

ALABAMA
SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION

www.alabamasoilandwater.gov

FY2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Overview

The Alabama Soil and Water Conservation FY23 Annual Report serves to highlight the accomplishments of the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee (ALSWCC), the Alabama Agricultural & Conservation Development Commission (AACDC), the state's 67 soil and water conservation districts (SWCD) and the Alabama Association of Conservation Districts (AACD). This report highlights conservation implementation, economic impact, education, outreach and the diversity of conservation efforts statewide.

Each local SWCD within Alabama is charged with promoting and implementing conservation practices for the wise use of soil and water within their respective counties. Governed by a board of five supervisors, which are appointed public officials, each local district is the front-line advocate for locally-led conservation within every county in Alabama.

ALSWCC supports districts, promotes conservation partnerships, provide conservation education and technical assistance, and advocates for new and emerging conservation practices. AACDC provides funding for needed agricultural water, erosion control, and forestry improvement and wildlife management programs. AACD represents districts as their voice on natural resource issues, provides information and training to districts, and offers administrative services to districts.

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Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee

FY23 FUNDING & PARTICIPANTS

FEDERAL GRANTS **\$2.7 MILLION**

ALABAMA GENERAL FUND **\$3.2 MILLION**

ALABAMA EDUCATION TRUST FUND **\$2.5 MILLION**

AGRICULTURE PRODUCERS SERVED **6,000**

SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS **3 MILLION**

ALABAMIANS EDUCATED **100,000**

CONSERVATION PROGRAM DELIVERY TRAINING

SUPPORT AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY PRODUCERS

PROMOTE NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION ON PRIVATE LANDS

REGISTRATION OF PROFESSIONAL SOIL CLASSIFIERS

PROGRAM AND TECHNICAL IMPLEMENTATION

SERVICES

FY23 FEDERAL GRANTS

FERAL SWINE

FARM BILL ASSISTANCE

ALABAMA IRRIGATION INITIATIVE

URBAN AGRICULTURE

RIPARIAN BUFFER



Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee

Farm Bill Feral Swine Program 2019-2023



Photo Credit: Jager Pro

FERAL SWINE CONTACT

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334 PRODUCERS
322 TRAPS
16,486 HOG TAKE

"The Feral Swine Control Program has literally saved our farm. We began to see feral swine about 8 years ago. Almost overnight, our crops, hayland, pastureland and even our yard were invaded by these destructive animals. We are very grateful for the trapping services and especially the cost-share program that has allowed us to begin trapping the hogs ourselves. A great program! Thanks ALSWCC."

- Micky Smith, Sumter County

Alabama Irrigation Initiative

The Alabama Irrigation Initiative was launched by the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee (ALSWCC) in partnership with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Auburn University, and the University of Alabama Huntsville. The initiative aims to increase the percentage of irrigated farmland in Alabama. At six percent of harvested cropland under irrigation, Alabama is far behind neighboring states who average between 35-65 percent irrigated cropland

PHASE 1: Middle Tennessee River

\$8 million available • \$3.5 million in payments (to date)
60 participants

PHASE 2: Choctawhatchee & Pea Rivers

\$9.5 million available • \$246,292 in payments (to date)
36 participants

PHASE 3: Middle Alabama River

\$9.5 million available
54 applicants

IRRIGATION CONTACTS

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Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee



Alabama Erosion & Sediment Control Program (ALESCP)

The ALSWCC provides funding and leadership for the Alabama Erosion & Sediment Control Partnership (ALESCP) which provides guidance to implement an erosion and sediment control program during the construction process that significantly supports the protection of water resources in Alabama. The program provides this water resource protection by maintaining technical materials, including the Alabama Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook, and by providing technical training to professionals throughout the State.

