

The Conservation Corner

Newsletter of the Charleston, S. C. Soil and Water Conservation District

2012 Annual Report



Charleston Conservation District

2012 Annual Report

SWEETGRASS GARDEN CO-OP, INC. 2012 Conservationist of the Year



Sweetgrass Garden Co-op owners and volunteers

Sweetgrass Garden Co-Op was selected as the “2012 Conservationist of the Year” by the Charleston Soil & Water Conservation District.

Dale Snyder, along with Charleston physician George Taylor, recently started the 501C nonprofit Sweetgrass Garden Co-op on about two acres located on Johns Island. George Taylor purchased the land, which he leases to the co-op for a dollar a year. The group is growing vegetables that will be provided free to the area’s low-income and homeless people through service agencies such as the Lowcountry Food Bank, Fields to Families and Crisis Ministries.

They were honored at our Conservation Recognition Program for their outstanding commitment to natural resource conservation. They chose to farm in a way that conserves our natural resources. NRCS, Natural Resources Conservation Service, completed a topographic survey on the farm to determine crop layout to minimize soil erosion. Some of the practices that they use are nutrient management, pest management, and cover crops in their crop rotations. They received a Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education Producer Grant to determine how well fish waste compost stacked up against vegetable compost and neutral compost.

Quote from Dale Snyder in a news article in the Post and Courier:

“This will be our first year growing vegetables and we wanted to do everything we could to implement sustainable Ag practices that not only take good care of the soil, but also produce healthy food.”

Charleston Soil & Water Conservation District is proud to honor Sweetgrass Garden Co-op for 2012 Conservationist of the Year!

District Commissioners

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M.F. “Mickey” Floyd
John P. Kozma

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Brian Celek
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Van Noy Thornhill
W.C. Gearty

Staff

Debbie Eckard, District Manager
Lisa Hajjar, 319 Grant Project Manager

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Our Mission:

*To preserve and enhance water quality,
working farms, natural areas,
and wildlife through locally-led
conservation efforts*

Sewee to Santee 319 Grant Project Completed

The Charleston Soil and Water Conservation District is pleased to announce the successful completion of our Sewee to Santee 319 Grant Project. The District received this competitive three-year grant in April 2009. Because of the ongoing success of the grant, we were awarded a six-month extension through October 2012, and additional funding, totaling to approximately \$600,000 in federal funds and \$200,000 in matching funds for the entire project. For a digital copy of the Project Closeout Report, contact Debbie Eckard or visit our new website at www.charlestonconservationdistrict.com.

The Sewee to Santee Watershed is a 76 sq. mi. geographic boundary that extends from northern Awendaw to just north of McClellanville and includes magnificent natural resources that epitomize the Lowcountry. However, many waterways in this area are closed to harvesting shellfish and to swimming due to high levels of fecal coliform bacteria. Common bacteria sources in the area include water birds and wildlife, failing septic systems, livestock and pet waste, and marine waste discharged from boats. The District's project focused primarily on a septic system rehabilitation program, and implementation of best management practices (BMPs) for animal farms, pet waste, marine sanitary waste, and an extensive education and outreach campaign. See selected photos from our grant project on the next page.

The District, with the help of many grant partners was able to implement many BMPs and to:

- Repair or replace 68 faulty septic systems for low income families with advanced or modified systems for the area
- Install over 10,000 ft. of fencing and 6,000 ft. of water lines to keep livestock out of streams at Our Local Foods
- Install 5 pet waste stations and 4 *Our Connected Coast* educational signs throughout watershed area
- Establish new shellfish beds in Sewee Bay (SCDNR) and Tibwin Reef (The Nature Conservancy)
- Conduct outreach to hundreds of residents through septic workshops, boater surveys, festival booths, newsletters, and direct mailout of *Healthy Watershed* magnets to over 1,000 properties in the watershed
- **These BMPs helped, in part, with DHEC's recent reopening of 883 acres of shellfish beds near McClellanville!**

The District would like to thank DHEC, NRCS, Charleston County, and all local partners who supported the work on this grant. Many thanks to our grant contractors without whom the work could not have been done: A-1 Services, Knights Septic Tank, Randolph Septic, B2 Unlimited, and White's Construction.

New Toogoodoo Creek Watershed Grant Project Begins!

