



South Carolina's

Current Developments



Helping People Help the Land

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

Spring 2008

From the office of the
State Conservationist
Niles Glasgow



In this issue...

- ◆ Kids Get in Touch with Nature Thanks to Lowcountry RC&Dpgs. 2-3
- ◆ Chesterfield Conservation Partnership Newspgs. 4-5
- ◆ Foothills RC&D Receives Special Recognitionpg. 5
- ◆ Marion County Farmer Returns Homepgs. 5-6
- ◆ SC Soil to be Featured at Smithsonian.....pg. 7
- ◆ SC RC&D Coordinator Gets Creative.....pgs. 8-9
- ◆ SC Envirothon '08.....pg. 9
- ◆ On the Road with Mobile Offices in SCpg. 10
- ◆ Conservation Photo Contest and Personnel Update.....pgs. 12-14

Dear SC Conservation Partnership,

Six months have elapsed since I arrived in South Carolina to serve as State Conservationist, and I have enjoyed the chance to visit many offices and greet old friends, and meet some new faces as well. As I get out into the field and visit with farmers, conservation partners, and others, I realize that our work has positive impacts on so many of South Carolina's resources.

Recent personnel announcements mean that Supervisory District Conservationists positions are now filled in all nine of SC's watershed teams, and am I very interested in receiving feedback on how the teamwork approach is working throughout the state.

The world of sports offers some of the finest examples of teamwork, and I think the concept is a natural fit for our watershed teams. Great athletes always acknowledge that great *teams* win championships—not great *individuals*. As Babe Ruth said, "The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime."

In 2006, two statistics professors at Brigham Young University concluded after a long-term study of NBA basketball games that teamwork truly was the most important factor in winning. I think the same concept applies to our work at NRCS. We have a diverse, talented, and motivated team of dedicated conservationists within the SC Conservation Partnership, and as we work together, I encourage all our players to support each other for the good of the team.

See 'ya out in the field!

Niles Glasgow

photo by Bob Nichols, USDA photographer, taken in Edgefield County April 2008.

Notes from the Field



Lowcountry RC&D Enhances Environmental Education at Cypress Gardens

Amy O. Maxwell, SC NRCS Public Affairs Specialist and Outreach Coordinator

A shallow blackwater wetland located twenty-four miles northwest of Charleston, South Carolina, Cypress Gardens is home to a wide array of animal and plant life. It also boasts a butterfly house, walking trails, aquarium, reptile center, and even offers visitors a chance to explore Crocodile Isle. Its beauty is so alluring, that location scouts from major film production companies have opted to shoot movie scenes at the majestic garden. Examples include Mel Gibson's, "The Patriot," "The Notebook," "North and South," and "The Yearling." Managed by Berkeley County, the gardens are also the home of the **J. Chalmers Dial Education Center**. Dial serves on the Lowcountry Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council, where he has been a strong supporter and proponent of environmental education.

"Mr. Dial is a tremendous advocate for environmental education, and his efforts are allowing kids to experience nature and benefit from a hands-on encounter with plant and animal life in this gorgeous setting," said Lowcountry RC&D Coordinator Steve Edwards. At eighty-five years old, Dial is still committed to making a difference in the lives of youth. The Moncks Corner resident does not get out as much as he used to, but he's still determined to make a



Lowcountry RC&D Councilman Chalmers Dial was instrumental in the creation of the education center (named in honor of him) constructed at Cypress Gardens in Moncks Corner, SC.

the popular program. Traci Cook has served as the Education Coordinator for Cypress Gardens for the past ten years. "We offer schools a choice of three subject areas, including the reptile program, the dip-netting program, and the butterfly program." With over 40,000 visitors a year to the facility (and 14,000 students a year participating in the education program) SC's Cypress Gardens is an outdoor classroom for everyone that

visits, whether young or old. "We are an extension of what kids are learning in the classroom, but here at Cypress Gardens, we get to knock down the confines of those classroom walls, and reveal the wonders of nature," remarked Cook.

The Dial Education Center was constructed with help from Lowcountry RC&D's Youth Environmental Education Grants. Edwards says, "These grants were created to promote, enhance, and assist with environmental education programs for youth, and the Lowcountry RC&D is proud to fund and support these invaluable programs, like the one here at Cypress Gardens, and it's great to see that our efforts are exposing so many people to the outdoors."



