



Spring 2009
Legislative
Report
Georgia



Helping People Help the Land

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Senator Saxby Chambliss

Yellow River Watershed Structure No. 15 Dedication!

by *Jimmy Bramblett, USDA-NRCS*
The Upper Ocmulgee River

Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) in collaboration with the Gwinnett County Commissioners, the local Soil and Water Conservation District, and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are proud to announce the completion of the Yellow River Watershed Control Structure (Y-15).

The watershed project is located in Gwinnett County. The original Yellow River Watershed project area is 104,929 acres. Of this total, 3,910 acres are located in the Y-15 drainage area.

The site is located on Wildcat Creek which flows 1.6 miles downstream to its confluence with the Yellow River.

Y-15 was originally constructed in 1970 as a medium hazard class "B" dam. This medium classification was based on the fact that two state highways were downstream of the dam.

Since that time, Gwinnett County's population has increased eight-fold from 73,000 in 1970 to 588,444 in 2000.

There are now 50 homes below Y-15 which lie within the dam's breach zone. Failure of the structure could result in a potential loss of life by impacting the 50 homes, 3 roads, 2 bridges, and one community recreational facility existing in the

downstream dam break flood zone.

These hazards prompted the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, Safe Dams Program (EPD) to identify Y-15 as a high hazard dam. Current NRCS criteria would require a class "C" (high hazard) designation.

This classification is based upon the risk to life and property downstream in the event of a dam failure.

This structure was selected to be renovated to become compliant with the Georgia Safe Dams Act. This will allow the dam to protect thousands of lives from potential flooding; while at the same time allowing the citizens of Gwinnett County to enjoy the benefits of increased recreation and its beautiful scenery.

Y-15 provides local recreation consisting of fishing, swimming, paddling, and boating. Recreation below the dam includes several tennis courts, swimming pools and a basketball court.



**Aerial view of Yellow River
Watershed Structure No. 15.**

2008 Quick Facts for the State of Georgia

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	1,713
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$19,883,040
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$18,304,990
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$725,060
* Conservation Security Program	\$852,990
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$12,640,862
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$3,322,279

Six Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.

Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	133,206 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	232,394 acres

Conservation Security Program

A new watershed was added in 2008, the Broad River in NE Georgia.

The agriculture in this watershed is primarily cattle operation and poultry houses, which placed an emphasis on conservation practices that excluded cattle from water bodies, rotational grazing and management of hay land.

Interest was high at all public meetings, with 59 applications being selected for funding.

These new contracts were for a 5-year periods and averaged \$6,500 per contract protecting an additional 10,000 acres of farmland.

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In 2008, 1,560 Georgia Farmers benefited from \$18.5 million in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds. Livestock producers received over 65 percent of the EQIP dollars, with cattle operators utilizing \$6.8 million.

Water conservation continues to be a primary resource concern in South Georgia as producers sign up to retrofit 234 center pivot irrigation systems from high pressure to low pressure systems. This will reduce water usage by over 20 percent on this system.

Sub-surface drip irrigation grew in popularity in 2008 with an additional 14 systems being funded.

These systems can reduce water usage by over 40 percent. Another EQIP highlight was the special effort made to assist landowners in Southeast Georgia that had their lands damaged by the wildfires.

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In 2008, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)-Georgia completed the final project in a suite of technical and financial assistance projects representing over \$1.8 million dollars of Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) funding.

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In 2008, one proposal was selected for funding and will provide permanent protection of 210 acres of Georgia farmland in Oconee Counties valued at \$1.1 million.

2008 saw the closing take place on five easements in Oconee, Carroll and a first time easement in Walton County.

All of easement utilized funding from the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) along with a match from the Georgia Land Conservation Program.

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In 2008, Georgia received approximately \$370,000 from the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) to improve the management and condition of the state's private grazing lands.

During the year, demonstration projects begun in 2007 were completed on 26 farms using GLCI funds.

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The Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center (PMC) has 13 active studies involving plants native to the Southeast with emphasis on seeding rates, establishment, growth, management and culture of native warm season grasses.

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During 2008, RC&D Councils in Georgia created or retained 35 businesses across the state of Georgia. Eleven watersheds or area plans were completed, benefiting 47,000 acres.

It is also estimated that RC&D Councils implemented 265 projects totaling over \$14 million in assistance.

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In fiscal year 2008, Georgia's NRCS obligated \$334,426.00 in the Technical Service Provider (TSP) program. These funds were disbursed throughout Georgia, in: 17 agreements.

Through these obligated funds hundred of conservation practices have been installed.

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In 2008, NRCS in Georgia provided technical assistance to nine communities with technical watershed planning assistance. Community needs for water supply projects have become the most common resource concern generating request for assistance from NRCS.

