



South Carolina Conservation Districts
2023 Annual Report



Overview

The South Carolina Conservation Districts 2023 Annual Report is a comprehensive set of accomplishments by South Carolina’s 46 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (districts), South Carolina Department of Natural Resources – Conservation Districts (SCDNR-CD), and South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts (SCACD). This report highlights conservation implementation, economic impact, education, outreach, and dedicated service to the citizens and natural resources of South Carolina.

Each local Soil and Water Conservation District within South Carolina is charged with promoting the wise use of soil and water within their respective counties that are governed by a board of commissioners. Each local district is the front-line advocate for locally led conservation within every county in South Carolina.

SCDNR-CD supports districts, promotes conservation partnerships, serves by providing conservation education and technical assistance, and advocates for new and emerging conservation practices. SCACD represents districts as their voice on natural resource issues, provides useful information to districts, and offers needed services to districts.

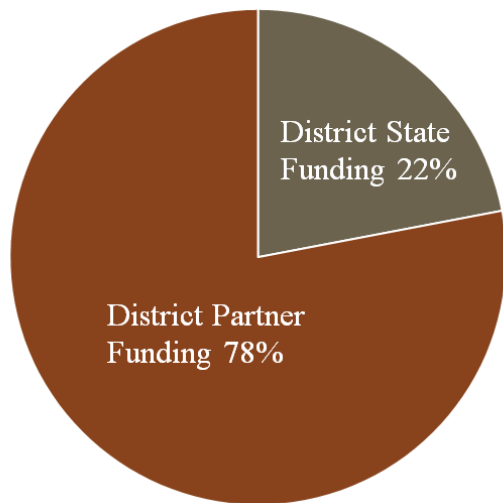
Since 1937, Conservation Districts in South Carolina have worked to promote and establish the wise use of soil and water resources on the land. Together, South Carolina’s local 46 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, SCDNR-CD, and SCACD make significant contributions to and serve as champions for conservation!

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South Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Districts - 2023 Impact

State FY24 Conservation District Funding



For every \$1 of state appropriated funds to Conservation Districts, \$3.40 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 FY23.

More than 190,000 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 2 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 10,000 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 from Spartanburg Day School represented South Carolina at the 2023 international NCF-Envirothon Competition competing against teams from the US, Canada, Singapore 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.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

Conservation Districts

SCDNR-CD Team Growth!

The SCDNR-CD Team has grown by two new team members – Jessica Egan and Jennifer Morris as Conservation District Program Coordinators. These positions were budgeted to the team during the 2023 legislative session along with the increase in appropriation dollars to districts. Jessica and Jennifer directly serve 23 districts each through attending board meetings, making office visits, assisting with programming, and training new staff. Together, the two of them have made over 90 district visits since they joined the team in May 2023!

South Carolina Local Work Groups

The SC Local Work Group Committee has made significant strides to improving the Local Work Group (LWG) process statewide. The LWG process is intended to be a locally led avenue for districts to collect natural resource concerns from local constituents. SCDNR-CD has committed to facilitating and leading the committee over the past two years. The committee consists of district commissioners, district employees, SCDNR-CD and NRCS representatives. South Carolina specific resources have been developed including training materials, in-person and virtual trainings, as well as one-on-one advisement with SCDNR-CD team members. Locally led conservation is the key to success and the reason districts exist!

Statewide Conservation District Trainings

Training sessions for Conservation District Commissioners and Employees continue to be a high priority for SCDNR-CD. The SCDNR-CD Team facilitated the following trainings New Employees and Commissioner Trainings, Social Media and Ethics, Budgeting Basics, Watershed Districts Basics Training, SC Envirothon Oral Presentation Judging, and Conservation Districts Advocacy Training. As well as a team member providing an orientation training session to each new Conservation District Employee across the state.

2023 Supported Programs

- SC Envirothon
- South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts
- South Carolina Conservation Districts Employees Association
- Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund
- Palmetto Leadership for the Environment, Agriculture and Forestry
- Environmental Educators Association of South Carolina

Other Notable Accomplishments

Additional team member changes include John Hayes serving as the Watershed Districts Coordinator and Jordan Baker serving as the Administrative Assistant. Both have hit the ground running and are making significant impacts through their roles.

Tyler Brown, Program Manager, selected as the 2024 President for the NASCA Executive Committee as well as a member of the 2024 PLEAF Cohort.

Jessica Egan and Jennifer Morris presented at the NASCA Annual Meeting about the SC LWG Committee and the impact it has had thus far across the state.

Brooke Myres, Field Operations and Program Development Manager was selected for another term as the Southeast Representative for the NCF-Envirothon Operating Committee.



SC Envirothon



1st place Overall: Spartanburg Day School A Team
2nd Place Overall: Spartanburg High School A Team
3rd Place Overall: JL Mann High School

Marc Cribb Exceptional Leader Award: Leah Chandler from Spartanburg High

New Team Award: JL Mann High School

Aquatics Station 1st Place: Spartanburg High School A Team
Current Topic Station 1st Place: Spartanburg Day School A Team
Forestry Station 1st Place: Spartanburg High School B Team
Oral Presentation Station 1st Place: Spartanburg Day School B Team
Soils Station 1st Place: Spartanburg High School A Team
Wildlife Station 1st Place: Spartanburg Day School A Team

Support SC Envirothon

SC Envirothon is a hands-on environmental competition for high school students made possible only by the generous contributions of time and money from SCDNR-CD, Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund, and various other businesses, individuals, agencies and groups. Please consider supporting this worthy cause!

For more information about SC Envirothon program or becoming a sponsor, reach out to Brooke Myres (myresb@dnr.sc.gov).

2023 NCF Envirothon

Spartanburg Day School represented South Carolina at the international National Conservation Foundation Envirothon in New Brunswick, Canada. Our South Carolina State Champions competed against 49 teams from the US, Canada, China, and Singapore in an intense week-long environmental competition. The team participated in exploring New Brunswick's natural wonders, taking written exams, and presenting on the environmental topic of Adapting to a Changing Climate. We are so PROUD of our South Carolina team!



2024 Envirothon Dates

- Competition registration deadline April 1, 2024
- SC Envirothon Competition to be held April 26, 2024 at Clemson Sandhill REC in Columbia, SC with Current Environmental Topic: Renewable Energy for a Sustainable Future
- NCF-Envirothon to be held July 28 through August 3, 2024 in Geneva, NY

South Carolina Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Conservation and Irrigation Field Day

South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts (SCACD) and SCACD President Jeff Wilson hosted an irrigation Field Day at Cotton Hills Farm in Chester County. The event showcased how conservation districts promote, demonstrate, and educate landowners on irrigation practices in cooperation with USDA-NRCS and SCDNR. Over 100 landowners and partners attended the field day which featured presentations and demonstrations of irrigation and other conservation practices.



Conservation Districts Day at the State House

On May 2, 2023, SCACD ascended with district commissioners, employees, and partners to the SC State House to visit with State Legislators during Conservation Districts Day at the State House. During which, SCACD Legislators of the Year were recognized: Senator Nikki Setzler of Lexington County and Speaker of the House of Representatives Murrell Smith of Sumter County.

SCACD is grateful for the General Assembly's support of South Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Districts!



2023 Highlights

Hosted the 81st Annual South Carolina Conservation Partnership Conference in Greenville, SC.

Convened a one-day Policy Committee meeting to review and update supported initiatives and district operations.

Continued to manage a Contribution Agreement with NRCS to coordinate technical and administrative assistance on NRCS contracts. For 2023, \$250,000 was allocated for 28 conservation districts. This program has made significant strides in tackling huge conservation technical assistance workloads.

Signed a Cooperative Agreement with NRCS for increasing awareness of conservation programs.

Approved district applications for NACD Technical Assistance Grants totaling \$235,960.

Participated in the NRCS State Technical Committee Meeting and appointed representatives to sub-committees.

Monitored legislation of the State Legislature.

Supported district commissioner representatives on each of the River Basin Advisory Councils.

South Carolina Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Southeast NACD Hall of Fame Inductee

Commissioner Diane Edwins was inducted into the Southeast NACD Hall of Fame at the Annual Southeast NACD Meeting in Savannah, GA. Since 1999, Commissioner Edwins has served Berkeley Soil and Water Conservation District as a commissioner holding several leadership positions for both the district and SCACD. Over the years, Diane's leadership has made a lasting impact in SC!

South Carolina Conservation Districts Foundation



Established in 1976 by the SCACD, the SC Conservation Districts Foundation was organized exclusively to promote educational, scientific, and charitable efforts to conserve South Carolina's life supporting resources. The Foundation is an IRS designated 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Annually, the Foundation awards approximately \$30,000 in college scholarships.

The Conservation Districts Foundation Trustees held two board meetings in 2023 as well as an executive officers' planning meeting. Other activities included: Foundation Chair Sterling Sadler sent a letter to all Conservation District Commissioners and employees, and partners to reinvigorate support.

Ms. Sadler reported at the SCACD Executive Committee Meetings and a Foundation Trustee was on the agenda at each of the SCACD Area Meetings to inform about the opportunities for Foundation support.

The Foundation signed an updated Memorandum of Understanding with the SC Department of Natural Resources to collaborate and co-sponsor natural resources education programs such as the SC Envirothon, student and teacher scholarships, conservation district contests, and workshops.

In addition to endowed scholarships, the Foundation supported: SC Envirothon, FFA Soil Judging Contests, and the SC Farmer and Agribusiness Association Conservationist of the Year Award. The award was presented to Chester Conservation District Commissioner Robin Beam.

Sponsored Programs

- SC Envirothon
- South Carolina Conservation Districts Employees Association Training Workshop
- South Carolina Soil and Water Society
- Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund



Abbeville

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



In 2023, Abbeville Soil and Water Conservation District was able to award and recognize the Dixie High School FFA with lunch and a \$2,500 grant to assist with the purchase of a dump trailer for their Plastic Baille Recycling Program. Their primary goal is to reduce the amount of net wrap, hay twine, and silage wrap entering the landfill. They work with local community members and members of the district board to create a plan to identify, contact, and work with cattle farmers to save and collect the hay bale waste throughout the county. For several months, 120 students participated weekly in preparing materials for the baler. Students were able to process approximately 800 pounds of product each week. They processed 5 tons for market in only a few months. Pictured above is District Chairman Fred Raines on the left, three FFA students, and their Agriculture/FFA teacher Josh Murdock.

Conservation by the Numbers

- 1,217 acres planted through district no-till drill rentals
- Assisted with implementation of more than \$1 million for conservation practices on 13,413 acres in Abbeville County

Other Notable Accomplishment

Abbeville Soil and Water Conservation District sponsored the Abbeville County Library's Seed Library by donating \$250 as well as \$250 worth of various vegetable seeds for 2023. The Seed Library was a huge success and encourages home gardening throughout the county. Over 1,000 packets of seeds were distributed to approximately 250 individuals. The district will continue to support this community effort.



