



# Conservation Digest

GREENVILLE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
SPRING-SUMMER 2011



# 2011 Banquet Keynote Speaker: Kirby Player



*Kirby Player with a brave volunteer at this year's banquet*



*Keynote Speaker, Kirby Player from Clemson University*



*Kirby is known for his interactive, engaging remarks*

Kirby Player is a farm boy from Bishopville, SC raised on a on a cotton, corn, wheat, peanut and soy-bean farm in the Pee Dee of South Carolina. His brother Pete, and niece Kayla currently operate the farm and are the 4th and 5th generations to do so.

Kirby received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agricultural Education in 1983 from Clemson University, and had the honor of serving as Student Body President of Clemson University in 1982-1983.

In February of 1989, Kirby was appointed Coordinator of Student Relations and Recruitment for the College of Agricultural Sciences at Clemson University. Two years ago, Kirby was appointed the Director of College Relations for Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences. In this role, Kirby directs Student, Alumni, Donor and Information Services for the college and to this day believes he is blessed to have a mission not a job.

Kirby received the Outstanding Employee Service Award for the Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources in 1996 and 2004. In the summer of 1999, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Award from the National Agriculture, Alumni and Development Association. In January 2001, Kirby assumed the added responsibilities of Executive Director of Alumni and Donor Services for the college and he seeks to expand the Circle of Life that is part of the life sustaining industries of agriculture, forestry and the life sciences. Kirby was honored and humbled to receive the 2002 Thomas Green Clemson Award for Excellence, an award presented to one staff and faculty member each year.

Kirby's life just took a wonderful turn a couple of years ago when he married his friend of 22 years, Miss Marilyn Pilgrim, of Six Mile, SC an elementary school teacher for 20 years. They married on 06/07/08 and Marilyn's initials became MPP which stands for Kirby's Most Perfect Princess!!!! They are living happily and adjusting to married life after 47 years of living as content singles!

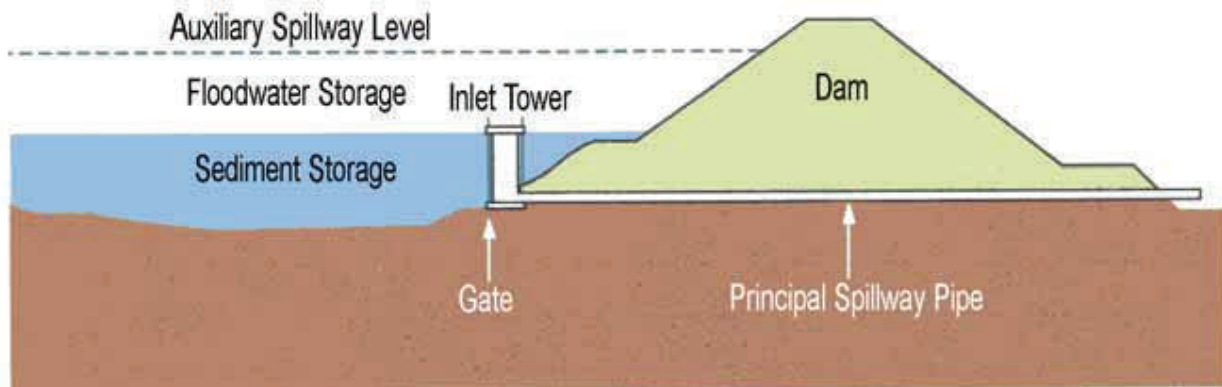
# Dam Matters

The Greenville Soil & Water Conservation District has been busy this quarter with dam maintenance. There are nine watershed dams in Greenville County that were built by NRCS in the 1960's through the 1980's. Over the decades since, these dams have minimized flooding in the South Tyger watershed and in the Huff Creek watershed, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in flood damages. Within each watershed, a series of dams are built across small tributaries to the larger stream. The dams temporarily store flood water after rain storms and slowly release it over a period of several days through a pipe in the dam. This reduces the amount of water that reaches the main stream after a rain, reducing flooding.



Last year we started a two-phased aggressive maintenance program to supplement our yearly mowing. We repaired the gates and movable parts of the dams, and this year we are working on the plunge pools on the back side of the dam and making sure that there are no large trees either on the dams, shading the dams, or in the spillways. We are almost through with the project, and the dams are in as good a shape as they were when they were built. We look forward to many more years of trouble-free operation.

## How a Watershed Dam Works



# Farmers Can Help Keep Our Water Clean

*“Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but the thread of it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect. Whatever befalls the earth befalls also the children of the earth.”*

-Chief Seattle’s address to President Franklin Peirce, 1855



The United States has more than 330 million acres of agricultural land that produce an abundant supply of food and other products. American agriculture is noted worldwide for its high productivity, quality, and efficiency in delivering goods to the consumer.<sup>1</sup>

With all of this good, a troubling fact is that runoff from farms is the leading source of impairments to surveyed rivers and lakes.<sup>1</sup> This is primarily due to nonpoint source pollution.

## Nonpoint Source Pollution

The topic sounds confusing, doesn’t it? Well many of the experts have a hard time with it too. Nonpoint source pollution is maddening for the very reason of its name; that is, you can’t trace the pollution to a single source and therefore easily correct it! It happens in drips and drabs, each of which seems so small as to be trifling.