SC NRCS State Conservationist Niles Glasgow recently visited Cypress Gardens and enjoyed a paddle through the Cypress swamp.

visit, whether young or old. "We are an extension of what kids are learning in the classroom, but here at Cypress Gardens, we get to knock down the confines of those classroom walls, and reveal the wonders of nature," remarked Cook.

The Lowcountry RC&D Council awarded Cypress Gardens two such grants, which assisted in the planning and construction of the education center. In 2007, an official ceremony marked the completion of the building, and also recognized Dial for his dedication. When asked about the history of Cypress Gardens, Dial mentions the impact that 1989's Hurricane Hugo had on the gardens. "Hugo really impacted the place, including wiping out a lot of the Camilla's." In addition, over 12,000 trees were lost, as well as all the buildings. The facility was closed two years for repairs, and the City of Charleston (who owned the garden until it transferred to Berkeley County ownership in 1996) worked diligently to bring the area back to life.

Cypress Gardens was once Dean Hall Plantation, a 3000-acre rice producing plantation on the Cooper River. Granted to Sir Alexander Nesbit of Dean Scotland in 1720, the plantation was operating by 1725. However, by the late 1800's, Dean Hall fell into disrepair, and was then revived by Benjamin Kittredge as a winter retreat and hunting preserve. Kittredge enjoyed duck hunting in the black water impoundments that were remnants left from the days when Dean Hall was a major rice plantation on the

With over 40,000 visitors a year, SC's Cypress Gardens is an outdoor classroom for everyone that visits, whether young or old.

Cooper River. The story goes that one day while out hunting he was inspired by the reflection of a red maple leaf in the mirror-like waters of the swamp. This moved him to plant thousands of azaleas, camellias, dogwoods, wisteria, daffodils and iris along the dikes of the impoundments. From this vision, Kittredge created the 163-acre swamp known as Cypress Gardens. The colorful reflections of the abundant flora and fauna have been enticing visitors from the world over. The gardens are also home to lots of living creatures, including pesky mosquitoes, lurking alligators, and plenty of wood ducks, osprey, herons, egrets, as well as deer, raccoons, and even bobcats.

Through the efforts and hard work of folks like Edwards, Dial, and Cook, Cypress Gardens is a South Carolina treasure which is revealing the joys of nature to thousands of visitors every year.



Chesterfield Conservation Partnership Recognizes Outstanding Stewards of the Land

The Chesterfield Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recognized the Long family (owners and operators of Long Meadow Farms) as the **2007 Conservation Farmer of the Year**. The Long's were recognized for exemplary stewardship efforts which are protecting soil and water quality while at the same time increasing productivity on their farm.

Ray and Jeff Long manage over 3,500 acres of cropland, hayland, and pasture, and they are dedicated to utilizing conservation practices that protect and improve soil, water, air, plant and animal resources. For the past twenty years, the Long's have consulted with the Chesterfield Conservation Partnership to implement a whole farm conservation plan on their operation.

Water quality was a major concern at Long Meadow Farms because it is located within a watershed designated by the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) as impaired. As a result, the Long's are doing all they can to protect water quality, including installing more than 4,000 feet of fence to keep cattle out of Thompson's Creek (which is polluted with sediment and bacteria). To provide their herd with a fresh water source, they installed two wells along with three miles of pipeline and fifteen water tanks.

Pasture quality was also enhanced with cross fencing, thereby allowing the cattle to graze when forage is at the proper height, and only when it provides optimal nutrition. The Long's also produce corn, wheat and soybeans using conservation tillage—a way of growing crops from year to year without disturbing the soil, which in turn reduces soil erosion, lowers use of herbicide and pesticide, facilitates energy efficiency, and ultimately increases profits.

USDA-NRCS District Conservationist Charles Babb has worked closely with the Long's and is impressed with their commitment to conserving resources. "Ray and Jeff are dedicated to farming and to the land which provides them with a living. They are committed to using environmentally-friendly methods, and as a result, the natural resources on their farm, and beyond, are being protected and improved."

The Chesterfield Conservation Partnership salutes the Long's for their stewardship, and hopes that others will follow their lead. Babb says, "It's easy to see the positive effects of conservation on their farm, but what you can't see is that their efforts are also protecting natural resources downstream, and because of that, we all benefit."



