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South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts scacd.org

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2020 SCACD

Annual Partnership Conference

Marriott on Lockwood - Charleston hosts event

After meeting for several years in Columbia, the SC Conservation Partnership returned to Charleston for the 2020 Annual Conference. Over 250 district commissioners, employees, DNR and NRCS staff, and friends were in attendance.

The conference began with a luncheon meeting of the SC Soil and Water Conservation Society, followed by the SCACD Policy Committee meetings. The next day featured a keynote speech by new DNR Director Robert Boyles who focused on coastal conservation issues, followed by presentations and discussion on the issues from experts from Conservation Districts, NRCS, DNR, Clemson Extension, and the SC Conservation Bank. The afternoon session topics included Clemson Extension Water Programs and Long Leaf Alliance Programs. In spite of the rainy weather, the day concluded with a tour of the DNR Marine Research Center at Fort Johnson. That evening featured the Partnership Awards Dinner including an inspirational message from Mr. Kirby Player with Clemson's Environmental, Agriculture and Forestry Institute.

Wednesday concluded with an update from NACD representatives, Area Caucus Meetings, and the Annual Business Meeting, where the following officers were elected for 2-year terms:

2020-2022 SCACD Officers

President, Jeff Wilson, Chester
Vice President, Ben Setzler, Newberry
Secretary, Barbara Padgett, Lexington
Treasurer, Diane Edwins, Berkeley
NACD Board, Sterling Sadler, Florence
Past President, Kenny Mullis, Richland

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Message from SCACD's President Jeff Wilson

My fellow conservationists, April 2, 2020

I would like to thank all of you for the opportunity of serving as your SCACD President for the next two years. Since our recent conference in Charleston, nearly every aspect of our lives has been drastically altered as our nation wrestles with the threat of the COVID-19 Virus. How do we continue on with our important work of conservation even as we face these foreboding circumstances? We need only to look back to the events which led to the birth of our organization to realize that even in the worst of times, positive developments can result. The conservation movement was rooted in an unforeseen disaster commonly known as the Dust Bowl. This catastrophic event caused millions of Americans to lose their livelihood and their dreams as the soil was blown off their land. Most of the suffering occurred between 1930 and 1936; by 1937 the first Soil and Water Conservation District had been established. It had been created by leaders who were visionaries and had new-found scientific understanding. The fruits of their efforts are all around us to this day. As we now face an invisible foe, let us be mindful of the perseverance and determination of our founders who moved forward despite harsh adversities.

It would seem that everything in our conservation network has been radically changed within the last few weeks: our offices are closed to the public; many employees are working from home; there is very little, if any, face-to-face contact with our clients; work hours have been reduced. These measures have been necessary and wise to protect our employees and our clients. Nevertheless, despite these adjustments, our dedicated personnel and commissioners have found ways to serve those who depend on our programs. These extraordinary efforts are not unnoticed and are much appreciated. As we look forward to our return to normal times, we anticipate that we may see new opportunities to pursue our conservation goals for our state. As always, the SCACD exists to help the local districts in any way possible. We intend to be a valuable resource when questions or needs arise, so do not hesitate to contact us at any time.

May God watch over you and bless you in these trying times,
Jeff Wilson, President SCACD

Area Directors elected by each caucus

East Piedmont, Joe Ghent, Lancaster
Edisto-Savannah Valley, Yvonne Kling, Aiken
Pee Dee, Bryant Sansbury, Florence
West Piedmont, Michael Stewart, Greenville

SCACD Policies Adopted during Conference

The Standing Committees of SCACD meet annually to study issues and make policy recommendations to the district commissioners for their consideration and approval. The committees met during the 2020 Annual Conference. The Policy Positions were approved by the commissioners during the Annual Business meeting and were distributed to the district offices via email.

Commissioners and staff are encouraged to review the action items for 2020.

NACD Soil Health Champions

South Carolina now has four certified Soil Health Champions in the NACD Soil Health Champions Network! The Network is made up of more than 240 farmers, ranchers and woodland owners from across the nation who practice good soil health management on their operations and promote the use of soil health management systems in their communities. The mission of the Network is to increase the adoption of soil health systems by farmers and other land owners nationwide.

Check out the SC Champions at:

<https://www.nacdnet.org/soil-champs/southeast/>

District Commissioner Election

One Commissioner position on each district board will be on the ballot for election in the November 3, 2020 General Election. DNR has sent District offices instructions on the process to place a name on the ballot. Questions regarding elections should be directed to Tyler Brown at DNR.

Did YOU know about these FREE Educational Resources?!

SCACD has pop-up banners (set of 3) available to districts to use at local events to educate the public on districts' purpose and programs. To borrow a banner set, reach out to one of the following four people – Chanda Cooper with Richland District, Kirsten Robertson with Greenville District, Tina Blum with SCACD, or Brooke Myres with SCDNR.

Also, the SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition (SCFGLC) has available rainfall simulators to educate private landowners and the public about soil health and water quality through workshops and pasture walks. Three large trailerized simulators and tabletop models are available for smaller audiences and venues. The simulators demonstrate the importance in good ground cover by its effect on the soil's ability to retain water from rainfall. For more information on the simulators, contact the SCFGLC at SCForage.org



ABOVE: SCACD District banners and tabletop rainfall simulator display



ABOVE: Tabletop rainfall simulator

More Free Information...

