

THE GEORGETOWN SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

“Promoting natural resources conservation through the use of public notification, conservation education, sound technical information, and direct personal assistance.”

Board of Commissioners

Chairman - Mark Johnson

Vice Chairman - Peggy Williams

Secretary/Treasurer - Morris Johnson

Commissioner - Marty Avant

Commissioner - Myrtle Milton

Associate Commissioners

Kenny Williams

Rodney Butler

Justin Sutton



Staff

District Coordinator - Denise Smith

Acting District Conservationist - Davis Powell

Soil Conservationist – Vacant

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Board Changes



The District saw changes to the board in 2024. Commissioner Josh Baxley stepped down after serving on the board for four years. In the general election, Myrtle Milton was elected as the new commissioner. She served on the Georgetown County School District Board for 26 years. Mrs. Milton attended the Partnership Conference in 2025 and took the commissioner Oath of Office to begin her term of office.

The board added two new Associate Commissioners, Rodney Butler and Justin Sutton. The board looks forward to working with the new commissioners and welcomes their input on the board.

No Till Grain Drill

The District has a no-till grain drill for rent. It is a Great Plains 10' Grain Drill that can be rented for planting cropland. It is located at the farm of Bobby McDaniel. The rental fee is \$9.00 per acre. Call the District Office at 546-7808 ext. 3 to rent the drill or for more information. No-Till cropping is based on the concept of keeping the soil covered at all times. It includes the use of crop rotations, cover crops, and planting into a seed slot created by coulters. The seed slot will include no more than 30% of the total surface. No-till can be practiced continuously without any additional tillage for seed bed preparation. This benefits the producer by increasing profit and by reducing costs associated with conventional tillage such as fuel and labor costs. It benefits the land by increasing soil quality, soil organic matter and moisture content. No-till reduces soil erosion because the soil isn't being turned over, less soil blows away and less washes away. The vegetation cover left behind helps control the loss of topsoil on slopes from runoff and helps prevent wind erosion.

What is a Conservation District?

The Conservation District determines the conservation needs in the county and implements programs to solve environmental problems and promote conservation education. It is a non-regulatory entity that does not enforce compliance or impose penalties, but instead works collaboratively with people to help them responsibly and efficiently manage their land. It has a board of five commissioners plus associates who volunteer their time to work as public officials and partner with SC DNR and NRCS. They engage people with voluntary actions that keep our air, water, soil, habitats, and farmland healthy for all.



Pee Dee Area Meeting

The Florence Soil and Water Conservation District hosted the 2024 Pee Dee Area Meeting. It was held at the Francis Marion University Fresh Water Ecology Center in Florence. The Center opened its doors to students in 2023. It is dedicated to training the next generation of natural resource professionals as studies focus on issues related to the natural resources of our region. The attendees were given a tour of the premises which included the labs used to teach the students. Dr. Jeff Steinmetz gave an overview of the premises, and the courses offered at the center and their research projects. Speakers Sterling Sadler, Marc Cribb gave updates on the Conservation Districts Foundation and the SC Association of Conservation Districts and DNR. Justin Woodard gave an update on Local Working Groups and the Pee Dee Area business.



Partnership Conference 2024

The 2024 Annual Partnership Conference was held January 22-24. Speakers covered a variety of topics. Commissioners gained useful information about land easements from Farm Bureau and the Nature Conservancy gave information on a project they have working with historically underserved farmers to help sell their goods at local markets. A presentation on the Envirothon was given as well as on the Palmetto Trail of South Carolina. In breakout sessions the topics covered were: the Ag + Art Tour, NACD Stewardship Week, Local Workgroup Facilitation, Getting started with Grants and The SC Association of Conservation Districts Foundation.



Kenny Mullis, the Southeast NACD Vice Chairman speaks to the group.



Sudie Thomas of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program presents information on rare species.