Dwight Johnson (far right), Chesterfield SWCD Chairman, presented the Long family with a plaque in appreciation of their efforts to protect soil and water quality on their 3,500-acre farming operation.

NRCS and Chesterfield SWCD Team Up to Improve Wildlife Habitat and Provide Hands-On Learning Experience

NRCS and the Chesterfield SWCD are lending a hand at the Connie Maxwell Children's Home (Adams Campus in Chesterfield County) to improve habitat for wildlife, and also provide a hands-on educational learning opportunity for the school's residents .

In February, the children constructed bird houses which will provide shelter for number of different bird species. NRCS District Conservationist Charles Babb talked to the students about the importance of providing and protecting wildlife



Students at the Connie Maxwell Children's Home built and decorated birdhouses in an effort to improve wildlife habitat on the school's campus.

habitat. Adams Campus Director Vernelle Swinton said, "I am excited to see the children involved not only in a community focused project, but one that will also develop civic-minded responsibility toward the natural environment we all share. Research has proven that when kids learn to care for nature they are less apt to develop socially inappropriate behaviors, and instead are more likely to be socially and emotionally well balanced."

NRCS Soil Conservation Technician Sue Griggs said that several area businesses pitched in to help make the project a success by donating materials to make the bird houses.

Plans to further enhance wildlife habitat at the school include developing a wildflower area, wildlife food plot, garden, and sunflower strip. For more information contact the Chesterfield NRCS office at 843-623-2788, extension 106.

SC's Foothills RC&D Council Honored with Circle of Diamonds Designation

The National Association of Resource Conservation & Development Councils is pleased to announce that the Foothills RC&D Council in South Carolina was awarded a membership in the National Circle of Diamonds Program.

As a member of the Circle, the Foothills RC&D Council has demonstrated its impact on the quality of life within its local area. Circle members are publicly accountable and realize that their accountability directly relates to the Council's structure, process, and outcomes each member of the Circle attains. There are 375 authorized RC&Ds throughout the country and only 96 RC&Ds have been accepted into the Circle of Diamonds.

The Foothills Council, in attaining the Circle of Diamonds level, has shown and promises to continue to show, a unique ability to reach and attain the specific benchmarks set forth in the program guidelines. This mark of excellence shows the honesty, integrity and strong commitment of the Foothills Council to the RC&D mission.

The Foothills RC&D Council is managed by Coordinator Dave Demarest and coverage area includes the counties of Anderson, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg. For more information, contact Demarest at (864) 467-2775, extension 102, or visit www.rcdnet.org/circle.php.



left to right: Foothills RC&D Council Officers Julian Jones, Vice Chair, Susan Guynn, Chair, and Darrell Harrison, Secretary-Treasurer, proudly display the Certificate of Excellence from the National Association of RC&D Councils which designates the Foothills RC&D as an official member of the Circle of Diamonds.

Marion County Small Farmer Returns Home

by Rebecca Harper, Marion NRCS District Conservationist

"I said I was never coming back to work on a farm and now--I'm back." These were the words of Elliott Porter when he returned to Marion County and purchased a farm with his wife Faye eight years ago.

After 38 years away from farm life, the Porter's purchased a small farm with the idea that their family would have a place to enjoy the outdoors. The farm consists of 65 goats, four horses, six dogs, two donkeys, and two ponies.

It's a sincere love of the land that motivated "We bought this farm so our family could learn to love the land and have a place to enjoy it. It is an investment for the future of our family," he explained. Conservation is a way of life for this family, and it allows the Porters to preserve this way of life for future generations who will follow in their footsteps.

"We wanted a place our grandchild could enjoy. This weekend we had a birthday party for our grandson. All the kids have keys to the gates and all of them use the farm during the weekend to enjoy each other and nature. Sometimes we may see too much of each other," joked Mr. Porter.

With the help of assistance for small farmers through NRCS' Environmental Quality Incen-

tives Program (EQIP) Program, the Porter's were able to install a grazing and watering system which allows them to rotate animals to different pastures and more efficiently utilize their grassland. He also recommends the use of electric fencing to contain goats. "We lost numerous goats due to wild dogs several years ago," he explained. Fortunately, they have reestablished the herd, but through the experience, learned that farming is about trial and error. Regardless, they are embracing the farm life with open arms, and despite the hard work, celebrating the fact that it is bringing their family the opportunity to make lifetime memories.



