

Title:	Resurrecting Rural Communities		
Sponsoring Agency	NIFA	Project Status	COMPLETE
Funding Source	Non Formula	Reporting Frequency	Annual
Accession No.	223577	Grants.gov No.	GRANT10576727
Project No.	MISW-2010-03138	Proposal No.	2010-03138
Project Start Date	09/01/2010	Project End Date	08/31/2013
Reporting Period Start Date	09/01/2010	Reporting Period End Date	08/31/2013
Submitted By	Frank Taylor	Date Submitted to NIFA	12/17/2013

Program Code: BFRDP

Program Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher

Project Director

Frank Taylor
601-291-2704
fltaylor@bellsouth.net

Recipient Organization

WINSTON COUNTY SELF HELP
716 OLD ROBINSON RD
Louisville, MISSISSIPPI 393396703
DUNS No. 169591851

Performing Department

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Co-Project Directors

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Departments

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Non-Technical Summary

The Winston County Self-Help Cooperative (WCSHC) is seeking funding from USDA to support its project, Resurrecting Rural Communities. This project is designed to assist new and beginning farmers in obtaining access to information, services, technical assistance, funding and business development support for their agricultural enterprises. WCSHC is requesting \$317,466 in Standard Project BFRDP funding to support this innovative project. \$145,000 will be provided as cash and in-kind matching fund support for the project. Project funds will be used to provide training and services for 150 beginning farmers in Eastern Mississippi and Western Alabama. Due to WCHSC's experience and base of support in the community, it is estimated that all beginning farmer participants will be African-American minority farmers and ranchers. Winston County Self Help Cooperative is a community based nonprofit organization, serving small and limited resource farmers/ranchers primarily in central and eastern counties of Mississippi. Winston County Self Help Cooperative is located in Louisville, Mississippi. The co-op organized in 1985 as an agricultural association under Mississippi State Law, which is equivalent to a cooperative. The group is composed of socially disadvantaged small farmers and ranchers which includes men, women and youth. Winston County Self Help Cooperative's mission is to help save rural America by providing technical and managerial assistance to small and limited resource farmer and ranchers. WCSHC's efforts have afforded African-American farmers and ranchers opportunities to gain market access, improve management skills, enroll in cost-share and incentive programs and improve their overall income. Through Winston County Self Help Cooperative economic development efforts has generate income, jobs, training and a spirit of self-help for small farmers/ranchers in east central Mississippi. With our Resurrecting Rural Communities Project, WCSHC believes that we can effectively match USDA and matching fund resources to deliver high-quality services, support and training to the next generation of farmers in our region. WCSHC has a strong history of working in and with African-American youth, and we understand the need the demand for these important services. During our recent period of growth and success, we have built the organizational capacity and relationships to achieve the goals of this project. These funds will help us sustain this period of growth and success while reaching one of the BFRDP's key goals of reaching minority and underserved beginning farmers.

Accomplishments

Major goals of the project

WCSHC is organizing ongoing training and education programs that will provide resources to beginning African-American farmers and ranchers in Eastern Mississippi and Western Alabama. Specific objectives are for participants to obtain the following services: Agricultural enterprise business planning support Farm finance information and access to capital Book-keeping and record-keeping assistance Sustainable agriculture production and marketing assistance Natural resource management assistance Education and access to cost-share programs Legal support for farm and estate planning services

What was accomplished under these goals?**OUTCOMES**

After three (3) years of operation **WCSHC** surveyed one hundred and five (105) program participants. Findings indicated 85% had a change in knowledge; 75% had a change in attitude; 75% had a change in behavior/ approach; 45% has a change in farm/ land management practices; 73% developed farm plans; 65% change in marketing practices; 65% changed business practices; 90% of program participants still operate their farm and 10% have discontinued farming. Results from our financial and business workshops indicated that there was an overall increase of 15% farm income for program participants.

Program participants participated in a series of USDA Program Awareness Workshops. Results of those workshops show that there was a 65% increase in participation in USDA Programs. Many small farmers and ranchers took advantage of some of those programs. One that we feel that was the most helpful to our program participants was the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Approximately thirty one (31) small farmers / ranchers were able to receive financial assistance with the construction of hoop houses, fencing, development of ponds, land grazing and irrigation.

A series of training sessions was conducted to assist existing as well as beginning farmers and ranchers with the completion of farm loan applications. A total of thirteen (13) farm loan applications were submitted which included loans for farm operating, farm ownership and youth loans. A total of ten (10) were approved in the amount of seven hundred and eighty three thousand (\$783,000)dollars.

WCSHC Youth Group consists of sixty five (65) youth, ages ranged from ten (10) to eighteen (18) years old. Twenty five (25) youth participated in our agriculture youth mentor program. As a result of the mentor training program, six (6) youth received loans from FSA to purchase livestock and equipment and four (4) youth were awarded scholarships from Alcorn State University to major in Agriculture.

What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

The cooperative conducted fifteen (15) official business sessions for its members and other program participants. These sessions provides important information on cooperative and leadership development, Grant writing, the empowering of rural communities and the County committee election process. State and County Officials were invited to attend these sessions. Approximately thirty eight (38) cooperative members and other program participants were in attendance for each session. WCSHC meet first Monday @ 3:50 p.m. or on Saturday mornings 6:50 a.m. at Winston County Extension Office in Louisville, MS.

