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# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2019



## Our Mission

Our mission is to protect natural resources through education, programs, and cooperative efforts with partner organizations to achieve common goals for the benefit of all citizens of Greenville County with efforts in promoting:

**Urban and Land Use Planning | Conservation Awareness | Sustainable Agriculture**

## District Commissioners



**Bruce Countryman**  
Chairman



**Brett Tankersley**  
Vice-Chairman



**Danny Howard**  
Treasurer



**Dr. Robert Hanley**  
Commissioner



**Michael Stewart**  
Commissioner

## A Message from the Chairman

The Greenville County SWCD made great strides in education and in putting conservation dollars on the ground this year. Our local educational outreach included the Seed Library in partnership with the Greenville Library System. Free organic seeds were well-received, especially coupled with education on best gardening practices through monthly workshops. We often rely on donations from our generous public utilities and this year was no exception. Duke Energy recognized the worth of the Seed Library by granting \$8000 to expand the program via pop-up seed libraries that travel with the Bookmobile on select dates across the County. This activity is a result of our District sticking to our core belief in strategic partnerships. We are thankful for the local organizations who have stepped up as they see the value of how we can work together as stakeholders in our community.

The depth of staff's knowledge was showcased as they spoke at multiple national conferences this the year. Both commissioners and staff received state and national awards.

On behalf of the other commissioners I was pleased to nominate Dr Robert Hanley who was then appointed by SCDNR as a commissioner this year. In addition, Margaret Harrison was voted in as an Associate Commissioner. We are happy to have them both working with us to guide our programming.

In more on-the-ground conservation news, the district helped stabilize the banks of the Middle Saluda River where erosion was endangering a county road. The required rock was so large that it required special dump trucks and we're glad to report that the bank is holding, even through major storm events.

Farmers who have implemented conservation practices with the assistance of federal Environmental Quality Improvement Project (EQIP) funds have benefited our watersheds with projects such as fencing to restrict stream access by cattle. Several field days/workshops were presented for farmers as well. A high priority is to share the news about Soil Health, and we are impressed by the farmers implementing soil health practices. Another one of our partnership projects is supporting the Save Our Saluda 319 grant effort to reduce sediment in the North Saluda River. We are working with them to obtain machinery crucial to growing food and growing soil at the same time. This machinery will be available for farmers to rent in the future.

Just as a farmer's work is never done we look forward to each opportunity to further assist our community. Please know that you are welcome to any Commission meeting (usually held on the second Tuesday of the month). You can also keep up with us on our social media pages as well as our District website.

Yours in conservation,

*Bruce Countryman*  
Chair

# From Our District Manager



Hello friends!

Every year I feel like we've had our most productive year yet, and this year is no exception. With a progressive commission and self-motivated staff, we have made great strides in conservation in Greenville County (and beyond) again this year. Our commissioners serve on 35 local and national conservation/ag related advisory boards (no, that's not a typographical error!) and our staff serves on 12. We are truly leaders in conservation.

The District has educated hundreds of thousands in Greenville County this year, and millions regionally and nationally if you include all of the municipalities that have adopted our Poop Fairy as outreach in North America and folks who have heard our presentations at national conferences and webinars. Our education may be as simple as answering a question or as comprehensive as immersing a child in nature at our Wet and Wild Camp for a full week.

Our partnerships provide synergy and have led to exciting projects like the Seed Library, March Into Earth Day event, and hosting several field days for farmers with the SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition. For farmers, we partnered effectively with NRCS to provide Federal funding in the form of cost-share to local farmers and provided several educational opportunities via conferences and field days. As an engineering resource, we assisted the County with a streambank restoration on the Middle Saluda River that would have destroyed a road, provided technical advice on erosion to about 100 individuals, and maintained 9 Federally built dams that improve both water quality and control flooding downstream.

Our days are happy and hectic, and we are proud to be a part of this organization. If we can help you, please let us know.

*Kirsten Robertson*

Manager

## Meet Our New Associate Commissioner

Margaret Harrison, of Pelzer, SC, is retired after a 35-year career as a research administrator with Mitsubishi Polyester Films of Greer, South Carolina. Now a full-time farmer, she is the co-owner of H & G Produce, a family-owned farm established in 2012 that provides a variety of vegetables to the public and to local businesses.

A passionate advocate for local farmers and agricultural issues, Margaret currently serves as the co-chair of the Farm Bureau Women Committee and as an advisor for the USDA FSA committee of Greenville/Pickens County. Farm Bureau Women coordinate agricultural education and promotional activities at county, state, and national levels. Their work includes supporting important family and agricultural legislation, youth programs, educational activities, leadership development and commodity promotions.

