



# 2025 Annual Report

ALABAMA SOIL & WATER  
CONSERVATION



*Soil & Water Matters!*



# About Us

The 2025 Annual Report highlights the accomplishments of Alabama’s conservation partners — the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee (ALSWCC), the Alabama Agricultural & Conservation Development Commission (AACDC), the 67 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), the Alabama Association of Conservation Districts (AACD), and the Alabama Conservation District Employees Association (ACDEA). This report showcases the state’s progress in conservation implementation, economic impact, education, outreach, partnerships, and the diversity of conservation efforts across Alabama.

Each local SWCD promotes and implements conservation practices for the wise use of soil and water on private lands within its county. Led by a five-member board of supervisors, each district serves as the front line for locally led conservation.

- ALSWCC supports districts through partnerships, education, technical assistance, and the promotion of new conservation practices.
- AACDC supports landowners by providing rebates for implementing conservation practices.
- AACD represents districts on natural resource issues, advocates for conservation policies, and provides training and administrative support.
- ACDEA connects district staff statewide through meetings, training, and scholarships that strengthen local conservation efforts.

ALSWCC Incoming Executive Director Ashley Henderson, NRCS Chief Aubrey Bettencourt, and Madison County SWCD District Administrative Coordinator Andrea Crain tour an irrigated soybean field.

**Madison County**

## **CONTACT**

**Ashley Henderson, P.E.**

Incoming Executive Director, Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee  
ashley.henderson@swcc.alabama.gov




# Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee

For over 80 years, the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee has worked to protect Alabama’s natural resources by connecting landowners with the tools and support they need. Our mission is to promote healthy soils, clean water, sustainable forests, and thriving wildlife for all Alabamians.

We achieve this by:

- Supporting Alabama’s 67 Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Administering state and federal conservation programs
- Partnering with state and federal agencies for funding and support
- Educating Alabamians on the importance of conservation

**FY 2025 FUNDING**

**ALABAMA GENERAL FUND**  
**\$4,015,995**

**ALABAMA EDUCATION TRUST FUND**  
**\$2,923,376**

COMMITTEE


<b>CHARLES A. HOLMES</b> PERRY COUNTY CHAIRMAN	<b>JAKE HARPER</b> WILCOX COUNTY
<b>DR. VAUGHN POE</b> HALE COUNTY VICE CHAIRMAN	<b>DR. J. MIKE PHILLIPS</b> DIRECTOR, ALABAMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM
<b>RICKEY L. CORNUTT</b> MARSHALL COUNTY	<b>JAY BORDEN</b> STATE AGRISCIENCE EDUCATION ADMINISTRATOR/ FFA ADVISOR
<b>DR. CAROL KNIGHT</b> RANDOLPH COUNTY	<b>DR. PAUL PATTERSON</b> DIRECTOR, ALABAMA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
<b>JOHNNY LEE</b> HENRY COUNTY	<b>DR. WILLIAM PUCKETT</b> EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SWCC



# Federally Supported Programs

**Alabama Irrigation Initiative**

**\$1,459,177**  
Paid to Producers



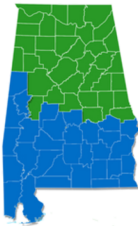
**Feral Swine Management**

**\$154,139**  
Paid to Producers




**Feral Swine Exclusion Fencing**

**\$139,122**  
Paid to Producers



**Alabama Black Belt Prairie Initiative**

**\$17.5M**  
Awarded  
*Applications accepted FY26*



By leveraging federal funding with state resources and farmer matching contributions, we maximize our collective impact—stretching every dollar further to benefit more producers, communities, and natural resources.

**Technical Support for Federal Projects**

**\$920,457**

# Other Programs



## **Alabama Erosion & Sediment Control Program (ALESCP)**

SWCC leads ALESCP, providing training, resources, and events like the Clear Water Alabama Seminar and Field Day to advance erosion control and protect the state's water resources.



## **Professional Soil Classifiers**

To practice soil science in Alabama, professionals must be certified by the State Board of Registration for Professional Soil Classifiers, with the SWCC managing the application process. Board members serve five-year terms.



## **Emerging Leaders in Conservation (ELC)**

The Emerging Leaders in Conservation (ELC) Initiative develops the next generation of Alabama conservation leaders through two years of hands-on training, networking, and mentorship for early-career Advisors, Supervisors, District, and NRCS employees.



# Alabama Agricultural & Conservation Development Commission (AACDC)

The Alabama Conservation Incentive Program (CIP), administered through the Alabama Agricultural Conservation and Development Commission (AACDC) and delivered by the state's 67 conservation districts, promotes voluntary conservation by offering rebates on 35+ practices statewide that protect soil, water, forests, and wildlife.



