

SWCD Spotlight

Dugdemona SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Dugdemona Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) was created in 1939 at the request of resident landowners who recognized the need to conserve soil and water resources. Dugdemona SWCD encompasses Winn, Jackson, and a portion of Caldwell Parish that lies west of the Ouachita River.

The Dugdemona SWCD provides conservation assistance to landowners through their partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Through this partnership, both technical and financial assistance are provided to SWCD cooperators for conservation measures on their land, including, silvopasture, forest stand improvement, fire breaks, prescribed burning, various pasture improvement practices, and more.

Each year, through a locally led process, stakeholders such as landowners, homeowners, and concerned citizens discuss local resource concerns within the district and provide the results to their Local Work Group (LWG). The LWG is an advisory board which consists of community leaders and conservation partners. During this LWG meeting, the resource concerns discussed and analyzed at the locally-led meeting are prioritized by the LWG for final state-level prioritization by the State Technical Advisory Committee. These prioritized natural resource concerns are used to structure conservation programs to help insure effective program funding and implementation.

Recently the top resource concern for the Dugdemona SWCD cooperators has been damage caused by feral swine on private lands. After successive years of providing this information to the NRCS, 10 parishes in Louisiana were invited to participate in Louisiana's Feral Swine Pilot Program. Created with funds from the 2018 Farm Bill, this pilot program obligated \$75 million to 10 states to aid in removal and eradication of feral swine and restoration of damaged working lands. Winn Parish was among the 10 invited parishes, and with these funds, the Dugdemona SWCD purchased 15 hog traps, surveillance equipment and supplies, as well as the salary for a full-time trapper-technician.

Upon receiving funds through the Pilot Program, both Jackson and Caldwell parishes along with most other statewide SWCDs received funds from Rep. Jack McFarland's amendment to the 2022 Supplemental Appropriations bill. These funds not only provided SWCDs with the means to purchase feral swine trapping equipment, but also allowed the Dugdemona SWCD to purchase an additional four traps.

A "Good Neighbor Authority" (GNA) agreement has recently been signed between the Dugdemona SWCD and the USDA Forest Service's Kisatchie National Forest for forest, rangeland and watershed restoration within the Dugdemona SWCD. This agreement with the Forest Service, along with two others in adjacent Louisiana SWCDs, is among the first in the nation.

Through funds generated from their annual tree sale, the Dugdemona SWCD provides conservation education and outreach to local landowners, educators, and students at school events, fairs and local community colleges, as well as providing technical assistance at 4-H and FFA judging events. The conservation programs and activities made available through the Dugdemona SWCD successfully highlight the great public benefit of private lands conservation.



Prescribed burns, such as this one on a Dugdemona SWCD cooperator's property, are used to improve wildlife habitat and reduce wildfire risk.



At left, Mrs. Betty Lou Young on a Long Leaf pine tract that NRCS and the Dugdemona SWCD assisted in establishing on her property.



Below, NRCS State Forester Dr. Rick Williams reviews a SilvoPasture Tract with landowner Steve Bates & District Conservationist Glenn Austin. SilvoPasture Establishment has become a popular practice within the Dugdemona SWCD.



At far left, a landowner's property and winter hay stock were being severely affected by feral swine. Hog trapper Hunter Tolar helped by setting out feral swine traps purchased through the Feral Swine Pilot Program.



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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.