



The AgAware Newsletter

AgAmerica Empowerment Agency, Inc.

Volume 2 Issue 7

AgAmerica Awarded funds to complete Precision Ag Network And add units to the Equipment Library

Receiving a positive nod from Southwest Georgia United Empowerment Zone directors, AgAmerica was awarded a substantial portion of their grant request to continue their technology infrastructure project and expand the Equipment Library. The award was not sufficient to complete all components of the proposal, but will allow the agency to complete its two-county Precision Ag Network infrastructure and proceed with its weather station project.

Also funded will be additional equipment purchases for the Equipment Library and technical assistance for the Library and the Network. Ongoing expansion of the Equipment Library program continues to be a popular request of farmers

throughout the two-county service area. The program's usefulness was demonstrated in the support given the program during the EZ's annual Community Meetings in 2004.

23 Rover units now operate under the Precision Ag Network which covers about 65% of the 2-county area to date. Funding will complete infrastructure.

The Precision Ag Network has already far surpassed AgAmerica's expectations for participant requests in Phase 1 of the infrastructure establishment. There are already 23 units utilizing the Network signal in its initial service area, with participating farmers assisting in equipment troubleshooting and signal evaluation efforts. Farm owners and employees are receiving

training on the network as rover equipment is installed.

Seven site sponsors have allowed Network equipment to be located on towers on their property at no cost to the agency. Negotiations are underway for an additional 6 sites at this time. The generosity and cooperation of these individuals, businesses, and agencies is the key to successfully operating the low-overhead net-

work. This allows AgAmerica to invest the bulk of grant funds into the network equipment itself, benefiting all participants, who share in the upkeep costs through minimal maintenance fees through annual subscriptions.

The Network has received inquiries from as far away as Washington (the State, not DC). Many will be watching how our community works together to establish, operate, and maintain the network, and how well our farms and agribusinesses utilize the innovation to improve productivity and control production costs.

For updates on coverage area progress, contact our office.

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Special points of interest:

- *Would you be interested in sponsoring a weather station site at your shop or business? Contact our office or the Extension Agents for more information.*
- *Information about our agency, programs, guidelines, and fees are now available on the internet at: www.ag-america.org*
- *AgAmerica Numbers: Office—229-268-8928 Equipment Tech: Mobile—877-311-1779 S. Linc—2*1437*

Ag Technologies, LLC opens office

A result of the formation of the Precision Ag Network is the creation of a new agribusiness in the area. Ag Technologies, LLC is the technology provider for the Network, and also serves a large portion of the state.

Brian Kelley is the owner of the business with an office located across from Harris Farm & Home on Union St in Vienna. Brian & staff may be contacted at 229-268-4969 or 888-499-9754.

News from your Local Ag Agencies

FSA Offices continue their schedule of program signups and crop reports and ask that farmers note the following:

- Crop Disaster & Livestock Assistance Program signups began March 14th and are on-going.
- The deadline for signup for the '05 Direct & Counter-Cyclical Payment Program is JUNE 1!!!
- Boll Weevil Eradication payments will be due July 15th. Those who have not reported their intended cotton acres by the April 30 deadline will be subject to late fees.
- Remember, the Dooly FSA office closes to the public on Wednesday afternoons to allow staff to focus on paperwork necessary to speed payments to farmers.

NRCS reminds farmers of the **MAY 27th deadline** for the new **CSP** (Conservation Security Program) in the Middle Flint Watershed area of Dooly, Crisp, and neighboring counties in fiscal year 2005. Contact Graylen Hall and staff for more information on the

Update of progress on AgAmerica programs:

The **Equipment Library** has added another lightbar to inventory available for farmer use. The agency also has acquired service equipment to enable the technician to better serve participants. Our directors expect to add another 2 or 3 units to the inventory soon. If you have recommendations, contact our office.

Weather Station equipment for a station to be located just Southeast of Byromville has been ordered, and is long-awaited. Other equipment will be ordered soon, and sites prepared. To check the Catahoula Farm weather, go to: www.georgiaweather.net and click on Cordele on the map.

Dooly County data conversion to

program, or you may check the AgAmerica news page online at www.ag-america.org/news.htm for links to the CSP data.

Extension staff members will soon enter the busy time of in-field assistance to farmers, having completed their grower meetings earlier in the spring.