ALESCP SERVICES

TECHNICAL MATERIALS

EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL TIPS

ANNUAL CLEAR WATER ALABAMA SEMINAR & FIELD DAY

SEMINARS & LUNCH-n-LEARNS

ALESCP Partnership

- AL Soil & Water Conservation Committee
- AL Associated General Contractors
- AL Association of Conservation Districts
- AL Chapter Soil and Water Conservation Society
- AL Department of Environmental Management
- AL Department of Transportation
- Auburn University
- Alabama Cooperative Extension System
- Home Builders Association of AL
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Auburn Stormwater Research Facility
- AL Section American Society of Civil Engineers

EROSION & SEDIMENT CONTROL TIP #59



Research at the Auburn Stormwater Research Facility has found that a lot of the under-mining type failures of a silt fence are initiated around the post. The new recommended off-set installation eliminates this issue when installed properly. By offsetting the post 6 in. downstream of the trench allows for the post to be inserted into undisturbed ground. It also allows for better compaction of soil on the silt fence geotextile when filling the trench.

For more erosion and sediment control tips, visit alsoilandwaterblog.blogspot.com/

ALESCP CONTACT

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SAVE THE DATE!

CLEAR WATER ALABAMA 2024
September 25 – 26 Dothan



Alabama Agricultural & Conservation Development Commission

Alabama Conservation Incentive Program (CIP)

The Alabama Agricultural Conservation and Development Commission (AACDC) was created in 1985 to offer rebates for the conservation and development of private lands to benefit all Alabamians. Together with the state's 67 soil and water conservation districts and the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee, AACDC provides funds through the Alabama Conservation Incentive Program (CIP) to assist with important natural resource projects across the state.

FY23
CIP FUNDING

General
\$566,123

Feral Swine
\$203,917

35

**conservation
practices**

Resource Concerns

- Water Quality
- Wildlife
- Forestry
- Erosion Control



CIP CONTACT

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Alabama Agricultural & Conservation Development Commission

FY23 FERAL SWINE

- 101 Approved Applicants
- \$95,492.58 Reimbursed to Date
- \$202,000 Obligated



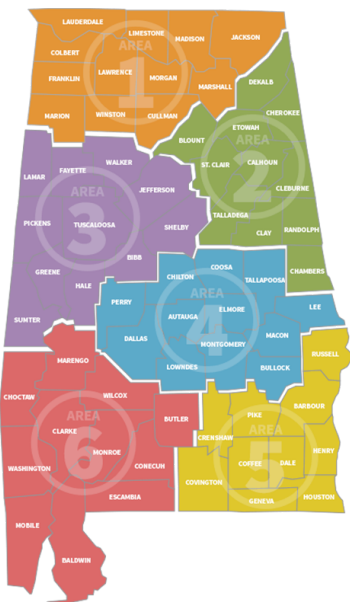
Photo Credit: Jager Pro



Photo Credit: Pig Brig



FY23 CIP Practices by Number of Applications



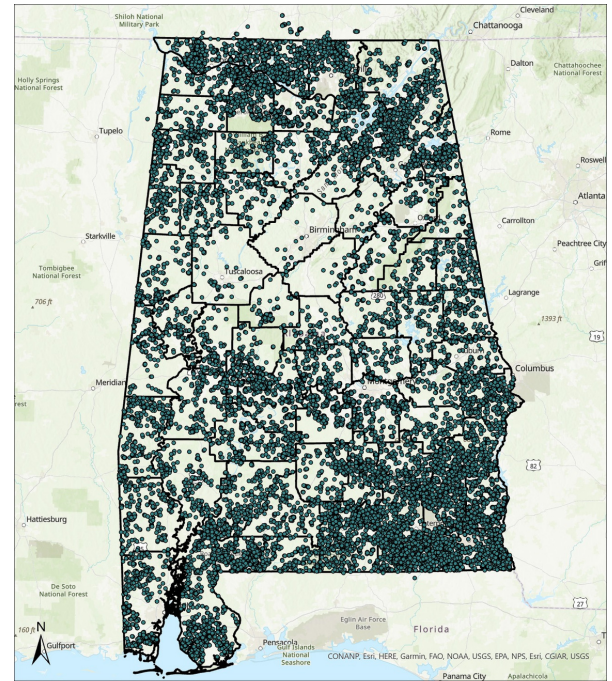
- 1** Rotational Grazing
Permanent Vegetative Cover Improvement
Small Animal Incinerator
- 2** Site Prep and Forest Tree Plantations
Animal Waste Distribution
Permanent Vegetative Cover Improvement
- 3** Feral Hog Traps
Forest Tree Stand Improvement
Rotational Grazing
- 4** Feral Hog Traps
Forest Tree Stand Improvement
Treatment of Invasive Species
- 5** Feral Hog Traps
Rotational Grazing
Permanent Vegetative Cover Improvement
- 6** Feral Hog Traps
Forest Tree Stand Improvement
Permanent Vegetative Cover on Critical Areas



Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Districts Impact

Alabama's 67 Soil and Water Conservation Districts received \$60,000 each from the Alabama Education Trust Fund to assist the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in supporting farmers with conservation practices. They used approximately **\$5 million** in state funds to leverage an impressive **\$99 million** in federal funds, leading to **29,372** applied practices covering areas like cover crops, conservation tillage, pest management, feral swine control and irrigation practices.

District staff played pivotal roles by communicating with clients, processing applications, creating GIS maps, and conducting field visits and follow-ups. They also hosted a variety of outreach events including farm tours, forestry field days, Women in Ag workshops and local work group meetings. Soil and water districts educated over 100,000 students statewide about agriculture, farming, wildlife, and natural resource conservation through events Ag in the Classroom, Farm-City Week, Forestry Awareness Week Now (FAWN), Progressive Agriculture Safety Days, Ag in Action Trailer, Water Festivals, and more! District employees and supervisors enhanced their expertise in conservation programs through virtual and in-person training.



Alabama Applied Practices (2018 - 2022)



07/18/2023

**NRCS
FY2023**

**\$40.5 MILLION
INSTALLED**

**\$66 MILLION
OBLIGATED**





Area 1 Spotlight

Sowing Seeds of Knowledge:

The Rich Harvest of Agriculture Farm Tours in Madison County

When you think of Madison County, you often think of space and rockets. But long before space travel and high tech made its mark on this north Alabama county, Madison County was recognized as the birthplace of Alabama and carries a rich farming heritage. Today, as urban development and the pressures of growth encroach upon the rural landscape, a grassroots approach has been sowing the seeds of agricultural appreciation and understanding. Since 2009, the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) has been offering informative Agriculture Tours. These tours provide an immersive experience into the world of farming, offering a firsthand glimpse into the challenges and innovations that fuel our agricultural community. They also serve to educate potential new and beginning farmers.

“Farming is a cornerstone of Madison County’s identity,” said Andrea Crane, Madison County SWCD Administrative Coordinator. “These farms tell stories of hard work, resilience, and a deep connection to the land. The Ag Tours not only celebrate this heritage, but also serve as a crucial tool in promoting and preserving it.”

According to Crane, partnerships have been the foundation of the program’s success. “We love working with our partners,” she said. “Whether they take on the role of sponsoring, facilitating, being a featured stop, or simply attending our tours, our partners play a pivotal role in every aspect of what we do. Highlighting their farm, business or knowledge is the best way to show our appreciation.”



That partnership includes Madison County's elected officials – many of whom have deep agricultural roots. They either hail from farming families or have plowed the fields themselves in previous occupations. For those officials new to agriculture, the ag tours serve as a useful tool to educate and cultivate relationships. "These tours are not merely about showcasing farms; they are about cultivating a sense of community connection," Crane said. "Participants get to see what it takes to be a farmer, and I think that builds a bridge between the agricultural community, our elected officials, and the broader population."

Emphasizing sustainable farming practices, the tours highlight no-till drilling, the use of cover crops and crop rotation among other conservation practices. Information on district and USDA programs and services are also provided.

As the Ag Tours in Madison County continue to flourish, they serve as a model for how communities can bridge the gap between farming and the general public. By preserving and promoting the county's farming community, these tours contribute not only to the preservation of Madison County's agricultural heritage but also to the education and inspiration of future generations. For more information, contact Madison County SWCD at madison@alconservationdistricts.org.



