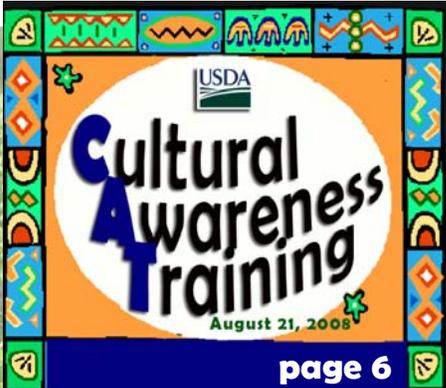


# SOUTH CAROLINA'S **Summer 2008**

# CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Helping People Help the Land

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service



**Cultural Awareness Training**  
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Photo credit: Tina McCaskill



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Room 950  
Columbia, SC 29201  
[www.sc.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.sc.nrcs.usda.gov)



From the office of the  
**NRCS  
State  
Conservationist**



*Niles Glasgow*

**Dear SC Conservation Partnership,**

It is my pleasure to announce that Yon Family Farms in Saluda County was recently recognized as one of seven regional winners in the 2008 Environmental Stewardship Awards program. This award is administered by the National Cattlemen’s Foundation and sponsored by Dow AgroSciences, L.L.C., USDA-NRCS, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The award recognizes cattle producers from across the nation who use innovative, cost-effective stewardship practices that contribute to conservation.

I had the opportunity to spend a day with this remarkable family last month and enjoyed



*Glasgow (second from left) visits with award winning producer Kevin Yon (right) and NRCS District Conservationist Hugh Smith (foreground).*

getting to know Kevin and Lydia and their children Sally, Drake, and Corbin. They are a great example of what results when love, dedication, hard work, and a deep-rooted conservation ethic collide to

create a beautiful, and well managed, environment. Take one look at their 1,500 acres

of cropland, hay, and pastureland, as well as their Angus operation, and you will see that hard work does indeed reap rewards. Using a whole farm approach to conservation, The Yon’s demonstrated a commitment to conservation through their participation in a number of Farm Bill programs. From CSP to FIP, EQIP, and GRP, protection of natural resources is a priority for this farm family. They worked closely with NRCS District Conservationist Hugh Smith to utilize financial and technical assistance to improve their operation. Now, with the presentation of the Environmental Stewardship Award, the Yon’s will go on to compete against seven other regional winners with the grand prize winner to be revealed at the January 2009 Cattle Industry Convention in Phoenix.

Regardless of the outcome of the competition, the Yon’s have already won the top prize. They understand and embrace the importance of natural resource protection, and are reaping the rewards that stewardship offers. I salute them for their dedication, and am proud that NRCS has been able to help them along the way. I hope you will join us at the 2009 SC Conservation Partnership Conference in Myrtle Beach where we will recognize and honor the Yon's for their farming success at a special luncheon.

**See you out in the field!**

*Niles*

*Editor's Note: See Yon Family Farm story on page 12.*

# Notes from the Field



## Chesterfield Conservation Partnership Protects and Improves Thompson Creek Watershed

by Amy O. Maxwell, Public Affairs Specialist,  
SC NRCS

A dynamic conservation partnership in Chesterfield County is collaborating to improve and protect water quality in the Thompson Creek Watershed. Located in the Upper Coastal Plain, the watershed occupies 192,398 acres with nearly 23 percent in agriculture. The watershed was identified by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) as impaired due to high levels of fecal coliform bacteria—the most common nonpoint source pollutant in South Carolina. A dedicated force of conservation agencies is making a positive difference in the health of this watershed. The Chesterfield Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), U S D A - N a t u r a l R e s o u r c e s Conservation Service (NRCS), Pee Dee R e s o u r c e Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council, and the SC Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) joined forces with SCDHEC and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to secure funding to help address the pollution problems of the watershed. Utilizing a combination of grant and federal funds (NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and EPA's 319 Nonpoint

Source grant administered through SC DHEC), the partnership developed best management practices and established an outreach program to encourage landowners to do their part to protect water quality.

Thompson Creek was listed as impaired in the late 1990's. "A large part of our focus was on education, and informing watershed residents that their actions have a direct impact on water quality," explained Pee Dee RC&D Coordinator Lynette Savereno. "Oftentimes that impact is harmful." For example, some livestock producers were allowing their animals direct access to streams and tributaries, thus contributing to high levels of bacteria and sediment. Furthermore, failing septic systems at home sites had a huge negative impact on water quality. SC DHEC Nonpoint Source Coordinator Meredith B. Murphy said, "Our ultimate goal was to implement control measures which reduce pollutant loads like fecal coliform bacteria to a level equal to or lower than state water quality standards." This can include reducing livestock access to waterways, buffering streams, providing alternate water sources for livestock, and installing heavy use areas (HUA's). Charles Babb, NRCS District Conservationist for



**Fencing was erected to reduce livestock access to waterways which protects water quality in the Thompson Creek Watershed.**

Chesterfield County, worked closely with all the conservation groups involved to ensure that landusers and residents in the affected area were aware of the available assistance. He said he was surprised at the number of failing septic systems throughout the county. "We improved water quality by replacing these faulty systems, but we also improved

the quality of life." In addition, the Chesterfield SWCD, local NRCS office, and Pee Dee RC&D educated citizens through a public information campaign that included distribution of brochures, door hangers, and a traveling display that was used at local fairs and meetings. Savereno emphasized that by combining the NRCS and EPA assistance they were able to obtain a higher

percent cost share on single practices which made installing practices financially feasible.

