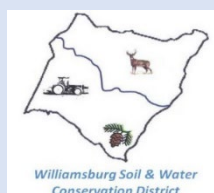


The Williamsburg Soil and Water Conservation District

Williamsburg Conservation Update Annual Report 2023

The Williamsburg Conservation District determines the conservation needs in the county and implements programs to solve environmental problems and promote conservation education. It has a board of five commissioners plus associates who volunteer their time to work as public officials and partner with SC DNR and NRCS.



www.williamsburgswcd.com

Forest Trees and Invasive Species Guides

The District purchased the Forest Trees and Invasive Species guides from the Forestry Commission to distribute in the county. These useful guides were given to our affiliate members who work with us to protect our county's resources. Also school libraries and contest winners received the books.



Forest Trees is a native forest tree identification manual with accompanying pictures that lists the characteristics of the tree including the leaf, fruit, flower, twig and bark description. It identifies the location of the tree and its uses.

Our state is blessed with many forest types and a diverse mosaic of over 100 different species of forest trees. Most of the SC forests are managed by private landowners. Having a knowledge of trees, where and how they grow, and how they may be used makes for a greater appreciation of this resource and the outdoors.

Invasive Species of South Carolina gives useful information about many shrubs, trees, vines, and insects. The manual identifies them with pictures and how they spread. It gives information on their management and suggests alternative native species to plant.

Invasive and exotic species have plagued the urban and rural forests of South Carolina for more than 200 years. Invasive species are any plant or animal that are non-native and can cause harm to the economy, the environment and our health. They rapidly increase in numbers and outcompete the native species thus threatening the stability of ecosystems. Many of the invasives were purposefully planted as ornamentals in the past. Controlling invasives in SC hinges on public awareness and education. The District distributed these books to help educate others because working together we can help protect the forests of South Carolina.

Trees of SC



Invasives



SC Wildlife Magazine



South Carolina Wildlife magazine has a long tradition of helping young people and adults learn about the importance of

the environment and the value of our state's natural resources. The magazine's statement of purpose, included on the Contents Page of each issue, says it best – "Dedicated to the conservation, protection and restoration of our wildlife and natural resources, and to the education of our people to the value of these resources". The magazine is an extremely valuable tool to teach the youth, therefore the Williamsburg Conservation District offers to donate a year's subscription to school libraries in the county. This makes the magazine available to countless students for study and enjoyment. This year the District donated the magazine to the school libraries at Kingstree High School, Hemingway High School, Hemingway Day School and Williamsburg Academy. The students love looking at the magazine and reading the stories.

Book of the Month

Book of the Month is a program sponsored by the SC Farm Bureau Women's Committee. It is a literacy outreach program with ag-



related resources to utilize in the classroom. Every month, a new book is available with accompanying activities that are aligned with SC State Standards. The Williamsburg Conservation District is pleased to sponsor school libraries in the county to receive the informative and ag-educational books making them available to all students at the schools. The C.E. Murray Elementary School and Hemingway Elementary School libraries were sponsored by in 2023 to participate in the learning program.

Conservation is a cause that has no end. There is no point at which we will say our work is finished. *Rachel Carson*



Grain Drill

The Williamsburg SWCD purchased a Great Plains 6' grain drill and caddy. The drill will be rented for a daily fee of \$200. Renters must sign a contract and pay before using the drill. No till drills allow farmers to plant crops without having to plow the land which saves time and reduces the need for fertilizer. It also reduces the amount of runoff into waterways, improving water quality. The district is excited to provide this service to the producers and landowners in Williamsburg County.



Learn to Burn Workshop

The fourth in a series of Learn to Burn Workshops was conducted on February 28, 2023 in the Bloomingvale Community. The workshop allowed many of the attendees to participate in the controlled burn. The SC Forestry Commission presented a program teaching those in attendance what preparations should be made before a burn and how to report the burn. They were taught about liability issues and how to get assistance. Different burning techniques were covered and then demonstrated in the burn. Afterwards the participants were able to explore the area to see the effects of the burn. Foresters Ron Holt and GraceAnna Cooper did an excellent job of teaching the participants vital information about burning.



Camp Wildwood

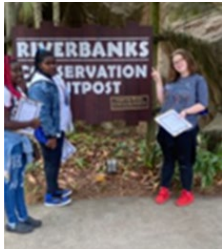
Camp Wildwood is a high energy hands on outdoor environmental camp. It is a fun filled week in which students can experience many aspects of their natural environment. They discover that we are a part of nature and everything we do in some way affects the natural balance. The campers acquire the knowledge and appreciation needed for the protection and wise use of our natural resources. They learn self-reliance, self-discipline and independence while in an outdoor setting. It helps them to build self confidence in relationships and learn how to cooperate within a group. They learn about the diversity of our natural resources and how many career choices there are in that field. The Williamsburg Conservation District will sponsor students to attend who are accepted.



Williamsburg Conservation Update

Teacher's Class Award

The Williamsburg Conservation District offers an award for teachers to promote conservation education. In 2023 Ms. Shywanna Thomas at Hemingway HB Lee Middle School received the award. Her



6th grade class

explored the diversity of life by completing a team-based scavenger hunt at the Riverbanks Zoo in Columbia. The students



learned a great deal while participating in the Conservation Around the World tour offered by the zoo. The class explored animal diversity, structural adaptations, and various animal processes. They were excited to see in real life how each animal looked and behaved.

Poster Contest

Our educational programs reach from kindergarten to the 12th grade. For the younger students, the District offers a Poster Contest. The elementary students



enjoy learning about the topic which was "Watersheds" this year. Then they get a chance to bring the topic to life on their posters. The winning class in 2023 was Mr. Collington's class at Kenneth Gardner Elementary School. A watershed is an area of



land that drains rainfall and snowmelt into streams and rivers. These smaller bodies of water flow into larger

ones, including lakes, bays, and oceans. Every body of water has a watershed. Gravity helps to guide the path that water takes across the landscape.

Parson Retires and New Associates Join

After many years of loyal service, Soil Conservationist Anthony Parson retired in October of 2023. Parson has served the producers and landowners of the county for fifteen years and provided great knowledge of conservation practices in the area. He assisted with many programs and practices and will be missed by everyone.



In 2023, the Board welcomed two new associate commissioners to the Board. Craig McFadden and Al Langmo joined the board. Their input and knowledge will enhance the board and help address the conservation needs in the county.

Partnership Conference

Each year the SC Association of Conservation Districts hosts a Partnership Conference for all District Commissioners. The conference is held in conjunction with the SC Department of Natural Resources and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. All three agencies can get updates from their partners, share ideas, and present new program information. Chairman Frances McClary and District



Coordinator Denise Smith attended the conference to get program information and updates. In 2023 the conference keynote speaker was Lt. Governor Pamela Everett, who said she wants her legacy to be protecting the environment. She spoke about the litter issue in the state and her grab a bag program to encourage litter pick up. She also gave information on the impact of eco-tourism in the state which brings 4.8 million dollars into our economy. She thanked the conservation family for protecting our outdoors, state parks, beaches, rivers, trails, and environmental tours which make our state beautiful and great and provides the avenue for the ecotourism. Everett stressed that she and Governor McMaster's door is always open to anyone. Other speakers included Sterling Sadler with the Conservation Districts Foundation, Curtis Miller of Maranatha Farms, Jim Beasley of the University of Georgia, Dr. Buz Kloot of the University of South Carolina, and Rick Huffman of Earth Design.

Report a Litterbug

Ever see someone throw trash out of their vehicle window? Or found trash illegally dumped. You can help to catch the culprit by calling the Litter Busters Hotline. The number is 1-877-7-LITTER (1-877-754-8837). Just call, report the location, time and the litterbug's license number. The line is open 24/7 with an answering service to make sure you can report the crime. There is also an app you can download on your phone and use to report. You can go to the Palmetto Pride website to find it. You may also complete a form on their website to report a litterbug. www.palmettopride.org Just click on Litter Busters Hotline. With your support, we can make a difference in South Carolina.

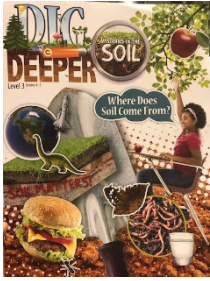
*Keep
Williamsburg*



Beautiful



Earth Day



Earth Day is a day to inspire awareness and appreciation for the Earth. It is celebrated on April 22 each year. The first official Earth Day was observed in 1970 and has been

celebrated every year since. In an effort to spread the conservation message, the Williamsburg Conservation District donated activity booklets to the 125 fifth grade students at Kenneth Gardner Elementary School. The booklets "Dig Deeper – Mysteries in the Soil" teach in a fun way the importance of soil. Soil has been called the "skin of the earth" because it is the thin outermost layer of the Earth's crust. Like our own skin, we can't live without soil.