PAST FARM TOURS

Creative Farming in Challenging Time
Changing Face of Agriculture
Niche Farming in Madison County
Crops to Market – TN River Tour
Tennessee Valley Women in Agriculture
That Was Then and This is Now
Creative Farming Methods



Area 2 Spotlight

Paddling Towards Conservation: *Ecotourism Thrives in the Choccolocco Creek Watershed*

The Choccolocco Creek Watershed, nestled between the bustling cities of Birmingham and Atlanta, is experiencing a transformative wave of ecotourism. Spearheaded by the Calhoun Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and its local partners, this initiative aims not only to showcase the natural wonders of the area but also to foster a deep appreciation for environmental conservation.

"Ecotourism creates a positive cycle where the environment, local communities, and visitors are all interconnected," explains Jennifer Yates Hudson, the District Administrative Coordinator at Calhoun County SWCD. "It's an innovative approach to sustainable and profitable conservation."

The Choccolocco Creek Watershed covers approximately 246,000 acres across Calhoun, Clay, Cleburne, and Talladega Counties. This vast region, situated between the Appalachian Mountains and Lake Logan Martin, features the Choccolocco Creek, a key tributary in the Coosa River drainage system. Ecotourism, with a focus on kayaking, has become a popular activity in the watershed. The idea is simple – encourage travelers to explore natural environments along waterways while promoting environmental conservation. Kayaking allows visitors to navigate the sensitive ecosystem with minimal environmental impact, offering close encounters with nature.



In 2021, the City of Oxford, in the heart of the Choccolocco Creek Watershed, drew over 595,000 visitors. Choccolocco Park, a sprawling 300+ acre sports complex, stood as the top attraction. But now, thanks to Choccolocco Kayak, visitors can seamlessly transition from manicured sportsplexes to the untamed beauty of nature.



For those looking to experience the Choccolocco Creek up close, Choccolocco Kayak offers a unique opportunity. The rental provides kayaks and transportation for a serene 1.5 to 2.0-hour float down the Choccolocco Creek.

The Choccolocco Creek Watershed goes beyond kayaking to promote environmental awareness. The area hosts workshops on rain barrels and rain gardens, partnering with local organizations to sponsor outdoor education activities. Events like Get Outdoors Day, Classroom in the Forest, Worlds of Work, and Earth Day bring communities together to appreciate and preserve the natural wonders of the watershed. The group meets with high school students once a month to talk about careers in conservation which culminates with a watershed science day at the end of the year.

Creek clean-up days are an annual initiative, removing thousands of glass bottles, plastic, styrofoam, and other debris from Choccolocco Creek and its riparian corridor. The Calhoun County SWCD also provides education and outreach services, including field days and classroom presentations using a variety of education tools.



For more information, contact Calhoun County SWCD at calhoun@alconservationdistrictis.org



Area 3 Spotlight

Empowering Tomorrow's Stewards: *'Litter Quitters' Campaign Transforms High School Students into Environmental Champions*



High school students are some of the worst offenders when it comes to littering. With the aim of actively involving, educating, and motivating young individuals, Jefferson County's "Litter Quitter" campaign is making a positive impact through its engaging, creative and educational strategy. Based on a Keep America Beautiful study, individuals between the ages of 18 to 35 are the leading litter offenders. The Litter Quitters Campaign aims to prevent these bad habits before they begin, starting with high schoolers.



"At its core, Litter Quitters is about empowering high school students to be the change they want to see in their communities," said Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Administrative Coordinator Holly Killian. "It taps into the power of their influence and provides a platform to encourage their peers to quit littering. The focus here is not just on cleaning up but on prevention, education, and advocacy."

Spurred-headed by Jefferson County SWCD, the standout feature of Litter Quitters is the video competition, where students from different schools compete to spread the anti-litter message through their creativity. Each participating school is tasked with submitting one 60-second video that packs a punch in conveying the anti-litter message. These videos undergo a content review and approval process by the Litter Quitters Committee, a collective effort involving various organizations. Once approved, the videos are uploaded to the Litter Quitters website, where the public has 12-days to vote for their favorite, always ending on Earth Day.



One unique feature of the competition is that it's divided into three major watershed basins: North (Locust Fork), West (Valley Creek), and East (Cahaba River). This format ensures that schools are focused on their watershed keeping the competition local and engaging students in the issues affecting their specific areas.