Thanks to the successful efforts given by the Charleston Conservation District, DHEC awarded the District a new competitive 319 grant in January 2013 to work in the Toogoodoo Creek Watershed area. The 23 sq. mi. drainage area of this watershed includes part of the towns of Hollywood and Meggett and unincorporated areas of Charleston County. The three shellfish monitoring stations in Toogoodoo Creek consistently exceed water quality standards for fecal coliform bacteria, resulting in the closure of shellfish beds to harvesting for human consumption. In addition to water birds and wildlife, the primary sources of bacteria include agricultural runoff from animal farms and failing septic systems.

The Charleston Conservation District, along with multiple grant partners, will work with landowners over the next three years to reduce bacteria sources and improve water quality. To do this, the District will provide the majority of costs associated with BMPs that will help reduce bacteria. This includes repairing or replacing failing septic systems and fencing livestock out of streams. The District will also work with Hollywood, Meggett, and other partners to educate residents through workshops, festivals, local schools, and various other outreach avenues.

Want to know more?

To find out more about the grant or to participate, contact:

Charleston Soil and Water Conservation District

843-727-4160, ext. 3

debbie.eckard@sc.nacdnet.net

Sewee to Santee Grant Project at a Glance



Septic Homeowner Workshop



Lindsay Fairchild—Septic Homeowner Workshop



Pet Waste Station—Buck Hall



*EPA/ DHEC 319 Grant Site Visit
Completed Water Quality Outreach Signage at
McClellanville Town Hall*



*Construction site—Elevated Septic Installation
Debbie Eckard shown with Septic
Contractor Harry Wilson of A-1 Septic Services*



Completed Elevated Septic Installation



Completed Ultra Shallow Septic System Site



*Animal Operations Project—Pipe Installation
Shawn Stormer, NRCS, inspects pipe line*



*Animal Operations Project—Herman White of
White's Construction install fence*



Fencing installed to protect water quality



Fencing for sheep



*Final Sewee/Santee 319 Grant Project Committee Meeting with
Project Partners and District Commissioners and Staff*

DISTRICT EDUCATION SPONSORSHIPS

LANDER INSTITUTE YOUTH WORKSHOP

Every year the Charleston Soil & Water Conservation District sponsored two students for the Youth Workshop held at Lander University in Greenwood, SC. Since 1967, students have been coming to this event to learn about conservation and the environment up close and hands on for a week, all while gaining multiple rewards. Tangible rewards include possible college scholarships. Over \$80,000 in college scholarships have been awarded during this time. The workshop is structured such that teams of students are assigned an adult counselor who works with them for the entire week. Areas of study encompass wildlife and wildlife management, soils and geology, forestry, water quality management, and natural resource management technology.

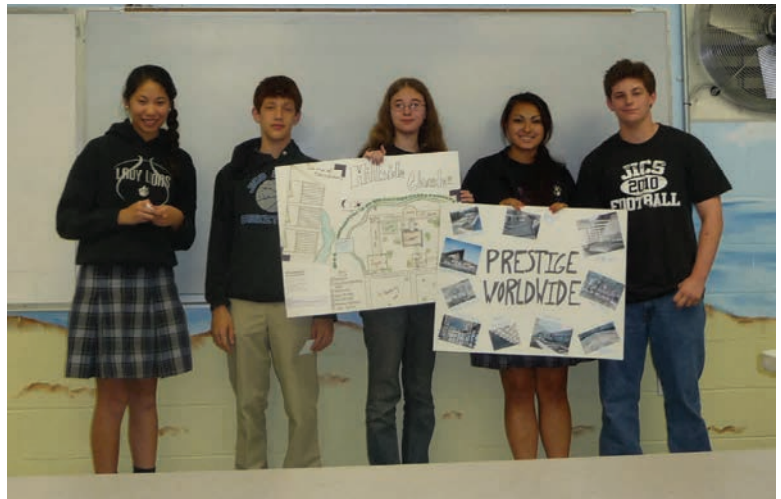


The Charleston Conservation District proudly sponsored Halle Murphy and Abby Rumph, students from Charleston County School of the Arts. They attended the workshop held June 11-15th along with other 9th-12th graders from across the state.

The District is currently seeking students to sponsor for the 2013 Lander Youth Workshop. Please contact Debbie at 843-727-4160 x 3 for more information.