Margaret is also currently serving as a member of the Upstate Forever Land Trust Committee. She is married to Bryant Harrison, and they have four daughters and six grandchildren. She is a long-time member of St. Matthews Baptist Church, where she serves as president of the deacons' wives. GCSWCD is thrilled to welcome her as an Associate Commissioner.



# 2019 Education Report

## In Greenville County and Beyond...

- Over 16,000 members of the public stopped by educational booths at Party for the Planet, Tails and Trails, and Earth Day Fairs at local businesses.
- Education Staff made monthly appearances on WSPA's Your Carolina, teaching about conservation issues, stormwater pollutants, and our campaigns.
- Fifth grade students throughout Greenville County learned about stormwater and watersheds via our 3D Watershed Model demonstrations.
- With GCSWCD assistance, Slater-Marietta Elementary School continued their Trout in the Classroom project and trout release.
- Our annual essay contest had 216 entries from 10 schools. Twelve winners were chosen from grades 5 through 8.
- 40 Scoop the Poop signs, 1000+ pet waste bag key chains, and over 1000 rack cards were distributed to various entities at the request of county citizens.
- County drivers took notice of our wrapped Suburban with promotional messaging featuring the Reedy River Water Quality Group outreach campaigns, which impacted approximately 180,760 citizens. More importantly, this was a conversation starter everywhere we went. We were able to have in-depth one-on-one conversations about our campaigns.
- GCSWCD was a presence at local farmers markets this year, with booths in Taylors, Travelers Rest, Downtown Greenville, and at Swamp Rabbit Cafe. Stormwater and conservation information was distributed to all.
- Our largest event this year was the iMAGINE Upstate festival for STEM/STEAM education promotion. Attendance was over 12,000 on one day.
- US outreach totals over 14.4 million people. Our Poop Fairy campaign is now seen in 23 states.

## By the Numbers

4

3,022,801

Educational Outreach in 2018 (# people reached)

16,557

Visitors to Educational Booths and Displays

3,125

Pet Waste Bags/Stations

\$185,468

Cost Share Funds Obligated through NRCS to Farmers

47

Trout Released

78,209

Student Participation

# Education Programs

## EDUCATION CONTESTS FOR GREENVILLE COUNTY STUDENTS

### PHOTOGRAPHY/DIGITAL MEDIA CONTEST (fall)

**Open to students K-12**

Each year, our contest will have a different conservation related theme. It is up to the student to interpret the theme in a way that they can explain in three to four sentences with their submission.

**\$150 for First Place, \$100, Second Place, \$50 Third Place**

For more information, visit [www.GreenvilleSoilandWater.com](http://www.GreenvilleSoilandWater.com)

### ESSAY CONTEST (spring)

**Open to students 5th-8th Grades**

**Entry Deadline March 12, 2020**

The 2020 essay contest theme: **Where Would We Bee Without Pollinators**

**Three \$50 prizes for each grade with a special gift for teachers of winners.**

For more information, visit [www.GreenvilleSoilandWater.com](http://www.GreenvilleSoilandWater.com)

## EDUCATION PROGRAMS

**All education programs are adjusted for the appropriate age group and are great for students, camps, homeowner associations or other interested groups.**

### STORMWATER/WATER CYCLE/POLLUTANTS

Covers the whole water cycle, definition of stormwater, and what can pollute our waterways. Participants learn what they can do to keep our rivers, lakes, and streams clean for future generations! Meets 4th grade specific SC standards, but can be modified for any grade level.

### WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

Students love to learn about our local waterways with our interactive watershed model! This program meets SC standards for 5th grade, but can be modified for grades 6-12.

### CONNECTING KIDS TO THE LAND

How did that apple get into your lunch box? Where does our food come from? Participants learn food facts, what crops are grown in SC, agriculture basics, and how familiar food items are created. They'll learn what foods come from animals or from plants and what sustainability means to our food supply.

### LET'S GET WET!

(No participants will actually get wet!) Using activities from the award winning Project WET curriculum, students will learn about all things water through activity based interdisciplinary and interactive activities - from watersheds and water quality to human use and conservation.

### LET'S GO WILD!

Participants learn about wildlife with Project WILD activities. Project WILD is one of the most widely-used conservation and environmental education programs. Actual fur pelts and skulls and scat replicas facilitate questions and answers. Participants learn about local animals with the help of educational puppets.

# Community Corner

Article by Shelby Cohen, GCSWCD Community Relations Coordinator

How does pollution make its way to our rivers, lakes & streams? We spent 2019 helping Greenvillians explore the answer to this question – stormwater carries it there!