2024 District Plans

- Continue to increase student participation in contests and scholarships
- Strive to increase District Affiliate Members by 50
- Increase marketing of programs with new brochures

Aiken

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

The biggest achievement in 2023 of Aiken Soil and Water Conservation District was the district's outreach efforts in telling the story of conservation.

The district gave a \$2,500 scholarship to Zeb Proctor. Zeb is a graduate of Midland Valley High School and is attending University of SC - Aiken.

The district's Local Work Group meeting was held in June with the highest attendance to date! Through interest expressed by the Local Work Group, a partnership was formed between the district, Longleaf Alliance, and local foresters to initiate a Prescribed Burn Association for Aiken County. To date, two workshops have been hosted with more planned for 2024.

A Storm Drain Mural Contest was facilitated by the district in downtown Aiken. Five artists were selected to paint sidewalk murals depicting the message: To Protect Our Waterways which coincided with the 2023 NACD Stewardship Theme - One Water. The contest was well received through significant media attention including recognition nationally in NACD's Conservation Clips! Pictured left is the first place winner receiving recognition at a City Council meeting. Pictured right is a high school student participant who received the People's Choice Award. Artists were given a monetary award.



Other Notable Accomplishment



Aiken Soil and Water Conservation District participated in City of Aiken's Festival of Trees with a seed themed tree to advertise the district's new seed library. The seed library will be available at the main branch of the library with pop-up seed libraries offered at five satellite library branches throughout Aiken County. The district gifted Aiken County Library with SC Farm Bureau Accurate books to compliment the seed library. This partnership will promote the wise use of our soil and water reaching youth and adults interested in growing their own food.

Conservation by the Numbers

- More than 800 acres planted through no-till drill rentals
- Sponsored booths at SEED Day and City of Aiken's Earth Day with over 3,400 attendees
- Youth outreach: volunteered and donated to SC Envirothon, provided 200 t-shirts for the CSRA Eco-meet, received 140 NACD poster entries, provided hay and seed to resolve erosion issues at a local school's outdoor learning area

2024 District Plans

- Partner with Aiken County Library to offer a Seed Library and a summer program with the Farm Bureau Agricultural Mobile Learning Lab
- Participate in and sponsor the NACD Poster Contest and SC Envirothon
- Host a New and Beginning Farmer Workshop and Agricultural Awareness Day with FSA and Clemson Extension

Allendale

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

Allendale Soil and Water Conservation District has continued to provide assistance through the Seasonal High Tunnel Technical Assistance program. Under this agreement, the district is able to install high tunnel greenhouses in every county of South Carolina for any farmer or landowner that has been approved through EQIP. The district has been providing this program for seven years and is happy to announce that the agreement has once again been extended through the end of 2024.

During 2023, ten new high tunnels were completed and several previously installed high tunnels received repairs throughout South Carolina. High tunnels help farmers and landowners grow vegetables all year long by planting directly into the soil inside the high tunnel. Some growers have successfully harvested three crops of peppers, tomatoes, eggplants, and other vegetables over the course of one year.

Pictured left is a high tunnel installation in Pelzer, SC. Pictured right is a completed high tunnel being utilized with rows for crops in Ridgeland, SC.



Other Notable Accomplishment



The district continues to grow its partnerships with local NRCS and Allendale County Clemson Extension Service to increase outreach efforts.

The district partnered with Allendale County Clemson Extension to host quarterly "Coffee with Clemson" programs in the county Agricultural Building.

Additionally, the district sponsored one horticulture and two canning workshops for the public.

Conservation by the Numbers

- 7,488 acres in Allendale County were enrolled in conservation programs
- Assisted with 66 active EQIP and CSP contracts
- Assisted with implementation of more than \$960,000 for conservation practices in Allendale County

2024 District Plans

- Continue to install seasonal high tunnels through NRCS Technical Assistance Grant
- Sponsor "Coffee with Clemson" programs in partnership with Allendale County Clemson Extension Service
- Attain 5 additional District Affiliate Memberships
- Celebrate America Recycles Day in November

Anderson

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

Anderson County Soil and Water Conservation District's biggest achievement of 2023 was receiving the Anderson County Watershed Protection Council Grant of \$39,333. This grant allowed the district to provide free educational programming related to water quality, agriculture, wildlife, forestry, and other natural resource related topics to our community and local schools. The district was able to host and be a part of 45 educational programs and outreach events, reaching 2,070 people through these programs, and serving 13 public schools with a total of 116 hours in programming. The Education and Outreach Coordinator held two SC Adopt-a-Stream trainings certifying 28 new participants in water quality monitoring protocols to help monitor impaired waterways in the county. These funds also provided the opportunity to hire an Education and Outreach Intern each semester to help support increased programming. These students ranged from high school seniors to college students pursuing degrees related to agriculture and natural resources.

"Water Trunks" with educational resources on water quality were piloted across all five Anderson County School Districts. These trunks contain resources for teachers to use in their classrooms such as water testing kits, example lessons, visuals, displays, books and more!



Other Notable Accomplishment



Established district outreach programs continued to thrive in 2023. The Seed Library grew with 9,160 seed packets checked out, 1,830 visitors, and 10 new zip codes recorded. The district's Barrels and Beer event was a great success with 35 rain barrels sold which increased the annual Environmental Mini-Grant to \$1,500 for 2024. The district also published an international article through the International Erosion Control Association sharing about Barrels and Beer.

Conservation by the Numbers

- Assisted with implementation of more than \$2.8 million for conservation practices in Anderson County
- 1,249 acres of land protected through conservation programs in Anderson County.
- 55 bags of trash picked-up by commissioners and staff from a highway that feeds into Anderson's drinking water supply
- 11 new partnerships made through projects and outreach

2024 District Plans

- Increase on the ground field projects such as stream bank stabilization projects
- Collect data for SC Adopt-a-Stream and Know Your River Database to increase public awareness platforms on water quality
- Grow District Affiliate Memberships to help support county programs

Bamberg

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



Bamberg Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner John Haralson hosted the Master Tree Farmer (MTF) Course at his tree farm. The event covered several natural resource topics including: controlled burn practices, pesticide application processes, improving wildlife habitat for Bobwhite quail, pine straw harvesting, and vegetation control in ponds. Clemson Extension facilitates the MTF Course which is a hybrid course that combines virtual and in-person learning components. It incorporates self-paced lectures, discussions, quizzes, and other web-based methods of participant-instructor interaction, along with hands-on activities in the field. This educational series helps landowners maximize productivity, profitability, and protection of the legacy of their forest land.

Other Notable Accomplishment

The district hosted a Drones in Agriculture presentation. Guest speakers from Clemson Extension, Kendall Kirk (pictured below) and Curtis Erwin gave attendees an in depth talk on the wide range of uses of drones in agriculture. Agricultural drones allow farmers to monitor crop and livestock conditions from the air to keep watch for potential problems and help optimize agricultural management. Agricultural drone pilots must possess a Part 107 license from the Federal Aviation Administration and adhere to all airspace regulations.



Conservation by the Numbers

- Provided geo-textile fabric for 19 conservation projects
- Sold seed blends to 25 landowners to complete CSP practices
- Assisted with implementation of more than \$1.7 million for conservation practices in Bamberg County
- 38,624 acres enrolled in conservation programs in Bamberg County obligating over \$6.7 million for conservation practices

2024 District Plans

- Attain additional District Affiliate Members
- Award scholarships in agriculture
- Sponsor students at South Carolina Governor's School for Agriculture
- Promote outreach and education
- Host workshop at local a dairy

Barnwell

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



Barnwell Soil and Water Conservation District worked to bring conservation awareness to the community through outreach and engagement of the district in 2023. One of the best ways to engage with the community is virtually, so the district created a Facebook page (Barnwell Soil and Water Conservation District) and a website (www.barnwellswcd.com). The district also started a Seed Library, participated in the first Scarecrow Contest hosted by the Rotary Club, and Commissioner Rebecca Davis visited students at Macedonia Elementary School to teach them about watersheds.

Other Notable Accomplishment

The district was happy to welcome Commissioners Curtis Hogg, Jr. (pictured left) and Fleming McMaster (pictured right) who were elected to office in the November 2022 General Election. Their term will run February 1, 2023 through January 31, 2027.

Hogg and McMaster took the Oath of Office as Commissioners at the Annual District Awards Luncheon. They are both excited to help protect and preserve natural resources through locally led conservation in Barnwell County.



Conservation by the Numbers

- Assisted with implementation of more than \$3.1 million for conservation practices in Barnwell County
- 6,299 acres in Barnwell County enrolled in conservation programs
- Provided administrative support to farmers and landowners for 180 EQIP and CSP contracts

2024 District Plans

- Promote the District Seed Library
- Obtain more than 60 District Affiliate Memberships
- Visit local schools to deliver conservation education

Beaufort

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

In March 2023, Beaufort Soil and Water Conservation District entered into a partnership with The Nature Conservancy of SC (TNC) to conduct a one year needs assessment for working lands in Beaufort County. TNC provided the district with a grant to hire a field agent, Walter Mack, to help seek out farmers and rural landowners with an emphasis on black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). TNC wanted to get a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to regenerative farming practices, current participation and awareness of conservation programs, challenges related to climate change, and interest in participating in programs and economic markets. To date, Mr. Mack has made 29 site visits to 18 farms helping to determine the following challenges and needs: livestock fencing, protecting crops from increasing deer populations, irrigation, flooding, and saltwater intrusion in pastures and cropland. Mr. Mack arranged for farmers to meet with FSA and NRCS to apply for funding, helped them apply for agriculture tax exemption, and informed them of other agencies who offer agriculture workshops and assistance programs through the USDA Farm Bill.

Pictured are two farms visited on St. Helena Island: Mingo Savios Farm (left) and Barefoot Farms (right).



Other Notable Accomplishment



Beaufort Soil and Water Conservation District is thrilled to have hosted the 32nd Eco Camp!

Eco Camp is a hands on day camp experience that is based around a yearly theme on environmental education. This summer's theme was "There is no Earth without Art". The campers created art based on the surroundings found in their natural environment. The focus was based on conservation and protection of local wildlife through construction, sculptures, fabric dyeing, and more.

Conservation by the Numbers

- 61 new acres enrolled in conservation programs in Beaufort County for a total of 958 acres enrolled county-wide
- 6 landowners assisted with new CSP and EQIP contracts with \$92,984 in conservation practices installed throughout Beaufort County
- 5,151 people reached at public events, festivals, Eco Camp, and classrooms with environmental education programs

2024 District Plans

- Secure permanent funding for field agent position
- Provide Beaufort County landowners with funding opportunities, agriculture workshops, and technical assistance programs
- Continue to work on Contribution Agreement with NRCS to assist with program delivery

Berkeley

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



Partnership and outreach is of high importance to Berkeley Soil and Water Conservation District. The district continues to build a relationship with NRCS to assist the farmers and citizens of Berkeley County. Berkeley Earth Team volunteers continue to make a huge impact in the community and the berkeleybees group continues to be very active and growing.

