NRCS
Natural Resources Conservation Service

South Carolina's Current Developments

Conference Highlights and Photos Inside!

Home of the first soil conservation district plan...February 4, 1938

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service **Winter 2003**

From the Office of the State Conservationist

Walter W. Douglas

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Dear NRCSers:

Happy New Year! The South Carolina Conservation Partnership Annual Conference in Charleston earlier this month was a great way to usher in the new year. I left the meeting knowing that the Conservation Partnership is strong and that we can accomplish a great deal this year to protect our state's natural resources.

I would like to congratulate the recipients of the 2002 Conservation District Partnership Award. These awards went to three very deserving conservationists who clearly demonstrate the importance and power of partnership. The recipients were:

- Walter Earley, district conservationist in Allendale and Hampton Counties,who was nominated by District Chairmen Stephen Lewis and W.A. Rouse. Earley received the award for his leadership that resulted in over 16 new WRP applications encompassing more than 2500 acres being enrolled in the program. He has also gone the extra mile to tackle huge workloads with other conservation programs including CRP, EQIP, and the Power for Wildlife Program.
- Charles Barr, soil conservation technician in Newberry County, who was nominated by District Chairman Wayne Satterwhite. Barr has assisted the Newberry district since 1978 and was instrumental in promoting the use of contour buffer strips beginning in the 1980's. He was also nominated for his outstanding efforts and leadership in the soil-sampling program that led to the gathering of over 800 soil samples and the development of nutrient management plans on nearly 7,000 acres of cropland and pasture.
- Alex Johnson, district conservationist in Horry County, who was nominated by District Chairman Wilbur James. Johnson was nominated for going the extra mile to provide service to the Horry SWCD and setting a standard for other conservationists to follow. His leadership in the Farmland Protection Program has helped slow urban encroachment in Horry County—one of the state's fastest growing counties. He was also nominated for his time and energy involved with watershed protection.

Congratulations to these three outstanding conservationists for their dedication and energy. I wish all of you and your families a prosperous and safe 2003.

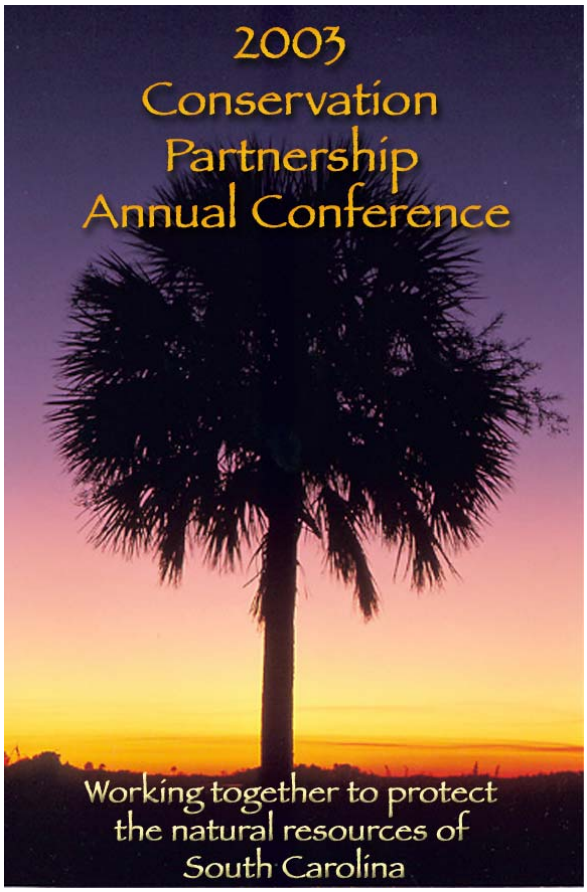
Walter W. Douglas

2003 Conservation Partnership Annual Conference

The Conservation Partnership gathered once again in Charleston, SC, for their annual conference. The event was kicked off with the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) Symposium on January 2nd, which featured special guest speakers Myron Senechal, international SWCS president, and Mark W. Berkland, NRCS director of Conservation Operations Division and former South Carolina NRCS state conservationist. Over one hundred natural resource professionals and private landowners attended the symposium to discuss Farm Bill 2002 and its impact in South Carolina. Providing a local perspective on Farm Bill issues were John Long, Newberry County Farmer and Associate SWCD Commissioner, and Mike Banks, NRCS District Conservationist in Anderson County. The symposium concluded with a dinner and auction that evening at James Island County Park.

NRCS District Conservationist Mike Banks from Anderson County addressed the audience during the SWCS Farm Bill Symposium.

SC Association of Conservation Districts (SCACD) President Larry Nates launched Friday's opening ceremony, which was followed by a morning of breakout sessions covering topics from Envirothon 2003 to conservation education. That afternoon featured a Conservation Business Session with guest speakers Charles Adams, NRCS Southeast Regional Conservationist, Billy Wilson, NACD 2nd Vice President, and Dr. Paul Sandifer, SCDNR Director. The SCACD Business Session followed at which time NRCS Public Affairs Assistant Sabrenna Bennett delivered a presentation regarding the Earth Team Volunteer Program. Earth Team Volunteer Bill Wilkes from Charleston, SC, made comments on his longtime service as a volunteer and encouraged districts to utilize volunteers in their conservation efforts. The day concluded with an awards ceremony and reception at the elegant Riviera Theatre adjacent to the hotel.



The conference concluded on Saturday morning with a Breakfast for the Leaders. For more information about the conference, contact SCACD Executive Director and conference coordinator Linda Tansill at (803) 253-3314.

The Awards Ceremony at the Riviera Theatre drew a large crowd.

2003

CONFERENCE

1. Outstanding Conservation District of the Year-Abbeville Conservation District. 2. Mark Berkland, NRCS Director of Conservation Operations Division and former SC NRCS State Conservationist spoke at the SWCS Symposium. 3. Walter W. Douglas (center) presented three NRCSers with Conservation District Partnership Awards. Shown holding awards from left to right are Walter Early, Charles Barr, and Alex Johnson. 4. Glenda Lewis finds out she has been awarded the National Employees Association District Employee of the Year Award from Mary Jane Henderson. 5. A large turnout to the 2003 conference eagerly awaits the next session.

Upstate's Saluda Lake Revived Through Grassroots Conservation Effort

By Amy O. Maxwell, USDA-NRCS Public Affairs Specialist

Saluda Lake near Greenville, South Carolina, is the site of an innovative restoration project and a prime example for other communities to follow. There are many key players in the project that began nearly ten years ago, but the Saluda Lake Restoration Committee, including residents Sam Glenn and Bruce Gaston, are breaking new ground when it comes to the locally-led conservation process. The group joined forces in the early 90's to address sediment buildup in the lake that could have a widespread effect on many resources, including the Easley water treatment system, which depends on the lake as its primary water source. The problem involved the deposit of sediments in the lake, also known as eutrophication. The process is caused by run-off that carries soil from agricultural fields, construction sites, and other urban areas. The Pickens and Greenville Soil and Water Conservation District, The Foothills Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provided the Saluda Lake Homeowners Association with an evaluation of the lake and contributing watershed in 1994. The report was also developed with the cooperation of The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR).

Bruce Gaston grew up on Saluda Lake and has seen first-hand the effects of sediment build-up. He was instrumental in founding the Saluda Lake Restoration Committee which formed a tax district to garner funding for the dredging project.

This report highlighted the harmful effects of erosion on the lake and prompted a group of citizens to take action to reverse the damage done to this important natural resource. The 331-acre Saluda Lake was constructed in 1905 for the purpose of creating hydroelectric power. Duke Power Company formerly owned the lake then sold it to North Brook Energy, LLC. The history surrounding the lake may explain some of the erosion problems.

For instance, in the 1920's and 30's, cotton farming was the rule, and conservation practices were not yet the standard. Farming practices in this fragile watershed area (comprised of highly erodible soils) contributed much of the sediment found in the lake today. Additionally, the creation of roads and highways also had an effect on the lake, particularly the construction of Highways 25 and 11. These highways were constructed at a time when erosion control ordinances were not yet in place. The sediment concern is compounded by the fact that the Easley water treatment system draws approximately eight million gallons of water per day from the lake for drinking water. In addition, more than 150 homeowners utilize the lake and the general public considers the lake an important source for recreation. The lake is also part of a 200,000-acre watershed and is the site for over 100 condominiums and a public boat launch. Nearly one hundred years after its creation, the lake is in desperate need of restoration. "I grew up on this lake and have seen first-hand the effects of sediment build-up, and realized I had to do something about it, before it was too late," explained Gaston.

The Saluda Lake Restoration Committee first formed a tax district in the surrounding area in an effort to help garner funding for the project. "We spent several years just laying the groundwork for this massive effort," said Gaston. "The permitting process alone took four years and there were times when I wasn't sure the project would ever happen," admitted Gaston. They persevered and in 1994 an initial meeting between all the key players brought the project into focus.

NRCS used ground-penetrating radar and Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to profile the lake bottom and provide data on the thickness and distribution of sediment. Data illustrated that the lake was undergoing tremendous changes—the depth at the backwaters of the lake was originally recorded at a depth of 20-feet deep. Today, it is only four feet deep or less in some places. Additional data concludes there is over 1 million yards of sediment, or "muck" that has built up in the lake over time. The solution to this sediment buildup is to remove it, which is done through dredging, or the removal of accumulated lake-bottom sediments. The process will take several years.

Foothills RC&D Coordinator Dave Demarest has worked with the restoration committee since the beginining of the project and explained the project initiative at a recent RC&D Council meeting.

Foothills RC&D Coordinator Dave Demarest has been a central force in the project since the beginning. "The dredging project began with the installation of a 2,500 foot maintenance road which cost $70,000." Dredging Operations Manager Steve Cooper was awarded the job and agreed to charge for only the unmarketable materials pumped from the lake. That's because of the potential for commercial value of the clean sand that comprises some of the sediment. "The real beauty of this project appeared when we discovered that most of the materials we were removing from the lake were marketable," said Demarest. NRCS Geologist Kim Kroeger studied the sediment and determined that it was composed of primarily clean sands, while the remainder was silt and clay. The discovery meant that the dredging process would be even more remarkable in terms of conservation. "This project is a prime example of good conservation—we are basically removing the sediment to clean the lake, but the sand is reusable and profitable," remarked Demarest.

Foothills RC&D Council Chair Wes Cooler kicked off a meeting and tour recently at the Saluda Lake Boat Landing where local residents and council members gathered for an update on the project. "This is a fine example of what locally-led conservation efforts can accomplish," he emphasized. "The residents at Saluda Lake were concerned about the condition of the lake and in protecting the resources associated with this watershed." And the effort is protecting much more than just the Saluda Lake area. "This project has a widespread effect throughout both Greenville and Pickens counties," said Demarest. "The focus is Saluda Lake, but this initiative benefits thousands of people in the surrounding area and a whole host of natural resources."

For more information about Saluda Lake, visit www.geocities.com/norwood_dr/saludalanding.htm or contact the Foothills RC&D at (864) 467-2775.

--2003 Environthon--

The 2003 SC Envirothon will be held at the Clemson University Sandhill Research & Education facility in Pontiac on Friday, May 2, 2003. A workshop for teachers and/or team coaches will be held on Saturday, February 8, 2003, at Summit Parkway Middle School in Columbia from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. All teacher/coaches are strongly urged to attend this workshop. Contact Janice Conner at conner@dnr.state.sc.us for more information.

Farm-City Success Stories!

From the Farm.....

Farm-City Celebration in Calhoun County

For the past 40 years, the National Farm-City Council has set aside a week in November to celebrate the contributions of our farms and cities. November 18-22, 2002, was the observance of National Farm City Week in Calhoun County. Margaret Thornton of the Calhoun SWCD, NRCS employees Will Allread and Odessa Sirmon, and Farm Bureau's Barbara Haigler sponsored three educational workshops for over 200 fourth grade students. The workshops increased the students' knowledge of the common ground between farm and city residents. They followed the production of milk from the dairy farm to the processor, wholesaler, retailer, and finally the consumer. They learned that the food we eat doesn't just appear in the grocery store!

In addition to the workshop, the Calhoun SWCD provided Farm-City educational activity sheets to the students.

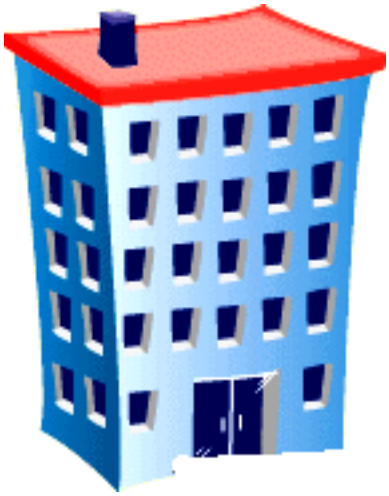
left to right: Will Allread, NRCS, Margaret Thornton, SWCD, and Odessa Sirman, NRCS, teach students about milk production.

