

Promoting Adoption Of Best Management Practices Through the Master Farmer Program



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Nonpoint Reduction Policies

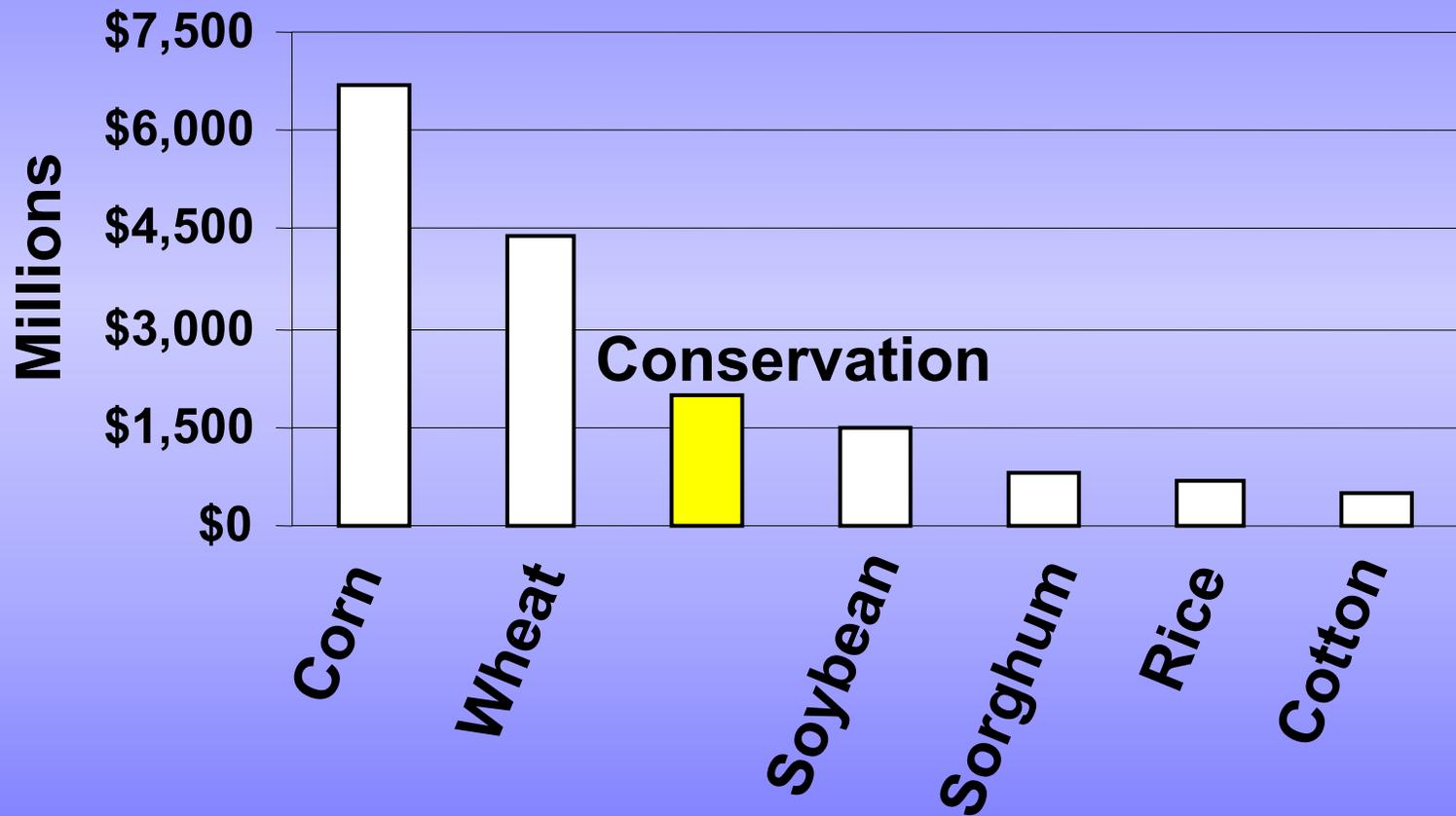
- **Voluntary education and technical assistance programs**
- **Subsidy programs to promote conservation program adoption**
- **Regulation**
- **Compliance Mechanisms**

» **Source: D. Hite, et al.**

Why Was the Program Developed?

