

Trailblazer news

Volume 13 • Issue 2 • February 2023

good for the land . . . good for the people



Wildlife Forestry Field Day, Choudrant, LA, Oct 14, 2022.

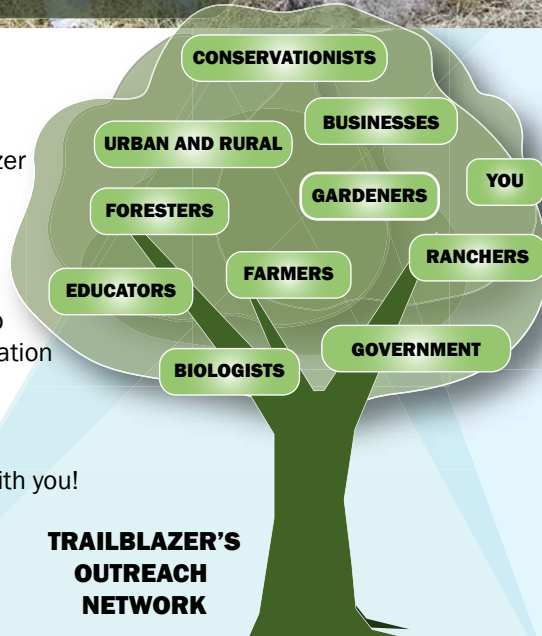
Trailblazer RC&D

Dear Friends,

Your support means the world to us, and partnership with Trailblazer could mean the world to you. Join the Trailblazer team and gain community access through our vast network of friends and partners. Check out sponsorship levels, perks, and contact information on Page 6, and join us at a workshop in February.

I am looking forward to visiting with you!

P. Ellzey Simmons
Chief Executive Officer
Trailblazer RC&D



SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

drax

Drax is committed to enabling a zero carbon, lower cost energy future through engineering, technology and innovation. They provide electricity generation, electricity sales to business customers, and compressed wood pellet production and supply to third parties.

Drax is committed to supporting the communities local to its operations in Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Alabama and provide donations to help efforts to improve communities and work to support sustainable forestry.

We appreciate Drax's support of Trailblazer and our communities!

Upcoming Events

TO REGISTER
Call or text
(318) 237-8350

February 7 - 6 p.m.
Soil Health and Your Garden
Lincoln Parish Library
Ruston, LA

February 14 - 6 p.m.
Spring Gardening Workshop: Your Soil and Your Garden
Bossier Parish Libraries
History Center
Bossier City, LA

Events

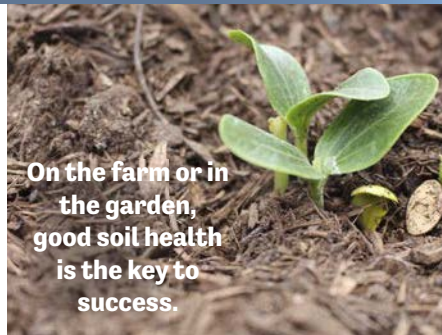
SOIL HEALTH WORKSHOP

Trailblazer Tuesday at the
Lincoln Parish Library

February 7, 2023

Lincoln Parish Library
910 North Trenton Street
Ruston, Louisiana
6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Join us at 5:15 p.m. for pizza!

Featured Speaker
Rachel Stout-Evans
Resource Soil Scientist
USDA NRCS



On the farm or in
the garden,
good soil health
is the key to
success.

Spring Gardening Workshop Your Soil and Your Garden

FEBRUARY 14, 2023

Bossier Parish Libraries
History Center
2206 Beckett Street
Bossier City, Louisiana
6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Join us at 5:15 p.m. for pizza!



FEATURING



HORTICULTURE
SPECIALIST

Mark Wilson

TO REGISTER FOR THESE WORKSHOPS:

Call or text (318) 237-8350 and provide your contact information and name of workshop.

Persons with disabilities who anticipate needing reasonable accommodations or who have questions about physical access may contact Trailblazer RC&D at (318) 237-8350 or ceo@trailblazer.org prior to the meeting or event.