Historically, factories, waste treatment plants, and other industries had a lot to do with the health of our waterways. This type of pollution is called point-source and has been regulated since the Clean Water Act was enacted in 1972. Now the real issue is non-point source pollution, which comes from the small, everyday choices people make like littering, leaving pet waste on the ground, over-fertilizing lawns, or improperly disposing of auto fluids.

The seemingly small choices we make have big, long-term impacts on the world around us. With the help of our partners, Greenville Soil & Water was able to reach over three million people in 2019. Here are some of the year's highlights, and what's up next:

## Stormwater Education

In 2019, we continued our stormwater education to remind individuals that we can all reduce our impact on natural resources by adopting better practices. We continued using our one-of-a-kind Greenville County Watershed Model at schools and community events to demonstrate how water flows across the land during rain events, picking up pollutants and depositing them in rivers, lakes, and streams. At iMAGINE Upstate, we showcased our new Stormwater Jenga sets, which explore water-related terminology.

On-site stormwater management is an important tool — whether it's a rain barrel, a rain garden, or strategically placing native plants. On top of offering free technical advice to residents with drainage or erosion issues, we teamed up with Lake Conestee Nature Park to host a Rainbarrel Workshop. Eighteen attendees went home with rain barrels and a strong understanding of why it's important to recycle rain and manage stormwater on-site. In 2020, we already have two more workshops planned.

## Youth Development

In 2019, youth outreach programs were held in classrooms, and in informal education settings, such as parks and community centers. Almost 80,000 kids participated in our youth outreach programs this year, which included stormwater activities, vermicomposting after-school programs, and a number of summer camps at community centers across the county.

This year was also our 5th annual **Wet & Wild Summer Camp**, which is a partnership with Clemson Extension's 4-H program. This week-long, outdoor camp was attended by 30 campers ages 6-12 who learned about watersheds, water quality, human impacts on the environment, and wildlife. We were lucky enough to host the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources for a fun day of fishing, as well as a 4H Extension Agent who spent the day teaching our campers wilderness survival skills.

To learn more and register for Wet & Wild camp, visit [www.wetandwild.camp](http://www.wetandwild.camp).

## March Into Earth Day

In 2019, we continued the new March Into Earth Day tradition with the help of the County's Litter Prevention Coordinator, Solid Waste department, and Keep Greenville County Beautiful. At March Into Earth Day, we are able to celebrate local organizations that work hard to keep the "green" in Greenville. Over 350 County employees stopped by to discover some 30 County departments and local organizations committed to protecting our environment – and quite a few folks walked away with native plants and door prizes that includes a raised bed garden kit, compost, and rain barrels.

**Mark your calendars!** This year, *March Into Earth Day* is open to the public and will be held on March 17th, 2020 from 10AM-2PM at County Square (301 University Ridge, Suite 400).

## Soil Health

We spend a lot of time teaching Greenville how to protect and restore soil — whether it's on farms, in gardens, or lawns. In 2019, we took our rainfall simulator to events around the County to help residents understand the relationship between healthy soil, clean water, and nutritious food. Our rainfall simulator shows how healthy soil has the ability to capture and store stormwater, while unhealthy, bare soil leads to runoff.

What can you do to protect our soil? Start by following the four soil health principles in your own backyard.

*Diversity is key* — Plant a diverse range of grasses, plants, and trees to increase diversity in the soil. A quarter of the planet's biodiversity lives there – and we have to keep all of their appetites in mind. Don't know where to start? Consider adding native plants like Black-eyed Susans or Coneflowers to your yard.

*Please don't disturb* — Disturb your soil as little as possible. Every time we disturb the topsoil, it loses vital nutrients, as well as its ability to store water and carbon. If you are a gardener, consider going no-till. Likewise, avoid adding yard chemicals like fertilizers and pesticides.

*Keep things growing* — Keep living roots in the soil year-round. Cover crops like Austrian Winter Peas and Crimson Clover are your soil's best friends. They help keep your soil in place while also suppressing weeds and "feeding" the soil with nutrients.

*Keep it covered* – Just like humans need protection from the sun during summer months and warm clothes during winter ones, soil needs to be protected from the elements. Bare soil is often carried away by wind and stormwater. Keep it covered with native plants to keep it in place. In shady areas where plants won't grow, spread three to four inches of mulch.

## Conferences, Committees and Workshops

We continue to serve as State Coordinators for Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) and attended the 2019 USA Coordinator's conference in Tucson, Arizona. In 2019, we joined Project Learning Tree (PLT) and Project WILD to host another Triple Facilitator workshop in Columbia. We also hosted 13 WET workshops throughout the year.

