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 **NRCS** Louisiana
Conservation Update
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August 2012

Gulf of Mexico Initiative

Bayou Corne-Grand Bayou and Bayou St. Vincent-
Little Grand Bayou Watersheds

Bringing Back the Gopher Tortoise

Beginning Farmers Alfred and Edith Gross

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

HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND

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Sugarcane producers in the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary are doing their part to make a difference in the water quality of the Gulf. They are implementing practices such as nutrient management, conservation crop rotation, grade stabilization structures, precision land forming, and residue management. Read more on pages 4 and 5.



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Notes from the State Conservationist

This month, Eugene Woods shares with us that "It is going to take a lot of effort from a lot of different people . . ." to make a difference in the water quality of the Gulf of Mexico.

A starting point in this effort for the Natural Resources Conservation Service and our conservation partners is the Gulf of Mexico Initiative.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service and our partners established this landscape-based initiative to improve ecosystem health of the Gulf of Mexico and its associated watersheds. Farmers and ranchers in two targeted areas in Louisiana are working in concert through the Gulf of Mexico Initiative to install conservation practices that will improve the quality of the water leaving their farms and ranches. This is a good beginning—guaranteed to make a difference in the quality of water entering the Gulf from our streams and bayous.

Have you thought about the path the water takes when it leaves your farm or ranch? Is it as clean as it can be when it leaves your farm or ranch? If you think it can be cleaner, give our offices a call, and we will help you choose and implement the alternative that best fits your goals.

Kevin Norton
State Conservationist
Louisiana



Quote of the Month

A good beginning makes a good end.

English proverb

The **Conservation Update** is distributed monthly by mail and e-mail.

If you would like to receive monthly issues of the **Conservation Update**, please send your mailing address or e-mail address to:

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Gulf of Mexico Initiative

Bayou Corne-Grand Bayou and Bayou St. Vincent-Little Grand Bayou Watersheds



It is going to take a lot of effort

“Every year the dead zone is growing in the Gulf, and I think the Gulf of Mexico Initiative is a way that it can be addressed,” said Eugene Woods, a sugarcane producer and District Supervisor for the Lower Delta SWCD District (SWCD) in Assumption Parish.

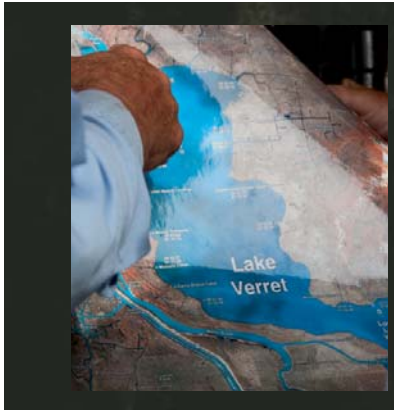
“It is going to take a lot of effort from a lot of different people—and lot of different industries; but I think it is a step in the right direction to get it started and alleviate some of the problems we are having in the Gulf.”

Lower Delta Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is partnering with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to improve water quality through the Gulf of Mexico Initiative in the Bayou Corne-Grand Bayou and Bayou St. Vincent-Little Grand Bayou Watersheds.

Sugarcane producers in the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary are doing their part to make a difference in the water quality of the Gulf. They are implementing practices such as nutrient management, conservation crop rotation, grade stabilization structures, precision land forming, and residue management.

One conservation practice—chemical fallowing residue management—is only offered to producers through the Gulf of Mexico Initiative.

Woods explains the benefits of chemical fallowing which is a component of residue management ridge till: “Traditionally, when a sugarcane crop is planted, a certain percentage of that acreage has to be left fallow. Normally, we do mechanical cultivation along with some chemical fallow on this acreage. When we mechanically cultivate, the soil is loose. It doesn’t have any protection, and some of the soil is lost. With chemical fallow, the land is packed, and you are leaving some residue on top. There are a lot of benefits (to chemical fallow): less run-off, less pesticides/nutrients are running into the water bodies.”





