

Georgia Rent-a-Drill Program "No-Till Saves Oil and Soil"

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Abstract

What started out as a single RC&D project has turned into a state wide RC&D program. Recent droughts and fescue endophyte fungus have damaged 90% of the fescue pastures in Georgia. Farmers could not afford to buy no-till equipment to overseed these pastures; and if they were planted using conventional tillage methods, thousands of tons of soil and oil would be wasted. The RC&D Councils applied for grants to purchase equipment for use by the farmers. Funds were supplied by the Georgia Energy Office through the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission to the RC&D Councils. These funds were used to purchase tractors and grassland drills. The equipment was then furnished to local districts. The districts administered the program. The program worked so well that the Georgia Energy Office, The State Soil and Water Conservation Commission, Soil Conservation Service and RC&D wanted to make this a state wide program.

Since RC&D Areas only covered 39 of the States 159 counties, something had to be worked out to make this a state program. The State Soil and Water Conservation Commission and the State RC&D Council agreed to act as a clearing house for applications coming in from outside districts. The Georgia Energy Office pledged \$200,000 toward the project each time they have a funding cycle which has been twice a year. Local RC&D Councils agreed to work with districts outside their RC&D area boundaries. SCS gave support by allowing RC&D Coordinators to work across area boundaries. Local District Conservationists support the program in many ways.

The program works in the following manner. Districts send applications to the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission who reviews the applications and sends them to the State RC&D Council. The Council assigns a numerical ratings to the application based on information provided in the application. When the energy office has a funding cycle, the State RC&D Council recommends the districts with the highest numerical ratings be funded. The districts that are funded are assigned a RC&D Council to work with them. The RC&D Council then receives a grant to purchase the equipment. The Council purchases the equipment and provided it to the local districts for a five dollar per acre maintenance fee. The districts contract with operators to run the equipment and do the planting. The RC&D furnishes forms, fact sheets, training and acts as a data base for soil and energy saved. The districts supply the equipment to the landowner for a fee which covers operator, fuel and maintenance of equipment. The fees range from \$12 to \$15 per acre.

When fall planting seasons rolled around, The Rent-A-Drill program was available to farmers and landowners in 78 of the States 159 counties. The equipment represents \$895,500 of Oil overcharge funds.

We feel that our RENT-A-DRILL PROGRAM is an excellent example of "MAKING CONSERVATION HAPPEN, TOGETHER."

¹Georgia Rent-A-Drill Program.