

Projects . Successes . Partnerships

 **NRCS** Louisiana
Conservation Update
United States Department of Agriculture . Natural Resources Conservation Service

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September 2011

**Quality Product . . .
Quality Environment**
Natchitoches Parish Poultry Producer
Has it All

**Conservation Classroom
Unveiled in Vermilion Parish**

First Ever for Louisiana

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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On the Cover

Gary and Louise Lirette and their son Stephen have been raising chickens near Marthaville, Louisiana, for over 12 years. Their farm produces three million chickens a year with little impact to the environment. Pictured on the cover is a composter on the Lirette's farm which converts organic matter to a more useful end product that can be used as fertilizer. See story on pages 4 and 5 to find out more.



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Notes from the Acting State Conservationist

September brought exciting opportunities for our State Conservationist, Kevin Norton. Kevin was selected for a temporary assignment on Senator Debbie Stabenow's staff to help draft the language of our nation's next Farm Bill (Senator Stabenow, from Michigan, is the Chairwoman of the Senate Agriculture Committee). We are very proud of Kevin and excited that he is in Washington working on this important legislation. We are looking forward to his return to Louisiana when his assignment is complete.

This month, the *Conservation Update* features an environmentally minded poultry producer in Natchitoches Parish. This producer has gone the extra conservation mile by becoming a Certified Master Farmer. Louisiana's Master Farmer Program gives producers an environmental edge through training, field days, and development and implementation of a conservation plan.

Every day NRCS helps private landowners and managers make the right decisions for the environment. Our conservationists deliver science-based technical assistance, and our programs are designed to ensure our nation continues to enjoy abundant crops and healthy landscapes.

Visit our offices to find out how NRCS and Louisiana's Soil and Water Conservation Districts can help you conserve and protect your farm's natural resources.

W. Britt Paul
Acting State Conservationist
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service - Louisiana

Quote of the Month

"The future belongs to those who see possibilities before they become obvious."

John Scully, American Businessman

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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Louise and Gary Lirette with Glenn Austin, NRCS District Conservationist, Natchitoches Field Office.

Quality Product . . . Quality Environment

Gary and Louise Lirette and their son Stephen have been raising chickens near Marthaville, Louisiana, for over 12 years. During an average year, the Lirettes will raise 3 million chickens, and these chickens find their way to fast food restaurants across the nation.

The Lirettes are dedicated to producing a quality product and maintaining a quality environment, and they use innovative conservation measures to minimize the effects of their farm on the land.

Little Flower Enterprises

The Lirette’s farm—Little Flower Enterprises—began in 2000, with 300 acres of land and six chicken houses.

Five years later, the Lirettes purchased 40 acres of forest land and built 6 more chicken houses in the middle of the new property. The forest provided a natural buffer for the new houses.

Today’s farmer has to be an engineer, a soil scientist, an agronomist, a chemist, a biologist, and an environmentalist—all rolled into one, and the Lirettes are no exception. They operate their farm to make a profit, but they plan their farming activities around what is right for the environment. From the design and placement of chicken houses, to the proper use of fertilizer on the hay fields, to the proper disposal and removal of poultry waste, the Lirettes must stay progressive to keep an environmental edge to their farm.

The Lirettes work with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to identify ways to protect and conserve natural resources while enhancing farm operations.

“I think working with NRCS has given us a better understanding of our farm’s impact on the land,” says Louise Lirette. “They help us plan and implement what is right for our farm and for the environment.”

Louisiana’s Master Farmer Program

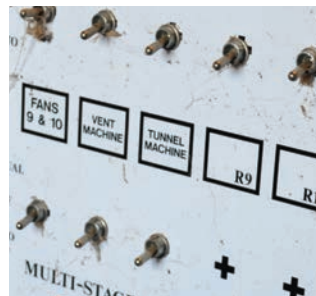
Gary Lirette is a Certified Master Farmer. This means he has successfully completed a voluntary three-phase program (training, field days, and conservation plan development) to address agricultural environmental concerns and enhance production.

As part of the Master Farmer Program, the Lirettes worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop a conservation plan that was suited for their farm.

Their conservation plan includes Best Management Practices (BMPs) for:

- 1. Nutrient Management:** Soil samples are taken every three years to test the soil for nutrient status and pH. Litter samples are taken on a yearly basis.
- 2. Pesticide Storage and Safety:** All pesticides on their farm are stored and applied properly.
- 3. Buffer Management:** Buffer zones are established on all hay meadows on the farm to eliminate the risk of litter contaminating streams.

Louisiana’s Master Farmer Program Environmental Edge



Conservation practices on the Lirette's farm were installed through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. To find out more about this program, contact your local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office or Soil and Water Conservation District. A directory of offices is included on the back page of this publication.

