

2009 Conservation Farm of the Year
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WHERE'S THE BEEF? Chances are that each of us is affected by Cattle Producers just about everyday of our lives. For example, each time you enjoy a juicy T-bone steak or hamburger, or put on your favorite leather boots, cattle production was involved. Even medicines that contain trypsin, which help promote healing for skin graft patients, are derived from bovine products. The fact is that cattle have a significant impact on our lives, especially in Suwannee County where they outnumber people.

The Suwannee County Conservation District (SCCD) is proud of our Farmers and Ranchers who voluntarily implement Best Management Practices (BMP). These producers use their valuable time to find new and effective ways to conserve the resources that our community relies on now and in the future. Environmental Conservation has become a way of life for these producers who implement BMPs in an effort to protect and conserve the precious resources critical to their livelihoods. So the next time you see one of these producers, thank him or her for protecting Suwannee County's natural resources.

SCCD would like to honor the Ryan and Reed Moore Farm with the *2009 Conservation Farm of the Year Award* for their use of BMPs. Moore Farm is a leader in Conservation Farming and Ranching. The Moores have seen first-hand the benefits that can come from implementing BMPs.

In the mid-1920s Mr. R.F. Moore purchased 40 acres north of the once booming phosphate mining town of Luraville. Through the Great Depression, Mr. Moore managed to maintain and grow his farm by producing tobacco, peanuts, corn, and raising cattle and hogs. Later, Mr. Moore's sons were able to help out and Revis took control of family farm operations. Mr. Revis Moore, with the help of his wife Frances, tended the land for many years. Their two sons, Reed and Ryan, grew up working the farm too. Reed and Ryan Moore now manage the farm located on south State Road 51 just north of Luraville.

Moore Farm is mainly comprised of an intensive beef cattle operation accompanied by grazing forages, hay, peanut, and timber production. Their operation incorporates the most cutting-edge conservation techniques available. When asked about the key to their success, Ryan and Reed answered simultaneously, "Taking care of the land and resources crucial to our living." Land stewardship is a priority for the Moore brothers; a family philosophy passed down through the generations. The Moores realize the importance of sustainability and work to ensure that their soil and water resources remain healthy. They believe in whole-farm conservation, focusing on the big picture when it comes to stewardship.

In order to improve the natural resources on their land, the Moores have partnered with local community and government organizations, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Suwannee County Conservation District. The Moores realized long ago that their farming activities affected the immediate area, as well as surrounding water-bodies and river systems, including the Suwannee River. To combat any potentially adverse effects, the Moore brothers implemented rotational crop planting sequences, nutrient, pest, irrigation management, and forage and soil sampling, all enhancing their grass and crop production.

The core of their farm conservation is Nutrient Management. This conservation tool is important to every square inch of farmland. With the help of SCCD and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), the Moore brothers have designed a soil sampling program that allows micro-management of soil nutrients for optimal plant and animal health. Their irrigation management works jointly with their nutrient management program. The Moores have retrofitted their irrigation systems with updated pressure regulators, x-wob sprinklers, and drops to get the water application near the soil and in larger droplets. This strategy prevents water from being applied off target due to wind. The updates have made their existing irrigation pivots apply water more efficiently and uniformly to crops, saving both energy and water. In addition, Ryan and Reed irrigate their crops based on plant stage need, which prevents over irrigation and washing nutrients past the plants' root system.

The Moores' beef cattle operation uses many techniques that are important to maintaining and improving their total environmental surroundings. One conservation tool they use is rotational grazing. Rotational grazing allows the Moores to utilize the best quality grass and prevents over-grazing, which can lead to degradation of the grass crop. If the grass crop is over-grazed, then the plant's ability to absorb and use nutrients from the soil profile is greatly reduced due to lack of transpiration, respiration, and photosynthesis. This may also result in soil destabilization, making it prone to wind and water erosion. Ryan and Reed use a minimum tillage program with winter and summer annual plantings. Minimum tillage is a practice that helps reduce wind erosion of the soil; high winds in springtime can cause soil to be blown and lost due to misplacement. The loss of topsoil means a loss of nutrients and water holding capacity.

The Moores use a 4-6 year rotation for their peanut production areas with Bahiagrass. After peanuts are harvested, they plant a fall cover crop to use any excess nutrients and to protect the soil from erosion. When the cover crop has run its course, Ryan and Reed plant Bahiagrass for grazing and seed production.

Along with production-based conservation, the brothers are avid hunters and outdoorsmen. They maintain a 15-acre natural preserve on their farm, adjacent to one of their slash pine fields. By planting tracts of pine for timber production, the Moores have created valuable wildlife habitats. They even plant annual and perennial food plots for wildlife that frequent their farm.

BMP implementation on production areas has proven to be successful both environmentally and economically for Ryan and Reed Moore Farms. It is our honor to present them with the Suwannee County Conservation District *2009 Conservation Farm of the Year Award*. Congratulations!