Other community scale resource concerns addressed this year include water

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Congressman Jack Kingston

Mr. Max: Godfather of No -Till Farming in Coffee County

by Bo Bannister, USDA-NRCS
Max Carter started farming in the 1950's. In the early 1970's he realized he had a problem.

Water and wind erosion were depleting his topsoil; his ponds were muddy; and so much silt had accumulated against one fence, he could step over it.

As his land deteriorated, farming required higher and higher inputs of fertilizers, insecticides, herbicide, and water. Carter thought there had to be a better way to farm. He heard about no-till farming.

Carter reasoned that if mulch residue was good for flower beds, it should be good for his fields. He kept his flower beds mulched down to control weeds and conserve moisture. Why not make it work in his fields?

He altered and adapted his equipment to make it fit his needs. He experimented with different cover crops and different chemicals until he found a system that worked for him. At times, he practiced his no-till in the back fields, away from the road and out of the public view, but he never quit. He found a way to make it work.

Eventually, Carter sold his irrigation equipment and his disk harrows. Today, more than 33 years later, no-till is still working for Carter, and he is a much-in-

demand technical consultant, speaker, and overall "expert" in no-till farming.

Carter enjoys the many benefits of no-till farming: clean water; better soil quality; reduced use of insecticides; herbicide; and fertilizers; sustainable crops; less fuel consumption; less wear on equipment; and more time to enjoy life.

Serving as an Earth Team volunteer, Carter has presented his story to agricultural councils, civic clubs, seminars, sustainable agricultural conferences and other agriculture related functions all over Georgia traveling thousands of miles and volunteering hundreds of hours.

He was selected Conservationist of the Year by the Altamaha Soil and Water Conservation District, and Farmer of the Year in Coffee County.

Conservation tillage in Coffee County has increased from a few acres to more than 65% of the total cropland in the county due largely to Carter's efforts.

In the Southeastern United States, conservation tillage has seen a phenomenal rise in popularity.

Nationwide more than 40% of all crops are planted using conservation tillage. Carter's untiring efforts to promote adoption of conservation tillage have been a big part of this movement.

Although he claims to have been retired for several years, Carter still plants 400 acres of cotton, peanuts, and wheat and still finds time to assist other farmers getting started with no-till.

2008 Quick Facts for Congressional District 1

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	284
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$2,618,280
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$2,282,906
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$335,374

Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$1,587,010
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Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$523,069
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Congressman Sanford Bishop

Marty McLendon: District IV 2008 Environmental Stewardship Award Winner

by Ron Morton, USDA-NRCS

McLendon Acres, Inc. is a family owned and operated diversified agricultural production company that includes Martin (Marty) L. McLendon, his wife Tracie, and other members of their family. His direct portion of the operation encompasses approximately 8,000 acres on which canola, corn, cotton, peanuts, pecans, sorghum, soybeans, hay, timber, and wheat are grown.

At a young age, McLendon felt that it was his calling to enter into the farming profession and actually use farm equipment versus just selling it as his father and grandfather had done. His grandfather started Randolph Tractor Company, a John Deere sales and service dealership, in Cuthbert, Georgia.

McLendon started his farming career in 1978 with limited equipment and a pickup truck, and he relied on the help of a neighboring farmer to get his crop planted and harvested each year. By 1980, he had accumulated enough equipment to go out on his own. Today, he has expanded his operation so that his entire family is involved.

Due to the intensity and scope of agricultural production in southwest Georgia, natural resource concerns such as soil erosion and sediment control,

nutrient and pest management and water quality are management priorities for area farming operations. McLendon has hit each one of these concerns head-on. He sought assistance from USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to implement conservation practices on his farm.

McLendon employs the incentives of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to implement conservation practices such as conservation tillage, grassed waterways, terraces, and field borders.

McLendon stated that, "EQIP provides an excellent opportunity for agricultural producers to engage in conservation practices by sharing the initial cost of implementation. It also serves as a tool to promote innovative conservation practices to area producers."

McLendon used conservation tillage to increase the organic matter content in the soil, water infiltration, and nutrient uptake at the root zone.

He has been willing to utilize many innovative practices to improve production efficiency. Also, he often provides area demonstration sites for education and outreach.

The success of this farm is due to his devotion to the land, hard work and ability to run this operation with wise business decisions. McLendon is the District IV 2008 Environmental Stewardship Award Winner.

2008 Quick Facts for Congressional District 2

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	461
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$4,419,073
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$4,359,545
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$59,528

Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$2,592,942
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Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$222,986
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Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	99,682 acres

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Congressman Lynn Westmoreland

District I 2008 Environmental Stewardship Award Winner

by Ron Morton, USDA-NRCS

Back in 1980, Bud Butcher bought his dairy located near Newnan, a community less than 30 minutes from the Atlanta International Airport. Back then, living in Coweta County was considered "living out in the country" and Butcher did not have to worry about urban communities.