The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in cooperation with our conservation partners, established a landscape-based, coordinated effort to improve ecosystem health in the Gulf of Mexico and its associated watersheds—the Gulf of Mexico Initiative. Working in conjunction with state and federal agencies, local partners, and producers, NRCS selected seven river basins containing sixteen of the watersheds with the greatest opportunity to build upon existing conservation efforts. They include Weeks Bay in Alabama, the Escambia River in Alabama and Florida, the middle Suwannee River area in Florida, the Atchafalaya and Mermentau Basins in Louisiana, the Jourdan River in Mississippi, and the Lower San Antonio River in Texas.

It comes from a lot of different people

The Gulf of Mexico Initiative partnership with Lower Delta SWCD has resulted in 10 contracts with agricultural producers in the targeted watersheds—impacting 4,297 acres.



South Louisiana is known throughout the United States for its abundant production of seafood along the Gulf Coast. It contains some of the most productive fisheries in the United States. It is also known for its ability to produce sugarcane and productive grazing lands because of its mild winters and fertile soils.

Bayou Corne-Grand Bayou and Bayou St. Vincent-Little Grand Bayou Watersheds are located within the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary. This is one of the most fragile estuaries in the country. The overall health of the Barataria-Terrebonne estuary is declining for several reasons, many of which are inter-related; they include: hydrologic modification, sediment reduction, habitat loss, eutrophication, pathogens, toxic substances, and changes in living resources. These problems originate from many sources including point water pollution sources, building levees, channelization, and non-point runoff from urban, suburban, and agricultural areas.

The major land use within the focus area is agriculture, with Assumption Parish being one of the top sugarcane producing parishes in the state. The two watersheds consist of 23,226 acres of cropland, 46,167 acres of bottomland hardwood forest, 331 acres of pasture, and 1,870 acres of urban land.

Runoff from working lands in south Louisiana contributes to water quality concerns in the watersheds, basins, and the Gulf of Mexico. Sheet and rill erosion deposits excessive sediment in waterways, resulting in increased turbidity, phosphorus loading, and eventually eutrophication. Excess sediment in surface water also degrades animal and plant life populations and diversity by changing the depth and turbidity of the water ultimately impacting fragile coastal estuaries.

Eugene Woods Lower Delta SWCD
Conservationists

Bringing Back the Gopher Tortoise: Working Lands For Wildlife

Bruce Miller learned about the Working Lands for Wildlife project at a workshop sponsored by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Wild Turkey Federation, Louisiana State University AgCenter, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. He went to the workshop looking for assistance with loblolly pine planting and came away from the workshop sold on longleaf pine.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service and its conservation partners are helping private landowners in Tangipahoa, Washington, St. Tammany, and St. Helena Parishes enhance and restore longleaf pine forests to support gopher tortoise recovery in Louisiana through NRCS' Working Lands for Wildlife project.

The rolling hills around Miller's property in Washington Parish are flush with timber and offer a prime habitat for the gopher tortoise. Miller's property runs adjacent to an area that was once designated as a wildlife management area by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and gopher tortoise burrows have been spotted in the area.



Miller worked with the Franklinton Field Office to develop a conservation plan that includes replanting a clear cut area in longleaf pine, control of cogongrass (an invasive species), planting of conservation cover for wildlife and grazing areas for gopher tortoise, and prescribed burning to promote native vegetation. The plan is in early stages of implementation, but progress is already evident in the battle against the cogongrass.

Around the State

Aug 10

Harper Armstrong featured in Delta Press

Morehouse Parish farmer Harper Armstrong was featured in the August 10, 2012, issue of the Delta Press in an article titled "Armstrong: EQIP'd to manage water."

In the article Armstrong explained how installation of an underground pipe to help with irrigation has made farming a lot easier

for him. Armstrong is a leader in the Morehouse Black Farmers Association, and he regularly works with the LSU AgCenter to host annual field days on his farm and other area farms and plant demonstration yield plots. He works with the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Bastrop Field Office to implement conservation practices.

