



# **OCONEE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

### **COMMISSIONERS**

Chair Robert Winchester Vice Chair Lee Keese

Secretary Treasurer Carol Hendrix

Rex Ramsay L J Jones

### **DISTRICT MISSION**

THE OCONEE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT MISSION IS THREE FOLD

TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO INSTALL CONSERVATION PRACTICES  
ON PRIVATE AND PUBLIC LANDS

TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE WISE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Hello from Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District

We are sure you are all well versed in the complications for normal operations due to Covid 19 restrictions. We have done our best to continue to function at our usual level. We have had to make sacrifices in face to face customer service in our service center. It has still been and will continue to be our priority to help our co-operators in every way possible in a safe and healthy manner. This will entail most of our conversations to be held by phone and any personal meetings to be done with social distancing in place. With that said we encourage you to continue to be in touch with the office on your conservation needs. We are excited to announce continued sign up for NRCS programs and a push for new sign ups for a coming program we will be highlighting in the spaces below.

# NACD Technical Assistance Grant

Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District was able to help our NRCS staff continue to support our local co-operators by using a grant to bring in additional help by adding a program specialists focusing on EQIP agreements. Our ability to complete these agreements was enhanced by that addition allowing multiple contracts to have designs in place, new plans written, practices installed and certified. OSWCD and NRCS staff were so satisfied with the process that applications for the 2020 round were submitted and awarded. We will use this grant for personnel to support the coming Conservation Stewardship Program application incentive.

## Education Programs

As stated earlier Covid certainly has restricted what our usual programs were able to do. We were not stopped on some fronts though. We continued to promote our Essay and Art Contests though we could not present our usual end of contest banquet we were able to provide our winners with the usual prize awards and certificates which were presented at each schools virtual awards day. We had over 200 participants and 8 students were awarded prizes for their great work. The theme this year was “Cause and Effect of Global Warming” and the winners put forth some very thought filled work expounding upon their thoughts on the subject and their outlook on the natural world

## GEORGE C. GROBUSKY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Each year Oconee District provides scholarships to students from Oconee County who are continuing their education in natural resource studies. Provided in memory of long serving board chair George C. Grobusky, this scholarship continues his legacy of trying to protect the things precious in our natural world. This years recipient was Adyson Lyles from West Oak High School. We wish Ms. Lyles the absolute best in her educational advancement

## OSWCD CONTINUING PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Oak Grove 4H Barn site: Barn site is used for agricultural events, 4-H livestock shows and camps and can be rented for private uses such as birthday parties, weddings and other functions

No Till Drill: OSWCD has a drill for rent for conservation planting. Call Pat Williams at 864 710 8779 to secure the drill for rental

Foothills Farmstead: OSWCD is in partnership with The Foothills Farmstead, a 501 © 3 organization currently creating a living farmstead museum which will interpret farm life in our county circa 1885 to 1925. Several vintage farmstead buildings are in different stages of disassembly and reconstruction. For more info go to [www.foothillsfarmstead.org](http://www.foothillsfarmstead.org)



The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary program through the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Farmers who choose to add to their conservation efforts, in addition to continuing their current efforts, may receive payment through this program.

The CSP addresses several concerns, such as:

- Air Quality
- Animal Resources
- Energy
- Plant Resources
- Soil Erosion
- Soil Quality
- Water Quality
- Water Quantity

Through a 5-year contract, participants can receive annual payments for installing new conservation activities (enhancements), while maintaining existing practices. This program has helped numerous producers over the past ten years and may benefit you too.

#### Samples of Enhancements Applicants May Choose

- Grazing Monitoring Enhancements
- Wildlife Friendly Fencing
- Tree Planting for Wildlife Food and Cover
- Crop Rotation
- Field Borders
- Cover Crops
- Pollinator and/or Beneficial Insect Habitat
- And many more...

Your local service center will assist you in finding the right enhancement for you and your operation.

The Soil and Water Conservation District and NRCS offices will be hosting several community meetings throughout the month of October to help answer questions about the program and assist farmers who wish to apply. Please consider attending one of these meetings or contacting the office for more information.

Additional information may be found on the NRCS website - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp/>

## EASEMENT PROGRAM

The District easement program currently protects upwards of 2800 acres in Oconee County. This year added two additional easements one in the crossroads area of the county (252 acres) and one near the five forks community near Walhalla (165 acres). We are working diligently to continue to offer this protection to our threatened farmland and open space. Working with NRCS, the South Carolina Conservation Bank, and The Oconee County Conservation Bank, we are partnering to put preservation on the ground and provide open space for generations to come. We are currently working on two additional easements for completion by summer of 2021. If you may have interest in protecting your property call to schedule an appointment to talk about options with the District Manager at 864 557 6168

## 2020/2021 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Your support is very much needed and appreciated. Our education programs as well as our service and support depend on your generosity. Please fill out this form and return it with your tax deductible contribution. Thank you for your continued support.

