



Implementing A Statewide *Master Farmer* Program

*Developed and distributed by
the LSU AgCenter*

*And
the **Louisiana Master Farmer
Program***



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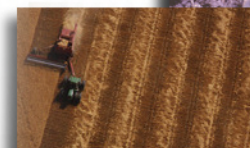
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Getting Started

HOW AND WHY WAS THIS PROGRAM DEVELOPED?

- ❖ Initiated in 2001 by the LSU AgCenter and Louisiana Farm Bureau
- ❖ Committee was established to collectively determine the needs of Louisiana producers
- ❖ Program and teaching curriculum was developed to include topics that address environmental issues with respect to the various commodities in different parts of the state
- ❖ Curriculum includes information about the Clean Water Act, BMPs for specific commodities, TMDL's, and other environmental issues or concerns



Getting Started continued:

- ❖ Target audience includes all agricultural producers
- ❖ Taught on a watershed basis, where trainings are scheduled in two, four-hour sessions
- ❖ Both program and trainings are **voluntary**, and the success and growth is evident in the number of producers that are currently enrolled, which is approximately 2300 state-wide



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Who's Involved

- ❖ Led by a Master Farmer coordinator who facilitates the goals and missions of the program
- ❖ With expansion, a collective team of administration, extension associates, watershed agents, and county agents are involved in administering the program
- ❖ Collaborating with other agencies and associations is critical in making the program a success



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❖ **Supporting agencies and associations include:**

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
Louisiana Dept. of Environmental Quality (LDEQ)
Louisiana Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF)
Louisiana Farm Bureau
Louisiana Cattlemans Association
Louisiana Cotton Producers Association
Louisiana Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR)
Louisiana Soil and Water Conservation Districts
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Louisiana Rice Growers Association
Louisiana Crawfish Producers Association
Louisiana Soybean Association
Louisiana Sugarcane League
Louisiana Forage and Grassland Council



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HOW IS THE PROGRAM MAINTAINED?

- ❖ Advisory committee was established to discuss any updates that are needed or give suggestions for field days
- ❖ Committee includes county agents and researchers and meets once per quarter, or as needed, to keep the program and its material current

Rules & Certification

- ❖ Three phases of program include:
 - ❖ Phase I, 8 hours of environmental lecture
 - ❖ Phase II, touring or attending a “model farm” field day
 - ❖ Phase III, developing and implementing a farm-specific conservation plan
- ❖ This certification is divided into tiers based on the number of phases that the producer completes.



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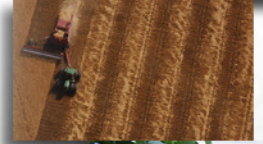
Tiers

❖ **Gold Tier** – producer completes all phases of program, including completion of a farm-specific conservation plan on entire farming operation.

-These producers receive certification of presumed compliance of state soil and water quality standards.

❖ **Silver Tier** – producer completes Phase I and II and develops and implements a farm-specific conservation plan on at least one field of their operation.

❖ **Bronze Tier** – producer completes Phase I and II.



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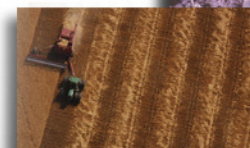


❖ Continuing Education Requirements for Certification

To maintain certification, producers must complete:

1. Attendance of an annual field day with conservation topics discussed for the commodity(s) produced
2. Annual demonstration of progress in the completion of the RMS level plans, as reviewed and verified by NRCS and/or Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Official certification rules for the Louisiana Master Farmer Program will be published into the state register by the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry.



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Structure

Program phases include education, demonstration, and implementation of BMPs.

Phase I: Environmental Stewardship

- ❖ Producers receive information about topics such as Clean Water Act, commodity specific BMPs, and conservation planning.
- ❖ Short multiple choice questions and an evaluation are provided after each section and are used as confirmation that the producer receives credit for all sessions.
- ❖ Trainings are divided into two, four hour blocks and taught by AgCenter and NRCS personnel.
- ❖ A template, based on Louisiana's information, is being developed for use in other states.