## WATER QUALITY

### WATERING FACILITY

- Pipeline - Livestock
- Heavy Use Area Protection
- Watering Facility
- Water Well

### FENCING

- Fence
- Access Control

### ANIMAL MORTALITY

- Animal Mortality Facility
- Composter
- Roofs and Covers
- Waste Storage Facility

### HERD HEALTH

- Corral
- Feed Trough
- Squeeze Chute (for Corral)

### IRRIGATION WATER MANAGEMENT

- Irrigation - Pipeline
- Irrigation System - Micro-irrigation - Plasticulture
- Irrigation System - Sprinkler - Traveling Gun
- Irrigation Water Management



## EROSION CONTROL

### SOIL HEALTH

- Herbaceous Weed Control
- Forage and Biomass Planting
- Nutrient Management
- Soil Amendment
- Soil Test
- Conservation Tillage
- Cover Crop

### EROSION MANAGEMENT

- Contour Buffer Strips
- Critical Area Planting
- Diversion
- Grade Stabilization Structure
- Grass Waterway
- Stream Crossing
- Terrace
- Underground Outlet
- Water & Sediment Control Basin

### DRONE

- Spray Pesticide
- Spray Herbicide
- Pasture Planting
- Cover Crops



## WILDLIFE

### FERAL SWINE MANAGEMENT

- Pre-Fabricated Feral Swine Trap
- Self-Assembled Feral Swine Trap
- Net-Feral Swine Trap
- Trapping Assistance
- Exclusion Fencing for Feral Swine (Electric)



## FORESTRY

### FORESTRY IMPROVEMENT

- Brush Management
- Prescribed Burn
- Firebreak
- Site Preparation
- Tree and Shrub Planting
- Forest Stand Improvement