Ken Lewis will be conducting a field day at the Melon Research Center in the future, so be listening out for a date and time. Melon growers have certainly endured a trying start to the growing season with hail, frost, excessive rain, and cool temperatures. Other early plantings got off



Contact your local ag agencies to stay abreast of the latest program developments

to a rough start as well.

Extension personnel remain at your service to assist you in addressing production issues throughout the crop year.

GIS format is progressing, and is hoped to be completed and operational before the end of the year. Upon completion of data conversion, training sessions for farm agency and county personnel will be conducted.

There is still funding available in our **apprenticeship program**. If you are hiring a young person for on-the-job training in farming or agribusiness this summer, please contact our office to learn about our cost-share offerings.

AgAmerica hopes to conduct a "ribbon cutting ceremony" sometime soon for its **Precision Ag Network**. Be on the lookout for a date & place.

AgAmerica Technician

Brad Sangster, has been working with farmers addressing a variety of conditions in fields. They have experimented with a few variations on the strip-till rig settings and attachments to find solutions to the myriad of challenges in the fields. If you find yourself with a challenge with your conservation tillage equipment, do not hesitate to contact him. He may have come across a solution that fits your situation.

We would also like to hear of how you successfully tackled this year's "challenges in the field".

Contact Brad at 877-311-1779 (Southern Linc: 2*1437)

USEFUL WEBSITES

AgAmerica News & Links:
www.ag-america.org/news.htm

FSA Disaster Program Info:
<http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov/fsa.asp>
& click on "Emergency Programs for Disaster Assistance 2003-2005 (PL 108-324)"

NRCS CSP 2005:
www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp
& click on "CSP watershed info 2005"

Our homepage is www.ag-america.org.

- Hit the "NEWS" button for current info
- Click on "Equipment Library" for inventory details
- "AgAmerica Programs" and related links tell about our technology initiative and other programs.

Equipment Library – Current Price List (Thru Aug 2005)

Here's what is available in the Equipment Library at this time. Very low user maintenance fees are charged on the equipment, and a security deposit and insurance coverage is required prior to pickup. Please make note of changes in fees on some units, and on user agreements on others. We continue to strive for the lowest fees possible to cover our expenses.

Strip-Till Rigs:

- 1—4-row KMC Strip Till
- 2—6-row KMC Strip Till
- 2—6-row Strip-Till w/ planters attached
- 3—8-row KMC Strip Till

Fees on strip-till rigs:

Without planters: \$3/acre, \$225 minimum. With Planters: \$6/acre, \$450 minimum. 10-day limit during high demand (all strip till rigs).

No-Till Drills:

- 2—John Deere 15' No-Till Drills
- 1—Case 15' No-Till Drill

Fees on drills: \$3.50/acre, \$175 mini-

mum—10-day limit during high demand

(JD units have small seed attachment)

Solid Stand Seeder:

1—Greenscape 5' Solid Stand Seeder (which is similar to a small no-till drill)
Fee on seeder: \$50/day, \$75 minimum with a 3-day limit during heavy demand.

Field Maintenance & Repair:

- 1—Marden Brush Chopper
- 1—6yd Prime Dirtpan

Fees on these units—\$150 per 5-day use period

- 2—KMC 9-shank Subsoiler/Levelers

Fees on subsoilers—\$3.50/acre (\$200 minimum). 5-day limit during heavy demand. User is responsible for point replacement prior to return.

1—Newton Crouch Fertilizer Spreader

Spreader fees: \$100 plus \$2/acre (50 ac minimum); 5-day limit during peak demand—Spreader must be returned CLEAN—Users returning the unit in excellent condition will be refunded \$100.

Parallel Tracking:

- 4—Trimble AgGPS EZ Guide Lightbars

Fees on lightbars—\$10/day, 5-day limit during heavy demand.

REFUNDABLE SECURITY DEPOSIT IS

\$250 FOR ALL UNITS.

We have purchased a trailer to improve movement of our smaller units over our large service area.

2 Stalk Pullers remain in inventory for use in the fall.

Contact us for more details.



To arrange to use any of these units contact Brad at 268-8928 or 877-311-1779 (toll free).

Empowerment Zone marks 10th anniversary of EC/EZ designations

At its recent annual meeting, the Southwest Georgia United Empowerment Zone celebrated 10 years of community achievements. Executive Director Robert Cooke presented a slideshow of good things that have come from the community's dedication to the strategic plan and vision for bringing great economic and social opportunities for the future.