To the farmer, soil is where crops grow.

To the engineer, soil is a foundation upon which to build.

To the ecologist, soil supports communities of living things.

To the archaeologist, soil holds clues to past cultures.

To the city dweller, soil nurtures grass and gardens.

To the soil scientist, soil is all of these things.



Great American Cleanup

The Great American Cleanup is the nation's largest community



improvement program which takes place annually. Lead by Keep Williamsburg Beautiful, it unites communities across the country and prompts individuals to take a greater responsibility for their local environment. On April 15 local volunteers united to pick up unsightly trash on Highway 52. The volunteers picked up 160 pounds of trash to improve the roadside appearance. A separate group of volunteers picked up trash in the Salters Community.



Black River Cleanup

As part of the Great American Cleanup a group cleaned up trash in the Black River. Using Kayaks, kayaks, johnboats and on land volunteers, they cleaned a seven-mile stretch of the river. The volunteers collected 1200 pounds of trash from the river consisting mostly of plastic bottles, cans, and fast-food containers.

Town of Kingstree Cleanup

The Town of Kingstree also held a clean-up in April. The group picked up 400 pounds of trash from the streets of town which included a large rug and a wooden chair.

Essay Contest

The Williamsburg Soil and Water Conservation District held its annual essay contest for students in Williamsburg County. The purpose of the contest is to help youth learn about our natural resources and ways they can help protect them. In 2023, the topic of the contest was “Watersheds”. The students’ essays investigated what is a watershed and why are they important. The County Winner was Katie Stanton, a 4th grade student at Kenneth Gardner Elementary School.

County Winner

Katie Stanton

Litter Hike

The teacher of the county winner in the Essay Contest is eligible to win funding for a class project. The winning teacher in 2023 was Ms. D. Parker at Kenneth Gardner Elementary School. Ms. Parker took her class on a Litter Hike. “One piece of litter isn’t that bad but if everyone takes that mindset, nature becomes a lot less beautiful,” said Ms. Parker. The students walked around armed with trash bags and rubber gloves to collect litter along the way. They made observations about the trash collected such as – Is it decomposing? And does it hurt the animals and plants? Ms. Parker said, “By getting the students engaged in hands-on activities like these, you help children understand the true meaning of conservation.”



Pee Dee Area Meeting

The Horry Conservation District hosted the Pee Dee Area Meeting in September of 2023. It began with a tour of the historic Horry County Museum which showcases a fish tank featured on the Animal Planet show “Tanked”. Horry Chairman Shane Willoughby opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Then guest speaker biologist Sudi Thomas with US Fish and Wildlife gave a presentation on Venus fly traps and pitcher plants. Updates were given by the SC Conservation Districts Foundation, the Pee Dee Area Director, The SC Conservation Districts Employees Association, SC DNR, NRCS and the SC Association of Conservation Districts. Dinner was served and door prizes were awarded.



Water Cycle Project

To promote conservation education in the classroom, the teacher of the Essay Contest County Winner is eligible to receive funding for a class project. Mrs. Mercer at Williamsburg Academy received this project funding since she was the teacher of county winner, Sharon Lian in 2022. Mrs. Mercer conducted a project to study the water cycle with terrariums. The students got to create their own terrariums to investigate the stages of the water cycle and to observe the effects of the cycle on plant growth. The students enjoyed growing cat nip and rye grass using jars and cups. Their individual terrariums were very successful, and they also created a class terrarium.



Camp Longridge

The Williamsburg Conservation District sponsored WA student Jake Hedrick to attend Camp Longridge for a fun adventurous summer experience. It offers outdoor opportunities for all ages with a 35-foot-high rope course, canoeing, archery, walking trail, zipline, swimming, and a climbing wall. It also offers many sports including basketball, gaga ball, and volleyball. Jake truly enjoyed their experience and was thankful for the opportunity to attend and make new lifelong friendships and memories.

Arbor Day

The Williamsburg Conservation District and Keep Williamsburg Beautiful commemorated Arbor Day on the first Friday in December. A ceremony was conducted by the Daughters of the American Revolution at Kellahan Park in Kingstree. One oak tree and three dogwood trees were planted in the park.