Today this is not the case. Butcher has subdivisions being built all around him. Butcher is rapidly becoming part of an urbanizing community. Consequently, the quantity and quality of water runoff from his dairy has become a concern to him and his neighbors.

Butcher's dairy utilizes center pivots for irrigation and waste management. Butcher read about the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in a newsletter and called for help on his waste management system.

Using the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to solve his problem with water runoff, Butcher planted a cover crop; a 25-acre Bermuda filter strip around his cropland field, as a means to trap agriculture contaminants and produce high quality hay.

He also now has a new waste management system linked to a lagoon, has installed concrete heavy use areas, and has developed a comprehensive nutrient management plan to use manure on his

land and dispose of excess manure appropriately.

"NRCS has provided technical and financial assistance. These practices were selected to provide a solution for managing the waste and wash water accumulated from a confined dairy operation," said Kevin Keel, district conservationist for the NRCS.

Butcher's operation has benefited from the application of the conservation treatments in four different areas: efficient use of water; waste management; water quality and high quality hay production.

"Center pivot [irrigation] has allowed for efficient use of water and provided a way to manage waste.

Bermuda filter strip has provided a buffer for water quality and lead to the production of high quality hay," said Butcher.

He added, "Take care of the land and the land will take care of you."

"Bud Butcher is one of the best dairymen to come to Coweta County and now is the only one left in the county," said Lisle Bower, district supervisor for Coweta County.

The success of this farm is due to Butcher's devotion to the land, hard work and his ability to run this operation with wise business decisions. Bud Butcher is the District I 2008 Environmental Stewardship Award Winner.

2008 Quick Facts for Congressional District 3

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	370
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$3,489,760
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$3,406,779
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$82,981

Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds \$1,340,322

Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State \$60,559

Six Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.

Conservation on the Ground
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments 43,521 acres

Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned 56,521 acres

Conservation Security Program

A new watershed was added in 2008, the Broad River in NE Georgia.

The agriculture in this watershed is primarily cattle operation and poultry houses, which placed an emphasis on conservation practices that excluded cattle from water bodies, rotational grazing and management of hay land.

Interest was high at all public meetings, with 59 applications being selected for funding.

These new contracts were for a 5-year periods and averaged \$6,500 per contract protecting an additional 10,000 acres of farmland.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

In 2008, 1,560 Georgia Farmers benefited from \$18.5 million in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds. Livestock producers received over 65 percent of the EQIP dollars, with cattle operators utilizing \$6.8 million.

Water conservation continues to be a primary resource concern in South Georgia as producers sign up to retrofit 234 center pivot irrigation systems from high pressure to low pressure systems. This will reduce water usage by over 20 percent on this system.

Sub-surface drip irrigation grew in popularity in 2008 with an additional 14 systems being funded.

These systems can reduce water usage by over 40 percent. Another EQIP highlight was the special effort made to assist landowners in Southeast Georgia that had their lands damaged by the wildfires.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program

In 2008, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)-Georgia completed the final project in a suite of technical and financial assistance projects representing over \$1.8 million dollars of Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) funding.

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In 2008, one proposal was selected for funding and will provide permanent protection of 210 acres of Georgia farmland in Oconee Counties valued at \$1.1 million.

2008 saw the closing take place on five easements in Oconee, Carroll and a first time easement in Walton County.

All of easement utilized funding from the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) along with a match from the Georgia Land Conservation Program.

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

In 2008, Georgia received approximately \$370,000 from the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) to improve the management and condition of the state's private grazing lands.

During the year, demonstration projects begun in 2007 were completed on 26 farms using GLCI funds.

Plant Materials Program

The Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center (PMC) has 13 active studies involving plants native to the Southeast with emphasis on seeding rates, establishment, growth, management and culture of native warm season grasses.

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It is also estimated that RC&D Councils implemented 265 projects totaling over \$14 million in assistance.

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In fiscal year 2008, Georgia's NRCS obligated \$334,426.00 in the Technical Service Provider (TSP) program. These funds were disbursed throughout Georgia, in: 17 agreements.

Through these obligated funds hundred of conservation practices have been installed.

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In 2008, NRCS in Georgia provided technical assistance to nine communities with technical watershed planning assistance. Community needs for water supply projects have become the most common resource concern generating request for assistance from NRCS.

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Congressman Hank Johnson

Yellow River Watershed Structure No. 15 Dedication!

by Jimmy Bramblett, *USDA NRCS*
The Upper Ocmulgee River

Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) in collaboration with the Gwinnett County Commissioners, the local Soil and Water Conservation District, and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are proud to announce the completion of the Yellow River Watershed Control Structure (Y-15).

