



LOUISIANA MARKET BULLETIN

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SWCD
Spotlight

Capital
**SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Southeast Louisiana's Florida parishes form the toe of the Louisiana "Boot" and are geographically unique within the state, being our only upland ecotypes east of the Mississippi River. This region, consisting of East Baton Rouge and Livingston parishes, covering the expanse of terrain between the Mississippi and Natalbany Rivers, just south of the Feliciana hills, is a little bit unique. It is slightly undulating in the north, flat and swampy to the south, and receives significant runoff from some of the steepest terrain in the state.

This area was once part of the Feliciana Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), which was divided in March 1972 to form the Capital SWCD. The division of an SWCD is a landowner-driven process based on criteria such as the aforementioned uniqueness of land features and land uses in relation to its neighboring areas. This uniqueness translates to land productivity and conservation needs all their own.

The Capital SWCD encompasses a population of 598,612 and includes 44,000 acres of water, 103,010 acres of agricultural land, 150,000 acres of urban land, and 430,000 acres of forest land. Here in Capital SWCD, timber production remains strong in the northern parts of Livingston Parish, with most remaining woodlands being privately owned woodlots and frequently flooded

hardwood bottoms. Traditional agriculture in the northern upland areas includes beef cattle, horses, hay production, alligators, and some of the most significant fruit and vegetable produce acreage in south Louisiana!

The southern portion of Livingston Parish lies within the state's Coastal Zone, where the Capital SWCD annually sponsors a coastal revegetation planting project. Over the past 25 years, the project has allowed the Capital SWCD to establish over 9,000 linear feet of shoreline vegetation in places such as the mouths of Dutch Bayou, Blind River, and Amite River, as well as the western and northwestern shorelines of Lake Maurepas. This vegetation has greatly enhanced aquatic habitat and stabilized receding shorelines. This project is a collaborative effort with agencies like the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA/NRCS), Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA), LDAF, the local FFA Chapters, Springfield Volunteer Fire Department, and the Livingston Parish Sheriff's Department.

The Capital SWCD supervisors and staff are deeply involved in every aspect of these restoration projects, from landowner contacts, site access approvals, project site selection, logistics, volunteer organization, and demonstrating their unwavering commitment to conservation. The stability of the Livingston Parish Coastal Zone is essential not only to Livingston Parish but to the entire Capital SWCD and beyond.

In the last three years, the Capital SWCD has secured \$1,645,842.82 from state and federal sources to support the voluntary conservation and protection of natural resources, nearly all on private land. These funds have enabled significant accomplishments, including the restoration of over 30,000 feet of shoreline vegetation, the development and implementation of Conservation Plans covering 3,117.8 acres on a total of nearly 100 separate farms and properties, and the implementation of Conservation Practices across 1,090.2 acres

of forestland, 1,220 acres of pastureland, and 650 acres of cropland. All at the request of the landowners!

Although these voluntary conservation efforts take place on private land, everyone across the Capital SWCD benefits from improved water quality, less soil erosion, improved soil health, enhanced floodplain hydrology, and enhanced fish and wildlife habitat. The community-wide benefits of private lands conservation are diverse, are many and are long-lasting!

In addition to conservation and restoration, Capital SWCD plays an active role in community conservation education and engagement. The district participates in local events such as Ocean Commotion with the LSU Sea Grant and STEM days in East Baton Rouge Parish schools, fostering awareness about natural resources conservation. The district also collaborates with local Cattlemen's and Forestry Associations, reinforcing its ties with the agricultural community.

Recently, Capital SWCD revived The Water Festival, an interactive learning field trip that educated over 300 Livingston Parish fifth graders



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about water conservation. These students participated in fun activities with Project WET (Water Education Today), which aims to teach about water pollution, waste, and conservation. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF), Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Livingston Parish 4-H, LSU, Livingston Parish Master Gardeners, the Livingston Parish Fair Grounds Board, and the Livingston Parish Sheriff's Office all played a vital role in facilitating the event. Capital SWCD looks forward to holding this event annually and expanding it to include more schools within its district in future years.

The district also champions creativity and education through the Soil and Water Conservation District Auxiliary Conservation Poster Contest. This annual contest encourages students in Livingston and East Baton Rouge Parishes to express their understanding of conservation through art, and the conservation



focus for the event is usually based on the theme for the National Association of Conservation Districts' annual Stewardship Week. This event begins with local submissions from students of all ages attending schools in Livingston and East Baton Rouge Parishes.

Remarkably, one entry from the district this year achieved outstanding success, winning first place locally, then at the state level, and ultimately securing the top spot at the national level. All participating students receive awards, with special recognition for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners. These awards are presented by board supervisors at the students' schools, allowing them to be recognized in front of their peers. The Capital SWCD eagerly anticipates this contest each year, as it provides an opportunity to collaborate with local communities in promoting and educating about conservation concerns, efforts, benefits, and opportunities.

Further supporting education each year, the Capital SWCD proudly supports a Teacher Grant to enable educators across the Capital SWCD to incorporate standards-based conservation content into their classrooms. This initiative is open to all classroom teachers. The scope of these projects is broad and imaginative, covering everything from establishing high school gardens and setting up hydroponics systems to equipping preschoolers with raincoats and kites to help them explore and understand the elements of nature. The Capital SWCD board reviews these grant applications and, for the past two years, has promoted and supported all schools that applied. The Capital SWCD recognizes that unbiased, science-based conservation education benefits the entire community for generations to come.

Each year, the Capital SWCD hosts a "Locally-Led" stakeholder information gathering meeting to which all the Capital SWCD public is invited. The meeting results in compiling and prioritizing all local natural resource conservation needs and concerns. The 2025 Locally Led Meeting was held at a local farm, focusing on current natural resource conditions, programs, and activities. Demonstrations included hog traps and a no-till drill, with discussions on grants for promoting conservation Best Management Practices (BMPs) on the land. A volunteer prepared pastalaya, and a survey was conducted to identify key resource concerns in the district for the year.

The district faces several resource concerns, including sediment transport to surface water,



plant productivity and health, plant pest pressure, and inadequate water quality, quantity, and distribution for livestock. Additionally, there are concerns about terrestrial habitats for wildlife and invertebrates.

To aid concerned landowners in addressing these concerns, the Capital SWCD offers practical conservation solutions and opportunities by providing feral hog traps and game cameras for rent to local landowners. The district recently received a significant grant from the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Program to acquire and maintain two no-till drills and two pasture aerators/renovators that may be rented to landowners as well. This grant will also fund a mobile conservation educational classroom and a rainfall simulator to further promote conservation efforts, outreach, and education in the area.

As with all other SWCDs, the Capital SWCD is governed by five elected and appointed board members: these are Steve Horvath of Springfield, Anthony Butler of Zachary, Burnell Muse of Baton Rouge, David Hoover of Tickfaw, and Denise Richard of Maurepas. The Capital SWCD board of supervisors and their dedicated staff and partners work hard to enact these comprehensive conservation efforts, and continue to be a beacon of environmental stewardship and community engagement in East Baton Rouge and Livingston Parishes, fostering a legacy of conservation and community involvement for future generations.

CAPITAL SWCD

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To learn more about SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS in Louisiana, or to find your local SWCD office, visit www.ldaf.la.gov.