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**GEORGIA SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION ANNOUNCES
FUNDING FOR AG WATER CONSERVATION & METERING PROGRAM**

ATHENS, GA— The Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (GSWCC) received approval for \$1.8 million budget for fiscal year (FY) 2010 to implement and enhance the Agriculture Water Conservation and Metering Program. There will be \$1.3 million in new funding to supplement the \$500,000 rollover from FY 2009. This program, developed to mitigate ever-increasing competition for water resources in Georgia and across the Southeast, helps ensure that Georgia agriculture has adequate water supplies for efficient and effective food, fiber, and fuel production. As agriculture remains the number one industry in the state, measurement of Ag water use is a necessary enterprise.

Governor Sonny Perdue and members of the OneGeorgia Authority Board met on Wednesday, June 24th at the College of Coastal Georgia in Brunswick and approved grants and loans from OneGeorgia Authority's portfolio of financing programs. These awards will assist a variety of economic development projects in rural Georgia, including the GSWCC's metering program.

The purpose of this program is to obtain accurate and timely information on the patterns and amounts of agriculture water use by Environmental Protection Division permit holders. This information is essential to proper management of water resources by the state and useful to farmers for improving the efficiency of their water use.

Agricultural water-use data is managed in a manner that provides only for access by State policymakers and insures privacy rights of landowners involved. Only summaries of water-use by the eight digit United States Geological Survey hydrologic code are made available to the general public. Water-use of individual irrigators is kept confidential and information gathered from the meters will not be used by any State agency or individual for purposes not intended by law.

Potential uses by the 10 Regional Water Councils (RWC) of the data gathered from this metering program are to show evidence that the agriculture industry in Georgia continues to be a good steward of natural resources. Other uses include providing data to support Ag water use demand forecasting, tracking use by sub-basin or areas of concern of the RWC, developing trend lines, encouraging producers to collect data to match crop water requirements, and helping identify systems where application rates are high compared to sub-basin average to better use cost share dollars.

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