Babb also said, "The fact that we could offer an additional 30% to assist landowners was what really enabled a lot of our producers to install these practices." Conservation measures included manure storage facilities, vegetative stream buffers, rotational grazing systems via cross fencing, and regular soil testing and reduction of the amount of litter applied to crops. "Some producers were applying poultry manure to their crops because it was what they had always done," explained Babb. "In the end, water quality is

protected because excessive bacteria and nutrients are kept out of water sources, and water bodies are filtered and protected from harmful contaminants."

One such producer who shifted his way of thinking was Ray Long. He eliminated free access to Thompson Creek so that his livestock could no longer drink and lounge in the waterway. By erecting fence along the stream bank, the eroded sides of the creek are healing and the natural vegetation is flourishing and providing an ideal buffer to protect water quality. Long also installed a well, pipeline, and water troughs to provide his animals with a clean, reliable source of water. "We helped Mr. Long install cross fencing which allowed him to implement rotational grazing," said Babb. Rotational grazing involves periodically moving livestock to fresh paddocks to optimize forage quality.

The Plyer farm in Ruby, SC, is a whole-farm showcase of conservation in the Thompson Creek Watershed. The operation includes 350 acres that was traditionally row-cropped in beans and corn, and is now used for grazing, forestry, and wildlife habitat. Utilizing a variety of conservation programs and practices, Evan Plyer worked with Babb to develop a conservation plan to improve and protect his operation with assistance from EQIP, the 319 grant, the Conservation Reserve

Program, and as a result, was rewarded for his conservation through the Conservation Security Program. "Mr. Plyer is innovative and willing to try new techniques and practices as long as they

protect soil and water quality," said Babb. "He is an outstanding steward of the land and dedicated to conservation."

Also in Ruby, SC, the 300-acre Donahue cattle operation was improved with the installation of cross fencing, ten water tanks, pipeline, and a heavy use area (HUA). The HUA protects water quality by stabilizing heavy traffic areas

which reduces soil erosion and sedimentation thereby protecting and improving water quality. "Before we constructed this concrete feeding area, there was a mixture of rainwater, soil, urine and manure all concentrated in one area and polluting nearby water sources," explained Babb. Now, the cattle are spared from having to stand in the manure and urine while eating, which will reduce health problems and protect water quality.

Savereno, Murphy, and Babb agree that their efforts are beneficial on a bigger scale than in just one watershed. "The installed conservation practices and the repaired septic systems are protecting the entire downstream portion of the Pee Dee River," said Savereno. "So, our work really does have a wide scale impact on water quality." DHEC monitors water quality monthly throughout Thompson Creek as part of its routine monitoring program. "It will be rewarding to analyze

water quality samples and illustrate that our efforts are indeed improving water quality," said Murphy. And Babb is thankful for the coordination of the many entities that consolidated their technical and financial resources to help private landowners in Chesterfield. "We can make a difference with combined resources like EQIP and 319



*Meredith Murphy with SCDHEC and NRCS District Conservationist Charles Babb discuss the Donahue cattle operation's heavy use area which was implemented to protect water quality.*



*The Plyer farm in Ruby, SC, is a whole farm conservation showcase in the Thompson Creek Watershed.*

grants." Murphy agrees. "EQIP and 319 grants complement each other wonderfully because they enable landowners to install environmentally beneficial practices to their home or business in an economical way."

For more information, contact the Pee Dee RC&D at (843) 393-9809.



*Donahue Farms is a 300-acre cattle operation which was improved through a combination of state and federal cost-share assistance.*



*Producer Ray Long installed water troughs to provide his animals with a clean, reliable water source.*

## Farming for the Future-- Conservation on the Land

2009 SC Conservation Partnership Conference  
January 14-16th, Myrtle Beach

Planning is already underway for the 2009 SC Conservation Partnership Conference which will be January 14-16th, at the Myrtle Beach Embassy Suites. The events of the week will begin with a symposium sponsored by the SC Soil and Water Conservation Society, and then the 3-day Partnership Conference will kick off with an opening ceremony on the 14th.

The planning committee is working on agenda development and speaker selection, and has adopted a theme which promises to showcase a variety of interesting and timely topics. *Farming for the Future--Conservation on the Land* will focus on the new Farm Bill, current trends in conservation technology (including mobile irrigation labs), marketing and producing locally grown agricultural products.

Registration details will be released in the Fall, so be on the lookout, and get ready to join your fellow conservationists at the beach for another great year of networking, education, and fun!





**T**he planning committee for the 2008 USDA Cultural Awareness Training (CAT) is looking forward to seeing you on August 21st at Seawell's in Columbia for a great day of learning, fellowship, and fun! The theme is *Celebrating Diversity, Appreciating Differences, and Teaching Values*.

The planning committee, led by NRCS District Conservationist Lakeisha Hill, is working in conjunction with USDA Rural Development who will also participate this year. Registration begins at 8 a.m. with a continental breakfast, and the event will start at 9:00 a.m.

You can expect to learn about different cultures including Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, East African, and NRCSer Elyse Benson will share her experiences about life on a commune! And motivational speaker Glen Ward will delight you with his unique outlook on life.

Guests can register to attend for \$30 by completing a registration form and check. **NOTE: NRCS employees are expected to attend, and do not need to register.**



**Breezes of Panama** dance troupe will entertain USDA employees on August 21st.

For a copy of the guest registration form, directions to Seawell's, and more information, visit the SC NRCS Sharepoint site at <https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/east/sc/default.aspx>.

