



For Immediate Release

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### **2008 WATER CONSERVATION SIGN-UP ANNOUNCED**

WASHINGTON, DC—Georgia's Congressional Delegation has announced that \$2.58 million has been made available to help South Georgia farmers conserve agricultural water supplies used for irrigation. The Congressional funding, made possible by the 2008 agricultural appropriations bill, will enable farmers to build irrigation water reservoirs or make necessary improvements to existing reservoirs and provide technical assistance to the landowners. The funding also provides for improving the application efficiency of irrigation systems in the region.

Applications for the program will be accepted between May 1 and May 30 of this year. Eligible counties include and are south of a line extending from Chattahoochee, Crawford, Wilkinson, Washington, and Burke counties. The Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission will administer the program, and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service will provide technical assistance. The program provides financial assistance for reservoir development to landowners striving to conserve water on their operations. The reservoirs serve as water catchments that retain rainwater for irrigation purposes. Landowners that need supplemental irrigation for existing irrigated land are encouraged to apply.

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Providing such surface water solutions that utilize rainwater supplies decreases the demand for drilling wells into the aquifer. In addition, maximizing application efficiency of irrigation systems will enable farmers to more effectively irrigate crops.

“We are extremely grateful for the Congressmen and Senators’ efforts on behalf of Georgia farmers,” said Garland Thompson, Chairman of the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission. “This program will better equip Georgia’s producers of food and fiber by conserving irrigation water supplies. This funding is especially timely due to the recent drought.”

The funds for reservoirs are available as a cost-share agreement between the Conservation Commission and landowners. Landowners will provide 25 percent of the cost of the project, while the Conservation Commission will fund the remaining 75 percent, not to exceed \$50,000, of the estimated cost as determined by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Since 2001, 180 reservoirs have been renovated/constructed and 405 irrigation systems have been upgraded through this initiative.

Applications and program information are available at the local Soil and Water Conservation Commission 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 the Soil and Water Conservation Commission at 706-542-3065 or visit [www.gaswcc.org](http://www.gaswcc.org) for more information. Applications received after May 30, 2008 will not be considered for the program.

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