

## Pasture Walk for Women

The Minden Field Office staff worked with the Dorcheat SWCD and Mike Turpin, grazing land specialist, to conduct a Pasture Walk for women. The Pasture Walk was held on June 10th at the farm of Trudie and Rex Cable in Doyline, Louisiana. Mrs. Cable gave an overview of her and her husband's



**Attendees learn about pasture walks**

farming operation. Mr. Turpin then explained what a pasture walk is and then the group moved into the pasture. Topics of discussion included: resource concerns such as overgrazing, heavy use area protection, pest management, waste utilization, and nutrient management. Plant identification for some commonly occurring pasture weeds was also discussed. Everyone at the meeting was enthusiastic and expressed their interests in participating in more meetings like this one.

### Twin Valley RC&D to provide Wildland Urban Interface Community Grants

Twin Valley RC&D worked with the LA Dept. of Ag & Forestry (LDAF) to provide two Wildland Urban Interface Community grants which were awarded to DeSoto Fire District #8, Mansfield, and the Village of Goldonna, Natchitoches Parish. The grants are worth \$30,000 total (\$15,000 grant money and \$15,000 local match). The communities will complete wildfire assessments, write a community wildfire protection plan, hold public meetings to discuss assessment findings with citizens, and implement their wildfire protection plans. With the grant money awarded, DeSoto Fire District #8 will purchase a four-wheel drive ATV vehicle with a foam tank to provide fire suppression around homes in heavily wooded and grassy areas. They will hold a public meeting in conjunction with their fall festival, Drake Saltworks Festival.

For more information on the Conservation Update, or to contribute or comment on this edition or past editions, please contact Stuart A. Lee, state public affairs specialist, at 318-473-7762, or by email at stuart.lee@la.usda.gov.

## Louisiana Holds State Technical Advisory Committee meeting on July 17th

NRCS in Louisiana was host to the State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) meeting on July 17, 2008, in Lafayette, Louisiana. The purpose of the STAC is to provide recommendations to the NRCS State Conservationist on natural resource related issues in Louisiana. The meeting began with an update from Leslie Michael, NRCS assistant state conservation for programs, on fiscal year 2008 allocations of EQIP, WHIP and WRP.

Kevin Norton, state conservationist, announced that the 2008 Farm Bill (Food Conservation and Energy Act of 2008) became law on May 22, with Louisiana tentatively receiving \$13,000,000 for EQIP. Steve Carmichael, state resource conservationist, led a discussion on national, state and local resource concern priorities for the fiscal year 2009 programs. The resource concerns for the state level were ranked during the meeting. The national, state, and local resource concerns will be used in the ranking process for EQIP and WHIP during fiscal year 2009 with the local resource concerns a priority for ranking EQIP and WHIP applications. Kevin Norton, encouraged those in attendance to contact him with questions and comments. He also requested for the members present to try and persuade representatives from other agencies and organizations to become more active in the STAC process.

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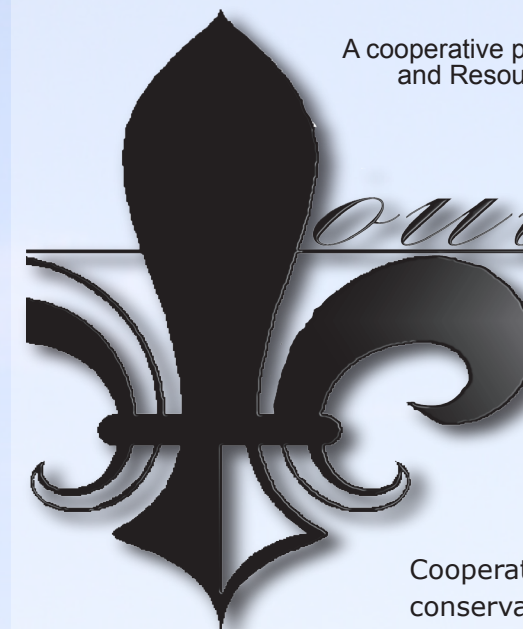
These issues have been laid on the table at the State Technical Advisory Committee and shared with other agencies and organizations.

In the next two months we will begin training NRCS field personnel on farm bill program delivery for 2009. We will be back at the conservation table working to identify and set priorities within each conservation district using information learned from the locally led process. I am looking forward to the coming year and opportunity to continue the legacy of cooperative conservation and engage districts and councils more directly in the delivery of conservation programs.