- 1. Increased threat of environmental regulations (TMDLs)**
- 2. Increased funding for local level conservation in 2002 Farm Bill**
- 3. Producer demand for a comprehensive program to address environmental concerns**

Conservation Has Become A Major “Program Crop”



Source: Environmental Working Group (2001)

Conservation in the 2002 Farm Bill



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- **More than \$17.1 billion in the Conservation Title of the 2002 Farm Bill**
 - **Emphasis on working lands programs**
 - **New multi-functional programs**
 - **Conservation will be key for continued public support of farm payments**

Master Farmer Program

- **Example of a nonpoint source reduction strategy**
- **Educates producers on environmental regulations and solutions to better environmental quality**
- **Voluntary**

“Farming is big business. And with any good business, you have to have a continuing education program,” said Ernest Girouard, a rice farmer in Vermilion Parish and one of the first to sign up. “This program will help bring us up to speed.”

Master Farmer Program Partnerships

- Louisiana Farm Bureau (sponsor)
- USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry
- Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts
- Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality
- Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
- Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program
- National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
- Louisiana Rice Grower's Association
- Louisiana Soybean Association
- Louisiana Cotton Grower's Association
- Louisiana Cattleman's Association
- American Sugar Cane League
- Louisiana Forage and Grassland Council
- Potash & Phosphate Institute

Environmental Stewardship

- **Phase 1: 8 hours of instruction on environmental issues, NPS and BMPs**
- **Phase 2: In-the-field viewing of implemented BMPs on Model Farms**
- **Phase 3: Development of a farm-specific Conservation Plan and the implementation of identified BMPs**

Phase 1:
Environmental Education

Phase 1:

Environmental Education

- **Conducted at the parish level**
- **Specific topics addressed include:**
 - **The Clean Water Act (CWA) of 1972**
 - **National & Louisiana water quality standards**
 - **Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)**
 - **Impacts of NPS Pollution on the Coastal Zone**
 - **Best Management Practices (BMPs)**
 - **Role of Conservation Districts in conservation planning and implementation**
 - **The NRCS Planning Process**
 - **Conservation Programs**