Farm-City Week Celebration in Darlington

NRCS in Darlington County participated in Farm-City Week October 29-13, 2002. The event was sponsored by the Clemson Extension Service and held at the Darlington Raceway. The event offered third grade students throughout the county an opportunity to understand the importance of farming, as well as the importance of industrialization. Students were shown demonstrations of how fiber and other foods are produced, and with the assistance of NRCS Soil Technician John Bennett, they also used surveying equipment.

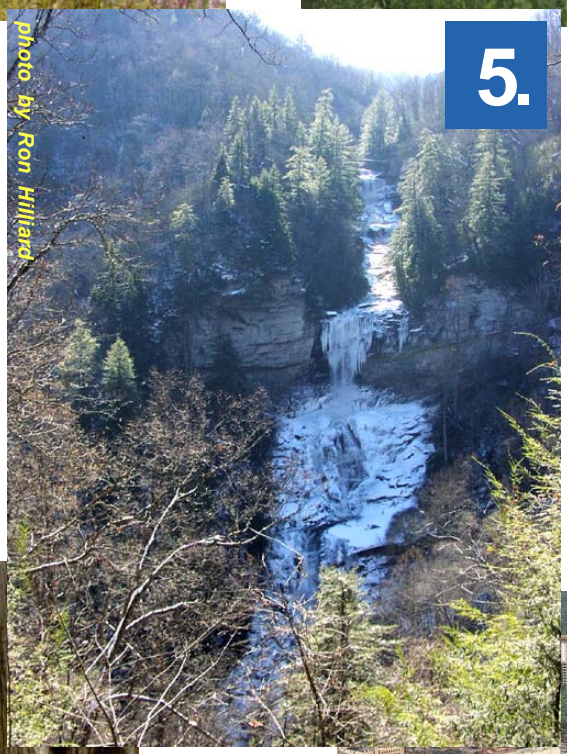
NRCS Soil Technician John Bennett of the Darlington NRCS office taught 3rd graders how to use a surveyor at the Darlington Raceway.

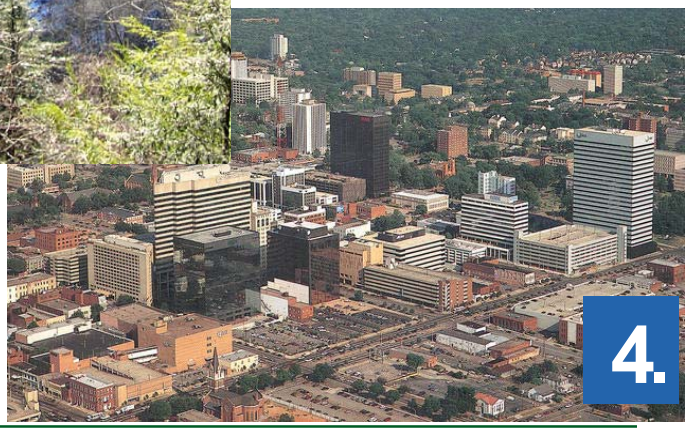
...to the city.



Can You Name that Place?????

These pictures were taken in South Carolina.
Can you guess in which county or area?
Answers are on page 10.
Good luck!





South Carolina Department of Natural Resources- Land, Water, and Conservation Division and South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts

Conservation Partnership News

Heritage Trust Acquisitions Protect Rare Plants, Animals

South Carolina's Heritage Trust Program acquired three different properties in FY 2002 totaling 1,131 acres, and protected a total of 35 rare plant and animal species. The program acquired and protected lands in Calhoun, Greenville and Jasper counties, forming a new heritage preserve and making additions to existing preserves.

The Heritage Trust Program, a part of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR), spent more than $3 million in South Carolina during FY 2002 to protect three different properties, for an average total cost of $2,653 per acre. Property donated to Heritage Trust was valued at $311,859. A total of $121,828 was spent on manpower to acquire property, and an additional $511,389 was spent on management and access facilities on heritage preserves.

Formed by state law in 1976, Heritage Trust has protected 80,217 acres on 66 state heritage preserves throughout South Carolina, which harbors 12 percent of the state's most significant archaeological sites and 34 percent of the state's rare plant species.

The new preserve added during FY 2002 was Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve in Calhoun County. Containing steep, undisturbed bluffs bordering the Congaree River, this 201-acre tract contains significant stands of American beech, oak-hickory and bottomland hardwood forests, and more than 100 species of trees, shrubs and woody vines have been identified between the ridge base and the crest of the bluffs. Department staff and the Calhoun SWCD are developing an education center on the site.