The cash prizes add an extra incentive for students to put their creative talents to work. Awards are given to the videos with the most 'likes' in each major watershed basin, with an additional category recognizing the "Best Message" overall that is judged on both the environmental message and the technical quality.

To boost the visibility of the Litter Quitters campaign to a broader audience, professionally-produced public service announcements (PSAs) are broadcast on local television featuring one student representative from each participating high school. Radio and bus ads are also launched to reinforce the negative impacts of littering. The radio PSA was recorded in two languages, English and Spanish.

Launched in 2017, Litter Quitters continues to develop new ideas to inform and inspire change with the goal of keeping local waters and environments clean and protecting neighbors downstream. For more information, visit www.litterquitters.org or email jefferson@alconservationdistricts.org



THE LITTER QUITTERS COMMITTEE

City of Birmingham ● City of Bessemer ● City of Hoover ● City of Leeds
Creative Directions, Inc. ● Freshwater Land Trust ● Jefferson County Commission
Jefferson County Department of Health ● Keep Birmingham Beautiful
Stormwater Management Authority, Inc.



Area 4 Spotlight

Holmestead Company: *A Legacy of Conservation*

In rural Perry County, Alabama, one family's unwavering commitment to the land stands as a shining example of conservation and sustainability. Holmestead Company, a 7th-generation family farm in Marion, Alabama, is a living testament to the enduring spirit of agriculture and the environment.

Perry County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Chairman Charles Holmes, and his wife, Jenny, have been the caretakers of Holmestead Company since 1972, raising their three sons – William, Webb, and Cooper. Today, their grandchildren work on the land, where tradition and conservation go hand in hand. The roots of Holmestead run deep, reaching back to its founding in 1819 by Charles' great-great-grandfather, William Moore.

The farm and its historic agricultural buildings are open to the public as a teaching property, boasting an impressive 53 structures on the National Register of Historic Places. It stands as one of the oldest continuously operating family farms in Alabama and proudly holds the titles of both a Century & Heritage Farm, bestowed upon it by the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries.



At the heart of Holmestead Company's success is their commitment to managing the land according to its capability and treating it according to its needs. Over the years, this farm has transitioned from various forms of agriculture, including cropland, dairy, cattle, and forestry, to predominantly forestry and most recently agritourism. The farm's first conservation plan was drafted in 1939 and has since been updated to incorporate the latest conservation technology and knowledge.

Because of the farm's exceptional conservation ethic, Charles (Holmestead Company) earned the prestigious Hugh Hammond Bennett Award for Conservation Excellence 2022 Producer Award. The award recognizes individuals for extraordinary achievements in and contributions to the soil and water conservation movement in the United States. Charles and his family have also been honored with the prestigious Helene Mosley Memorial Treasure Forest Award for their exceptional achievement in multiple-use management of forest land by the Alabama Natural Resources Council, The W. Kelly Mosley Environmental Awards Program; Alabama's Conservationist of the Year by the Alabama Wildlife Federation, and the Environmental Stewardship Award for the Southeast presented by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association an acknowledgement of his conservation ethic related to his cattle operation. The farm holds designations as a Treasure Forest, Tree Farm, and Stewardship Forest, reflecting Charles' meticulous planning and execution of forestry practices. Holmestead Company is also committed to giving back to the community. The farm plays a pivotal role in youth education, introducing young minds to forestry and wildlife practices, as



Meet Charles Holmes

Chair – Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee
Chair – Perry County Soil & Water Conservation District
Past President – Alabama Association of Conservation Districts
Member – Alabama Agriculture and Conservation Development Committee
Director – Alabama Treasure Forest Association
Vice Chair – Ala-Tom RC&D
Member – ALFA & Cattleman's Board (Perry County)

well as the operations of the farm. The annual event "Classroom in the Forest" offers an educational experience for all fifth graders in Perry County, providing a unique opportunity to connect with nature. The farm has also hosted "Fall in Folsom," a day of history that showcases the farm's 1800s operations alongside modern practices.