## NRCS Featured on MyOutdoorTV.com

The conservation successes of NRCS are now highlighted in video on a national website. *My Outdoor TV--Outdoor Television on the Internet--* is a unique site featuring videos about hunting, fishing, camping and natural resources conservation. There are currently four brief NRCS features available at <http://www.myoutdoortv.com/show-microsites/nrcs-natural-resources-conservation-service.html>.



According to NRCS Executive Communications Branch Chief Terry Bish, the Web features don't cost the agency a penny and are a new and effective communication tool. "Today we need to communicate in any and every way we can. We can't rely on the same methods."

South Carolina's natural resources also get attention on the site with topics including bass fishing, backyard conservation, flounder gigging, and bird watching. Visit this link at <http://www.myoutdoortv.com/explorer-the-u.s./south-carolina.html> to check it out!

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## SC NRCS State Soil Scientist Honored by Virginia Tech

Pam Thomas, SC NRCS State Soil Scientist, was honored by Virginia Tech's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Alumni Association with an Outstanding Alumni Award. The Virginia Tech Alumni Association honors graduates for career achievements as well as service to the community and the university. Thomas received a Bachelor of Science degree in 1983, a master's degree in 1987 and a doctorate in agronomy, crop and soil environmental sciences in 1998. Congratulations Dr. Thomas!



## Upstate Conservation Partnership Helps Communities Plan for Drought

By Dave Demarest, Foothills RC&D Coordinator

Recent studies on two reservoirs in Spartanburg County were completed by the Spartanburg SWCD, USDA-NRCS and the Foothills RC&D Council. The reservoirs—Lyman Lake and North Tyger Reservoir—are two important municipal water sources for the residents and commercial industries of Startex, Jackson, Wellford, and Duncan communities.

Kim Kroeger, NRCS Geologist from Raleigh, NC, headed up the effort which utilized ground penetrating radar to reveal a clear and concise bottom in the reservoirs. This data was then analyzed to determine the capacity or amount of water the reservoirs hold.

Mike Caston, General Manager of Startex, Jackson, Wellford, and Duncan Water District (SJWD) said, "Our engineers can use this data to predict how long we can provide water to residential and commercial industrial customers during an extreme drought, and when it is appropriate to implement a water rationing plan."

Kroeger commented, "The study also provides data on the amount of sediment that has moved into these two reservoirs since they were built." As sediment builds up in the bottom of reservoirs, the amount of water they can hold decreases. "Any loss that a reservoir has in holding water is critical to the health and economy of the communities it serves," explained Caston. This conservation partnership of Upstate entities is working to ensure that natural resources are protected, and that property and lives are also safe in Startex, Jackson, Wellford, and Duncan.

**Kim Kroeger, NRCS Geologist from Raleigh, NC, headed up the effort which utilized ground penetrating radar to reveal a clear and concise bottom in the Lyman Lake and North Tyger Reservoirs.**

## Former SC NRCS Employee Honored for Service in Afghanistan

Secretary Schafer Recognizes Work of USDA Team Advisors Who Served in Afghanistan

In May, Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer recognized the efforts of nearly 60 USDA employees who volunteered to serve as agriculture advisors in Afghanistan and Iraq. One of the honorees was retired SC NRCS District Conservationist Alex Johnson from Horry County.



*Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer (left) presented NRCSer Alex Johnson with an award of appreciation in Washington, DC, for his service in Afghanistan as an agricultural advisor.*

He served two volunteer assignments in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, with USDA. Working one-on-one with farmers and others to help reconstruct their land, he proudly represented NRCS. SC NRCS State Conservationist Niles Glasgow said, "We are extremely grateful for his service, conservation ethic, and compassion for those who desperately needed his technical expertise, guidance, and friendship." As an agricultural advisor, he worked closely with national and provincial agricultural leaders, and not only forged business relationships, but also life long friendships.

This Spring, Johnson traveled to Washington, DC, to receive a special award for his brave and devoted assistance to the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. Secretary Schafer said, "These men and women volunteered to serve as agriculture advisors because they believed their expertise—whether in forestry, soil and water conservation, food safety, agricultural extension, or veterinary services—would help farmers in these countries return to their livelihoods and contribute to revitalizing their agricultural sectors and economies."

For more information visit [http://www.fas.usda.gov/icd/iraq/detailops\\_04-07.asp](http://www.fas.usda.gov/icd/iraq/detailops_04-07.asp).



# News from Our Partners



## Sections of Catawba, Lynches Rivers Designated Scenic

The South Carolina General Assembly designated a 30-mile segment of the Catawba River and a 57-mile segment of the Lynches River as State Scenic Rivers. The legislation was signed June 11, 2008, by Governor Mark Sanford.

The Lynches River (between Lee State Park and Lynches River County Park--a section covering approximately 54 miles) was designated a State Scenic River in 1994. In the summer of 2006, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR) received several requests to consider an additional 57 miles of the Lynches River in Florence County for designation. The Lynches Scenic River Advisory Council and DNR staff initiated a study to assess the eligibility of the lower Lynches for State Scenic River designation. This makes the Lynches River the longest state-designated scenic river at 111 miles.

"The goal of the Scenic Rivers Program is the conservation of South Carolina's unique and outstanding river resources" said Dr. Barry Beasley, DNR Habitat Protection Section Chief.