S.C. ENVIROTHON

The **Envirothon** is a program for high school students to learn more about our natural resources. This week long program tests the student's knowledge on topics such as soils, water resources, forestry, wildlife, and a current environmental issue. **This year's team winner was from Spartanburg. The national competition was held in New Brunswick, Canada.** This team competition is sponsored by the S.C. Association of Conservation Districts, in partnership with Environmental Education Assoc. of South Carolina Conservation Districts Foundation, SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, SC Department of Natural Resources, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Teams who win at the state level then go on to compete in the National Competition.



The District was proud to sponsor three teams: Wando High School and two teams from James Island Christian School. Congratulations to these teams who worked hard to represent their schools for this state-wide event.

James Island Christian School Envirothon Team was one of three teams that the District sponsored in 2012.

Do you have a team that would like to be involved in this event; Contact Debbie to learn more about this great event!



Chairman Bill Simpson rallies support

2012 LEGISLATIVE DINNER

The SC Association of Conservation Districts held its annual Legislative Dinner at Seawells in Columbia. Representatives from Conservation Districts around the state gathered to recognize Legislators for their efforts in the area of Natural Resource Conservation. Updates on changes that will affect Districts were given by Chief White and NACD President Schmidt.

Legislative Appreciation Awards:



Senator Ronnie Cromer and Representative Harry Ott, Jr. were honored by the SC Conservation Districts Association for their support of conservation Districts in South Carolina.

Left, Senator Cromer and Representative Harry Ott, Jr.

CHARLESTON DISTRICT'S ANNUAL EASEMENT REVIEW AT CATR FARMS

Charleston Soil & Water Conservation District is proud to hold the Conservation Easement on **CATR Farms**. This easement was signed into place December, 2009. The purpose of this easement is to protect and preserve the Conservation Values; To prevent any use or activity that will impair the Conservation Values; and To allow the continuation of historic and traditional uses and activities as well as limited uses that would not impair or degrade the Conservation Values.

Bill Simpson, Chairman, John Smoak, Associate Commissioner, and Debbie Eckard, District Manager, met with Murray Neale and Kimberly Anderson on December 20th to review the easement conservation guidelines.

How fortunate we all are to be involved in such a wonderful outreach program as this and at the same time preserving the conservation values that make this property so beautiful to us all! Great Job CATR Farms!



2012 Annual Easement Review

Commissioners John Smoak and Bill Simpson are given a tour of the stables by manager, Murray Neale.



Ashley Scenic River Event shown above. Local landowners, legislative guests and conservationists in the tri-county area, came to learn more about conservation measures to preserve this historic river.

ASHLEY SCENIC RIVER EVENT

Charleston Soil & Water Conservation District is a member of the Ashley Scenic River Event Advisory Council and a major sponsor of their annual event. This Council was formed in 1999 and was created according to the Scenic Rivers Act to assist and advise the SCDNR in protection and management of the scenic river. The leadership is driven by the local advisory council. This council meets monthly at the Dorchester Library on Dorchester Road. Water quality issues are at the heart of this Council's concerns.

EARTH DAY/ARBOR DAY AT CHARLESTON AFB

On March 28th over 800 fifth grade students from throughout the Lowcountry area participated in this annual Earth Day/Arbor Day celebration sponsored by Charleston Air Force Base. County-wide fifth graders participated in poster/essay contests and in a tree planting ceremony. The District was one of several participating agencies that presented conservation information to this group.

A water quality conservation program was presented by Debbie Eckard and Commissioner Mickey Floyd. This was a great Earth Day/Arbor Day for all!

SCIENCE FAIR SPONSORSHIP RECIPIENTS

Each year the Charleston District proudly presents savings bonds to students from all over Charleston County whose projects demonstrate excellence in the Environmental Category of the Lowcountry Hall of Science & Math Science Fair. The District not only presents winning students with savings bonds, but also judges the environmental projects. The students who placed first in the Junior Divisions of the environmental category were:

First Place Jr. 1 Division– Isabella Mika Newbauer
“Got Milk”? Lowcountry Preparatory School

First Place Jr. 2 Division Sashank Sakamuri
“Plant Growth in Microgravity” - Magnet High School

First Place Jr. 1 Division - Isabel Marie Del Mastro
“A Hummingbird Experiment”
Charter School for Math & Science

PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE

On February 26-27, 2013, the 72nd Annual SC Partnership Conference was held in Columbia at the Downtown Marriott. This annual event highlights the awards and achievements accomplished in conservation throughout the 2012 year. **William S. Simpson, Chairman, of the Charleston Conservation District, was honored for his 35 years of service as a District Commissioner. Other recognitions included:**

