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NEWS RELEASE

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

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By Beverly Moseley

NRCS – Public Affairs Specialist

Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers Reach Out to East Texas Producers

“On the Road Again” isn’t just the title to a famous song for Wade Ross. It’s where he can be found on any given day traveling across East Texas coordinating outreach efforts and training to Texas’ Limited Resource agriculture producers.

Nacogdoches, Bryan, Crockett and Pittsburg are just some of the communities Ross has visited as a State coordinator for the South Central Initiative for Outreach & Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers & Ranchers (SCIOASDFR) program with the USDA-Office of Advocacy & Outreach (USDA/OAO).

“It is real impressive right now. It looks as if we are going to be able to meet our objectives,” said Ross, who works through the Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers (TSFR) community based organization (CBO) on this initiative.

TSFR and the Texas/Mexico Border Coalition (TMBC) CBO are the primary organizations tasked through a USDA three-year grant with coordinating outreach efforts and training, along with providing technical assistance to socially-disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. The University of Texas Pan American is the lead institution in this advocacy and outreach program, which these CBOs collaborate with.

Ross also has worked closely with staff from the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on communication efforts and in providing speakers for workshops and field days. His group focuses primarily in the East Texas region where he and members of TSFR plan on providing upwards of 48 workshops and field days annually to bridge the gap and create awareness about available USDA programs and other partnering entities.

“The information that is being given shows them how to navigate around USDA. It’s a comfortable journey. We want them to know they can still come to the USDA and get real service from each and every agency,” Ross said. “A lot of folks want hands off of government agencies, but what we are promoting is that these folks are your friends. If you don’t use them one day they might not be there.”

Ross said the response at these workshops has been overwhelmingly positive. At a recent meeting in Bryan, more than 60 people attended. Representatives from initiative partners, rural community development representatives, along with local farmers and ranchers were in attendance.

TSFR began having workshops and field days in January. By the end of March, the group had held 21 events and all were well attended, Ross added.

Along with NRCS, other federal entities involved in the project are the USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the USDA-Rural Development (RD) and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Partnering state entities are the Texas Soil and Water Conservation District Board (TSWCDB), Texas Agri-Life Extension and Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). Local Resource and Conservation Development (RC&D) Councils and Soil and Water Conservation Districts are cooperative partners.

For more information on scheduled workshops or field days contact Wade Ross at (979) 589-3649 or visit www.texasmallfarmersandrancherscbo.com.

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Rick Florence, area specialist for USDA-Rural Development is presented a certificate of appreciation from Kanand Brooks (left) Zone 4 NRCS Assistant State Conservationist and Wade Ross (right) with Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers, during a recent meeting in Bryan.



Wade Ross, left, visits with young farmers after a Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers meeting held in Crockett.



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