The district has been working on four signature platforms since Spring 2006. These platforms continue to lead the Southeast in outdoor recreation and historical opportunities. No other county has this much to offer! Please continue to follow our progress at www.BerkeleyOutdoorLife.com and www.ByGoneBerkeley.com.

Other Notable Accomplishment

With the help of state appropriation funds, the district was able to partner with the Berkeley County Farm Bureau to purchase a no-till drill that was made available to Berkeley County farmers to plant oats, wheat, rye, and soybeans that are used as a cover crop through the CSP program.

Rental of the no-till drill gives small to medium sized farms access to a piece of machinery that they may not have the funds to purchase. So far, over 400 acres of cover crop was planted using the district no-till grain drill.



Conservation by the Numbers

- 86 landowners assisted with conservation programs
- Over 10,000 acres of farmland enrolled in conservation programs in Berkeley County
- 31 landowners assisted with new EQIP applications
- 25 landowners enrolled in the CSP

2024 District Plans

- Assist with EDUC 695 Graduate Class for teachers- Environmental History of Berkeley County.
- Continue current partnerships to provide education opportunities for citizens to become aware of the beauty and history of Berkeley County
- Partner with Berkeley County Schools to host 2024 Kids Who Care

Calhoun

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



Calhoun Soil and Water Conservation District partnered with several state agencies and local volunteers to bring new programs and opportunities to Calhoun County citizens. This included field trips to Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve for local schools, as well as, mentoring St Matthews K8 and Sandy Run Schools as Green Step Schools. The district utilized new binoculars for lessons on bird habitat, identification, and ebird data collection. In partnership with Calhoun County Farm Bureau, Ag Lab in the Classroom was provided to all Calhoun County K-8 schools. The district also received a Buyck/Carpenter Grant for a multi-week 2023 Teen Conservation film series. As far as adult outreach goes, the district is assisting residents of a local adult care facility with gardening projects, and district commissioners have worked to educate local farmers and landowners on NRCS programs.

Conservation by the Numbers

- 2,334 students and 110 adults engaged in conservation programs
- Distributed over 200 warm season pollinator packets to local businesses, county offices, and the public
- Mentored 2 Green Step Schools

Other Notable Accomplishment

District coordinator, Mary Dixon, received the Sandy Run Ruritans 2023 Environmentalist of the Year Award! She has been instrumental in establishing and enhancing conservation programs for all ages throughout the Sandy Run Community.

The district welcomed two new Associate Commissioners. As our programs grow, we are delighted that our Affiliate Membership grows and our digital platforms gain followers.



2024 District Plans

- Increase education and outreach efforts for youth and adults
- Assist with planning and building a new Sandy Run School nature trail
- Host District Affiliate Member Banquet

Charleston

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



Charleston Soil and Water Conservation District sponsored two students, Guign and Eliza Bradham, to attend Camp Wildwood. Camp Wildwood gives students a basic understanding of the wise use and management of wildlife, natural resources, and conservation. Activities are filled with information about natural resources and how to take care of them for future generations. The camp also gives students a chance to grow their self-confidence and develop leadership skills within a supportive environment. Students are offered hands-on classes that are facilitated by professional natural resource staff members. Some activity topics include fisheries, forestry, firearm safety, hunter education, orienteering, first aid, and wildlife.

Other Notable Accomplishment

Partnership and outreach is of high importance to the district. With newly appointed Chairman John Smoak (pictured below), a 10-year veteran of the district board, the district has continued to develop relationships with predominant organizations within Charleston County and South Carolina.

Commissioner Smoak has served on several prestigious boards and the district is thrilled to have him inspire fresh ideas for locally led conservation in Charleston County.



Conservation by the Numbers

- Sponsored 2 students to participate in Camp Wildwood
- Engaged 28 landowners with NRCS programs
- Over 3,000 acres of farm and forest land enrolled in CSP
- 12 landowners enrolled in EQIP and 16 landowners enrolled in CSP

2024 District Plans

- Participate in community events including SEWE and Arbor Day
- Host a Field Day promoting Soil Health and Tractor Safety
- Increase District Affiliate Memberships
- Promote May Be the Forest Be With You, Always Poster and Essay Contest

Cherokee

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



The biggest achievement of Cherokee Soil and Water Conservation District in 2023 was the number of programs hosted and participated in by the district. One of the most notable events was the planting of a memorial tree for former District Coordinator Karen Allen on Arbor Day. All members of the board, as well as many others who worked alongside Karen, were in attendance. Students at Blacksburg Primary School joined to learn about conservation and the importance of honoring Arbor Day. Other projects included sponsoring the Butterfly Life Cycle project for kindergarten students in Cherokee County School District, presenting a Healthy Eating presentation at Cherokee Charter Academy, and participating in a Science Day for Corinth Elementary School. The district hosted the South Carolina East Piedmont Area Meeting in September at the Cherokee County Museum with guest speaker Tatum Goins.

Conservation by the Numbers

- Awarded \$500 scholarship to a high school senior
- Affiliate Membership Program received donations from 55 individuals and small businesses totaling over \$5,000
- Over 600 acres were planted through the Local Land Management Program
- Repairs were made to district equipment and a new Hardee Sprayer for rent through the district was purchased

Other Notable Accomplishment

Cherokee Soil and Water Conservation District awarded prizes to several students across the county. This included 10 Cherokee County students for this year's Essay and Poster Contest. The winners and their families were invited to a recognition picnic at Lake Wheelchel on May 16, 2023. Winners in each category received a cash prize along with certificates.

A scholarship was also awarded to a senior from Gaffney High School who is attending Upstate University.



2024 District Plans

- Increase participation in the District's Conservation Poster Contest
- Invest increased funds in conservation education, including increased involvement within the local schools
- Continue partnership with Thicketty Creek Watershed District and Clemson Extension

Chester

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

Chester Soil and Water Conservation District participated in and sponsored several local events to encourage positive conservation practices to people in the community. Of special note, an Irrigation Field Day was sponsored by the South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts in cooperation with the district, SCDNR, and NRCS. The day was spent outdoors learning how Soil and Water Conservation Districts educate landowners about successful conservation practices, how USDA-NRCS provides technical assistance to put these practices to use, and demonstrations on how irrigation can be used by anyone no matter the size of the operation with experts on hand. Vice Chairman Jeff Wilson's farm, Cotton Hills Farms, hosted the event to illustrate how good conservation practices such as no-till, cover crops, and water conservation can work together to make a farm more resilient, profitable, and beneficial to the environment. With more than 100 participants, this event was a great opportunity for landowners to meet local district commissioners, partnership staff, and irrigation suppliers to recommend the best management practices.

Chairman Allen Beer, Vice Chairman Jeff Wilson, and Commissioners Mac Turner and Ethan Bedford made sure everyone enjoyed their day and left with valuable knowledge.



Other Notable Accomplishment



On Arbor Day, over 50 fruit trees were given away to be planted in Chester County. Local landowners were excited to be able to plant a new tree on their property. Participants were given a choice of a peach, pear, apple, or fig tree.

Conservation by the Numbers

- Chairman Allen Beer is the longest serving active commissioner in South Carolina beginning his service in 1973
- 468 acres in Chester County planted through district's no-till drill rentals
- Received 84 entries to District Conservation Contests
- District Coordinator Beth Harris of almost 8 years retired and was replaced with Susan Lalli.

2024 District Plans

- Increase participation in conservation education contests
- Build partnerships to increase outreach efforts
- Encourage no-till planting as a conservation practice
- Work with Rocky Creek and Tinkers Creek Watershed Directors to maintain watershed dams

Chesterfield

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

In October, Chesterfield Soil and Water Conservation District held their annual banquet and recognized Joel Rivers as the 2023 Conservation Farmer of the Year. Rivers has been farming for over 35 years and currently farms 1,027 acres (224 acres of corn, 447 acres of cotton, 356 acres of soybeans) in Chesterfield County in addition to 683 acres across neighboring county lines. His primary conservation practices include the use of cover crops, no-till farming, residue management, in addition to nutrient and pest management.

A special presentation was made during the banquet in memory of Administrative Assistant Susan Felts who passed away suddenly in June. The District Commissioners and staff wore matching polo shirts and blue jeans in honor of Susan.



Other Notable Accomplishment



Chesterfield Soil and Water Conservation District and the Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership (SLPCP) hosted a few landowner field days in 2023. One field day educated landowners on pine straw production. Charles Babb, SLPCP Coordinator, gave a presentation on taking advantage of management decisions that help with the overall health of the forest. Clemson Extension Forester, Ryan Beam, presented topics related to income, pest management, and nutrient deficiencies that can happen with intense straw raking.

Conservation by the Numbers

- 140 participants assisted with EQIP and CSP contracts to protect 23,033 acres in Chesterfield County
- 25 landowners funded with NFWF grant agreements to improve 1,159 acres of longleaf habitat
- More than 500 elementary students reached with long leaf pine presentation at Edwards Elementary School Farm Day
- 2 new employees - Nicole Austin and Thomas Babb

2024 District Plans

- Update website and implement social media presence
- Increase community and education involvement
- Participate in NACD Poster Contest
- Continue to assist landowners in establishing and managing longleaf habitats

Clarendon

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



The Clarendon Soil and Conservation District held their annual Farm City Luncheon in November 2023. Farm-City Week is a nation-wide annual event that celebrates and recognizes the partnership between rural and urban communities. People all over the country celebrate farmers and ranchers through educational forums, social media campaigns, and local events. The district welcomed a very special guest speaker, Dr. Corey Heaton, Clemson Extension Assistant Professor and State Wildlife Specialist. Dr. Heaton spoke about the Whitetail Deer population and how it is affecting the crop production across the state. He gave some wonderful information to the affiliate members and producers in the area and was able to answer members' questions.

Other Notable Accomplishment

Mary Anna Mayson, District Administrative Assistant, visited the gifted and talented students at Walker Gamble Elementary to donate eight bags of soil from the district for their raised bed garden project. The district has plans to donate plants and assist the students in maintenance of the raised bed project in the Spring of 2024.

The district prioritizes and is excited to provide outreach to young community members so they carry conservation practices into their future endeavors.



