

**ALA-TOM
RESOURCE CONSERVATION
AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, INC.**



AREA PLAN

2009-2014

**Serving the following counties in Southwest Alabama since 1981:
Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Dallas, Marengo, Monroe, Perry, Washington and Wilcox**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page Number
Introduction	4
Organizational Overview	5
Socio-Economic Overview	6 - 7
Natural Resources Overview	8 - 10
Public Participation Overview	11
Survey Response By Age	12
Survey Response By Sex	13
Comments on Land Conservation	14
Comments on Water Management	15
Comments on Community Development	16
Comments on Land Management	17
Graphical Presentation of Project Activity Responses	18 - 23
Area Planning Goals 2009 – 2014	24 - 29
Current and Potential Partners	30 - 31
Linkages to the NRCS Strategic Plan	32
Closing and Plan Adoption Signature Page	33
Appendix	35 - 37

INTRODUCTION

THE RC&D PROGRAM

The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program is a nation-wide U.S. Department of Agriculture program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Congress initially authorized the program as part of the Food and Agriculture Act of 1962. It was created to address rural poverty and help rural communities generate sustainable natural resource based economies. The program has evolved over the years and now is used to accelerate the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources, improve economic activity, and enhance the environment and standard of living in designated areas. Current program objectives focus on land conservation, water management, community development, and land management. Being in an approved RC&D Area authorizes the assistance of a federal RC&D Coordinator to the local council in carrying out its annual and long-term plans.

THE RC&D COUNCIL

A local council made up of representatives of the sponsoring organizations and the general public administers the program. The council is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation that directs short term and long-term efforts of the area. It is a volunteer organization made up of representatives of local governments, local soil and water conservation districts, and community leaders interested in carrying out plans, programs, and projects to improve the area.

THE AREA PLAN

The purpose of this Area Plan is to provide a document that gives guidance and direction for the council over the next five years in addressing the problems, needs, and opportunities identified from input received from sponsors and the general public. This Area Plan addresses the identified issues through the development of specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time bound (SMART) goals and objectives. The Area Plan will serve as the basis for the development of Annual Plan of Work. The Area Plan also serves as the agreement between the USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service and the ALA-TOM RC&D Council.

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

COUNCIL BACKGROUND AND STRUCTURE

The Secretary of Agriculture approved the ALA-TOM Resource Conservation and Development Area in March 1981. The sponsors of the area were the County Commissions and Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Dallas, Marengo, Monroe, Perry, Washington, and Wilcox Counties in Alabama. The ALA-TOM RC&D Council was formed in 1981 made up of a representative of each the sponsoring organizations. The Council was later broadened to add a member-at-large from each county to insure inclusiveness. The Council became a 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation in 1988.

The Council later formed a Board of Directors to manage the organization, which is made up of one of the Council members from each county. The Executive Committee, made up of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary-Treasurer, also meets in times of extenuating circumstances.

VISION STATEMENT

Our vision for the ALA-TOM Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area is an area with a sound economy with jobs for all, with all people, communities and governments working together in harmony. We see an educated and informed citizenry, with small town and rural family values preserved. We see all land used wisely, with it being both productive and protected. We see beautiful, clean landscapes and all rivers and streams with clean water. We see all rural and urban areas adequately served with community facilities and services, and adequate recreational facilities, making the ALA-TOM RC&D Area the best place to live and work.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the ALA-TOM RC&D Area is to conserve and develop all resources to enhance the quality of life in the area.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of the ALA-TOM RC&D Area is to provide local leadership in developing and carrying out a plan for the orderly conservation, improvement, development and wise use of natural resources thereby improving economic opportunities. The organization cooperates and assists in carrying out local and regional plans of other organizations and agencies. It is working to create and awareness of the need for orderly development and conservation of area resources. The organization is working to secure the required technical, financial, educational and other services required to develop and apply the Area Plan.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

The following tables illustrate the social and economic condition of the people living in the ALA-TOM RC&D Area.

Table 1. TOTAL POPULATION - Source - U.S. Census

County	Population 2000 Census	2007 Estimates	Number Change	Percentage Change
Choctaw	15,922	14,173	-1,749	-10.98
Clarke	27,867	26,496	-1,371	-4.92
Conecuh	14,089	13,160	-929	-6.59
Dallas	46,365	43,079	-3,286	-7.09
Marengo	22,539	21,276	-1,263	-5.60
Monroe	24,324	22,764	-1,560	-6.41
Perry	11,861	10,602	-1,259	-10.61
Washington	18,097	17,226	-871	-4.81
Wilcox	13,183	12,779	-404	-3.06
Area Totals	194,247	181,555	-12,692	-6.53
Alabama	4,447,100	4,627,851	180,751	4.06

As illustrated, every county in the area is losing population, while the State of Alabama is growing. The loss is mainly attributed to the lack of job opportunities in the region.

Table 2. Population Composition - Source - 2000 Census

County	Population Total	White		Black		American Indians		Other		Hispanic	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Choctaw	15,922	8,779	55.1	7,027	44.1	25	0.2	24	0.2	67	0.4
Clarke	27,867	15,589	55.9	11,989	43.0	62	0.2	47	0.2	180	0.6
Conecuh	14,089	7,806	55.4	6,136	43.6	28	0.2	17	0.1	102	0.7
Dallas	46,365	16,496	35.6	29,332	63.3	50	0.1	232	0.5	255	0.5
Marengo	22,539	10,657	47.3	11,655	51.7	19	0.1	101	0.4	107	0.5
Monroe	24,324	14,047	57.7	9,747	40.1	236	1.0	103	0.4	191	0.8
Perry	11,861	3,660	30.9	8,111	68.4	9	0.1	17	0.1	64	0.5
Washington	18,097	11,759	65.0	4,867	26.9	1,289	7.1	24	0.1	158	0.9
Wilcox	13,183	3,626	27.5	9,479	71.9	19	0.1	34	0.3	25	0.2
	194,247	92,419	47.6	98,343	50.6	1,737	0.9	599	0.3	1,149	0.6

This data shows that the area is losing population, primarily from whites. This continues a trend started decades ago. African-Americans are now the majority race in the area. The Hispanic population grew significantly, but it is still relatively low.

Table 3. Income and Poverty Data - Source - 2000 Census

County	Total Number of Families	Number of Families Below Poverty	Percentage of Families Below Poverty	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income
Choctaw	4,549	942	20.7 %	\$14,635	\$32,950	\$41,294
Clarke	7,795	1,407	18.1 %	\$14,581	\$38,625	\$47,829
Conecuh	3,931	853	21.7 %	\$12,964	\$29,176	\$38,644
Dallas	12,622	3,438	27.2 %	\$13,638	\$37,783	\$49,095
Marengo	6,337	1,409	22.2 %	\$15,308	\$43,814	\$53,445
Monroe	6,815	1,237	18.2 %	\$14,862	\$35,182	\$44,303
Perry	3,073	960	31.2 %	\$10,948	\$34,956	\$43,850
Washington	5,072	750	14.8 %	\$14,081	\$37,000	\$44,246
Wilcox	3,401	1,229	36.1 %	\$10,903	\$33,668	\$43,060
Area Average	5,955	1,358	23.4 %	\$13,547	\$35,906	\$45,085
Alabama	1,223,185	153,113	12.5 %	\$18,189	\$38,539	\$46,939
U.S.	72,261,780.00	6,620,945.00	9.2 %	\$21,587	\$44,687	\$53,356

The area consistently lags behind the state and nation in poverty and income levels.