“All farmers want to be good stewards of the land. . . .”

- 4. **General Farm:** Precautionary measures are taken with storing diesel in tanks and disposing of oil on their farm.
- 5. **Poultry Mortality Management:** Composting of dead poultry and litter is used in accordance with specifications in the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG).



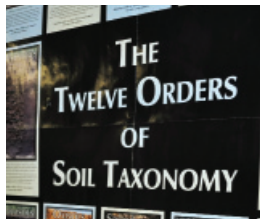
On average, the Lirettes raise 3 million chickens a year with an average weight of 4.25 pounds per chicken. They sell approximately 13 million pounds of chicken meat per year.

With so many chickens being raised on the farm, one would be surprised that there is only a poultry mortality rate of 2.5 percent.

The Lirettes compost the dead chickens using litter, manure, and rice hulls. When the composting is complete, a useful end product is created that the Lirettes sell to other farmers for use as fertilizer.

“All farmers want to be good stewards of the land, that’s their livelihood and they respect the land and understand what the land can do for them,” says Gary Lirette. “Working with NRCS keeps us doing the right thing and keeps us ahead of regulation—a winning combination for any farmer.”

Gary, Louise, and Stephen Lirette Conservationists



Sep 14
Conservation Classroom
 On Monday, September 14, 2011, a dedication ceremony was held at the USDA Service Center in Abbeville, Louisiana, for Louisiana's first-ever mobile Conservation Classroom. The Conservation Classroom is a cooperative project led by the Vermilion Soil and Water Conservation District.

Dr. Ernest Girouard, Vermilion Parish Soil and Water Conservation District Chairman, led the dedication which was attended by classroom partners; federal, state, and local officials; and local residents.



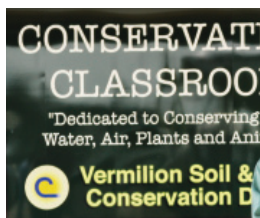
"Because of great partners, what started out as a discussion about a horse trailer filled with conservation information became a 40-foot, air-conditioned mobile classroom," said Mitzi Dohrman, Vermilion Soil and Water Conservation District Secretary and classroom organizer.

"The Conservation Classroom was funded in part by a grant through the National Conservation Foundation," said Girouard. "However, many other partners contributed to this classroom."



Inside the classroom, students have a chance to stop at six different stations where they will learn about recycling, animals, air, water, plants, and soil.

Conservation Classroom sponsors include: the Louisiana Land Bank, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Vermilion Parish 4-H, LSU AgCenter, Vermilion Parish Farm Bureau, Ag in the Classroom, Louisiana Cattlemen's Association, Woodmen of the World, Coca Cola Company, Evangeline Maid Bread, Vermilion Parish Sheriff's Department, Sonic of Abbeville, Gulf Coast Bank, Coastal Chemical, Ray Chevrolet, and Fire and Safety Services.



"Our goal was to make the classroom interactive with hands-on activities. We want the kids to use all of their senses," says, Dohrman. "From dust bowl demonstrations to Enviroscape simulations, visiting students have an opportunity to see how conservation practices help everyone."

For additional information on the Conservation Classroom, contact Mitzi Dohrman, Vermilion Soil and Water Conservation District, at 337-893-5664, extension 3.

Around the State

Sep 24

National Hunting and Fishing Day

On Saturday, September 24, 2011, a group of NRCS Earth Team volunteers led hundreds of children through a wildlife track identification exercise at National Hunting and Fishing Day in Woodworth, Louisiana. The event was sponsored by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.



Upcoming Event
Generating Wildlife and Timber Values
Longleaf Restoration Field Day

Wednesday, October 5, 2011
 Southern Forest Heritage Museum
 Long Leaf, Louisiana

Private landowners and forestry/wildlife professionals are invited to learn about longleaf pine restoration and wildlife management. Information will also be presented on state and federal cost share programs that can help restore longleaf pine stands. Registration begins at 8 a.m.

This event is being hosted by the Texas-Louisiana Longleaf Task Force and the National Wild Turkey Federation. Other sponsors include U.S. Forest Service Southern Research Station, Louisiana Society of American Foresters, Louisiana Forestry Association, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, LSU AgCenter, The Nature Conservancy, Larson and McGowin Forest Managers and Consultants, and the Southern Forest Heritage Museum.

For more information, contact: Mary Anne Sayer, Alexandria Forestry Center, (318) 473-7275.

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 Dugdemona 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) 757-8366, 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) 363-6020, 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	Dugdemona SWCD	1803 Trade 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	1803 Trade 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	1100-C South Third 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	Dugdemona SWCD	6949 Louisiana Highway 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, LA 71457	(318) 357-8366, ext. 3

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