## SC Bald Eagle Population Continues to Increase

SCDNR has been monitoring Bald Eagle populations in the state for 32 years and has documented 2,887 nesting attempts and 3,595 fledglings. Some 228 nesting sites were occupied within our borders. This is an astonishing increase over the 13 sites documented in 1977. The latest count found that South Carolina eagles were averaging 1.25 chicks per nesting attempt.

The Bald Eagle was declared the National Emblem by the US Second Continental Congress on June 20, 1782, due to its uniqueness to North America. The Bald Eagle populations reached dangerously low levels in the 1960's due to habitat alteration, the toxic effects and widespread use of persistent pesticides and shooting mortality. The Bald Eagle Protection Act of 1940 was the first step to help restore this declining population. However, populations continued to decline and ultimately the Bald Eagle landed on the list of

endangered and threatened species of the 1973 Endangered Species Act. Thirty-five years of protection have helped the failing population bounce back from as low as 400 nesting pairs to almost 10,000 in the lower 48-states today. This amazing rebound in the population prompted the delisting of the Bald Eagle this past June.

DNR will continue to work with the USACE and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to provide vital monitoring information to ensure the delisting of the Bald Eagle will not have a harmful affect on the population. This provides accurate up-to-date information on nest locations and high use foraging areas. Habitat protection projects will additionally continue throughout the state.

## Welcome New District Commissioners!

- ◆ Abbeville-Barney Gambrell
- ◆ Aiken-Ed Swartz
- ◆ Bamberg-Kevin Sease
- ◆ Barnwell-Michael J. Sullivan
- ◆ Berkeley-Troy Maxwell Diel
- ◆ Calhoun-Ronnie L. Bozard
- ◆ Cherokee-E. Dewitt McCraw
- ◆ Chesterfield-Marc Marsh
- ◆ Darlington-Clarence Randell Ewing Sr.
- ◆ Fairfield-Eric Cathcart
- ◆ Florence-Sterling Sadler
- ◆ Greenville-Claire I. Bradbery
- ◆ Greenwood-Marion P. Gentry
- ◆ Horry-Barry Shane Wiloughby
- ◆ Jasper-Helen M. Dills-Pittman and Lonnie M. Ginn
- ◆ Lancaster-Sam W. Cranston
- ◆ Laurens-Pat Garrett
- ◆ Lee-C.B. Player III
- ◆ McCormick-Thomas Ware
- ◆ Newberry-Carl Benjamin Setzler III and Jason Bishop
- ◆ Oconee-Lee James Jones and Bob Winchester
- ◆ Pickens-David Norton
- ◆ Saluda-Jason R. Price
- ◆ Spartanburg-Kelly B. Hall
- ◆ Williamsburg-Brian McClam and T. N. Mishoe

## East Piedmont RC&D Partners to Create Walking Trails in North Columbia

by Sabrenna Bryant and Amy O. Maxwell, SC NRCS  
photos by Tavares T. Hanks, Graphic Designer,  
Richland County Recreation Commission

The East Piedmont RC&D Council has been busy this summer working to create and improve recreational opportunities throughout Richland County. Working in conjunction with county, state, and private entities, East Piedmont RC&D Coordinator Reginald Hall helped plan and construct walking trails and outdoor classrooms at Ridgewood Neighborhood Park and Denny Terrace Community Center.



*Residents, city officials and conservation partners celebrate the opening of the Ridgewood Neighborhood Park Walking Trail.*

The Ridgewood ceremony was held on July 15th, 2008, and featured a ribbon cutting and comments from project sponsors and citizens, including Ridgewood-Barony Neighborhood Association President Mildred Johnson. "The park and trails are a great way to improve our community for seniors and for families," she commented.

The park is located at the former site of Ridgewood Elementary School, which many local residents attended. Through their eyes, the park is great not only for recreation, but also for revitalizing their community.

The walking trail is particularly unique because it is the first "green" community trail in Richland County. The quarter mile path is constructed of recycled rubber, which also allows easy access for visitors in wheel chairs and makes the trail ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant. Visitors can also use one of four exercise stations installed along the trail.

Further plans to enhance the area including constructing benches and trash receptacles along the trail. These will be made with recycled plastic milk jugs.

Hall would also like to establish a community vegetable garden to be maintained by the residents. "I think that would be a great way for the community to not only work together, but also generate income for future community improvement projects."



*Ridgewood Neighborhood Park Walking Trail features exercise stations and a handicapped accessible walking trail.*

A similar event was hosted on July 8, 2008, at Denny Terrace Community Center where a half-mile walking trail was established adjacent to the community center. The trail provides an ideal outdoor oasis for residents and visitors who can now enjoy the trees and natural vegetation surrounding the area. Three adjacent lots, totaling nearly six acres, were donated by the McAllister's, a local family who attended the ceremony and were thanked by local politicians and residents alike for their generosity.

Other contributors to the project include USDA-NRCS (GIS Specialist George Sullivan assisted with site survey), Richland County Conservation Commission, Richland County Soil and Water Conservation District, Richland County Recreation Commission, East Piedmont RC&D, and the Denny Terrace Neighborhood Association, as well as a number of local schools. Community residents are excited about the trail, and agreed that it will preserve a natural area in the heart of their community. A total of 144 volunteer hours were donated to the creation of the trail, including help from Ben Lippen students who cleared the trail. A number of middle school students also pitched in to build and paint bird houses which were placed along the trail. Local resident Lawrie Sikkema spoke passionately about the neighborhood in which she lives, and is proud of the trail and the folks who pitched in to make it a reality. "We turned a garbage filled forest into a beautiful place where residents can enjoy a clean, safe environment to walk and enjoy nature." Hall echoed her thoughts. "Both of these projects are indicative of what can happen when people and groups work together to improve their neighborhoods. It also leads to a greater sense of pride, and encourages people to appreciate their natural environment."



*Denny Terrace Walking Trail Dedication on July 8th, 2008.*

There are three gentlemen in Orangeburg County with a deep love of the land. From the outside, it may be hard to see the similarities which bind them. Thirty-something Joe Bolen grew up visiting the farm of his aunt and uncle, and now lives there and farms part-time with his wife and young son. Then there is Willie Ulmer who retired after thirty years with NASA to return to his family farm near the Four Holes Swamp in Cameron. And lastly, Darryl Jenkins grew up on the same small operation where he now farms part-time in Norway.

Although diverse in age, experience, background, and farming enterprises, they are bound together by a care and concern for natural resources and a desire to take care of the land that provides them with supplemental income, but more importantly, a particular way of life they treasure. These three small farmers also utilized technical and financial assistance from USDA-NRCS, as well as Clemson Extension, to improve and protect the natural resources at their operations. With assistance made available to small farmers through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), they installed water troughs, erected cross fencing, and established Coastal bermudagrass, which is an excellent perennial pasture and hay grass for much of the Southeast.

SC NRCS worked with Clemson University's Cooperative Extension Service (CES) to conduct workshops and one-on-one training particularly in reference to record keeping, and its importance to maintaining a successful business, especially for small farm operations. This partnership also resulted in establishment of Coastal bermudagrass on eleven small farm operations, including the three featured here. Local CES agent Lewis Beckham was instrumental in conducting small farmer training sessions throughout Orangeburg County. "It was our goal to help small farmers realize the benefit to them that recordkeeping could provide," explained Beckham. "We presented training, both in a classroom setting, and one-on-one, so that we could really focus on the needs of each producer." Recordkeeping is a requirement for those participating in EQIP, and



story and photos by  
by Amy O. Maxwell

## SMALL FARMING Across the generations

Three Orangeburg County  
producers share why they  
love the land



the training provided by Clemson Extension was very helpful to the farmers. NRCS Soil Conservationist Charles Holland coordinated the grass planting which was accomplished by private contractor Joe Gallagher of Fairfax, South Carolina. "Joe did an excellent job establishing the bermudagrass at these small farm operations, and did so for a very reasonable cost," said Holland.

Former Orangeburg NRCS District Conservationist Frank Stephens also worked closely with these producers to ensure that their EQIP contracts met their individual needs. "EQIP provides incentives for small farmers who may not have the opportunity to participate in the program due to the limited size of their operations. Oftentimes, small scale farmers don't have the resources to compete with larger operations, so they don't score high enough to qualify," said Stephens. "Small farmers have unique needs, and many of them are farming part-time in addition to working full-time jobs. This technical and financial assistance can really make a difference to a farmer who is considering whether or not to stay in farming," added Stephens.

The most experienced of the farmers is Mr. Ulmer who manages eight acres, mainly for goat meat production. EQIP helped him install cross fencing to prevent over grazing, implement heavy use areas, install water troughs, and he plans to convert to micro-irrigation which will conserve water. "Goats are pretty easy to handle, and they listen well," he commented. Ulmer also works part-time at a school for special needs children, and speaks fondly of his time in the Air Force which eventually landed him a long-time job with NASA in Florida. When asked about why he returned to the farm he doesn't hesitate before answering. "I like the country, and the peace and quiet." It's definitely a world

away from the sound of rocket engines and space shuttles. The only thing that would make Ulmer happier is his wife's presence. He lost her tragically in a car accident several years ago, and it's apparent that Ulmer misses her deeply. His son helps out with the farm work, and together, they have created a peaceful, pristine, and conservation-minded small farm.

Darryl Jenkins is another small farmer, but one who never veered far from home, as he still farms in the same location where he grew up. Together with his brother Clarence, the two manage a cow/calf breeding operation. EQIP assisted them in implementing rotational grazing, and also in establishing Coastal Bermuda. "The quality of my product is so important, so this assistance has really helped me to ensure that I can raise good livestock," said Jenkins. He also emphasized the importance of small family farms in today's economy, especially with the rising cost of fuel. "Small farmers contribute in a positive way to today's market, and the assistance I get from NRCS is helping me stay in farming." He also said that the practice of recordkeeping has really improved his farm, and he's thankful for the education he received. "You have to plan, test your soil, and manage the resources on your farm in order to make a profit," he remarked. He said he is relieved he does not have to purchase hay for his livestock anymore because of the grass planting. "Today it isn't enough to be up early and work hard. Now, you have to watch the market, know what's going on, get involved, and look for assistance that is available, like this help through EQIP."

On the other end of the generational span is young Joe Bolen who is preparing five acres of pasture to manage cattle after his Coastal bermudagrass is properly established. Currently, he and his wife grow sweet corn to supplement their full time jobs in South Carolina's capital city of Columbia. As a homebuilder, Bolen knows the importance of a solid foundation, and his work ethic and attention to detail are noticeable in the con-

struction of his rock-solid fencing. He erected it himself, and also installed a well and micro-irrigation. When asked about why he wants to farm, he speaks of his young son. "I want to live here on my family farm so that my little boy will grow up like I did, and have the opportunity to enjoy nature." He also admits that farming is a labor of love. "You have to have your heart in it, or you won't make it. I don't regret my decision to live here, because I know it was the right decision for my family, and together we are working to do the best we can, and hopefully because of that, we will profit."