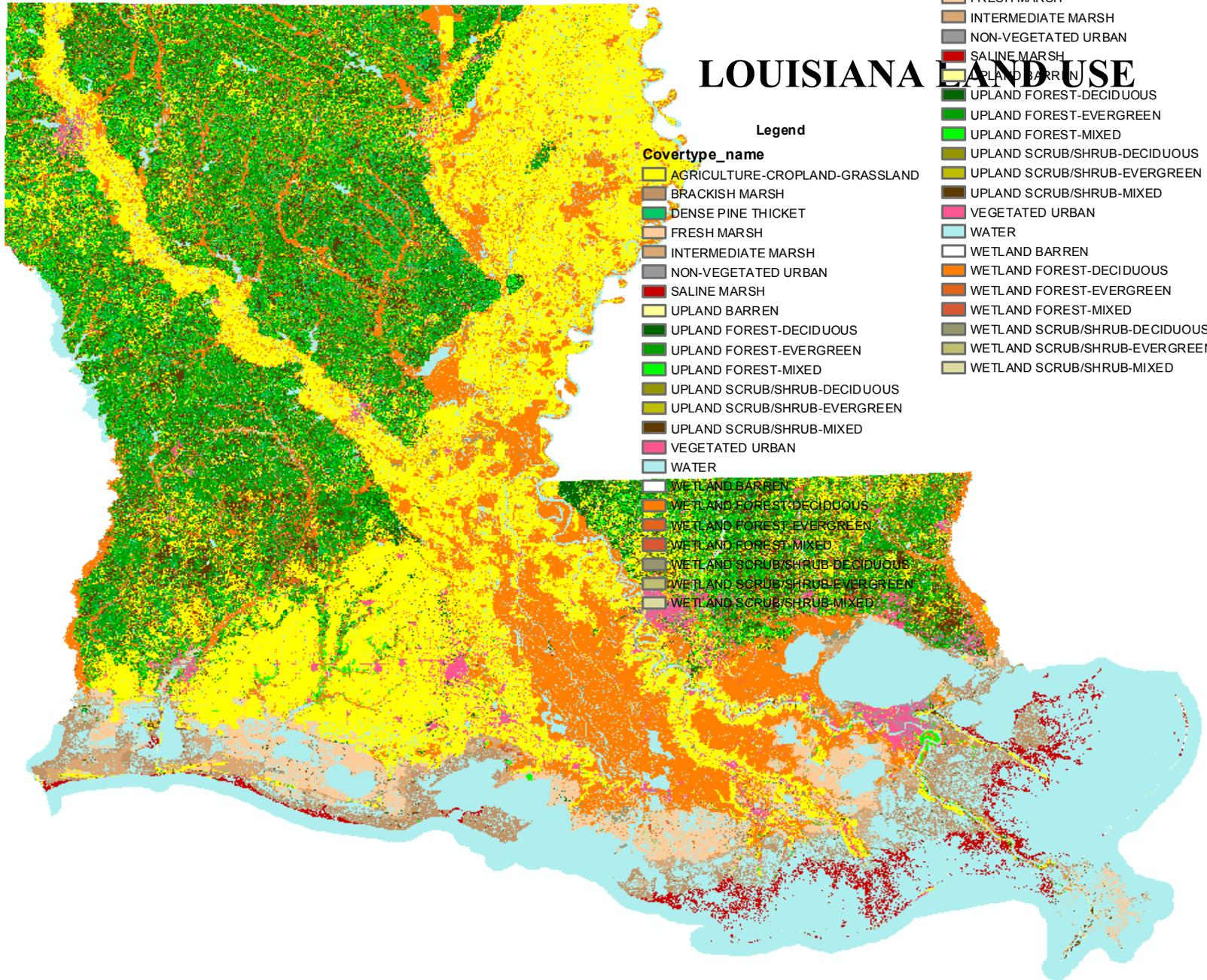
LOUISIANA LAND USE

Legend

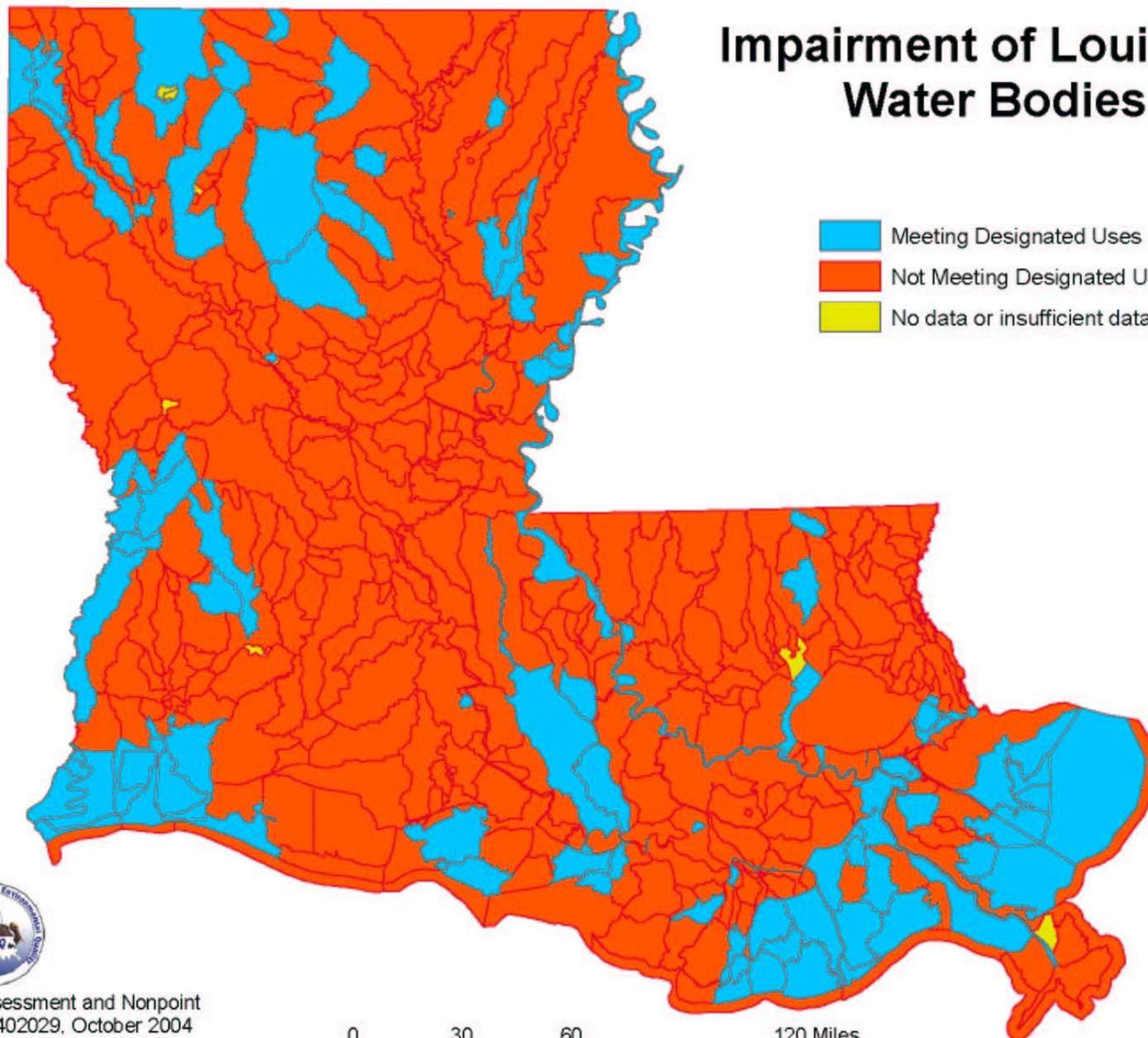
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Impairment of Louisiana Water Bodies



Standards, Assessment and Nonpoint
Map No. 200402029, October 2004
Projection: UTM Zone 15, NAD83

0 30 60 120 Miles



Mandated “Manmade” Nonpoint Reductions

- **Bayou Nezpique – 85%-90%**
- **Bayou Des Cannes – 50%-75%**
- **Bayou Plaquemines Brule - 50%**
- **Lacassine Bayou - 100%**
- **Bayou Courtableau - 30%**
- **Vermilion - 50%**
- **Mermentau River - 30% (with other reductions in place)**

