

District News

Welcome Spring.

We've been seeing the signs for weeks, daffodils in bloom, warmer days (and that pesky sneeze from pollen).

Many of you having been planning for Spring planting, getting your soil tests, buying seeds, renting the no-till drill for planting.

Your local conservation district has also been making plans, preparing the soil for future growth. We are beginning to update our 5 year strategic plan to guide our priorities in the coming years. We hope you will help us this process to shape our future.

We are also excited to celebrate our 85th anniversary as a conservation district this year and to honor the 85th anniversary of the first conservation plan in the nation by Mrs. Ploma M. Adams.

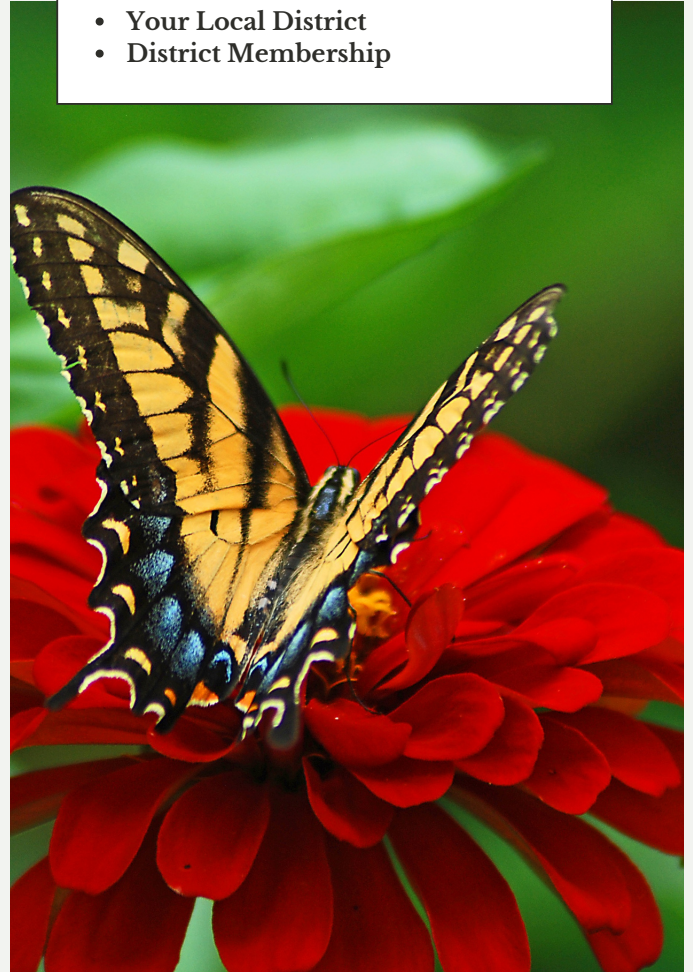
Oconee has a rich heritage of conservation and bountiful natural beauty and resources, but we can't stop now. It takes intentional focus and a lot of work to leave and continue a legacy of conservation. It takes everyone - not just your local conservation district.

Through this issue, we hope you learn more about conservation and find ways to include conservation in your everyday life. Join us for the journey.



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CREATING A LEGACY OF CONSERVATION

Ways to share your love of our natural resources with the next generation and instill conservation values:

1. Talk about conservation and why it's important
2. Garden together/Plant a pollinator garden
3. Go on a nature hike/Visit one of Oconee's waterfalls
4. Visit a local farm
5. Plant a tree
6. Join a local 4-H or Scout program
7. Go fishing
8. Practice conservation at home

Upcoming Opportunities

2022 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

The Census of Agriculture is a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. Even small plots of land - whether rural or urban - growing fruit, vegetables or some food animals count if \$1,000 or more of such products were raised and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the Census year. The Census of Agriculture, taken only once every five years, looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures. For America's farmers and ranchers, the Census of Agriculture is their voice, their future, and their opportunity.

If you did not receive the 2017 Census of Agriculture questionnaire and should have, or if you are operating a new farm or ranch, please sign up to be counted in the 2022 Census of Agriculture.

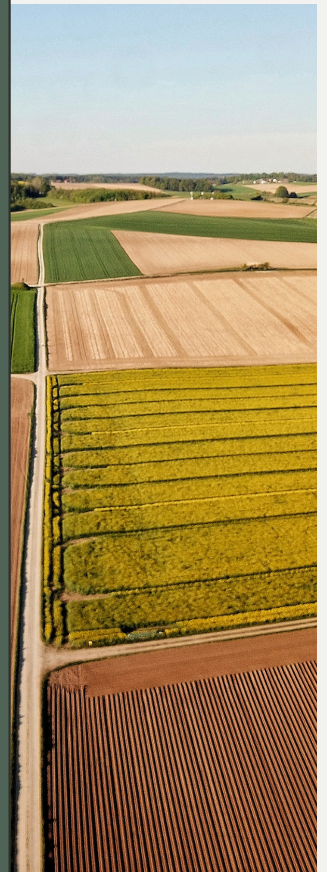
USDA ANNOUNCES CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM SIGNUPS FOR 2022

Agricultural producers and landowners can sign up soon for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a cornerstone conservation program offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Grassland CRP signup will run from April 4 to May 13.