Table 4. Unemployment Data - Source - Alabama Department of Industrial Relations

County	2004	2005	2006	2007	August 2008
Choctaw	7.7	5.7	4.9	5.3	8.4
Clarke	8.0	5.5	4.0	5.4	9.6
Conecuh	7.6	5.4	5.0	5.7	8.3
Dallas	9.0	7.4	7.2	7.6	11.5
Marengo	5.5	5.0	4.1	4.8	6.7
Monroe	6.7	5.3	5.3	5.7	9.8
Perry	9.2	7.9	7.4	7.9	11.3
Washington	8.6	5.4	5.1	5.3	8.8
Wilcox	10.1	6.7	7.3	8.6	13.4
Area Totals	8.0	6.0	5.6	6.3	9.8
Alabama	4.5	3.6	3.6	3.7	4.9
US	5.5	5.1	4.6	4.6	6.1

Unemployment in the area is a chronic problem, always 3-5 percentage points above the state and Nation.

NATURAL RESOURCES OVERVIEW

The following is a discussion on the current condition and future challenges to the natural resources of the area, including agricultural and forestry production issues.

Table 5. Land Use Acres – Source- Alabama Agricultural Statistics 2006

County	Row Crop land		Pasture and Hayed land		Forest land		Water		Total Acres
	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	
Choctaw	514	0.1	3,118	0.5	584,145	99.1	225	0.1	589,184
Clarke	2,801	0.3	2,465	0.3	724,361	90.5	24,970	3.1	801,153
Conecuh	7,105	1.3	11,699	2.2	461,262	84.6	2,508	0.5	545,167
Dallas	84,833	13.4	68,154	10.7	421,196	66.3	9,091	1.4	635,525
Marengo	3,087	0.5	35,320	5.6	584,884	93.1	1,191	0.2	628,320
Monroe	39,941	6.0	14,273	2.2	533,200	80.6	1,135	0.2	661,646
Perry	10,075	2.2	36,266	7.8	304,693	65.8	0	0	462,842
Washington	5,700	0.8	3,067	0.4	610,199	87.7	1,636	0.2	696,058
Wilcox	4,108	0.7	31,399	5.4	468,299	80.7	5,100	0.9	580,281
Area Totals	158,224	2.8	205,761	3.7	4,692,290	83.8	46,100	0.8	5,600,186
State Totals	1,944,722	5.8	2,385,636	7.1	22,927,728	68.6	960,595	2.8	33,393,369

County	Urban land		Mined land		Other Land		Total Acres
	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	
Choctaw	740	0.1	0	0	402	0.1	589,184
Clarke	15,922	2.0	0	0	30,634	3.8	801,153
Conecuh	34,490	6.3	896	0.1	27,207	5.0	545,167
Dallas	13,422	2.1	450	0.1	38,379	6.0	635,525
Marengo	762	0.1	330	0.1	2,746	0.4	628,320
Monroe	14,259	2.2	1,130	0.1	57,468	8.7	661,646
Perry	274	0.1	0	0	111,534	24.1	462,842
Washington	12,400	1.8	0	0	62,996	9.1	696,058
Wilcox	5,027	0.9	54	0	66,290	0.4	580,281
Area Totals	97,296	1.7	2,860	0.1	397,656	7.1	5,600,186
State Totals	2,077,106	6.2	214,106	0.6	3,043,847	9.1	33,393,369

The soils of the RC&D Area are primarily within the Coastal Plains and the Alabama Blackland Prairie Major Land Resource Areas. The Blackland Prairie soils contribute to problems with on site sewage treatment and localized water quality issues, but generally water quality is excellent across the area. Water quantity is generally good for surface water sources while deep wells can bring good water in the Blackland Prairies and Coastal Plain areas. Cities utilize both surface water from rivers and deep wells for city and county water supplies.

The topography of the Council's area varies from gently rolling to moderately rolling with some steep slopes in Clarke, Choctaw, Southern Wilcox and Northern Monroe Counties. Crop production from row crops is primarily in the counties of Dallas and Monroe. There is some commercial aquaculture in Marengo, Perry and Dallas Counties. The Alabama and Tombigbee River basins combine in lower Clarke County and river traffic from barges on the Tenn-Tom waterway and barges servicing the forestry industry ply the area's waters.

The Area is blessed with plentiful water resources, abundant uplands with wetlands that support one of the most diverse ecosystems in Alabama. Wildlife and fish species are abundant with the hunting and fishing recreation activities an important part living in this area of Alabama.

Confined animal production is somewhat limited in the area with some poultry in the counties of Washington, Conecuh, Monroe and Perry. Confined Swine is limited also primarily in Perry and Dallas Counties.

The RC&D Area is situated in Southwestern Alabama and is in the heart of Alabama's Timber Belt. The forestry industry is a major contributor to our economy and remains the major land use in the Council's area. Forestry is expected to be the driving economic force for the area in the foreseeable future. The down side to the high amount of forestland is that it contributes to the non-diversified economy of the area. Recent declines of the forest product industry have adversely affected the jobs in the area. There is approximately 4.6 million acres of forestland in the area. The majority of the land is pine and lesser amounts in hardwoods. Over 95 percent of the forestlands are privately owned. Prescribed burning is a major part of timber stand improvement because of the low cost and the multiple benefits that can be obtained from this relatively low cost practice.

The Blackland prairie area of the Area is well suited to pasture and hayland. Over 205,000 acres are in pasture and hayland in the area. This is the second most intense agriculture use of the area. Pastureland and hayland in the area have suffered recently from continual droughts. The drought has added weakened stands of grazing land. Stress from overgrazing also contributes to weakening stands of grazing lands. The overgrazing is a product of not enough forage production due to a lack of rainfall and producers are forced to overgraze as they maintain herd size. Producers need technical assistance to plan and develop grazing systems that effectively rotate grazing animals, protect forage plants and ultimately reduce weed competition. Producers also need assistance understanding fertilizer alternatives. These include the use of animal manures and clovers. Both can improve grazing lands and provide significant economic benefits.

Cropland is a much smaller portion of the Ala-Tom area and soil erosion on cropland is a significant problem especially on the coastal plain soils. Sheet and rill erosion rates exceed the soil loss tolerance rates for many acres. Soil organic matter levels and soil quality levels are considered to be degrading rather than sustaining and improving. The high soil erosion rates and poor soil quality levels are due to the use of conventional tillage systems, the lack of good crop rotation systems and inadequate residue management practices. Some significant acreage of class III or above is being tilled and should be converted to other land uses. Producers need technical assistance to plan and develop conservation tillage systems that are less soil disturbing and are more sustainable. These systems should include strip till, no till or mulch till cropping systems. Use of these systems will improve soil condition indexes. Demonstrations and incentive programs could provide needed information to help producers adopt new, more conserving cropping systems for the area. Crop rotations that include a diversity of crops and high residue crops should be adapted to improve soil conditions. More sloping fields should be converted to grass or trees moving marginal lands out of production.