The watershed project is located in Gwinnett County. The original Yellow River Watershed project area is 104,929 acres. Of this total, 3,910 acres are located in the Y-15 drainage area.

The site is located on Wildcat Creek which flows 1.6 miles downstream to its confluence with the Yellow River.

Y-15 was originally constructed in 1970 as a medium hazard class "B" dam. This medium classification was based on the fact that two state highways were downstream of the dam.

Since that time, Gwinnett County's population has increased eight-fold from 73,000 in 1970 to 588,444 in 2000.

There are now 50 homes below Y-15 which lie within the dam's breach zone. Failure of the structure could result in a potential loss of life by impacting the 50 homes, 3 roads, 2 bridges, and one community

recreational facility existing in the downstream dam break flood zone.

These hazards prompted the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, Safe Dams Program (EPD) to identify Y-15 as a high hazard dam. Current NRCS criteria would require a class "C" (high hazard) designation.

This classification is based upon the risk to life and property downstream in the event of a dam failure.

This structure was selected to be renovated to become compliant with the Georgia Safe Dams Act. This will allow the dam to protect thousands of lives from potential flooding; while at the same time allowing the citizens of Gwinnett County to enjoy the benefits of increased recreation and its beautiful scenery.

Y-15 provides local recreation consisting of fishing, swimming, paddling, and boating. Recreation below the dam includes several tennis courts, swimming pools and a basketball court.



**Aerial view of Yellow River Watershed
Structure No. 15**

2008 Quick Facts for Congressional District 4

Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds \$2,708

Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State \$83,000

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Congressman John Lewis

2008 Farm Bill Targets Small Urban Farmers

by Valerie Pickard, USDA-NRCS
Photos by Atlanta Journal-Constitution



Brian Harrison, an urban farmer, is seeking assistance from the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). This program provides



technical, educational, and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their land in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner.

Harrison owns 5 acres nestled near historic Grant Park and Interstate 20. He leases out several plots of land to urban neighbors who tend the land to produce and harvest vegetables that end up at the local farmers market.

With the increased popularity of buying locally grown vegetables, demand for his produce has increased. As production increases there is a greater need to protect the property's natural resources.

With the new provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill focussing more on small farmers, Harrison hopes to receive assistance so he can implement practices to conserve water, reduce soil erosion and control pests.

If funded through EQIP, Harrison plans to install an efficient irrigation system, establish a crop rotation system, planting cover crops (which also will increase soil fertility and soil organic matter) and establish a pest management system.

The 2008 Farm Bill has opened the door for small urban farmers to be eligible for USDA programs. Harrison's goal is to receive financial assistance to place these practices in place to ensure that his land remains both healthy and productive.

2008 Quick Facts for Congressional District 5

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	2
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$9,203
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$9,203
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$15,058
Six Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	15 acres

Conservation Security Program

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Congressman Tom Price

Cherokee County Farmers Continue Family Tradition

by Mabelle Simmons, USDA-NRCS

Cherokee County farmers Linda and Thomas Dilbeck, were both raised on a poultry farm. Thomas remembers watering and feeding chickens by hand as a child. He and Linda have a very different poultry operation today.

In 1985, the Dilbecks purchased an existing poultry farm located in the Hopewell community. The poultry farm needed a lot of upgrading to meet state and local regulations. With the assistance of their two adult children, the farm, affectionately called "2+2," now consists of four fully renovated poultry houses containing 80,000 broiler birds.

The Dilbecks, seeking to maintain a conservation friendly farm, contacted the Calhoun USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office for assistance. Their goals were to prevent surface runoff from polluting streams, dispose of dead birds, and improve overall farm management.

Through NRCS, the Dilbecks received funding to install two conservation practices: a Waste Storage Facility and an Animal Mortality Incinerator. They also developed a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan.

As all great conservationists would, the Dilbecks constantly seek new and innovative ways to improve their farm in



the most economical and efficient manner. One way of improving their operation has been to install attic vents to pull warmer air from the poultry house attics to provide heat; therefore, reducing the winter heating bill.

Attic vents also lower the humidity inside poultry houses, resulting in dryer floors, lower bird mortality rates. It also produces healthier, happier birds.

The Dilbecks have won numerous "Top Grower" awards, and attribute their success to hard work, concern for the environment, installation of environmentally friendly management practices, and listening to the advice of their poultry service representatives.

Mr. Dilbeck said, "I am impressed with the prompt service and technical information received from USDA NRCS." He also stated that Joe Bishop, a Cherokee County Technician, has always been "Johnny-on-the-Spot." He appreciates the NRCS staff for their hard work and dedication to serving the customer.

2008 Quick Facts for Congressional District 6

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	1
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$6,049
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$6,049
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$36,806
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$55,741
Six Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.	
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	28 acres

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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 \$11 million to upgrade six watershed dams. In 2008, construction was completed on Yellow River Watershed Structure No. 15 (Y-15).

Additionally, 44 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 2008, 598 new acres were signed up under the Wetlands Reserve Program. An additional 3,550 acres were restored, or are in the process of restoration.

In January and February of 2008, NRCS assisted landowners who planted 550,000 Cypress trees and 50,000 Longleaf pines in Roundabout Swamp in Atkinson County.

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Georgia received \$727,000 in Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) funds in 2008. Ninety-four contracts were approved in 34 counties.

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Congressman John Linder

Yellow River Watershed Structure No. 15 Dedication!

by *Jimmy Bramblett, USDA--NRCS*
The Upper Ocmulgee River

Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) in collaboration with the Gwinnett County Commissioners, the local Soil and Water Conservation District, and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are proud to announce the completion of the Yellow River Watershed Control Structure (Y-15).

The watershed project is located in Gwinnett County. The original Yellow River Watershed project area is 104,929 acres. Of this total, 3,910 acres are located in the Y-15 drainage area.

The site is located on Wildcat Creek which flows 1.6 miles downstream to its confluence with the Yellow River.

Y-15 was originally constructed in 1970 as a medium hazard class "B" dam. This medium classification was based on the fact that two state highways were downstream of the dam.

Since that time, Gwinnett County's population has increased eight-fold from 73,000 in 1970 to 588,444 in 2000.

There are now 50 homes below Y-15 which lie within the dam's breach zone. Failure of the structure could result in a potential loss of life by impacting the 50 homes, 3 roads, 2 bridges, and one community recreational facility existing in the downstream dam break flood zone.

These hazards prompted the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, Safe Dams Program (EPD) to identify Y-15 as a high hazard dam. Current NRCS criteria would require a class "C" (high hazard) designation.

This classification is based upon the risk to life and property downstream in the event of a dam failure.

This structure was selected to be renovated to become compliant with the Georgia Safe Dams Act.

This will allow the dam to protect thousands of lives from potential flooding; while at the same time allowing the citizens of Gwinnett County to enjoy the benefits of increased recreation and its beautiful scenery.

Y-15 provides local recreation consisting of fishing, swimming, paddling, and boating. Recreation below the dam includes several tennis courts, swimming pools and a basketball court.



**Aerial view of Yellow River
Watershed Structure No. 15**

2008 Quick Facts for Congressional District 7

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	6
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$55,307
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$52,379
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$2,928
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$150,663
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$154,569
Six Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.	
Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	1 acre
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	102 acres

Conservation Security Program

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The agriculture in this watershed is primarily cattle operation and poultry houses, which placed an emphasis on conservation practices that excluded cattle from water bodies, rotational grazing and management of hay land.

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These new contracts were for a 5-year periods and averaged \$6,500 per contract protecting an additional 10,000 acres of farmland.

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In 2008, 1,560 Georgia Farmers benefited from \$18.5 million in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds. Livestock producers received over 65 percent of the EQIP dollars, with cattle operators utilizing \$6.8 million.

Water conservation continues to be a primary resource concern in South Georgia as producers sign up to retrofit 234 center pivot irrigation systems from high pressure to low pressure systems. This will reduce water usage by over 20 percent on this system.

Sub-surface drip irrigation grew in popularity in 2008 with an additional 14 systems being funded.

These systems can reduce water usage by over 40 percent. Another EQIP highlight was the special effort made to assist landowners in Southeast Georgia that had their lands damaged by the wildfires.

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In 2008, one proposal was selected for funding and will provide permanent protection of 210 acres of Georgia farmland in Oconee Counties valued at \$1.1 million.

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All of easement utilized funding from the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) along with a match from the Georgia Land Conservation Program.

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Congressman Jim Marshall

Keeping Farming in the Family

by Ron Morton, USDA-NRCS

Farming is a family tradition for Danny Hogan. He has been farming for over 40 years and is a third generation farmer. His son, Richard, has been in partnership with him since 1994. Hogan Farms consists of 950 acres utilizing conservation tillage. They grow wheat, oats, peanuts, cotton, and soybeans. They also manage 40 acres of pasture land, 104 acres of hayland and 700 acres of timberland. Of the 700 acres of timberland, 119 acres are enrolled in the longleaf Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

Hogan Farms also raises different breeds of cattle, including Black Angus, Limousine and Belgian Blues. In addition, Quarter and Paint horses are raised for show and sale. When it comes to conservation, Hogan believes in spreading the wealth. "We have tried to work closely with all of the agricultural agencies to stay current on the proper way of doing things" said Hogan.

