

AUGUST 2021

ANNUAL REPORT

Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District



A Look Back, A Look Forward...

We've had a busy year at the OSWCD office! Even with the change in operations, due to COVID guidelines, we're excited about the progress we've made and for our future plans.

If you haven't been by the office lately, it may look fresher thanks to some renovations, courtesy of Oconee County. We have helped property owners conserve their land through conservation easements (page 3), assisted the NRCS team in advancing the CSP program (page 4), welcomed new members to the Conservation Board and Beaverdam Watershed Commission and so much more!

Additionally, we are already making plans to our 15th Celebration of Agriculture Banquet to be held November 11th. Make plans to join us today!

Read all about these accomplishments and more of our programs in the this year's annual report.

We'd love to help you take your next step in reaching your stewardship goals. Let us know how we can help.

*The Oconee Soil and
Water Conservation District Team*

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Honoring L.J. Jones' Years of Service

Mr. L J Jones has served the Oconee County Conservation District faithfully for over a decade. He will be deeply missed by our board and employees, as well as remembered for his dedication to conservation. We hope his retirement from the board gives him more time to focus on his own farming operation.

Staying safe by wearing masks to celebrate the presentation of The George Grobusky Conservation Service Award to our retiring Commissioner Mr. L J Jones (left). Commissioner Rex Ramsay (right) made the presentation.



The Oconee Soil and Water Conservation Board Commission

Robert Winchester, Chairman
Lee Keese, Vice-Chairman
Carol Hendrix, Secretary/Treasurer
Rex Ramsay
Steve Smith

Meetings of the Board are normally held on the 1st Thursday of each month. Meetings are not scheduled in January and July.

Who We Are

We are dedicated to the preservation and protection of the natural resources of Oconee County and all of South Carolina.

Our main mission is to teach about the wise use of our natural resources.

We are proud to step forward and make a difference in the conservation of our area and beyond.

Mission

The Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District's 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.



Conservation Easements

Our Conservation Easement Program helps protect the precious resources and productive farm land we have here in Oconee County. We currently hold 22 conservation easements, protecting approximately 2,800 acres and continue to work with property owners on additional protections.



We are happy to announce that another 40 acres has been preserved through a fee simple agreement, in partnership with the SC and Oconee Conservation Banks. This easement includes a Century Farm and Native American petroglyph site. (Images of site, E. Martin.)

Conservation easements are a voluntary, legal agreement that limits the uses of land, in order to protect its conservation values. If you have interest in protecting your property or would like more information, call to schedule an appointment with the District Manager to discuss options, 864-557-6168.

By working with the NRCS, the South Carolina Conservation Bank and the Oconee County Conservation Bank, we are partnering to put preservation on the ground and provide green space for generations to come.



Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

The OSWCD was able to continue to assist our NRCS staff and support our local producers through a NACD Technical Assistance grant allowing the district to hire a program specialist focusing on the Conservation Stewardship Program. Through this, Oconee County saw the highest number of CSP applications submitted - over 20! Thus far, nearly 80% have been selected for funding. This will lead to increased conservation practices on working lands, dedicated wildlife habitat and food sources and a focus on pollinators, including the Monarch butterfly.

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

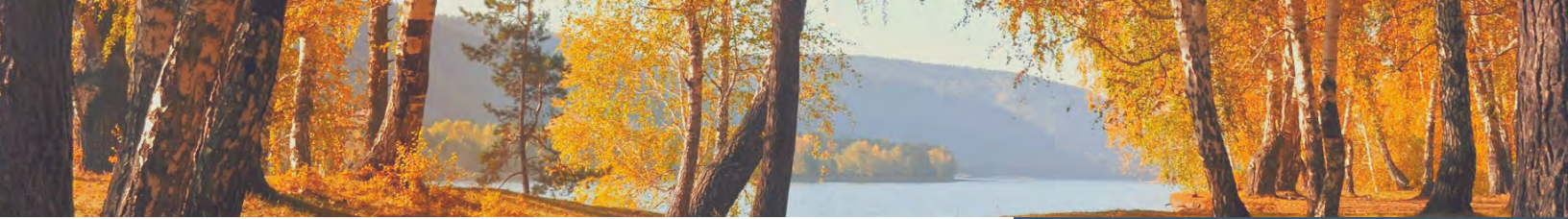


We are already accepting applications for the 2022 application season. For more information, please visit our [website](#) or contact Celia Boyd Myers at celia.myers@usda.gov.



"The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value."

THEODORE ROOSEVELT



District Programs

2022 Art and Essay Contest

We are so excited for this year's theme - "watersheds". This contest is open to all K-12 students in Oconee County (public, private and home-school). Our past winners have produced incredible art and ideas on how to make our future a healthy and happy place to live; and we look forward to seeing what tomorrow's leaders create this year!

George C. Grobusky Memorial Scholarship

This scholarship is provided in memory of our long-serving board chairman, George C. Grobusky, continuing his legacy of working to protect the things precious in our natural world. Each year, the Oconee District provides a scholarship to a student from Oconee County, who is continuing their education in natural resource studies. Know a senior or college student with plans to pursue natural resources? Please share this opportunity with them!