## Commission

**DR. CAROL KNIGHT**  
Governor's Representative

**RICK PATE**  
Alabama Agriculture & Industries

**JIMMY PARNELL**  
Alabama Farmer's Federation

**KEITH GLOVER**  
AL Cattlemen's Association

**PATTY LAMBRECHT**  
Citizen/Active Farmer

**SUE GAINES**  
Citizen/Active Farmer

**RICK OATES**  
AL Forestry Commission

**CAMERON SMITH**  
AL Assoc. of Conservation Districts

**CHARLES HOLMES**  
Soil & Water Conservation Committee

**REP. MATTHEW HAMMETT**  
Ex-Officio

**REP. DANNY CRAWFORD**  
Ex-Officio

**REP. REED INGRAM**  
Ex-Officio

**SENATOR DAVID SESSIONS**  
Ex-Officio

**SENATOR DONNIE CHESTEEN**  
Ex-Officio

**SENATOR GREG ALBRITTON**  
Ex-Officio

**DR. WILLIAM E. PUCKETT**  
Executive Director

# FY25 Conservation Incentive Program

## FUNDING

General	\$804k
Feral Swine	\$675k

## IMPACT

Obligated	\$1.5M
Payments to Date	\$831,745
Practices Installed	593

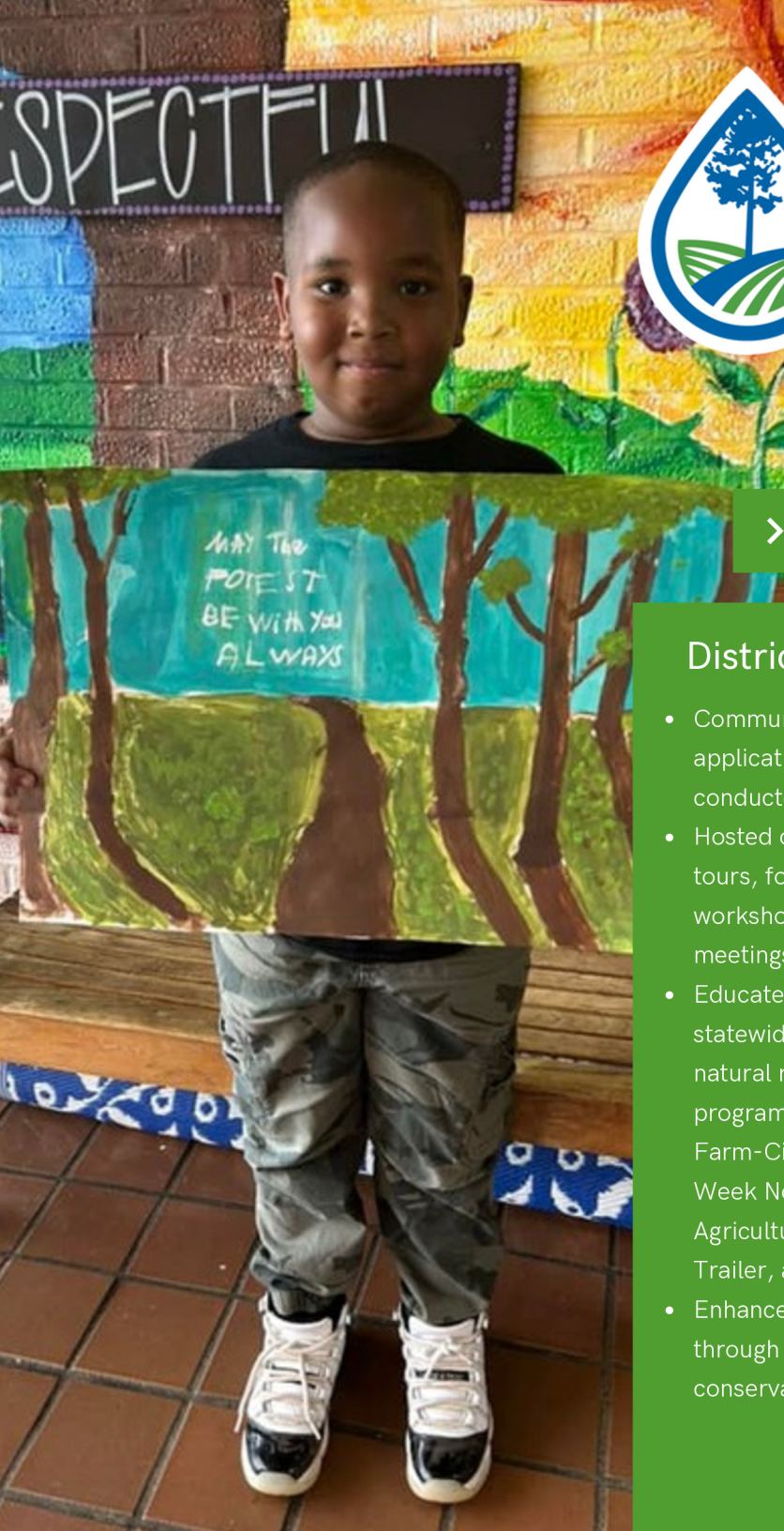
## APPLICATIONS

Taken	728
Funded	481

## TOP CONSERVATION PRACTICES

- 1 FERAL SWINE NET TRAP**  
A humane and cost-effective trapping system used to capture and remove feral swine to reduce agricultural damage, protect natural resources, and improve soil and water quality.
- 2 FERAL SWINE TRAPPING ASSISTANCE**  
This practice allows landowners to hire pre-approved trapping businesses (trappers) to assist in the trapping and euthanization of feral swine in traps.
- 3 SQUEEZE CHUTE**  
A livestock handling facility designed to safely and efficiently restrain cattle, promoting animal welfare, operational efficiency, and improved water quality through better livestock management.
- 4 PRESCRIBED BURNING**  
A planned, controlled fire used to manage vegetation, reduce wildfire danger, and improve wildlife habitat.
- 5 FIRE BREAK**  
Creating a strip of bare soil or fire-resistant vegetation designed to stop or slow the spread of prescribed burns for vegetation and habitat management.





# Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Alabama's 67 Soil and Water Conservation Districts each received approximately \$70,000 in state funds to support NRCS conservation efforts, CIP implementation, and education programs. Together, they leveraged \$4.7 million in state funds to secure \$101 million in federal funds, resulting in 1,354 new contracts statewide for practices such as cover crops, conservation tillage, pest management, and longleaf pine management.

## District Role

- Communicated with clients, processed applications, created GIS maps, and conducted field visits and follow-ups
- Hosted outreach events including farm tours, forestry field days, Women in Ag workshops, and local work group meetings
- Educated over 100,000 students statewide about agriculture, wildlife, and natural resource conservation through programs such as Ag in the Classroom, Farm-City Week, Forestry Awareness Week Now (FAWN), Progressive Agriculture Safety Days, Ag in Action Trailer, and Water Festivals
- Enhanced staff and supervisor expertise through virtual and in-person conservation training

 Natural Resources Conservation Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

**Districts assisted NRCS with distribution of federal funds to landowners for on the ground conservation practices.**

## FY25 Impact

**\$105,655,251 + \$29,000,000 = \$134M**  
Total Funds Invested      Farmer Contributions

## Applications

**5,470**      **1,354**  
New      Funded  
Applications      Applicants

## Most Popular NRCS Resource Practices

- Prescribed Burn
- Firebreak
- Herbaceous Weed Control
- Heavy Use Protection
- Watering Facility

# District Small Grants

Districts across Alabama put their creativity to work through the 2025 Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee Small Grant Program, turning awards of \$5,000 or less into projects that educated, inspired, and strengthened local conservation efforts. From road signage and learning stations to landowner tours, equipment, and water festivals, districts found innovative ways to make every dollar count.





