

# UPPER SUWANNEE News

Upper Suwannee River Partnership

The Upper Suwannee Conservation Tillage Alliance (USCTA) is now online, [www.uscta.info](http://www.uscta.info)

## Upper Suwannee River Partnership

### MEMBERS

- Alapaha Soil & Water Conservation District
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection—Water Resource Management
- Georgia Poultry Federation
- Georgia Soil & Water Conservation Commission
- Gold Kist, Inc.
- Mid South Georgia Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc.
- Middle South Georgia Soil & Water Conservation District
- Seven Rivers Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc.
- South Georgia Regional Development Center
- Suwannee River Water Management District
- United States Department of Agriculture—Natural Resources Conservation Service
- University of Georgia, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
- Upper Suwannee Conservation Tillage Alliance
- Upper Suwannee River Watershed Initiative

Emily P. Davenport, Georgia Coordinator  
Angela Wall, Assistant Georgia Coordinator  
South Georgia Regional Development Center

327 West Savannah Avenue, Valdosta, GA 31601 | 229.333.5277 | [edavenport@sgrdc.com](mailto:edavenport@sgrdc.com)

Check out the Upper Suwannee River Partnership website at: <http://www.sgrdc.com/USRP/index.htm>

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## Suwannee Basin Workshops—Huge Success



The Upper Suwannee River Watershed Initiative (USRWI) held their 6th annual summit on **January 25th, 2006** in Tifton at the UGA—Tifton Campus Conference Center (TCCC). This year's summit brought in over **100** attendees and focused on the forestry industry and its impacts on the environment. Several speakers presented from agencies such as the Georgia Forestry Association (GFA), Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC), USDA—Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the University of Georgia (UGA).

Topics covered a wide variety of issues such as:

- ◆ Forest Hydrology
- ◆ The Importance of BMPs
- ◆ Streamside Management Zones
- ◆ The Role of Buffer Strips
- ◆ Stream Crossings
- ◆ Selective Thinning for Growth/Forest Management
- ◆ NRCS Farm Bill Programs
- ◆ Tree Growth for Carbon Sequestration
- ◆ Forest in Georgia
- ◆ Selective Thinning



Designed to promote conservation tillage, the **6th Annual Conservation Tillage Training Conference** was held in Tifton on **February 7—8th** at the UGA—TCCC. Over **270** people attended this conference, including farmers, researchers, and both USDA and UGA personnel.

The conference promoted a “Systems Approach” to sustainable agriculture and conservation tillage. Topics that were covered included a variety of commercial crop production systems, soil quality/soil fertility, water use, cover crops, the USDA-NRCS Conservation Security Program (CSP), and organics. In addition, there were over 20 tabletop displays as well as several outside displays that included equipment used for conservation tillage practices.

This year's conference was dedicated to Rick Reed who has been a dedicated public servant and strong supporter of conservation tillage systems throughout Georgia. Featured speakers included **Teresa Lasseter**—FSA Administrator, **Senator Saxby Chambliss**, and **Steve Groff** who all shared their interest and support for conservation tillage systems and the importance of promoting these practices.

An extensive resource manual was provided to each person who attended as well as a Resource Directory that included agricultural agency contact information for 61 counties in South Georgia. The Resource Directory can also be found online at, [www.sgrdc.com/USRP/index.htm](http://www.sgrdc.com/USRP/index.htm), under “Resources.”



## PARTNER'S PERSPECTIVE

As one of the first proactive initiatives to address water quality issues at a basin level in Georgia, the South Georgia Regional Development Center (SGRDC) is proud to be a partner of the Upper Suwannee River Partnership (USRP). Since 1963, the SGRDC has been a leader in the development of local and regional programs. The SGRDC serves the local governments of nine counties and 22 municipalities in South Georgia encompassing an area of 2,978 square miles and a population of approximately 210,657.

As times change and our communities continue to grow, it is imperative that we continue to strive towards protecting our natural resources. Within the last few years, we have witnessed a strong focus being placed on the importance of improving our water resources, not only by state and federal agencies, but by our local citizens. Through key elements such as education, partnerships, proactive steps, and voluntary measures, the Suwannee will continue to be a pristine basin for generations to come.

