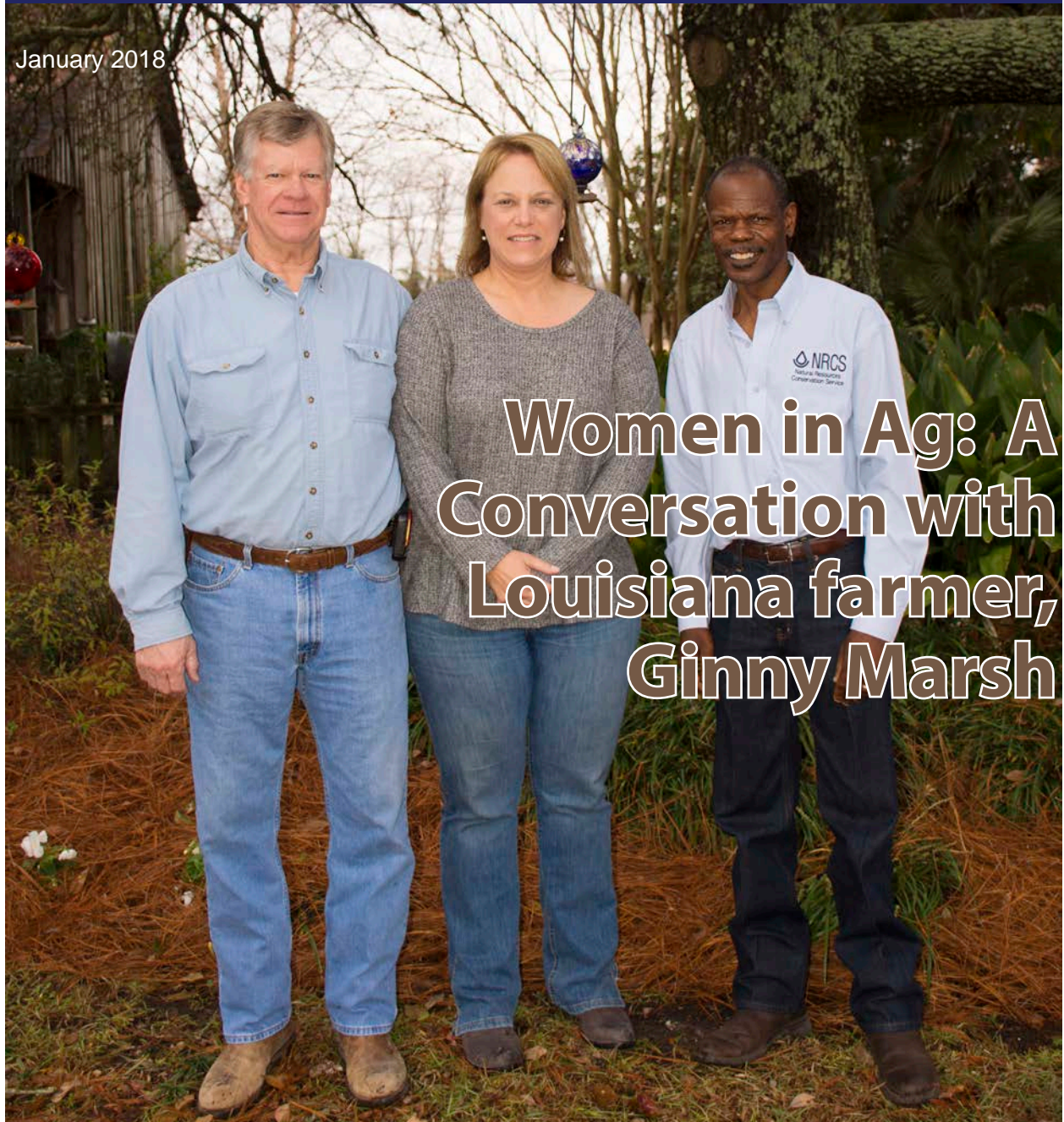




United States Department of Agriculture

Louisiana Conservation Update

January 2018



Women in Ag: A Conversation with Louisiana farmer, Ginny Marsh

Projects • Successes • Partnerships



United States Department of Agriculture

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On the Cover



The Louisiana Women in Ag Conference is coming up soon. Learn about the conference and valuable insight from Louisiana farmer, Ginny Marsh on pages 4 and 5.

Upcoming Events

January 23, 2018 Soil Health & Cover Crop Conference

The LSU AgCenter is hosting a Soil Health & Cover Crop Conference on Tuesday, January 23, 2018, from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm at the Hampton Inn-West Monroe located at 601 Mane Street. This event is free, but pre-registration is required. Visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/louisiana-soil-health-cover-crop-conference-west-monroe-tickets-40791418230>.

crop-conference-west-monroe-tickets-40791418230.

