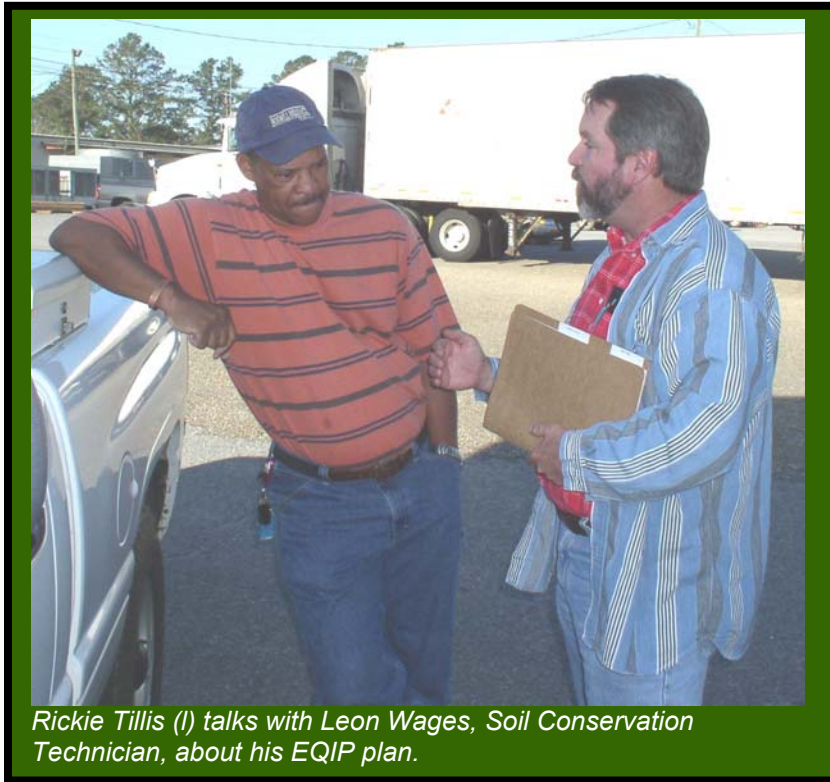


Conservation on the Ground – EQIP Program Helps Covington County Farmer

by Merry Buford, Soil Conservationist, Covington County, Alabama



Rickie Tillis (l) talks with Leon Wages, Soil Conservation Technician, about his EQIP plan.

Rickie Tillis, Covington County farmer from the Fleeta community, has 33 acres enrolled in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Mr. Tillis is a part-time farmer, and a full-time employee at the Micolás Cotton Mill. Tillis' EQIP plan calls for converting a field from row crops to pasture land and renovating some of his pasture land to improve the forage.

Mr. Tillis will create seven paddocks to improve his grazing system with rotational grazing after he installs 9711 feet of fencing. He is installing a well and four watering facilities for 48 livestock animals to improve the quality of their drinking water. By installing a critical area treatment

and a water sediment control basin, Tillis will also be able to control an eroding area. All these practices will make Mr. Tillis' farm more productive and efficient.

This year the EQIP program has been the biggest Covington County has ever seen. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) approved approximately 27 EQIP contracts for an approximate total of \$294,483. Some of the best management practices installed through the EQIP program include converting cropland to pasture land, renovating existing pasture to improve productivity, installing wells and watering facilities to improve livestock health and control erosion.

If you are interested in signing up for the EQIP program, or have questions, please come by our office at 23952 AL Highway 55, Suite 1 in Andalusia or call (334) 222-3519 ext 3.

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