



Lafayette Soil & Water Conservation District
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Lafayette, LA 70501-7913
337-262-6601 ext. 3

Annual Report – Fiscal Year Ended 2024

“The Lafayette Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) has begun Fiscal Year 2023-2024. We, the District Board of Supervisors, look forward to the challenges of a new year”, announced Ronous J. Duhon, Chairman of the District Board. “At the beginning of a new year, we would like to reflect on last year’s accomplishments”.

The Lafayette Soil & Water Conservation District is a legal subdivision of the State of Louisiana and includes all of Lafayette Parish. A board of five supervisors who are landowners within the district governs it. They are charged with the responsibility of conserving Lafayette’s soil and water resources. This authority is based on the State Soil and Water Conservation Act No. 370 of 1938. Conservation Districts must shape programs to accomplish objectives as specified in the Act. Monthly board meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at the district office located at 905 Jefferson Street, Lafayette, Louisiana, 70501. The following serve as supervisors: Ronous J. Duhon, Chairman; Daniel Hebert, Vice-Chairman; Eddie Blanchard, Secretary-Treasurer; Chad Courtois, Stanley Dutille, and Associate Supervisor Chris Adams.

The district obtains its operating funds from state and Lafayette Consolidated Government. These funds are used for operating expenses and salaries of employees to assist landowners and operators in the planning and application of conservation practices on the land. The district staff includes Michael Brantley, District Technician, Kat Wilder, District Secretary, and Christopher Holland, 319 Program Soil Technician.

Through a Memorandum of Understanding with the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical assistance through the district to plan and apply conservation practices. The personnel available for this assistance are Andrea Bridgewater, District Conservationist Supervisor, Terrell Rabalais, Natural Resource Specialist, Sean Troy, Natural Resource Specialist, and Barrett Lyons, NRCS Resource Conservationist.

In addition, working agreements have been signed with the Louisiana Forestry Commission, and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to provide well-developed conservation programs to the people of

Lafayette Parish. The Lafayette Consolidated Government assists the district in installing conservation practices. The main objective of our agency is to conserve Louisiana's natural resources by identifying conservation problems at the grass roots level and planning programs to treat those problems. NRCS and other local agencies assist the district in promoting these programs. This year customers were serviced by our office for a variety of conservation issues related to soil and water erosion, conservation planning, wildlife habitat, irrigation improvements, soil survey information, ponds, drainage recommendations, wetland issues, tree planting, watershed programs, water quality and other Federal, State and Local Programs.

The board strives to make local, state, and federal officials aware of problems and needs of our parish and state. We have worked closely with members of the State Legislature to get conservation legislation passed or to amend legislation that may have an adverse effect on our natural resources, landowners and farmers, and the people of Louisiana. We have worked very closely with other Conservation Districts, our local Farm Service Agency, Cooperative Extension Service, and the Lafayette Consolidated Government to provide services that would benefit not only farmers and landowners, but also the citizens of Lafayette Parish and Louisiana.

The news media, local schools, and people throughout the parish have been extremely cooperative in assisting the district to promote the programs of conserving our natural resources. To them we offer our sincere appreciation.

Lafayette Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) has a No-Till Drill available, which serves to promote conservation in planting seed and keeping turbidity out of the Vermilion River. Lafayette SWCD is promoting, renting, housing, and maintaining the drill to enhance conservation practices and produce an additional income source for the district.



**7' - 706NT END WHEEL
NO-TILL COMPACT DRILL
AVAILABLE FOR RENT
LAFAYETTE SWCD**

Call (337)262-6601, X3 for more information

No-till Farming:

No-till farming (also known as zero tillage or direct drilling) is an agricultural technique for growing crops or pasture without disturbing the soil through tillage. No-till farming decreases the amount of soil erosion tillage causes in certain soils, especially in sandy and dry soils on sloping terrain. Other possible benefits include an increase in the amount of water that infiltrates into the soil, soil retention of organic matter, and nutrient cycling. These methods may increase the amount and variety of life in and on the soil. While conventional no-tillage systems use herbicides

to control weeds, organic systems use a combination of strategies, such as planting cover crops as mulch to suppress weeds.

