



Williamsburg Conservation Update

Williamsburg Soil & Water Conservation District

2020 Annual Report

502 Martin Luther King Jr. Highway, Kingstree, SC 29556
843-354-9621 ext. 3 phone 855-589-9002 fax

Board of Commissioners

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District Coordinator

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NRCS

District Conservationist

Litza Ramos-Lopez

Soil Conservation Tech.

Anthony Parson

Soil Conservationist

Jabril Wright

Mission Statement:

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



Learn to Burn Workshop



On February 10, 2020 the Williamsburg Conservation District and the SC Forestry Commission hosted a second Learn to Burn Workshop. Held at White Oak Plantation, the workshop was conducted by GraceAnna Cooper and Chet Foyle of the SC Forestry

Commission. They presented a program covering vital topics such as why landowners should burn their woods, and pre-burning preparation, which includes making a burn plan, notifying the SC Forestry Commission, making firebreaks and being aware of weather conditions. Then Burning was covered with different burning techniques being shown, making a test fire and



making sure you have the proper burning equipment. Liability issues were covered, and the attendees were told how to get assistance from cost share programs. They were also given information on attending a certified prescribed fire manager course.



During the Post-burn; mopping up was covered and evaluating the fire.

Partners from NRCS, Clemson Extension and SC DNR gave information on what assistance and programs their agencies offer. Following the program, the Forestry Commission conducted a very successful prescribed burn on the property.



Covid 19

In 2020, Williamsburg County and the world were dramatically impacted by Covid 19. We all felt the impact on our families, community and our very way of life. We saw many heroes emerge with acts of courage, humanity and love. The District strived to continue with our efforts in conservation as always. Some programs couldn't be conducted as usual, but we did manage to find different ways to provide our best efforts. We will strive to continue with all of our programs in the coming year.

Cover Crop Project

Lawrimore Farms is in year two of the Williamsburg County Soil and Water District's Cover Crop Project funding. Originally, they wanted to use this project as a study for grazing livestock, then planting to show the effects the livestock would have on the growth pattern compared to non-grazed cover crop. The cover crop project consisted of 71 acres and a three-way mix of rye, oats and crimson clover was planted. This mix was grazed lightly but not on a consistent basis, so we did not get to monitor and document. Year two was planted in late December 2019 and March 15, 2020. At time to burn down for planting the same mix had produced over 8000 pounds of silage and had grown to be 6 feet tall in some areas. (see photos). Because of the height of the rye it was decided to cut and bale the cover crop to a level of 12 inches, then drill crop into that residue after burn down. This produced good weed suppression and kept the ground moist which enabled the cash crop to thrive. Even though we did not get to complete the project as grazing vs non grazing, the fact that they were able to cut and bale over 8000 lbs. per acre and still have a good amount of residue to complete the soil health function of cover crop is still something to be commended. This practice is not currently being funded through EQIP. This is a project that livestock producers can do on their own and get a dual results of cover crop and feed stock.



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. Due to the pandemic the meetings have been held at the property of Commissioner Ruth Brown so social distancing guidelines can be followed. 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!

New Associate Commissioner

A new Associate Commissioner joined the Board this year. GraceAnna Cooper recently joined the board bringing her knowledge of forestry and conservation. GraceAnna is the Project Forester with the South Carolina Forestry Commission for Williamsburg and Georgetown counties.

Photo Contest



The Conservation District sponsors a photography contest for students in the 9 -12 grades. Students may enter in any of the four categories: Trees, Native Wildlife, Landscapes, or Rural Life. The 2020 winners were Lane Phillips and Boyd Casselman. Their winning photos captured images of life and nature in Williamsburg County. The winning photos are displayed in the Williamsburg Conservation District office.

FFA Wildlife Career Development Event

The District annually sponsors the Future Farmers of America, Wildlife Career Development Competition, which hosts over 200 students from around the state. The competition is among the most scientifically challenging of all the events conducted by the SC FFA Organization. Preparation requires considerable study and practice in the classroom and outdoor settings.



The event is conducted by faculty of the Forestry



Management Technology Program of Horry-Georgetown Technical College. FFA teams from high schools across South Carolina compete for individual and team prizes and the title of State Champion. The winning team will earn a trip from the college to the national competition. The National FFA Organization is committed to the individual student, providing a path to achievement in premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education. It helps the members to develop their own unique talents and explore their interests in a broad range of agricultural career pathways.

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 of the schools.



Camp Wildwood

Imagine a place where the energy is contagious, the environment is the beautiful outdoors and the lessons learned are about the impact on the natural environment. There is such a place – Camp Wildwood. It is held at Kings Mountain State Park in June. The Williamsburg Conservation District offers to sponsor two students to attend the camp each year. If you would like to attend, contact the district at 546-7808 ext. 3 for information or go to www.campwildwoodsc.com Camp Wildwood encourages self-reliance, self-discipline and independence in an outdoor setting. It is a place to learn about the diversity of our natural resources and the variety of career choices within the environmental field. 10 – 12 graders may apply. Unfortunately, because of Covid 19, the camp had to be cancelled in 2020 but the program will continue in 2021.



Essay Contest

The Williamsburg Soil and Water Conservation District holds an annual essay contest for all students in the fourth thru eighth grades in Williamsburg County. The purpose of the contest is to help youth learn about our natural resources and ways they can help protect them. The topic of the contest in 2020 was “Where Would We BEE Without Pollinators”. Pollinators form the foundations of a healthy and sustainable future for food and the environment, but in recent years, they have shown concerning signs of decline. These hard-working animals and insects often go unnoticed. It’s important that we work to help them prosper by enhancing native pollinator habitats and protecting against pollinator declines.