Carvers Bay FFA

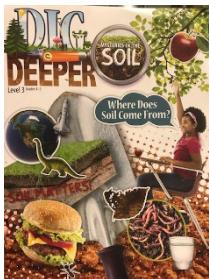
The Conservation District assisted the Carvers Bay FFA to attend the National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana in October. The school sent two teams to compete in the National Agriculture Quiz Contest. Team #1 finished 7th out of the 52 teams from across the entire nation. Jenna Kay Avant finished number 12 individually out of the whole contest and Halle Baxley finished top 30 individually as a freshman. Marissa Jones and Hailey Barnhill represented the group by winning state for their Agriscience fair project “Alternative Agriculture in the Community”. They received a bronze emblem in the National Competition. The organization received a lot of exposure and valuable experience.



Commissioners School for Agriculture

The South Carolina Commissioners School for Agriculture is a premier career and leadership development summer program. This program is designed to inform, inspire, and challenge student participants to consider a career in the agricultural, natural resource and life science industries as well as to be model citizens of leadership and influence for these industries as they embrace an agriculturalist philosophy. The Georgetown Conservation District was proud to sponsor Marissa Jones, a student at Carver's Bay High School, to attend the week-long camp that focuses on hands-on experiences and activities and demonstrates the vast opportunities that exist within these fields. The participants who are rising 11th and 12 grade students get a first-hand experience at college residential life for the week.

Earth Day



Earth Day is a day to inspire awareness and appreciation for the Earth. It is celebrated on April 22 each year. The first official Earth Day was observed in 1970 and has been celebrated every year since. In an effort to spread the conservation message, the Georgetown Conservation District donated activity booklets to the 5th grade students at Pleasant Hill Elementary School. The booklets "Dig Deeper – Mysteries in the Soil" teach in a fun way the importance of soil. Soil has been called the "skin of the earth" because it is the thin outermost layer of the Earth's crust. Like our own skin, we can't live without soil.

To the farmer, soil is where crops grow.

To the engineer, soil is a foundation upon which to build.

To the ecologist, soil supports communities of living things.

To the archaeologist, soil holds clues to past cultures.

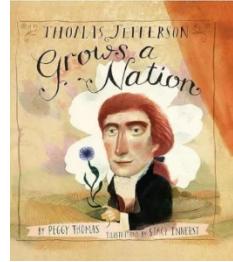
To the city dweller, soil nurtures grass and gardens.

To the soil scientist, soil is all of these things.



Sprout's Monthly Book

This program is sponsored by the SC Farm Bureau Women's Committee. It was formerly known as Book of the Month. It is a literacy outreach program with ag-related resources to utilize in the classroom. It is for anyone looking for a valid ag-related resource to utilize in a classroom. Every month, a new book is available with accompanying activities that are aligned with SC State Standards. The Georgetown 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 at the schools. The Waccamaw Elementary School, Pleasant Hill Elementary Stream Academy, Plantersville Elementary School, and Brown's Ferry Elementary School libraries were sponsored by the Georgetown Conservation District in the 24/25 school year to participate in the learning program.



Poster Contest

The annual Poster Contest for third grade classes received some great entries in 2024. This class project is open to all third-grade classes in the county. In 2024 the topic of the contest was “May The Forests Be With You”. Forests are the largest ecosystems on earth. They cover 75% of the earth. Our forests are vital to human survival. The students did an excellent job showing this on their posters. The winning class was Ms. Deanna Moore’s class at Kensington Elementary School. They received a pizza party for their efforts.



Essay Contest

The Georgetown Soil and Water Conservation District holds an annual essay contest for students in 4th to 8th grades. The contest helps students learn about environmental issues and their impact on our daily lives.

In 2024, the topic of the contest was “May The Forests Be With You Always”. The essays conveyed the theme well about the importance of our forests and ways we can protect them.

The winning students were 1st Place – Riley Amerson, 2nd Place – Braeden Lee, and 3rd Place – Elijah DeLuca. All are students at the Georgetown School of Arts and Sciences.



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, national origin, religion, gender, disability, age, marital status, or political beliefs.

Scholarships

Each year the Georgetown Conservation District offers a scholarship to deserving students at Horry Georgetown Technical College who are studying in the fields of conservation or natural resources. Two students were selected to receive the \$500 scholarship in 2024. Maggie Fischer who is majoring in Forestry and Wildlife Management and Ethan Griggs whose major is Forestry Management Technology. Both are very deserving and have been involved with conservation practices in their communities.