Grassland CRP is a working lands program, helping landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland and pastureland and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as working grazing lands. Protecting grasslands contributes positively to the economy of many regions, provides biodiversity of plant and animal populations and provides important carbon sequestration benefits to deliver lasting climate outcomes.

Landowners and producers interested in CRP should contact their local USDA Service Center to learn more or to apply for the program - before the May 13 deadline. Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Additionally, fact sheets and other resources are available at fsa.usda.gov/crp.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.



District Happenings

2021 CELEBRATION OF AGRICULTURE BANQUET

The 15th annual Celebration of Agriculture banquet was held November 11, 2021 at the South Union Baptist Church Fellowship Hall. Thanks to you, our event was a huge success, with over 150 people in attendance to celebrate our Oconee Farmers. Information for the 2022 Banquet will be available in late Summer.

Congratulations to our 2021 District Award Winners:

George C. Grobusky Conservation Service Award
Carolina Hemlocks
Heritage Farmer Award
L.J. Jones
Horizon Farmer Award
Roger Head



Thank you once again to our generous 2021 sponsors!

Columbia Farms
AgSouth
Oconee Federal
Oconee County

Fieldale Farms
SC Farm Bureau
Airey Law Firm
Clemson Extension

Special thanks to the following:

West Oak High School FFA and JROTC
Seneca High School FFA
Walhalla High School FFA



LOCAL WORKSHOPS

On Saturday, January 29th, we were at Whispering Pines Farms. We loved partnering with Deborah Webster and Whispering Pines for their "What To Expect When Expecting Baby Goats and Lambs AND Forage Essentials" workshop. We held mini workshops for the children's programming on seed germination and pollination. The kids enjoyed hands-on projects to take home and interactive time with the farm's animals, while the adults learned about healthy forage and how to care for expectant sheep and goats. Thanks to Deb and the SC Forage & Grazing Lands Coalition for organizing and sponsoring this event; and to our local FFA chapter for their help with the children's program.

If you or your organization has an event planned and would like the District's participation, please contact our office (864-638-1002 or celia.myers@usda.gov).

Conservation Steps



NO TILL DRILL RENTAL

We offer two no-till drills for rent to perform conservation planting. Planting with a no-till drill conserves the soil by planting directly into the ground without having to break the surface by tilling.

We're excited about this program's success and the many acres of top soil have been saved. Total 2021 rentals show 977 acres were planted using one of the no-till drills, leading to improved soil health.

Rental fees are by the acre.

Oconee Soil & Water Conservation District Affiliate Member or Oconee County Cattlemen's Association Member | \$10 / acre

Oconee County Resident | \$14 / acre

Non-Resident | \$16 / acre

YOU CAN IMPACT FUTURE CONSERVATION IN OCONEE COUNTY

The Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District is updating its 5-year strategic plan and would like your input. We are inviting all stakeholders to help us in this endeavor.

Please take our quick survey at <https://forms.gle/HVrAWup3jetGrZuW8> and share your thoughts on future programs/priorities of the District.



Oconee County Conservation District Survey

The Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District is updating our long-range strategic plan; and we need your help. Please take the short survey to help us set priorities and annual work plans for the next five (5) years.



News For You

SOUTH CAROLINA INTRODUCES CARD FOR AGRICULTURAL SALES TAX EXEMPTIONS

SC Department of Agriculture | March 3, 2022

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture and the South Carolina Department of Revenue are pleased to announce the South Carolina Agricultural Tax Exemption (SCATE) card, a handy way for farmers to show they are eligible for certain state Sales Tax exemptions.

For many years, farmers have had to fill out a paper form, the ST-8F, to receive Sales Tax exemptions for items used in agricultural production. But after July 1, 2022, farmers will instead show their plastic SCATE card or key fob when making an exempt purchase.

“Farmers have asked us to modernize the sales tax exemption process, and the new SCATE card we’ve developed will do just that,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers. “I’d like to thank Senate Finance Chairman Harvey Peeler for his support of this new endeavor.”

State law is not changing. Farmers will still be able to receive the same exemptions as before.