WEED WIPER AVAILABLE FOR RENT

The Lafayette Soil and Water Conservation District now offers a 12' Tractor Mounted Weed Wiper with a roll-on paint brush application eliminating drip or drift purchased through the EPA Vermilion River Project. This equipment will aid in achieving reduction in coliform bacteria, nutrients, and sedimentation within the Vermilion River 319 Project area. The most straightforward rationale is that the approved BMP's Prescribed Grazing, Forage and Biomass Planting, and Pest Management practices which are a key to success of the Vermilion River 319 Project, may be more efficiently implemented, and coliform, nutrient and sediment loading more effectively curbed by targeted removal of noxious and invasive vegetation from Vermilion River basin grazing land. Performing this land treatment will almost immediately allow for more uniform grazing and thus less livestock concentration, more successful vegetative plantings and enhancements, greater soil stability, less tillage, greater vegetative assimilation of nutrients, higher soil organic matter, less pesticide drift and improved water quality.



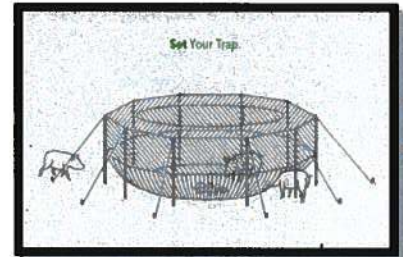
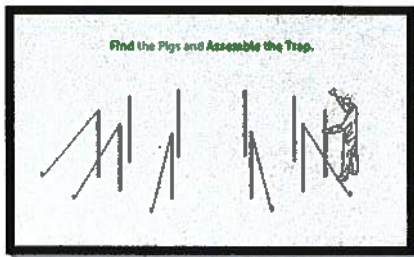
12' Tractor Mounted Weed Wiper
AVAILABLE FOR RENT
LAFAYETTE SWCD
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information



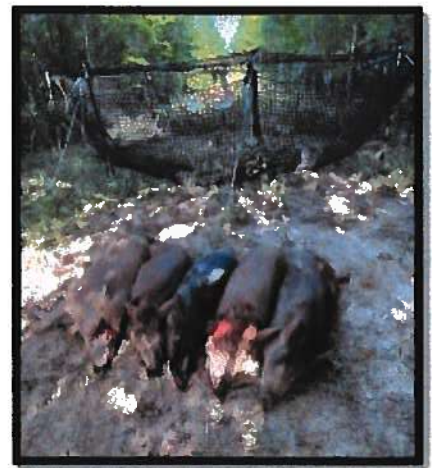
Danny Hebert and Stan Dutille, Lafayette SWCD Supervisors demonstrate the Lafayette Weed Wiper at several field days in 2024.

PIG BRIG TRAP SYSTEMS AVAILABLE FOR RENT

The Lafayette Soil and Water Conservation District also offers a Pig Brig Hog Trap with Hog Eye Camera System which allows you to operate the net with your cell phone through the Hog Eye camera application. A group of pigs is called a “sounder”. To rid your land of feral hogs, you must trap the whole sounder. The best way to do that is with a Pig Brig Trap System. The Pig Brig Trap is the only “continuous trap” system available. You set it, condition pigs to it, then it keeps on trapping the pigs all night long. There are no gates and triggers to reset, and the only trigger is the feral hog’s rooting system. There are no loud gates crashing down behind them, so their buddies don’t run away. The netting looks natural, and there are no metal banging noises to startle them, so feral hogs keep rooting in – one at a time until the trap has caught them all. This information is copied from Pig Brig Trap System website where you can also view videos. Please call Lafayette SWCD at 337-262-6601, Ext. 3 for further details.



Chad Courtois, Lafayette SWCD Supervisor captures wild hogs in the Pig Brig trap.



Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts – Baton Rouge, LA

The Lafayette SWCD attended the annual LACD Meeting held in Baton Rouge, LA on January 8-10, 2024. Earl Garber, State Soil & Water Conservation Commission President, Area IV, Acadia SWCD, along with Joey Breaux, Executive Director, LA Dept. of Agriculture & Forestry and Ronous Duhon, LACD Area IV Vice-President updating Supervisors, Producers and staff on ongoing practices.



There are 44 districts in the State of Louisiana. They are divided into 4 different areas. Lafayette SWCD is one of 11 districts which is included in Area IV. The other districts in Area IV are Acadia; Evangeline, Gulf Coast, Jeff Davis, Iberia, Lafourche-Terrebonne, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary and Vermilion SWCDs'. There is one LACD President which covers the whole state; each of the divided Areas have an appointed LACD Vice President. Lafayette SWCD Chairman Ronous Duhon is the LACD Vice-President of Area IV. The Area IV districts host an annual meeting on a rotating basis. This year's meeting was hosted by the Evangeline SWCD, which was held at the Crawfish Barn, Ville Platte, February 29, 2024. Below are some pictures of the event where guest speakers and district staff and NRCS staff networked in acquiring more conservation practice input in Area IV.