The Porter family of Marion County improved their small farm with assistance through EQIP.

Marion County District Conservationist Presented with SC Cattlemen's Association Award

Marion County NRCS District Conservationist Rebecca Harper was presented with an *Associate of the Year Award* from the SC Cattlemen's Association (SCCA). Harper accepted the award during the Association's annual meeting in Clemson this past April.

The award nomination cited her outstanding efforts to protect soil and water quality in Marion County, including the successful implementation of fourteen livestock-related contracts under EQIP.



SC NRCS' Rebecca Harper (left) was honored by the SC Cattlemen's Association as the Associate of the Year.

East Piedmont RC&D and NRCS Educate Horse Owners

Horse owners and enthusiasts got an education in equine management last month during a series of workshops co-hosted by the East Piedmont RC&D Council, Clemson Extension Service, SC Department of Agriculture, SC Horsemen's Council, and the Richland County Soil & Water Conservation District.

The six-week program featured meetings on Thursday evenings covering a broad range of topics for both new and experienced horse owners. Some of the discussions included nutrition and pasture management, transportation of horses, health and vaccination planning, and assistance available through USDA. SC NRCS Conservation Agronomist Tibor Horvath and Grassland Specialist David Findley both presented information during the workshops.



Attendees of a six-week series on equine management learned about the many different aspects of caring for horses.

Lynchburg Soil to Represent South Carolina at Smithsonian Exhibit

by Charlie Ogg, SC NRCS Soil Survey Party Leader

“Dig It! The Secrets of Soil” will open July 19, 2008, at the *Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History*. The 5,000-square-foot exhibit will increase public awareness about the importance of soil with a focus on conservation and sustainability. The Soil Science Society of America (SSSA), a Madison, Wisconsin, based professional scientific society, is the founding sponsor. The exhibit will cover soil concepts ranging from horizon formation to global element cycles. A core feature of the exhibit will be a display of 54 state soil monoliths – one from each state and U.S. territory. A monolith is a vertical slice, or profile, showcasing the colors, textures, and structures of soil; properties that sustain life on Earth.

A monolith of the Lynchburg Series, found commonly on the Coastal Plain, was contributed by South Carolina. Recently, the soils staff of MLRA Office 14-3, Bishopville, exposed a profile of Lynchburg on a representative landscape for John Kelley, soil scientist in Raleigh, NC, to photograph for the exhibit. Lynchburg soils are used primarily for the production of row and grain crops as well as wildlife habitat. Undoubtedly, Lynchburg soils played an important role in the colonial settlement of South Carolina not only for food and fiber production, but also for the supply of longleaf pines used for lumber, navel stores (tar, pitch, turpentine, and masts), and other uses.

The exhibit will also feature hands-on educational games, multimedia programs, a large-screen theater, and other activities demonstrating to visitors the vital link between soil and the health of mankind, the environment, and our planet. It is hoped the Smithsonian exhibit will spur greater



A monolith of the Lynchburg Series, found commonly on the Coastal Plain, was contributed by South Carolina to the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History.

awareness of the importance of soil in our lives and enhance the attention of soils topics at the primary and secondary educational levels throughout the nation. Be sure to include the Smithsonian exhibit in your summer vacation to Washington, DC. For more information please visit <https://www.soils.org/smithsonian/>.

Final Call to SC Farmers to Be Counted in 2007 Ag Census!

Forms will be accepted until early June

Officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) are calling and knocking on the doors of South Carolina’s farmers and ranchers to remind them that it’s not too late to respond to the 2007 Census of Agriculture.



CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE
YOUR VOICE YOUR FUTURE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY
2007

“Nearly 70% of responses have already been received in South Carolina,” says Rhonda Brandt, Director of the NASS South Carolina Field Office. While the official response deadline was Feb. 4, NASS will continue to accept responses through early June.

“It’s not too late to respond! We want to make sure that every farm and ranch in South Carolina is counted,” adds Brandt. “So, if you have not done so already, please complete and return your 2007 Census of Agriculture form today. By responding, producers are helping themselves, their communities and South Carolina agriculture.”