~ John L. Leonard

**John Leonard,**  
Executive Director  
South Georgia Regional  
Development Center  
(SGRDC)

## Robert Lindsey Joins NRCS Staff in Ocilla Field Office



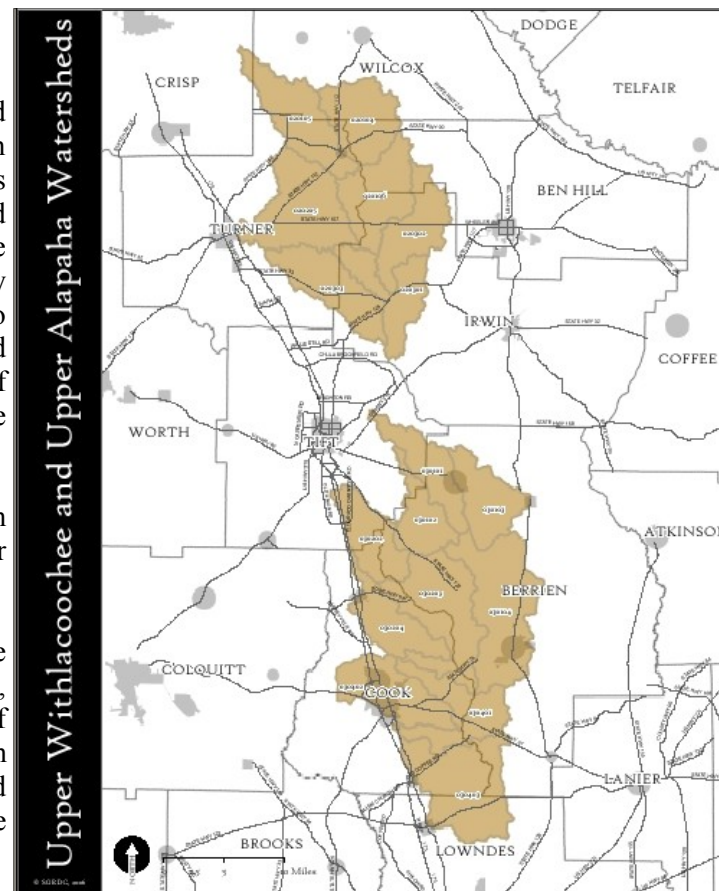
On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, **Robert Lindsey** became the second new team member to be hired by NRCS to assist with an agreement between NRCS and GA EPD to assess 250,000 acres of both the **Alapaha** and **Withlacoochee** watersheds. Robert, who will be housed at the Ocilla Field Office, will work directly with District Conservationist, Mary Leidner to inventory the Alapaha watershed, work with local officials and land users, accelerate conservation activities through the installation of best management practices (BMPs) and propose strategies to improve and protect water quality as they relate to agriculture.

Charlie Ford, who was hired by NRCS on January 9<sup>th</sup>, will perform the same duties; however in the Withlacoochee watershed and under the direction of District Conservationist, Hal Simpson.

Robert is from Berrien County and has been farming since 1959. Over the years, he has grown everything from corn, peanuts, cotton, soybeans, and tobacco and has been practicing some form of conservation tillage since 1968. In 1997, he retired as Farm Manager from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) and in recent years, served as Project Coordinator for the Willacoochee River 319 Project that was completed in January 2005.

For more information on the Alapaha Watershed Assessment, please feel free to contact the Ocilla Field Office at 229.468.7491 ext. 3. Or for more information on the Withlacoochee Watershed Assessment, please contact the Nashville Field Office at 229.686.2363 ext. 3.

The **Governor's Honors Agriscience and Environmental Science Program** is coming to South Georgia again! This six-week summer instructional program provides talented high school students challenging and enriching educational opportunities not usually available during the regular school year. This years program will be held from **June 11th to July 22nd** at **Valdosta State University**. Students who participate in the Governor's Honors Program acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to become independent, life-long learners. This years students will learn about a number of agencies such as NRCS and GFC and how important their role is in protecting and improving our environment. For more information on this program, please contact Blane Marable at 706.542.9793 or by email, [bmarable@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:bmarable@doe.k12.ga.us).