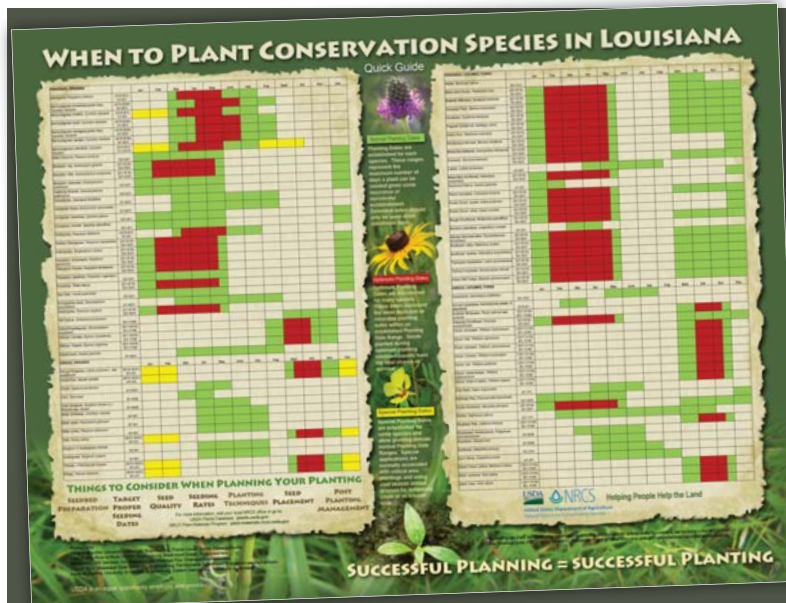


More about EQIP

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers through contracts up to a maximum term of ten years in length. These contracts provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns and for opportunities to improve soil, water, plant, animal, air and related resources on agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland. In addition, a purpose of EQIP is to help producers meet Federal, State, Tribal and local environmental regulations.

Who Can Apply

Owners of land in agricultural or forest production or persons who are engaged in livestock, agricultural or forest production on eligible land and that have a natural resource concern on the land may participate in EQIP. For more information on the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, visit your local NRCS office or www.nrcs.usda.gov.



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Beginning Farmers Alfred and Edith Gross

Submitted by Samuel Terry, Student Intern



Alfred and Edith Gross are a beginning farming couple from the New Orleans area. They have been in the farming business for about four years. Both attended Northeast Louisiana University which is now the University of Louisiana at Monroe. Alfred majored in general studies and is retired from the oilfield as a service hand doing technical testing. Edith majored in business and is currently a high school educator. I had the privilege to have a conversation with Alfred and Edith about their life, plans, and goals for the future as farmers. Alfred always did enjoy farming and the thought of owning some land one day was always on his mind. He only wanted about six or so acres, but he and his wife found a

place with twenty five acres they liked, so they bought it. They currently have sixteen Black Angus beef cattle and plan to keep their herd about that size to be small, well managed livestock farmers. Their focus is more about the quality rather than the quantity.

Alfred and Edith also have a garden and a small fruit orchard. Some crops they have grown in their garden are tomatoes, yellow squash, cucumbers, turnips, and zucchini. They take their produce to New Orleans to the Gretna Food Bank which is a food charity.

Alfred and Edith acquired their first few heifers through an organization called Heifer International Project with the St. Helena Cattle Company. In this project a beginning farmer gets training, and they are issued four breed heifers. When their herd grows and they get more heifers, they pass new heifers to new beginning farmers. The couple actually heard about the Natural Resources Conservation Service through this project.

Alfred is currently in a program, the Small Farmer Agricultural Leadership Training Institute, with Southern University that gives small, beginning, socially disadvantaged, limited resource, and/or minority farmers the knowledge to become successful agricultural entrepreneurs. Through this program he has had an opportunity to visit many colleges, universities, and state of the art farms throughout the United States.

