

Twin Valley RC&D and DeSoto SWCD to hold Workshop for Minorities and Small Landowners

Twin Valley RC&D along with DeSoto SWCD is planning a workshop for minorities and small landowners in DeSoto Parish to be held on July 16, 2008. Participants will be taken to Jeannie Roger's farm in Grand Cane, Louisiana, where they will be given an opportunity to cruise timber to determine how much volume could possibly be on an acre of land. The District Conservationist will discuss and provide information on the best forest management practices that are available to landowners.



Calcasieu River 319 Water Quality Project-Jennings Field Office

The Jennings Field Office developed three new contracts in May for the Calcasieu River 319 Water Quality Project. Despite rising production costs, the field office has completed conservation practices to improve irrigation efficiency on 5,478 acres; 5,145 acres to improve water quality; 9,038 acres to improve soil quality. These practices have been installed through EQIP, Calcasieu 319 Water Quality Project, Mermentau River 319 Water Quality Project, and the Bayou Duralde/Lower Nezpique Land Treatment Watershed Project.



319 Water Quality Project

Lauren Heinen awarded the Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts 2008 State Scholarship

The Jefferson Davis SWCD awarded eight scholarships to students of Jefferson Davis Parish who will major in agricultural related fields. Mr. Joe Tupper, SWCD chairman, made the presentations. Miss Lauren Heinen was selected to represent Jeff Davis Parish at the state level and was awarded the Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts 2008 State Scholarship.



Mr. Joe Tupper awards Miss. Lauren Heinen the State Scholarship

Shoreline Vegetative Dune Fencing Project

John Boatman, NRCS DC for Thibodaux Field Office, assisted with shoreline vegetative/dune fencing project on May 27 at Fourchon Beach in Lafourche Parish. Project is part of the Gulf of Mexico Community Based Restoration Partnership Program, Gulf of Mexico Foundation. A section of the project also included the SWCD/DNR Coastal Re-vegetation Program. A variety of coastal plants and sand dune fencing was established to help protect a section of newly reformed beach that was damaged by the hurricanes of 2005.



Fourchon Beach in Lafourche Parish

Peveto Beach Water Festival

The Imperial Calcasieu RC&D participated in the Peveto Beach Water Festival on May 14. The water festival consisted of multiple structured learning stations where students actively engaged in hands-on water activities and investigations.



Students at Peveto Beach engaging in one of the learning activities

These stations focused on the importance of water quality, wetland and dune ecosystems, watersheds, water conservation, and the hydrologic cycle. As a part of the festival, the students harvested bitter panicum, a native dune grass in the Peveto Beach area, and transplanted the grass to the Holly Beach Area to continue dune creation. Project Partners were USDA/NRCS, Lafayette, Cameron, and Calcasieu Parish 4-H Junior Leaders, American Wetlands Conservation Corp (AWCC), Gulf Coast SWCD, Jefferson Davis SWCD, Cameron Parish School Board, Cameron Parish Police Jury, and Cameron Parish Sheriff's Department.

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.

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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

The lengthy and complicated process of writing a new Farm Bill is now complete. The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) was passed into law on May 22, 2008, with the exception of the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), the conservation programs were provided continuing authority to complete the 2008 fiscal year under the rules and regulations established in the 2002 Farm Bill. As a result, Louisiana has received additional technical and financial assistance funding for the Conservation Reserve Program, Ground and Surface Water Conservation Program, WRP, and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. The actual funding increases are reflected in the table on page two. There remains potential for increases in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, too. Program announcements are underway and field office personnel will be working diligently to obligate these funds for resource conservation across the state.

The Wetlands Reserve Program has been granted authority for immediate implementation under the 2008 Farm Bill. For the balance of this fiscal year (September 30, 2008), NRCS will have interim authority to acquire easements based on the lesser of one of the following: 1) Fair Market Value as established by a USPAP appraisal; 2) Geographic rate cap established in consultation with the State Technical Committee; or 3) Offer by the landowner. This effectively eliminates the before and after appraisal values we have offered over the past two years. We are aggressively preparing releases and mailings to advise past and potential participants of the program changes.

As implementation moves forward on the 2008 Farm Bill beginning October 1, 2008, USDA will be developing the rules and regulations for each program and eligibility provision included in the law. These will be made available over the next few months for public review and comment. We have established a link on our home page for access to the most current information available on implementation of the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill. Admittedly, the information available at the moment is limited to the text of the Farm Bill. As more information becomes available, the site will grow.

Finally, I wish to express my appreciation to the NRCS staff and conservation district employees who have worked to obligate well over \$14.5 million in the 2002 Farm Bill. Your hard work has greatly benefited Louisiana's natural resources and the people on the land. The accelerated timeline for obligations in the winter and the stops and starts of the Farm Bill extension process

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Kevin D. Norton

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Visit the Louisiana NRCS Web site at www.la.nrcs.usda.gov to learn more about the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill 2008)

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proved challenging. Each of you maintained a professional and positive focus while servicing our customers. We are most effective when we keep our eyes on the land and enable our customers to protect our natural resources. You all have worked so hard to implement sound conservation practices by providing the best technical and financial assistance we can offer to protect nature's beauty.

Thank you for a job well done.

Kevin D. Norton
State Conservationist

Funding Increases (Technical Assistance)

CRP		GRP	
Increase	\$266,289	Increase	\$1,129
Total	\$813,384	Total	\$4,205
WHIP		WRP	
Increase	\$180,772	Increase	\$618,409
Total	\$342,347	Total	\$1,239,217
GSWC			
Increase	\$68,145		
Total	\$174,476		

Figures provided by NRCS Budget Officer

**Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
LA CREP I to cease sign-up**

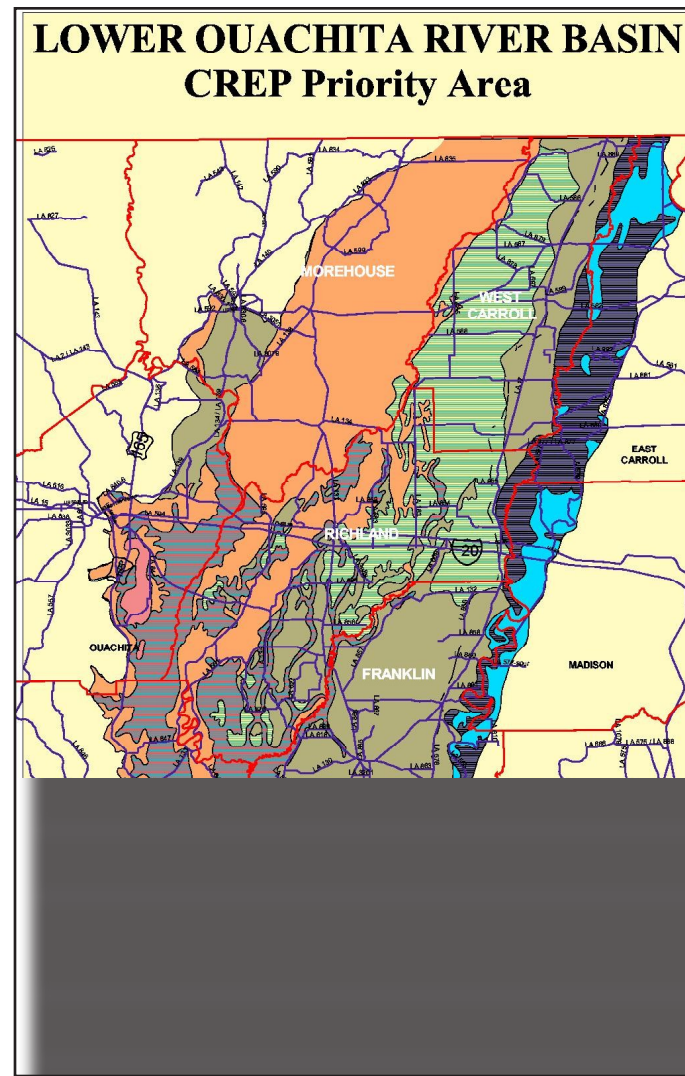
Starting in 2005, the Louisiana Conservation Reserve Program (CREP) had a tremendous goal—establish 50,000 acres of long term conservation practices on environmentally sensitive lands. At present, there are currently 717 contracts with 50,000 acres in the LA CREP I project. By reaching the goal, LA CREP I has closed enrollment and is not taking new applications.