NACD offers publications through their weekly *eResource* subscription service at no cost. Districts should subscribe to stay up to date. To find out more and subscribe, go to: <https://www.nacdnet.org/news-and-events/publications/>

SC Districts receive NACD Technical Assistance Funds

Five SC Districts approved for funding

In 2018, the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) offered cooperative agreements to provide funding to Districts to hire staff to enhance technical assistance related to EQIP contracts. Five Districts in South Carolina received funding the first year, providing assistance on 636 EQIP contracts covering over 62,000 acres.

In 2019, the program was expanded to include technical assistance on CSP contracts in addition to EQIP. Districts participating include Barnwell, Clarendon, Horry, Orangeburg and Williamsburg with the total agreement amount statewide of \$179,000.

A third year of grants will be offered in 2020 to include technical assistance on EQIP, CSP and conservation planning. Major funding is provided through NRCS with a 20% match from each district.



Ben Setzler, SCACD's current Vice President and Newberry Soil and Water Conservation District's Chairman, along with Brooke Myres, SCDNR-Conservation District's Program Development Manager, have been accepted as participants in the first cohort of South Carolina's Palmetto Leadership Program for the Environment, Agriculture and Forestry (P-LEAF)! P-LEAF is a two-year intensive academic, experiential learning and networking curriculum designed to facilitate personal and professional growth and success, while sharpening character and leadership skills for each participant. P-LEAF is housed and directed by Clemson University's College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences (CAFLS) and Public Service and Agriculture Division in conjunction with key program related cooperating partners.

SCACD Contribution Agreements to Districts - Successful and Growing!

In 2016, SCACD entered into a Contribution Agreement with NRCS to coordinate technical and administrative assistance on EQIP contracts. In that first year, SCACD was allocated \$300,000 for this program, with \$250,000 available to Districts. The year began with over \$267,000 in requests with 12 Districts participating, eventually growing to include 15 Districts.

In FY 2018, with another allocation of \$250,000 available to Districts, SCACD received requests in the amount of \$314,180, beginning the year with 14 Districts and growing to 19 Districts. FY 2019's allocation, again at \$250,000, was 100,000 short of meeting the requested need of Districts at \$351,240.

SCACD's tracking of requests and management of the program prompted NRCS to offer an additional \$100,000 for FY 2020. The Contribution Agreement supports local staff in the District offices and has grown from supporting 12 employees in 2016 to over 30 in 2020!

This program has made significant strides in tackling a huge EQIP workload, and SCACD is grateful to our partners for their cooperation and support! For more information, contact SCACD Agreement Coordinator, Joy Sullivan at SullivanJ@dnr.sc.gov

State Water Plan Update

SCDNR is happy to announce that the Edisto River Basin Council for the State Water Plan has been selected and that two of the selected individuals for the Council include Laura Bagwell, Aiken District Commissioner, and Johny Haralson, Barnwell District Commissioner. These two were chosen as District Representatives for the Council. Jeremy Walther, Aiken District Associate Commissioner, was also chosen to serve on the Council. The Edisto River Basin Council plans to begin convening after COVID-19 concerns and restrictions have passed. This will be a 2-year planning process. We appreciate these Conservation District Representatives making the commitment to be a part of the State Water Plan Process. Stay tuned for other river basin council announcements in the near future.

SCACD Overview

The South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts (SCACD) represents the state's 46 soil and water Conservation Districts. Its programs and activities are aimed at advancing the resource conservation cause of the Districts and the cooperating landowners, land users and citizens whom they serve in their communities. Since 1937, Conservation Districts have worked to promote and establish the wise use of soil and water resources on the land.

The mission of SCACD is:

- To represent Conservation Districts as their voice on natural resource issues
- To provide useful information to Conservation Districts
- To offer needed services to Conservation Districts

Benefits of SCACD

- Monitors and supports Federal and State Legislation pertinent to conservation districts
- Supports and monitors State Funding Aid to Conservation Districts State budget process.
- Coordinates and supports membership meetings:
 - SC Conservation Partnership Annual Conference, Business Meeting and Policy Planning meetings
 - Southeast NACD Region meeting
- Represents S.C. on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)
- Conducts regular meetings of the SCACD Executive Board (Officers , Area Directors, and SCACD staff)
- Participates in all four Area Meetings and conservation district meetings
- Initiates continuous dialogue and coordination with major partners NRCS and DNR
- Participates on with the SC Conservation Districts Foundation Board of Trustees

Mobile Irrigation Project

The Mobile Irrigation Lab (MIL) is a locally-led water conservation project involving multiple partners across all levels of governmental and private entities. The Aiken Conservation District is leading the initiative through fostering funding partners and serving as the project manager. The MIL pilot project will provide water and energy audits on 24 agricultural center pivot irrigation systems throughout the state of South Carolina at no charge to the agricultural producer. The goal of this project is to determine the feasibility of a statewide MIL program that can be implemented throughout South Carolina to agricultural producers at no cost.

“We were approached by a local farmer who brought the idea of establishing a Mobile Irrigation Laboratory in the state of South Carolina” said Yvonne Kling, Aiken District Chair. “We felt that as a Soil and Water Conservation District, we had to make the effort to establish this MIL pilot project. We also wanted to ensure that this came at no cost to agricultural producers who were willing to participate.”

For more information, please contact 803-649-4221 ext 3 or email: MILpilot.sc@gmail.com

SCACD Staff

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Upcoming Events

August 9-11, 2020 – NACD Southeast Region Annual Meeting, The Lodge at Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, AL

September 14-15, 2020 – SC Conservation Districts Employees Association Annual Training, Beaufort, SC

February 6-10, 2021 - 75th NACD Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA

February 22-24, 2021 - 80th Annual SC Conservation Partnership Conference, Charleston, SC