The EC designation acquired in 1995 is reaching the end of its 10-year cycle,

which found all the EZ partners in awe of the passage of time. The EZ designation is scheduled to conclude in 2009, leaving several more years of work ahead for the EZ staffers to complete the ground-work projected in the original strategic plan for development.

Mr. Cooke reported on the EZ's expanding housing initiative. The zone's Housing Programs and Staff have been designated as a model and mentor for other initiatives nationwide.

AgAmerica to partner with Forestry Commission

AgAmerica Empowerment Agency will be cooperating with the Georgia Forestry Commission to sponsor Forestry Stakeholders' Meetings over the next few years. Be watching for dates/place.

This will continue AgAmerica's outreach efforts with ag agencies throughout the area in educating and informing

producers and landowners of opportunities, offerings, and technical assistance available to them.

The agency has also collaborated with the Soil & Water Conservation District, Conservation Tillage Groups, NRCS, FSA, NESPAL, and Extension Services for similar sessions.

AgAmerica has been proud to be one of the EZ's partners since it organized in 2000, and received funding in 2001. Our agency's foundation is built upon the agricultural strategies determined by the community back in 1998/1999, with expansion as lead by citizen participation in successive years.

It is our desire to have used the EZ funds wisely to invest in long-term assets, techniques, and collaborations to improve the local ag economy. New micro-management of farming operations, adaptation of cutting-edge technologies, effective use and conservation of our soil and water resources, and youth participation are all parts of the vision we have for tackling the challenges facing agriculture.

The EZ will hold community meetings later this summer, as usual, to gather citizen input in progressing its strategic plan. Make plans to participate!!!

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"Working together to make ag better"

We are now online at:
www.ag-america.org



Ag.Aware

AgAmerica's Board Members:

Steve Whelchel (Chairman), Stephanie Chapman (Secretary-Treasurer), Don Tucker, Arthur Roney, Randy Coffee, David Leary, Kathy Weesner, Charles Hardin, and Eddie Green

Advisory Members:

Chuck Ellis (Dooly Extension), and Ken Lewis (Crisp Extension)

Staff: Phyllis Roney (Office Mgr./Pres.), Brad Sangster (Equipment Technician)

Funded by Southwest GA United Empowerment Zone, Crisp-Dooly Joint Development Authority, and USDA Rural Development; Cooperating with local Extension.

Does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or religion in its programs or policies.

Our office will make special arrangements to accommodate persons with special access needs. Contact us at 268-8928.

Is the CSP Program a Good Opportunity for your Farm? (REPEAT)

"CSP (Conservation Security Program) is a voluntary conservation program that supports ongoing stewardship of private agricultural lands by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. CSP identifies and rewards those farmers and ranchers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their operations.

...CSP rewards the best and motivates the rest...

How CSP Works

1. The CSP sign-up will be offered in selected priority watersheds across the Nation. (Locally eligible: Middle Flint watershed—located in parts of Dooly, Crisp, and neighboring counties)
2. Producers complete a self-

assessment to determine eligibility (available online—see page 2)

3. Eligible producers within these watersheds submit an application
4. Based on the application, description of conservation activities, and a follow-up interview, the NRCS will determine which program tier and enrollment category are available for the applicant."

Both the producer and the producer's operation must meet a set of basic eligibility criteria, and additional tier and contract requirements, plus any additional requirements announced at the sign-up. The criteria are available at your local NRCS office or online at www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp. Soil quality practices and water quality practices are evaluated in the assessment workbook.

**SIGNUP BEGAN MAR 28th.
DEADLINE IS MAY 27, 2005!!**

"Contract payments include one or more of the following:

- An annual stewardship component for the existing base level conservation treatment
- An annual existing practice component for maintaining existing conservation practices
- A one-time new practice component for additional needed practices
- An enhancement component for exceptional conservation practices...etc...that provide increased resource benefits beyond the prescribed level...."

The CSP program will be most advantageous for farmers that have been utilizing conservation practices in their operations before EQIP and other conservation incentives. This program will provide funding for such farmers who due to their independent, early conservation initiatives were excluded from eligibility in other NRCS programs.

Contact your NRCS office for more details as they become available. *Quoted sources: NRCS CSP website information*