

The Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI) was announced on September 24, 2009. MRBI will provide approximately \$320 million in USDA financial assistance over a four-year span for voluntary projects in priority watersheds in Arkansas, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee and Wisconsin to help producers implement conservation and management practices to prevent, control and trap nutrient runoff from agricultural land.

The three initial focus areas in Louisiana for MRBI are: the Lower Mermentau Watershed in Calcasieu, Jefferson Davis, Acadia, Lafayette, Cameron, and Vermilion Parishes; the Bayou Macon Watershed in West Carroll, East Carroll, Richland, Madison, Franklin, and Catahoula Parishes; and the Boeuf River Watershed in Morehouse, West Carroll, Ouachita, Richland, Caldwell, Franklin, and Catahoula Parishes.

The Bayou Lafourche MRBI Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program was established to help agricultural producers in the Boeuf River Watershed (Richland, Ouachita, and Caldwell Parishes) protect and enhance critical wetland habitats on private lands by reducing erosion, sediment load and subsequent water quality issues.



## Saving the Farm

### Current economic conditions

were about to take their toll on producer Donald Williams' farming operation.

Faced with these conditions and the uncertain future of his farming operation, Mr. Williams turned to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for help.

Local NRCS District Conservationist James Shivers was able to offer Mr. Williams a solution to his economic problems as well as an opportunity to make a difference in the Mississippi River Basin ecosystem—the **Bayou Lafourche Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (MRBI WREP)**.

The Bayou Lafourche MRBI WREP was established to help agricultural producers in Louisiana's Boeuf River Watershed protect and enhance critical wetland habitats on private lands by reducing erosion, sediment load and subsequent water quality issues. The lead sponsor for this project is the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry-Office of Soil and Water Conservation.

"In the short term—we gain financially," said Williams. "In the long term—we gain a legacy of healthy land and clean water—for my family and other families in the Mississippi River Basin."

Mr. Williams enrolled 90 acres of marginal cropland into the MRBI WREP, and thanks to the financial assistance provided through the initiative, Mr. Williams will be able to continue farming, while converting the offered land into a bottomland hardwood forest that his children and grandchildren will be able to enjoy.

"I have always wanted to leave my farm to my grandchildren," said Williams. "Setting a part of it aside in this program helps me reach that goal."

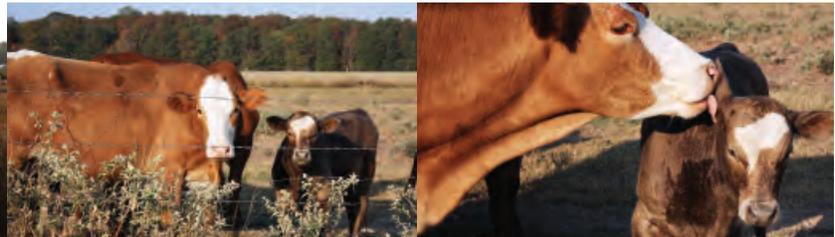


# Bayou Lafourche Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program

## MRBI WREP



*“ . . . we gain a legacy of healthy land and clean water. . . ”*



The benefits that will result from this restoration project will echo from his land, down the Mississippi River—reducing sediment loads and water turbidity from seasonal cultivation practice, restoring declining wetland wildlife habitat, reducing the risk of surface water and ground water contamination from nutrients and pesticides, and serving as a carbon sink as the habitat moves to a climax community.

To find out more about the **Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (MRBI WREP)**, visit or call your local Natural Resources Conservation Service or soil and water conservation district office. Contact information is included on the back cover of this publication.



Donald Williams  
Conservationist