Oak Grove 4H Barn

The Oak Grove Center, located at 183 Capps Road in Westminster, is a 14-acre event center that includes the 4-H Barn, the Clemson Extension Riding Ring and the 100-year old Oak Grove School House. The 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, reunions and other functions. Please contact Eddie Martin at (864) 638-2213 with questions and reservation requests. We would be happy to hear from you and help you plan your proposed event!

No Till Drill

The district now has two (large and small) no-till drills for rent! Call Pat Williams at 864-710-8779 to secure the drill for rental.

For more information about any of these programs, please visit our updated Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District's website - www.oconeesoilandwater.org.

The no-till drills allow farmers to plant crops without having to plow the fields, thereby saving time and fertilizer costs, and it reduces runoff into local waterways, improving water quality.

Rental fees are by the acre.

OSWCD Affiliate Member or
Oconee County Cattlemen's
Association Member | \$10 / acre
Oconee Resident | \$14 / acre
Non-Resident | \$16 / acre





2021 Celebration of Agriculture

This is our 15th year celebrating and honoring the family farmers who devote their time and efforts to produce the products that everyone in every community need to survive. It is our honor to shine the spotlight on our local agricultural heroes. We hope you join us to and help make this a great night for our farm families.

Event Details

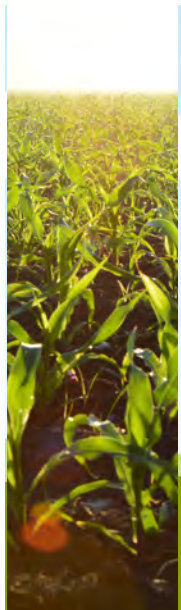
Thursday, November 11, 2021

6 PM

South Union Baptist Church, Fellowship Hall
481 South Union Road Westminster, South Carolina 29693
\$12 Tickets (Purchase tickets with the inserted form)
Events include: Guest Speakers, Award Presentations, Meal, Prizes, Entertainment and Fellowship

For more information about this event or to become a sponsor, please visit our updated Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District's website -

www.oconeesoilandwater.org or call Eddie Martin, (864) 638-221.



Many thanks to our 2020-2021 Affiliate Members!

Land Conservationist

Willa Hadlin
Ann Yelton
Benjamin Ables,
Robert Gambrell
Roger Burdette
Bill Butts, Gnat Hill Orchard and Farm

Soil and Water Protector

Martin Kay, South Belt Properties, LLC
John and Julia Shirley
Jack and Virginia Arve
Lee Keese
Tim Tannery
Kent Miller, Lucky Strike Restaurant
Ronald Miller, Seneca Little Pigs Barbeque

Steward of the Land

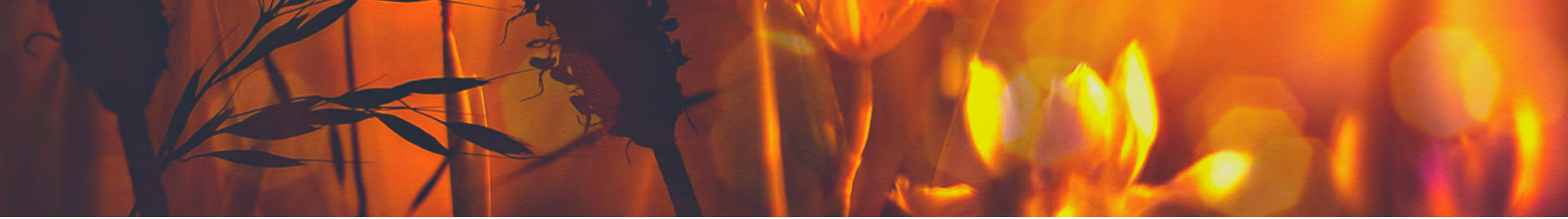
Mark Laws, Laws Logging, Inc.
Alice Wald
Virginia Grobusky
L.J. Jones, Jones Poultry Farm, Inc.
Barker and Dawn Stone
Pete and Rebecca Powell, Powell Farm
John and Linda Bowen, Three Cornerstone Farm
Patrick Williams, Little Cane Creek Farm
Head-Lee Nursery
Ed and Kitty Land, Chattooga Belle Farm

Corporate Conservationist

Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative

Oconee Preservationist

Peggy and Don Moore



2021-2022 Affiliate Membership Form

We hope you will partner with us in realizing our mission. Your tax-deductible donations help support the OSWCD's educational, large conservation and backyard conservation efforts and programs. Your support helps preserve our natural environment for future generations.

Affiliate Members can be anyone who is concerned about the conservation of our natural resources. Our members include: Farmers, Businesses, Land/Homeowners, Educational and Community Leaders.

To become an affiliate member, fill out the Membership Application Form below and mail to 301 West South Broad Street Walhalla, SC 29691, along with your donation check, made out to OSWCD.

All affiliate member levels will receive:

- OSWCD newsletter/annual report
- Print recognition in OSWCD newsletter/annual report

Corporate Conservationists and Oconee Preservationists will also receive:

- Online recognition on oconeesoilandwater.org, including your logo and a link to your website, if applicable
- Invitation to the annual Agricultural Celebration Banquet

Thank you to those have already donated so generously and please encourage others to become involved.



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: _____