“The Census is an opportunity for local farmers to demonstrate the importance of South Carolina agriculture and strength of rural America to the rest of the country,” says Brandt. “But, more importantly, Census data is used to affect policy and business decisions that will shape our communities for future generations.”

Whether or not they are actively engaged in agricultural activity, everyone who received a Census of Agriculture form is required by law to respond. Forms can be returned by mail or submitted online. For more information, or for assistance with completing the 2007 Census of Agriculture, call toll-free (888) 424-7828 or visit www.agcensus.usda.gov. The Census is your voice, your future and your responsibility.

SC RC&D Coordinator Gets Creative

by Amy O. Maxwell, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist and Outreach Coordinator

It doesn't take long to realize that Ninety-Six District RC&D Coordinator Elyse Benson is full of life.

Witty, warm, and willing to take on just about any challenge that comes along, Benson has a talent which lots of folks don't know about. Art has been a part of her life since she was a child in Dayton, Ohio. "Growing up, there was an elderly lady I knew and she had a house full of art materials—whether it was paper scraps, or stuff to glue and cut up—it didn't matter. She encouraged and inspired the artist in me, and ever since then, I've been hooked," explains Benson. She says she really got serious about art after reading an article that motivated her to create. "I was flipping through a magazine one day in the late 70's, and there was a feature on elaborately painted eggs. I cut the article out, started collecting materials anywhere I could, and began designing. I still have the article!" she exclaims.

With no formal art training, Benson has experimented with quilt making, furniture painting, creating clothes and jewelry, and has a special knack for turning something old into something quite unique. Many of her materials are discovered at flea markets and other places where she can find one-of-a-kind objects. "Each year, I look forward to a trip to Quartzsite, Arizona, where I buy a lot of the materials, including gems and pearls, that I make my jewelry with," she says. During the months of January and February, over a million visitors flock to this town for one of the world's largest open air flea markets. "I like collecting raw mate-



Elyse Benson, Ninety-Six District RC&D Coordinator.



Benson has a real talent for turning "trash to treasure" using many recycled materials in her artworks.

"I select the furniture I'm going to paint based on the fact that it is oftentimes something someone is going to get rid of."

rials, and items like keys, which can really be transformed into something beautiful." Benson's art could be considered eco-friendly, as she does focus on using recycled materials, which might otherwise end up in a landfill. "I select the furniture I'm going to paint based on the fact that usually it is something someone is going to get rid of."

One of her creations is a quilt that she made for her daughter, Iris. Constructed of scraps collected over a 30-year period (including treasured pieces like old clothes that hold special memories) the quilt was a wedding gift for her daughter who lives in Oregon. "I began collecting wool scraps in the 70's, and it really took lots of material to comprise the quilt. I'm already saving up cotton scraps for my next quilt project." Benson also paints furniture, and says that some of her creations can take up to twenty hours. In fact, the first thing she ever painted after becoming inspired by the magazine article was a chair.

Benson lived in a commune for 22 years in Williams, Oregon. "I had a good deal of free time at the commune, so I spent a lot of time experimenting with my art," she says. "I sewed a lot of my own clothes, and still enjoy doing that."

A graduate of Oregon State University in forest management, Benson worked for the USDA Forest Service in Oregon and Washington State before coming on board with NRCS. Prior to her arrival in South Carolina in 2006, she was an urban planner in the NRCS Las Vegas office. She also enjoys gardening and playing the old-time fiddle.

Benson sells some of her artwork at a local gallery in downtown Greenwood, South Carolina. "I am not interested in actively marketing or promoting my creations. I just do it because I love it." She explains that art is an integral part of her life,

and is something that she can always turn to. "I don't really consider myself an artist—I just feel driven to bring color into my life." Benson is cur-

rently focused on making jewelry. "When I grow up, I'd like to devote most of my time to fiber arts, gardening, and coming up with unique designs." She says it is the creative process that excites her. "Ideas are everywhere, and I'm constantly gathering them from different sources. It can be something I see on a book cover, a menu, in a gallery, or even from watching shows on Home and Garden Television (HGTV). I am looking forward to retirement so that I can devote much of my time to the creative process!" Benson draws a correlation between her love for art and her career as an RC&D Coordinator. "I love my job with RC&D, and it allows for a good measure of creative license." This NRCS employee is taking conservation to the next level. Part conservationist, part artist, Benson is blending two passions to create beautiful works of art, while at the same time, improving the quality of life for the citizens in her RC&D area.