Farmers can apply for their SCATE card now at scatecard.com. Applicants will need a valid email address, and a credit card or checking/debit account number to pay the \$24 fee for the card. (Note: A Social Security Number or Federal Employer Identification Number is no longer required.) Cards expire three years from the date of issue.

Beginning July 1, 2022, retailers should no longer accept the old paper form. SCDOR requires that retailers maintain evidence of exempt sales, including the SCATE card number, and report exempt sales on the Sales & Use Tax return.

Visit scatecard.com to apply for a card, verify a card number, or read the FAQ, including the full list of tax exemptions. You may also email scate@scda.sc.gov or call 803-734-2210.



Reprinted from the SCDA News Release

Did You Know?



TREES

Trees are in it for the long haul. In the Southeast, conifers may live 100-150 years. Hardwood may live 150- 200 years. Some species can live 300 years and longer. – US Forest Service

SOIL MATTERS

Before you begin your Spring planting, make sure you get your soil tested.

Clemson Extension has sample bags available at our office and can help you determine what's right for you.

Learn how to take a soil sample through this YouTube video https://youtu.be/Sio_yhdBT6E.

HONEY BEES

Honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) are the pollinators of choice for American farmers, pollinating over 130 fruits and vegetables. According to USDA honey bees pollinate an estimated \$15 billion worth of crops annually. In South Carolina, the Clemson Extension Service states annual cash receipts of crops pollinated by honey bees are estimated at \$25 million. Additionally, SC boasts ~2,500 beekeepers managing ~30,000 honey bee colonies. Honey bee colonies have been declining at a staggering pace of late (USDA and EPA). In 1947, there were an estimated 6 million hives in the US. This number has dropped to ~ 2.5 million today. Two steps we all can take include planting pollinator friendly plants and following the manufacturer's guidelines when using pesticides.



MARCH 22ND IS NATIONAL AG DAY

National Agriculture Day marks a nationwide effort to tell the true story of American agriculture and remind citizens that agriculture is a part of all of us.

Everyone is encouraged to:

- Better understand how food and fiber products are produced;
- Appreciate the role agriculture plays in providing safe, abundant and affordable products;
- Value the essential role of agriculture in maintaining a strong economy;
- Acknowledge and consider career opportunities in the agriculture, food and fiber industry.

Your Local District

GET TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Oconee Soil and Water Conservation Board

Robert Winchester, Chairman

Lee Keese, Vice-Chairman

Carol Hendrix, Secretary/Treasurer

Rex Ramsay

Steve Smith

Beaverdam Watershed Commission

The Beaverdam Creek Watershed Conservation District is a special purpose district established for the services of watershed and flood control. The watershed includes 24,269 acres, 89% in southern Oconee County, 11% in northwestern Anderson County.

Board of Directors

Royce McCall, Chairman

George Olbon, Vice-Chairman

Nathan Gambrell, Secretary/Treasurer

Garland Veasey

Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District

The Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District is 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 offer many programs that can be of benefit to farmers, woodlot and forest owners, conservation stewards, nature enthusiasts, home gardeners and more.

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; and
- To educate the public about the wise use of natural resources.

Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District Staff:

Celia Myers, District Manager

NACD Grant Supported Staff:

Tina Vickery, Technical Assistance Affiliate

Ryan Meyer, Technical Assistance Affiliate

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Walhalla Service Center Staff:

Kelly Herrera, District Conservationist

Jason Davis, Conservation Technician

Savannah Davis, Soil Conservationist

District Membership

Current Affiliate Members (2021-2022)

Thank you to our current membership. Your support allows us to continue the good work of conservation that we try to provide.

Benjamin Ables
Bill Butts, Gnat Hill Farm
Robert Gambrell
Willa Handlin
Martin Kay, South Belt Properties
John Little
Michael Manley

Marie Chatlos
Angela Laws, Laws Farm
Laws Logging Inc.
Wayne and Ellen Orr
Jerry Powell
John Shirley
Tim Tannery

Marion Barker
Joe Davis, J. Davis Cattle
Gary and Christie Lyle
John and Dawn Stone
Alice Wald
Patrick Williams, Little Cane Creek Farm

Become A Member

We hope you will partner with us in realizing our mission. Your tax-deductible donations help support the District'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 section below and mail to 301 West South Broad Street Walhalla, SC 29691, along with your donation check. Please make checks out to the Oconee Soil and Water Conservation District or OSWCD.

Please select your membership level

Land Conservationist | \$25 Soil and Water Protector | \$50
Steward of the Land | \$100 Corporate Conservationist | \$250
Oconee Preservationist | \$500+

Name: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

City, State Zip: _____

Email Address: _____