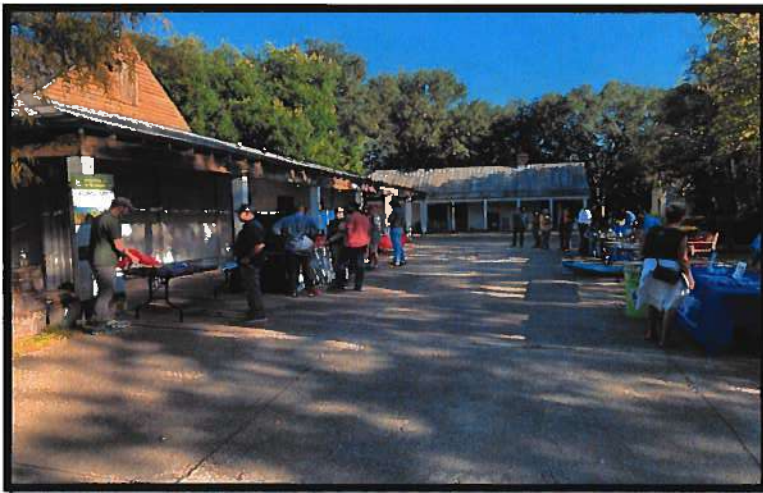


Individual pictures from left to right: Ronous Duhon, LACD Vice-President, Lafayette SWCD; Benson Langlinalis, LACD President, Iberia SWCD; Ronous Duhon; Joey Breaux, Executive Director - LA Department of Agriculture & Forestry; and Earl Garber, State Soil & Water Conservation Commission President, Acadia SWCD

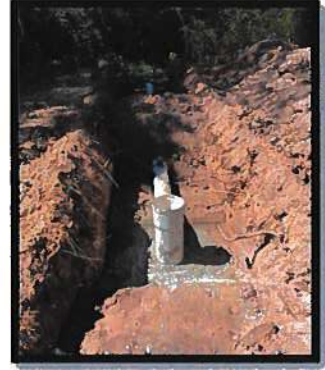
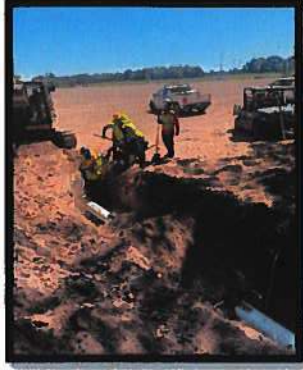
EPA Vermilion River 319 Project:

Christopher Holland, 319 Project Soil Technician for the St. Martin Soil & Water Conservation District and Lafayette Soil & Water Conservation District, (SWCD), along with Dustin Aguillard, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry partnered in participating in the Bayou Vermilion Preservation Alliance Annual State of the River Meeting held September 26, 2024, at Vermilionville, where the districts display of the EPA 319 Vermilion River Project maps outlining property qualified for the Upper Vermilion River Watershed free sewer pump outs to improve water quality in the Vermilion River. This program is offered through EPA via LDAF after DEQ tests found the fecal coliform was too high in the Vermilion River. They provided handouts and presented information to interested citizens to educate the public in taking advantage of their participation in improving water quality. This program will be offered through September 2025. There was a great turnout of local property owners and partnering organizations. New partnerships were made to continue to grow water quality practices throughout Lafayette Parish. **For more information, please call Christopher Holland, 319 Project Soil Technician at 337-262-6601, Ext. 3.**

2024 BVPA Annual State of the River Meeting



Lafayette Soil & Conservation District with assistance from Lafayette Consolidated Government Public Works installed and construction checked (3) pipe drops for 319 Project Applicant



Some of the activities Lafayette SWCD participated in:



BVAP Symposium held at the Lite Center with Chairman Ronous Duhon speaking



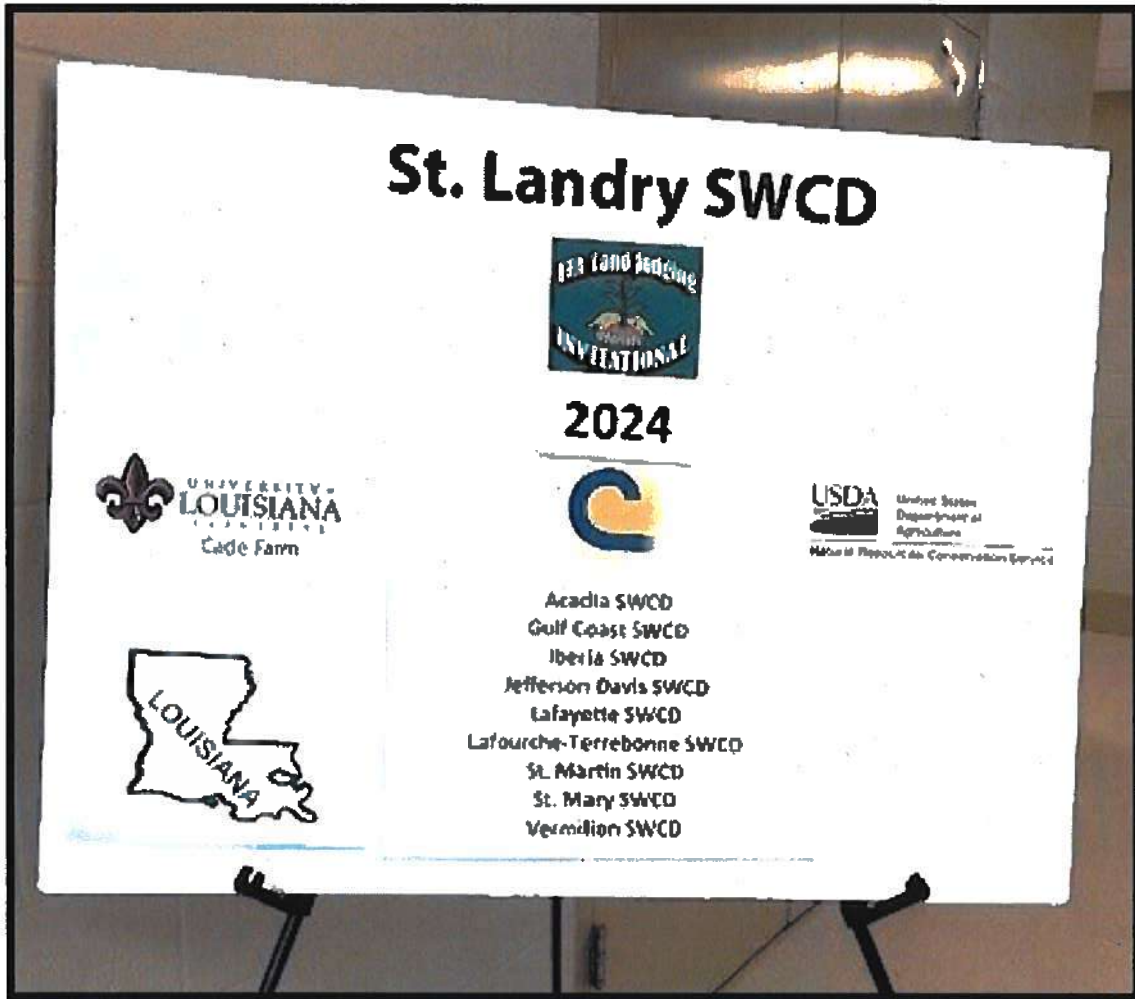
Karen Hale speaking at the Water Quality Task Force

Land Judging Career Development Event

ULL Cade

High school students throughout Acadiana participate in the Soil Judging

As a service to the Lafayette Parish Community, we participated in sponsoring the Land Judging Career Development Event, which is hosted by St. Landry SWCD and held at the ULL Cade Farm on Thursday, October 10, 2024. We had 22 schools representing 59 teams that participated in the event. There were 206 students in attendance plus advisors, parent volunteers, and staff.



The following is a breakdown of winners:

HIGH SCORERS

1. Gavin Simoneaux-Acadiana High
2. Owen Sturm-Acadiana High
3. Isaiah Roberson-Acadiana High
4. Noah Gauthier-Acadiana High
5. Carter Aucoin-Acadiana High

TOP TEAMS

1. Acadiana High - White
2. Acadiana High - Blue
3. Acadiana High - Gold
4. Cecilia High - Blue
5. Beau Chene High - Blue

List of schools that participated :

| |
|-----------------------------|
| Acadiana High School |
| Assumption High School |
| BEAU CHENE HIGH SCHOOL |
| BERWICH HIGH SCHOOL |
| Cecilia High School |
| CENTRAL LAFOURCHE |
| CHURCH POINT HIGH SCHOOL |
| CROWLEY HIGH SCHOOL |
| DELHI CHARTER SCHOOL |
| Elton HS |
| Erath High School (MAILING) |
| FRANKLIN HIGH SCHOOL |
| HATHAWAY HIGH SCHOOL |
| Iowa High School |
| LAFAYETTE HIGH |
| MIDLAND HIGH SCHOOL |
| PORT BARRE HIGH |
| RAYNE HIGH SCHOOL |
| South Lafourche |
| SOUTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL |
| Thibodeaux High School |
| Welsh High School |