Constructed of scraps collected over a 30-year period (starting in the 1970's), Benson created a quilt and presented it to her daughter as a wedding gift.

Students Go Green at the SC Envirothon

by Joy Sullivan, SC DNR

High school students from across the state converged at the Clemson Institute for Community and Economic Development on May 2nd to compete in the 12th Annual SC Envirothon. Eighteen teams were tested on their knowledge of aquatics, forestry, wildlife, soils, oral presentations and the special topic for 2008: **Recreational Impacts on Natural Resources**.

Donations made to the Envirothon program, grant funds and team registration fees support the program and finance the scholarship

awards offered. At the 2008 competition Spartanburg High School Teams B and A won the first and second place awards of \$500 for each student and coach, and \$250 for each student and coach respectively. Third place went to the Strom Thurmond FFA team at \$125 per student and coach, and fourth place was taken by the Calhoun Falls DNR team at \$75 per student and coach.

Not only is the Envirothon academically challenging to the students, it instills a conservation ethic that the students will carry with them the rest of their lives. The Envirothon Steering Committee, partnership staff and volunteers work extremely hard to provide this opportunity to the high school students of this state. If you would like to learn more about the Envirothon and how to support this conservation oriented, team-building competition, please visit the website www.dnr.sc.gov/education/Envirothon.

You can support the Envirothon simply by signing a 'Watch Your Water' Pledge (available online) and receive a handy key chain as a reminder of your commitment to safeguard our state's surface and groundwater supplies! General support for the Envirothon comes from SC SWCD's, SCACD, SWCS-SC Chapter, USDA-NRCS, SCDNR, Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund, SC Forestry Commission, SC State Parks, Canon Envirothon, Lexington Water and Sewer Authority, Richland County Farm Bureau and private individuals.



Spartanburg High's Team B (coached by Rob Wilder, far right) took the 1st place prize at the 2008 SC Envirothon. The team will compete in the national Envirothon competition this July in Flagstaff, Arizona.

SC NRCS District Conservationists On the Move with Mobile Offices

Early one April morning, Florence NRCS District Conservationist Matthew Anderson left the USDA Service Center parking lot in his government truck with the satisfying feeling that he had *everything* he needed with him to complete a days work. From his tablet computer with *Internet* access as well as USDA server access, to Geographic Information System (GIS) technology, a printer, and cell phone, Anderson hit the pavement with a world of technology right at his fingertips. The concept of mobile computing is catching on in both government and corporate entities, and NRCS is traveling the same road as the agency strives to balance the demands of technology with outstanding customer service. "Mobile offices will allow our staff to escape the confines of office walls, and get out into the field where they can work directly with customers," explained State Technology Coordinator Kellee Melton. Mobile offices enhance the mission of NRCS by ensuring that our conservationists have the necessary tools to assist landowners—when and where they really need it.

SC NRCS District Conservationist Rebecca Harper in Marion County is also testing a mobile office unit. "We have used the mobile GPS technology to plan practices, print out maps in the field, certify practices, and then return to the field office with the landowner's signature," she explained." Harper emphasized the need for NRCS employees today to manage their time carefully, and says that mobile offices will help them do just that. Anderson agrees, but does not think mobile offices are the end of USDA Service Centers. "There are still elements of our work that require us to spend time in the office, but having all this technology in the truck is helping me manage my time better and get more work done." As the concept catches on, more NRCS employees will have immediate access to natural resource data such as soils, aerial photography, and Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) information, all from the convenience of their government vehicles. But, both Harper and Anderson agree that improvements are needed before the mobile office concept is rolled out statewide. Harper recommends incorporating scanning capabilities, as well as a way to capture electronic signatures, and both recommended larger, brighter screens on the laptops.



Above: Florence NRCS District Conservationist Matthew Anderson works with State Technology Coordinator Kellee Melton to test his mobile office unit.



Right: Marion NRCS Soil Conservation Technician Brad Poston prepares a conservation plan from the convenience of his NRCS truck.

SC's 1st Wholesale Auction Produce Market Opens



SC NRCS State Conservationist Niles Glasgow (3rd from left) participated in a ribbon cutting on May 15th to celebrate the grand opening of SC's first wholesale farmer's auction market in Jasper County.

For more information, visit www.jaspercountysc.org/secondary.aspx?pageID=199

Edisto-Savannah RC&D Participates in Purple Martin Festival

On May 29, 2008, in Calhoun County, SC, the Edisto-Savannah RC&D took part in the fun at the annual Purple Martin Festival in St. Matthews. RC&D Coordinator Karen Brady said, "We took part in this year's festival to provide natural resource education focusing specifically on the food and habitat needs of martins."

The RC&D exhibit treated kids to a gourd decorating activity, and also offered bookmarks about Purple Martins. Everyone who came by the RC&D booth received seeds and growing instructions to produce their own gourds. "This was a great way to educate young and old on the importance of taking care of wildlife, and it is also great to get out into the community with others that also have an appreciation and respect for natural resources."



Kids attending the 2008 Purple Martin Festival enjoyed decorating gourds (which provide ideal habitat for the birds) at the Edisto-Savannah RC&D booth.

Welcome New Employees!

Corry Calderone is a Soil Scientist in the Piedmont Soil Survey Office in Greenwood. She is a December 2007 graduate of West Virginia University, with dual degrees in Agronomy and Agriculture Business Management. She is from Southwest Pennsylvania, and was deemed the 1st and 2nd place finisher in the 2006 and 2007 National Soil Judging Competition. She was a STEP (student temporary employment program) student with the USDA-NRCS-National Geospatial Development Center from May 2006 until December 2007. **Welcome to SC NRCS Corry!**



Corry Calderone is a new soil scientist in the Greenwood Field Office.

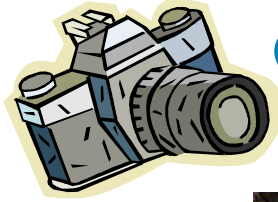
Rick Colson is the new Civil Engineering Technician in the Colleton Field Office. He started his career with the Federal Government in 1979 working with the Army Corps of Engineers, where he was fortunate enough to take part in the design and construction of the jetty's in Myrtle Beach and Little River, as well as the rediversion project at Santee, SC.

Colson then went to the Department of Defense at the Charleston Naval Shipyard as a Naval Architect providing support and direction on submarine inspections and later moved over to Dredge Management where he did surveys on dredge material and dike management.



In 1993, due to closure of the shipyard, he accepted a position with the Department of Justice as an Engineering Technician until 2007. **Welcome to SC NRCS Rick!**

Rick Colson is a new civil engineering technician in the Walterboro Field Office.



Conservation Photo Contest Winners



Tiny Treasure, taken by Soil Scientist Emory Holsonback in Clinton, SC.



Little Pee Dee River, taken by Soil Scientist Ron Morton.



Gator at Cypress Gardens, taken by Casey Blackmon, Clarendon County SWCD Manager.



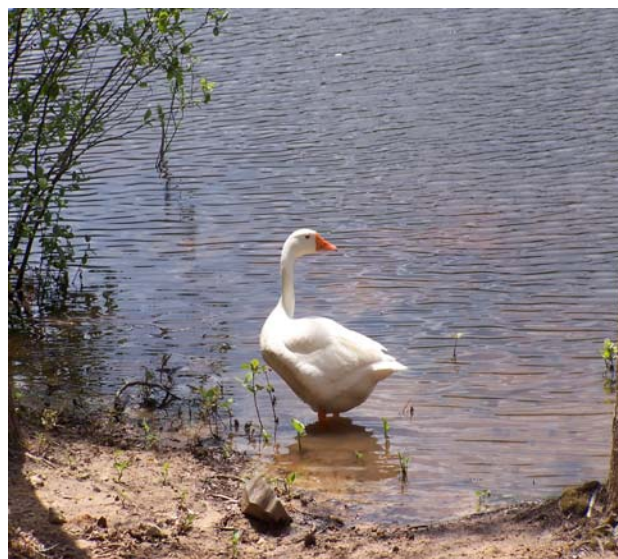
Field of Flowers, taken by Soil Scientist Caleb Gulley.



Rain Drops, taken by Soil Conservation Technician Sue Griggs.



Red Buds, taken by
Soil Conservation Technician
Sue Griggs.



Wading Duck, taken by
Amanda Roberts, Lancaster SWCD
Manager.



Sparkleberry Swamp taken by
Soil Scientist Caleb Gulley.