SC Wildlife Magazine



South Carolina Wildlife magazine has a long tradition of helping young people and adults learn about the importance of the environment and the value of our state's natural resources. The magazine's statement of purpose, included on the Contents Page of each issue, says it best "Dedicated to the conservation, protection and restoration of our wildlife and natural resources, and to the education of our people to the value of these resources". The magazine is an extremely valuable tool to teach the youth, therefore the Georgetown Conservation District offers to donate a year's subscription to school libraries or interested teachers in the county. This makes the magazine available to countless students for study and enjoyment. FFA Teachers Garrett Howard at Carver's Bay High School and Jason West at Georgetown High School were sponsored to receive the magazine in 2024.

Camp Wildwood

Do you know a student who loves the outdoors and would like to spend a week learning about nature and participating in many exciting activities? If you do tell them to apply for a week of adventure at Camp Wildwood. The weeklong camp is held at King's Mountain State Park in June. 10th – 12th grade students may apply online at <https://www.campwildwoodsc.com/> If accepted the Georgetown Conservation District will assist with the camper's tuition.



NRCS Staff Changes

Debbie Mann Retires

The Georgetown District Conservationist, Debbie Mann, retired in January of 2024 after many years of dedicated service to the area. Debbie had been with NRCS for 34 years. She was in the Georgetown office for 30 of these years. Debbie provided excellent service to countless farmers and producers in the county. She was always willing and able to help with any of their needs and problems. Debbie loved putting conservation on the ground. She also enjoyed teaching the youth how to appreciate our natural resources. We are grateful for her contributions to the county and will surely miss her expertise.



New District Conservationist



The Georgetown office welcomed a new employee, Davis Powell in 2024. He is serving as the acting District Conservationist in the Georgetown office. Davis grew up in Wakefield Virginia and attended college at Virginia Tech where he received a BS in Environmental Science and Crops and Soils. He began working with NRCS in 2020 in Jonesville, Virginia. Davis moved to the Georgetown office in September as a Soil Conservationist and became the acting District Conservationist in November. He and his wife, Jamie, married in 2023. Davis loves the outdoors, especially hunting and fishing.

Departures

Soil Technician, Amelia Farrell, left the Georgetown office in April. Amelia will further her education as she continues to work with NRCS in Bryson City, North Carolina. Soil Conservationist and Acting District Conservationist, Bradley Stokes worked in the Georgetown office for most of 2024. He moved to Oregon to continue his career with NRCS there.



We wish both of them all the best in their new endeavors.

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

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 offers cost share for implementing conservation practices which help with water quality, soil health, water conservation, and livestock management. Practices include, but are not limited to conservation tillage, nutrient management, cover crops, tree & shrub establishment, nutrient management, livestock water, fencing and pasture management. Assistance is also available to specialty crop producers including vegetables. In 2024 there were 18 new EQIP contracts on 3,547.1 acres totaling \$1,054,493.12.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - ACEP

Wetland Reserve Easement

The Wetlands Reserve Easement (WRE) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on private land in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to restore, protect and enhance wetlands.

Conservation Stewardship Program - CSP offers incentives based on current conservation activities and accomplishments and requires producers to enhance their operations with additional conservation practices to improve and protect natural resources, predominately soil and water quality, and forest wildlife habitat benefits for cropland, pasture, and forestland. In 2024 there were 18 new CSP contracts on 10,698.5 acres totaling \$952,104.38.



Our 2024 Affiliate Members

The Georgetown 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 Georgetown County.

Endowing Membership

Bob & Mary Roberts
Charles Ingram Lumber Company
HTC

Supporting Membership

Black River, LP
Samuel O. Cribb
Gray Lady at Pawleys Island

Sustaining Membership

Charles King
Estherville Farm
S2 Farms, LLC
Fred R. & Janice Powell
Dr. & Mrs. Wallace Vaught –
Hobonny Fields Farm
Hobcaw Barony – Baruch Foundation
John & Mary Beahrs
Big Dam Plantation
Santee Cooper
Anna Kate & Hayne Hipp
China Grove Plantation

Regular Membership

Kyle & Jodi Daniel
Patsy R. Williams
Sybil Collins
Owens Farm
Bob P. Cribb
Jimmy & Linda Capps