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

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*Louisiana*

*NRCS Conservation Update*

### Notes from the State Conservationist

Cooperative Conservation continues to be the "banner" used by public sector conservation agencies to communicate their varied efforts of delivering financial and technical services. The two words evoke positive emotions. Cooperation brings to life the emotions and thoughts of togetherness, shared visions, common values, trust and happiness. Conservation creates visions of clean water, healthy plants, fresh air, and abundance of livestock, wildlife, and future generations healthier and wealthier than ours.



**Kevin Norton**

Over the past few months I've attended several Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) meetings as part of my journey toward meeting at the table with all 44 districts and seven councils. Also, I have traveled with members of our State Conservation District Association and the Office of Soil and Water Conservation (LADF-OSWC). At these tables, as we discuss the topics of locally led conservation, district priorities, Farm Bill program delivery, partnerships, emerging natural resource problems, and celebrate the successes of recently completed practices, I'm reminded of the cooperative conservation legacy we have inherited. Cooperative conservation is what we, NRCS, OSWC, councils and districts, are all about. The "banner" waived today has been our model for success since our first conservation district was organized in 1938. Government (federal, state and local) working voluntarily with people on the land to protect, maintain and improve natural resources.

It started fairly simple and small. Soil erosion was the primary culprit and the interested parties were landowners and us. Today, the resource issues are expanding, as well as, the partners we bring to the table. However, the very core of our success is the "conservation table" set at the local SWCD and RC&D council. It is at this table where local officials, elected and appointed, and professional conservationists turn their attention to the natural resources, the people on the land, and the needs of both. Through the locally led process we have looked at the natural resources and health of the land; and we have heard from the people.

### What's inside?

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### Quote of the Month...

"Motivation is everything. You can do the work of two people, but you can't be two people. Instead, you have to inspire the next guy down the line and get him to inspire his people."

**- Lee Iacocca**



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### Thrift Savings Plan

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is a valuable way to build up your retirement for both FERS and CSRS employees. Social Security, the FERS annuity and TSP make up the three sources of income at retirement for FERS retirees. FERS employees are encouraged to take advantage of the matching funds with FERS participation. CSRS employees can participate but they do not receive the matching funds.

As of May 31, 2008, TSP has 3.9 million participants with \$234 billion in assets. 86% of FERS employees, 70% of CSRS employees and 27% of Uniformed Service Employees are participating. TSP costs approximately \$.15 (cents) per every \$1,000 which is quite low compared to other financial service companies.

A new free e-mail subscription service has been provided that will automatically send out an email to your email of choice when there is new or updated information at the TSP website.

As of June 29, 2008, TSP participants have the option to change that long 13-digit ID to a customizable User ID. Participants do NOT have to change but have the option to change if they desire.

All information and directions on how to make changes and add services relating to TSP can be found at [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov).

### Volunteers Help to Plant Smooth Cordgrass Along the Banks of Prien Lake

The McNeese Collegiate FFA Group has been a vital participant of the Earth Team Volunteer Program for NRCS and the Gulf Coast Soil & Water

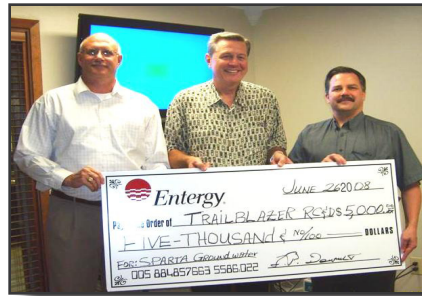


**Volunteers planting the banks of Prien Lake**

Conservation District. On June 23, 2008, the Earth Team group along with Dr. Chip LeMieux volunteered to help with the planting of 1,000 trade gallons of Smooth Cordgrass along the banks of Prien Lake. They were assisted by LDAF Project Manager Marc Carlson and District Technicians. The purpose of this planting project is to establish shore line protection for the outer banks of Prien Lake. The McNeese Collegiate FFA assisted in planting approximately 5,000 feet of eroded shoreline along Prien Lake.

### Trailblazer RC&D Awarded \$5,000

On June 26, 2008, Trailblazer was awarded a \$5,000 check from Entergy Corporation in support of the Trailblazer Sparta Education Project.



**Jim Pensell awards Trailblazer RC&D a check for \$5,000**

The check was presented to President William Altimus at the Trailblazer Board Meeting by Jim Pensell, Entergy Customer Service Manager. This money was awarded to Trailblazer in support of their continuous efforts to educate north central Louisiana on the status concerning the depleting Sparta Aquifer.

