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October 10, 2017

NC Conservation Partners Announce the 2017 Improving Pastures Program

[Raleigh, NC] The North Carolina Conservation Partners announce the roll out of the 2017 Improving Pastures Program!

NC's pasture and haylands support a vibrant livestock industry, one of agriculture's key economic sectors. Many NC pastures and haylands were damaged during the 2016 drought. To improve drought resilience on as many acres as possible, the NC Conservation Partners announce the 2017 Improving Pasture Management Program with educational resources and pasture renovation equipment for rent to producers.

The Golden LEAF Foundation awarded a \$200,000 grant to the NC Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation to purchase pasture renovation equipment in 14 counties – Alamance, Alexander, Buncombe, Cleveland, Franklin, Harnett, Haywood, Johnston, Lincoln, McDowell, Macon, Madison, Surry and Union. Producers can rent the equipment through their local soil and water conservation district offices. Equipment purchased includes no-till drills, broadcast seed spreaders, and weed wipers; Conservation Districts chose what equipment is most useful to their county's producers.

“Golden LEAF is pleased to support North Carolina farmers,” said Dan Gerlach, Golden LEAF President. “Recent natural disasters have left pastures in poor condition and this collaborative outreach program will help farmers in 14 counties increase crop yields by providing the technical resources, training, and equipment needed to improve pasture management and drought resilience.”

The NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund awarded \$114,000 to the NC Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation to purchase additional equipment in Cabarrus, Rutherford, Wilkes, and other counties and to establish pasture management demonstrations in 21 counties. Local soil and water conservation districts will manage the equipment and host Field Days to highlight effective pasture and forage management techniques. Participating counties will be announced in the future. 2018 Field Days will be advertised broadly so that all producers can take advantage of these opportunities.

“The health of our pastures is very important for the health of our livestock,” said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. “The Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund is pleased to help fund the purchase of equipment and support educational programs to assist farmers with pasture renovation.”

Partners gathered at NC Electric Cooperative Membership headquarters in Raleigh to kick-off the project on September 28, 2017. The project is supported by the NC Cattlemen's Association, the NC Horse Council, the NC Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the NC Farm Bureau, the NC Agriculture Foundation, and NC Cooperative Extension.

“It is important to the North Carolina Cattlemen’s Association that our farmers have the resources and training to renew and maintain grazing systems that will not only help them to be profitable but to ensure they can continue to be good stewards of the animals, land and the water that these hard-working farming care for.” said Bryan Blinson, NC Cattlemen’s Association Executive Director.

“NC Farm Bureau is very proud to participate in the 2017 Improving Pastures Initiative helping farmers learn ways to improve their pastures and haylands as well as provide access to pasture and hayland renovation equipment such as no-till drills and weed control tools.” said Larry Wooten, NC Farm Bureau President.

“Members of the Better Pastures NC, an interagency consortium to support pasture-based agriculture, gathered to plan demonstration on how to renovate these damaged pastures and then manage them to be resilient to future disasters. Obtaining new no-till drills suitable for plating a variety of forages was a high priority for the group given the lack of equipment is one factor limiting the ability of farmers to renovate their pastures. We greatly appreciate the leadership of the NC Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation in obtaining funding form the Golden LEAF Foundation and the NC Agriculture Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund to help support the purchase of this crucial equipment”. said Dr. Matt Poore, the Extension Livestock Commodity Coordinator with NC Cooperative Extension.

Interested producers should contact their local soil and water conservation district or visit www.ncsoilwater.org.



PHOTO ONE (Left to Right) Jimmy Gentry, President, NC Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation & NC State Grange President, David Smith, Administration Chief Deputy Commissioner of NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, Larry Wooten, President of NC Farm Bureau Federation, Dan Gerlach, President of Golden LEAF Foundation, Bryan Evans, Executive Director of NC Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Dr. Matt Poore, Extension Livestock Commodity Coordinator, NC Cooperative Extension



PHOTO TWO (Left to Right) Michelle Lovejoy, Executive Director of NC Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation, Bryan Blinson, Executive Director of NC Cattlemen’s Association, Chester Lowder, Livestock Specialist of NC Farm Bureau Federation, Dr. Matt Poore, Extension Livestock Commodity Coordinator, NC Cooperative Extension, Bryan Evans, Executive Director of NC Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts