



South Carolina's Current Developments

A LEGACY OF CONSERVATION

Helping People Help the Land
for 75 Years



USDA
Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

From the Office
of the State Conservationist

Summer 2010



ANN ENGLISH

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Greetings,

I have been in the State for approximately 3 months. I made the commitment to visit each service center to meet and have a discussion with each of you. I began making these field visits in May, and I appreciate the open discussions with the employees I have met so far. I look forward to working with the SC Conservation Partnership and will be seeking opportunities to forge new partnerships that benefit NRCS and others.

NRCS Chief Dave White laid out a recipe (Ps and Qs) for what it would take to be a successful State Conservationist. I believe the recipe shines light on what it takes for NRCS in SC to be successful. Listed below are his ingredients for the recipe tailored toward SC:

People – We have got to treat our customers, **each other**, and partners ethically and with respect. We are leaders, but *how we lead* is vital to our success here in South Carolina

Partnerships – We simply must work within our partnerships – with districts, NGOs, State agencies, private entities – whoever, whenever, however – to get conservation on the ground.

Policy – We need to be familiar with major policy initiatives, particularly in the area of financial management and key area of program management.

Programs – We must have knowledge of both the statues and rules along with how programs are being implemented in South Carolina.

Politics – We do not care what anyone's political affiliation is; private lands conservation is bi-partisan. We must work with our political leadership, at the Federal, State and local level. We are not being asked to do anything untoward to accommodate whatever requests are made of us; we need to follow the law and explain our positions clearly. But, we will work with elected officials and treat them fairly and with respect.

Quality – Do the best we can, all the time.

Quantity - Means meeting our resource goals, helping more customers, putting more conservation on the ground, etc.

Accountability - Ensuring we are paying attention to the details of the "Ps and Qs"

I realize we have a Hercules job ahead of us and changes continue to come; however, I know we are up to meeting the challenges. I am looking forward to this new journey in South Carolina and seeing the great things that will be accomplished present and future.

Yours in Conservation,

Ann

Notes from the Field



Lowcountry RC&D Council Host Tour of ACE Basin Aboard DNR's Vessel Discovery

On May 3, 2010, the Lowcountry RC&D Council hosted its *Spring Tour* which featured a tour aboard the SC Department of Natural Resources (DNR) *Vessel Discovery*. Tour guide and Education Specialist Kattie McMillan shared her wealth of knowledge about marine, estuarine and salt marsh ecosystems, with the nearly fifty attendees. The highlight of the trip was viewing and learning more about what was captured in the net!

A variety of marine life provided an up-close-and-personal view into what lies beneath, and this was enjoyed by all aboard. The group gained an appreciation for the beautiful coastal natural resources in the ACE (Ashepoo-Combahee-Edisto Rivers) Basin.

SC NRCS State Conservationist Ann English attended the event and enjoyed her first visit to SC's Lowcountry since assuming leadership in the Palmetto State.

The group then met in the outdoor pavilion at the McKenzie Field Station for a delicious Lowcountry Boil.



Ann English, SC NRCS State Conservationist, and Lowcountry RC&D Council Chair Jimmy Bilka enjoyed the boat tour in the ACE Basin.



DNR's *Vessel Discovery* offered a great view of the coast.

Bishopville Soils Staff Inspires Kids to Dig In

What a day to celebrate! Kids in Sumter County got their hands dirty on Earth Day with the help of soil scientists from the SC NRCS Bishopville office.

During the second annual Earth Day Celebration at Cherryvale Elementary School, nearly 600 students (ranging in age from kindergarten to fifth grade) got to dig in and get up-close-and personal with nature.

NRCS employees Jackie Reed and Caleb Gulley emphasized the importance of soil and how our food, clothes, and homes depend upon the soil which produces these items. The students also learned about the three particles that compose soil-- sand, silt, and clay, which was a hit with the kids. The educational, hands-on experience also helped the kids gain an appreciation for water quality and quantity, wildlife, and got them thinking about things they could do around their homes, like recycling, to become more conservation friendly.



Students from Sumter County's Cherryvale Elementary learned about soils on Earth Day.

USDA Conducts Farm Bill Workshop to Kick Off 13th Annual Black Cowboy Festival

SC NRCS State Conservationist Discusses Importance of Conservation Planning

On April 29th, USDA hosted a *Farm Bill Workshop* to kick off the four-day Black Cowboy Festival in Rembert, SC, which is now in its 13th year. The creation of Mark and Sandra Myers (who own and operate Greenfield Farms), the festival seeks to recognize and celebrate the contributions of the African American cowboy. The annual event attracts hundreds of attendees from the East Coast, and the Farm Bill workshop is always a great start to this unique event. The topics help landowners understand how USDA programs and assistance can help them maximize profits and conserve and protect natural resources.

Supervisory District Conservationists Wilfred Pace and Ann Christie informed the audience about NRCS technical and financial assistance, as well as Farm Bill program details. SC NRCS State Conservationist Ann English introduced herself to the audience and told them about NRCS' 75th birthday which is being observed in 2010. She then encouraged landowners to consider the importance of whole farm conservation planning. "I invite you to visit your local NRCS District Conservationist and develop a good working relationship with them. Make sure they are familiar with the resources on your farm, and your goals. Then, when a Farm Bill program sign up is issued, you will be ready to submit your application, and will have a better chance of receiving assistance by meeting eligibility requirements and submitting a complete and thorough application." She also noted that the provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill ensure that new and beginning, and small and limited resource farmers, have access to financial and technical assistance.



The USDA Programs Workshop helped landowners understand the financial and technical assistance available to help them maximize profits and protect soil and water resources.

English concluded her comments by thanking the local landowners for taking care of the resources upon which we all depend. "For the farmers here today that continue to work the land, and grow the food and fiber that supports our country, I thank you for what you do. It's not an easy job, but it's a labor of love, and for many of you, something that was passed down throughout many generations of your family."

South Carolina Host Listening Session for America's Great Outdoors Initiative

South Carolina NRCS employees Ann English, Amy Maxwell, Sabrenna Bryant, Erica Westbrook, and David Findley served on the planning committee for the June 28th listening session in Charleston, SC. The event was conducted as part of President Obama's *America's Great Outdoors (AGO)* initiative.

The day kicked off with a tour of longleaf pine in the Francis Marion National Forest, and then a panel discussion and listening session at Founder's Hall, Charlestowne Landing. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack spoke at the event, and encouraged partnership between local, state, and federal conservation leaders. The event signified the kickoff for a new USDA initiative to improve longleaf pine forest ecosystems, and South Carolina was named one of nine states in the southeast to be included in the project. "This collaborative, all-lands approach to conservation will result in cleaner water, improved critical habitat for sensitive species, and an economic resource for the future," explained SC NRCS State Conservationist Ann English. The initiative is funded through NRCS' Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). South Carolina received \$700,000 in financial assistance for the restoration efforts, and sign up extends through July 14th.



photo: Gwyn A. Ingram, USDA Forest Service

Secretary Vilsack (left) was greeted by state and regional conservation leaders during the longleaf pine tour, including NRCS Regional Conservationist for the East Leonard Jordan.

A Legacy of Conservation

East Piedmont RC&D Council and Richland County Recreation Commission Partner for *Green Thumb Garden*

by Sabrenna Bryant, SC NRCS Public Affairs Specialist

The East Piedmont Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council, along with the Richland County Recreation Commission (RCRC) and other partners, hosted the *Green Thumb Garden Dedication Ceremony* on April 22, 2010, at the Denny Terrace Community Center in Columbia, SC. The *Green Thumb Gardening Project* is aimed at educating the community about the importance of gardening and growing healthy, all-natural foods, as well as emphasizing the involvement of disabled youths and senior citizens by implementing raised handicap-accessible gardening beds. East Piedmont RC&D Coordinator Reginald Hall said he has partnered with the RCRC on several projects and, "they have been very receptive to many innovative ideas and I look forward to future partnerships."

The project is located in a small green space behind the Denny Terrace Community Center and features two raised beds of flowers and vegetables. Plant materials and labor were donated by Blythewood and Keenan High Schools, and include tomato, onion, parsley, and basil. The produce and the harvest of the garden will be presented to the senior citizens of the community. "We wanted this project to foster an appreciation for gardening in some of our underserved communities, and to strengthen our partnerships," said Andrew Scott, Adaptive Recreation Supervisor for RCRC.



A Green Thumb Garden Dedication Ceremony was held on Earth Day at Denny Terrace Community Center.



During the Ceremony, Master Gardener Sandy Bailey demonstrated how to take care of the chemical-free garden by illustrating pruning, mulching, and application of natural fertilizer from the compost box. The compost box will be used to fertilize next year's plantings. Bailey encouraged citizens and employees to fill the compost with dead plants from pruning, as well as fruit and vegetable peelings to produce a rich fertilizer.



Kenya Bryant, RCRC Assistant Executive Director (r), speaks with eleven year old Milton Frederick who is able to enjoy the handicap-accessible garden at Denny Terrace Community Center.

East Piedmont RC&D and the RCRC hope to continue their partnership with additional community enrichment projects. "We would like to use Denny Terrace as an example and expand projects like this one to our other facilities across Richland County," stated Kenya Bryant, RCRC Assistant Executive Director. "Not only does it bring about awareness to our communities, but it also has a positive impact on the environment."

Sumter County Farm Couple Nominated as *Small Farmers of the Year*

by Amy O. Maxwell, SC NRCS Public Affairs Specialist

Larry and Janie Harris of Sumter, SC, love the land where they farm, care about their neighbors, and believe in implementing conservation practices on their operation so that they can protect and improve natural resources.

Because they are outstanding stewards of the land, they have been nominated as 2010 Farmers of the Year by SC NRCS for a competition sponsored by *Minority Landowner* magazine to recognize exemplary producers throughout America.

SC NRCS Soil Conservationist Angel Sams (now the District Conservationist in Charleston County) worked closely with the Harris' to implement conservation practices as prescribed through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Practices include drip trickle irrigation and plasticulture. Soon, they will construct a high tunnel to extend their growing season and potentially reduce pesticide use, keep vital nutrients in the soil, increase yields, and help add to their bottom line.

They farm eighteen acres and produce truck crops including squash, tomatoes, potatoes, melons, corn, peas, beans, onions, and peppers. "Our goal is to produce a safe and healthy plant and we take pride in that," said Mr. Harris. They are members of SC Department of Agriculture (SCDA) *Certified South Carolina Program* which is a branding program that helps consumers locate and purchase products from the Palmetto State. A SCDA survey of shoppers throughout the state revealed that nearly 90 percent would buy SC-grown produce if it was competitively priced and good quality. This is great news for farm families like the Harris' who work hard to produce a highly desirable, locally produced consumable. Their roadside market operates with the slogan, "Get What's Fresh Today for Dinner." Locally produced equates to freshness, and consumers take pride in knowing that they are supporting local farmers.

STEWARDS OF THE LAND
SUMTER, SOUTH CAROLINA
LARRY & JANIE HARRIS



Mr. and Mrs. Harris have been married for 41 years, and first met in New Jersey. It wasn't long before Mrs. Harris talked her husband into moving back south with her to the Palmetto State. Mr.

Harris' background was in law enforcement, but Mrs. Harris grew up on a farm in Sumter. Her return to the farm was the result of an eye opening trip to the supermarket. "I picked up a squash that had an origin label of Denmark," she explains. "Like the Denmark overseas--not Denmark, SC!" That was the moment she knew she wanted

to get back into farming, and she convinced her husband to join her. They both agree that it's a labor of love, but one that they wouldn't trade for anything.

"Get what's fresh today for dinner tonight!"

Harris Farm Market slogan



Larry Harris (left) consults with NRCS conservationist Angel Sams about his EQIP plan which is helping to protect and improve soil and water quality at his twenty-acre operation in Sumter County.

A Legacy of Conservation

Wetlands Reserve Program Easement Will Restore and Protect Wateree Floodlands Memorial Forest

Tucked away just west of the Wateree River on both sides of the Kershaw/Richland County border is an exceptional forest brimming with life. It's quiet in this bottomland hardwood, formerly called English Swamp, yet officially known as the Wateree Floodlands Memorial Forest. But don't let that fool you. There is plenty to see, hear, smell, and experience in this pristine 2000+ acre area owned by the Guy family of Boykin, SC. Not only can you witness a new species of plant life, you can also gaze up at a massive 148-foot tall state champion willow oak (with a circumference of 21.5 feet!). And to top it all off, the forest will be protected forever thanks to a Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) easement. WRP is a voluntary program of the Farm Bill that offers landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. The Guy family worked with conservationists at USDA-NRCS to enroll nearly 1,450 acres of their property in WRP, and will receive technical and financial assistance to restore the hydrology of the area. The resulting restoration plan will help achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled. Because of the long-term conservation practices being implemented, this area will be permanently protected and enjoyed by the Guy family for generations to come.

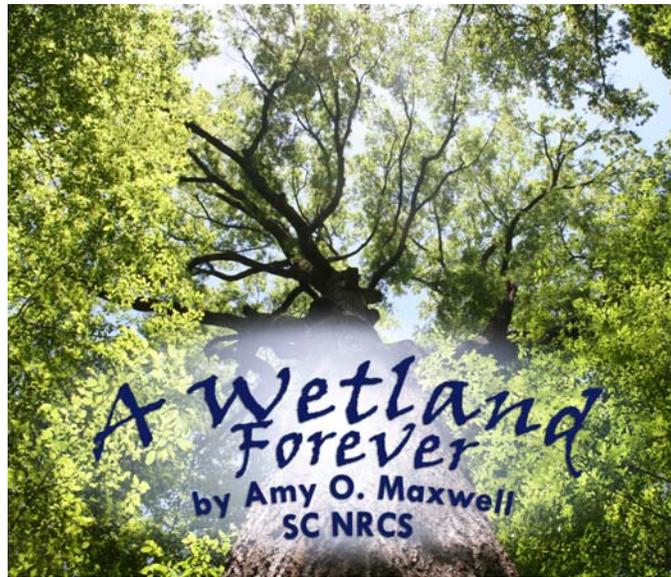
WRP SITE HOME TO NEW TRILLIUM SPECIES

SC NRCS Wildlife Biologist Studie Daves Thomas visited the WRP site in March 2008 and came across an interesting plant. "I found a Trillium species in bloom, and then learned that a botanist had discovered a specimen with similar characteristics in Kershaw County," she explained. That botanist was L. L. "Chick" Gaddy, a field-trained naturalist and president of the environmental consulting firm *terra incognita*. Thomas

contacted Gaddy to inform him of her discovery of the plant at the Guy WRP site. He first encountered the species in 2002 and dubbed it Wateree Trillium. Gaddy wrote, "Although I immediately recognized the plant as one of the sessile trilliums, I could not determine the species." Further research indicated that the trillium was originally collected in the same area in 1937 by H.J. Oosting, Professor of Ecology at Duke University. His trillium collections are housed at the Duke University Herbarium, and that's where Gaddy discovered that what he had collected at both this WRP site, as well as an adjacent one, were in fact the same trillium. Gaddy's abstract explains, "After an examination of Oosting's specimen, I concluded that

the plant I was observing in the Wateree floodplain was the same plant Oosting had collected in 1937. Its petals were green to yellowish-green with maroon, clawed bases. The plant was growing in rich floodplain woods along the Wateree River in the Inner Coastal Plain of South Carolina." Since all known populations of the

plant are found just below the fall line in the floodplain of the Wateree River in Kershaw and Richland Counties, Gaddy and Thomas realized that a previously unclassified species of trillium, the same collected by Oosting in 1937, was plentiful at this WRP site. Gaddy classified it *Trillium oostingii* in tribute to the field biologist who first located and collected it in the 30's. The permanence of this WRP easement means that this plant species will remain forever undisturbed.