## NRCS Chief Tours Alabama Farms Highlighting Irrigation Success

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**“We were thrilled to welcome Chief Bettencourt and highlight the success of the Alabama Irrigation Initiative. The program has been a model of effective collaboration between federal, state, and local partners – all with the same goal: to support Alabama farmers through sustainable and responsible irrigation.”**

— Ashley Henderson,  
Incoming Executive Director, ALSWCC

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Chief Bettencourt (center) with Stuart Thornton and Larkin Martin – Martin Farm  
**Lawrence County**

Aubrey Bettencourt, Chief of the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), toured farms in Madison and Lawrence Counties to see firsthand the success of the Alabama Irrigation Initiative. The July tour, which included stops at 2M Farms in New Hope, Letson Brothers Farm in Hillsboro, Martin Farm in Courtland, and Spruell Farms in Mt. Hope, highlighted how partnerships and innovative practices are transforming agriculture in the state.

At each stop, Bettencourt engaged directly with farmers and conservation partners to understand local challenges and the impact of the program.

“We discussed local irrigation practices, water rights, generational legacy, mapping, and process improvements,” said Trey Mann of 2M Farms. “Irrigation helps us manage risk and make the most of our seed, herbicides, and fertilizer. A healthy crop with good root structure also combats erosion during the growing season and after harvest. With support from the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee (ALSWCC), Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District and NRCS, irrigation became economically feasible.”

Ashley Henderson, Incoming Executive Director of ALSWCC, echoed the positive impact of the initiative. “We were thrilled to welcome Chief Bettencourt and highlight the success of the Alabama Irrigation Initiative. The program has been a model of effective collaboration between federal, state, and local partners – all with the same goal: to support Alabama farmers through sustainable and responsible irrigation. By promoting sustainable irrigation practices, we’re not only increasing crop yields but also conserving water and protecting the environment.”

During the tour, Chief Bettencourt shared her broader goals for NRCS: to create an effective, responsible, and efficient agency focused on supporting producers.

“We appreciated the Chief’s willingness to meet north Alabama farmers in the field and see real-world results from the NRCS–SWCC partnership, said Liz Spruell, Spruell Farms. “She also shared encouraging plans to improve system integration and contract execution. The ‘one farmer, one file’ approach is a foundational improvement that will help modernize and simplify the producer experience.”

Launched in 2017, the Alabama Irrigation Initiative is a collaborative effort between NRCS, ALSWCC, Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Auburn University, and the University of Alabama in Huntsville. The initiative provides up to \$250,000 in financial assistance per producer to help install new irrigation systems — including wells, piping, pumps, pivots, and the power needed to operate them. The program also equips farmers with essential tools such as weather stations, soil moisture sensors, and flow meters, supported by a three-year vendor subscription, to ensure efficient and responsible water management.



Chief Bettencourt visits with the Mann family — Trey, Abel and David – 2M Farms.  
**Madison County**



Chief Bettencourt learns about the feral swine issues impacting Alabama farmers and gets an up-close look at the Pig Brig trapping system in use at Spruell Farms.  
**Lawrence County**



# Working Together For Wild Turkeys

In June, landowners, natural resource professionals, and conservation partners gathered in Autauga County for the Wild Turkey Habitat Field Tour. The event was hosted by the Autauga Forestry & Wildlife Stewardship Council (AFWSC), the Autauga County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the River Region’s Flock of Turkeys for Tomorrow. It featured wild turkey habitat experts Dr. Craig Harper of the University of Tennessee and Dr. Will Gulsby of Auburn University. Thanks to a grant secured by the Autauga County SWCD from the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee, the day gave participants a rare hands-on look at habitat practices designed to sustain one of Alabama’s most iconic wildlife species.

Wild turkeys are a cornerstone of Alabama’s natural and cultural heritage. Yet, their numbers have fluctuated in recent years. Spring harvests are down from record highs in the early 2000s, and biologists note that reproduction rates remain a concern. “Although harvest trends are down from record highs in the early 2000s, we’ve seen recent increases in some areas,” explained Dr. Will Gulsby, Associate Professor at Auburn University, co-host of the Wild Turkey Science Podcast, and a featured speaker on the tour. “Populations are highly variable—some areas still harbor strong populations while others remain suppressed.”

More than 90% of Alabama’s land is privately owned, which means the future of wild turkeys depends heavily on the decisions of private landowners. “If we are going to restore turkey populations to what

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**“Our mission is to connect private landowners with the resources they need to successfully manage their land—it benefits all Alabamians.”**

—Jack Wadsworth, Autauga County SWCD Chairman

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they once were, private landowners are going to play a major role,” said Gulsby. “Equipping them with the information on how to do that effectively is crucial.”

Throughout the day, participants toured the property while learning about key topics in wild turkey management and observing practices firsthand. Discussions covered nesting versus brood habitat and poult requirements, managing openings, pine plantations, and mixed pine-hardwood stands, and the use of herbicides and prescribed fire. Participants also received information on NRCS and SWCD programs offering technical and financial assistance.

The event also showcased the value of collaboration. “As partners, we all share the same overall objective of improving natural resources,” said Alex Johnson, District Conservationist with NRCS. “Each partner brings different strengths—funding, expertise, or logistical support. When those strengths are combined, you can accomplish far more than one group could alone.”

This cooperative approach has been a hallmark of Autauga County. The county’s Stewardship Council and SWCD have worked hand in hand for nearly two decades, consistently engaging landowners in conservation. “Our mission is to connect private landowners with the resources they need to successfully manage their land—it benefits all Alabamians,” said Jack Wadsworth, Autauga County SWCD Chairman.

Johnson added that peer-to-peer learning is critical: “Agencies can demonstrate conservation practices, but what really resonates is landowner-to-landowner conversation and demonstration. Field days like this—where people can see results firsthand—are among the most effective ways to encourage adoption.”

Despite challenges, Gulsby remains optimistic about the future of wild turkeys in Alabama. “Landowners are more knowledgeable and engaged in land management for turkeys than they ever have been,” he said. “According to a recent poll, information gained from our Wild Turkey Science podcast has already been used to improve over 2 million acres across the Southeast. That’s just a fraction of all the great work landowners are doing.”

As the Wild Turkey Habitat Field Tour demonstrated, when landowners, agencies, universities, and conservation groups come together, the impact is far greater than the sum of its parts. By continuing to share knowledge and resources, Alabama is laying the groundwork for healthier turkey populations—and healthier natural resources—for generations to come.



Above: Harper discusses the benefits of warm season prescribed burns.

Below: Harper and Gulsby demonstrate the hack and girdle method for killing unwanted trees.

**Autauga County**




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**“Since putting up the fence, I haven’t had any problems. It’s given me peace of mind and lets me focus on growing my crops and getting fresh produce into my community.”**

—Macon County Farmer  
Matthew Steele, Steele Produce

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Produce Farmer Matthew Steele  
**Macon County**

## New Program Shields Alabama Crops from Feral Swine

The Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee (ALSWCC) launched a new conservation incentive program in October 2024 to help agricultural producers install electric exclusion fencing designed to minimize feral swine access to high-value crops, orchards, grazing lands, and row crops. The Feral Swine Exclusion Fencing Program was made possible through a \$480,000 grant award from the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Perimeter Fencing for Feral Swine Grant Program.

Feral swine are one of Alabama’s most destructive invasive species, causing significant damage to the state’s farms, pastures, and forests. Their rooting and wallowing harm crops, orchards, and grazing lands, contribute to soil erosion, degrade water quality, and can spread pathogens such as E. coli, Salmonella, and Giardia.

The program was expanded in June 2025 with an additional \$250,000, providing rebates to producers in 32 counties across central, Black Belt, and southern Alabama, with priority given to high-value crops and historically underserved producers.

“Feral swine have become one of the most persistent threats to Alabama agriculture,” said Ashley Henderson, Incoming Executive Director, ALSWCC. Their damage reaches far beyond the field and farm

profitability. It impacts soil health and water quality. While SWCC already provides rebates for feral swine traps and trapping assistance, being able to offer exclusion fencing gives producers another layer of protection against this threat.”

To ensure proper installation and long-term effectiveness, the program featured a series of workshops and on-site demonstrations across eligible counties. Led by conservation partner The United Community Christian Association (TUCCA) and Soil and Water Conservation District staff, these hands-on sessions provided producers with practical, in-field instruction on fence design, post layout, corner bracing, gate placement, and wire spacing for the required five-wire high-tensile electric fence. Producers observed active construction sites and received direct guidance from field representatives and technicians on installation and maintenance, helping them gain confidence in managing their fencing systems and ensuring lasting protection from feral swine.

Farmers across Alabama are already seeing results.

Matthew Steele, a produce farmer in Macon County, planted 10,000 collards this fall on his 5-acre farm with three plots. To protect his crops, he installed 1200 linear feet of electric fence to keep both hogs and deer out. “Since putting up the fence, I haven’t had any problems,” Steele said. “It’s given me peace of mind and lets me focus on growing my crops and getting fresh produce into my community.”

Justin House, a row-crop farmer in Monroe County, calls the fencing “doing the Lord’s work.” His fields, located near a creek—a prime habitat for feral swine—had been plagued by extreme hog damage. This spring, he had to replant corn after hogs devastated his crop. Through the program, House and three neighboring farmers came together and installed two large exclusion fences, successfully keeping hogs at bay. While trapping continues as a supplementary measure, the electric fencing has already made a noticeable difference, allowing the farmers to make significant progress in protecting their fields and improving crop survival.

“Every fence we help install represents progress for an Alabama farmer in the battle against feral swine,” said Henderson. “With the right support and guidance, producers are protecting their crops, their land, and their livelihoods—one fence line at a time.”



