

ANNUAL REPORT 2021





Our Mission

Our mission is to protect natural resources through education, programs, and cooperative efforts with partner organizations to achieve common goals for the benefit of all citizens of Greenville County with efforts in promoting:

Urban and Land Use Planning | Conservation Awareness | Sustainable Agriculture

District Commissioners



Michael Stewart
Chairman



Margaret Harrison
Co-Chair



Danny Howard
Treasurer



Dr. Robert Hanley
Commissioner



Brett Tankersley
Commissioner



Bruce Countryman
Associate Comm.

A Message from the Chairman

2021 proved to be another year of many challenges similar to 2020. With the pandemic continuing on, so did Greenville County SWCD. The Conservation District respected the nature of this new environment with creative ways to educate, assist, and reach out to our community.

I want to recognize our staff for their outstanding efforts and leadership. Our District Manager, Kirsten Robertson, was elected to serve as Board President for South Carolina Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition. Additionally, our District Programs Coordinator Lynn Pilewski serves as SCCDEA President through 2022 and our Stormwater Programs Coordinator, Chaneen Haler, serves as President Elect. I am grateful for their continued hard work and leadership throughout the State.

As my first term as West Piedmont Director of the South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts comes to an end, I am grateful that we were able to host the 2021 West Piedmont Regional Meeting. We got to showcase one of the crown jewels of Greenville County, Lake Conestee Nature Preserve. The meeting was held outside and featured a walking tour of the park led by Education Director Sarah Whitmire. Additionally I participated with Kirsten Robertson and Lynn Pilewski in the 2-day South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Strategic Planning Retreat, which will guide the direction of Conservation Districts in the State for years to come.

I want to express gratitude to our incredible staff, SCDNR, and our other partners for helping us continue on and inspire us despite a world of new challenges. I also would like to express gratitude to my predecessor Bruce Countryman, a friend and mentor, who believed in me; which helped me to serve the County in many capacities within this role.

Yours in conservation,

Mike Stewart
Chair

From Our District Manager



Hello friends!

It's so good to share the happenings of another year with you. While Covid-19 ebbed and flowed, we kept our heads down and kept on working, accomplishing more than ever before.

We continued maintenance on the nine PL566 dams that we oversee in the County, improving the vegetation on the dams and auxiliary spillways, mowing, moving downed trees and clearing the woody debris out of the concrete primary spillway structures.

We also provided technical advice to 156 citizens who requested help with drainage issues, flooding, sinkholes and erosion problems. If you need help in any of these areas, please give me a call at 920-6404. It's free!

Our outreach to farmers expanded so much this year that we added a whole section about it to this newsletter! Check it out on page 8.

In more exciting news, we started a Soil Health Tool Library! So far our most popular items are the soil sampler and the soil penetrometer. Reach out to us if you've never heard of these and want to know more (or if you are interested in borrowing one!)

We appreciate you and are glad you are with us in this journey of both learning and educating. Keep in touch and let us know how we are doing. We are here for you!

Healthy soils to you!

Kirsten Robertson

Manager

Lisa Sullivan, Administrative Assistant



Join us in welcoming Lisa Sullivan as Administrative Assistant. Lisa will be the first contact many folks will have with the Conservation District. Whether in the office or on the phone, count on Lisa to be a warm and friendly voice for District and NRCS clients.

Lisa says that she is pleased to be a part of such a wonderful team. She comes to the team with an eagerness to learn and a want for knowledge. She is a Military Veteran of the United States Navy. Lisa is also a mother of two talented young men that are soaring the skies with their golf skills and using their everyday skills to grow their own garden.

Lisa looks forward to learning more with Greenville County Soil and Water Conservation District and NRCS.

Thank you for welcoming Lisa with open arms!

Community Corner

Article by Chaneen Haler, GCSWCD Community Relations Coordinator



2021 saw the return of in-person education! For me, teaching is so fulfilling. I love the opportunity to help students (of all ages) explore the world around them, get curious about their surroundings, and start to develop as naturalists. Personally, I love the candid reactions and the collaboration in person instruction allows. I always learn something new – even when teaching the same water cycle lesson for the 10th time.

Wet and Wild Camp

One of my favorite lessons from this year was our insect lesson at Wet and Wild Camp. After discussing different types of insects and holding hissing cockroaches, we took off with bug nets and bug boxes to find some! We found bees and beetles and caterpillars around Lake Robinson.



It was so exciting to see everyone interact with the natural world, take interest in a spider and ask questions about a beetle that they may have squished before without a second thought. The camp was held at Lake Robinson in Greer and collaborations with Clemson 4-H, Greer Public Works, Litter Ends Here, and many presenters made for an amazing outdoor experience. Our 25 campers learn how to fish and canoe, played an array of educational water games, and learned all about the natural world they live in.