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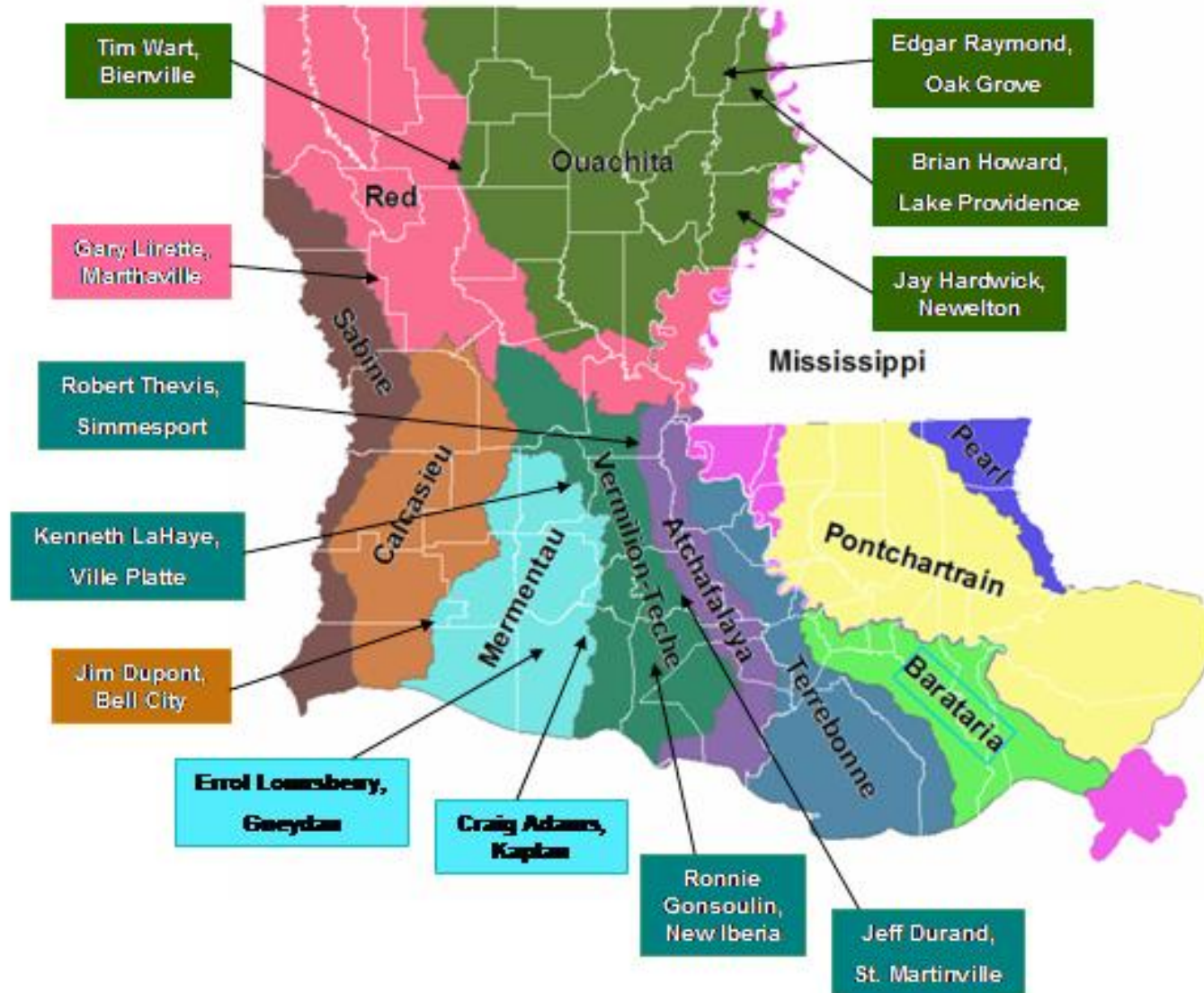
Phase II:

Attending a “Model Farm” field day

- ❖ Applications were sent out to Master Farmer participants that had completed the first phase of the program.
- ❖ Selections were made based on conservation efforts by producers in specific watersheds with various commodities.
- ❖ Quality criteria were used by both LSU AgCenter personnel and NRCS to identify producers and farming practices that would be suitable for water-quality monitoring over time.
- ❖ Cooperative agreement was signed by both AgCenter and producer stating project responsibilities of each.
- ❖ LDEQ funded this phase of the program through 319 educational grant



MASTER FARMER MODEL FARMS





Automatic water samplers were installed at each of the sites.