Trillium oostingii

-continued-

WILLOW OAK REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

This WRP site boasts yet another incredible find, but instead of gazing down at the ground as you would to spot the trillium, the state record willow oak requires you to look sky high. Measuring 148-feet tall and 21.5-feet in circumference, the majestic oak soars above the other trees in this forest. “Many of the trees here are old-growth and are even comparable in size and stature to those in the Congaree Swamp National Monument,” remarked Thomas. In fact, the lay of the land and the flora and fauna found within the forest do in fact resemble the Congaree Swamp. The area is full of cypress and tupelo, along with oak and pine, and the property is blessed with a diversity of native wetland forest plants and abundant wildlife. In the midst is the towering tree—now a state record holder. During a recent field trip, John Cely, a retired SC Department of Natural Resources biologist, used a clinometer to record and confirm the record breaking height of the willow oak. Jamie Guy was on hand to witness the occasion and proudly posed alongside the grand giant to have his photograph taken. “In the 1940’s my father purchased this tract to support our family’s plywood mill.” Luckily, the area was never logged. Then in the early 70’s when the profitability of small plywood mills was decreasing due to competition from larger markets, Guy’s father, Edwin Guy, protected the forest through a private foundation with family members serving as the officers. “My father could not bear the thought of those trees being cut,” Guy said. That’s how Wateree Floodlands Memorial Forest was created. And now, the WRP easement is just another way of protecting the valuable assets of this old-growth forest.



This willow oak on Guy’s WRP easement measures 148-feet tall and 21.5-feet in circumference.

LOVE IT AND LEAVE IT WITH THE HELP OF WRP

May 2010 marked the 20th anniversary of American Wetlands Month—a time when conservation partners in federal, state, tribal, local, non-

profit, and private sector organizations celebrate the vital importance of wetlands to the Nation’s ecological, economic, and social health. A hike through the Wateree Floodlands Memorial Forest is pure proof that wetlands are places worth protecting. Not only do they provide habitat for wildlife and plants, they also filter, clean, and store water, and act like kidneys for other ecosystems. They help collect and hold flood waters, and best of all, provide a place of beauty, peace and quiet, and recreation.

Thomas said the WRP restoration plan will reconnect the natural backwater floodplain channels that are now blocked by road fill or restricted by small pipes. “In shallower channels, we will take the road fill down to below natural ground, and then install rock and geo-textile in the road bed up to natural ground level.” She explained that the road will still be accessible by vehicles up to certain water levels, and still allow for the natural water flow patterns. Larger pipes will be installed in the deeper “slough” areas where water flow is currently restricted. This will also allow passage for aquatic organisms. Invasive species, such as Chinese Privet, will also be eradicated. This shrub infests bottomland forests and many other natural communities and reduces habitat quality and biodiversity. “The removal of this species will nurture the growth of native plants that provide high quality food and shelter for wildlife,” explained Thomas. Construction begins this summer, while water levels are low.

The NRCS District Conservationist currently assisting Guy with the WRP restoration is Mike Sigmon. “This forest contains a truly spectacular WRP site. It’s got a unique ecosystem and diverse plant and animal community, including aquatic and terrestrial species. Working through WRP, Mr. Guy has preserved a very special place, and he’s the type of landowner I enjoy working with and partnering with every day,” he said.

Thanks to the dedication and stewardship of the Guy family, and the knowledge and expertise of the many conservationists who collaborated to develop the restoration plan and identify the amazing spectrum of biodiversity in the area, this wetland will not be a memory. Rather, the permanent WRP easement will ensure that the area continues to function just as it was meant to. This wetland is a vital link between land and water, and supports an amazing ecosystem.

A Legacy of Conservation

13th Annual Cultural Awareness Training is August 26

Cultural Awareness Training (CAT) will be hosted at the South Carolina Department of Archives & History, 8301 Parkland Road in Columbia, which is the same facility as last year. SC NRCS employees will get together on Thursday, August 26th, for a day of training, interaction, and discussion. The theme is *Blast from the Past-Diversification of SC NRCS Employees*.

Registration is from 7:30a.m. to 8:30a.m. and the program will begin promptly at 9 a.m. The CAT committee worked really hard this year to secure some wonderful and diverse speakers.

This year's training was designed to keep the group together in general session without breakouts. CAT Committee member Rebecca Wilson distributed an Outlook Calendar Event request, so please reply to that if you have not already. This is important and enables the committee can get a head count of attendees.

SC NRCS Welcomes New State Administrative Officer

Tony K. Doxtater grew up in southern Indiana, attended high school in Indianapolis, and attended college at Purdue University. He started with the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) right out of college as an Admin. *Tony K. Doxtater, SC Trainee, specializing in contracting, and has been with the agency for 20 years.*



Tony K. Doxtater, SC NRCS' new SAO.