Outstanding Conservation District Award - Beaufort

Outstanding District Commissioner Award - Brenda Nettles - Barnwell

Outstanding District Employee Award - Shelby Berry - Beaufort

Teacher of the Year (K-6th) - Victoria Pasco - Richland
 of the Year (7th-12th) - Michael "Blake" Berry - Anderson

SOUTHEASTERN WILDLIFE EXPO

The annual Southeastern Wildlife Expo was held February 17-19th at Marion Square in downtown Charleston. The District sponsored a booth to display various resources, both education and technical, to Lowcountry citizens interested in conservation of our natural resources. The display highlighted an exhibit that encouraged urban property owners to participate in practices that protect and encourage wildlife habitats. Over 40,000 attendees visited the Conservation area where District/NRCS staff had an opportunity to interact with fellow wildlife conservationists.

ARBOR DAY AT PORTER GAUD SCHOOL

The District sponsored **Porter Gaud School** for an Arbor Day event with Fourth Grade Foresters USA. Debbie Eckard dressed up as **“Twiggy the Tree”** and presented each fourth grade student with a tree to plant at home. A short program was given to 100 fourth graders to talk about the value of trees to the environment. Arbor Day is the first Friday in December for South Carolina.

It was a great day with Porter Gaud Elementary students! *Call Debbie to hear more!*

GARDEN CLUBS

“Backyard Conservation” is a program that is available to garden clubs and other civic organizations throughout Charleston County. This program focuses on ways to incorporate **backyard conservation** measures in your yard. Topics such as composting, native species planting, trees, and attracting wildlife to your yard are highlighted. **Programs were presented to Magnolia Garden Club, Camellia Garden Club, and Cokesbury Garden Club.**

See Photo on page 11

SCACD MID-YEAR MEETING

The SC Association of Conservation Districts held its Mid-Year Meeting October 10, 2012 at the Farm Bureau Office in Cayce, SC. There were break-out sessions to discuss Legislative, Education, Conservation Concerns, along with District policy changes, funding options, and District and partner concerns. These concerns and policy changes are presented at the annual partnership conference. There are 46 Districts in the state of South Carolina.

2012 POSTER/ ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS

"PEEK" into HEALTHY SOILS!



Kindergarten Class– Montessori Community School Ms. Terry Hartnett



What will you find when you "Peek" into your soil?
Will it be healthy?
What lives there?
The Poster Contest was open to grades K-4.

The Essay contest was open for grades 5-9.

Congratulations winners!

Look at our winners!



Kindergarten Class –Ms. La'Sheia O. Oubre'
Sanders-Clyde Elementary School



First Grade Class– Porter Gaud School
Teacher: Ms. Jennifer Clair



Fifth Grade Essay Winner
Domonique Edmondson
Hunley Park Elementary
Ms. Margaret Eideson



Second Grade Class
Montessori Community School
Teachers: Ms. Julie Hund & Robin Prosise



Third Grade Class–Ms. Deirdre Sykes
Montessori Community School



Left, Daniela Garcia, Eighth Grade
Essay Winner–Teacher Erik Hilden
Jerry Zucker Middle School of Science



Fourth Grade Class- Teacher Ms. Jordan Lotts
Mary Ford Elementary School



2012 Best Conservation Poster
Second Grade Class , Montessori Community School
Teachers Julie Hund and Robin Prosise



2012 Best Conservation Essay—Amber Holmes, 6th grader
Teacher, Kyle Smalls, West Ashley Middle School



First Grade Class - Ashley Hall School
Teachers: Beth McCarty and Aimee Pierce
Most Creative Poster using natural elements

Every year the Charleston Soil & Water Conservation District has an annual Conservation Recognition Awards Dinner to honor the top conservationists in Charleston County.

It is a pleasure to honor our local educators, farmers-landowners who have a passion for the preservation of our natural resources.

Your school can also be a conservationist.
Our 2013 poster/essay contest on “Watersheds” can be seen at our new website. Check us out!

www.charlestonconservationdistrict.com

2012 CONSERVATION TEACHER OF THE YEAR



2012 Conservation Teacher of the Year
Terry Hartnett - Montessori Community School

Terry Hartnett, Kindergarten Teacher at Montessori Community School of Charleston was selected as the 2012 Conservation Teacher of the Year.

Terry is a National Board Certified Teacher and has a BS in Early Childhood Education from the University of Cincinnati along with other outstanding educational credits. Terry has taught 3-6 year olds for over 25 years and has participated in our conservation contests every year since 1997!