Public Participation Activities

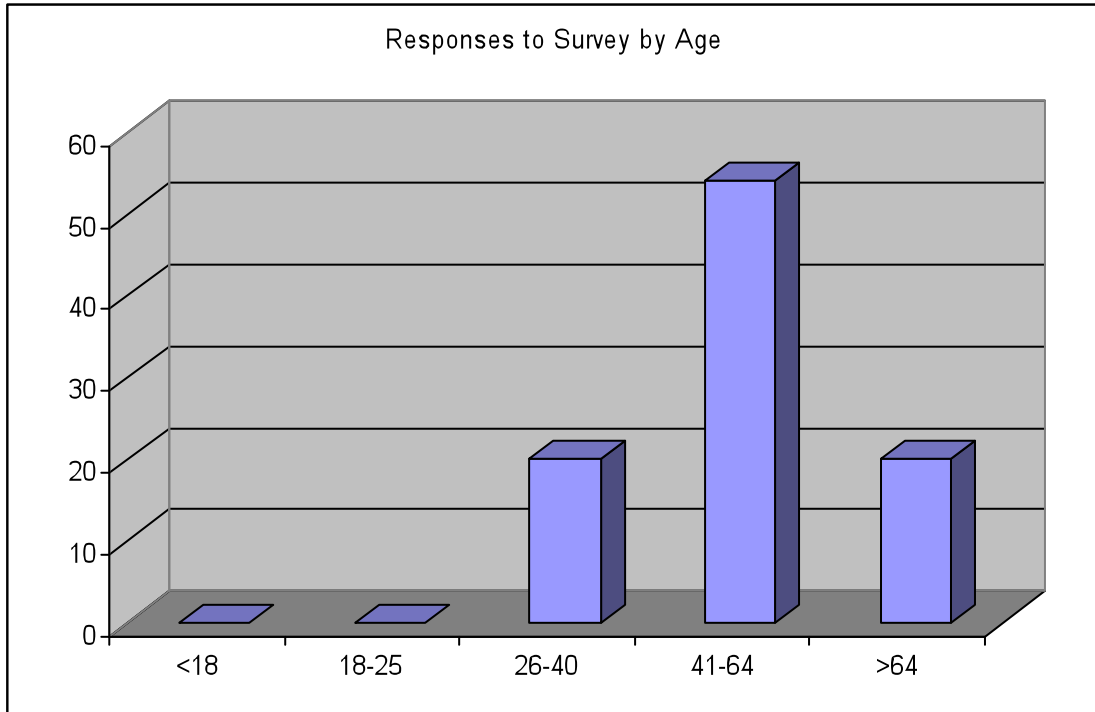
The Ala-Tom RC&D Council started gathering public information from citizens throughout the Council's Area in order to identify the needs and opportunities in the communities it serves. The information would be useful in formulating the goals, objectives and strategies in the revised area plan. The Council agreed to gather the information through meetings, written surveys, web surveys and individual calls or contacts.

Individuals participating in the survey were asked to respond to questions regarding priorities for Land Conservation, Water Management, Community Development and Land Management. Specific ratings were sought on the fields of Environmental and Agricultural Education, General Education, Small Farmer and Alternative Agriculture Initiative, Community and Economic Development, Tourism Promotion for Economic Development, and Recreational Facilities.

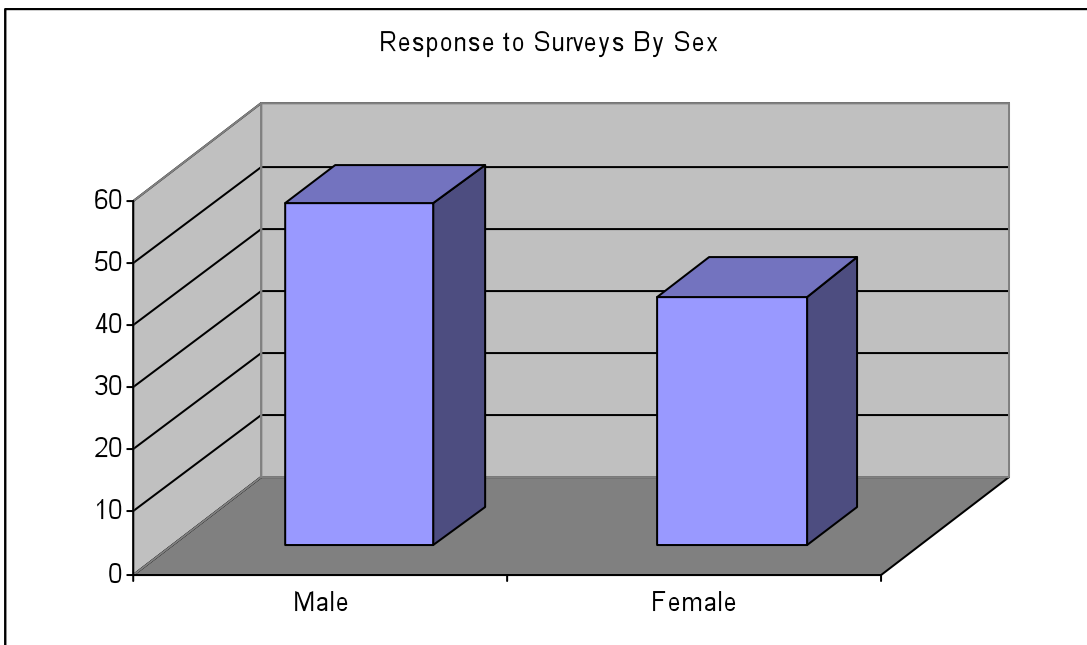
Once the surveys were collected, along with input from public, the Council discussed the results and developed goals, objectives and strategies to address the identified needs and opportunities. (See Appendix 1 for Sample Survey)

Survey responses primarily came from the age group 26 – 64, indicating the Ala-Tom RC&D Council Received input from a wide demographic group. Responses are presented in tabular and graphical formats in the pages that follow.

SURVEY RESPONSE BY AGE



SURVEY RESPONSE BY SEX



TABULAR SUMMARY OF COMMENTS BY RESPONDENTS TO ALA TOM RC&D PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Land Conservation

Specific items indicated by survey respondents are listed below.

Educating youth on land conservation
Educating youth on land conservation
Beautification and recycling projects
Environmental issues
Outdoor Classrooms and rain gardens
Less CRP acres
Invasive species control
Soil Conservation
Conservation Education
Erosion control projects
Erosion control projects
Invasive Species Control
Watershed conservation and upkeep
Land Mgt / Invasive Species Control
More Organic choices
Teaching limited resource citizens on management of property
Invasive Species Control
CRP use on open land and stream bank filter strips
CRP Mgt.
BMP activities
Hunting and Fishing tour trails
Energy Conservation and education
Litter control
Erosion control
Native Grasses
Invasive species, pocket parks, paving dirt roads
Need to partner with others such as forever wild
Focus Tourism on all counties, not just Clarke and Wilcox
Improve school grounds and county Highway ROW
Land Conservation

Respondents indicated a desire to work with educating youth on conservation, work with NRCS on erosion control projects that benefit the area, and invasive species control.