For more information, contact James Hendrix at 318-235-7198 or Donna Morgan at 318-613-9278.

January 24, 2018 Soil Health & Cover Crop Conference

The LSU AgCenter is hosting a Soil Health & Cover Crop

Conference on Wednesday, January 24, 2018 from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm at the State Emergency Shelter (South of LSUA) on Highway 71S. This event is free, but pre-registration is required. Visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/louisiana-soil-health-cover-crop-conference-alexandria-tickets-40791660956>

For more information, contact James Hendrix at 318-235-7198 or Donna Morgan at 318-613-9278.



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Notes from the State Conservationist

Happy New Year to all of our customers, partners and conservation friends. This time of year is full of promise, not to mention, setting new goals. At NRCS we are no different, our first priority is to provide excellent technical assistance and timely customer service to agriculture producers across the state. Although, that is not a new goal for us, it is one that we keep at the very top of the list.

This month's Conservation Update is all about the upcoming Louisiana Women in Agriculture (LWAG) conference. As many of you know, last year we had a phenomenal conference with well over 100 attendees from across the state. This year is going to be even bigger and better!

New this year are two tours on Thursday afternoon. Participants can choose to take a guided nature hike in Kisatchie National Forest or tour Inglewood Farms a completely organic farming operation located just south of Alexandria. This year also boasts two key-note speakers, both successful businesswomen, entrepreneurs and both highly regarded in their agricultural fields.

A conference of this size and magnitude would not be able to happen without the hard-work and dedication of a planning committee. The LWAG committee is made up of a small group of women and men who are dedicated to the success of the conference.

We are also truly thankful for the generous sponsorships from the agricultural community that will make this year's conference an even greater success.

Also this month we have a conversation with Ginny Marsh, in Tallulah, Louisiana. Ginny and her husband Billy Marsh have about 1,600 acres of land in East Carroll and Madison Parishes where they grow soybeans and are for the first time trying out cover crops through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

I hope to see you on Thursday, February 22nd and Friday February 23rd at the Holiday Inn in downtown Alexandria for the 8th annual Louisiana Women in Agriculture conference.

Kevin D. Norton
State Conservationist

February 6, 2018 Northeast Louisiana Rice Forum

The LSU AgCenter will be hosting the Northeast Louisiana Rice Forum at the Rayville Civic Center on Tuesday, February 6, 2018, from 9:00 am - Noon. Please contact Keith Collins at 318-728-7014 for more information.

February 8, 2018 Northeast Louisiana Crops Forum

The LSU AgCenter will be hosting the Northeast Louisiana Crops Forum on Thursday, February 8, 2018, from 9:00 am - Noon at the Delhi Civic Center.

Please contact Keith Collins at 318-728-3216 for more information.

February 22 & 23, 2018 Louisiana Women in Ag Conference

See page 7 for more information.

February 24, 2018 Profitable Farm Systems with Daniel Salatin

The Louisiana GLCI is hosting the "Profitable Farm Systems with Daniel Salatin" Workshop on Saturday, February 24, 2018, from 8:00 am -

4:00 pm at 57355 Sam Mizell Road in Bogalusa, Louisiana. Registration is \$90/person. Space is limited. Visit www.louisianaglci.org to register. Pre-registration is required.

March 3, 2018 Acadiana Beef Cattle Producers Field Day

The Louisiana Cattleman's Association is hosting the Acadiana Beef Cattle Producers Field Day at the Iberia Research Station in Jeanerette, Louisiana.

Women in Ag: A Conversation with

About Ginny:

Virginia “Ginny” Marsh and her husband Billy formed GB Farm Partnership, one year ago. Ginny and Billy farm 1,600 hundred acres, located in East Carroll and Madison Parishes. Around 300 acres surround their home in Tallulah.

Ginny didn’t grow up on a farm, in fact, when she and Billy married 20 years ago, she was introduced to a farming life and has learned all aspects of farming since then.

Ginny on Farming:

“Last year was all soybeans.” Depending on pricing this year Ginny is looking into rotating between soybeans and corn.

“I focus a lot of my time on marketing, constantly looking at prices, searching the market. It is a hard job, you have to be diligent, and stay on top of what is happening with the market.”

“Agriculture is who we are, we live and breathe agriculture. Farming is not easy, it is 365 days a year, and you never stop working. The greatest take-away is being able to work alongside my husband and having our children involved in the day-to-day operation of the farm.”

