



## **USDA-CSREES 2006 National Water Quality Conference**

### **Finding Out What Happened: 50 Years of Applied Conservation Practices on a Mississippi Watershed**

Land management within a watershed has impacts far beyond its boundaries. Increasing private and public interest in whether conservation investment has been effective led to the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP). As part of the national program, CEAP efforts in north Mississippi will document implementation of practices through various government programs over the past five decades within one watershed.

The Yalobusha River is one of the major contributors to Grenada Lake in North Central Mississippi. The Upper Yalobusha River Watershed (YRW), comprising 168,750 ha, is defined from a point in Grenada Lake near the confluence of the Yalobusha in the lake. Land use within the YRW is 18% cropland, 19% pasture or grassed areas, 53% forested areas, 6% wetland that is largely forest, and 4% surface water or urban areas.

Resource issues within the YRW include sedimentation, sheet and rill erosion, stream bank instability, and nutrient enrichment. These have been addressed through local implementation of national programs such as the Soil Bank Program of the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1956, the Conservation Reserve Program of the Food and Agricultural Act of 1977, the National Agriculture Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act, the Food Security Act of 1985, the Food Agricultural Conservation and Trade Act of 1990, and the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002. Targeted north Mississippi projects for watershed conservation in the YRW include Watershed Flood Prevention by the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Demonstration Erosion Control by the Agricultural Research Service, and Forestry Restoration by the USDA Forestry Service.

Within this component of the overall CEAP effort, we are documenting the monetary investment, location, and condition of installed conservation practices within the Little Topashaw Creek watershed within the YRW. The next phases will assess the physical effectiveness of the installed practices, and explore the socio-economic factors that inform individual conservation decisions.

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