These small farmers know that their success depends on many factors including the market, weather conditions, and other elements beyond their control. But, they also understand that their choice and their dedication to conservation is making a positive difference on their operations. Each has a specific reason for choosing to farm, but they are alike in their desire to live a certain lifestyle. It's a way of life that affords them the opportunity to rise each day and take pride in the fact that they are doing their part to protect and improve soil and water quality. Small farmers like Ulmer, Jenkins, and Bolen are becoming more important in today's economy as consumers demand fresh, locally-grown produce and other agricultural products. Hopefully, other small farmers will adopt the same conservation ethic

as these Orangeburg County producers.



*Retired NASA employee Willie Ulmer (center) worked with former Orangeburg NRCS District Conservationist Frank Stephens (right) and recently retired Soil Conservationist Charles Holland (left) to install conservation practices on his small farm.*



*Pictured at left is small farmer Joe Bolen's wheat field. He farms part-time and is thankful that his family, including his young son, can enjoy nature and live in a rural area surrounded by natural resources.*

## SC Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Yon's of Ridge Spring, S.C., (Saluda County) were selected as one of seven regional winners of the 2008 Environmental Stewardship Award (ESA). The award, now in its 18th year, is administered by the National Cattlemen's Foundation and sponsored by Dow AgroSciences L.L.C., USDA-NRCS and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The award recognizes cattle producers from across the nation who utilize innovative, cost-effective stewardship practices that contribute to environmental conservation.

"The Yon family exhibits tremendous stewardship with regard to pasture management, forage preservation, crop implementation and water quality improvement," said SC NRCS State Conservationist Niles Glasgow. "They've utilized the resources available to them to partner in developing stewardship and conservation goals."

Established in 1996, the farm is family-owned and operated, and managed by Kevin and Lydia Yon and their three children. The farm includes 1,500 acres of cropland, hay and pastureland. It's also a diversified Angus seedstock operation that incorporates income from the sale of seed and feed for livestock, freezer beef and the children's sweet corn sales. They believe in whole-farm conservation, focusing on the big-picture when it comes to stewardship.

The Yon's worked closely with SC NRCS District Conservationist Hugh Smith, who helped them apply for technical and financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Forestry Incentives Program, Conservation Security Program, and the Grassland Reserve Program. The Yon's implemented no-till, practice rotational grazing, nutrient and pest management, and forage and soil sampling.

Glasgow says, "Working as a family unit, they have built one of the most reputable seedstock operations in the Southeast."

They have also worked closely with other cattle producers to share information and swap ideas.

"They have a solid understanding of the interdependence of natural resources, and their approach to conservation works," concluded Smith.

The 2009 National ESA winner will be selected from one of the seven regional winners and revealed at the 2009 Cattle Industry Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, in January.

In addition, the Yon's will be recognized at a special luncheon at the January 2009 SC Conservation Partnership Conference in Myrtle Beach. They will also deliver a presentation at this conference in an effort to share their

conservation success story. Congratulations to this dedicated SC farm family.

For more information, contact Amy O. Maxwell, SC NRCS Public Affairs Specialist, at amy.maxwell@sc.usda.gov.



Scenes from Yon Family Farms in Saluda County



**Fort Jackson Conservation Tour Highlights  
Erosion Control and Prevention**

*by Tibor Horvath, NRCS Conservation Agronomist*

The Natural Resources Management Division at Fort Jackson hosted a conservation which was attended by SC NRCS State Conservationist Niles Glasgow. The tour highlighted the erosion control and prevention work that is being accomplished at the Fort, and which began in 1966 when the first conservation plan was written for the military base. That plan addressed gully and wind erosion concerns, along with road dust control practices.

In addition to erosion prevention, NRCS has also assisted the base with storm water management, as well as streambank stabilization. These efforts are helping to protect and improve water quality in the Gills Creek Watershed of Richland County, where the base is located.

During the tour, participants viewed several sites where drainage and storm water sediment basins were installed, including a Red-cockaded Woodpecker habitat improvement site.



*A group of conservationists, including SC NRCS State Conservationist Niles Glasgow, toured conservation sites at Fort Jackson.*

**Welcome New Employees!**

**Two New Soil Conservationists Join the SC NRCS Team**

**Tria Yang** is the new Soil Conservationist in the Saluda Field Office. "I am an Asian Pacific Islander from Laos, and came to the United States in 1980 as political refugee, settling in Long Beach, California," said Yang. From there, he moved to the Central Valley in Fresno, California, where he lived for twenty years. While in Fresno, he attended California State University, and then moved to

North Carolina in 2000 (where his parents and family lived). He is married and has four boys ages 9, 6, 5, and 3.

In North Carolina, Yang worked for Michael Weinig, Inc., (a German company) for four years, and then decided to finish his education in natural resource-soil science at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro. He graduated in May of 2008 with a B.S. degree in Natural Resource-Soil Science. During his schooling, he interned with NRCS in Statesville, NC, as a soil scientist student trainee. He enjoyed working with NC NRCS Soil Scientists Robert Ranson and Roger Leab, and gained experience in soil sampling, soil description, field transect and geographical information systems (GIS).