Above: Steele’s crop protected behind newly-installed, electrified exclusion fencing.  
**Macon County**

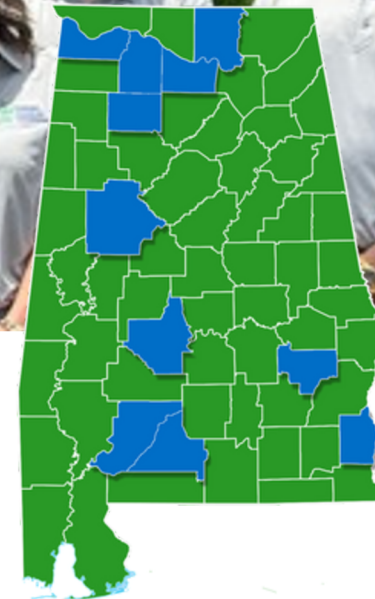


Right: House’s corn crop protected by solar-powered exclusion fencing.  
**Monroe County**



Below: TUCCA Rep. Darrel McGuire (far right) leads an on-site installation demonstration for farmers.  
**Dallas County**





## Emerging Leaders in Conservation (ELC) Launches Inaugural Cohort

The Emerging Leaders in Conservation welcomed their very first cohort in 2025. This initiative, led by the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee (ALSWCC), empowers the next generation of soil and water conservation champions through personal growth, professional development, and the policy education needed to build a sustainable and resilient future for Alabama. The call to create this program came from soil and water conservation district supervisors within the state who saw a need for more development to elevate advisors, supervisors, district employees, and NRCS staff in conservation leadership.

“This program is extremely important,” said SWCC Committee Chairman Charles Holmes. “As you look around the rooms of our meetings, you see a lot of older members who have worked hard to create and maintain an amazing organization. What we fail to see are the younger generations who are needed to rise up and get involved for the sustainment of our mission.”

SWCC kicked off its program with rigorous application and interview processes, where each applicant got the opportunity to sit down with Executive Director Dr. Bill Puckett to discuss their passions for conservation and their visions for the future. Twelve applicants rose to the top and secured a seat in the inaugural cohort, with high expectations from current soil and water conservation leadership. These promising and highly motivated individuals are comprised of supervisors, advisors, and one DAC from across the state.

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**“The candidates chosen for this program are so promising for this task. I am already proud of the work they are doing.”**

—SWCC Chairman Charles Holmes,

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"The candidates chosen for this program are so promising for this task," said Holmes. "I am already proud of the work they are doing."

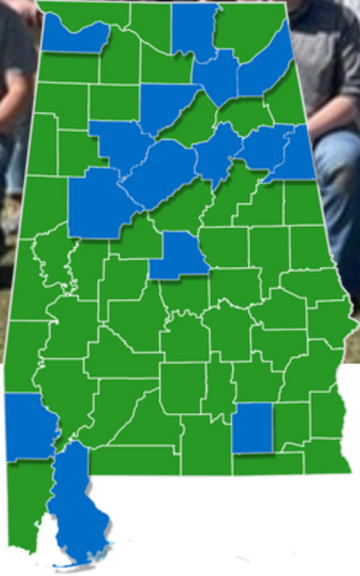
This cohort will meet quarterly over the course of two years to develop the knowledge, skill and networks needed to champion the next generation of soil and water conservation. Their first meeting was in May of 2025 in Opelika, AL with an agenda packed with personality assessments, leadership style determinations, public speaking and other training sessions to better understand themselves and each other's leadership styles. Their second meeting was in July of 2025 in Dothan, AL, where they focused on the history of conservation, our organization's structural makeup, in-depth looks at programs, practices on the ground, and community projects within the Districts to develop a better understanding of what we do, and why we do it.

"This program simply has to be successful, if we are to keep going," Holmes concluded. "It is not just for the younger people. We older people need to be there to give advice and temper them in their movements. We all need each other here to continue the legacy of soil and water conservation."



## ELC Inaugural Cohort

Jamie Vann - Madison County  
Will Gotcher - Colbert County  
Mitchell Henry - Lawrence County  
Matthew Bentley - Morgan County  
Zach Brannon - Winston County  
Chad Christian - Tuscaloosa County  
Darrell McGuire - Dallas County  
Darren Beachem - Bullock County  
Justin House - Monroe County  
Emmanuel Bankston - Henry County  
Cameron Smith - Conecuh County  
Andrea Crain - Madison County



## Conservation Partners Strengthen FFA Land Judging

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**“The support from Alabama’s Soil and Water Conservation Districts—both through financial contributions and hands-on involvement—plays a vital role in helping FFA students gain real-world experience. Their partnership strengthens students’ understanding of conservation practices and prepares them to be responsible stewards of our natural resources.”**

— SWCC Member Jay Borden,  
Agriscience Education Administrator/  
Staff FFA Advisor

Alabama’s Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)-AL have a long tradition of supporting FFA land judging—a hands-on competition that teaches students about soil, conservation, and land use. This year, Tuscaloosa County SWCD led efforts to host the 2025 Alabama State Land Judging Competition at the Tuscaloosa County School System Agriscience Teaching Farm.

