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 **NRCS** Louisiana
Conservation Update
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September 2012

**Gulf of Mexico
Initiative**

Bayou Grand Marais Watershed

**Louisiana
Women in
Agriculture
Conference**

**Red Bayou
Groundbreaking**

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

HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND

On the Cover



When you visit Christian Richard's rice farm in Vermilion Parish, Louisiana, he is quick to point out that the farmers in his family have always worked their farms with conservation in mind. Read more on pages 4 and 5.

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Notes from the State Conservationist

Our September Conservation Update continues a journey through our targeted Gulf of Mexico Initiative watersheds with a visit to Christian Richard's farm in Vermilion Parish.

Christian shares with us that the farmers in his family have always worked their farms with conservation in mind. He takes us on a photographic journey of the water entering his rice fields, then exiting. The images of muddy water entering and crystal clear water exiting are proof that his conservation measures are working. The water leaving his farm is as clean as it can get.

Last month, I asked if you ever thought about the path the water takes when it leaves your farm or ranch. Whether you are a farmer or rancher near the Gulf of Mexico or the Arkansas line, the water leaving your farm impacts others. It could impact the aquifer your community uses for drinking water or it could impact the fish in the local bayou.

Give us a call, and we will visit your farm and discuss conservation measures to improve the quality of water leaving your farm. You can make a difference in your environment. Just pick up the phone.

Kevin Norton
State Conservationist
Louisiana



Quote of the Month

I always wondered why somebody doesn't do something about that. Then I realized I was somebody.

Lily Tomlin
American comedienne, actress, writer, and producer

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 Grand Marais Watershed



When you visit

Christian Richard's rice farm in Vermilion Parish, Louisiana, he is quick to point out that the farmers in his family have always worked their farms with conservation in mind. "Rice farmers are the ultimate conservationists," he says.

When the Gulf of Mexico Initiative offered opportunities to implement additional conservation measures on his farm that could impact water quality in the Gulf of Mexico, Richard seized the opportunity. Through the Gulf of Mexico Initiative, Richard

has been able to install and/or implement irrigation land leveling, grade stabilization structures, irrigation pipeline, and nutrient management.

Richard describes a rice field as a natural filter strip. "By taking surface water, putting it back on a rice field, letting the rice field filter out some of the sediments and nutrients, and then releasing the water out of the field through grade stabilization structures . . . water leaves the field as clean as possible—it is crystal clear."

"The Bayou Grand Marais runs right down the heart of my farm," says Richard. "I farm 3,000 acres, and roughly about 90 percent of the land I farm drains into Bayou Grand Marais which, in turn, drains into the Mermentau. After it goes down the Mermentau, it comes out into the Gulf of Mexico. So, we are having a direct impact on what we are doing from my farm to the Gulf."

Richard utilizes no-till planting, and once the rice is tall enough, he uses surface water to flood his fields. Richard explains, "We are able to pick

up surface water—muddy water—that typically runs off of fields that have been tilled multiple times. We are actually picking up their (other farms) sediment, their nutrients, their run-off, and we are putting in on our fields, and when the water comes out of that field, it is just like drinking water—it's crystal clear. There are no suspended sediments. There is nothing in it—it is crystal clear."



Conservationist Christian Richard

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.



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

Bayou Grand Marais Watershed is located in the north-central portion of Vermilion Parish. A majority of the land use in the watershed is irrigated cropland, predominately rice grown in rotation with crawfish production. Other crops grown in the watershed include soybeans and sugarcane, which are typically not irrigated. Livestock production comprises approximately 10 percent of the area. The watershed consists of 30,975 acres of cropland; 3,777 acres of pasture; 1,332 acres of forestland; and 1,133 acres of urban land.

Ecosystem health is threatened by erosion, pollutants, and high nutrient loads from urban and agricultural sources. Runoff from rice fields, sugarcane, and pasturelands adds nutrient-rich sediments to surface water, affecting water quality of the watersheds, basins, and the Gulf of Mexico. Sheet and rill erosion from agricultural sources 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.



Around the State

Jul 30

The Big Event: Grambling, LA

Trailblazer RC&D worked with USDA Rural Development, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and USDA Farm Service Agency to host "The Big Event" at Grambling State University on July 30, 2012. A packed room of farmers, ranchers, landowners, students, and interested individuals heard from speakers about natural resource conservation, land ownership, community development. Organizers of the event are looking forward to making this an annual event.



Sep 5

Red Bayou Watershed Project

The Caddo Soil and Water Conservation District hosted a groundbreaking on September 5, 2012, under the Red River Bridge at Red Bayou to mark the beginning of construction of the Red Bayou Watershed Project. This project will provide irrigation water for agricultural producers in the Red Bayou Watershed from the Red River. A large crowd braved the heat to celebrate this important milestone for Caddo Parish farmers.



Sep 20

Louisiana Women in Agriculture Conference

The first Louisiana Women in Agriculture Conference was hosted on September 20, 2012, by USDA Rural Development, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and USDA Farm Service Agency at the Delhi Civic Center in Delhi, Louisiana. Over 70 women farmers (and some spouses) from across the state attended the conference. Information on agency opportunities was provided by representatives of each agency; and a roundtable discussion of issues important to women in agriculture was conducted by Sarah Haymaker, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; Betsy Moreland, American Cattlewomen's Association; Tammie McDaniel, Franklin Parish cropland producer; and Angie Tyler, Lincoln Parish poultry producer. There are plans to make this conference an annual event.



Sep 22

National Hunting and Fishing Day

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries hosted National Hunting and Fishing Day that took place September 22, 2012, in Woodworth, Louisiana at the Woodworth Outdoor Education Center on Alexander State Forest Wildlife Management Area. Over 1,900 children and their families enjoyed a wide array of exhibits and activities provided by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries; Academy Sports; Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act; and the Natural Resources Conservation Service among others. The day started with fishing, and then, children visited exhibits, participated in minnow racing, archery, kayaking, and many other outdoor activities. The Natural Resources Conservation Service hosted an exhibit to provide information to children about conservation practices that help to protect and conserve wildlife habitat. Earth Team volunteers staffed NRCS' exhibit.



Sep 21

American Indian Advisory Group

On September 21, 2012, a group of American Indian tribal members from across Louisiana met in Lafayette, Louisiana, to discuss natural resource conservation issues. Meeting participants were greeted by State Conservationist Kevin Norton and learned about conservation activities of tribes in Wisconsin from Tina L. Van Zile of the Sokaogon Chippewa Community of Crandon, Wisconsin.



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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