CREP promotes voluntary, incentive based stewardship by Louisiana farmers and landowners. Some of the key conservation practices under CREP are: reduction of nutrient and sediment contributions, enhancement of surface and ground water quality, enhancement of wildlife habitat for waterfowl and upland game species, establishes critical bottomland hardwood habitat for declining and endangered species, sequestration of carbon through conservation planning and promoting stewardship.

Parish acres under contract

Caldwell	38.5
Catahoula	961.80
E. Carroll	2,751.60
Franklin	9542.90
Madison	3,716.30
Morehouse	8,752.40
Ouachita	1,142.60
Richland	13,152.20
W. Carroll	9,919.90

LA CREP is a partnership effort of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, USDA Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and many other private and public conservation partners.



**CWPPRA Construction Update
June 2008 - Adele Swearingen**

NRCS is currently involved in the construction of four CWPPRA projects valued at approximately \$30 million and benefiting 2,070 acres of Louisiana coastal marsh in Cameron, Jefferson, and Lafourche Parishes. Two of the projects, CS-32 East Sabine Lake Hydrologic Restoration and TE-46 West Lake Boudreaux Shoreline Protection and Marsh Creation, are federally sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; however, NRCS performed the project design and is overseeing project construction. The other two projects, BA-27 Barataria Basin Landbridge Shoreline Protection, Phases 1 and 2 and BA-27c Barataria Basin Landbridge Shoreline Protection, Phase 3, are NRCS sponsored projects.



Construction of earthen terraces on CS-32 project



Construction of earthen terraces on CS-32 project



Construction of rock dike on the TE-46 project



Concrete wall on BA-27 Project



Completed concrete wall on BA-27c project

Please visit www.lacoast.gov for more information

Master Cattlemen Demonstration - Oak Grove

A Master Cattlemen Demonstration Farm Field Day was held at Riverosa Farm in West Carroll Parish on May 23, 2008. There were approximately 25 people in attendance. Several speakers gave excellent presentations. Jerry Shows, District Conservationist, gave a presentation on Resource Management System's planning and the role of NRCS in the Master Farmer Program.



Master Cattlemen Demonstration

Tenth Annual LaSalle Forestry Awareness Day

The Tenth Annual LaSalle Parish Forestry Awareness Day was held April 30, 2008, at Attakapas Boy Scout Camp near Trout. The fifth graders from LaSalle Parish schools went through a series of stations learning about forestry and other environmental concerns. The students spent about twenty minutes at each station. The weather was beautiful, which made the day even more enjoyable. All of the students were very well-behaved and attentive.



NRCS at Forestry-Awareness Day

Soil Scientist Ed Scott and District Supervisor Clyde Irvin gave brief discussions on how a soil scientist defines the components of soil such as: soil color, texture, soil horizons, organic matter, water/air, soil erosion, wetlands, and soil fertility. The children especially enjoyed Mr. Scott's demonstration on how to take soil samples. The children were given "Water is Life" educational activity sheets to take home with them at the end of the day.

Spotlight - Saline Soil and Water Conservation District

The Saline Soil and Water Conservation District held its annual Soil and Water Stewardship Luncheon on April 29, 2008, in Ringgold, Louisiana. There were approximately 56 people in attendance. Kevin Norton gave a brief presentation. The Saline SWCD also honored Mr. R. P. Thomas for serving on the Saline SWCD Board for 60 years and a Power Point presentation showing his history in conservation was presented.