Ankole-Watusi Cattle, taken by SC NRCS State
Engineer Phillip Rippe at Disney's Animal Kingdom.



One thirsty conservationist!!!!

PERSONNEL NEWS

New Employees

Niles Glasgow was selected as the SC NRCS State Conservationist, GS-0301-15, in the State Office, effective January 6, 2008.

Beverly Alexander was selected as an Office Automation Assistant, GS-0326-05, in the State Office, effective January 6, 2008.

Corry Calderone was selected as a Soil Scientist Career Intern, GS-0470-07, in the Greenwood Field Office, effective January 20, 2008.

Tibor Horvath was selected as a Conservation Agronomist, GS-0471-12, in the State Office, effective January 6, 2008.

Promotions

Lakeisha Hill was promoted to District Conservationist, GS-0457-11, in the York Field Office, effective February 17, 2008.

Rafael Mendez was promoted to District Conservationist, GS-0457-11, in the Lexington Field Office, effective February 17, 2008.

Michael Sigmon was promoted to District Conservationist, GS-0457-11, in the St. Matthews Field Office, effective March 2, 2008.

Jennifer M. Sarvis was converted to Career Conditional Soil Conservationist, GS-0457-07, in the Greenville Field Office, effective January 6, 2008.

Resignation

Larry Coburn, Soil Conservation Technician in the Aiken Field Office, resigned effective December 11, 2007.

Shirley Easter, Budget Analyst in the State Office, was promoted to the United States Attorney's Office effective January 05, 2008.

Christina Lucia, Student in the Walhalla Field Office, resigned effective December 20, 2007.

Darla Simons, Soil Conservationist in the Edgefield Office, resigned effective December 18, 2007.

Transfers

Jeffrey Barrington, Soil Conservationist in Edgefield Office, transferred to the Abbeville Field Office effective February 3, 2008.

Retirement

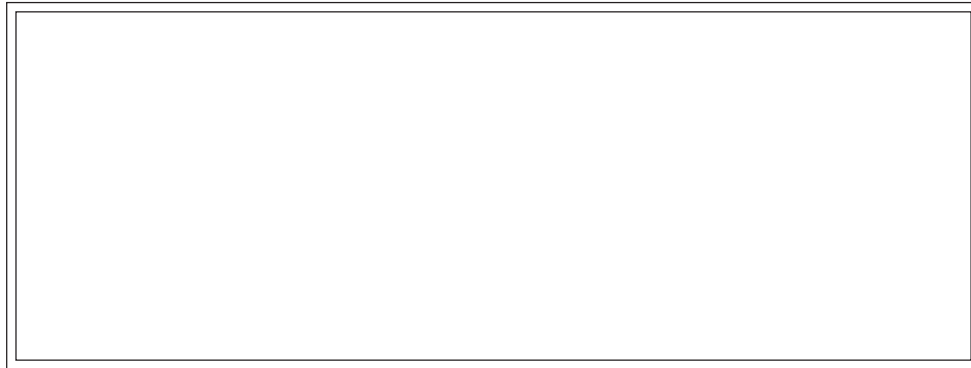
Walter W. Douglas, SC NRCS State Conservationist, GS-0301-15, in the State Office, retired effective January 2, 2008.

Curtis Hobbs, Agricultural Economist, GS-0110-12, in the State Office, retired effective December 31, 2007.

James Williams, Assistant State Conservationist, GS-0457, in the State Office, retired effective December 31, 2007.



This month NRCS staff and conservation partners from across the state of South Carolina enjoyed an outstanding soils training course organized by State Soil Scientist Pam Thomas.



FIRST CLASS

**USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
1835 Assembly Street, Room 950
Columbia, South Carolina 29201**

Visit us on the web at www.sc.nrcs.usda.gov

NRCS Public Affairs Team

**Editor: Amy O. Maxwell, State Public Affairs
Specialist and Outreach Coordinator**

**Assistant Editor: Sabrenna B. Bryant, Public
Affairs Assistant**

**Editorial Assistant: Beverly Alexander,
Administrative Assistant**

**Please send comments and suggestions
to:**

USDA-NRCS

EDITOR-Current Developments

1835 Assembly Street, Room 950

Columbia, SC 29201

*Current Developments is published
quarterly.*

Non-Discrimination Statement

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.