BMP Publications

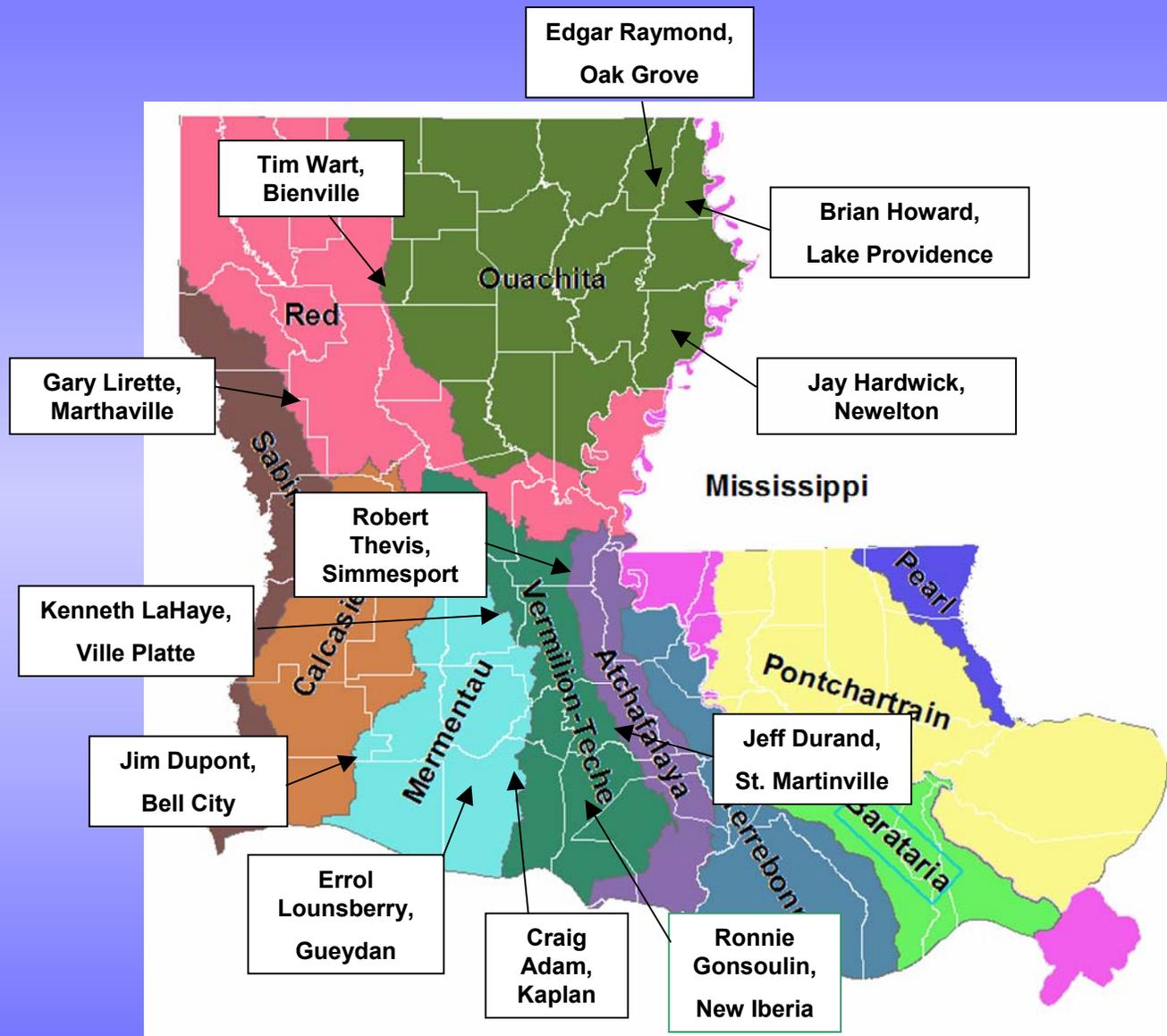
➤ www.agctr.lsu.edu/masterfarmer



Phase 2: Model Farms

- **Representative farms for each watershed**
- **BMP demonstrations**
- **Water quality monitoring**
- **Education and outreach**

Master Farmer Model Farms



Model Farms

Name	Parish	Watershed	Commodities	BMP to Monitor
Kenneth LaHaye	Evangeline	Mermentau	Rice/Crawfish/Cattle	Conservation Tillage/Nutrient Mgmt.
Errol Lounsberry	Vermilion	Mermentau	Rice/Crawfish	Irrigation Water Management
Brian Howard	E. Carroll	Ouachita	Cotton, Corn, Soybeans	Conservation Tillage/Residue Mgmt.
Tim Wart	Bienville	Ouachita	Beef Cattle/Poultry	Nutrient Management
Jay Hardwick	Tensas	Ouachita	Wheat, Soybeans, Corn, Grain Sorghum, Cotton	Conservation Tillage/Residue Management
Gary Lirette	Natchitoches	Red River	Beef Cattle/Poultry	Nutrient Management/Filter Strip
Ronald Gonsoulin	Iberia	Vermilion/Teche	Sugarcane	Conservation Tillage
Jeff Durand	St. Martin	Vermilion/Teche	Rice/Crawfish	Conservation Crop Rotation/Residue Management “seasonal”
Robert Thevis	Avoyelles	Vermilion/Teche/Atchafalaya	Soybeans, Wheat, Corn, Grain Sorghum	Conservation Tillage/Residue Management