Ginny on NRCS

“NRCS has helped us be good stewards of the land, it has provided a guide for us, and our conservation plan has proven to be invaluable for us.”

Anthony Bridegwater, NRCS District Conservationist in the Tallulah Field office on the Marshes

“They are conservation minded, and they consider their resources. The Marshes use the best practices

available, they are always exploring our programs to improve their farming operation.”

By utilizing the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), the Marshes have enhanced their land. This year they planted wheat as a cover crop and it has been successful.

Ginny on agriculture and women:

“I believe we are caretakers of the land for the next generation.”

What advice would you give to other women considering agriculture? “Women can be a part of farming just like men, women can do it! Our mindset has to change, farming is hard work but, it is also fun and more than anything, it is a way of life.”

“I believe women need to be on the fore-front. Working in agriculture has allowed me to work alongside my husband and to share special moments with him and our children as we farm.”

“We are connected to our land, our family farming together is not a job it’s a way of life and I love it.”



th Louisiana farmer, Ginny Marsh

Louisiana Women in Ag 2018 Conference

As you drive along the highways and byways in Louisiana, what do you see? Cows grazing in pastures, row after row of crops reaching toward the sky, rice fields brimming with crawfish traps. Agriculture is everywhere.

Louisianans know, probably better than most folks, just how important agriculture is to our state. It is woven into the fabric that binds us together with our culture, history and families.

Agriculture plays an integral role in our lives and provides an economic boom to the state. According to the last agricultural census, in 2012, the total value of agricultural products sold in Louisiana was valued at \$3,809,401. Did you know that of the 26,000 farms in Louisiana 3,500 of them are primarily operated by women? Meaning approximately 20% are run by women.

Women are making a difference in the world of agriculture. That is why NRCS along with the Rapides Soil and Water Conservation District have joined forces to offer the 2018 Louisiana Women in Agriculture Conference. This year's conference will be held on Thursday and Friday, February 22 and 23, at the Holiday Inn in downtown Alexandria.

If you are a farmer, interested in becoming a farmer or are involved in the agricultural industry, then the Louisiana Women in Agriculture conference is the event for you! Women from across the state are invited to come get inspired, leave with contacts and some serious know-how about growing your farming business, news about the agriculture industry and how to take the next step toward making your farming dream become a reality.

This year's conference will not disappoint. Join in the fun on Thursday for tours and a networking event, then take in the conference on Friday. A full-day of inspirational, nationally-recognized speakers,

informative break-out sessions and plenty of time to network!

Thursday, February 22 begins at 1 p.m. with a choice of tour. The first option is a guided hike in Louisiana's only national forest, Kisatchie. Learn about native plants, wildlife and enjoy the beautiful surroundings. Or you can take a tour of Inglewood Farm, located just south of Alexandria, an organic farm that raises a variety of seasonal produce, eggs, pecans, grass-fed beef, and heritage pork. They truly are a unique and incredibly special part of our community.

Friday is filled with inspirational speakers and informational booths. There are two amazing key note speakers this year. Kimberly Ratcliff of Caney Creek Ranch in Texas and Sarah Calhoun, owner and founder of Red Ants Pants in Montana.

In 2007, Kimberly joined her family ranch, leaving a successful career with Bloomberg in New York City. She completed the Texas Christian University "Ranch Management Program", and then successfully combined her financial and ranch training to increase productivity, not only at her family operation, but also with other producers in the area, including 100 acres of her own.

Sarah Calhoun, owner and founder of Red Ants Pants, is the second key note speaker. She was raised on a farm in rural Connecticut and joins us from White Sulphur Springs, Montana. Sarah was tired of wearing men's work pants, so she created a line of women's work pants that would fit and flatter women, while functioning. She started the Red Ants Pants Foundation, supporting women's leadership, working family farms, ranches and rural communities.

If you are a farmer, or interested in farming, come join us! Tickets are \$50 per person, and include the Thursday tour and networking event, and the Friday conference with breakfast, lunch and snacks. The registration fee also includes a t-shirt and goody bag!

Register online: Louisianawomeninag.com

Programs Reminder

USDA Seeks Applications for \$10 Million in Conservation Innovation Grants

USDA is offering grants for innovative ideas for conservation strategies and technologies. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) plans to invest \$10 million in the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program, funding innovative conservation projects in three focus areas: grazing lands, organic systems and soil health.

Grant proposals are due Feb. 26, 2018.