February Workshops: Soil Health on Your Farm or in Your Garden

Trailblazer will offer a free Soil Health Workshop on February 7, 2023, at the Lincoln Parish Library in Ruston, Louisiana. Soil scientist Rachel Stout-Evans will present information to help growers understand and manage soil health to improve production. Workshop topics include the composition of soil, how soils function, indicators of soil health, and ways to manage soil health. Stout-Evans is a resource soil scientist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Trailblazer will also offer a free Spring Gardening Workshop on soil on February 14, 2023, at the Bossier Parish Libraries History Center in Bossier City, Louisiana. Horticulture specialist Mark Wilson from the LSU AgCenter will present information to help gardeners prepare their gardens for spring and improve soil health to improve production.

February Workshop Sponsors/Partners

Drax
USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service



Conservation Conversation

What is REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE?

Regenerative agriculture is farming/gardening to improve the whole ecosystem around a farm/garden by focusing on soil health and water management.

it's all about **SOIL HEALTH**



Practice	Regenerative Farming Practices			Regenerative Gardening Practices		
	Conservation Tillage	Crop Rotation	Cover Crops	No Till	Composting	Crop Diversity
Description	At least one of a field's rotated crops is produced with reduced tillage, or less frequent tillage.	A planned sequence of crops is grown on the same ground over a period of time.	Grasses, legumes, and forbs planted for seasonal vegetative cover.	Once a garden bed is established, the surface is not disturbed.	Compost is a blend of partially decomposing organic material (leaves, grass clippings, kitchen waste, etc.).	Growing different crops in the same garden bed throughout the year.
Results	Water savings, reduced weeds, increased organic matter in the soil, and reduced soil erosion	Balanced plant nutrients, increased water use efficiency, and reduced erosion from water and wind	Reduced erosion from water and wind, increased organic matter in the soil, reduced weed and pest pressure, and improved soil moisture	Water savings, reduced weeds, increased organic matter in the soil, and reduced soil erosion	Improved soil texture, water-holding capacity, and fertility	Reduced insect pest populations, reduced weeds, reduced soil erosion, balanced plant nutrients, and increased yields

For more information on regenerative agriculture, soil health, and conservation practices that focus on soil health and water management, contact your nearest office of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. A local listing of contact information can be found on Page 5. Additional information can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov. Attend a February Trailblazer workshop to learn about soil health from soil and horticulture specialists (see Page 2).

NEW TRAILBLAZER SERIES



USDA/FPAC Photo by Preston Keres



In January, Trailblazer RC&D released the first chapter in a new video series spotlighting urban agriculture. In this first video, viewers are introduced to opportunities that are available to urban farmers through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The video includes photos and video footage from actual NRCS cooperators captured by USDA photographers. Future chapters will zero in on soil health, irrigation, weeds and pests, and high tunnels. Watch each chapter as it is published!

See Chapter 1 at: <https://youtu.be/cjlmfC9Kkto>

This video was produced by Trailblazer RC&D in cooperation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

News

USDA Announces Grants for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making available up to \$7.5 million for grants through its Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP).

The competitive grants will support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects through two categories, Planning Projects and Implementation Projects.

USDA will accept applications on Grants.gov until 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on March 27, 2023.

About Planning Projects

Planning Projects initiate or expand efforts of farmers, gardeners, citizens, government officials, schools, and other stakeholders in urban areas and suburbs. Projects may target areas of food access, education, business and start-up costs for new farmers and the development of plans related to zoning and other needs of urban production. For example, the Texas Coalition of Rural Landowners used 2022 awarded funds to conduct a feasibility study and develop a business plan to establish a cooperative for small-scale agricultural producers serving low food access markets in Harris County, Texas.

About Implementation Projects

Implementation Projects accelerate existing and emerging models of urban, indoor, and other agricultural practices that serve farmers and communities. Projects may improve local food access, include collaboration with partner organizations, and support infrastructure needs, emerging technologies, and educational endeavors. For example, the Moka Urban Agriculture Initiative used 2022 awarded funds for a project to increase local food access and provide culturally relevant options that create economic opportunities for urban farmers. The project will help to reduce food insecurity, improve health and establish outdoor spaces for food production in Missouri.

A pre-recorded webinar on Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Grants provides an overview of the grants' purpose, project types, eligibility and basic requirements for submitting an application.