"No other person I know has made such improvements on his land and on his fellow man as Charles Holmes," said Dr. Carol Knight. "He has served as a mentor for countless young conservationists across the nation but most notably in Alabama. His impact on our state cannot be measured in acres or any other tangible way, but he has influenced people—and that is the best legacy of all."

With a well-diversified plan for both conservation and sustainability, Charles Holmes envisions a brighter future for Holmestead Company and the generations to come. He believes in passing on the legacy of stewardship and environmental care to the next generation.

"Jenny and I hope the next generation will take what we've been given and make it even better."



Area 5 Spotlight

Cultivating Tomorrow:

Alabama's Irrigation Initiative Reshaping Wiregrass Region

The drought of 2023 has been hard on Alabama's farmers and cattlemen with 95 percent of the state experiencing moderate to exceptional drought conditions. Forty-three of Alabama's 67 counties are experiencing extreme conditions triggering qualification for federal livestock forage assistance. To exacerbate the situation, only six percent of Alabama's agricultural land is currently under irrigation. It is a stark reminder that while agriculture thrives in our state, it remains remarkably vulnerable to the unpredictable whims of weather. However, a state and federal partnership designed to convert rain-fed farmland to irrigated farmland could bring long-term relief to Alabama producers.

The Alabama Irrigation Initiative, launched by the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee (ALSWCC) in partnership with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service aims to address the challenges posed by unpredictable weather patterns in the state of Alabama. The initiative focuses on increasing the percentage of irrigated farmland in the state by encouraging the adoption of water-saving irrigation systems and techniques. Some of these methods include drip irrigation, micro irrigation, and center pivot irrigation. By using these water-efficient practices, farmers can optimize water use improve plant health, making their agricultural practices more sustainable.

The initiative started in 2019 in the Middle Tennessee River and expanded into the Choctawhatchee and Pea River (Choc-Pea) watersheds of southeastern Alabama in 2021. Earlier this year, the Middle Alabama River Basin was added to the program.





Barbour County Farmer Andy McRae illustrates irrigated versus non-irrigated corn.

To qualify for the initiative, farmers must have access to proper power and water resources and demonstrate a conservation ethic in their farming practices. The program aims to promote sustainable land management, prevent soil erosion, and protect water quality in the state. Farmers interested in the program can contact Kathy Gotcher at kathy.gotcher@swcc.alabama.gov

For farmers in the wiregrass region, like Henry County Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor Johnny Lee, the Alabama Irrigation Initiative is a welcomed relief. The sandy clay soil of the Choc-Pea watershed has low water-holding capacity, making irrigation a crucial factor for crop survival during dry spells.

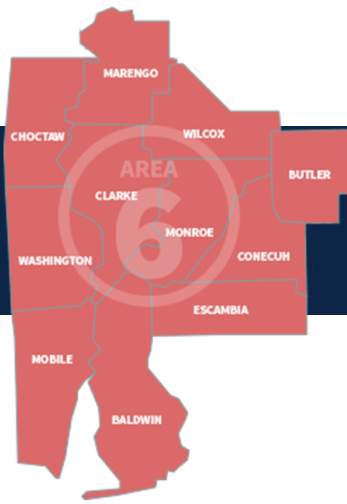
“With the intermittence of showers throughout the summer, irrigation can be the saving factor when you hit a two-week drought,” Lee said. “It can be the determining factor between making a crop and having a total loss for the year.”

That sentiment was echoed by Andy McRae, a 30-year Barbour County row crop farmer and cattle producer who is participating in the initiative. McRae has been using his new system, which includes two pivots, to irrigate 117 acres of corn and soybeans. McRae said after years of “praying for rain,” this system fills in the gap during periods of drought. He also said the water-efficient low-volume, low-pressure irrigation nozzles ensure he is not wasting any water.

Alabama’s Irrigation Initiative serves as an important resource for farmers who have not been eligible for other conservation incentive programs in the past. One key aspect of the program is that it supports the installation of new irrigation systems, with a focus on covering all components of installation, including drilling wells and supplying power to systems. The program provides a maximum of \$250,000 per producer for the system’s installation. It also includes an Irrigation Water Management component that includes weather station, soil moisture sensor, flow meter and a three-year subscription from an irrigation vendor to assist producers in knowing when and how much water to deliver to the crop.