Property additions to heritage preserves were made during the year to Ashmore Heritage Preserve in Greenville County and Tillman Heritage Preserve in Jasper County.

Heritage Trust is funded through a small portion of revenue collected from documentary stamps required in South Carolina property transactions. The funds may be used only for acquiring and managing significant natural and cultural areas. Heritage Trust identifies rare plants, animals, archaeological sites and other outstanding features of South Carolina's natural and cultural heritage. The goal is to permanently protect the best examples of these features through acquisition or conservation easement.

For more information on state heritage preserves or for a full copy of the Heritage Trust annual report, write Heritage Trust, DNR, PO Box 167, Columbia, SC 29202; call (803) 734-3894 in Columbia; or visit the DNR Web site at http://www.dnr.state.sc.us.

16th Annual Wild Quail Management Seminars

Bobwhite quail populations in South Carolina and the southeast have been declining steadily over the past 40 years due to change in land use and reduction in suitable habitat. The 16th Annual Wild Quail Management Seminars, sponsored by the S.C. Department of Natural Resources and the S.C. State Committee of Quail Unlimited, are designed to instruct landowners and land managers in the proper techniques of creating habitat that will support native populations of bobwhite quail.

Two seminars will be conducted over a three-day period, March 6-8, 2003, at the Webb Wildlife Center in Hampton County. The registration fee is $75 and includes meals, overnight accommodations and seminar materials. Space is limited, so register early to reserve a slot in one of the two sessions.

"Properties that consistently carry medium-to high-density wild quail populations are actively managed to provide quail with all the habitat components necessary throughout the year," said Judy Barnes, SCDNR small game biologist. "These seminars are designed to improve quail habitat management skills and the information is presented so that anyone with an interest can implement these practices on their property."

16th Annual Quail Seminars
March 6-8, 2003
Hampton County
Call 803-734-4306
for more information.

Field demonstrations and classroom instruction will focus on habitat practices including firebreak establishment, prescribed burning, timber management, brush control, discing for natural foods and supplemental food patch plantings. Presentations also will be given on wild quail natural history, biology, diseases and parasites, predation and other factors that may be contributing to the population decline. An update on current research will also be presented. Speakers will include wildlife and forestry professionals from state and federal agencies.

For more information write to: Quail Management Seminars, SCDNR, PO Box 167, Columbia, SC 29202, or call the SCDNR Small Game Project at (803) 734-4306.

New Litter Busters Hotline Puts Public's Watchful Eye to Work

Be a Litter Buster and help the SCDNR control, reduce and eliminate litter along roadsides and highways and in natural areas like lakes, beaches, rivers and streams. The SCDNR, along with Palmetto Pride and the Department of Public Safety (DPS), have launched a new program that gets motorists, boaters and concerned citizens involved in the state's fight against litter.

The program provide citizens with a toll-free telephone number to call if they witness a litter violation. Call the Litter Buster's Hotline at 1-877-7-LITTER the next time you see someone unlawfully discarding trash, litter or debris, and be prepared to give the DNR dispatcher as much detailed information as possible. This includes a vehicle tag number or boat registration number, a general description of the vehicle or boat and the location and nature of the littering violation. After DPS matches the reported tag number to the registered owner of the boat or vehicle, Palmetto Pride will send a letter to the owner stating that someone, in his or her vehicle or boat, was observed littering. The letter's recipient will be given a courtesy notice and told that a littering conviction could result in fines of between $200 and $1000. If the littering offense is prosecutable, law enforcement will handle the investigation.

"This is a great tool for law enforcement that will contribute to a cleaner South Carolina," according to DNR Law Enforcement Division director, Colonel Alvin Wright. "We're combining the watchful eye of the public with contemporary communications technology."

Palmetto Pride, the Governor's Council on Beautification and Litter, started the Litter Busters program. Palmetto Pride is committed to the eradication of litter and the promotion of beautification in South Carolina.

PERSONNEL NEWS

Promotions

Finley, Wynetta- Promotion, 0810-9, 2002-10-06, Civil Engineer, Greenville.

Taylor, Randall- Promotion, 0334-11, 2002-11-03, Computer Specialist, Lexington.

Let us not forget that the cultivation of the earth is the most important labor of man. When tillage begins, other arts will follow. The farmers, therefore, are the founders of civilization.

— Daniel Webster

Answers to picture ID on page 7:
1. Anderson County
2. Marlboro County
3. Sumter County
4. Downtown Columbia
5. Greenville County (Raven Cliff Falls on January 18, 2003)