The students essays explored what animals and insects are pollinators and what they do to help us. They researched what products we get from pollinators and ways in which we can help protect their declining numbers. Participation was down this year because of the pandemic but the District still received sixty-three essays.

The winners were 7th Grade Winner – Justice Dail and 2nd Place – Taila Cooper both of Williamsburg Academy. 8th Grade Winner – Landon Eaddy and 2nd Place – Mary Katherine Tisdale both of Williamsburg Academy. From the grade winners, a county winner is chosen who receives an additional award. The County Winner for 2020 was Landon Eaddy. Mrs. Crystal Mercer at WA was the teacher of the county winner enabling her to receive funds to conduct a project for the classroom.





Poster Contest

Each year the District sponsors a Poster Contest for kindergarten thru third grade classes in the county. Posters are class projects and the winning class receives their choice of a pizza or ice cream party. The topic of the contest in 2020 was “Where Would We BEE Without Pollinators?” The winning class was Mrs. Pam Williamson’s class at Williamsburg Academy. Due to the pandemic the class could not have a party so the students each received a card for a personal pan pizza from Pizza Hut.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE LITTERED CIGARETTE BUTT



Cigarette Butt Litter

Thousands of smokers don't think twice about leaving a trail of cigarette litter behind them. According to Keep America Beautiful (KAB), cigarette butts continue to be the most commonly littered item in the United States and around the world today. 4.5 trillion cigarette butts are littered worldwide every year. Just one can contaminate one quart of water in one hour. The core of most cigarette filters, the part that looks like white cotton, is actually a form of plastic called cellulose acetate. By itself, cellulose acetate is very slow to degrade in our environment. It can take up to 5 years to decompose. But that isn't the worst of it. Used cigarette filters are full of over 60 toxins, which can leach into the ground and waterways, damaging living organisms that come into contact with them. Most filters are discarded with bits of tobacco still attached to them as well, further polluting our environment with nicotine, which is poisonous. Cigarette filters are a threat to wildlife that could ingest them, mistaking filters for food, and to small children, who may eat them if they're within reach. 80% of littered butts will end up in the stomachs of wildlife and marine animals. Discarded cigarette butts also pose a significant threat to our environment in terms of fire. Every year, forest fires ravage vast areas, killing off wildlife and vegetation that take years to return.

South Carolina Forestry Facts

- Who owns South Carolina's timberland?
 - 5% by the public
 - 5% by national forest
 - 16% by forest industry
 - 74% by non-industrial private landowners
- Timber is South Carolina's largest cash crop, with an annual delivered value of over \$876 million.
- Wood products are the 3rd largest manufacturing industry in the state, employing over 32,000 residents and contributing \$8.5 billion annually to our economy.
- Forested timberlands occupy approximately two-thirds (12.3 million acres) of South Carolina's land area.
- In the 2000-01 planting season, tree seedlings were planted on 145,251 acres in South Carolina.
- Approximately 48 percent of South Carolina's forests are pine, 52 percent are hardwood.
- Pine plantations account for nearly 25 percent of SC timberland.
- Over 300,000 acres were regenerated annually between 1993-2000.
- There are over 88,000 forest land owners.
- South Carolina ranked 12th in trees planted in the USA in 1998.
- South Carolinians planted some 90 million tree seedlings in 2000-01.
- Forest products are grown and processed in every county.
- Approximately 78 million seedlings were produced by forest tree nurseries in South Carolina in 2000.

Partnership Conference

The South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts hosted a Partnership Conference for the Conservation Districts, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Department of Natural Resources. It was held in Charleston in February and the conference focused on coastal conservation issues. Presentations were given by experts from the Conservation Districts, NRCS, DNR, Clemson Extension and The SC Conservation Bank. Discussion then followed. The Longleaf Alliance and the Clemson Extension Water Program also gave presentations. A tour of the DNR Marine Research Center at Fort Johnson was given and an Awards Dinner was held. The Annual Business meeting was held and the new SCACD officers were elected. The District Employees Association held an auction to raise funds to support their organization.



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.

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 2020, NRCS in Williamsburg County awarded 27 new contracts totaling \$340,988.50 on 960 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 2020, NRCS in Williamsburg County awarded 28 new and contracts totaling \$1,541,133.23 on 21,233.60 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.

Surveying Heavy Use Area



Inspecting Planting



Measuring Fence Line



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.

2020 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

Charles Ingram Lumber Co.

PLATINUM

Bank of Greeleyville
Mishoe Insurance Agency
Williamsburg County Farm Bureau
Farmers Telephone Cooperative
Carsten Farms

GOLD

Anderson Brothers Bank
S2 Farms LLC
Palmetto Synthetics, LLC
Kingtree Forest Products, Inc.
The Citizens Bank
Palmetto Pump Systems, LLC
Williamsburg County
Development Board
Santee Cooper
First Citizens Bank

SILVER

H. E. Hemingway
Archie B. Ward
Never Fail Farm
Charles R. Barwick

REGULAR

Richard A. Gamble

Williamsburg County Soil & Water
Conservation District
502 Martin Luther King Jr. Hwy.
Kingstree, SC 29556
Phone: (843) 354-9621 ext. 3
Fax: 855-589-9002