Board Meetings

The Board of Commissioners meet on the first Tuesday of each month to address the issues related to conservation and the natural resources in Williamsburg County. Anyone with conservation or program concerns and questions may contact the district at 843-354-9621 ext. 3. You may also visit the District's website at www.williamsburgswcd.com. Conservation District Commissioners are charged with promoting the wise use of soil and water within their Conservation District. Conservation Districts provide customer service to local landowners, conservation related education and outreach opportunities, and serve as conservation advocates for the community. Conservation Districts are the voice for locally led conservation!



Conservation Programs

NRCS offers voluntary programs to eligible landowners and agricultural producers to provide financial and technical assistance to help manage natural resources in a sustainable manner. Through these programs the agency approves contracts to provide financial assistance and to help plan and implement conservation practices. These practices address natural resource concerns or opportunities to help save energy, improve soil, water, plant, air, animal and related resources on agricultural lands and non-industrial private forest land. The 2018 farm bill is being implemented over a five- year period.

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

Although the CTA program does not include financial or cost-share assistance, clients may develop conservation plans, which may serve as a springboard for those interested in participating in USDA financial assistance programs. In 2023 the NRCS office helped 363 producers.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers who face threats to soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. Through EQIP, NRCS develops contracts with agricultural producers to implement conservation practices to address natural resource problems such as watering systems for livestock, conservation tillage, Seasonal High Tunnels and many other practices. In 2023, NRCS in Williamsburg County awarded 14 new contracts totaling \$632,956.00 on 4,207 acres.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Through the Conservation Stewardship Program participants take additional steps to improve resource conditions including soil quality, water quality, air quality, and habitat quality, as well as energy. CSP provides two types of payments through five-year contracts: annual payments for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing practices; and supplemental payments for adopting a resource-conserving crop rotation. In 2023, NRCS in Williamsburg County awarded 23 new contracts totaling \$1,190,543.83 on 14,848 acres.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program provided financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits. Under the Agricultural Land Easement component, NRCS helps Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land. Under the Wetlands Reserve Easement component, NRCS helps to restore, protect and enhance enrolled wetlands.

All programs and services of the Conservation District, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and DNR-Land, Water and Conservation Division are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital status, political beliefs, or handicap.

Our Mission Statement:

The protection of our environment through the wise use of our natural resources.



Board Of Commissioners

Atwood McIntosh

Brian McClam

Ruth Brown – Sec./Treas.

Scott Williamson – Vice Chairman

Frances McClary – Chairman

Commissioner Emeritus

Jayne Carsten

Associate Commissioners

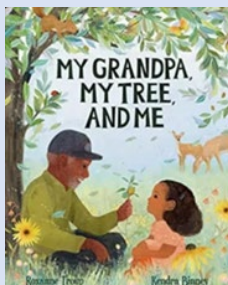
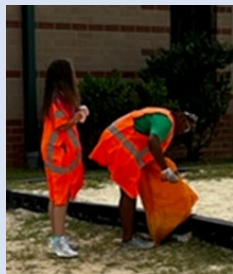
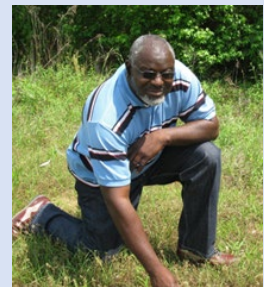
Craig McFadden

Al Langmo

Staff

Denise Smith - District Coordinator

Jeremy Munn - District Conservationist



2023 AFFILIATE MEMBERS

The Williamsburg Soil & Water Conservation District would like to recognize our Affiliate Members who are a vital part of our conservation team. Without the monetary support given by the Affiliates, we would not be able to carry out the many programs to promote conservation stewardship within the county. The Conservation District is committed to helping the landowners and educating the students of Williamsburg County. **Thank you Affiliates!**

The Camp Fund Contributors is a level in which the money is specifically used to send students to one of the conservation camps available.

CAMP FUND CONTRIBUTORS

Worldnet Auctions Live LLC
Charles Ingram Lumber Co.
Wake Stone Corporation
Langmo Williamsburg Lands, LLC
DSM Nutritional Products

GOLD

Bank of Greeleyville
Anderson Brothers Bank
Cooper's Country Store
Santee Cooper
The Citizens Bank
First Citizens Bank
S2 Farms LLC

SILVER

McElveen Buick GMC Inc.
Charles R. Barwick
Richard A Gamble
Archie B Ward
Ruth Brown
Never Fail Farm
Harry McKenzie Jr.

PLATINUM

Mishoe Insurance Agency
Farmers Telephone Cooperative
Grier Farms LLC
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Palmetto Synthetics
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