Conservation by the Numbers

- 30 producers utilized district's no-till drills
- 40 new District Affiliate Members
- 75 students learned about storm water and pollution

2024 District Plans

- Host District Affiliate Member Banquet
- Grow District Youth Commissioner Program
- Visit several schools to present the EnviroScape

Colleton

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

Essay Contest Winners

6th Grade



7th Grade



8th Grade



Colleton Soil and Water Conservation District held its annual Affiliate Membership and Awards Banquet at the Elks Lodge in Walterboro. Winners of the 2023 poster and essay contest, "Turtle Travels, The Life of a Loggerhead Sea Turtle", were recognized and presented their awards at the banquet. The poster contest is a class project and the winning teachers were presented a \$50 award for their class. The essay contest is an individual project for students in grades 6th-8th with 1st-3rd place winners in each grade level. The winning students attend the banquet with their parents to receive their awards. Winners of the essay contest are pictured above: Olivia Hunt, Isaac White, Lillie Fillers (pictured left); Christopher Heatley, Shelby Benton, Presley Smoak (pictured center); Jackson Hallman, Dylan McDaniel, Fayann Rentz (pictured right).

Other Notable Accomplishment

The district recognized Fredric K. Tritapoe for his 32 years of service to Colleton County as the NRCS District Conservationist. Mr. Tritapoe is a graduate of Clemson University and began his career with NRCS right after graduation.

Mr. Tritapoe's service to the farmers and landowners of Colleton County made a lasting impact!



Conservation by the Numbers

- 8,860 acres in Colleton County enrolled in conservation programs
- 35 farmers/landowners assisted with new EQIP and CSP applications resulting in 10 EQIP and 9 CSP contracts
- More than 650 children and adults reached through conservation programs

2024 District Plans

- Increase District Affiliate Memberships
- Promote Agriculture Scholarship for Colleton County students
- Recognize a Conservation Farmer/Landowner of the year at Annual District Affiliate Membership and Awards Banquet

Darlington

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

Darlington Soil and Water Conservation District prioritizes recognition of conservation leaders in the community. The district has been recognizing outstanding conservation farmers since 1969 with its annual Conservation Farmer of the Year Award. The 2023 award went to sibling farmers, William Kirven, IV and Caid Kirven (pictured below). The award was presented to them during the district's annual recognition dinner. William and Caid strive to grow agricultural crops in a manner that practices conservation operations by reducing wind and water erosion, improving soil health, reducing excessive nutrients and pesticides, and improving air and water quality. Practices include continuous no-till farming and the use of cover crops and GPS precision planting and fertilization regiments. Several additional practices are done daily to ensure quality along with conservation.

An additional conservation leader the district is working to recognize is W.E. Dargan (Ned). Mr. Dargan was a district commissioner from 1949 to 1993. He helped establish the Coastal Plains Soil Water Plant Research Center. The district is working with the center to sponsor a historical marker to honor Mr. Dargan's dedication to conservation.



Other Notable Accomplishment



District Commissioners and staff believe connecting with community members is of high importance for locally led conservation to thrive. To support these efforts, Administrative Assistant, Dani Chaplin, became Mayo High School's Green Step School Mentor to help them learn about sustainability. She is meeting with students and teachers to assist with composting and gardening projects. Chairman Alton Jeffords also shared his expertise in agriculture with students (pictured above).

Conservation by the Numbers

- 30,602 acres of conservation practices applied
- 77 EQIP applications and 19 CSP applications received
- 21 District Affiliate Members
- 77 students taught about horticulture

2024 District Plans

- Attain 10 new District Affiliate Members
- Develop additional programs for school outreach
- Host a workshop for local landowners
- Provide health insurance for Conservation District employee

Dillon

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



The biggest achievement of the Dillon Soil and Water Conservation District is the support it provides to the community through donations. The district provided calendars to producers throughout the county. The district donated \$250 to a local high school FFA Chapter for projects in the community as well as donated to the South Carolina Governor's School for Agriculture to cover tuition expenses in order for Dillon County students to have an opportunity to attend.

Dillon Soil and Water Conservation District also donated a VERIS Machine to the Pee Dee Research and Education Center in order to advance learning opportunities about conservation and work the land.

Conservation by the Numbers

- 24 CSP applications received and 10 active CSP contracts
- 10 EQIP applications funded
- Commissioners work side by side with producers to make them aware of programs and funding available to meet their needs to become better conservationists

Other Notable Accomplishment

The district rents several pieces of equipment to local producers through its Equipment Rental Program. Pictured below is a John Deere 1590 no-till grain drill.

The District Equipment Rental Program puts conservation on the ground in Dillon County. It provides small to medium sized farmers access to a piece of machinery that they may not have the funds to purchase. One way farmers use this equipment is to establish cover crops as part of their CSP contract.



2024 District Plans

- Order and offer seed packets to Dillon County students and citizens
- Host an annual Local Work Group Meeting
- Recognize a Conservation Farmer of the Year

Dorchester

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



In November 2023, Dorchester Soil and Water Conservation District sponsored the SC Agriculture Learning Lab for the Dorchester Academy. The SC Agriculture Learning Lab is an educational experience that brings the farm to schools allowing students to see the importance of conservation and agriculture. Volunteers from the district and the Dorchester County Farm Service Agency were on hand to assist the teacher from the SC Agriculture Learning Lab. A total of 120 students spent the day enjoying hands on lessons and activities. They learned the process of how butter and plastic is made from start to finish and how SC Commodities go from field to table.

Other Notable Accomplishment

The district continued to grow its Pop-Up Seed Sanctuary in 2023 by hosting 11 Pop-Up Seed Sanctuary events where an estimated 2,581 packets of free garden seeds were handed out! At the Seed Sanctuary events, individuals of all ages stopped by and picked out several packs of garden seeds, collected gardening tips, and grabbed free coloring books and pencils.

The Pop-Up Seed Sanctuary helps spread the word about conservation and agriculture in Dorchester County and encourages individuals to be great stewards of the land.



Conservation by the Numbers

- 2,581 packets of vegetable and flower seeds distributed and 1,200 local citizens educated on conservation
- Youth Outreach: 43 photo contest entries; 32 poster contest entries; 2 - \$1000 college scholarships; 1 - \$500 classroom grant; 1 SC Envirothon team sponsored
- 39 new District Affiliate Members
- 158 acres enrolled in conservation programs

2024 District Plans

- Attain 5 new District Affiliate Members
- Host a Conservation Day Event
- Participate in 2024 NACD Photo and Poster Contests with theme May the Forest be with You, Always
- Sponsor 2 SC Envirothon Teams

Edgefield

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



Edgefield Soil and Water District strives to share the message about conservation and prioritizes educating the future generation. The district sponsored several education programs for students. A new program sponsored by the district this year was "Watch and Grow" through which the district provided each 3rd grade class in the county the tools necessary to grow their own plant. Students enjoyed watching and learning the process and seeing the final product. The district also provided soil lessons for STEM DAY at W.E. Parker Elementary School. The district continued to offer a scholarship for a student pursuing an agriculture degree in memory of beloved Bob Bowie.

Other Notable Accomplishment

Local Edgefield County students attended the Eco-Meet Challenge that was sponsored by the district. The Eco-Meet Challenge is an environmental science competition for middle school students in the CSRA of Georgia and South Carolina.

Students were very excited to be the first group to compete from Edgefield County. Their favorite part was the hands-on stations and being able to explore the park.



Conservation by the Numbers

- Educated more than 800 students through education and outreach programs
- Assisted with implementation of more than \$1.6 million for conservation practices on 6,000 acres in Edgefield County
- Welcomed Josh Boatwright as new NRCS District Conservationist to support Edgefield's wonderful producers!

2024 District Plans

- Start a local seed library
- Increase conservation education efforts for youth and adults
- Sponsor SC Envirothon Team

Fairfield

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District continues working with students in Fairfield County. The most popular activity is sending youth to Camp Wildwood each summer. Camp Wildwood is a natural resource learning camp. Activities are filled with learning opportunities about natural resources and how to take care of them for future generations.

In addition to supporting Camp Wildwood, the district coordinated a tree planting event for students from Richard Winn Academy to celebrate Arbor Day. The district also hosted its Annual Photo Contest with the requirement of photos being of farm life, flowers and trees, animals, and/or landscapes. This contest teaches the students to appreciate our natural resources and instills an appreciation for wildlife.

Conservation by the Numbers

- 1,106 acres in Fairfield County enrolled in conservation programs
- 127 acres planted through rentals of the district's no-till drill

Other Notable Accomplishment

In 2023, longtime Chairman, Charles H. Coleman, III was recognized for his 40 years of dedicated service to Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District at the September board meeting. Commissioner Coleman has never missed a board meeting in his 40 years on the board. Anything that is asked of him, he has always been willing to complete the task.

Commissioner Coleman has since stepped down from chairman and the board has named Commissioner Eric Cathcart the new chairman.



2024 District Plans

- Work with newly elected officials on conservation and environmental projects
- Sponsor additional Camp Wildwood campers, support SC Envirothon, host Annual Photo Contest, and work with a local school to build an outdoor classroom

Florence

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



Florence Soil and Water Conservation District continued its emphasis on conservation education during 2023. The district provided assistance and funding to the Florence Montessori School for a chicken coop and run (pictured above). The project provides conservation and agricultural education to students as to where food comes from and how it is grown.

The district also supported the Commissioners School for Agriculture at Clemson by sending Caden Crawley, a rising senior, to the week long workshop. Caden gained valuable insight into conservation measures available to producers and land users. The district supported the SC Conservation Districts Foundation as well in its efforts to promote conservation of natural resources statewide.

Other Notable Accomplishment

The district oversees two Watershed Districts in South Carolina providing support to Watershed Directors on an as-needed basis.

The Salem Community Watershed District provides 42 miles of drainage canals and ditches for agricultural drainage relief.

The Lynches Lake-Camp Branch Watershed District provides 21 miles of canals and ditches for agricultural drainage relief.



Conservation by the Numbers

- Assisted with implementation of 15 EQIP contracts to put \$354,160 in conservation practices in Florence County
- Assisted with implementation of 15 CSP contracts to put \$349,147 in conservation practices in Florence County

2024 District Plans

- Provide locally led conservation measures for landowners and users in Florence County
- Host a Local Work Group Meeting
- Provide conservation programs to Florence School Districts
- Provide mini-grants to schools and organizations that provide conservation education programs

Georgetown

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



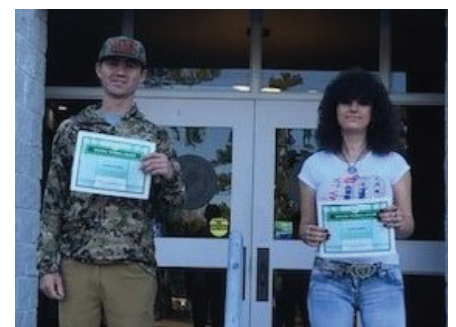
Naavah Piggott was sponsored by the Georgetown Soil and Water Conservation District to attend Camp Wildwood which provides hands-on environmental experiences. The camp teaches respect for natural resources, heritage, and the importance of protecting the environment. Activities included archery, night walks, swimming, hunting, fishing, wildlife classes, and water games, with one class teaching about tree identification and controlled fire. Naavah has an interest in pursuing marine biology. Naavah said, “This camp is a great opportunity for people interested in nature to learn about SC’s wildlife and natural resources and helps raise awareness of how the things we do can change their environment and affect them positively or negatively. It is also a great way to meet new people.” Naavah attended a board meeting to give a report about her week at Camp Wildwood (pictured center above).