Students getting instructions

Top Team Winners – Acadiana High

1st

2nd

3rd



Cecilia High – 4th

Beau Chenes High – 5th

Grading Soil in Pits



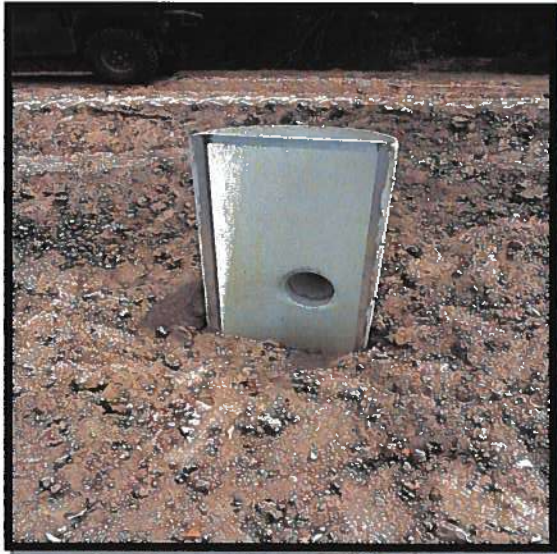
High Score



NRCS Program Assistance

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improving water and air quality, conserving ground and surface water, reducing soil erosion and sedimentation or improving or creating wildlife habitat. In FY23-24 Farm Bill programs implemented various conservation applications within 2,102; 1.5 acres of conservation cover; 150.4 acres of annual forage for grazing systems; and 20 acres of shallow water area for wildlife. In addition, NRCS approved 8 drainage surveys and 6 pond borings.. These contracts included cost-share assistance to help landowners improve irrigation water use efficiency, reduce soil erosion, establish and/or improve habitat for wildlife and native pollinators, and improve pasture conditions.

Water Control Structure (Before)



(After)



Dike



NRCS staff and SWCD staff attended the Teche-Vermilion Fresh Water District Annual Meeting Monday, October 21, 2024 in Krotz Springs. Pumping Station pictured below covers the Bayou Teche & Bayou Vermilion Watersheds.



EARTHSHARE GARDENS

Earthshare Gardens is a 501c3 community farm in Lafayette with year-round production since 2005. Strictly following sustainable growing practices, the farm serves as a model for successful organic agriculture in South Louisiana. Chris Adams now directs a statewide initiative in partnership with USDA to expand the number of organic growers in our state. Email cadams@louisiana-central.com for more information. Chris currently serves as Lafayette SWCD's Associate Supervisor.



A “success story” tour was given by Chris on 10/21/2024 which consisted of NRCS staff and Lafayette SWCD staff. Various pictures are posted on the following page. Pictures are compliments of NRCS Public Affairs.



*Special Thanks Goes to the Lafayette Parish
Consolidated Government for their continued
support!*

**Conservation Accomplishments for Lafayette Parish
Landowners/Operators
2023-2024**

Precision & Grading - 165 ac

Irrigation & Land Leveling – 135 ac

Crawfish Ponds (Design) – 3

Drainage Surveys – 13

Crawfish Pond Construction Check - 1

Irrigation Pipeline Designs – 3,890'

Ponds – 4

Ditch Surveys/Designs - 6

Erosion Assessments – 16

Drainage Assessments - 9

Pipe Drop Design Surveys – 27

Pond Borings - 6

Pipe Drop Installations - 14

The Lafayette SWCD also assisted local consultants locate aerial photographs for projects that are taking place in Lafayette Parish.

Bear sightings have been plentiful throughout the state. This mama bear and her 3 cubs were browsing around the deer feeder at the Delta Ridge Ranch near Marksville, Louisiana. Cubs captured in tree in photo to the right. Courtesy of Eddie Blanchard, Lafayette SWCD's Secretary-Treasurer.



Bears were also captured in the Pig Brig trap the Lafayette District rents out. Courtesy of Chad Courtois, Lafayette SWCD Supervisor.



Lafayette Parish
Soil & Water Conservation
District Board



“The USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender”.

Website: <https://lafayettesoilandwater.com>

Facebook: Lafayette Soil and Water Conservation District