Water Management

Specific items indicated by survey respondents are listed below.

Promote murder creek reservoir project
Promote murder creek reservoir project
Water quality education in schools
Irrigation ponds and reservoirs
Clean rural water
Water safety classes
Environmental appreciation education
County sewer
Stream restoration, partner with ADEM
Livestock Water sources
Education and "how to" get involved in conservation
Educate deer hunters on disposal of entrails ..not water
Community sewage
Rural water supply (lakes and reservoirs)
Clean water
Clean water
Erosion along rural dirt roads
Conservation on private lands
Irrigation water for farmers
Clean water
Community Water Systems
Surface water for recreation and water systems, pave dirt roads, canoe and camping sites
Survey of water management needs
Disposal of water from roads and public land
Irrigation and tile drainage
Water Management
Need industry not tied to aviation, auto, timber or pulp and paper..need a call center

Respondents indicate a need to work on water resources for recreation and irrigation. Rural water and sewage disposal are problems identified.

Community Development

Specific items indicated by survey respondents are listed below.

Promote the murder creek reservoir project
Tourism development through birding trail
Dry Hydrants
Internet access across counties (wireless towers)
Ag Tourism
Goat Production
Work with employers to allow workers to become involved in communities
Alternative crops and Markets
More funding opportunities for projects
Internet tours incorporating deer hunts
Internet access across all counties (wireless towers)
Recycling Programs
Litter prevention and clean up of communities
Work with others for career fair and workplace training
Develop chambers of commerce in counties
Recreational Opportunities
Health care and rural ambulance service
Litter prevention
Regional tourism, dev. Of interest in rural heritage, adult computer literacy.
Park and School Ground development
Homes
Agriculture facilities
Senior Citizen Activities, Literacy Programs
Litter prevention and recycling
More buildings for Sr. citizens and Youth Dev.
Securing grants for local facilities and buildings
Small business
More buildings for Sr. citizens and Youth Dev.
Civic leadership development and service
Tourism
Civic leadership development and tourism
Community Dev.
More buildings for Sr. citizens and Youth Dev.
Agriculture facilities
Classes for Sr. Citizen, Recreation Facilities
Public golf, encourage meat slaughter market facilities
Needs assessments in rural community
Have to play catch up due to TK plant in community development
Educating communities leaders about community and economic development

There are many comments on Community Development. It is obvious developing communities and facilities in the Ala-Tom Area is a priority. Tourism and Leadership Development are priorities in this area. Developing internet access, prevention of litter and facilities that allow the area to grow are of interest to respondents.

Land Management

Specific items indicated by survey respondents are listed below.

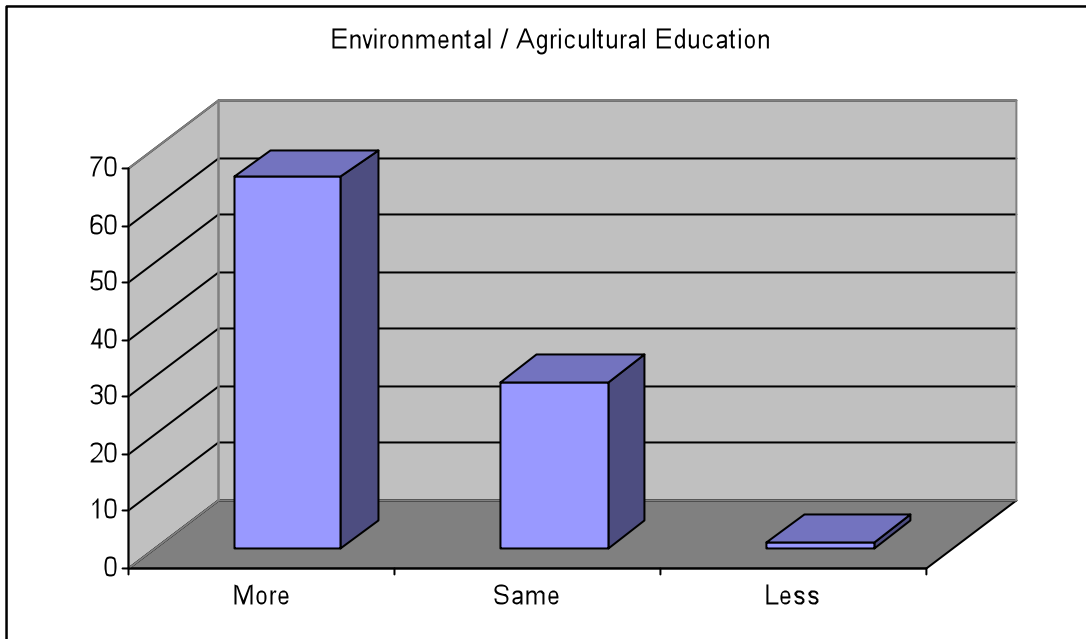
- Stewardship education in schools
- Control Invasive species
- More grazing and Hayland Management
- Wise use of resources
- Work with extension for education of landowners on landuse
- Anti Litter
- Educational programs for land owners on land mgt.
- Help small farmers manage lands
- Promote hunting and fishing by management of resources
- More subdivisions
- Address natural resource concerns
- More organic choices
- Biofuels and energy conservation also conservation education
- Soft wood trees and reforestation
- Cogon grass control
- Strive to make all lands productive
- Conservation
- Education programs
- Reforestation on Clear Cuts, Streambank Erosion Control
- Improve parks in counties (more than baseball)
- Cogongrass management
- Partner with industries and farmers to find new initiatives

Respondents indicate a need to educate land users on management of lands. Opportunities abound with opportunities of working with small and limited use landusers to encourage conservation, reforestation and invasive species control.

GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF SURVEY RESPONSES

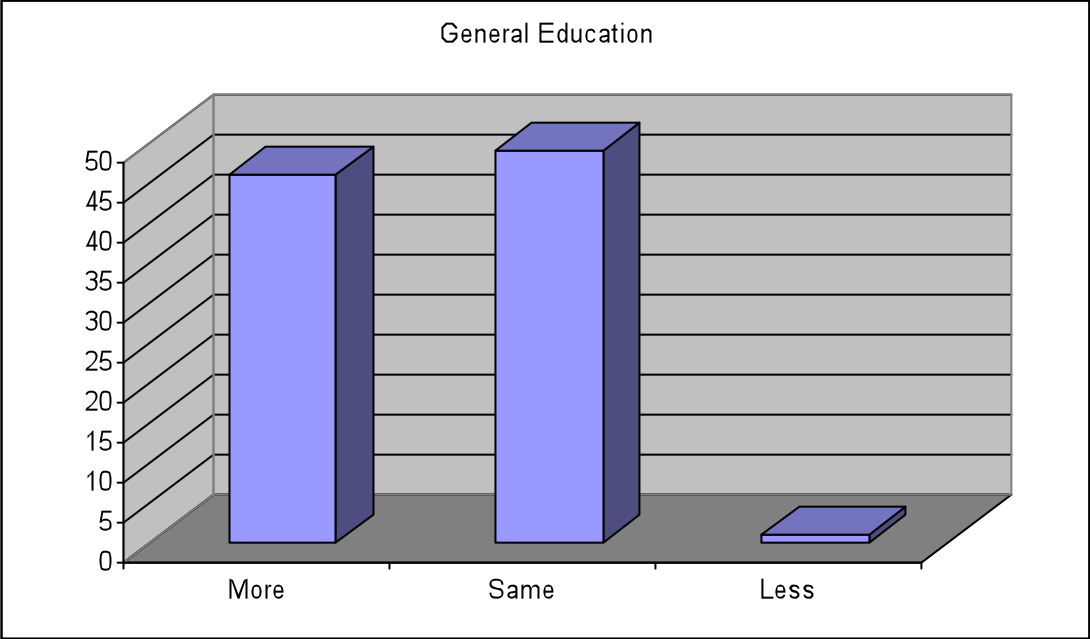
Participants were also asked about the level of specific Ala-Tom Involvement in specific types of projects and those responses are presented graphically as follows:

ENVIRONMENTAL AND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION



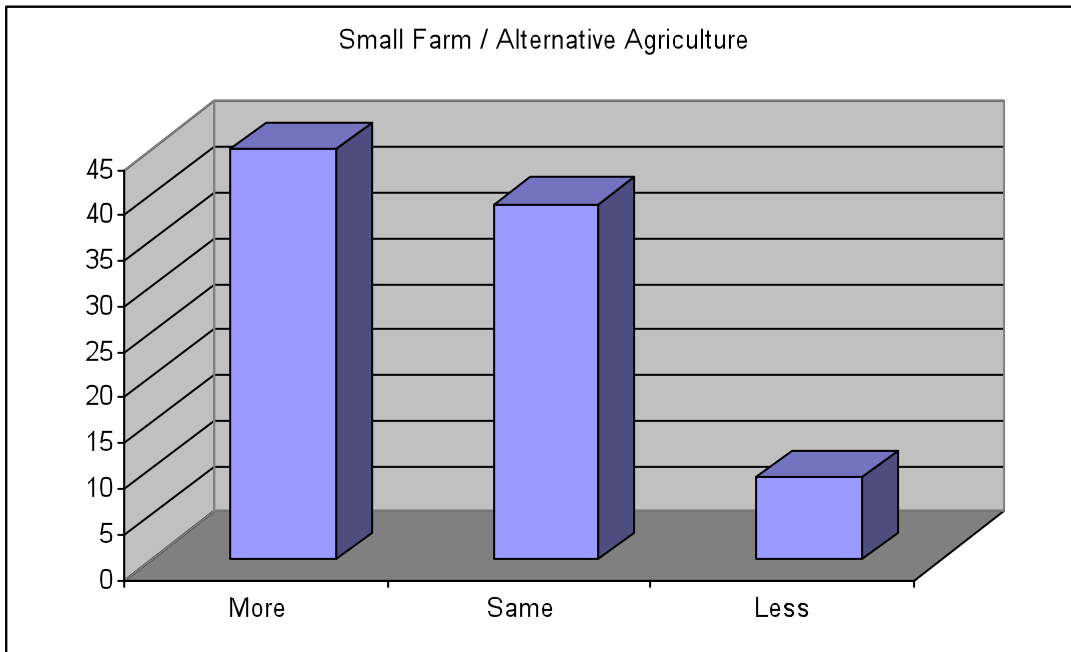
It is obvious from respondents that Environmental and Agricultural Education is a priority for the Area. More involvement in this area is encouraged by the respondents.

GENERAL EDUCATION



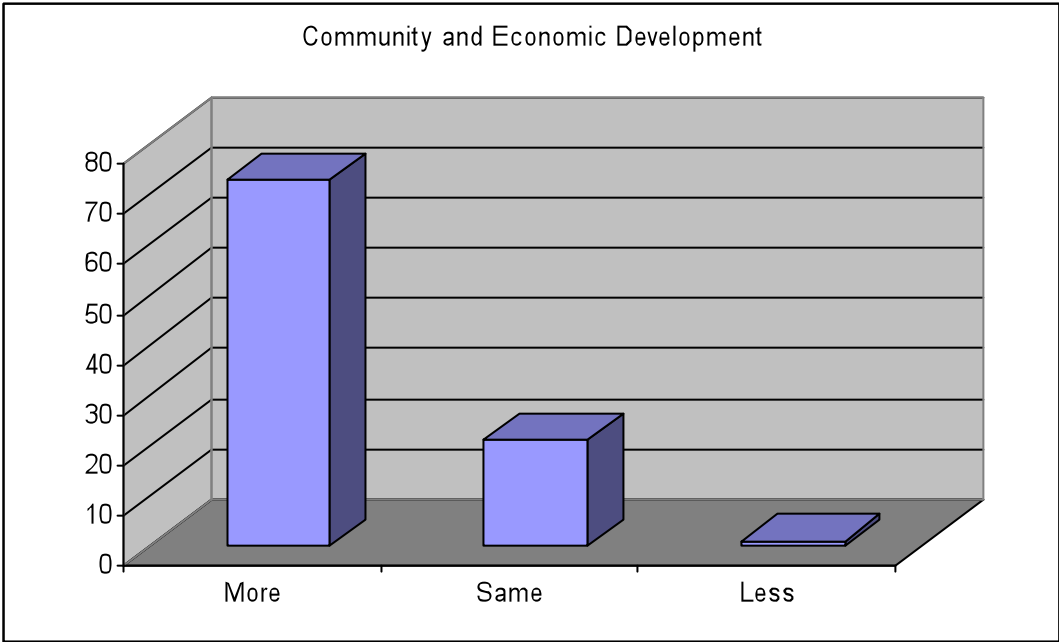
General Education in the Area apparently is balanced with More Involvement and Same Involvement being about the same.

SMALL FARM AND ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURE



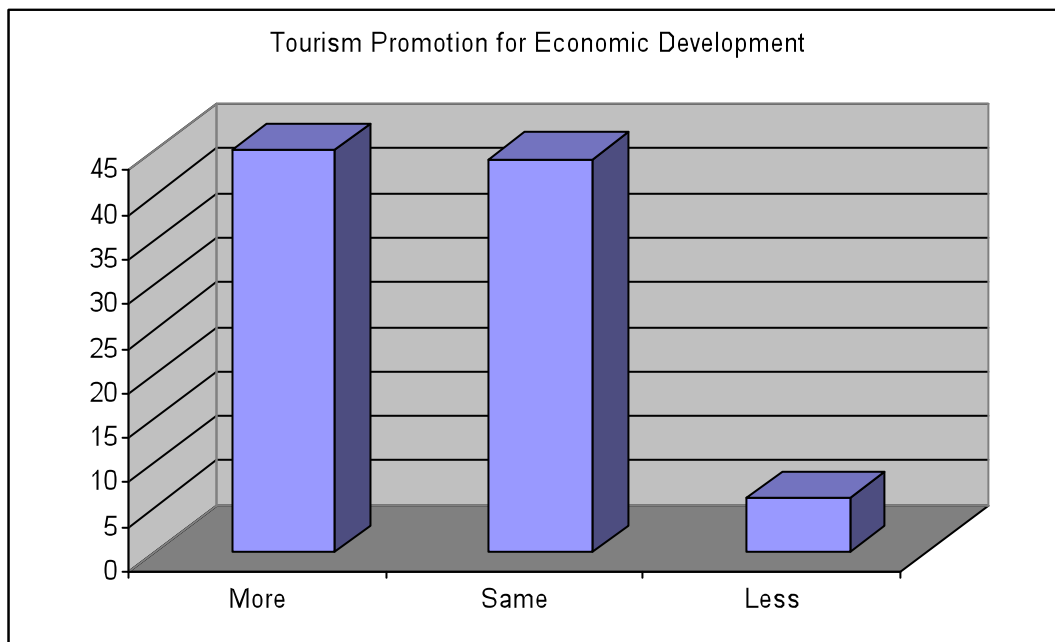
Respondents are satisfied with the balance of Small Farm and Alternative Agriculture involvement in the council.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