Other Notable Accomplishment

Outreach is of high importance to the district!

Scholarships were provided to Allen Ledford (pictured left below) and Ashley Rom (pictured right below) who are majoring in Forestry and Wildlife Management at Horry-Georgetown Technical College.

The district also sponsored a pizza party for two classes from local elementary schools that were chosen as winners in the poster contest. Posters were based on importance of watersheds in SC.



Conservation by the Numbers

- 200 acres planted with the district's no-till drill
- 2,460 students were impacted by the contests and programs offered by the district and 280 students impacted through district provided SC Wildlife magazines
- 65 adults impacted by programs and services

2024 District Plans

- Provide no-till drill to area landowners
- Add additional District Associate Commissioners
- Offer annual contests and programs including new program Book of the Month
- Continue to work on Contribution Agreement with NRCS to assist with program delivery

Greenville

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

Greenville Soil and Water Conservation District partnered with a nonprofit, Save Our Saluda, on streambank stabilization projects in Greenville County. Save Our Saluda was awarded an EPA 319 Grant for the Upper Saluda Watershed. This money is being used to promote good farming practices in the floodplains and to repair streambanks to control erosion.

In August, the district assisted Save Our Saluda with a workshop to educate about soil health. The workshop boasted Nathan Lowder from North Carolina as the speaker, as well as a free barbecue dinner and door prizes. A compelling film showing that encouraging soil health can be profitable was shown to over 25 workshop participants.

The majority of project funding was through Save Our Saluda's 319 and NRCS cost share program for farmers.

These streambank projects have afforded opportunities to train NRCS interns who would not normally be exposed to these types of projects. This gives them more capabilities and helps move projects forward more quickly.



Other Notable Accomplishment



In 2023, the district implemented a new strategy to reach children around Greenville County by partnering with Greenville County Parks, Recreation and Tourism for "camp takeover" days. The district offered day long programming at each summer camp county-wide.

Students learned about stormwater and pollutants with district staff and interns during a full day of engaging activities. This program allowed the district to maximize outreach with students throughout the summer season.

Conservation by the Numbers

- Sponsored and hosted a successful SC Envirothon team for the first time in 12 years
- 1,689,853 individuals reached with conservation and stormwater programs
- 158,535 students taught about stormwater, pollutants, and soil health
- Online outreach efforts seen by 279,095 viewers

2024 District Plans

- Increase outreach and education with areas of focus in stormwater education and farmer/landowner outreach and programming
- Facilitate conservation practices in the county
- Sponsor two SC Envirothon teams

Greenwood

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

Greenwood Soil and Water Conservation District decided to host a series of meetings for the landowners in Greenwood and surrounding counties. The series was entitled "Planning the Future of Your Farm". The district's goal was to help landowners plan for the future of their property by giving them valuable information on the options available. This topic is not often discussed in detail without seeking out a professional.

The first meeting of the series was held on April 20, 2023. It was very informative and received significant positive feedback. Through partnerships with Clemson Extension and Upper Savannah Land Trust, the first meeting included speakers who explained options for managing the future of farm, crop, and timber land. The district also collected information on what attendees were most interested in learning in order to improve future meetings in the series.



Other Notable Accomplishment



Greenwood Soil and Water Conservation District purchased a new excavator. Landowners in Greenwood County were in need of a better option when completing EQIP contracts as well as other conservation projects on their property. The district is providing the equipment as well as an operator so that landowners can complete their projects in a timely and effective manner. The district looks forward to serving the community and working towards implementing more conservation practices in Greenwood County.

Conservation by the Numbers

- 300 acres planted with the district's no-till drill
- 639 feral hogs trapped through district trapping program
- More than 6,725 acres enrolled in conservation programs

2024 District Plans

- Continue "Planning the Future of Your Farm" series
- Host at least 2 field days for landowners
- Become more involved with local FFA projects

Hampton

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

The Hampton Soil and Water Conservation District was thrilled to sponsor two SC Envirothon teams from Wade Hampton High School. This was the first year that a Hampton County school participated in SC Envirothon. Team members were chosen from an Environmental Studies Honors Class.

SC Envirothon is a high school environmental competition in which students are tested on aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and current environmental issues. Each team has five competitors and one alternate. This competition provides students with an excellent opportunity to learn outside of the classroom and many students leave inspired to learn more about the environment and are motivated to pursue careers in environmental studies.

One team member expressed their gratitude to the Hampton Soil and Water Conservation District staff member, stating that his favorite testing stations were soils and aquatics, and that he hoped to compete again in 2024!



Conservation by the Numbers

- 3,157 students and citizens were reached through classroom presentations, contests, community events, and workshops
- With the approval of 17 new contracts in 2023, Hampton County now has 64 active EQIP and CSP contracts
- Over \$1.2 million in conservation practices installed throughout the county

Other Notable Accomplishment



The district, in collaboration with the Hampton Friends of the Arts, hosted an Earth Day Recycled Art Contest. Several free recycled art workshops were held and over 30 creative pieces of artwork created by students from local schools, home schooled students, and workshop attendees were submitted for judging. Participants were encouraged to create artwork using materials left over from previous projects. Entries were made of reclaimed cardboard, plastic bottles, aluminum cans, broken pottery pieces, and artificial flowers.

2024 District Plans

- Continue to assist with SC Envirothon
- Provide conservation education programming for summer reading program participants at local libraries
- Submit posters from the District Conservation Poster Contest to the SCACD State Poster Contest

Horry

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

One goal in 2023 for the Horry Soil and Water Conservation District was to closeout out the Little Pee Dee Phase II 319 Grant. This grant assisted 136 landowners with one being an agricultural application. In early February, the district closed the Little Pee Dee Phase II 319 Grant having assisted with 51 sewer tie ons and 84 septic tanks/field lines totaling over \$358,110 in cost share.

The Horry County Water Quality Improvement 319 Grant, a three year grant, continued into 2023. This project combined the Little Pee Dee Phase II, Loris, and Crabtree grant proposal areas. The project focused on diverse homeowners in the western part of the county that were in need of septic repairs. This project encompassed 134 septic systems and 22 sewer tie on for a total of 156 systems being completed totaling \$438,497 in cost share. The need was so great that the grant was finished in one year!

The 319 grants were sponsored by SCDHEC and funded by the EPA. The water quality in Horry County is better thanks to the district's partnership with SCDHEC.

Other Notable Accomplishment



The district has a no-till available to Horry County farmers to plant oats, wheat, rye, and soybeans that are used as a cover crop in CSP contracts.

The use of the no-till drill allows small to medium sized farmers access to a piece of machinery that they may not have the funds to purchase. Overall, 4,428 acres of cover crop were planted in 2023 using the district's no-till grain drill.



Conservation by the Numbers

- Over 5,200 students learned about conservation and stormwater through District Essay Contest
- Assisted with implementation of more than \$1.6 million for EQIP conservation practices that will impact almost 6,000 acres and \$530,000 for CSP conservation contracts that will impact 5,769 acres in Horry County

2024 District Plans

- Secure a NACD Grant to fund a technician
- Assist SCDHEC with 319 Grants
- Sponsor 2 SC Envirothon teams and attend Swampfest and Baby Animal Day
- Host Horry Watershed Directors and Stormwater Annual Meeting

Jasper

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

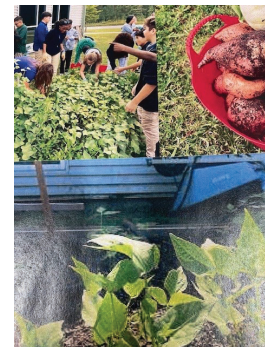
Biggest Achievement of 2023

Jasper Soil and Water Conservation District has been designated to serve on the Stakeholder Advisory Committee for the process of updating the Jasper County Comprehensive Plan. Jasper County is the fastest growing county in the state. Considering the exponential increase over the last five years, a multitude of natural resources are at risk. To achieve a fiscal and ecological balance, it is critical to select prudent land management that supports conservation and conservation that supports responsible development. It is the responsibility of Jasper County, the district, and its municipalities to strike this balance between the preservation of its invaluable natural, historic, and cultural resources and future land development.

The district will steer the natural resource element of the plan with the goal to identify, promote, and enhance the natural resources in the county and correlate the overall vision of the Comprehensive Plan by implementing strategies that protect natural resources for our current and future generations.



Other Notable Accomplishment



The district planted raised garden beds and container gardens in cooperation with the Royal Live Oaks Academy of Arts and Sciences. 26 seventh graders helped with the planting of sweet potatoes, carrots, lettuce, and cantaloupe. Food webs, food chains, and eating a balanced diet were taught to the students. By planting, harvesting, and cooking their produce, this project provided wholesome foods otherwise not always accessible, as many of the students are from low-income families.

Conservation by the Numbers

- Presentations on litter, recycling, container gardening, local wildlife habitat, and conservation practices reached 2,600 students and citizens
- Assisted with implementation of \$70,149 in conservation practices for installation in Jasper County, management of 13 active CSP and EQIP contracts, and enrolling 576 additional Jasper County acres

2024 District Plans

- Provide input on the 2024 Jasper County Comprehensive Plan to develop a growth and development strategy
- Continue efforts in conservation education through schools, landowner seminars, conservation partnerships, and land management practices for developers and landowners

Kershaw

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

Kershaw Soil and Water Conservation District hosted an affiliate tour on Saturday, October 28th. The purpose of the tour was to show appreciation to those who contributed financially to the district during the previous year and also served as an affiliate drive to gain exposure and attract others to the district's mission.

The tour took place at the Nature as Teacher Preserve (870 acres of land dedicated to educating young people about the environment) and was led by renowned naturalist and Kershaw County native, Josh Arrants. Before his move to Montana, Josh led many walks for the district that highlighted regions from Mulberry Plantation to Forty Acre Rock to the Carolina Sandhills Refuge. His return to Kershaw County seemed like somewhat of a "homecoming" for the district because he is so near and dear to many. In a recent newspaper article promoting the event, it was said of Josh, "to know him, is to love him". He has captivated many audiences across the US with his love and knowledge of "all things nature". Through this event, the district gained 10 new affiliate members -accomplishing a 2023 goal.

A special thank you to Leoncia Cruz, Josh Arrants, and the Commissioners and Associates of the district for supporting this endeavor.



Other Notable Accomplishment



The district sponsored a camp July 17-21 for 15 youth, ages 9-12.