### Plant Materials Program Planning Meetings

Many folks wonder what drives the Plant Materials Program (PM) and why specific plant science studies are taken on by Plant Materials Centers (PMC). On July 30th the Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center will host its 2008 Technical Committee Meeting, and on August 7th the 2008 State Plant Materials

Committee will meet to answer these questions. Plant Materials technical committees meets annually to review the current direction of the PMC and state PM program and to identify, prioritize, and recommend future plant technology needs. Committee membership is comprised of both internal (NRCS) and outside partners that have a vested interest in the role plant materials plays within the state. Recommendations from technical committees are later presented to the State Conservationist's Plant Materials Advisory Committee for approval and integration into the state's strategic plan. If you are interested in serving on one of the PM technical committees contact the PMC or Morris Houck, Plant Materials Specialist for Louisiana.



**Tour of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute**

### National Resources Inventory Conducted in Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes

During the month of July, Rangeland Management Specialists Johanna Pate, Stuart Gardner, and Chris Ebel, and John Pitre, wildlife biologist; Charles Guillory, assistant state soil scientist and Michael Lindsey, soil scientist, set out to Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes to collect data for the National Resources Inventory (NRI) field study. The group required an air boat to get to all of the Sample Data Point (PSU) sites. After completion of the field study Johanna Pate stated, "NRI data collection went very well, we completed four PSUs." Pate also stated, "None of the sites had been grazed or burned since the storms of 2005. The vegetation was very robust." Three of the four PSUs were classified as a Brackis Firm Mineral Marsh Ecological Site Description (ESD) and one of the PSUs was a Fresh Firm Mineral Marsh ESD. The data collected is very beneficial to Louisiana. The data will be used to verify the state and transition zones, which Pate is developing for marsh ESDs. After completing this year's NRI field study, results showed that the plant community has shifted, but without causing any major natural resource concerns; the plants are stable.



**Pictures were taken during the NRI fieldstudy**

### False River Sediment Reduction Project

The New Roads Field Office personnel and Pointe Coupee Parish Police Jury recently installed an erosion control structure along LA-413. The drainage channel drains into False River. In an effort to reduce sediment from entering the lake, a sediment reduction plan has been developed that identifies all possible sources. The plan includes cleaning out a man-made sediment basin that was installed through the Grosse Tete Watershed Project, livestock exclusion from major drains and critical area treatment to severe gully and stream bank erosion. This money is being provided through a congressional earmark especially tagged for False River.



**Installation of an erosion control structure along LA-413**

### The National Integrated Drought Information System

The National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) website at <http://www.drought.gov> is looking for feature articles of general interest relating to drought that can help any or all stakeholders better understand drought.

The feature may address any of these topics:

- New or existing drought-related products
- Drought related climate statistics
- Drought as related to projected climate change impacts
- Drought current impacts
- Drought Community Outreach
- Drought Planning & Mitigation
- Drought Education
- Drought Research
- New or existing meteorological-hydrological monitoring stations or networks applicable to monitoring drought
- Summary about drought related organizations or meetings

If you are interested in submitting an article or have any questions, please contact Jan Curtis, Applied Climatologist at (503) 414-3017.

## Preparing for the 2008 Hurricane Season- Kristen Lemoine

Summer months can be very hectic. Parents are busy packing-up for long-awaited vacations, getting their kids off to summer camps, making sure the kids get to games and practices on time, and while all these different activities are happening, we often forget to prepare for the hurricane season that awaits us. Preparing for hurricane season may not be on the top of everyone's summer To Do List, but hopefully previous devastating hurricane seasons have made people more aware of the dangers that hurricanes can cause.

It is important that we all take hurricane season very seriously. Hurricanes have caused death and billions of dollars in property damage. It is necessary that you and your family start to prepare in advance. Whether you and your family decide to evacuate or stay, it is imperative that you and your family discuss and develop a family disaster plan. You should not wait until a storm is near to develop your plan. You will be surprised at the number of different things that will need to be discussed. Below is a helpful preparation list.

### **If you decide to evacuate consider this:**

Where will you go? What route will you drive to get there? Make a list of all essentials that you will need. How will you care for your pets? What property security needs to be done? Will you notify family members where you will be?

### **If you choose to stay:**

Do you have shutters on all the windows? How will you cope with any family members with special medical needs? Do you have all the special supplies and food on hand? Do you have a safe place for all important documents? Are you prepared to live without utilities and normal services for as long as two weeks after the storm?