For instance, the pollution in the runoff from a single field after one rain is probably not that much, at least all by itself. But multiply that field by many thousands to represent all the fields in one watershed, then several dozen for all the rainfall events in one year, then many times again for all of the watersheds in a river system. That adds up to a whole lot of pollutants washed into one river in only one year! Mother Nature is very forgiving, and often can absorb much of the pollution we cause. But even a loving mother can take only so much.<sup>2</sup>

## The Problems

### Sediment

You may be surprised to know that the biggest pollutant in our surface waters is sediment; washed-in soil particles. It fills up ponds and drainage ditches, chokes streams, and fills in estuaries. And it’s damaging in other ways, too. It carries fertilizers and pesticides to places they were never intended to be.<sup>2</sup>



## Nutrients and chemicals

Next on the list of pollutants are excess nutrients and chemicals. They can be carried by seemingly clean runoff and can also seep into our ground water. They come from a variety of sources; an over-fertilized field, manure nutrients in runoff from a poorly run animal operation, the wrong pesticide sprayer settings, fertilizer application immediately before a rain, and dozens of other sources.



The result of all this is two-fold; it lowers each field's productivity when the topsoil, nutrients, and chemicals are washed away ("money down the drain!"), and it pollutes our surface waters and ground water.<sup>2</sup>

## Easy Solution?

The common ingredient in all this nonpoint source pollution is water. Water carries the things that are helpful when they stay put, but that cause problems when they go where they shouldn't be.

The solution, then, is to manage the water. Farmers and ranchers can reduce erosion and sedimentation by 20 to 90 percent by applying management practices that control the volume and flow rate of runoff water, keep the soil in place and reduce soil transport.<sup>1</sup>

Sounds easy and it actually is. The complicating issue is the vast scope of all this. Think back to our example of runoff from the one field. We can easily slow the runoff so the topsoil and nutrients remain in that field, and only the clean water runs off. However, there are thousands of landowners, nearly all of whom have no intention of causing pollution, but who have no idea of their part in the big picture.<sup>2</sup>

## You Can Help

Regardless of all the laws, agencies, and handbooks available, the farmer is still the only one who can actually reduce agricultural nonpoint source pollution. He or she is the one who controls the land, and can apply profitable conservation measures.<sup>2</sup>

## Good News!

Free assistance with conservation planning is available from the NRCS/Conservation District partnership in each county. Call us to tap into it.

Content for this article was obtained from:

- 1 EPA 841-F-05-001
- 2 Farming for Clean Water in South Carolina: A Handbook of Conservation Practices, SCDNR, Land Resources and Conservation Districts Division and US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, July 1997.

# SWCD Partners to bring better service to GIS users

Maps are some of the most useful tools known to man. Greenville County has online maps compiled and coordinated through the Greenville County Geographical Information System (GIS) department. These maps show topographic features, property boundaries, political boundaries, and much more.

The Greenville County Soil & Water Conservation District partnered with the GIS department to show the inundation outlines of our watershed lakes on the Greenville GIS system. This allows people to see where the dams are, and enables them to make informed decisions on purchasing property, or improving their property if it is adjacent to one of our watershed lakes. The cross-hatching on the maps show the top of dam elevation, and the information attached to it on the GIS system allows the user to click to the Soil & Water website which explains what watershed dams are and policies concerning them.

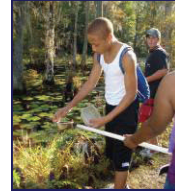
This was not a trivial application, and we appreciate the time that the GIS department devoted to the project, while competently managing the rest of their projects. We are pleased with the outcome, and hope that it is helpful to Greenville County residents.

An example of what can be seen is shown below. Online, citizens can zoom in to see exactly what properties are affected by these inundation lines:



# Affiliate Memberships

## Sponsor Education Programs



To become a member of the Greenville Soil & Water Conservation District, fill out the form below and return it with your **tax deductible** gift. Donations help the District award essay contest winners, provide environmental education presentations in schools, and sponsor delegates to the South Carolina Institute for Natural Resources.

Your gift helps the District educate the public about natural resource conservation, places your name on District newsletters and annual reports, and secures an invitation for you and a guest to our Annual Awards Banquet.



### Donate Today!

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Select a Category:  \$1000       \$750       \$500       \$200  
 \$150       \$100       \$50       \$35

*Please make checks payable to Greenville County Soil & Water.*

**Return to: Greenville County Soil & Water,  
301 University Ridge, Ste. 4800, Greenville, SC 29601**

*Front Cover: This edition's front cover picture is a trout habitat enhancement project. Large boulders are placed in streams to create small pools to protect young trout from predators..*

**GREENVILLE COUNTY  
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
301 University Ridge, Suite 4800  
Greenville, SC 29601

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**Greenville County Soil & Water Conservation District**  
301 University Ridge, Suite 4800, Greenville, SC 29601 864-467-2755

**Commissioners**

**Dr. Robert Hanley, Chairman • Claire Bradbery, Vice-Chairman • Danny Howard, Secretary-Treasurer • Darrell Harrison • David Gible • Ben H. Dillard, Commissioner Emeritus**

*Commissioners meet on the second Tuesday of every month at 9:30 AM at County Square in a meeting that is open to the public. Call 864-467-2755 for details on location of the conference room.*

*Commissioners are unpaid volunteers, three elected in the general election for a four-year term and two are appointed.*

**Affiliate Member Donations Underwrite the Conservation Education Effort for the District**

**Benefactor—\$1,000**

*GE Power Systems*

**Friend – \$500**

*Strange Brothers Grading Co., Inc.*

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*Caliber Engineering Consultants, Inc.*

*Farm Bureau of Greenville County*

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