He spent nine years in Bozeman, Montana, as a contract specialist, and then moved to Denver, Colorado, for five years to serve as the supervisory Contracting Officer.

Tony's next career move took him to Huron, South Dakota, as the State Administrative Officer (SAO) where he served for 4.5 years. This Spring, he joined the SC NRCS family as the new SAO.

Tony has two very friendly cats named Spike and Trixie. He enjoys music and riding on his scooter. He has been involved in various activities including choir, square-dancing, volleyball, bowling, and improvisational comedy. But his most favorite thing to do is writing biographies.

McCormick Conservation Partnership Host Field Day for 4th Graders

Conservation partners in McCormick County combined their expertise, talents, and resources to plan and host the 6th Annual Conservation Field Day for 4th graders.

The event helps students to understand the importance of protecting natural resources, and teachers, their students, and volunteers all enjoy the hands-on activities.

Topics include watersheds, wildlife, tree identification, and a relay race illustrates how animals interact in the forest.

The event was created by McCormick SWCD Clerk Phyllis Albert and Commissioner Bobby Edmonds. The SWCD conducts the event with assistance from NRCS, Clemson Extension, SCDNR, and the SC Forestry Commission.



Fourth graders in McCormick County learn about soil, water, air, plants, and animals, at the annual conservation field day.

Greenville Conservation Partnership Helps Local Church Instill Community Pride

by Amy O. Maxwell, SC NRCS

THE SULLIVAN STREET COMMUNITY IN GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA, HAS UNDERGONE AN EXTREME MAKEOVER.

The transformation was merely a dream a few years ago when Pastor Sean Dogan contacted the Greenville USDA NRCS for assistance and advice. His mission was clear and straightforward. He, along with church members from Long Branch Baptist Church, wanted to ensure that the stream running adjacent to the church was stabilized.

“We simply wanted to clean up this channel and make sure that it didn’t collapse from the effects of severe erosion along the banks,” explained Dogan. “My main concern initially was the danger the channel posed.” The channel was also an eyesore that marred the church property. The Greenville Conservation Partnership was eager to assist Dogan and worked with him to implement a plan to stabilize and repair the 200-foot of eroding streambank. But, they did not stop there.

This group embarked upon a venture that would improve the economic, environmental, and social conditions of an inner-city Greenville neighborhood.

A LARGE AREA OF VACANT LAND BEHIND THE CHURCH HAD DISINTEGRATED INTO A SCENE OF FREQUENT DRUG TRADE AND CRIMINAL ACTIVITY. So, working with the Greenville NRCS, Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), and the Foothills Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council, the church went a step further and set its sights on a greenway development project. The area was first cleared of the dilapidated homes that bordered the area. Far exceeding his original intent to stabilize

and clean out the stream, Dogan was determined to accomplish much more. From a relatively simple stream restoration project was born a cooperative conservation project that would instill pride in a depressed community, rally volunteers from the church and neighborhood, and create an oasis of peace, beauty, and reflection.

FORMED IN 1924 BY A SMALL GROUP OF WORSHIPERS, THE FOUNDING MEMBERS OF LONG BRANCH BAPTIST FIRST MET IN TWO CONJOINED HOMES. They named the church after the meandering stream that bordered the property, and in which founding members were baptized. Over the years, the once sacred stream

became a dumping ground for unwanted materials, including tires and other discarded items. Eroding banks were steep, dangerous, and rapidly approaching the perimeter of the church building. When Pastor Dogan was elected to lead the church in 1997, this was one of the numerous positive projects he initiated. Also, under his leadership the congregation increased its membership, and also purchased four acres of

idle land surrounding the church. Unfortunately, the area bore the scars of neglect from a neighborhood wrought with crime, drug activity, and negligence. For a church so rich with history and with such a strong following, Dogan sought to ensure that the outside of his house of worship was just as sustainable and inviting as the interior.

FOOTHILLS RC&D COORDINATOR DAVE DEMAREST AND NRCS DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST LYNNE NEWTON WORKED CLOSELY WITH PASTOR DOGAN, AND THEIR BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP TURNED INTO A LASTING FRIENDSHIP. In fact, during the August 2009 SC NRCS Cultural Awareness Day, Dogan made a surprise appearance to present Demarest with the NRCS Outreach Award. Since beginning



Local residents volunteered their time and energy to clean up an eyesore in their community, and the result was a sustainable, safe, and attractive greenspace.

A Legacy of Conservation

work on this project, they have developed not only an effective working relationship, but also a long-lasting friendship. Demarest was recognized with the award for his exemplary efforts in spearheading this project, and for his leadership, dedication, and commitment. Both Demarest and Newton worked diligently with the church to secure grants and funding sources, and were critical liaisons between the many project sponsors, partners, and volunteers. They also both agree that if it were not for the true commitment of the church, including their willingness to support the project with much of their own funding, it would not have happened. “We shared a vision and a common goal, and because of that, we couldn’t be stopped.” Demarest added, “Pastor Dogan and his church members were not looking to us strictly for financial assistance. They told us what they wanted, and we helped them find ways to get it done.” Just



IME
Foothills RC&D Coordinator Dave Demarest was presented with the 2009 NRCS Outreach Award for his work on the Long Branch Greenway.

as Demarest was recognized for his efforts to make this project a success, Dogan was recently presented with the Greenville SWCD *Urban Conservationist of the Year* Award during the District’s annual banquet.