On June 30, 2012, Alfred and Edith hosted a pasture walk. A pasture walk is an informal gathering of livestock owners who are interested in the grazing aspect of raising livestock.

They are also elated from the assistance that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is giving them. NRCS has helped them with heavy use areas for their grass fed only livestock. Alfred and Edith recently spread out Argentine Bahia grass seed and lime on their pasture. They are using the rotational grazing method and may do some cross fencing in the future. A survey was just done for a lower water crossing to be designed for their property.

They said NRCS is a great support system, especially for beginning farmers and they are very grateful for all the help they have received. They said they are willing to work diligently with the NRCS because they do not want to destroy anything. They know more generations are left to come.

It is a great to know that there are still people in the world trying to conserve our land, but it is even better knowing that after 75 years of service, the motto of the Natural Resources Conservation Service still stands strong as they continue "Helping People Help the Land!"



USDA's Commitment to Equality

USDA believes every farmer and rancher should be treated equally and fairly, and we are committed to resolving all cases involving allegations of past discrimination by individuals.

Referral Guide for USDA Settlements and Claims Adjudication Process

Women and Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers Claims Adjudication Process

If you believe that USDA improperly denied farm loan benefits to you for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000 because you are a female or because you are Hispanic, you may be eligible to apply for compensation. To request a claims package by telephone, call 1-888-508-4429. To request a claims package online, please visit www.farmerclaims.gov

Native American Farmer and Rancher Class Action Settlement (Keepseagle v. Vilsack)

If you are a Native American who was denied a farm loan or loan servicing by the USDA between January 1, 1981, and November 24, 1999, you may be eligible for benefits from a Class Action Settlement. To request a claims package by telephone, call: 1-888-233-5506. To request a claims package online, or for more information, please visit: www.indianfarmclass.com

African American Farmer and Rancher Class Action Settlement (Pigford II)

If you are an African American farmer (a) who submitted a request to file a late claim on or between October 13, 1999, and June 18, 2008, under the 1999 USDA settlement in the earlier class action known as Pigford v. Glickman ("Pigford") and (b) who did not receive a merits determination on your discrimination claim, you may be eligible for benefits from a Class Action Settlement. To hear information by telephone, call 1-866-950-5547 or 1-866-472-7826. To find information online, please visit: www.blackfarmercase.com