Upper Withlacoochee and Upper Alapaha Watersheds

## ACTIVITIES IN THE SUWANNEE BASIN



### Local Receives Governor's Award for Stewardship

**Bob Rawlins** of Turner County was recently selected as one of five regional winners in Georgia to receive the **Governor's Agricultural Environmental Stewardship Award**. This award recognizes farmers that have successfully implemented BMPs and conservation techniques in their farming operations to help sustain our natural resources.

Rawlins began farming in 1971 and has had the opportunity to grow watermelons, peanuts, cotton, pine trees, and much more. Over the years, he has altered his techniques of farming to help protect and maintain the natural resources found on his land. Rawlins has used a number of conservation practices to protect his land such as strip till, cover crops, variable-rate irrigation systems, and converting his existing equipment to bring conservation tillage to his crops. Rawlins is a firm believer that "if God put the cover on the land, that we as people should be careful on how we remove and replace it." On behalf of the USRP, we would like to say "Congratulations to Mr. Bob Rawlins for all his hard work and dedication."

### Georgia's 2004 Forestry Best Management Practices Survey

The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) announced the completion and results of the **2004 Forestry Best Management Practices (BMP) Implementation and Compliance Survey Report**. The GFC conducts the biannual evaluation of statewide forest practices for BMP implementation and compliance and reports the findings to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division.

Since the first BMP survey in 1991, the Suwannee River Basin in Georgia continues to improve in all areas of BMP compliance, due to the ongoing educational workshops for loggers, foresters, and landowners by the GFC. Of the 724 individual BMPs evaluated on 33 different sites, the Suwannee River Basin percentage of correct implementation was 89.8%. Stream crossing compliance for new crossings within the basin remains low, but improved educational efforts relating to stream identification and proper crossing techniques from the GFC should improve BMP implementation and compliance in this area.

Two cost share programs are available to landowners to assist in implementing practices for forest roads and stream crossings. The **Forest Land Enhancement Program** is administered by the GFC and the **Environmental Quality Incentives Program** is administered by NRCS. For more detailed information and/or to receive a copy of the 2004 Forestry BMP Implementation and Compliance Survey Report, call the GFC office in Macon at 1-800-GATREES or visit the GFC website at <http://www.gfc.state.ga.us>.

The **Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program** is a voluntary program to assist private landowners with fish and wildlife habitat restoration on their land. It restores, improves, and protects fish and wildlife habitat on private lands through alliances between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Georgia Association of Conservation District Supervisors, Georgia Soil & Water Conservation Commission (GA S&WCC), and individuals, while leaving the land in private ownership.

This program can be beneficial to people by providing natural flood water storage, recreational opportunities, recharging ground water supplies, filtering pollutants, and providing irrigation water. Jamey Crozier, Regional Representative with the GA S&WCC stated, "The key is partnerships! Working together, teaming up to meet local needs, addressing issues, and taking advantage of local opportunities."

For more information on the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, please contact Jamey Crozier at 229.995.6001 or Robert Brooks at 912.265.9336 ext. 25.

### DATES TO REMEMBER...

**April 8, 2006, Middle South Georgia Soil & Water Conservation District Meeting** at 2 PM, Tifton, GA. For more information contact Jamey Crozier at 229.995.6001 or by email, [jcrozier@gaswcc.org](mailto:jcrozier@gaswcc.org).

**April 12, 2006, Alapaha Soil & Water Conservation District Meeting** at 9AM, Valdosta, GA. For more information contact Jamey Crozier at 229.995.6001 or by email, [jcrozier@gaswcc.org](mailto:jcrozier@gaswcc.org).

**April 27, 2006, Continuing Logger Education Workshop**—Managing GA and FL BMPs with Field Trip/Ethics from 8—5, Valdosta, GA. For more information or registration questions, please contact Tommy Carroll at 478.994.4449 or by email, [tcarroll@sewpa.com](mailto:tcarroll@sewpa.com).

**June 1, 2006, Seven Rivers RC&D Board Meeting** at 10:30 AM, Waycross, GA. For more information contact Luther Jones at 912.367.7679 or by email, [luther.jones@usda.gov](mailto:luther.jones@usda.gov).

**June 11-July 22, 2006, the Governor's Honors Agriscience and Environmental Science Program**, Valdosta, GA. For more information, please contact Blane Marable at 706.542.9793 or by email, [bmarable@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:bmarable@doe.k12.ga.us).