

Highlights from the Hills

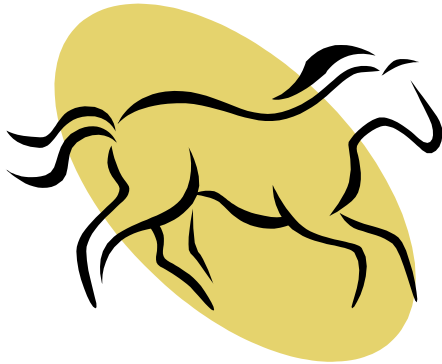
A NEWSLETTER OF THE
ROLLING HILLS RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, INC



Issue 16, Spring 2008

MASTER EQUINE COURSE SCHEDULED

UGA Cooperative Extension and Rolling Hills are partnering to host a Master Equine Course beginning on May 8th. Classes will be held every Thursday from 6:30pm to 9:00pm through June 19, 2008. Registration information is now available at our office and on our webpage (www.rollinghillsrcd.org) and will be accepted until May 1, 2008.



The program is designed as an advanced training curriculum to inform horse owners about many topics critical to starting and managing a horse related business or merely managing your family horses. The course is highly recommended for horse owners, trainers, instructors, boarding stables, managers and breeding farms. Instruction topics taught by UGA Extension Faculty, Natural Resource Conservation Service personnel, and other equine experts, will include feeding, nutrition, waste handling, horse health, barn design and management, water and pasture management, legal and liability issues, and other pertinent equine management information. (This course was developed by Oconee River RC&D Council and Cooperative Extension in 2007.)

Horse ownership in Georgia is rapidly increasing along with the equine industry. In the Rolling Hills region, we have over 9,000 horses with a Farmgate Value of \$10,950,000 (Georgia Ag Statistics: 2006). These landowners are typically non-traditional customers to NRCS. Through the Council's Area Planning Process, equine landowners have requested assistance in land management issues, in addition to other items.

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ROLLING HILLS AREA PLAN

After months of outreach and planning, the Rolling Hills RC&D five year Strategic Area Plan is finalized. This plan will serve to guide and direct the Council's activities for the next five years. The goals and objectives identified in this plan were developed from input solicited in 2007 from around the Council region and from a diverse constituency. This plan reflects not only the public input, but also documented natural resource concerns that provide opportunities for improvement. Annually, the Plan of Work will be developed based upon this document.

Please visit the Council's website at www.rollinghillsrcd.org or contact the Council office for a copy.

Office Contact Information:

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Ph: 770-749-0444 Fax: 770-749-9444

FARM ENERGY REDUCTION GRANTS

by Susan Pullen, Project Manager

The 2002 Farm Bill provided a new program that is available to farmers across the nation that need to reduce their energy consumption on their farms. Applications can now be made to receive up to 25% of the cost of performing energy efficiency improvements to a facility, building or a process within the farming operation. The maximum grant is \$250,000 and the minimum is \$1,500. Grant funds must be used to finance and develop small and emerging private business enterprises in rural areas. This means that poultry farms and other small businesses in rural areas would be eligible to receive funding. The following is a list of some of the eligible purposes: purchase and installation of equipment, construction and improvements, energy audits,

permit fees, professional service fees, feasibility studies, business plans, and retrofitting.

There is \$16 million available in funding this year, and applications are due by June 16, 2008. Part of the application process includes having an energy audit performed on your farm by the University of Georgia, so that an assessment can be taken of your energy consumption, and areas needing improvement can be noted.

If you are interested in applying for this grant, please contact Rolling Hills RC&D as soon as possible so that we may begin the application process. If you have questions, contact Susan Pullen or Craig Scroggs (craig.scroggs@ga.usda.gov or 770-267-1413).

Poultry Litter Management Tour

We will be taking a tour to northeast Alabama to visit with Alabama Mountains, Rivers, and Valleys RC&D in June for the purpose of previewing a poultry litter windrow and composting machine. If you are interested in participating in this tour, please contact the Council office.



NEW CONSERVATION EQUIPMENT

In 2007, Rolling Hills added some new conservation equipment to its inventory in order to expand its services to landowners.

An **Aerway aerator** was purchased and is located in Polk County. The aerator will assist landowners by eliminating compaction in feeder root zones, allowing roots greater downward movements, resulting in healthier, more productive plants. Aeration also increases water infiltration. Greater water infiltration eliminates ponding and allows water to be distributed more evenly on slopes. Promoting improved plant vigor by increasing water infiltration and deeper root systems are especially beneficial during drought stress. To reserve this aerator, contact Earley Vinson at 770-748-7992.



A Great Plains No-Till **Native Grass Planter** was purchased and is located in Floyd County. The loss of old field and native grassland habitats has resulted in drastic declines in bobwhite quail and grassland bird populations. Planting and maintaining native grasses can help revive these populations by providing essential cover and food sources. There is a growing interest in restoring these native grasses for the purpose of providing wildlife food sources and, in particular, promoting bobwhite quail.

To reserve this planter, contact Jarrell Cagle at 706-291-8651.

WHEELS TO WORK

Throughout the first part of 2008 Wheels to Work placed one client in a vehicle. Reshawn Robert, single mother of four, desperately needed transportation in order to travel to and from work, not to mention grocery shop or carry her children to the park. Reshawn currently works at Aaron’s Sales and Lease in Carrollton as a Sales Representative.

For other good news, two clients, Pamela Robinson from Newnan and Diane Johnson from Norlina, North Carolina paid off their vehicles in the first quarter of 2008.



by Kevin Patterson, Wheels to Work Project Administrator

Speaking engagements do pay off. Recently while speaking at a Kiwanis club in Newnan Kevin Patterson, “Wheels” Project Administrator spoke about the importance and benefits of a “Wheels” program. Several weeks later he was contacted by the Kiwanis club and they are willing to assist in starting a program in Coweta County within the next two months. Wheels to Work will be one

of their sponsor projects for the year. We look forward to assisting individuals in need of transportation in Coweta County.

URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY– TREE INVENTORIES

by Ginger Watson, Community Forester



We would like to welcome a new intern working with Rolling Hills RC&D! **Paolina Sparti** is working towards a Horticultural Degree at Chattahoochee Tech. She will be working with Ginger Watson through the spring as an intern to assist with the tree inventories in Dallas, Cedartown, and Rockmart. Paolina wants to become a Certified Arborist and work in parks and recreation, forestry, or resource management when she completes her degree.

This year Ginger Watson, Community Forester, organized five Arbor Day events and planted trees in three communities. Children, municipalities and civic groups came together to purchase and plant trees in celebration of Georgia’s Arbor Day.

Arborist Training is still taking place at Chattahoochee Technical College in Dallas. The City of Dallas and Paulding county each have representatives participating in the course. The ISA test is set up for May 16, 2008 at 8:30am in the auditorium at Chattahoochee Tech.



ENVIROTHON COMPETITION

The Georgia Envirothon state competition was held in the Rolling Hills RC&D Council region on April 11-12 at Berry College in Rome. Thirteen schools from around Georgia gathered at the Winshape Centre at Berry to compete for the top spot in Georgia and move on to the International Competition at the Canon Envirothon. These teams had already competed in regional competitions to earn their right to come to the state competition—meaning that we had the “best of the best”! This year’s International Competition will be in Flagstaff, Arizona on July 27–August 2.

The Georgia Envirothon is a hands on, high school competition on environmental topics. Teams compete on soils, forestry, aquatics, wildlife, and a current event topic. This year’s current issue was “Recreational Impacts on Public Lands”. They study and prepare all year to test their knowledge on these subjects against other teams across Georgia.

The State winner at Berry was Ware Magnet High School from Waycross.





ROLLING HILLS MEMBERSHIP

Bartow County

Clarence Brown
Davis Nelson

Carroll County

Bill Chappell
Wendy Crager, Treasurer

Coweta County

Sandra Parker
Jim McGuffey

Coosa River SWCD

VACANT

At Large Member

Johnny Groover, President

Douglas County

David Lathem
Carolyn Westbrook

Floyd County

Eddie Lumsden
Thad Rush

Haralson County

Allen Poole
Keith Golden

West GA SWCD

Claude Abercrombie, Vice Pres.

Chatt-Flint RDC

Kimberly Dutton

Heard County

Denney Rogers
Doug Craven

Paulding County

Bruce Coyle
Charles Rutland, Past Pres.

Polk County

Frank Lott
Jewell Tuck, Secretary

Coosa Valley RDC

David Howerin

UPCOMING EVENTS!

WILDLIFE FIELD DAY

Saturday, April 19, 2008 9:30 a.m.
Troutman Farm, Armuchee

MASTER EQUINE COURSE BEGINS

Thursdays, beginning May 8th
seven consecutive Thursdays 6:30-9:00 p.m.
Bartow County Extension Conference Room

GEORGIA RC&D MEETING

May 22-23, 2008
Little Ocmulgee State Park, McRae

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

Wednesday, June 18, 2008 9:00 a.m.

THIRD QUARTER COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, July 10, 2008 10:00 a.m.
Location: Heard County

SE RC&D CONFERENCE

September 10-13, 2008
Wytheville, VA

COUNCIL STAFF

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Bradley Strickland, Earth Team Volunteer
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To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA and Rolling Hills RC&D are equal opportunity providers and employers.