### **Prepare your property in advance:**

All openings of your home need to have protection to keep fierce winds and rain out of the building. Trees need to be trimmed to minimize the damage trees may cause to your home. Make sure vehicles are not left out in the open, try and move them from the main force of the wind. If you do not have a carport, locate a protected spot to park your vehicles. A good location may be on the side of the house. Bring in all outside items, i.e., lawn furniture, grills, toys, yard equipment, and etc. When these items are picked up by wind they can become very dangerous. Store up to 14 days of supplies and equipment. You should be prepared to live without utilities and basic services for up to two weeks or longer. It is also important to fuel all vehicles before the storm hits. In addition, remember to get to the ATM or bank and secure some cash since banks will probably be closed for some time after a severe storm.

It is important that everyone takes hurricane season seriously. The dangers that hurricanes can cause should never be taken lightly. Remember to plan ahead of time so that if a storm decides to take a bad turn you will be ready! To learn more about hurricanes please visit the National Hurricane Center at: <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/index.shtml>

### **Below is a list for Supplies and Equipment that you should be supplied with:**

Food (canned, dry, non-perishable)  
Baby needs (formula, diapers)  
Bottled water one gallon/person/day  
Disposable plates, cups, utensils  
Toiletries  
Medicines-RX as well as aspirin  
Battery operated clock  
Flash light w/ spare battery

Non-electric can opener  
Mosquito Repellent  
Pet Food  
Ice  
Plastic garbage bags  
Extra batteries  
Portable Radio  
Paper Towels

## Southeast Quail Study Group- John Pitre

On July 15 through 18, 2008 a group of approximately 130 biologists from numerous states, known as the Southeast Quail Study Group, held their 14th annual meeting in Lafayette, LA. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) contracted with the Acadiana RC&D Council to be host to the event. LDWF Secretary Robert Barham, Farm Services Agency State Executive Director Willie Cooper, NRCS State Conservationist Kevin Norton, and Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry Commissioner Dr. Mike Strain gave the initial welcome and opening remarks. There were several presentations given on the subjects of native grass and forb establishment and research, the Farm Bill, and the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI).

The Research, Forestry, Grassland/Grazing Land, Public Relations/Education, and Cropland Management/Ag Policy Committees met from Wednesday afternoon until Thursday at noon. During the Luncheon on Thursday, BASF representatives gave presentations on Chinese tallowtree control with Clearcast herbicide. That afternoon, the CRP CP-33 monitoring update was presented by Mississippi State University.

A biologist with the Missouri Department of Conservation presented a quail success story utilizing the Conservation Security Program and other conservation programs, and the National Wild Turkey Federation discussed the status and structure of the North American Wild Turkey Management Plan. Each committee presented reports then immediately following the business meeting, the conference adjourned. On Friday a field trip consisted of a guided tour of the Gueydan WRP special prairie restoration project, field presentations on sugarcane and rice cultural practices, and a demonstration by a legendary South Louisiana call maker. The group also enjoyed sampling traditional Cajun cuisine.



## EWP- Stuart A. Lee

August 29, 2005, will be a date that changed the lives and landscape of Louisiana forever, but Hurricane Katrina did not stop us from partnering together and moving forward toward a greater environment. NRCS and the city of Covington have partnered together through numerous projects to restore Louisiana's natural resources that were damaged after the hurricane. The last of these projects is now underway thanks in part to the USDA's Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program.

The Bogue Falaya and Tchefuncte rivers project is being conducted under EWP and will remove Hurricane Katrina debris that poses a threat to human safety and natural resources within the rivers.

"The hurricane left tons of debris in waterways throughout the state," said Edmund Giering, state engineer for NRCS. "Removal of debris from the rivers within this project will eradicate the threat to health and safety that it currently pretense – restoring drainage and providing safe boating and recreational use to the rivers."

Downed trees and identified underwater obstructions that pose a threat to health and safety will be removed from the Tchefuncte River from the confluence with the Bogue Falaya to Dogwood Drive. The same kind of obstructions will be removed on the Bogue Falaya River from a point approximately 3500 feet north of I-12 to the abandoned railroad trestle north of US Hwy 190 (Boston Street).

"I am relieved that we have been able to get this project off the ground and I am very grateful to the NRCS for their assistance," said Covington Mayor Candice Watkins.

The work will be performed under a federal contract as a result of the request of Mayor Watkins. The contract amount is \$394,583.70 and has been awarded to Three Fold Consultants, LLC. There have been approximately 20 EWP projects in the greater Covington area.