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

An Annual Report was completed and disseminated to Program Participants, USDA Offices, Local and state Officials, report was place in our quarterly news letter and shown on our WCSHC website.

What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

{Nothing to report}

Participants**Actual FTEs for this Reporting Period**

Role	Faculty and Non-Students	Students within Staffing Roles			Computed Total by Role
		Undergraduate	Graduate	Post-Doctorate	
Scientist	0	0	0	0	0
Professional	2	0	0	0	2
Technical	0	0	0	0	0
Administrative	1	0	0	0	1
Other	1	0	0	0	1
Computed Total	4	0	0	0	4

Target Audience**INPUTS**

Winston County Self Help Cooperative (WCSHC) is a community based nonprofit organization, serving small and limited resource farmers and ranchers primarily in central and eastern counties of Mississippi and Alabama. **Winston County Self Help Cooperative** launched its **Beginning Farmers/Rancher Development Program** on September 1, 2010. Our targeted audience consisted of seventy five (75) small farmers/ranchers located in East Mississippi and Western Alabama. During

three (3) years of the project, **WCSHC** was able to increase its program participants to approximately one hundred and five (105) small farmers/ranchers.

WCSHC's Outreach Training Staff partnered with Land Grant Institutions, USDA Offices and other local and state organizations to identify, educate and provide technical and managerial training to small farmers/ranchers in targeted areas. Training included workshops, field days, educational classes and one-on-one farm visits. Training consisted of livestock and crop production, forestry and land management, financial and farm business management, credit counseling, estate plans, record-keeping, year-end analysis and whole farm planning. Over one hundred and five (105) small farmers/ranchers participated in these training sessions.

Fifteen (15) training and educational workshops were conducted during 2013 which includes forestry production, hoop house production training, crop and livestock production, marketing of alternative crops, credit counseling, estate planning, whole farm planning, food safety, canning and preserving. Approximately two hundred and fifty seven (257) small farmers/ranchers were in attendance.

Sixteen (16) USDA Programs Awareness Workshops were conducted. These workshops informed small farmers/ranchers of USDA Programs availability as well as other programs offered on the federal, state and county levels. Our program staff worked closely with Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Rural Development, Land grant University's and other partners to conduct these informational workshops. Natural Resource Conservation Service discussed financial assistance, livestock management, small ruminants and Specialty Crop Initiatives. Farm Service Agency discussed the new Micro-Loan Program and other lending resources. Rural Development discussed their housing loans and grants. The majority of these workshops were held on small farmers/ranchers farms. Approximately two hundred and twenty four (224) small farmers/ranchers and public citizens were in attendance.

There were several methods that the **WCSHC** used to promote USDA and others programs. The most effective were conferences, rallies, quarterly newsletters, brochures, promotional flyers, weekly radio talk shows and **WCSHC** website.

WCSHC conducted four (4) Saving Rural America and Youth Conferences. 2013's Conferences Theme "Building Healthy Communities through Health Foods generated hope in rural America". The purpose of conferences provided an atmosphere of learning, networking and strengthening families' values. The first conference was held on February 2, 2013 at 4C's Activity Center Tylertown MS with fifty five (55) small farmers/ranchers and other constituent's attended. The second conference was held on February 9, 2013 at the Multi – Purpose Building in Collins, MS. Approximately eighty (80) small farmers/ranchers in attendance. Wayne County Conference was held on February 16, 2013 at Wayne County Vocational Center the conference drew eighty five (85) participants. WCSHC 6th SRAC was held on February 23 & 24, 2013 at the Louisville Coliseum in Louisville, MS. The WCSHC closed conference season with two hundred and forty (240) small farmers/ranchers, USDA and Extension staff.

WCSHC staff conducted one rally. The goal of the rally were to engage farmers, consumers, service providers, stake holders, extension and other continents raise awareness of team work and to disseminate credible information to rural America which will propel end user to develop success farm enterprises.

WCSHC hosted thirteen (13) live talk radio programs. These radio talk shows allowed USDA Officials, Extension and non-profit organizations personnel to dialogue on issues affecting landowners, farmers/ranchers and natural resources enthusiasts. WCSHC's radio program has a listen audience of twenty four thousand five hundred (24,500) targeted in the southeastern states with exponentially growth throughout the United States.

Visit us online every Monday at 6:00 pm CST @ www.blogtalkradio.com/savingruralamerica or call 323-580-5735 to speak to the host.

Agribusiness Management Specialists conducted one hundred and seventeen (117) one-on-one farm visits to small farmers/ranchers in targeted counties. Program participants were advised on livestock production, crop production, forest management plans, forage management plans, record keeping and other outreach services.

Products

{Nothing to report}

Other Products

Product Type

Audio or Video

Description

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WCSHC provides information to small farmers/ranchers through its monthly newsletters which include USDA Programs, crop production, extension, upcoming events and others. You can read previous newsletters at the website www.wcshc.com

Changes/Problems

{Nothing to report}