"Conservation Innovation Grants play a critical role in developing and implementing new methods to help our customers across the country and here in Louisiana conserve natural resources, strengthen their local communities, and improve their bottom lines," said Kevin Norton, NRCS state conservationist in Louisiana. "In addition, they support our efforts to help producers build economically-strong and resilient farms and ranches by providing producers tools to utilize across their working farmlands."

The NRCS uses CIG to work with partners to accelerate transfer and adoption of promising technologies and approaches that address some of the nation's most pressing natural resource concerns. This year, NRCS is focusing funding in these areas:

- **Grazing Lands:** Helping livestock producers make grazing management decisions, encouraging prescribed burning as a grazing management practice, and improving access to conservation planning tools used for developing grazing management plans.



- **Organic Agriculture Systems:** Helping organic producers develop innovative cropping and tillage systems, edge-of-field monitoring, crop rotations, and intercropping systems.

- **Soil Health:** Supporting both cropping and grazing systems, in a variety of climatic zones, that incorporate soil health management systems for addressing specific resource concerns like nutrients and availability. Evaluating multiple soil health assessment methods to assist in the development of new soil health indicators and thresholds.

"Every sector of American agriculture has its unique conservation challenges," said Norton. "CIG enables USDA to help support new, innovative tools and techniques which have helped U.S. agriculture become the powerhouse we see today, leading the world in both production efficiency and conservation delivery. We encourage groups and individuals in Louisiana to take advantage of this grant opportunity."

Potential applicants should review the announcement of program funding available at www.grants.gov, which includes application materials and submission procedures. All U.S.-based entities and individuals are invited to apply, with the sole exception of

Federal agencies. Up to 20 percent of CIG funds will be set aside for proposals from historically underserved producers, veteran farmers or ranchers or groups serving these customers.

CIG is authorized and funded under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Projects can last up to three years. The maximum award amount for any project this year is \$2 million.

Since 2004, NRCS has invested nearly \$286.7 million in more than 700 projects focused on providing farmers and ranchers new techniques, data and decision-making tools for improving natural resources conservation on their land. In 2016, Louisiana State University was awarded a grant in the amount of \$992,012 to develop and improve fallow season cover crop strategies as a component of overall conservation programs for soybean, field corn, cotton and sugarcane.

**Visit our web site at:
www.la.nrcs.usda.gov**

Outreach Corner

Outreach Update

Submitted by: Dexter Sapp, Outreach Coordinator

Outreach was a key agenda item at the November 28, 2017, Lower Mississippi Delta Resource Unit Meeting. Two of the featured guests at the RU Meeting were

Dr. Nolo Martinez, the Founder and Co-President for Nolo Consulting, LLC, and John Adrian Parrott the Hispanic Outreach Specialist with NOLO Consulting.

NOLO has started farm visits and will be conducting bilingual educational events across the state. NOLO's John Adrian Parrott has been visiting NRCS Offices to share more information about how his

organization can support Louisiana NRCS' Mission and to develop a strategy on how NRCS can connect with Hispanic Farmers in Louisiana. As per the 2012 USDA Ag Census, there are 849 Hispanic/Latino operators in 58 of the 64 parishes. West Carroll Parish, located in the northern portion of the state, reports the highest number of operators in the state, 67, which is 7.9 percent of the state total.

Upcoming Events

YOU'RE INVITED TO THE

LOUISIANA WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE 2018

FEBRUARY 22 & 23 | ALEXANDRIA, LOUISIANA

REGISTER or SPONSOR: LouisianaWomeninAG.com

THURSDAY

1 PM: CHOICE OF TOUR

CHOOSE BETWEEN A TOUR OF INGLEWOOD FARM OR A GUIDED HIKE IN KISATCHIE NATIONAL FOREST



6 PM: RECEPTION

HEAVY HORS D'OEUVRES INCLUDED, COCKTAILS AVAILABLE



FRIDAY

8 AM: CONFERENCE

ENJOY A MORNING AND EARLY AFTERNOON OF INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKERS, INCLUDING CANEY CREEK RANCH MANAGER KIMBERLY RATCLIFF, AND RED ANTS PANTS OWNER AND FOUNDER, SARAH CALHOUN



REGISTER TODAY!

REGISTRATION: \$50

(INCLUDES THURSDAY TOUR AND RECEPTION, FRIDAY BREAKFAST & LUNCH, T-SHIRT AND GOODY BAG)
ALL EVENTS HELD AT THE HOLIDAY INNIN DOWNTOWN ALEXANDRIA SPECIAL ROOM RATE CODE: LWA

FOR ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS: Info@LAWomeninAg.com

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