Contact Our Offices

Parish	Field Office	Soil and Water Conservation District	Address	Telephone
Acadia	Crowley	Acadia SWCD	157 Cherokee Drive, Suite C, Crowley, LA 70526	(337) 783-5823, ext. 3
Allen	Oberlin	Allen SWCD	309 North 1st Street, Suite 1, Oberlin, LA 70655	(337) 639-4850, ext. 3
Ascension	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD and New River SWCD	2274 Highway 70, Suite C, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
Assumption	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD	2274 Highway 70, Suite C, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
Avoyelles	Marksville	Avoyelles SWCD	629 Tunica Drive West, Marksville, LA 71351	(318) 253-9445, ext. 3
Beauregard	DeRidder	Calcasieu SWCD	597 Mahlon Street, Suite B, DeRidder, LA 70634	(337) 463-8555, ext. 3
Bienville	Minden	Saline SWCD	216B Broadway, Minden, LA 71055	(318) 377-3950, ext. 3
Bossier	Benton	Bodcau SWCD	200 Burt Boulevard, Suite 101, Benton, LA 71006-4901	(318) 965-2185, ext. 3
Caddo	Shreveport	Caddo SWCD	1402 Hawn Avenue, Shreveport, LA 71107	(318) 676-3461, ext. 3
Calcasieu	Lake Charles	Gulf Coast SWCD	1400 Highway 14, Suite B, Lake Charles, LA 70601	(337) 436-5020, ext. 3
Caldwell	Columbia	Boeuf and Dugdeмона SWCD	7128 Highway 165 South, Suite 2, Columbia, LA 71418	(318) 649-2651, ext. 3
Cameron	Lake Charles	Gulf Coast SWCD	1400 Highway 14, Suite B, Lake Charles, LA 70601	(337) 436-5020, ext. 3
Catahoula	Jonesville	Catahoula SWCD	3545 4th Street, Jonesville, LA 71343	(318) 339-4239, ext. 3
Claiborne	Minden	D'Arbonne SWCD	216B Broadway, Minden, LA 71055	(318) 377-3950, ext. 3
Concordia	Ferriday	Tensas-Concordia SWCD	8331 Highway 84, Ferriday, LA 71334	(318) 757-2455, ext. 3
DeSoto	Mansfield	DeSoto SWCD	211 Washington Avenue, Mansfield, LA 71052	(318) 872-4949, ext. 3
East Baton Rouge	Denham Springs	Capital SWCD	2191 Tower Drive, Denham Springs, LA 70726	(225) 664-1430, ext. 3
East Carroll	Lake Providence	East Carroll SWCD	406 Lake Street, Suite C, Lake Providence, LA 71254	(318) 559-2604, ext. 3
East Feliciana	Clinton	Feliciana SWCD	9752 Plank Road South, Clinton, LA 70722	(225) 683-5496, ext. 3
Evangeline	Ville Platte	Evangeline SWCD	205 Court Street, Ville Platte, LA 70586	(337) 363-6602, ext. 3
Franklin	Winnsboro	Northeast SWCD	616 Riser Road, Winnsboro, LA 71295	(318) 435-6743, ext. 3
Grant	Colfax	Grant SWCD	510 Main Street, Colfax, LA 71417	(318) 627-9903, ext. 3
Iberia	New Iberia	Iberia SWCD	2617 Northside Road, Suite 600, New Iberia, LA 70563	(337) 369-6623, ext. 3
Iberville	Addis	Lower Delta SWCD	7747 Highway 1 South, Addis, LA 70710	(225) 687-2184, ext. 3
Jackson	Ruston	Dugdeмона SWCD	1412 Celebrity Drive, Ruston, LA 71270	(318) 255-3136, ext. 3
Jefferson	Boutte	Crescent SWCD	14246 US Highway 90, Boutte, LA 70039	(985) 758-2162, ext. 3
Jefferson Davis	Jennings	Jefferson Davis SWCD	2003 Port Drive, Jennings, LA 70546	(337) 824-0975, ext. 3
Lafayette	Lafayette	Lafayette SWCD	905 Jefferson Street, Suite 310, Lafayette, LA 70501-7913	(337) 262-6601, ext. 3
Lafourche	Thibodaux	Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD	143 Laura Drive, Thibodaux, LA 70301	(985) 447-3871, ext. 3
LaSalle	Jonesville	LaSalle SWCD	3545 4th Street, Jonesville, LA 71343	(318) 339-4239, ext. 3
Lincoln	Ruston	D'Arbonne SWCD	1412 Celebrity Drive, Ruston, LA 71270	(318) 255-3136, ext. 3
Livingston	Denham Springs	Capital SWCD	2191 Tower Drive, Denham Springs, LA 70726	(225) 664-1430, ext. 3
Madison	Tallulah	Madison SWCD	1900 Crothers Drive, Tallulah, LA 71282	(318) 574-4158, ext. 3