Pictured above are a few of the campers gathered around the Goodale State Park Nature Trail. SCDNR staff, along with Nature as Teacher instructors, provided quality environmental hands-on activities. A field trip to the Environmental Discovery Center on the Lynches River concluded camp this year.

Conservation by the Numbers

- 70 landowners received conservation technical assistance
- 200 students exposed to conservation practices through the funding of education mini-grants
- 100 students participated in stormwater and watershed education
- Approximately 200 residents reached through an outreach table at the Kershaw County Farmers Market

2024 District Plans

- Plant 100 trees for Arbor Day and Earth Day in needed areas of the county
- Engage local students in service and citizen science projects such as Adopt a Highway and CoCoRAHS
- Provide a shelter at the Nature as Teacher Preserve

Lancaster

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

Increased outreach efforts were a huge achievement of Lancaster Soil and Water Conservation District in 2023. In partnership with the Lancaster County Library System, the district expanded the Sowing Seeds program. It was launched on social media and within the first week reached over 10,000 people through the post! The seeds were flying off the shelf so quickly shelves couldn't be restocked fast enough. The three library branches saw an increase in library cards and membership to receive access to Sowing Seeds. The district is so thankful for everyone who helped sponsor and make this program a success.

To increase pollinator habitat in Lancaster County, the district began selling pollinator packs for large scale projects. This saves the landowner money and is a great opportunity to promote pollinators. The seed selection is limited but are approved seeds for NRCS practices.

A fall scavenger hunt was launched in 2023 and it was so cool to see all of the engagement of the program. Awards will be presented to the winners in 2024. The district is looking forward to expanding these programs even more in 2024.



Other Notable Accomplishment



The district engaged with agriculture related teachers and school programs throughout 2023.

The district sponsored the Andrew Jackson High School FFA Team at the SC Envirothon Competition where they won 3rd place in the Wildlife Station!

Justin Reynolds, Buford High School Agriculture Teacher, received the District's Conservation Educator of the Year Award.

Conservation by the Numbers

- Assisted with implementation of more than \$544,870 to implement conservation practice on 4,037 acres
- Awarded a \$750 Bill Ardrey Forestry Scholarship to Zoelle Gordon who will be attending Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College
- Watershed Directors installed staffing gauges which will allow the board to better manage the dams. Gauges recorded water levels 7ft above normal pool after 3.5in of rainfall

2024 District Plans

- Increase participation in SC Envirothon, educational contests, scholarship programs, and Sowing Seeds
- Present Conservationist of the Year and Conservation Educator of the Year awards
- Increase education and outreach efforts
- Maintain 5 flood control lakes

Laurens

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



Laurens Soil and Water Conservation District and partners host Team Ecology each year. This is a week long event at the Joe Adair Outdoor Education Center for third grade students. In 2023, over 500 third graders participated and learned about conservation topics, such as watersheds, landfills, recycling, litter, composting, air quality, soil types, pollinators, and how to protect our native wildlife. Students got to enjoy a nature hike during the week because a trip to the Joe Adair Center would not be complete without one!

This program is run almost completely by volunteers. Team Ecology is going into it's 10th year and will be hosted April 15-19, 2024.

Other Notable Accomplishment

The District's Annual Earth and Sky Photo Contest received 175 entries in 2023. That is a record number of entries for the district! The contest has been going on for many years, since the days of film!

The contest serves as an opportunity to instill a love for the beautiful county of Laurens within the hearts of the community. All of the winners are featured on the district's social media.

"Comfort Food" by Trey Wardlaw received First Place in the Adult Earth division of the contest.



Conservation by the Numbers

- Approximately 2,000 students impacted through the Adair Outdoor Education Center
- More than 300 adults reached through the seed library
- Assisted with implementation of \$365,171 for conservation practices in Laurens County

2024 District Plans

- Increase litter clean up efforts
- Sponsor a lifetime fishing and hunting license at the SCDNR Fishing Rodeo
- Find new ways to assist local FFA and 4-H groups

Lee

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

Lee Soil and Water Conservation District was successful in assisting with implementation of conservation planning on over 17,000 acres of cropland, pastureland, and forestland in 2023. Conservation practices were applied to over 12,000 acres of land to improve water quality, soil health, livestock health, forestland health, and wildlife habitat. The district enjoys working with local producers, farmers and ranchers in Lee County to provide technical support.

Christy McCormack, a five and a half year district employee, transferred to the local NRCS office as a Field Technician. She is a well known face to all of the producers in Lee County and her transition to the local NRCS as a Field Technician was smooth. Byron Knox from Georgia joined the county as its new NRCS District Conservationist. The district is supportive of these changes and is excited to see how it will benefit the district going forward.



Other Notable Accomplishment



The district supported the use of pollinator habitats which are beautiful for landscape, key to ecosystem success, and provide community engagement through a large number of learning opportunities.

Pollinator habitats can also aid in the production of fruits, seeds, vegetables, and the development of new varieties of commodities. Healthy insects are one of the most beneficial conservation tools to support.

Conservation by the Numbers

- 4,000 acres planted in cover crops and trees; 6,500 acres in residue management completed to enhance carbon sequestration and improve soil health on cropland
- 50 children educated on NRCS and FSA programs and career options during a Career Day workshop
- 275 individuals assisted in the office with conservation

2024 District Plans

- Expand outreach efforts to Lee County farmers and ranchers by hosting a high tunnel workshop
- Participate in the 4H20 Camp hosted by the Clemson Extension Service
- Increase carbon sequestration practices by 1,000 acres to lower Lee County's carbon footprint

Lexington

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

This year, Lexington Soil and Water Conservation District worked towards increasing outreach efforts through community programs.

Two Rain Barrel Workshops were hosted, one during the height of summer and the other near the end of fall. Future Rain Barrel Workshops will be held in partnership with Lexington County Stormwater.

The district attended and participated in several community events as a vendor, including the 11th Annual Herb Festival, the Blowfish All-Star Fan Fest, and the Market at Icehouse Amphitheater. These events allowed the district to connect with the community and highlight the district's programs and resources.

This year, the district took the first steps to creating a small Pop-up Seed Library. It will rotate through the 10 library branches within Lexington County beginning in 2024. The Pop-up Seed Library will stay at each library for one week and at least one program will be held while it's there. The programs will mainly focus on sustainability and backyard gardening but also cover topics such as: recycling, food preservation, wildlife nuisance species, and wildfire preparedness.



Other Notable Accomplishment



The district is excited to mentor five Green Step Schools. The included schools are Saxe Gotha Elementary School, Irmo Middle School, Beechwood Middle School, Leaphart Elementary School, and Pleasant Hill Elementary School. The schools are focusing on composting projects for the 2023-2024 school year.

The district will also be mentoring the spring plant sale and Milkweed to Monarch project at Irmo Middle School.

Conservation by the Numbers

- More than 500 students received education on pollinators, soil composition, erosion, and water conservation
- Nearly 200 people received conservation programs and event information through outreach at community events
- More than \$7,000 received through District Affiliate Membership Drive

2024 District Plans

- Partner with Lake Murray County and the Master Gardener Volunteers for the 2024 Ag + Art Tour
- Showcase new Pop-up Seed Library through programs at Lexington County Libraries
- Conduct community outreach programs with Lexington County Stormwater

Marion

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



Marion Soil and Water Conservation District was excited to present brothers Michael and Tony Poston of Mullins, SC as Conservation Farmers of the Year. The Postons have participated in several NRCS programs including: EQIP and CSP on their nearly 2,500 acre farm dating back to 2002. Mrs. Rethea Poston was the first Poston to engage in Nutrient and Pest Management, Conservation Crop Rotation, and No-till Planting. The Postons have since completed conservation work addressing Nutrient Management, Residue Management No-till, Cover Crop, Pest Management, Conservation Crop Rotation, Heavy Use Area Protection, Access Road, Agrichemical Handling Facility, Grassed Waterway, Tree Planting, and Tree Site Preparation. All of these conservation practices and enhancements have helped improve water quality, soil and air quality, crop production, and wildlife habitats.

Other Notable Accomplishment

The district is dedicated to educating youth. The district assisted in the installation of two raised beds at the Mullins Palmetto School and donated all of the supplies for construction of the beds. This was such a great learning experience for the students while providing winter vegetable plant produce.

The district also donated \$4,000 to two agriculture classes to purchase greenhouses, awarded a \$2,000 scholarship, had over 100 people in attendance for the Essay Banquet, and distributed over 1,800 conservation booklets.



Conservation by the Numbers

- Over 1,200 acres planted with district no-till drills and Brillion Seeder this fiscal year
- Conservation programs provided \$2,119,930 to landowners through tree planting cost share program

2024 District Plans

- Hold workshops and field days for landowners
- Install additional raised beds
- Obtain new District Affiliate Members
- Participate in SC Envirothon and NACD Poster Contest

Marlboro

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



Marlboro Soil and Water Conservation District continues to strive to educate youth on conservation and put conservation on the ground. The district continues to assist NRCS through the SCACD Contribution Agreement Program. The district employee provides administrative assistance to NRCS in assisting farmers and landowners to help get conservation practices on the ground in Marlboro County.

The district invited Marlboro County School Board member, Danny Driggers to discuss Marlboro County Schools involvement with educating students about conservation education in 2024. Driggers and the district agreed to work together to get the following items into circulation: school gardening project, SCACD Poster Contest, distribution of seed packets, and district photo contest.

Conservation by the Numbers

- Landowners served with conservation technical assistance to put conservation on the ground
- 9,567 acres of farmland protected through district conservation programs
- 150 students taught about conservation through outreach

Other Notable Accomplishment

District Chairman, Pat Rogers presented Frankie Hinson with a plaque awarding him the honor of Commissioner Emeritus. To be nominated for Commissioner Emeritus the individual must demonstrate exemplary service as a Conservation District Commissioner.

Frankie retired from the board after 42 years of dedicated service to the district.



2024 District Plans

- Increase conservation outreach and education
- Order seed packets to distribute to students and citizens of Marlboro County
- Attain additional District Affiliate Memberships
- Continue to promote rental of the cover crop seeder

McCormick

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



McCormick Soil and Water Conservation District Chairman Bob Edmonds, presented a check to Dr. Timothy Keown, president of the South Carolina Governor's School for Agriculture at John de la Howe (pictured above). The school is the only residential high school for agricultural education in America. It is a place where students don't just learn about the world in a classroom, they get out and experience it, getting their hands dirty as their young minds are focused on the future. These are the future leaders of the nation. It is an amazing, unique place, a brand-new establishment created within the state's oldest public school founded in 1797. It was declared a Governor's School in 2020. It is taking its place alongside the other two Governor's Schools in the state. The district is proud to sponsor the school each year.

Other Notable Accomplishment

McCormick County Soil and Water Conservation District sponsored a nature themed poetry contest open to fourth and fifth grade students at McCormick Elementary School.