Hogan learned about USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as a child growing up on the farm. "As a young boy, I remember my mother talking with the District Conservationist about what she could do to conserve the natural resources of our farm. I didn't realize then that she was concerned about "sustainability" of our farm. Some of her early efforts were to get a farm plan and then to sign up some of the marginal land

into the old soil bank program. "Working with NRCS is just a given to me if I am going to be a landowner," said Hogan.

In addition to hosting field and legislative tours to promote conservation practices, Hogan has implemented many conservation practices on his farm including: heavy use area protection; manure storage facility; irrigation water management; use exclusion; alternative water source; nutrient management; watering ramp; and riparian buffers. He has also established a chemical storage facility and community nutrient management facility.

Hogan has practiced conservation for years and is planning to do more conservation projects in the near future. "I try to do practices that are important to me and I hope are important to soil, water and conservation. It's something I've been doing for a number of years," he said.

His future plans include completion of an irrigation pond, installing more use exclusion for protection of wetlands and streams, constructing three additional heavy use areas and replacing his existing inefficient irrigation pivot system.

"When it comes to conservation, Hogan is an excellent conservationist. He tries to practice conservation on every acre of his farm," said Britt Parker, district conservationist, for the NRCS.

Hogan said that he has benefited from the application of the conservation treatments with "less erosion, improved wildlife habitat, higher crop yields and less water used."

2008 Quick Facts for Congressional District 8

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	63
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$869,732
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$852,999
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$16,733

Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds \$935,357

Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State \$82,500

Six Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.

Conservation on the Ground

Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	9,962 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	8,415 acres

Conservation Security Program

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In 2008, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)-Georgia completed the final project in a suite of technical and financial assistance projects representing over \$1.8 million dollars of Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) funding.

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In 2008, one proposal was selected for funding and will provide permanent protection of 210 acres of Georgia farmland in Oconee Counties valued at \$1.1 million.

2008 saw the closing take place on five easements in Oconee, Carroll and a first time easement in Walton County.

All of easement utilized funding from the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) along with a match from the Georgia Land Conservation Program.

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In 2008, Georgia received approximately \$370,000 from the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) to improve the management and condition of the state's private grazing lands.

During the year, demonstration projects begun in 2007 were completed on 26 farms using GLCI funds.

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The Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center (PMC) has 13 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.

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During 2008, RC&D Councils in Georgia created or retained 35 businesses across the state of Georgia. Eleven watersheds or area plans were completed, benefiting 47,000 acres.

It is also estimated that RC&D Councils implemented 265 projects totaling over \$14 million in assistance.

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In fiscal year 2008, Georgia's NRCS obligated \$334,426.00 in the Technical Service Provider (TSP) program. These funds were disbursed throughout Georgia, in: 17 agreements.

Through these obligated funds hundred of conservation practices have been installed.

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In 2008, NRCS in Georgia provided technical assistance to nine communities with technical watershed planning assistance. Community needs for water supply projects have become the most common resource concern generating request for assistance from NRCS.

Other community scale resource concerns addressed this year include water

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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. Through 2008, just over \$4 million of financial assistance has been provided.

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Congressman Nathan Deal

Environmental Quality Incentives Program helps Horse Farmers

by Ron Morton, USDA-NRCS

In 2000, John and Moira McCracken started clearing their 50 acres of land so they could move their horse farm from one side of Dawson County to the other. It took them three years before they could move the horses onto the land and another year before they could move into their new home.

The McCrackens did not know that they could receive help from the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), so they were doing everything from their own knowledge and out of their own pocket.

When asked how they heard about the NRCS, John McCracken said, "read about it in the newspaper." Louise McPherson, soil conservationist for the NRCS elaborated, "The McCrackens saw an Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) article in the newspaper and called to see if they would qualify."

McPherson took a trip out to the farm to see how the NRCS could help the McCrackens with their horse farm. Now the McCrackens have an EQIP contract.

The McCrackens had concerns about their pastures, water for their horses and some erosion. "Their concerns were lack of forage and erosion due to the drought. The little creek where the horses drank also dried up during the drought," said McPherson. "The EQIP contract will help them with reseeding pastures which

were damaged by the drought. It will also help cover cross fencing, a well, water troughs and heavy use areas at the troughs. The well and water troughs will allow them to rotate the grazing so that none of the pastures get overgrazed," said McPherson"

Moira believes the farm will benefit from the cross fencing and a well. "Right now...I'm not using cross fencing. I try to keep one pasture unoccupied. That big field down below, never seems to get a rest, right now I have my two young horses on it. I need to divide that field. That will be the benefit of cross fencing and putting in the well—it will allow us to rotate the horses."