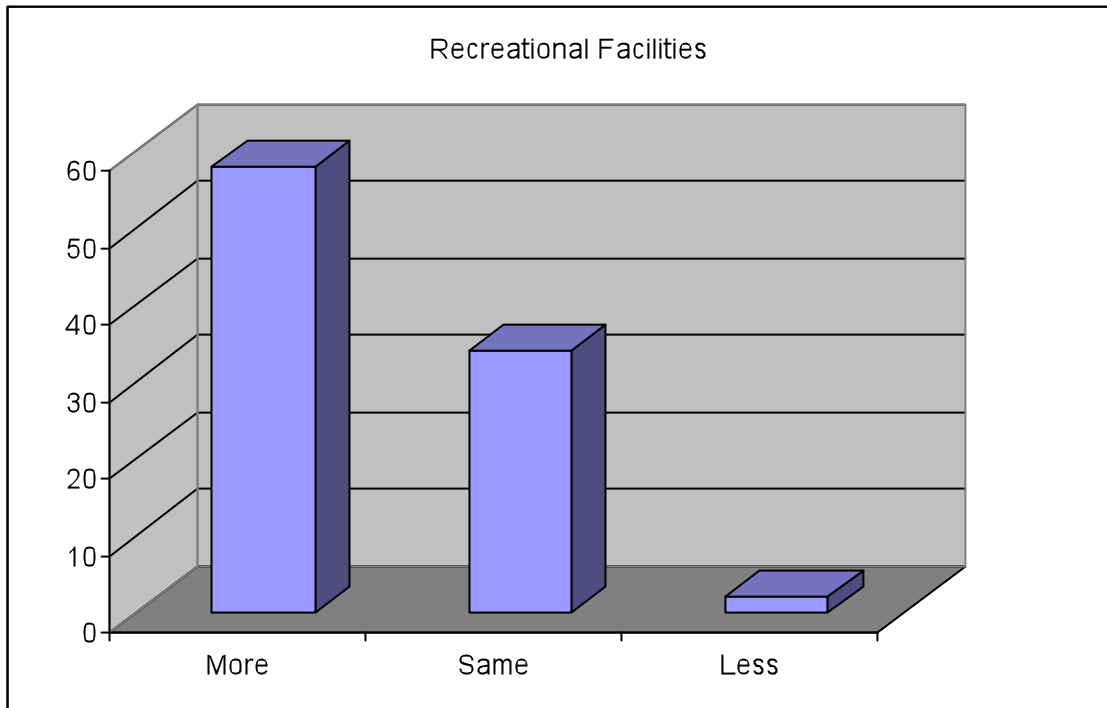
Respondents indicate a need in improving Community and Economic Development in the Ala-Tom Area. Recent depressed markets in the Timber Industry obviously reflect a need to develop the area and provide Jobs for residents.

TOURISM PROMOTION FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Respondents are well pleased with the balance of Tourism activity for Economic Development in the Ala-Tom Area.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES



There is a need in the Area to continue to develop Recreational Facilities over the Area. Parks, walking trails, pocket parks and various types of recreational facilities throughout the area.

AREA PLANNING GOALS 2009 - 2014

Element 1- Land Conservation

(Identified Issues/Need Environmental and Agricultural Education; Conservation, Preservation, Invasive species control)

Goal 1: Assist/develop (10) ten projects that preserve, enhance, and/or expand heritage and/or recreational/natural assets by the year 2013.

Objective 1: Beginning in 2009, assist a minimum of (1) one community per year in the preservation of open space, park and trail development, and/or natural/historical assets.

Strategy 1: Participate in (3) three local initiatives that preserve, protect and/or enhance natural areas by the year 2013.

Strategy 2: Participate in a minimum of (2) two initiatives that protect and/or enhance historically significant objects/ locations by 2013.

Strategy 3: Beginning in 2010 facilitate a minimum of (2) two educational meetings per year that promote preservation of open space, farmland and/or heritage.

Strategy 4: Assist in the promotion of environmental education by developing three (3) environmental education outdoor classrooms by 2012.

Strategy 5: Have active Urban Forest Programs in a minimum of 10 incorporated communities by 2013 and annual arbor / Urban Forestry events in each annually by 2012.

Strategy 6: Support the installation of a minimum of (1) erosion control project to prevent sedimentation from impacting water quality in the Ala-Tom Area prior to 2013. Sponsor workshop / demonstration meeting to encourage use of erosion control to prevent water and stream degradation on cropland, forestland or recreation lands.

Objective 2: Before 2013, develop at least (10) ten educational initiatives that provide awareness to the general public in regard to natural resource conservation.

Strategy 1: Beginning in 2010, organize and or assist in the organization of (1) one celebrations (i.e. water festival, earth day, etc.) or receptions per year through 2013.

Strategy 2: Through monthly website data updates, provide documents, information and linkages to local resources.

Strategy 3: Beginning in 2010, develop educational brochures and print and distribute a minimum of (250) two hundred fifty per year, through 2013.

Strategy 4: Utilize (1) one volunteer and/or intern to produce a finished product of historic or natural resource significance by the year 2013.

Element 2- Community Development

(Identified Needs: Tourism Development and Promotion for Economic and Community Development, Workforce Development, Trade Skills Education, Infrastructure Upgrades, improved water and sewer)

Goal 1: Assist local governments, community groups and agencies with development of the area many tourism opportunities to promote Economic Development.

Objective 1: Beginning in 2009, enhance the tourism and recreational infrastructure of the ALA-TOM Area.

Strategy 1: Develop a minimum of five (5) new public launch or campsites on waterways through the nine county RC&D area to promote eco-tourism and water trails.

Strategy 2: Continue to enhance the Black Belt Birding trail and facilitate a minimum of one (1) birding event before 2012.

Strategy 3: Develop a minimum of (4) four different promotional brochures, monthly updates to web site and (1) one video on tourism assets of the area.

Strategy 4: Develop (2) two regional guides for camping, hiking, canoeing/boating, cycling and horseback riding for the area before 2013

Strategy 5: Expand the successful Blackbelt Treasures program into the lower regions of the Ala-Tom area by implementing a "Timberbelt Arts and Crafts" program before 2013.