"With the skills, knowledge and experiences I gained as a student trainee in soil science, I hope to contribute my skills and services to the team in South Carolina and fulfill the NRCS mission to the best of my ability." Welcome to SC NRCS Tria!



**Tria Yang**  
Soil Conservationist  
Saluda Field Office

**Jennifer Sarvis** started working as a Soil Conservationist in the Bishopville Field Office on May 12, 2008. She was a student intern with NRCS from 2006-07 in the Pickens Field Office.



**Jennifer Sarvis**  
Soil Conservationist  
Bishopville Field Office

She is a December 2007 graduate of Clemson University with a degree in Agricultural Education. She is originally from Edgefield, SC, and now lives in Hartsville with her husband, Bud. They were married April 19th of this year, and traveled to Pigeon Forge and Nashville, Tennessee for their honeymoon.

She loves riding horses, hunting, going to the beach, and traveling. Jennifer is excited about working for NRCS and looking forward to meeting everyone! Welcome to SC NRCS Jennifer!

**South Carolina State Soil Featured In Smithsonian Exhibit**

SC NRCS State Soil Scientist Pam Thomas says that the state soil, Lynchburg, is included in a historic new exhibition at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. The exhibition, entitled "Dig It! The Secrets of Soil," opened July 19 and will remain on display in the Nation's Capital through Jan. 3, 2010. Thereafter, it will travel to 10 museums nationwide until 2013.

"Lynchburg soils have had and continue to have an important role in the economy of South Carolina. Longleaf pines, whose historic range extended into the southeastern U.S. flatwoods which included the Lynchburg soil, were important in Colonial times as a source of turpentine, pitch, and tar. Today, the few remaining longleaf pine savannas provide habitat for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. Lynchburg soils are also some of the most productive agricultural soils in South Carolina and are especially well suited to grain crops such as corn and soybeans," explained Thomas.

The exhibition features seemingly improbable facts on this underfoot resource. The abundance of life in soil is one such example. There are more living creatures in a shovel-full of soil than there



**SC's Lynchburg soils are some of the most productive agricultural soils in the state.**

are human beings on the planet; so many organisms contribute to the health of soil that scientists have not even named them all.

The exhibition aims to improve soil literacy with a 5,000-square-foot exhibition that reveals the complex soil ecosystem and how it supports nearly every form of life on Earth. The exhibition includes interactive displays, hands-on models, videos and soil samples from all fifty states and US territories.

For more information about the traveling exhibition, visit [www.sites.si.edu/soils](http://www.sites.si.edu/soils). More information about "Dig It! The Secrets of Soil" is available at [forces.si.edu/soils](http://forces.si.edu/soils).

The National Museum of Natural History is located at 10th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W. in Washington, D.C. Admission is free.

To learn more about NRCS, soil, and soil science, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov), and to learn about South Carolina's state soil, check out [http://soils.usda.gov/gallery/state\\_soils/](http://soils.usda.gov/gallery/state_soils/).

**SC NRCS Helps Sponsor 2008 Commissioner's School for Agriculture**

Forty three high school students descended on Clemson University for the week-long South Carolina Commissioner's School of Agriculture from July 19-25. The students, who came from across the state and as far away as Tennessee, spent the week exploring career paths in agriculture and natural resources.

This is the fifth year the program has been held and each year it grows larger. The students spent the week in hands-on scientific exploration along with workshops related to academic integrity, teamwork, personal growth and leadership. They also took several field trips including visits to university research farms, the Clemson Experimental Forest, and rafting on the Chattooga River.

SC NRCS is a proud supporter of the yearly event, and NRCSer and Clemson graduate Bethel DuRant attended the closing ceremony and awards luncheon on July 25th.

High school students interested in participating in next year's Commissioner's School or attending Clemson's agriculture program, should contact



**Forty-three high school students from SC and beyond attended the 5th Annual Commissioner's School for Ag this summer.**

Katie Black at the College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Life Sciences at Clemson. She can be reached at [hulse@clemson.edu](mailto:hulse@clemson.edu) or 864-656-6662.

## State Conservationist Tours Upstate EWP Projects

The successes of NRCS' Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program were highlighted recently in Upstate South Carolina during a tour organized for State Conservationist Niles Glasgow. The purpose of the EWP program is to undertake emergency measures (including the purchase of flood plain easements) for runoff retardation and soil erosion prevention. The ultimate result is the safeguarding of lives and property from floods, drought, and the products of erosion on any watershed whenever fire, flood or any other natural occurrence is causing or has caused a sudden impairment of the watershed.

Tyger Watershed Supervisory District Conservationist Lynne Newton and Soil Conservationist Ross Stewart organized the tour in Greenville and Pickens Counties, which highlighted a variety of EWP projects in both rural and urban areas. Glasgow was impressed with the collaborative efforts which resulted in protection of property and lives. A number of successful EWP projects in Greenville, Pickens, and Oconee Counties have been completed in FY 08, and a legislative/media event is being planned for the Fall which will illustrate the benefits of the program.

Following is an excerpt from a letter sent to Oconee NRCS District Conservationist Heather Stephens from a satisfied customer who received assistance through EWP:

**Ms. Stephens,**

I just wanted to take a minute to thank you for helping get the project moving on my mother's property. I haven't been down there today, but was very pleased with the way things were looking yesterday evening. We did have a couple of concerns, but Eddie Martin was very prompt in returning my call and was more than willing to answer our questions. He also followed through when he promised to call me back with information he was unsure of earlier in the day.