To access the webinar, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhLff2b6DMg>

To learn more about urban agriculture and NRCS, check out Trailblazer's NEW YouTube video: Urban Agriculture, Chapter 1: Intro to NRCS at <https://youtu.be/cjImfC9Kkto>

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering contract opportunities for architectural and engineering services from small firms with an emphasis on watershed restoration work.

Deadline for submissions is February 13, 2023.

The awards being offered will provide enhanced productivity for design, planning and assessment phases on NRCS watershed projects. Services include dam assessments, watershed rehabilitation planning, watershed planning and engineering design.

To be considered for an award, the submitting organization must:

1. Be a Small Business as registered in the System for Award Management (www.sam.gov); and
2. Have at least one Professional Engineer and Professional Land Surveyor registered/licensed in each state within the region for which they are submitting.

NRCS anticipates offering one award per region. Eligible architectural and engineering firms may submit for more than one region.

To learn more about this opportunity and the associated regions and solicitation numbers, go to:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/news/usda-offers-contract-opportunities-for-small-architectural-and-engineering-firms>

**Louisiana is in Region 4:
AR, MS, LA
Solicitation Number:
12FPC323R0005**

Did You Know ... ?

Compost Improves Soil Structure

Composting is a process that converts organic materials, such as leaves, grass clippings, kitchen scraps, and rose petals into a nutrient-rich mulch through natural decomposition. Compost can be

used as a soil amendment or mulch. It improves the structure and health of your soil by adding organic matter; helps retain moisture and nutrients in your soil; attracts beneficial organisms to the

soil and reduces the need for pesticides and fertilizers; reduces the potential for soil erosion; sequesters carbon in the soil; and builds resiliency to the impacts of climate change.¹



Farmers and ranchers use composting to decompose manure and other organic material. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service offers technical and financial assistance to eligible agricultural producers for composting facilities.

To learn more about composting, check out these great resources:

- **Composting Module 01-YouTube**, LSU AgCenter, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0H032ZPh4_Y
- **Backyard Composting**, LSU AgCenter, https://www.lsuagcenter.com/portals/communications/publications/publications_catalog/lawn%20and%20garden/backyard%20composting
- ¹**Composting At Home**, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, <https://www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home>
- **Small Scale Solutions for your Farm**, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/composting-manure-small-scale-solutions-fy22.pdf>

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides America's farmers and ranchers financial and technical assistance to voluntarily put conservation on the ground. If you are interested in learning more about NRCS opportunities, contact your local field office or go to www.nrcs.usda.gov.

NRCS Local Contacts:

Bienville Parish: (318) 377-3950, ext. 3	Jackson/Lincoln Parishes: (318) 255-3136, ext. 3
Bossier Parish: (318) 872-4949	Union Parish: (318) 368-8021
Claiborne/Webster Parishes: (318) 377-3950, ext. 3	Winn Parish: (318) 357-8366, ext. 3

Unsure who to call? Contact Trailblazer RC&D at (318) 237-8350, and we will put you in touch with the right people.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

A lot of people learned how to conserve and protect the natural resources of their land during 2022 because of our great sponsors.

Partners & Friends

Are you interested in becoming a Trailblazer sponsor?

Demonstrate your organization's commitment to conservation and sustainability of our natural resources by joining the Trailblazer team.

Levels of Annual Participation

PLATINUM - \$15,000 or more donation

GOLD - \$2,000 up to \$15,000 donation

SILVER - \$1,000 up to \$1,999 donation

EVENT SPONSOR - \$300 donation

BASIC PARTNERSHIP - Less than \$300 donation and/or substantial in-kind support.

Each level comes with lots of perks such as website coverage, newsletter recognition, event recognition, signage, and much more.

What is to gain?

Grassroots Connections

Network Building

Community Presence

Contact us today.

Visit our website to learn more

about Trailblazer RC&D:

www.trailblazer.org

Contact us to become a sponsor:

(318) 237-8350

ceo@trailblazer.org



302 REYNOLDS DRIVE
RUSTON, LOUISIANA 71270
(318) 255-3554
ceo@trailblazer.org

"Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."

Proverbs 19:21
New International Version



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

811 is the national call-before-you-dig phone number. You should call a few business days before you begin any digging, including common projects like planting trees and shrubs or installing fences and mailboxes.

Check us out on YouTube!