Please Circle One

Land Conservationist.....\$25.00      Soil & Water Protector.....\$50.00  
Steward of the Land.....\$100.00      Corporate Conservationist...\$250.00  
Oconee Preservationist.....\$500.00+

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Company \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Without your support we would be unable to continue the good work of conservation we try to provide. Please consider continuing to help with our education programs, our easement program and our outreach programs that help promote farmland and open space in our district. Please make you donation check out to OSWCD and mail to 301 West South Broad Street Walhalla SC 29691

## AFFILIATE MEMBERS

These are the good folks that supported us through the 2019 2020 fiscal year. It is now time for renewal of all affiliate memberships. Please consider renewing your support. If your name is not on this list of great supporters please pick a support level from the previous page and join the ranks of affiliate members of OSWCD.

John Shirley, Mark Laws, Tim Tannery, Willa Handlin, Martin Kay, Jerry and Jared Powell, Pete Miley, Floyd McPhail, Ann Yelton, Charles Cothran, William Butts, Dewitt Mize, Alice Wald, Robert Gambrell, John and Carolyn Harris, Wayne & Ellen Orr, Kathy & Marion Barker

Our affiliate member organization is a very important part of the work we do here. Thank you for your continued support and we look forward to you joining us again in the 2020/2021 conservation year.

Walhalla Service Center Staff

OSWCD Eddie Martin District Manager, Amy Bargeron Technical Assistance Affiliate Equip

Celia Myers Technical Assistance Affiliate CSP

Natural Resource Conservation Service Staff: Jason Davis Conservation Technician

Kelly Herrera District Conservationists

### **The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) Deadline Has Been Extended**

The USDA's Farm Service Agency is accepting CFAP applications through September 11, 2020.

If you are you a farmer or rancher whose operation has been directly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, the CFAP can provide direct relief, if you faced price declines and additional marketing costs due to COVID-19. CFP offers financial assistance to producers of agricultural commodities who have suffered a five-percent-or-greater price decline or who had losses due to market supply chain disruptions due to COVID-19 and face additional significant marketing costs. Eligible commodities for CFAP include:

Non-Specialty Crops

Wool

Dairy

Specialty Crops

Aquaculture

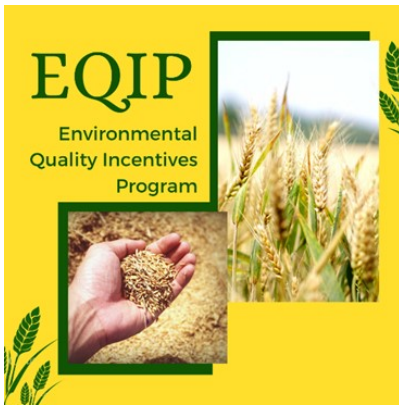
Eggs

Livestock

Nursery Crops and Cut Flowers

Apply online at <https://www.farmers.gov/cfap> or call your local FSA service center for more information at (864) 638-2213.

Additionally, a CFAP Call Center is available for producers who would like additional one-on-one support with the CFAP application process. Please call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance.



## Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial and technical assistance to farmers that address and benefit natural resource concerns. Participants receive assistance from your local NRCS office to plan, fund and implement improvements to conservation practices. These efforts not only help conserve natural resources, but also help improve local agricultural operations, in order to meet the farmer's goals and vision.

Working with your local NRCS office can help you find the right conservation efforts for you and your operation, while providing financial assistance to help cover the costs of implementation. This is a voluntary program that allows you and NRCS to co-invest in efforts to make conservation work for you.

Through the 2018 Farm Bill, EQIP now offers incentive contracts to increase benefits and practices for farmers. EQIP incentive contracts can be a stepping stone for producers between EQIP classic and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contracts.

You can learn more about EQIP on the NRCS website: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip/>.



## Livestock Forage Program (LFP) – Drought Assistance

Are you an eligible livestock owner, contract grower who have covered livestock and producer of grazed forage crop acreage that has suffered a loss of grazed forage due to a drought? If so, the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) provides payments for qualifying grazing losses during qualified droughts.

Eligible livestock are grazing animals that satisfy the majority of nutritional needs through grazing of forage grasses or legumes and include alpacas, beef cattle, equine, goats and other species. Animals that are eligible include those that are or would have been grazing the eligible grazing land or pastureland:

- During the normal grazing period for the specific type of grazing land or pastureland for the county; or
- When the federal agency prohibited the livestock owner or contract grower from having livestock graze the normally permitted livestock on the managed rangeland due to fire.

To learn more about the program or to see if you are eligible please visit the FSA website: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/livestock-forage/index> or call your FSA contact at (864) 638-2213.