Phase 3:

Conservation Plans

- **Development and implementation of farm-specific conservation plans**
- **Plans will be developed by the NRCS working with the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts**

Enrollment Statewide

- **2,300 producers**
- **More than 2 million acres**

Enrollment by Commodity

- **Cattle: 792 producers; 91,347 head**
- **Corn: 192 producers; 133,217 acres**
- **Cotton: 156 produces; 129,065 acres**
- **Crawfish: 100 produces; 16,591 acres**
- **Milo: 108 producers; 42,245 acres**
- **Poultry: 241 producers; 83,110,550 head**
- **Soybeans: 354 producers; 240,963 acres**
- **Sugarcane: 194 producers; 234,860 acres**
- **Wheat: 137 producers; 56,446 acres**
- **Rice: 307 producers; 205,855 acres**

Multi-State Master Farmer Program

- Partnering to develop Louisiana Master Farmer Program, Mississippi Master Farmer Program, Arkansas Master Farmer Program and other Southern states
- Benefits:
 - Strength in numbers
 - Better leverage for funding as multi-state initiative under one programming name
 - Already recognized by EPA, USDA, and CSREES as a means of addressing agricultural nonpoint source pollution
 - Recognized by producers in several states
 - Suggested by former Chief of NRCS as priority for CSP payments

Next Steps

- Precision agriculture training for Master Farmer Participants for nutrient management and recordkeeping requirements.
- Seek opportunities for Master Farmer participants to become involved in Carbon Sequestration efforts
- Continuing education
- Development of a manual for each of the major watersheds in Louisiana
- Development of Homeowner BMP Manual
- Additional incentives for producers to participate

Why should a producer participate in the program?

- **Education to make better decisions on what practices to implement based on sound-science, economics and environmental benefits**
- **Voluntary program**
- **Conservation program funding (\$17.1 billion) is an additional source of income considering depressed commodity prices**
- **Other innovative state developed incentives to certified Master Farmers (tax breaks, etc.)**
- **Environmental Stewardship recognition from both fellow farmers and the public**

Louisiana Presumption of Compliance Proposed Legislation

- The purpose of this legislation is to certify farmers and ranchers, who have enrolled in and complete the requirements of the program, as master farmers.
- Requirements include:
 - Attend 8 hour environmental stewardship lecture
 - Attend model farm field day or virtual model farm workshop
 - Develop a farm-specific conservation plan
- The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry will be the certifying agency for the program.

Louisiana Presumption of Compliance Proposed Legislation

- The NRCS and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts will provide verification to LDEQ that the farmer or rancher has implemented the specific comprehensive conservation plan, recommended for that farming operation.
- Upon receiving official verification from NRCS and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts, LDAF shall issue a document of certification to the applicant, which states that the applicant's agricultural operation is in presumed compliance with State water quality standards.
- To maintain certification, the farmer or rancher agrees to actively maintain his specific comprehensive conservation plan and maintain Master Farmer certification continuing education requirements.

A Master Farmer Will:

- **Demonstrate knowledge of and dedication to environmental stewardship.**
- **Demonstrate mastery levels of conservation-based production.**
- **Demonstrate resource management through the implementation of a comprehensive conservation plan.**
- **Promote the success of local-level conservation to the agricultural community and public and private interests.**

Outstanding Master Farmer Award

- **Reward exemplary commitment to the program**
- **Annually recognize six Master Farmers in Louisiana who have realized the environmental and economic benefits of implementing conservation, promotes innovative approaches to local-level conservation and demonstrates excellence in the Louisiana Master Farmer Program**
- **6 winners will receive a \$1,000 award donated by the Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts**
- **Recognized at the Annual Farm Bureau Convention**

For more information visit:

www.lsuagcenter.com