

Oconee

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2022

In 2022, Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District (OSWCD) updated its 5-year Strategic Plan. Primary goals designated within the plan include increased conservation planning with local governments, increased conservation awareness through community education outreach, and increased awareness and support of current and future farmers in Oconee County.

The increase in state appropriated funds enabled OSWCD to start and maintain the Oconee Seed Exchange which is designed to encourage community members to engage in gardening, harvesting vegetables, and saving seeds to exchange with other community members. Packets of seeds are available in the district's Seed Bank to all community members. In addition, a program named "Sprout for Sprouts" was initiated to assist local K-12 teachers in gaining instructional materials and supplies geared towards lessons in seed germination and growth. Teachers can visit the office to get seeds, peat cups, and other materials for individual classes or whole grade levels to learn about the planting and germination process and to raise plants they can put in their own home gardens.

OSWCD participated in the South Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair in Seneca, SC where an educational outreach booth was maintained by staff. Attendees had access to information related to the importance of local agriculture, conservation, and preservation of natural resources. Our district continues to award the Grobuskly Scholarship to students in Oconee who intend to major in natural resource studies in college, as well as continued promotion of NACD's Art and Essay Contest with this year's theme of "Healthy Soil, Healthy Life". Forty acres of land were placed in an easement this year, and there are five active applications for easement protection in the works!

Other Notable Accomplishments



Oconee County FFA students presented this handmade logo sign to the district in November.



Mark A. Fischer began as new District Manager for OSWCD on November 21, 2022.

Conservation by the Numbers

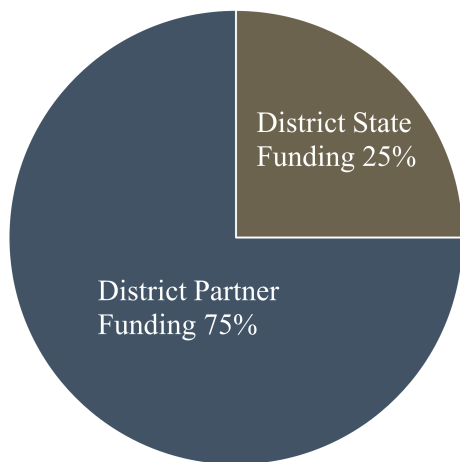
- 13 students from West-Oak Middle school submitted artwork for the NACD Art Contest which was made into a calendar
- 10 community youth participated in presentations at Whispering Pines Farm regarding baby goats, lambs, and forage expectations
- 35 FFA members from area middle and high schools participated in our Agricultural Awards Banquet in November

2023 District Plans

- Offer minimum of two conservation workshops for homeowners, farmers, or students
- Continue efforts to promote awareness and use of the district's no-till drill rental program
- Regular updates to district website and social media
- Update and improve educational programs and materials for K-12 public and private schools

South Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Districts - 2022 Impact

State FY23 Conservation District Funding



For every \$1 of state appropriated funds to Conservation Districts, \$3 on average is leveraged to implement conservation programs in South Carolina.

Conservation Districts assist with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Farm Bill Programs which brought more than **\$55 million** to South Carolina's private lands for conservation implementation in federal FY22.

More than 72,000 students were reached by conservation district youth oriented programs such as school gardening, seed libraries, SC Envirothon, Arbor Day and Earth Day events, stormwater education, scholarships, and conservation related contests, etc.

More than 1.3 million adults were educated on conservation topics including Farm Bill Programs, pollinator promotion, stormwater mitigation, invasive species control, prescribed fire, water quality and conservation, habitat restoration, land easements, etc.

More than 44,000 acres statewide were impacted by conservation rental equipment available through conservation districts (no-till drills, prescribed fire equipment, hog traps, etc.).

SC Envirothon State Champions took **17th place** overall at the 2022 international NCF-Envirothon Competition competing against teams from the US, Canada, and China.

Programs involving land easements, habitat restoration, invasive species removal, water conservation, watershed improvement, litter removal, and conservation education are just a handful of the vast conservation topics implemented statewide by Conservation Districts.