The winning students were (left to right): Evonte Allen (second place, 5th grade), Zoe Epps (first place, 4th grade), Bonnie Brown (associate commissioner), and Masiah Gilyard (first place, 5th grade). Not pictured: Landon Chamberlain (second place, 4th grade).



Conservation by the Numbers

- 27,317 acres in McCormick County were enrolled in conservation programs
- Assisted with implementation of more than \$450,000 for conservation practices in McCormick County

2024 District Plans

- Award scholarships to and sponsor FFA at the South Carolina Governor's School for Agriculture
- Host a photo contest
- Sponsor SC Envirothon

Newberry

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



The Newberry Soil and Water Conservation District's 19th Annual Camp Conservation was held June 19-23, 2023. Camp Conservation is a week long day camp for youth ages 6-12 to learn about their environment. Each day, 46 children from Newberry County alternated lessons between target shooting and gun safety to pollinators and how to identify trees by their leaves. They met wild animals including a rescued condor, alligators, and baby goats. Ducks Unlimited provided duck calls and a gear grant from Cabela's and Bass Pro provided supplies for archery, fishing, and games.

SCDNR, Quail Forever, Palmetto Pride, APHIS, Ducks Unlimited, NRCS, Clemson Extension, Greenleaf Education, and many local volunteers worked to make this a fun, safe experience.

Conservation by the Numbers

- Awarded \$4,000 in scholarships and impacted 945 students through conservation programs
- Assisted with implementation of more than \$5.8 million for conservation practices in Newberry County
- More than 10,000 attendees at the 2nd Annual Summer Fair
- 68 miles of roadway cleaned with 9,195 lbs of litter removed

Other Notable Accomplishment

The 2nd Annual Keep Newberry Beautiful Summer Fair was held Aug 24-27, 2023 at Prosperity Town Center. The district featured amusement rides, games, fair food, live bands, vendor booths, and a petting zoo. The fair saw more than 10,000 attendees from multiple states who came to help celebrate the community. This premiere event raises awareness of Newberry Soil and Water Conservation District and Keep Newberry County Beautiful programs. Proceeds benefit local scholarships and events.



2024 District Plans

- Host Earth Day celebration with "Movie Night", Great American Cleanup, Annual Awards Banquet, and Camp Conservation
- Coordinate the Earth and Sky Photo Contest
- Celebrate Arbor Day

Oconee

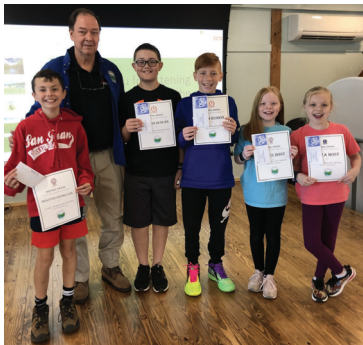
SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District's biggest achievement was the success of district outreach efforts. Once again, the district engaged students from Oconee County to participate in the annual Arts and Essay Contest with the theme of One Water. Approximately 150 students from local elementary and middle schools participated in the contest. Entries were judged and cash prizes were awarded to the winners. A great time was had by all!

An informational table was presented at the annual Foothills Heritage Farm Festival during their Ag Days at the Farm in conjunction with FFA students and teachers from across Oconee County. Over two days, nearly 1,500 students, teachers, and chaperones attended the fair. The district also presented a table at the annual National Hunting and Fishing Day at South Cove County Park. The Enviroscape was useful in helping the attendees understand the importance of conservation and preservation of water and watersheds. The district manager presented to almost 100 FFA students regarding the foundation and functions of soil and water conservation districts in the United States.

Four highly recommended students in Oconee County in pursuit of natural resource field or closely related degrees were awarded the \$500 George C. Grobusky Conservation Scholarship to attend college.



Other Notable Accomplishment



Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District contracted to have forest mulching completed around the historic Oak Grove School and 14 acre property owned by the district. Originally built by J.L. Hamby in 1909, the building is central in the history of the Oak Grove Community. The district is working to raise funds to restore the old schoolhouse to be used as an environmental education center. The district hopes it will serve as a great resource, not only for Oconee County, but for conservation districts, students, and citizens from across South Carolina.

Conservation by the Numbers

- More than 500 acres were planted using the two no-till drills managed, maintained, and rented by the district
- More than 1,500 students, teachers, and community members were positively impacted by district presentations
- More than 150 people attended the annual Celebration of Agriculture Banquet where 7 local producers/community members were recognized

2024 District Plans

- Continue educational outreach to schools, community members, and other organizations by providing conservation programs
- Monitor and maintain 26 conservation easements and 8 watershed dams in Oconee County
- Support conservation-minded local growth and development in Oconee County

Orangeburg

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

Orangeburg Soil and Water Conservation District is excited to mentor Brookdale Elementary School as the first in Orangeburg County to work on becoming a Certified Green Step School. This program encourages students to compost at home and at school. These lessons are life skills that are used in everyday.

SCDHEC estimates that 40% of the waste in landfills is food, much of which could be used in making compost. Decreasing the amount of materials put in dumpsters decreases the number of times a dumpster is emptied and schools are charged by the number of times the dumpsters are emptied. This is a big motivator for the school to compost food waste! To learn more see the district website -www.Orangeburgswcd.com For information about Green Step Schools: www.eeasc.org and select Green Step School.



Other Notable Accomplishment



Edisto Memorial Gardens held a Trunk or Treat Event on Monday, October 23 from 5PM to 7PM. The visitors walked through the gardens visiting different vendors. Among them were the Girl Scouts hosting a rock painting session. Out of nowhere two Bag Creatures appeared! The plastic shopping bags made a ghostly scene flapping in the wind adding to the size of the creatures. The attendees with totes from Keep Orangeburg County Beautiful and PalmettoPride were glad they were not adding to the creatures' growing and changing size!

Conservation by the Numbers

- Assisted with implementation of \$4,253,870 for 63 conservation program contracts
- 9,635 acres in Orangeburg County were enrolled in conservation programs
- 32 under served contracts totaling \$1,642,211 on 1,208 acres

2024 District Plans

- Partner with the SC Forestry Commission to implement Project Learning Tree lessons in the classroom and trainings for teachers
- Encourage 100% participation of mayors in Orangeburg County in the Greatest American Cleanup
- Increase the number of Orangeburg County Schools that participant in Green Step Schools

Pickens

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

Pickens Soil and Water Conservation District expanded its influence across the county by reaching more than 500 people through the district's networking events, festivals, and conservation programs. In January, two board members presented awards at the 81st SC Partnership Conference. Kirby Player presented the Conservation Educators of the Year Award and Chuck Owens presented the Watershed District of the Year Award. The district collaborated with Pickens County and the SC 7 Natural Wonders Group to host "Conversations of Conservation". A panel of experts, facilitated by Commissioner Chuck Owens, discussed the importance, impact and sustainability of South Carolina's natural resources. The event was held on the banks of Lake Hartwell across from Clemson University.

A total of \$695 was awarded to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners of the education contests (poster contest, essay contest, and photography contest) and to teachers who participated in the education contests. The district also helped design educational signage for Tohi Trail, a wellness trail developed by Pickens County to encourage residents to get outdoors. The district would like to recognize the students from the Pickens County Career and Technology Center for their participation in the 2023 SC Envirothon and would also like to sincerely thank the Pickens Federal Credit Union for their generous donation to support and sponsor the team.



Other Notable Accomplishment



The district was awarded the Duke Energy Foundation Grant totaling \$2,550 towards education programs. This grant will fund the purchase of wildlife pelts, materials for take home activities, and program supplies for stormwater education in the classroom.

Conservation by the Numbers

- 8 new landowners served with conservation technical assistance for \$143,574 of conservation practices on 637 acres
- More than 500 people reached by the districts networking events, festivals, and conservation programs
- 290 acres planted through no-till drill rentals
- 1,412 people used the district sponsored Seed Library with 8,286 seed packets distributed

2024 District Plans

- Sponsor SC Envirothon Team
- Participate in the 2024 SCACD Partnership Conference, NACD Poster Contest, as well as local festivals, farmers markets, FFA events, and association meetings
- Host a Rain Barrel Event
- Increase District Affiliate Memberships

Richland

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District hosted the 2023 Richland County Ag + Art Tour, which featured stops at 15 farms and agribusinesses in Blythewood, Eastover, Hopkins, and Columbia. These sites showcased the diversity of local agriculture, including the production of fruits, vegetables, livestock, cut flowers, nursery stock, and forest products.

Each tour site featured local artisans, including painters, bakers, and musicians. More than 100 artisans were stationed at Richland County's 15 tour sites!

Tour sites counted 3,007 visitors during the tour. These visitors saw first-hand where their food comes from, watched artists in action and purchased their works, enjoyed the tunes of local musicians, and learned more about rural life.

Other Notable Accomplishment

In 2023, the district awarded its 100th Conservation Education Mini-Grant to support conservation education in local schools. Nine projects funded in 2023 included two cafeteria composting initiatives, two school gardens, four classroom hydroponics towers, and a series of Outdoor STEM Classes at Rosewood Community Orchard. Mini-Grants provide up to \$1,000 in funding per project. The district has awarded over \$47,000 through the program since its launch in 2012. Funding for Mini-Grants is provided by donors through Friends of Richland Soil and Water Conservation District.



Conservation by the Numbers

- 479 participants in district presentations (8) and workshops (5); 319 educators attended 30 professional development events; 4,379 people received monthly e-newsletters
- 92 classroom presentations delivered to 3,427 students; 75 students from 9 schools entered 2023 poster contest; 13 Green Step Schools mentored by district mentors
- 7,867 seed packets distributed through the Seed Sanctuary; 69 volunteers packed seeds during 5 community events

2024 District Plans

- Feature 20 local farms and agribusinesses on the Richland County Ag + Art Tour June 8-9 with financial support from partners
- Thanks to a \$10,000 grant from Dominion Energy, continue offering free seeds to residents through Seed Sanctuary program and will celebrate the 2024 stewardship theme, May the Forest Be With You Always with the community

Saluda

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



Saluda Soil and Water Conservation District helped sponsor the Woodland Clinic Forestry Skills Clinic held at Connie Maxwell Children's Home in Greenwood County on April 25, 2023. Saluda High School FFA Forestry Team took first place honors. Team members included Wilfredo Lopez-Perez, Allisa Hite, Leigh Ann Campbell, and Corbin Cochran. The students competed in four events: tree and pest identification, tree measurement, compass and pacing, and tool identification. The clinic is a career day highlighted by a forestry competition where students interact with foresters and natural resource professionals from the SC State Forestry Commission, the SC Department of Natural Resources, the US Forest Service, and Conservation District Commissioners.

Other Notable Accomplishment

Saluda Soil and Water Conservation District, Saluda County Clemson Extension Service, South Carolina Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition, and Seedway hosted a Winter Grazing Demo Field Day on March 28, 2023 at Yon Family Farms in Ridge Spring, SC. Presenters discussed and demonstrated several paddocks with winter grazing varieties of grasses. Other topics discussed included soil health, planting guidelines, and annual winter weed control. The 170 landowners who attended made the event successful.



