



USDA-CSREES 2007 National Water Quality Conference

Conasauga River Alliance

The Conasauga River is an ecological Hot Spot for the Eastern United States. The river is the home of more than 90 species of fish, more than all of the species of fish in Europe and is also the home of 15 rare and endangered species of fish and mollusks. This 90 mile stretch of river reaches from its start in the Appalachian Mountains and flows south to the Coosawatee River. Ten years ago a group of individuals from the Extension Service, Limestone Valley RC & D, and The US Forest Service and USDA offices met to find a way to “Maintain a clean and beautiful Conasauga River – forever.” To accomplish this group of volunteers were recruited, including, farmers, foresters, private land owners and concerned citizens to develop a plan to protect and enhance the Conasauga River Basin. After many meetings, The Conasauga River Alliance was formed with the mission to, “To promote and coordinate efforts between private citizens and government agencies to maintain and improve the quality of the Conasauga River watershed while respecting the landowner rights.” The Conasauga River Alliance is administered by the Nature Conservancy with two full time employees working on Conasauga River Projects. With the help of agencies including the Murray County Extension Service, many projects have been carried out during the past ten years. More than 30 miles of River have had riparian strips planted along the river. More than \$2,225,000.00 in Federal dollars has been used to help build stack houses for Poultry Operations, restore stream banks using rip rap, encourage no-till farming in the basin and fencing and alternative watering to keep livestock out of the river. Two major Field Days have been hosted to teach the general public and teachers about work being done in the Conasauga Basin. In 2000 more than 300 participants learned about work being done at the Conasauga Field Days. In 2001 more than 70 teachers from Tennessee and Georgia participated in the Conasauga Field Days for Teachers. During both of these Field Days the Murray County Extension Office has taught classes for the general public and for the teachers. This past year I nominated the Petty Dairy for the Governor’s Farm Conservation Award and they were selected as the first state winner for their work on the Conasauga River. For the past seven years young people in the Murray County 4-H Program have been very involved in programs along the Conasauga River. The High School 4-H Group working on Conasauga River Projects is called The Green Team. Team members are part of the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream Project and have worked on an eight mile stretch of the river from the Old Gregory Mill to the Beaverdale Grocery. Four clean-ups per year are carried out by the 4-H’ers collecting hundreds of bags from their stretch of the river. Team members have also been involved in stream bank restoration projects and planting of wildlife plots along the river. The two years o the Field

Days, Green Team members helped with work needed before and after the Days and helped teach during the Teacher Field Days.

Author: Louis Dykes

University Affiliation: University of Georgia

Co-Author(s): N/A