“We were thrilled when NRCS approached us about hosting,” said Dupree Galloway, Chairman of the Tuscaloosa County SWCD. “Supporting land judging helps us build stronger connections with local schools and students. It’s a natural extension of our mission to promote conservation education and youth engagement.”

Tuscaloosa County SWCD coordinated the event—securing a site with diverse soils, ensuring the pits were dug, and managing logistics. They worked closely with partners like the Tuscaloosa County School System, Tuscaloosa County Commission, and Alabama 811 to ensure safe excavation. Donations from Local Bank, the Tuscaloosa County Natural Resource Planning Committee, and the Tuscaloosa County Farmers Federation supported food and materials, creating a well-organized and memorable experience for students and teachers.

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2025 FFA State Land Judging Participants  
**Tuscaloosa County**

Local student engagement was also a priority for the event. “We were excited to have Brookwood High School FFA students participate as volunteers and spectators,” said Galloway. “They’re interested in forming a land judging team, and this gave them a great introduction to the contest.”

NRCS-AL soil scientists were instrumental in selecting four distinct sites (cropland, pastureland, forestland and homestead) and ensuring alignment with national judging standards. “Our role is to create a fair, educational experience where students can apply their knowledge of soil management,” said Christopher Davis, NRCS State Soil Scientist. “We judge the pits through the same lens as the FFA Land Judging Manual, so everything aligns with classroom instructions.”

Davis also sees land judging as a launchpad for career awareness. “A lot of students don’t realize careers in Soil Science, Forestry, Agronomy, or Natural Resource Management are even an option,” he said. “We want to be a visible resource to students and teachers when it comes to careers in agriculture. This is a fun, hands-on way to introduce those pathways.”

In addition to sponsoring or assisting with land judging, Alabama’s Soil and Water Conservation Districts demonstrate their strong commitment to FFA through a variety of initiatives including providing financial assistance, supporting student speaking and judging events, and sponsoring forestry judging contests. Together with NRCS-AL and other partners, these efforts help inspire the next generation of conservation leaders across the state.

“The support from Alabama’s Soil and Water Conservation Districts—both through financial contributions and hands-on involvement—plays a vital role in helping FFA students gain real-world experience,” said SWCC Committee Member Jay Borden, State Agriculture Education Administrator and FFA Advisor. “Their partnership strengthens students’ understanding of conservation practices and prepares them to be responsible stewards of our natural resources.”



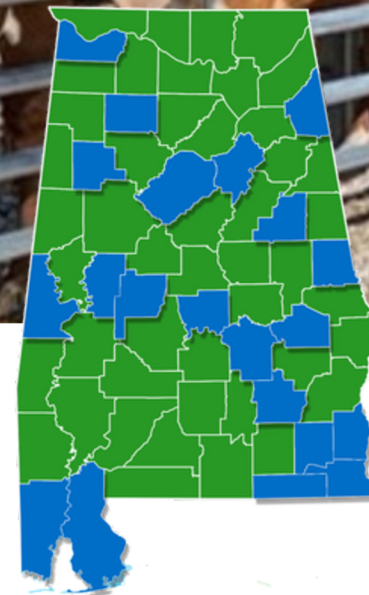


# District Equipment Rental Programs Support Alabama Landowners

Across Alabama, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) are finding practical ways to help landowners put conservation into action. One growing effort involves equipment rental programs—giving producers access to tools that support soil health, water conservation, and sustainable farm management without the heavy financial burden of ownership.

While the idea of conservation equipment rental isn't new—some districts began offering implements as far back as the 1980s—interest has surged in recent years as producers look for ways to cut input costs, build soil resilience, and manage water more efficiently. Tools like no-till drills, sprayers, hog traps, and roller crimpers are helping landowners adopt best management practices that boost productivity while protecting Alabama's soil and water resources.

As soil and water districts begin focusing on herd health as a means to improve water quality, many are expanding their rental programs to include squeeze chutes and portable corral systems. These tools not only make livestock handling safer and more efficient but also help producers implement management practices that promote animal welfare, protect pastures, and reduce runoff from overused areas. The systems are also portable and convenient -- towable with a pickup truck and quick to set up in different pastures or fields.



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**“Our mission is to support conservation and local agriculture. Our rental equipment program helps landowners improve their operations while protecting natural resources.”**

—SWCC Member Johnny Lee,  
Henry County SWCD Chairman

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Henry County SWCD is leading the way with equipment offerings tailored to local producers. Recognizing that small and mid-size farmers often lack access to specialized conservation tools, the district invested in two key pieces of equipment with support from grants provided through the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee. Designed to save time, reduce costs, and promote good land stewardship, the district now rents out a 10-foot No-Till Grain Drill and a 20-foot Portable Corral System capable of handling 100 calves (up to 500 lbs each) or 50 mature cows.