Morehouse	Bastrop	Morehouse SWCD	9604 Marlatt Street, Bastrop, LA 71220	(318) 283-7626, ext. 3
Natchitoches	Natchitoches	Natchitoches SWCD	6949 Louisiana Highway 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, LA 71457	(318) 357-8366, ext. 3
Orleans	Boutte	Crescent SWCD	14246 US Highway 90, Boutte, LA 70039	(985) 758-2162, ext. 3
Ouachita	Monroe	D'Arbonne/Boeuf River SWCD	2410 Old Sterlington Road, Suite B, Monroe, LA 71203-2668	(318) 343-4467, ext. 3
Plaquemines	Boutte	Plaquemines SWCD	14246 US Highway 90, Boutte, LA 70039	(985) 758-2162, ext. 3
Pointe Coupee	New Roads	Upper Delta SWCD	180 East Main Street, New Roads, LA 70760	(225) 638-7746, ext. 3
Rapides	Alexandria	Rapides SWCD	3734 Government Street, Building C, Alexandria, LA 71303	(318) 473-7856, ext. 3
Red River	Coushatta	Red River SWCD	1311 Ringgold Avenue, Coushatta, LA 71019	(318) 932-4352, ext. 3
Richland	Rayville	Boeuf River SWCD	141 Industrial Loop, Rayville, LA 71269	(318) 728-4451, ext. 3
Sabine	Many	Sabine SWCD	570 Highway 171 By Pass, Many, LA 71449	(318) 256-3491
St. Bernard	Boutte	Crescent SWCD	14246 US Highway 90, Boutte, LA 70039	(985) 758-2162, ext. 3
St. Charles	Boutte	Crescent SWCD	14246 US Highway 90, Boutte, LA 70039	(985) 758-2162, ext. 3
St. Helena	Amite	Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD	805 West Oak Street, Suite 1, Amite, LA 70422-2820	(985) 748-8751, ext. 3
St. James	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD and New River SWCD	2274 Highway 70, Suite C, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
St. John	Boutte	Crescent SWCD	14246 US Highway 90, Boutte, LA 70039	(985) 758-2162, ext. 3
St. Landry	Opelousas	St. Landry SWCD	5832 I-49 North Service Road, Opelousas, LA 70570	(337) 942-2530, ext. 3
St. Martin	Lafayette	St. Martin SWCD	905 Jefferson Street, Suite 310, Lafayette, LA 70501-7913	(337) 262-6601, ext. 3
St. Mary	Franklin	St. Mary SWCD	500 Main Street, Franklin, LA 70538	(337) 828-1461, ext. 3
St. Tammany	Franklinton	Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD	1111 Washington Street, Franklinton, LA 70438	(985) 839-5688, ext. 3
Tangipahoa	Amite	Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD	805 West Oak Street, Suite 1, Amite, LA 70422-2820	(985) 748-8751, ext. 3
Tensas	St. Joseph	Tensas-Concordia SWCD	1223 Plank Road, St. Joseph, LA 71366	(318) 766-3502, ext. 3
Terrebonne	Thibodaux	Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD	143 Laura Drive, Thibodaux, LA 70301	(985) 447-3871, ext. 3
Union	Farmerville	D'Arbonne SWCD	604 East Water Street, Farmerville, LA 71241	(318) 368-8021
Vermilion	Abbeville	Vermilion SWCD	3221 Veterans Memorial Drive, Suite H, Abbeville, LA 70510	(337) 893-5664, ext. 3
Vernon	Leesville	Calcasieu SWCD	205 North 5th Street, Leesville, LA 71446	(337) 239-2193
Washington	Franklinton	Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD	1111 Washington Street, Franklinton, LA 70438	(985) 839-5688, ext. 3
Webster	Minden	Dorcheat SWCD	216B Broadway, Minden, LA 71055	(318) 377-3950, ext. 3
West Baton Rouge	Addis	Upper Delta SWCD	7747 Highway 1, South, Addis, LA 70710	(225) 687-2184, ext. 3
West Carroll	Oak Grove	West Carroll SWCD	208 South Constitution Street, Oak Grove, LA 71263	(318) 428-9303, ext. 3
West Feliciana	Clinton	Feliciana SWCD	9752 Plank Road South, Clinton, LA 70722	(225) 683-5496, ext. 3
Winn	Natchitoches	Dugdeмона SWCD	6949 Louisiana Highway 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, LA 71457	(318) 357-8366, ext. 3

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