Henry County farmer Lewie Helms, who operates a family-owned farm with his two sons, is grateful for the initiative. Helms uses the system for “timely watering” when faced with drought conditions. His project included a well and one center pivot covering 80 acres. He is in the process of applying for three more pivots to irrigate an additional 100 acres.

“My hope is through good management practices, coupled with irrigation, this farm will be viable for years to come,” Helms said.



Area 6 Spotlight

From Plants to Plates: *How Marengo County is Connecting Kids to Agriculture*

In the heart of Marengo County, Alabama, a remarkable transformation is taking place – one that’s connecting the county’s youth to the roots of agriculture. On a sunny September day at Marengo High School in Dixon Mills, a group of enthusiastic 7th graders is getting their hands dirty in the fall garden. Their mission? To nurture a thriving patch of collard plants, from seedlings to the lunchroom’s fresh produce. This inspiring initiative, aptly named “Grow Marengo,” has brought the community together in a vibrant collaboration of learning and cultivation.



The brainchild of Marengo County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Chairman Andrew Williams, “Grow Marengo” sprouted in 2016 as a 4-H project at Amelia L. Johnson High School in Thomaston, a rural community in eastern Marengo County. Through the collaborative efforts of SWCD, Marengo County Board of Education, Deep South Food Alliance, Ala-Tom RC&D, and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, students now experience the complete journey of vegetables, from plant to plate. This encompasses the entire process: seed germination, cultivation, harvesting, processing, marketing, shipping, cooking, and consumption.

“Research suggests that youth learn best when they are interested and actively engaged with classmates in fun topics,” said David Miller, Tuskegee University Extension Agent. Miller became involved in the program while principal of Marengo High School. What began with a small patch of collards in the fall of 2018 expanded the following year to include a hoop house for the school’s Agriscience Department. It just grew from there.

The impact has been nothing short of remarkable. In seven years, the program has expanded into eight schools and three community gardens across three counties in Alabama's Black Belt. It includes five traditional gardens, three hoop houses, four container gardens, and one greenhouse. Furthermore, these schools extend the opportunity for fresh, locally grown vegetables to be purchased by the community and donated to the elderly.

The fall garden projects kick off each school year, typically in September or October, and wrap up around April or May. Students follow the Junior Master Gardener curriculum, receiving instruction and engaging in hands-on activities. Their local gardens, hoop houses, or container gardens are established with a strong emphasis on food safety. The educational process covers various aspects, including drip irrigation, plasticulture, fertilization, and lime application, with local volunteers, cooperative extension agents, agricultural professionals, and university specialists playing a pivotal role.

"Our students have been receptive to the concept of growing their own food, our teachers have embraced the hands-on activities that reinforce their in-class curriculum, the cafeteria and nutrition staff have integrated our locally grown vegetables into their menus, and the school administrators have wholeheartedly embraced the program," Miller said. "It's been a tremendous success."

Miller envisions continuous expansion, anticipating the addition of more schools as funding becomes available through grants and donations. The goal? To provide all students in Alabama Public Schools with the opportunity to grow and eat their own vegetables in their cafeteria while learning the essential skills of reading and writing.

For more information on "Grow Marengo," contact the Marengo County Soil and Water Conservation District at marengo@alconservationdistricts.org





Alabama Association of Conservation Districts

SE Conservation Hall of Fame

In August, Don Sherrod of Pickens County was inducted into the Southeast Region Conservation Hall of Fame during the Southeast NACD annual meeting held in Savannah, GA. Don has served as a District Supervisor for over two decades and currently serves as Vice Chairman of his board.



Soil and Water Matters Day

Representatives from the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Districts visited the Alabama State House to discuss conservation programs and projects happening across the state.

AACD Annual Meeting

Annual training opportunity for district supervisors and staff, state-wide conservation awards recognition, and member networking.

NACD Fly-In

Leadership visited D.C. during the National Association of Conservation Districts Fly-In to advocate for conservation efforts and funding.



CONTACT

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Alabama Association of Conservation Districts

Alabama Envirothon

Alabama Envirothon is shaping the future by developing leadership skills and environmental stewardship in high school students across Alabama, as well as providing opportunities for students to explore exciting career opportunities. This unique competition is not just about learning; it's about experiencing the environment firsthand and becoming a good steward of it.

Envirothon 2023 event data/milestones:

- Two regional training events conducted March 2023
- Award of NCF-Envirothon Diversity Grant, to be used to conduct targeted outreach in Alabama's Blackbelt in winter 2023
- Conversion to laptops and slide decks for oral presentation component from posterboard/marker
- Statewide regional competition March 2023
- 13 total teams participated -- up from 5 the previous year
- Ardmore High School placed first; Bob Jones High School, second; Albertville High School FFA, third.
- International Competition. In July, Ardmore High School competed against the best Envirothon teams from across the U.S., China, Canada, and Singapore at the NCF-Envirothon Competition held in New Brunswick, Canada.

FY2024 plans:

- Expanded program offerings made possible through agreement with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to conduct natural resource education events statewide
- Targeted outreach in blackbelt counties



2024 Envirothon Dates:

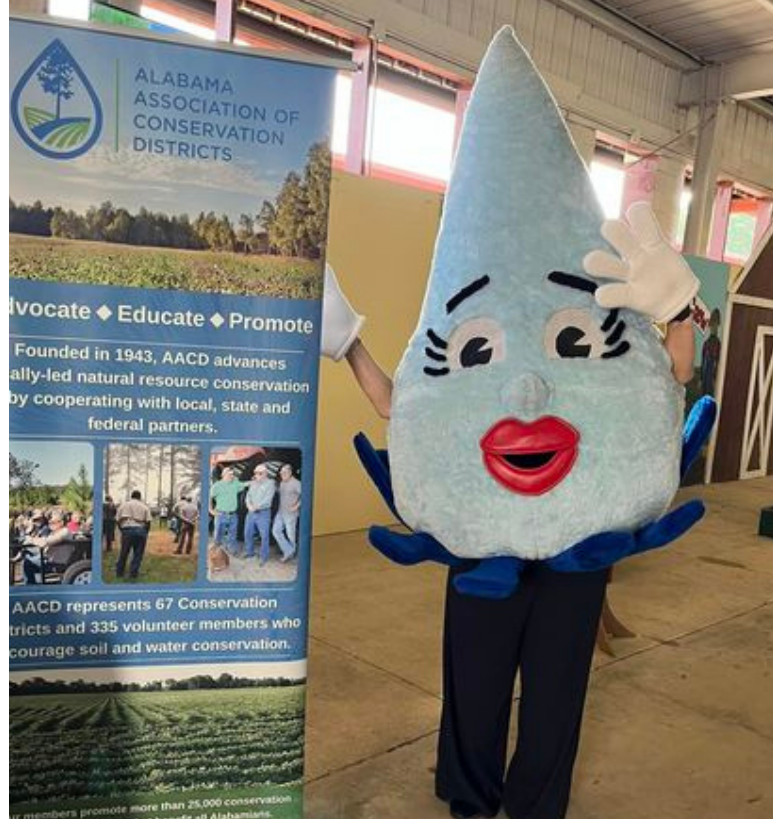
- 2024 Alabama Envirothon, February 29th-March 2nd at the Alabama 4-H Center
- Registration deadline January 26th, 2024

ENVIROTHON CONTACT

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Acronyms

AACDC	Alabama Agricultural & Conservation Development Commission
AACD	Alabama Association of Conservation Districts
AFC	Alabama Forestry Commission
ALSWCC	Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee
ADA	Alabama Department of Agriculture
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
CIP	Conservation Incentive Program
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EWP	Emergency Watershed Program
FFA	Future Farmers of America
FY	Fiscal Year (10/01/22-09/30/23)
LWG	Local Work Group
NACD	National Association of Conservation Districts
NFWF	National Fish and Wildlife Service
SWCD	Soil and Water Conservation District
TA	Technical Assistance
USDA NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service





Soil & Water Matters!

www.alabamasoilandwater.gov
www.facebook.com/ALSWCC/