“Our mission is to support conservation and local agriculture,” said Henry County SWCD Chairman Johnny Lee. “Our rental equipment helps landowners improve their operations while protecting natural resources.”

Farmers in Henry County have embraced the district’s new rental program. “It’s a huge resource for our county,” said Tom Chestnut, a Henry County cattle producer who has used the district’s no-till drill. “Small farmers can use the equipment without having to buy their own. The no-till drill helps conserve soil nutrients, topsoil, and organic matter. It’s just overall sustainable.”

Beyond simply providing tools, Henry County SWCD uses its rental program as an opportunity to educate landowners on smart conservation practices.

“The grain drill teaches farmers how to reduce erosion, improve water infiltration, and protect soil structure,” Lee added. “The portable corral system also demonstrates the value of rotational grazing, which prevents overgrazing and improves vegetative cover—key to water retention, reduced runoff, and better forage for livestock.”



To see which districts offer equipment rentals, scan the QR code or visit [AlabamaSoilandWater.gov/equipmentrental/](http://AlabamaSoilandWater.gov/equipmentrental/)



Henry County SWCD Chairman Johnny Lee pictured with the district's 10' Great Plains No-Till Drill



Several districts offer feral swine net and panel traps along with game cameras for rent.



# Alabama Association of Conservation Districts

Founded in August 1943, the Alabama Association of Conservation Districts (AACD) is a non-profit organization made up of Alabama's 67 Soil and Water Conservation Districts. AACD exists to strengthen the state's local conservation districts. It promotes education and training for district supervisors and staff, encourages collaboration across districts, and provides a unified platform to address soil and water conservation challenges. AACD also engages in advocacy to ensure that conservation remains a priority in public funding and resource planning.

## SE Conservation Hall of Fame

In August, Johnny Lee was inducted into the Southeast Region Conservation Hall of Fame during the Southeast NACD Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky. A lifelong conservationist and past president of the Alabama Association of Conservation Districts, Johnny continues to serve his community and church in Headland, Alabama.

## Soil and Water Matters Day

On April 9, more than seventy representatives from Alabama's Soil and Water Conservation Districts attended Soil and Water Matters Day at the State House. They met with legislators to discuss conservation priorities and emphasize continued funding for the Alabama Conservation Incentive Program (CIP).

## NACD Fly-In

In March, AACD representatives joined district leaders nationwide in Washington, D.C., for the NACD Fly-In. The team met with Alabama's congressional delegation and NRCS leadership to advocate for policies and funding that strengthen natural resource conservation.

## AACD Area and Annual Meetings

In 2025, AACD hosted six Area Annual Meetings across Alabama, providing updates and engagement opportunities for local conservation partners.

The AACD Annual Meeting in November offered training and policy sessions for supervisors and staff statewide. Cameron Smith (Conecuh County) was elected AACD President, along with new Executive Committee members. AACD also celebrated Dr. Carol Knight's appointment to the NACD Southeast Region Executive Board.

## Alabama Envirothon

The Alabama Envirothon continues to grow, engaging over 200 students and educators in hands-on environmental science competition. Straughn High School earned first place and represented Alabama at the NCF-Envirothon in Alberta, Canada. A summer training expanded district involvement, helping foster the next generation of conservation leaders.





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# Alabama Conservation District Employees Association (ACDEA)



The purpose of ACDEA is to strengthen local Soil & Water Conservation Districts by providing vital assistance and resources to the districts, their boards, and employees. We aim to promote excellence in fulfilling district responsibilities and to support district employees through ongoing professional development. The association's greatest benefit lies in the continuing education workshops offered to all district staff and the encouragement for fostering stable, collaborative relationships among districts, employees, supervisors, and partnering agencies.

## 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

### Let Conservation Roll! - Annual Workshop

The Alabama Conservation District Employees Association (ACDEA) held its 2025 Annual Workshop June 1-4 in Mobile, Alabama, welcoming 70 attendees. The packed agenda featured educational sessions, hands-on training, engaging tours, valuable networking opportunities, and, of course, a bit of fun along the way!

### Student Scholarships

The Alabama Conservation District Employees Association (ACDEA) is proud to invest in the future of conservation through its annual scholarship program. Each year, ACDEA awards a \$1,000 scholarship to a deserving student in each of Alabama's six areas. By supporting education, ACDEA continues its mission to cultivate the next generation of conservation leaders who will carry forward the stewardship of Alabama's natural resources.

### Training

In 2025, each Area prioritized training to enhance skills and knowledge. Training sessions were held across the state and covered topics such as CIP, Canva, Education and Outreach.

Soil & Water Matters!



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[www.facebook.com/SWCC/](https://www.facebook.com/SWCC/)