Field days include presentations from various speakers.

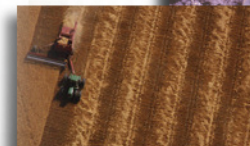


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Cattle producer field day in Ouachita watershed



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Phase II continued:

❖ Producers within respective watershed must attend commodity-specific field day to receive credit for this phase.

-Notification and promotion of field day through mailouts, radio, newspaper, television, and county agent support

❖ Program agenda includes touring of field monitored, NRCS conservation planning, university researchers, and a producer prospective.

❖ Alternate Phase II certifications COULD include viewing of “virtual model farms”, attendance at university field day, or BMP verification on research farms.



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Phase III: Developing and implementing a comprehensive conservation plan

- ❖ Resource Management System (RMS) conservation plan is developed and completed between the producer, NRCS, and his local Soil and Water Conservation District.
- ❖ Plan is developed and producer agrees to implement the necessary practices in the time-line that is agreed upon. This is NOT a contract – it is only contractual if the producer applies for cost-share assistance through the NRCS' EQIP program.



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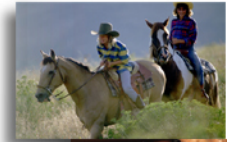


Completion, Benefits, & Incentives

❖ Completion of all phases and requirements for each specific tier level will receive Master Farmer certification from the LSU AgCenter.

❖ “Gold Tier” level of completion results in certification from the LSU AgCenter and from the office of Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

-Producers with Gold Tier certification are then in “presumed compliance” of state soil and water quality standards.



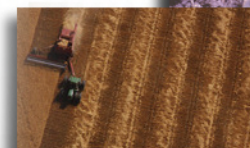
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Are there any incentives for the program?

- ❖ “Presumed Compliance” – threat of regulation
- ❖ EQIP points – NRCS is awarding 2 extra points on EQIP applications for those producers completing Phase I (8 hours of lecture) of the program.
- ❖ Industry support – chemical and fertilizer discounts
 - ❖ Other incentives?
 - equipment discounts
 - farm liability insurance discounts
 - computer software packages
 - discounts on services such as variable rate applications for nutrients and pesticides



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Implementation

- ❖ Implemented by watershed, with the watershed agent helping to coordinate the program in their area
- ❖ Design based on the development and implementation schedule of TMDLs
- ❖ Needs must be assessed in each of the watersheds to identify the greatest concerns with producers.
- ❖ Once needs have been defined, an organized timeline of how the program will be implemented must be developed.



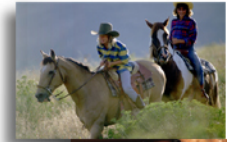
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Things to consider when designing a program:

- ❖ Phases the producer must complete in order to be certified
- ❖ Personnel that must be hired and/or trained
- ❖ Funding for printed materials for trainings
- ❖ Location of trainings
- ❖ Advertisement for lectures and field days
- ❖ Agencies directly involved contact with them
- ❖ Database for producer enrollment/maintaining certification
- ❖ Model farm selection, equipment and personnel needed
- ❖ Each state will need to modify and answer these questions based on the design and implementation of the program.



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Advertising & Media Dissemination

- ❖ Media -television, radio, newspapers, word of mouth
- ❖ Field days and production meetings are excellent opportunities to “talk it up” and give producers, as well as industry, information and updates as the program progresses.
- ❖ Semi-annual Master Farmer newsletter gives updates and changes to producers enrolled in the program.
- ❖ Master Farmer website -updates, upcoming trainings, participant list, field days, related links (NRCS, LDEQ)



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More Information...

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Master Farmer website

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