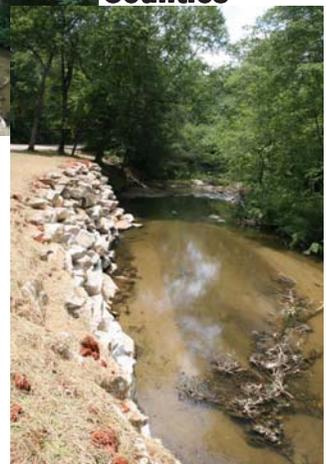
I must admit, that when I first started pursuing this, I did not feel like it was anything that we would ever see happen. We are fortunate to have people like you and Mr. Martin representing Oconee County who are willing to put forth the effort to help residents when situations like this arise.

I'm not sure how long until this project is completed, but if things continue as they have so far, I have no doubt that we will all be completely satisfied with the outcome. Thanks again for all of your help!

*-A satisfied customer*



**Upstate EWP Tour in Pickens and Greenville Counties**



## Register Now for the October Eastern Native Grassland Symposium

The Eastern Native Grass Symposium will be at the Radisson Hotel & Conference Center in Columbia, SC, October 7-10, 2008. The biennial symposium is an established conference on native grasslands in eastern North America, designed to promote sharing of research, information and experiences. Participants include individuals from universities, natural resource agencies, non-governmental conservation organizations, private enterprises, and agriculture. To register for the symposium or for more information, visit [www.Regonline.com/ENG2008](http://www.Regonline.com/ENG2008).



# Conservation Photo Contest Winners



*Birds on a Wire, by Sue Griggs, Chesterfield NRCS Field Office*



*Killdeer Family, by Emily Pohlman, Aiken NRCS Field Office*

**Did you know?** This bird is well known for its call, which sounds much like its name, “kill-dee(r), kill-dee(r), kill-dee(r)”. You will most often hear this call if you get too close as it is quite commonly heard when the Killdeer wants to scare away potential predators.



*Arachnophobia, by Lateia Sandifer, Bamberg SWCD*

**Did you know?** Arachnophobia is an abnormal fear of spiders, and is among the most common of phobias.

## PERSONNEL NEWS

### New Employees

**Angela Major** was converted from career intern to career conditional, GS-0547-09, in the Sumter Field Office, effective July 20, 2008.

**Jayson Mas** was selected as a Soil Conservationist Career Intern, GS-0457-07, in the Lancaster Field Office, effective August 3, 2008.

**Michael Sampson** was converted from career intern to career conditional, GS-0457-09, in the Kingstree Field Office, effective July 20, 2008.

**Randy Snow** was selected as a Soil Conservationist Career Intern, GS-0457-07, in the Florence Field Office, effective August 31, 2008.

**Tria Yang** was converted from an 1890's USDA Scholar from North Carolina NRCS to a Soil Conservationist, GS-0457-05, in the Saluda Field Office, effective May 25, 2008.

### Promotions

**Deborah Mann** was promoted to Supervisory District Conservationist in the Lynches Watershed area, GS-0457-12, effective May 25, 2008. Her duty station will remain Georgetown.

**Michael Sigmon** was promoted to District Conservationist, GS-0457-11, in the St. Matthews Field Office, effective March 2, 2008.

### Transfers

**Phillip Rippe**, State Engineer, was promoted and transferred to the United States Engineer Center in Huntsville, Alabama, effective June 21, 2008.

### Reassignments

**Frank Stephens**, Orangeburg District Conservationist, was selected as the Supervisory District Conservationist in the Pee Dee Watershed area effective June 22, 2008, in the Bennettsville Field Office.

**Jessie Newton**, Greenville District Conservationist, was selected for the Supervisory District Conservationist in the Tyger Watershed area effective May 25, 2008. Her duty station remained Greenville.

**Mike Banks**, Anderson District Conservationist, was selected for the Supervisory District Conservationist in the Savannah Watershed area effective May 25, 2008. His duty station remained Anderson.

**Odessa Armstrong**, Soil Conservationist in the Hampton Field Office, was selected as the District Conservationist, GS-0457-09, in the Orangeburg Field Office, effective August 3, 2008.

**Ray Dotson**, Soil Conservationist in the Bonifay, Florida Field Office, was selected as the District Conservationist, GS-0457-09, in the Hampton Field Office, effective August 3, 2008.

**Wilfred Pace**, Bamberg District Conservationist, was selected as the Supervisory District Conservationist in the Edisto Watershed area effective May 25, 2008. His duty station remained Bamberg.

### Retirements

**Charles Holland**, Soil Conservationist, GS-0457-11, in the Orangeburg Field Office, retired effective August 3, 2008.

**Merle Diem**, Soil Conservation Technician, GS-0458-07, in the Bamberg Field Office, retired effective July 31, 2008.

### SC SWCS Chapter Seeking Award Nominations by October 1

It's not too early to start thinking about preparing award nominations for deserving conservationists to be honored by the SC Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS)!

Each year, the SC Chapter recognizes and honors outstanding stewards of the land, both SWCS members and non members, for their extraordinary contributions to protecting and improving natural resources. There are several different award categories, and more information (and the nomination form) is available at <http://swcs.tripod.com/awards.html>.

The awards will be presented during the SC Conservation Partnership meeting in January 2009 in Myrtle Beach. **Nominations are due by October 1, 2008.** For more information, contact SWCS Awards Committee Chair Wayne Cowell at [wayne.cowell@sc.usda.gov](mailto:wayne.cowell@sc.usda.gov).