Strategy 6: Promote the hunting and fishing industry by sponsorship of hunter appreciation, Hunting expo, Turkey Hunter Hall of Fame, Fishing Expo's etc. That will encourage and expand the commercial aspect of hunting and fishing as a tourism and economic development activity in the Ala Tom Area. Sponsor at least (3) three such events before 2013.

Strategy 7: Assist with enhancement of the Area's public fishing lakes and assist with the development with new lakes or public fishing access at (2) locations in the Ala-Tom area before 2013.

Goal 2: Assist with development/improvement of public services and/or facilities in (5) five areas by the year 2013.

Objective1: Beginning in 2009, support and/or assist in improving public facilities in each of the nine council counties in the next (5) years.

Strategy 1: Attain necessary funding to help equip (2) two under-funded Volunteer Fire Departments with training and/or equipment to better serve the needs in their communities by the year 2011.

Strategy 2: Work in a minimum of (3) three area communities to preserve and upgrade existing public facilities by the year 2013.

Strategy 3: Establish trail projects in (3) three communities to promote community health and welfare of residents by the year 2011.

Strategy 4: Assist the Alabama Tombigbee Regional Planning Commission, or other agencies in the development and/or improvement of (2) two recreational facilities by the year 2013.

Strategy 5: Host a minimum of (2) two grant- writing workshops by the year 2013.

Strategy 6: Participate in the facilitation/implementation of (2) two innovative storm water or wastewater treatment systems by the year 2013.

Goal 3: Provide educational and /or workforce development opportunities to regional participants by the year 2013.

Objective 1: Participate in (3) three workshops in the next (5) five years designed to educate youth and/or unskilled labor workers in the areas of agriculture, economics, or trade skills development.

Strategy 1: Work with (1) one educational facility to administer a minimum of (1) one community development or job skills training programs per year.

Strategy 2: Provide technical assistance to (2) two communities to develop, expand, or support local farmers markets by the year 2013.

Strategy 3: Support (4) four programs (through funding or technical assistance) that targets trade skills training by the year 2010.

Strategy 4: Design, fund, and/or install educational areas in a minimum of (1) one public space by end of year 2011.

Strategy 5: Promote educational opportunities by promoting, funding, designing (3) three after school/ summer reading and math programs for students before 2012.

Element 3- Land Management

(Identified Needs: Development of green infrastructure, alternative energy sources, energy independence, expanded recycling programs, preservation of Small Farms and Alternative Agriculture)

Goal 4: Assist (5) communities in the development, protection and management of the area's natural resources by 2013.

Objective 1: Create and or enhance five local food project and market opportunities by 2013.

Strategy 1: Continue the revolving loan program to support a minimum of 10 small and emerging agricultural business by 2013.

Strategy 2: Conduct a minimum of (3) three education and outreach activities for sustainable agriculture and alternative agriculture and direct marketing opportunities by 2013.

Strategy 3: Continue through partnerships and sponsorships the small farmer initiative by promoting and sustaining the vegetable marketing opportunities by sponsorship of cooperatives, educational events, and new producers by assisting at least (3) three events and (6) six new producers by 2012.

Objective 2: 2009-2013 participate in one (1) consistent initiative that educates/assists in building local capacity for alternative energy sources and/or conserves natural resources.

Strategy 1: Before 2013, attend/host at least (1) one educational event that encourages and promotes the production and use of alternative fuels, biomass, and other alternative energy sources.

Strategy 2: Assist in providing (5) five educational opportunities to participants through programs that promote energy conservation, alternative energy and natural resource conservation by 2013.

Strategy 3: Work with partners and other government and private organizations to expand or develop Biomass and other under-utilized alternative fuel materials. Help develop at least (1) one producer to develop, demonstrate and/or expand biomass / alternative fuel usage by 2013.

Strategy 4: Work with partners to develop recycling opportunities by providing workshops to educate local governments and citizens on recycling. Conduct at least (2) two recycle stations such as Project Rose, in the area before 2012 and have at least (1) one workshop of recycling opportunities.

Strategy 5: Develop a recycling program in 4 of the nine RC&D Counties before 2014 and establish or expand anti-littering programs in (3) three counties before 2013

Strategy 6: Develop a program for disposal of small quantity of household hazardous waste and electronic equipment recycling. Implement or sponsor (2) two such recycling events in the area and utilize brochures and web page to promote the events. Complete implementation before 2013.

Objective 3: Establish and/or improve (50) fifty acres of habitat or restoration and enhancement for fish and wildlife by 2014.

Strategy 1: Restore a minimum of 40 acres of drained or devalued wetlands to restore wetland habitat and benefits before 2013

Strategy 2: Conduct a minimum of (1) one, hands on educational opportunity for (50) participants regarding habitat and stream health before 2011.

Strategy 3: Create wildlife habitat by installing a minimum of (2000) two thousand native Alabama plants on (1) one project site by the year 2011.

Strategy 4: Demonstrate alternative waste disposal systems for failed septic system replacement. Provide a minimum of (2) two demonstration projects before 2013.

Strategy 5: Participate in demonstrations and educational seminars on controlling invasive species affecting the forest and recreation resources across the Ala-Tom Area. Provide a minimum of (4) demonstration projects by partnering with Alabama Invasive Species Councils or Soil and Water Conservation Districts before 2014.

Element 4- Water Management

(Identified Needs: Conservation, education, development of clean water, and promoting wise management)

Goal 5: Participate in (2) two initiatives that protect and improve the area's air and water quality.

Objective 1: Assist in development and implementation of one (1) water quality project before 2013.

Strategy 1: Develop water management plan for (1) one targeted impaired stream by 2012.

Strategy 2: Conduct a minimum of (1) one workshop/meeting per year to address water conservation innovation, and/or educational opportunities to landowners/municipalities.

Strategy 3: Support (through financial or other means) (1) one volunteer water monitoring kit to groups/educators by end of year 2011.

Strategy 4: Seek funds for stream restoration projects and/or monitoring of (1) one impaired stream per year.

Objective 2: By the year 2013, educate a minimum of (250) two hundred fifty participants regarding water quality issues.

Strategy 1: Assist with organizing (2) two workshops or celebrations by the year 2010.

Strategy 2: Promote water conservation through the production of a minimum of (4) four educational brochures by 2013.

Strategy 3: Implement a minimum of (1) one water harvesting system (Rain Garden) on a community property or school by 2012.