Youth Education

We were also able to get back into classrooms and afterschool programs with lessons on Water and Stormwater Management. A notable new addition was Freetown Community Center's afterschool group. Once a month we brought interactive, water related lessons to their 25 students. Educational lessons on the water cycle, aquatic indicator species, and stormwater made for a fun fall semester.



Additionally, we taught on watersheds at Conestee Nature Preserve's summer camp, on the water cycle at LEAD Academy and on soil conservation at Traveler's Rest High School. We even participated in Roper Mountain Science Center's Summer Adventure with Stormwater Jenga.

In total, we connected with more than 6,500 students, both in person and virtually in 2021.

Adult Outreach and Education

Youth education was only a small part of our in-person class offerings this year. The South Carolina Garden Club invited us to teach at their annual Environmental Studies Course. We connected with avid gardeners to discuss soil conservation, water ecology and sustainable gardening practices. We were also able to return to Conestee Nature Preserve to teach 4 rain barrel workshops. Virtually, we continued to partner with the Greenville County Library System to facilitate lessons. This year we piloted a Soil Health Series that focused on the basics around building healthy soils and how to measure your soil's health at home.



Seed library

The Seed Library program continues to develop and better serve Greenville County Citizens. In 2021 we made several additions to the program, including a mini seed library on the Bookmobile. Now, seed packets are available to patrons that visit the Bookmobile year-round. We also held our first Seed Library Extravaganza in September. SNAP-Ed participated with samples of Candy Roaster Squash and resources on nutrition and cooking, Jessica Lancaster painted a beautiful sunflower during the event, and we had tons of free seeds available! It was a lovely celebration of the Seed Library program and we look forward to hosting more events like this in the coming year. Nearly 24,500 seed packets in 2021 – an increase of nearly 8,000!



Affiliate Membership

Since 1971, citizens, businesses, and educational institutions in Greenville County have donated tax deductible gifts to the Greenville County Soil & Water Conservation District. The District uses affiliate member funds to provide a wide variety of environmental education programs, demonstration projects, and outdoor learning opportunities.

District education programs reach students of all ages, classroom teachers, informal educators, pet owners, homeowners, farmers, contractors, members of the public, and elected officials.

We need your help to continue these important programs!

- Awards for Greenville County students for photographs, science projects, and essays written on natural resource conservation topics
- Interactive exhibit displays at area events, fairs, and Earth Day celebrations
- Funding for mini-grants to schools and organizations for conservation education

A Heartfelt Thank You To Our Affiliate Members

We appreciate your ongoing support!

South Carolina DNR

Clemson University

ReWa - Renewable Water Resources

Mountain View Farm

Nature Walk Photography

Pecan Dale Farmstead

Padula's Plants and Gardens

John W. Parris

Dennis & Judy DeFrancisco

Friend of the District Award

Richane Robbins Named Friend of the District

The Friend of the District Award is presented to an individual or team that has excelled in sustained support of Greenville County Soil and Water Conservation District and its mission.

In 2021, we recognized Richane Robbins as the Friend of the District Award Recipient. During her time as a middle school science teacher, she was an enthusiastic supporter of our annual essay contest. The submissions from her students were creative and impressive and consistently won awards.



Her support of conservation education continued in her role as a Natural Science Teacher at Roper Mountain Science Center. With the opportunity to focus on natural science, Richane consistently highlighted soil and water science in her lessons. Her accomplishments in 2020 are a great example of how committed Richane has been to conservation education. She ingeniously created a river lake-bed model to teach about sediment and sedimentation; she used our watershed model to talk about watersheds; she even found a great way to incorporate our soil infiltration models into her lessons. Additionally, she has championed the installation of a rainfall simulator and soil focused education to the new Environmental Science and Sustainability Center!

“Soil Your Undies” Webinar Series

Greenville citizens have been seen burying their underwear outside in an effort to determine the health of their soil. A national program called Soil Your Undies teaches gardeners and farmers how to bury a pair of cotton underwear for 8 weeks to see if the microbes in the soil eat the organic matter (cotton). The more fabric eaten, the better the health of the soil.

Greenville Soil and Water teamed with the Greenville County Library system to host an 8-week virtual soil health class with four engaging experiments. Participants had a grand time and learned a lot about the role soil microbes play in reducing the use of pesticides and herbicides.



Focus on Agriculture

Newsletter for Producers

Greenville Growers news, opportunities, & updates



In 2021, Greenville County Soil and Water Conservation District launched a bi-monthly newsletter with information relevant to farmers, grazers, producers and local food enthusiasts. Every other month, we sent out articles, links and information about opportunities, education, legislative issues, and ways to connect with other producers.