The Long Branch greenway project was implemented in four phases that included curb tree planting, stream restoration, establishment of a riparian area, and construction of a native rock



The streambank along Long Branch creek was stabilized to prevent further erosion.

sitting area. Newton explains how the project got started. “Pastor Sean first contacted me in 2008 for assistance in stabilizing the creek behind the church. We discussed several options including culverting the whole stream, riprap, and native stone. Culverting would have been the easiest, but it would have been expensive and timely due to permitting is-

sues. Riprap wasn’t a desired option because we wanted a natural look, so that is what led us to chose a method of modified natural stream principles that use very large native rock in the bottom of the channel at several locations to reduce erosion. We also sloped the banks to allow the water to spread out during storm events.”

A fifth and final component of the plan evolved after the construction was complete. The establishment of an environmental education program for children and adults will be spearheaded by the Greenville SWCD who will work with *Clubhouse Gang*, an enrichment program for inner-city schoolchildren, to plan and implement monthly programs for children so they can get up close and personal with nature. Also, exposure to the variety of educational programs and speakers will hopefully interest young adults in pursuing a career in natural resources. Both young and old are benefiting from the recreational opportunities the greenway offers. In fact, the church has an active seniors group that recently installed beds where they will plant a *Three Sister’s Garden*, an ancient method of intercropping corn, beans, and squash. “Students and seniors will be engaged in outdoor learning activities to help them understand the importance of soil and water conservation, and teach them about responsible stewardship,” explained Dogan.

Demarest, Dogan, and Newton were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and willingness of local residents to pitch in during the clean up and tree planting. “The response has been really awesome with scores of private citizens volunteering to help plant trees, clean up trash, and keep the area pristine,” said Dogan. The area is now a source of pride for the residents in the neighborhood, and Demarest shares a funny story about one particular evening he was caught “trespassing” at the greenway. “I had stopped by one night on my way home after work to check on the progress of the tree planting, and a lady that lives across the street warned me that she would call the authorities on me for messing with the trees!” Demarest says it was then that he realized what kind of impact the project was making on the community. “I was so glad when that happened, because it proved to me that the project was a success in the sense that folks were taking ownership of the greenway.” The once vacant and litter-strewn lot is dotted with a variety of trees

thanks to the help of *Trees Greenville*, a non-profit community group focused on planting, promoting, and protecting trees in the county. Now, with the native rock sitting area complete, it serves as a beautiful focal point, and was made possible with grant support from the Lowcountry RC&D Council and Palmetto Pride. In fact, it was recently used as an altar for an outdoor wedding service. Newton recognizes that this project impacts both the conservation aspects of the area, but on a larger scale, is having a positive impact on the community as a whole. "Through this project and others like it, the church is changing the community one heart at a time. A person turns his or her life around and it impacts the family, the family changes, and over time the community is changed for the better, and that's what it's all about." Newton is optimistic about the educational component of the greenway. "The stream is a great visual aid to emphasize the importance of water quality, soil erosion and wildlife habitat."

THIS IS MORE THAN A SUCCESS STORY ABOUT A LOCALLY-LED COOPERATIVE CONSERVATION PROJECT RESULTING IN AN AESTHETICALLY PLEASING GREENWAY AND A STABILIZED STREAMBANK. It is the story of the power of community pride, local, state, and federal partnerships, concerned citizens and community leaders, and lasting friendships. Combining the talents, resources, enthusiasm, and ideas of a group of hard working, creative individuals resulted in a place of learning and exploration that will be present for generations to come. The motto of Long Branch Baptist, "Saving Souls and Solving Problems," is a fitting one for this story. "If I had to pick one project over the course of my career which really illustrates the true spirit and mission of our work at NRCS, it would be this one," concluded Demarest. Now, ninety-seven years after the founding members of Long Branch Baptist first baptized members in the stream that borders the present sanctuary, the area experiences a rebirth.

From the native rock sitting area, the restored streambank, tree plantings, and the volunteer effort and energy that went into getting the work done, this project clearly illustrates what happens when a community is inspired and empowered.



The rock sitting area was funded with grant support from the Lowcountry RC&D Council and Palmetto Pride.



left to right: Greenville District Conservationist Lynne Newton, Long Branch Baptist Church Pastor Sean Dogan, and Foothills RC&D Coordinator Dave Demarest developed a close working relationship and friendship through their coordination on this project.



Conservation Photo Contest Winners



Gator on Edisto WRP site
by Ann Bentley, NRCS, Charleston, SC



Honeysuckle Row
by Charlie Ogg, NRCS, Bishopville, SC



Flower Power
by Sue Griggs, NRCS, Chesterfield, SC



Sunflower
by Lisa Good, NRCS, Laurens, SC

Assistant State Conservation Engineer Stephen Henry has some very creative daughters! Looks like he has a pair of budding poets in his household!

A pink squid who lives on a leaf likes to eat the sun on a pretty day.

by Lillian Henry, Age 7, who wrote the poem to describe these flowers in her backyard.



Great Arrival

by Ashbelle Henry, 7th grade

A bouquet of flowers, roses galore.
Long spring showers, daises and more.
Sun on our faces, grass so green. Buds in soft cases, all these are spring.
Butterflies flutter, the shines bright.
Rain in the gutter, everything's right.
Lacy mosses, great green trees. Vines are bosses, the great trunk grieves.
Flowers grow, and the world finally knows....
That Spring is definitely here!

Remembering Caroline Grant

40+ Year Veteran of SCS/NRCS Passes Away

Employees and retirees have inquired about memorials to honor Caroline Grant, former administrative assistant to the State Conservationist and a 40+ year employee of SCS/NRCS in South Carolina, who passed away this April.



At her memorial service, her goddaughter Brandie asked friends and coworkers of Caroline's to honor her memory by writing about their relationship with Caroline in a letter addressed to Davis Love, her nephew (Brandie's son).

Because Davis is so young, he may not remember Caroline, but your letters and cards to him will help him learn more about her. You can address those letters to: Davis Love, 936 Cloisters Drive, Florence, SC 29505. In addition, you can make memorial gifts in honor of Caroline to:

Friends of the Richland County Public Library

1431 Assembly Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Please put "Caroline Grant Memorial" on the For line on the check. Checks payable to Friends of the Richland County Public Library.

32nd Annual Jubilee Festival Coming Up Next Month

Farmers Encouraged to Register as Vendors to Promote and Sell Locally Grown Produce

The Historic Columbia Foundation extends an invitation to farmers to participate as a farmer's market vendor in the 32nd Annual Jubilee Festival of Heritage. The event will take place Saturday, August 28th, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Mann-Simons Cottage on Richland Street in downtown Columbia.

The festival celebrates the life of Celia Mann, one of South Carolina's most celebrated free black women. As one of the longest running African American festivals in the Southeast, Jubilee has become one of Columbia's top cultural attractions. The event is free to the public and will feature music, storytellers, historic house and site tours, demonstration artists, and hands-on activities.

Farmers who would like to register as vendors (\$100 registration fee), should sign up by August 11, by visiting www.historiccolumbia.org, or call 803-252-1770, extension 32, or email tcaswell@historiccolumbia.org.

South Carolina Strives to Meet Secretary Vilsack's People's Garden Challenge

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that "People's Gardens" now exist in all 50 states, two U.S. territories, and three foreign countries. South Carolina NRCS State Conservationist Ann English said there are twelve registered gardens throughout the state at USDA Service Centers. The gardens are in Bamberg, Barnwell, Colleton, Dorchester, Edgefield, Horry, Laurens, Lee, Newberry, Orangeburg, Spartanburg, and Williamsburg.

To date, there are over 400 'People's Gardens' across the country. This is a significant milestone in 'The People's Garden' initiative since Secretary Vilsack broke ground one year ago at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC.

The Secretary challenged all employees to create a 'People's Garden' at their USDA office or in their local communities. USDA is partnering with hundreds of organizations at the local level and most of these partners are recipients of the food grown in the gardens. Last year, with only 124 'People's Gardens', USDA donated over 34,000 pounds of produce to local charities.

More information can be found at www.usda.gov/peoplesgarden or follow the initiative for real-time updates at twitter.com/peoplesgarden. Information also is available on the USDA Facebook page at www.facebook.com/USDA and photos are available at www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov. Blogs from the gardeners involved in these "People's Gardens" are featured each Friday at www.usda.gov/blog/usda.

In concert with this effort, USDA is also participating in the *Feds, Farmers, and Friends Feed Families* campaign which seeks to gather 1.2 million pounds of non perishable food items to donate to children and families who are in need. The campaign started in June and ends August 31st. Learn more at www.fedsfeedfamilies.gov.

-garden photos on next pg.-



People's Gardens in South Carolina

Barnwell



Dorchester



Lee



Newberry



Spartanburg

Lee County High School Students Enjoy 3-Day Natural Resources Workshop

Lee Central High School students got exposure to leadership skills, environmental awareness, and career planning during a three day workshop sponsored by a host of Lee County sponsors and organizations, including NRCS and the SWCD.

Day one exposed students to a variety of activities designed to strengthen leadership skills and learn more about how they interact with others. At the beginning of the session, attendees were reserved, but by the end of the day, new friendships were forming and the sounds of laughter were heard throughout the classroom.

Day two offered students the chance to visit a local cattle farm and hear firsthand from a young farmer about raising beef cattle. Then, they traveled to a turkey farm and row crop farm where they learned about what it takes to operate a farm, and the technology available to producers to help them save money and be more efficient. Lee State Natural Area was a great spot to have lunch, and a demonstration of the *Environscape Watershed Model* enabled students to understand that everyone lives in a watershed, and that their actions impact water quality. A stroll down the park's boardwalk with NRCS Wildlife Biologist Dick Yetter helped them understand the purpose and importance of wetlands, and they even spotted snakes, rabbits, skinks, and lizards. The group experienced a short canoe trip before summer rains appeared.

The final day of the workshop enabled students to take assessments in order to help them explore career options. They also visited local businesses to talk to small business owners and learn their secrets to success. Local topiary artist Pearl Fryer, who was featured in an award winning documentary film, also addressed the students about following their dreams and overcoming obstacles.



Students visited a cattle operation and learned about what it takes to manage a farm.

Spartanburg High School Claims Top Envirothon Prize in South Carolina

The 14th annual SC Envirothon was held on May 7th at the Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development. SC NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs Kellee Melton chaired this year's Envirothon Steering Committee. The competition attracted 23 teams seeking to win the state prize and head to the national event in August. Students were tested on Aquatics, Forestry, Oral Presentation, the Protection of Groundwater through Urban, Agricultural and Environmental Planning, Soils, and Wildlife. The oral presentation demands a working knowledge of every station, and an ability to analyze the information, coordinate with their team a course of action, and illustrate a plan for implementation. The teams had to present a comprehensive water management plan for a large SC county considering drought, population increases, ground and surface wa-

ter protection, urban and agricultural needs, and storm water management. The Envirothon prepares students for issues that are now, and will continue to challenge our leaders.

The overall competition winners, whose high scores landed them in the top four were: **Honorable Mention** – Team Greenville (Greenville County), **Third Place**, each member receiving a \$125 scholarship – Spartanburg Day School (Spartanburg County), **Second Place**, with each member receiving a \$250 scholarship – Spartanburg High School Team B, and **First Place**, each member receiving a \$500 scholarship – Spartanburg High School Team A (Spartanburg County). Spartanburg Team A will also move on to compete at the Canon Envirothon competition that will host approximately 45 other US and Canadian Province teams in Fresno, CA.

Scholarships and prizes at the state level were provided by the generous donations of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of the state,

their State Association, the SC Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society, the Lowcountry RC&D Council, the Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund, the SC Association of Future Farmers of America, the Canon Envirothon Committee, and various personal donations made by the 'Friends of Envirothon'.

The event is a true model of partnership for a common cause: providing a challenging, but fun outdoor experience for high school students that will encourage them to be stewards of the land, not just with their hearts, but with their heads and with their hands. To learn more, please visit www.dnr.sc.gov/education/Envirothon.



The top prize for the 2010 SC Envirothon was presented to Spartanburg Team A who will travel to Fresno, California, to compete at the national level.



Several NRCsers volunteered to grade and score the Envirothon tests at the outdoor competition as temperatures rose into the upper 90's.



Joy Sullivan, Educational Programs and Special Projects Director at SC DNR, coordinates the annual SC Envirothon.

Personnel News

New Employees

Ann M. English was promoted to State Conservationist, GS-0457-14, in the State Office, effective April 26, 2010.

Heather Coleman was selected as a Student Intern, GS-0499-04, in the Dillon Field Office, effective May 9, 2010.

Tony Doxtater was selected as the State Administrative Officer, GS-0341-13, in the State Office, effective April 13, 2010.

Promotions

Jolie Brown was promoted to Soil Conservationist Student Trainee, GS-0499-04, in the Greenville Field Office, effective May 9, 2010.

Joshua Boatwright was promoted to Soil Conservationist Student Trainee, GS-0499-04, in the Anderson Field Office, effective May 9, 2010.

Martha Bright-Rivera was promoted to Human Resources Specialist, GS-0201-11, in the State Office, effective May 23, 2010.

Brad Poston was promoted to Soil Conservationist Technician, GS-0458-07, in the Marion Field Office, effective March 14, 2010.

Taylor Ammons was promoted to Cartographer Student Trainee, GS-1399-04, in the State Office, effective May 9, 2010.

Tria Yang, Soil Conservationist in the Saluda Field Office, was promoted and reassigned to Soil Conservationist, GS-0457-09, in the Jasper Field Office, effective June 20, 2010.

William Faulkner was promoted to Soil Conservationist, GS-0457-09, in the St Matthews Field Office, effective June 20, 2010.

Transfer

Natalie Bowyer, Financial Technician in the State Office, was promoted and transferred to the Bureau of Land Management in Colorado, effective June 06, 2010.

Ruthie Davis, Soil Conservationist in the Charleston Field Office, was promoted and transferred to Massachusetts, effective May 9, 2010.

Reassignment

Clifford Eaddy, District Conservationist in the Manning Field Office, was reassigned to District Conservationist located in the Edgefield Field Office, effective June 6, 2010.

Jayson Mas, Soil Conservationist in the Lancaster Field Office, was reassigned to Soil Conservationist located in the Bamberg Field Office, effective June 20, 2010.

Joshua Martin, Soil Conservationist in the Abbeville Field Office, was reassigned to Soil Conservationist located in the Sumter Field Office, effective June 6, 2010.

Myra Jones, a Soil Scientist in the Laurens Soil Survey Office, was reassigned to Soil Conservationist located in the Newberry Field Office, effective June 6, 2010.

Retirement

Louis Jackson, Supervisory District Conservationist, GS-0457-12, retired effective May 31, 2010, from the Sumter Field Office.

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www.sc.nrcs.usda.gov

NRCS Public Affairs Team/Newsletter Staff

Editor: Amy O. Maxwell, State Public Affairs Specialist and Outreach Coordinator

Co-Editor: Sabrenna Bryant, Public Affairs Assistant

Editorial Assistant: Beverly Alexander, Admin. Asst.

Please send comments and suggestions to:
USDA-NRCS

EDITOR-Current Developments
1835 Assembly Street, Room 950
Columbia, SC 29201

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