, LA 71220	(318) 283-7626, ext. 3
Natchitoches	Natchitoches	Natchitoches SWCD	6949 Louisiana Highway 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, LA 71457	(318) 357-8366, ext. 3
Orleans	New Orleans	Crescent SWCD	1041 Rue La Cannes, Luling, LA 70070	(985) 331-9084
Ouachita	Monroe	D'Arbonne/Boeuf River SWCD	2410 Old Sterlington 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	2274 Highway 70, Suite C, 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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