Strategy 4: Co Sponsor or Sponsor at least (1) one minimum tillage event to encourage more adoption of No till, Minimum Till or Mulch Till in the area by 2013

CURRENT AND POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH USDA AND OTHERS

Federal

USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service
USDA- Farm Service Agency
USDA- Rural Development
USDA- Agricultural Research Service
USDA- Forest Service
US Fish and Wildlife Service

State

Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Commission
Alabama Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Alabama Association of RC&D Councils
Alabama Cooperative Extension System
Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries
Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Alabama Department of Environmental Management
Alabama Department of Public Health
Alabama Farmers Federation
Alabama Forestry Commission
Alabama Power Company
Auburn University Center for Architecture and Urban Studies
Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
Alabama Tombigbee Regional Planning Commission
Alabama Urban Forestry Association
Alabama Clean Water Partnership
Southeastern Association of RC&D Councils
Choctaw County Soil and Water Conservation District
Conecuh County Soil and Water Conservation District
Clarke County Soil and Water Conservation District
Dallas County Soil and Water Conservation District
Marengo County Soil and Water Conservation District
Monroe County Soil and Water Conservation District
Perry County Soil and Water Conservation District
Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District
Wilcox County Soil and Water Conservation District
Auburn University
Tuskegee University
Legacy, Inc
Soil and Water Conservation Society – Alabama Chapter

County and City Governments of the following Counties:

Choctaw
Conecuh
Clarke
Dallas

Monroe
Marengo
Perry
Washington
Wilcox

LINKAGES TO THE NRCS STRATEGIC PLAN

The Goals, objectives and strategies included in the ALA-TOM Council's Area Plan will address the mission goals of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Strategic Plan; "Productive Lands – Healthy Environments".

High Quality, Productive Soils; Clean and Abundant Water

- Water Festival / Education Program
- Minimum Tillage Workshops
- Stream Restoration Program
- Minimum Tillage Promotion and Demonstration
- Alternative Waste Treatment Demonstration

Healthy Plant and Animal Communities

- Sediment and Erosion Control Workshops
- Wetland Restoration Program
- Birding Trail and Sanctuary Development
- Invasive Species Control Program
- Reestablishment of Native Plant Communities
- Enhancement and development of public fishing lakes

Clean Air

- Farm and Ranchland Preservation Program
- Urban Forestry Program

An Adequate Energy Supply

- Biomass / Alternative Energy Workshops
- Minimum Tillage Promotion and Demonstration
- Energy Conservation Education

Working Farms and Ranch Lands

- Farm and Ranchland Preservation Program
- Small Farmer Initiative
- Local Grown Food Initiative
- Revolving Loan Program for Conservation Practice and Emerging Businesses

CLOSING PAGES

The ALA-TOM Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc. agrees that the RC&D program will be conducted in compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions as contained in Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, the Civil Rights Restoration act of 1987 (Public Law 100-259) and other nondiscrimination statutes; namely, Section 504, of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Agreements of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and in accordance with the regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture (7CFR-15, Subparts A & B) which provide that no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, or handicap/disability be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial (or technical) assistance from the Department of Agriculture or any agency thereof.

The ALA-TOM Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc. agrees that the signing of this document constitutes agreement to comply with federal laws concerning restrictions on lobbying, a drug-free workplace, and responsibilities for non-procurement, suspension, and disbarment, and state review.

The ALA-TOM Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc. hereby adopts this RC&D Area Plan and agrees to effectively use the assistance provided by the United States Department of Agriculture to realize the goals and objectives outlined herein. This action authorized at an official meeting of the ALA-TOM RC&D Council, Inc. on _____, 2009.

ALA-TOM RC&D Council, Inc.

BY: _____ Date: _____
Chairperson

Attest: _____ Date: _____
Secretary

US Department of Agriculture – Natural Resource Conservation Service

The State Conservationist hereby acknowledges the attached Area Plan of the ALA-TOM RC&D Council, Inc., as meeting the requirements under Public Law 97-98 to receive assistance from USDA.

Approved By: _____ Date: _____
State Conservationist

APPENDIX

**ALA-TOM Resource Conservation and Development
(RC&D) Council, Inc.
Survey for Input on Five Year Plan Revision**

The ALA-TOM RC&D Council is in the process of revising its Area Plan. This five year strategic plan is to provide guidance to the RC&D Council in the use of its resources in addressing problems, needs and opportunities in our nine-county region in Southwest Alabama which are as follows: Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Dallas, Marengo, Monroe, Perry, Washington and Wilcox. We are soliciting your input as to what you feel is the direction the Council should take over the next five years.

The mission of the ALA-TOM RC&D Council is to conserve and develop all resources to enhance the quality of life in the area. To learn more of how the ALA-TOM RC&D Council works, click on the "About RC&D" tab on the Council's Home Page at www.ala-tomrcd.org. There you can see the goals, objectives and strategies in our current Area Plan.

Over the past five years (2004-2008), the Council has completed 105 projects. To see these projects, go to ALA-TOM web site and click on www.ala-tomrcd.org. These projects fall into the following categories:

1. Environmental and Agricultural Related Education (17 projects)
2. General Education (16 projects)
3. Small Farmer/ Alternative Agriculture (16 projects)
4. Community and Economic Development/ Improvement (23 projects)
5. Tourism Promotion for Economic Development (12 projects)
6. Recreational Facilities (21 projects)

In order to comply with the requirements of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service Resource Conservation and Development Program, the Council must work within one or more of the following areas:

1. Land Conservation – controlling erosion and sedimentation
2. Water Management – water conservation, use, water quality, flooding, reservoirs
3. Community Development – Improving, developing, and protecting all aspects of a community, including the economy
4. Land Management – conserving and developing energy, protecting agricultural lands, and protecting fish and wildlife habitat

Please complete this form and return to us at ALA-TOM RC&D. If you would like you can fill this form out on line at www.ala-tomrcd.org by clicking on the "COMMENTS" tab across the top of site home page and then choosing to "Take the survey online by clicking here" option at the bottom of the page, or you can mail it to ALA-TOM RC&D Council, Inc., Post Office Box 355, Thomasville, Alabama 36784.

SURVEY

Please complete the following survey as completely as possible. Your input will be kept confidential.

Date Completed: _____

I reside in the following county:

- Choctaw
- Clarke
- Conecuh
- Dallas
- Marengo
- Monroe
- Perry
- Washington
- Wilcox

My age is:

- Less than 18 yrs.
- 18- 25
- 26- 40
- 41- 64
- 65+

I am a:

- Elected Official
- Community Organization Leader
- Community Volunteer
- Private Citizen
- Business Owner/Operator
- Other _____

I live the following area:

- Rural
- Incorporated City or Town

I am:

- Male
- Female

I am interested in becoming a volunteer with ALA-TOM RC&D:

Contact me at (email address or phone) _____
(Optional)

I believe the greatest problem or need of my community/county/ region is:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The ALA-TOM RC&D Council should spend the following amount of time and energy on the following types of projects:

- More ***Environmental/Agricultural Education***
- About the Same
- Less

- More ***General Education***
- About the Same
- Less

- More
- About the Same
- Less

Small Farmer/Alternative Agriculture

- More
- About the Same
- Less

Community and Economic Development

- More
- About the Same
- Less

Tourism Promotion for Economic Development

- More
- About the Same
- Less

Recreational Facilities

I believe the ALA-TOM RC&D Council should look into these projects in the USDA/NRCS categories:

Land Conservation _____

Water Management _____

Community Development _____

Land Management _____

Please use the following space (and any additional pages needed) to record any comment, concern, or suggestion for the ALA-TOM RC&D Council to consider in its future plans:

Please mail completed form to:

ALA-TOM RC&D Council, Inc.
Post Office Box 355
Thomasville, Alabama 36784-0355