Olivia Felber: My Intern Experience



I have always been passionate about conservation and the environment, and working with the Soil and Water Conservation District has been a wonderful experience and opportunity for me to apply skills from both my current and past studies.

I started interning with the Greenville County Soil and Water Conservation District back in August 2021 and was brought on to help with events and material regarding environmental education and outreach. I helped run this year's camp that Soil and Water ran in conjunction with Clemson Extension and had a blast helping kids learn about conservation and environmental stewardship at beautiful Lake Robinson in Greer!

I've also helped design and illustrate social media posts for various Seed Library events and am currently helping to develop lesson plans and compositions for some educational painting classes coming up this spring in collaboration with the Greenville County Library system!



Social Media



Oil and auto fluids are water pollutants! Do your part to keep our water clean. Learn how here: <https://loom.ly/TACC6kQ>



Want an excuse to not rake leaves this fall? Leaves help suppress weeds and at the same time fertilize the soil as they break down. Why spend money on mulch and fertilizer when you can make your own? Less fertilizer = cleaner water!



Bare soil on hillsides is more likely to wash away in a storm and pollute our waterways. Plant, mulch, or cover bare slopes to help reduce erosion, improve soil health, and keep our waters clean!



When applying fertilizer follow these helpful tips to keep our water clean: Follow the package directions for the correct amount to spread. Check the weather forecast. Make sure that it's not going to rain for 24 hours. Rain will wash all of your fertilizer away and into our waterways!



Your human should scoop your poop! There is no Poop Fairy. Grab it, Bag It, Trash It!



Hey cat... Mom scoops my poop too! Grab it, Bag It, Trash It!



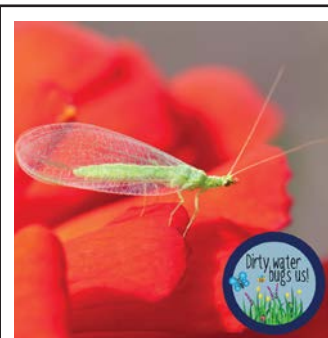
Leave the leaves, but not the poop! Grab it, Bag It, Trash It!



Your human should scoop your poop! There is no Poop Fairy my schoolpups. Grab it, Bag It, Trash It!



Hey, my children have to grow up IN that river, so don't let pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers runoff into the water. Follow package directions and don't spray before it rains. My beautiful babies thank you.



Lacewings are natural predators to many garden pests. Help them thrive and you'll see less pest pressure in your garden and less need for chemical controls.!



Tomorrow is last frost date for the Upstate. What does that mean? April 15 is the average date of the last light freeze in spring, so it's time to plant summer vegetables. Don't have seeds? No problem! The Seed Library is open at the Berea Branch.



We serve our community in partnership with our Seed Library program. Located at the Berea Branch, 60 varieties of vegetable and flower seeds are offered free with your library card.

Social media was a big part of outreach efforts in 2021. We used image badges to highlight different stormwater campaigns. "Clean Water Starts with Me" focused on specific ways to prevent pollution. "There is No Poop Fairy" focused on pet waste. "Dirty Water Bugs Us" highlighted correct use of pesticides. Finally, we also promoted our Seed Library program and herbicide education by using the logo on those posts.

Meet Our Staff



Kirsten Robertson
District Manager



Chaneen Haler
Stormwater Programs Coordinator



Lynn Pilewski
District Programs Coordinator



Lynne Newton
NRCS District Conservationist



Collin Buckner
NRCS Soil Conservationist



Lisa Sullivan
Administrative Assistant

Staff Directory

Kirsten Robertson
Chaneen Haler
Lynn Pilewski
Lynne Newton
Collin Buckner
Lisa Sullivan

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District Programs Coordinator
NRCS District Conservationist
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From the District Conservationist/NRCS

Getting Conservation on the Ground in Greenville

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides funding through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) to address resource concerns such as erosion, water quality, soil health or wildlife.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps farmers build on their existing conservation efforts while strengthening their operation. Whether farmers are looking to improve grazing conditions, increase crop yields, or develop wildlife habitat, NRCS can design a CSP plan to help meet those goals.

This year, \$87,993.92 of CSP and EQIP dollars supported projects covering cropland, forestland and pastureland in Greenville county. This is in addition to the funding that NRCS brings to the county every year in the form of professionals, and equipment to provide technical support to our farmers.

If you have a farm or timberland and would like assistance in improving the resources on your land, give us a call to schedule a visit.



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

PLEASE DELIVER TO:

