

For Immediate Release
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GA SOIL & WATER 2010 PONDS PROGRAM SIGNUP ANNOUNCED

WASHINGTON, DC—The Georgia Congressional Delegation recently announced a \$2.42M appropriation to help South Georgia farmers conserve irrigation water this year. This legislation provides federal funds and technical assistance to enable farmers to construct irrigation reservoirs or improve existing reservoirs on agricultural property. This funding will also greatly improve the efficiency of irrigation systems in the region.

Landowners who need supplemental irrigation are encouraged to apply for the program. Applications will be accepted July 1-30, 2010, from eligible Georgia landowners south of a line extending from Chattahoochee, Crawford, Wilkinson, Washington, Glascock, and Burke counties. The Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (GSWCC) will oversee the program, and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) will provide the technical assistance.

"NRCS is committed to working hand-in-hand with local conservation districts and the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission to help farmers conserve water. This latest initiative is something all Georgians can be proud of," says James E. Tillman, Sr. the state conservationist for NRCS in Georgia.

Ponds Program reservoirs are catchments that retain rainwater for irrigation. Surface water solutions that utilize rainwater decrease the demand for ground water while maximizing the efficiency of irrigation systems, thereby enabling farmers to irrigate crops more effectively.

"Our South Georgia farmers are especially vulnerable to droughts and harsh weather," says GSWCC Chairman Garland Thompson. "And so the federal assistance provided by the Ponds Program is vital to help farmers make the most of the rains we do get while preserving the health of our aquifers."

Through this cost-share agreement with GSWCC, landowners must provide 25 percent of the cost of the pond project, and grant funds provide the remaining 75 percent, not to exceed \$50,000 of the estimated cost as determined by the NRCS. Possible funding for irrigation nozzle retrofits is \$6 per linear foot of the center pivot irrigation system up to \$5,000.00. Additional cost share on an end gun shut-off will be based on 75 percent of the original cost not to exceed \$3,000.

Applications and program information are available at the GSWCC offices in Dawson (229-995-6001), Milledgeville (478-445-5766) or Statesboro (912-681-5241), or at USDA Service Centers in South Georgia. Please contact GSWCC at 706-542-3065 or visit gaswcc.org for more information. Applications received after July 30 will not be considered.