Moira's conservation philosophy is simple and to the point: "Horses are beautiful, powerful creatures that capture our hearts, and everybody wants to own them, but most people don't realize all the work that goes along with owning horses. It is a real conservation challenge. You must plan ahead and make sure you have enough pasture for them and rotate the lots. Otherwise, you wind up with a horse standing in a dirt lot and that is what we are working so hard here to prevent. That's my conservation statement."

This is a farm moving toward conservation. Their success is not in the past but in the future. The future for the McCrackens will be brighter as the NRCS will continue to work with them.

"We will continue to work with them to help get these practices established successfully," said McPherson.

2008 Quick Facts for Congressional District 9

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	252
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$4,126,579
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$3,269,782
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$77,271
* Conservation Security Program	\$779,526

Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds \$1,178,644

Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State \$406,028

Six Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.

Conservation on the Ground

Total Acres with Conservation Treatments 3,234 acres

Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned 9,093 acres

Conservation Security Program

A new watershed was added in 2008, the Broad River in NE Georgia.

The agriculture in this watershed is primarily cattle operation and poultry houses, which placed an emphasis on conservation practices that excluded cattle from water bodies, rotational grazing and management of hay land.

Interest was high at all public meetings, with 59 applications being selected for funding.

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Congressman Paul Broun

Owens Farm: A Tradition of Conservation

by Ron Morton, USDA-NRCS

Ken Owens has been farming all of his life. His grandfather owned a farm and when he was 12 years old, his late father, Talmadge Owens, moved his family to Stephens County.

The senior Owens believed in providing a habitat for the wildlife through conservation and Ken is carrying on his father's traditions. Ken's 16-year-old son, Houston, is showing cattle with the Future Farmers of America.

Four generations have carried on the farming tradition in their own unique way, but these traditions were in danger all because of a small bug called the pine beetle. In 1997, pine beetles infested the Owens' tree farm killing all of the pines. "Some of the pines were over 50 years old," said Owens. The family tried to save the pines through spot cutting but it was too late and they had to clear-cut.

The clear-cutting left the land exposed to the weather and over time the rain starting eroding the land. The road that the loggers used to haul out the timber had become filled with ruts from the rain. The rain was also washing away the top soil effecting the growth of some of the newly planted loblolly pines.

The Owens tried to handle the erosion problem but they were not having much success. Then one day, the Georgia Forestry Commission Forester, Gregg Jameson, intervened. "I approached Owens about his roads one day. Several of them were on steep slopes and some of

them were damaged and eroding after the timber harvest and site preparation for replanting. I was familiar with the Broad River 319 project and asked if he would be willing to work on bettering the erosion problem on his roads. He responded, 'Let's do it.'

"The North Fork Broad River 319 Project is a cost-share program made possible by the Clean Water Act, Section 319," said Russell Biggers, district conservationist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS). "The project was a 60/40 cost share; with 60 percent from a grant and 40 percent by the landowners," said Nianne Mullis, project coordinator, Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation & Development Council in Demorest.

Owens' project involved relocating one of the steep roads, putting broad base dips at critical points along the roads to move the rain water off the road and into the field of trees, laying down rock on the roads to help reduce erosion and putting broad base dips throughout the hill side to help stop the water from washing off the top soil and filling in the local creek that feeds a pond on his neighbor's property. He seeded the land so grasses would grow.

The wildlife habitat is of major importance to the Owens and they did not leave this out of their plans. "We took the logging deck areas and turned them into food plot areas for the wildlife," said Owens. "We have always been connected to the NRCS as long as I can remember. Everyone has been great to work with and very knowledgeable about the programs," he added.

2008 Quick Facts for Congressional District 10

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	87
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$1,848,180
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$1,846,103
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$2,077

Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds \$876,828

Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State \$1,073,664

Six Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.

Conservation on the Ground
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments 2,061 acres

Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned 990 acres

Conservation Security Program

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NRCS Natural Resources
Conservation Service

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Congressman Phil Gingrey

Field Days Showcase Conservation in Floyd County

by *Josh Schrecengost, USDA-NRCS*
The Troutman Farm a few miles

north of Rome is a testament to the success of cooperative efforts between NRCS, the Farm Services Agency (FSA), and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division.

The farm is owned by J. Michael Ware, M.D. and is managed for soybean production and early successional habitat for Bobwhite Quail.

In 2001, Dr. Ware received special project funding through the Wildlife (WHIP) to establish 90 acres of longleaf pine forest. In addition to the excellent habitat in the young longleaf pine, Dr. Ware manages many fallow areas, plum thickets, and food plots for quail and other wildlife.



This year, Dr. Ware enrolled in Continuous CRP practice CP-33 to establish field borders of early successional habitat throughout the farm. The borders are being established with winter disking as well as selected plantings of native warm season grasses and native legumes.