Conservation by the Numbers

- 65 guests attended the District Annual Banquet, 170 landowners attended the Winter Grazing Demo Field Day, and 48 attended the Carbon Sequestration Meeting
- 123 students participated in special education opportunities and 259 fourth-grade students received educational materials for National Ag Day and NACD Stewardship Week
- Conservation practices were implemented on 2,500 acres

2024 District Plans

- Host a District Annual Banquet and Annual Educational Meeting related to conservation
- Sponsor 4-H Projects, 4-H Livestock Shows, FFA Projects, Woodland Clinic, Seed Library, and South Carolina Commissioner's School of Agriculture at Clemson University
- Distribute materials to all fourth-grade students for National Ag Day and NACD Stewardship Week

Spartanburg

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



Through additional state appropriated funding and a partnership with Keep OneSpartanburg Beautiful, the Spartanburg Soil and Water Conservation District hosted a storm drain art contest to promote water conservation and storm drain awareness. Designs from five artists were selected to be featured in downtown Spartanburg. The panel of judges consisted of one district commissioner, one Keep OneSpartanburg Beautiful board member, the city director of Public Works, and the community engagement coordinator for the Northside Development Group.

The projects were installed during the first two weeks of June. Most of the sites are located near the Hub City Farmer's Market and other popular walkways raising a lot of public awareness through these beautiful works of art.

Other Notable Accomplishment

District outreach efforts were very notable and far reaching this year! The SC Envirothon team from Spartanburg Day School represented SC at the international Envirothon competition. The district hosted a local NACD Poster Contest and made calendars with theme related artwork by county students for District Affiliate Members. Partnered with Spartanburg Water, USC Upstate, and TreesUpstate to celebrate Arbor Day by planting 10 native trees and giving away five Redbud trees. Awarded one high school senior with the Bryan Johnson Memorial Scholarship.



Conservation by the Numbers

- More than 7,000 pieces of litter were removed from the WATERGOAT during first year of service - 93% of the trash removed was plastic, most in foam form
- 529 acres were planted through the rental of the district's no-till drills and the firminator was rented 13 times
- More than 2,000 community contacts made through educational programs, community events, social media, storm drain art traffic, WATERGOAT exposure, and poster contest

2024 District Plans

- Install 10 Storm Drain Art murals at branches of the Spartanburg County Library
- Expand district rental options for Spartanburg County residents
- Continue ongoing projects such as removing litter from Persimmon Creek and providing data to citizen science through Project FeederWatch, CoCoRaHS, SCAAS, and SC Aquarium's Litter Free Journal

Sumter

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

Sumter Soil and Water Conservation District launched a seed library in April 2023. The district has distributed over 1,100 vegetable, fruit, flower, and herb seeds to the Sumter County community!

The district also developed and taught multiple “Read, Learn, Grow Veggies” classes at the county library and schools to over 220 children. District employee, Anna Makiewicz, read a book about where food comes from then discussed with the students the roles everyone plays in getting food from the farm to the table. She also taught a basic summary of the life cycle of a plant then ended the class with the children planting a vegetable of their own to take with them and plant at home. Students were sent home with an interactive worksheet on what to look for in their plant’s life cycle and how to care for it. Since then, the district has received multiple pictures and testimonies from students and county residents who now have thriving gardens and are very appreciative of the district’s support!



Other Notable Accomplishment



The district has had a strong presence in community activities. In September, district employee, Anna Makiewicz, was a keynote speaker for the Poinsett-Bland Garden Club where she presented on the continued projects and possible partnership efforts with the seed library. In October, the district had a booth at the Sumter eSTEAM festival and the Fall Feast to support Sumter Green. The benefits of the district and composting were promoted at both events.

Conservation by the Numbers

- Interacted with 2,220 children and adults through: “Read, Learn, Grow Veggies”, eSTEAM and other Fall Feast events
- 16 producers utilized the no-till grain drill for a total of 246 acres planted in Sumter County
- 3 producers rented the feral hog traps with 430 hogs captured

2024 District Plans

- Sponsor Sumter County SC Envirothon team
- Purchase a second no-till drill for rental
- Expand seed library to second branch location
- Strengthen and continue to build District Affiliate Membership Program

Union

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



Union Soil and Water Conservation District was a sponsor for the 2023 Upstate Livestock Show held in Union, SC September 28-30, 2023.

Exhibitors from across North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia came to showcase their beef cattle, dairy cattle, pigs, and meat goats over the three day event.

The Upstate Livestock Show is hosted annually by the Union County Livestock Association.

Other Notable Accomplishment

This year, Union County Soil and Water Conservation District was a sponsor for the Union County Farm Show on September 16. Exhibitors from across North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia came to showcase old and new tractors and other equipment.

There were more than 1,900 people in attendance.



Conservation by the Numbers

- Assisted with implementation of more than \$150,000 for conservation practices in Union County
- 230 students were involved in the Upstate Livestock Show

2024 District Plans

- Maintain Watershed Dams
- Host Conservation Poster Contest for 3rd Graders
- Sponsor Upstate Livestock Show and Union County Farm Show
- Attend Annual SC Conservation Partnership Conference

Williamsburg

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023

Williamsburg Soil and Water Conservation District purchased a Great Plains 6' no-till grain drill and caddy. The no-till grain drill can be rented for a daily fee by anyone in Williamsburg County. Renters must sign a contract and pay before using the drill.

No-till drills allow farmers to plant crops such as corn, oats, wheat, rye, and soybeans eliminating the use of discs, chisels or plows. This conservation practice saves time, reduces soil erosion, increases soil organic matter, improves localized water quality, and reduces the need for fertilizer. Rental of the no-till drill allows producers and landowners access to a piece of machinery that they may not have the funds to purchase. The district is excited to provide this service to the producers and landowners in Williamsburg County!



Other Notable Accomplishment



The district provided Forest Trees and Invasive Species of SC guides to the community. The Forest Trees of SC guide lists the identifying characteristics of all native SC trees. The Invasive Species of South Carolina guide gives useful information about the many invasive shrubs, trees, vines, and insects that are found in SC. Both guides have pictures to help identify the tree, plant, or insect. Specifically, the Invasive Species guide lists details on how the tree or plant is spread and suggests an alternative native species.

Conservation by the Numbers

- 2 new District Associate Commissioners joined the board
- 1,500 students were impacted by the many contests and programs offered by the district
- Workshops and meetings benefited 55 landowners and attendees
- Educational books impacted 100 adults and 500 students

2024 District Plans

- Participate in Annual Conservation Contests
- Work with Keep Williamsburg Beautiful to help control the litter issues in the county
- Continue to work on the grant to assist NRCS with program delivery
- Provide the grain drill to landowners for conservation practices

York

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Biggest Achievement of 2023



York Soil and Water Conservation District's biggest achievement of 2023 is participating in York County Schools' Garden Lessons. Students learn about gardening and how to produce their own food through educational and hands-on experiences. So many children don't understand the importance of agriculture and the value of being self-sustaining. Teaching these students how to plant, tend, and cultivate their gardens equips them with fundamental tools that they can use and teach to others. Going into classrooms in the spring to teach Garden Lessons is, and has always been, a highlight of the district.

Other Notable Accomplishment

York Soil and Water Conservation District participated in Adopt-A-Highway during the months of July and December. For the year, a total of 10 volunteers worked tirelessly for four hours picking up a total of 35 bags of trash!

Additionally, District Coordinator Jones, attended the Catawba Riversweep and collected 54 pounds of trash.



Conservation by the Numbers

- More than \$72,000 of conservation practices were implemented on 500 acres in York County
- Nearly 1,000 students reached with district conservation education programs

2024 District Plans

- Host free, virtual garden lessons for the community
- Grow and develop new programs for local schools based on changing educational standards
- Continue to grow the relationship with local 4H
- Increase involvement in local environmental events

2023 Conservation Award Recipients

Outstanding Conservation District

Orangeburg Soil and Water Conservation District



Outstanding Conservation District Commissioner

Barry Jurs, Berkeley SWCD



Outstanding District Employee

Quinton Epps, Richland SWCD



SC Envirothon State Champions

Spartanburg Day School A Team



Watershed District of the Year

Cane Creek Watershed District



Outstanding Watershed District Director

Roland Vaillancourt, South Tyger Watershed Board



Conservation Educator of the Year (K-6)

Dr. Sarah Burnham, Richland County



Conservation Educator of the Year (7-12)

Kimberly Stokes, Kershaw County



SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Contacts & Acronyms

Contacts

Tyler Brown, SCDNR-CD Program Manager,
brownnty@dnr.sc.gov

Brooke Myres, SCDNR-CD Field Operations and
Program Development Manager / SC Envirothon
Coordinator, myresb@dnr.sc.gov

Jessica Egan, SCDNR-CD Upstate Conservation
Districts Coordinator, eganj@dnr.sc.gov

Jennifer Morris, SCDNR-CD Lowstate
Conservation Districts Coordinator,
morrissj@dnr.sc.gov

John Hayes, SCDNR-CD Watershed Districts
Coordinator, hayesj@dnr.sc.gov

Jordan Baker, SCDNR-CD Administrative
Assistant, bakerj@dnr.sc.gov

Tina Blum, SCACD Executive Director,
2scacd@gmail.com

Local SWCD contact information can be found here:
<https://www.dnr.sc.gov/conservation>

*All reports were collected from individual district and
SCACD representatives. SCDNR-CD team compiled
and edited individual reports to ensure consistency.

**Cover photo taken by Cindy Thompson, SCDNR

Acronyms

APHIS - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

CSP - Conservation Stewardship Program

EQIP - Environmental Quality Incentives Program

EPA - Environmental Protection Agency

EWP - Emergency Watershed Program

FFA - Future Farmers of America

FY - Fiscal Year (federal 10/01/22-09/31/2023; state
07/01/23-06/30/24)

KSCB - Keep South Carolina Beautiful

LWG - Local Work Group

NACD - National Association of Conservation Districts

NASCA - National Association of State Conservation Agencies

NCF - National Conservation Foundation

NCFE - National Conservation Foundation Envirothon

NFWF - National Fish and Wildlife Service

NRCS - Natural Resources Conservation Service

PLEAF - Palmetto Leadership for the Environment, Agriculture,
and Forestry

PLT - Project Learning Tree

SCACD - South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts

SCCDEA - South Carolina Conservation Districts Employees
Association

SCDHEC - South Carolina Department of Health and
Environmental Control

SCDNR-CD - South Carolina Department of Natural Resources -
Conservation Districts

SWCD - Soil and Water Conservation District

TA - Technical Assistance

USDA - United States of Department of Agriculture



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