Terry’s commitment and dedication to conservation education continues to serve her school and community with enthusiasm.

Congratulations Terry!

Soil Map Guide

This past year NRCS has begun a Soil Health Campaign called “Unlock the Secrets in the Soil”. Soils are a vital part of our everyday existence and with the growing population it is more important than ever to protect the soil. In order to improve your soil health lets first start with learning about the soils on your property.

The USDA-NRCS Web Soil Survey is a free and fast way to access information about soils on your property.

The link to the site is <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm>.

Once you have selected your Area of Interest you will generate a soil map like below.



From here you can choose the tab Soil Data Explorer and explore the soils properties and suitabilities and limitations for use. The maps and reports that you generate can then be added to the shopping cart for you to print and keep.

Once you have learned what soils you have on your property take the time to learn about conservations practices that can improve your soils health by following NRCS’s soil health campaign at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/soils/health/>

As always, if you have any questions about how to use Web Soil Survey or how to improve your soil health please give Angel Sams, Charleston and Berkeley Counties District Conservationist, a call at 843-727-4160 ext 3.

THE YEAR



Earth Day at Charleston AFB –Commissioner Mickey Floyd gives Water Quality Program to Charleston County 5th graders. Over 800 attended this event.



*Garden Club - Backyard Conservation Program
Call Debbie or Kathy Woolsey if you would like a program!*



District Annual Conservation Awards Recognition Dinner/Program



*Farm Day at Joseph Field's Organic Farm—
Kentucky Soil & Water Conservationists visit Charleston to compare farming methods and learn more about organic farming*



Envirothon Team 2 from James Island Christian School



*First Place Jr. 1 Division– Isabella Mika Newbauer “Got Milk?”
Lowcountry Preparatory School*



2012 Science Fair—Bill Simpson judges posters submitted in the conservation category



Right, Ann Bentley, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician, Herman White, Contractor, along with Maria Baldwin of "Our Local Foods" meet to discuss Animal Operations portion of the Sewee /Santee 319 Grant.



*Arbor Day Program given by "Twiggy the Tree!" Porter Gaud School
Students received seedlings to take home and plant!*



Commissioner Kathy Woolsey explains 319 Sewee/Santee Grant Watershed Project to locals at the Awendaw Crab Festival



Charleston AFB Science Camp Watershed Presentation



*Our Natural Resources at its best!
We work for clean water!*



2012 Charleston District Board

L-R: Front Row: Debbie Eckard, District Manager/Education Coord, Bill Simpson, Chairman, Lisa Hajjar, Grant Manager, Commissioners Kathy Woolsey and Raymond Tumbleston.

Back Row: Commissioners John Kozma and Mickey Floyd

The Charleston Soil & Water Conservation District would like to thank our County, State, and Federal Partners and 2012 Affiliate Members for your ongoing financial and technical support. Your gift helps us to educate the public about natural resource conservation. THANK YOU!

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SC Dept. of Natural Resources
USDA / Natural Resources
Conservation Service

Total Affiliate Memberships—127
Government Partners—3
Advertising—8
Sustaining Memberships—36
Associate Memberships—39
Contributing—44

Affiliate Membership Levels:

- Corporate Sponsorship—\$500 or above
- Advertising Membership—\$250-\$499
- Sustaining Membership \$100
- Associate Membership—\$50
- Contributing \$25



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2012 Charleston Soil & Water Annual Report

CHARLESTON SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Check out our new website!! www.charlestonconservationdistrict.com



Charleston Conservation District

The Charleston Soil & Water Conservation District meets
the Second Tuesday of each month, 3:30 PM at
2070 Northbrook Blvd., Ste. A-8, North Charleston, SC .

Our meetings are open to the public!

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

2012 Commissioners

William S. Simpson, III, Chairman
Raymond L. Tumbleston – Vice-Chair, Treasurer
Kathy Woolsey
Mickey Floyd
John P. Kozma

Associate Commissioners

John H. Smoak
Brian Celek
Barbara Neale
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Van Noy Thornhill

District Staff

Debbie Eckard, District Manager &
Education Coordinator
Lisa Hajjar, Sewee/Santee Grant Project Leader

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service Staff

Angel Sams, District Conservationist
Ann Bentley, Soil Conservation Technician
Randy Fowler, Resource Soil Scientist
Liz Colby, Resource Civil Engineer