Dr. Ware has been the host of two field days to showcase Farm Bill programs and his commitment to good land stewardship and wildlife. The first field

day was held in October of 2002 shortly after longleaf pines were planted. The most recent field day took place in April 2008 and concentrated on the benefits of field borders, fallow areas, and management of longleaf pines.



2008 Quick Facts for Congressional District 11

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	96
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$885,962
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$837,535
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$48,427

Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds \$527,831

Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State \$132,361

Six Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.

Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	1,343 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	3,237 acres

Conservation Security Program

A new watershed was added in 2008, the Broad River in NE Georgia.

The agriculture in this watershed is primarily cattle operation and poultry houses, which placed an emphasis on conservation practices that excluded cattle from water bodies, rotational grazing and management of hay land.

Interest was high at all public meetings, with 59 applications being selected for funding.

These new contracts were for a 5-year periods and averaged \$6,500 per contract protecting an additional 10,000 acres of farmland.

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In 2008, 1,560 Georgia Farmers benefited from \$18.5 million in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds. Livestock producers received over 65 percent of the EQIP dollars, with cattle operators utilizing \$6.8 million.

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Sub-surface drip irrigation grew in popularity in 2008 with an additional 14 systems being funded.

These systems can reduce water usage by over 40 percent. Another EQIP highlight was the special effort made to assist landowners in Southeast Georgia that had their lands damaged by the wildfires.

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Congressman John Barrow

Pre-Commercial Thinning Will Benefit Warren County Wildlife

by *Cread Brown, USDA-NRCS*
Dan Crumpton, a Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) supervisor and owner of the Lockett Farm, is always looking for ways to enhance wildlife habitat.

At a Warren County SWCD meeting last winter, Crumpton learned that the NRCS would be offering landowners the opportunity to compete for funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to assist with thinning pre-commercial sized pines. Crumpton automatically thought of the Lockett Farm.

As a young man, he and his son hunted quail in the cotton fields that are now overstocked pine stands. The thick pines offer little benefit to wildlife other than low quality cover. A simple change could create beneficial habitat for quail and other wildlife.

By thinning the pine stand, sunlight would reach the forest floor and set off an early successional flush of herbaceous vegetation. Quail desperately need this vegetation for food and cover. Thinning the pines would also improve the timber quality in the remaining stand.

Crumpton applied and was approved for the EQIP Program. In late September, the thinning crew pulled out of the Lockett Farm after two days of hard saw-

ing. In two years, after the felled trees have partially decomposed, the first of two prescribed burns will be done.

The burns will help keep the understory vegetation in early succession and return nutrients to the soil.

These practices not only benefit quail but also deer, turkey, and many non-game species.

Crumpton is pleased with the progress so far and said, "By utilizing the EQIP program and NRCS' working-land knowledge, I am on track to reach my goals -- one of them being to hunt quail on the Lockett Farm again."



Dan Crumpton (R) and Cread Brown, NRCS district conservationist.

2008 Quick Facts for Congressional District 12

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	89
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$1,573,917
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$1,381,778
* Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	\$118,675
* Conservation Security Program	\$73,464

Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds \$3,269,392

Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State \$502,092

Six Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.

Conservation on the Ground	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	5,041 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	30,666 acres

Conservation Security Program

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Congressman David Scott

Clayton County Soil and Water Conservation District Reaches Out to the Local Community

by Valerie Pickard, USDA-NRCS

The Clayton County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) sponsored a tree seedling give-a-way on Georgia's Arbor Day in February to promote tree planting and reducing soil erosion.

The Clayton County SWCD partnered with the Clayton County Master Gardener's and Keep Clayton County Beautiful for this event.

The SWCD's tree give-a-way consisted of Dogwood and Redbud trees. Mr. Vacal Caldwell, Chairman of the Clayton County SWCD stated that the giveaway was a huge success. "Meeting with the local community has afforded us with an opportunity to let people know

who we are and what our mission and goals are for the county," he added.

In addition to the tree give-away, the SWCD also sponsored students for the Natural Resource Conservation Workshop in Tifton and served as a sponsor for the Georgia Envirothon competition.



District Supervisors giving out seedlings to area residents.

Clayton County Soil and Water Conservation District Board Members (L-R):

Vac Caldwell,
Charlie Wiggins,
Joe Shelnut, and
Lonnie Philpot.



2008 Quick Facts for Congressional District 13

Individuals Receiving Conservation Assistance	2
Total Conservation Cost-share Funds	\$9,203
* Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$9,203
Total Conservation Technical Assistance Funds	\$127,301
Total RC&D Funds Brought to the State	\$25,710
Six Technical Service Providers are providing service to producers.	
<i>Conservation on the Ground</i>	
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments	6 acres
Total Acres with Conservation Treatments Planned	147 acres

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