Staff presented at national and regional conferences in 2019. Presentations included "Greenville's Seed Library" at the South Carolina District Employee Association's annual conference and webinars for the National Association of Conservation Districts on our stormwater games and the Reedy River Water Quality Group partnership. Kirsten presented at the American Forage and Grassland Council conference, National Grazing Lands Coalition conference, and National Wildlife Federation's America's Grasslands Conference highlighting soil health, rotational grazing, and biodiversity initiatives on her farm.

# Affiliate Membership

Since 1971, citizens, businesses, and educational institutions in Greenville County have donated tax deductible gifts to the Greenville County Soil & Water Conservation District. The District uses affiliate member funds to provide a wide variety of environmental education programs, demonstration projects, and outdoor learning opportunities.

District education programs reach students of all ages, classroom teachers, informal educators, pet owners, homeowners, farmers, contractors, members of the public, and elected officials.

We need your help to continue these important programs!

- Awards for Greenville County students for photographs, science projects, and essays written on natural resource conservation topics
- Interactive exhibit displays at area events, fairs, and Earth Day celebrations
- Funding for mini-grants to schools and organizations for conservation education

## A Heartfelt Thank You To Our Affiliate Members

### Partners

South Carolina DNR

### Leaders

Clemson University

Kilwins

ReWa - Renewable Water Resources

### Conservationist

Strange Brothers Grading Company, Inc.

### Educators

Darrell & Georgia Harrison

### Patrons

Caliber Engineering Consultants, LLC

Green Lakes Properties

Darrell & Georgia Harrison

Mountain View Farm

Nature Walk Photography

Pecan Dale Farmstead

Padula's Plants and Gardens

Stratus Building Solutions

### Supporters

Bob & Claire Bradbery

Buck Outdoors

Commerce Club

Sean & Satrena Dogan

Dr. David L. Hargett

Howard Farms

Hyatt Regency Greenville

Laurens Electric

Dr. Walter McPhail

John W. Parris

Paul Wickensimer

### Contributors

Dennis & Judy DeFrancisco

William N. Gressette, Jr.

Danny & Nan Howard

Sprague & Sprague Consulting Engineers

# District Staff & Commissioners Honored

## District Manager Kirsten Robertson Named NACD Soil Health Champion

The NACD Soil Health Champions Network (SHCN) 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.

Kirsten was an early adopter of soil health principles, actively implementing them on her farm. Through NRCS CIG and EQIP programs, she has transformed her farm into a veritable Garden of Eden where all creatures are happy, including Kirsten, the livestock and the microbes. She feels that the best part of her day is during the daily livestock moves when she gets a chance to be with the animals, observe what they've eaten, analyze how much space they need for the next day, and enjoy her changing farm as she imitates nature. Through soil health, her farm has also become more profitable.



When she was first trying to figure out the technical aspects of grazing small ruminants in 2015, she started a small Facebook group for a couple of friends where they swapped information and stories. That group, called the reGenerative Grazing Group, is now 12,000 strong consisting of people grazing everything from chickens to giraffes, but is mostly cattle owners. The group includes international experts as well as beginners and provides a comfortable space to learn and share experiences with management intensive grazing. Many say that it is their favorite place on the internet.

Kirsten invites formal and informal groups to her farm for tours, and hosts field days regularly. She has embraced demonstrating rainfall simulators, both the large ones and the tabletops, for groups all over the state. Because of her enthusiasm, she has become president of the SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition. She speaks about soil health and the changes on her farm at various conferences all over the US. In Greenville she also uses the soil health principles to educate urban citizens about soil health in their yards and gardens, and how it can affect stormwater pollution, aquifers and wildlife. Kirsten lives and breathes soil health, and is an exceptional choice for Soil Health Champion.

## Danny Howard named SCACD Outstanding Conservation Commissioner

Commissioner Danny Howard serves as a Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner for the Greenville Soil and Water Conservation District. Commissioner Howard has 17 years of dedicated service to the Greenville Soil and Water Conservation District and has served the board in the roles of Secretary and Treasurer. Commissioner Howard is always furthering the mission and spreading the message of conservation through his involvement with other conservation groups such as, but not limited to, SC Beekeepers Association, Cattleman & Livestock Association, 4-H, Sustainable Agriculture Advisory Committee for Clemson University, Young Farmers and Jocassee Wild Nature Education Program. Commissioner Howard has received numerous awards throughout his career such as Distinguished Service Award from the Clemson Alumni Association, Distinguished Service Award from the SC Association of County Agriculture Agents, Distinguished Service Award from the Greenville County Farm Bureau and SC Extension Agent of the Year from the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association. Danny goes above and beyond to support the Greenville Soil and Water Conservation District programs in Greenville County.



# Caught in the Act!

Caught in the Act! - Around the District



# From the District Conservationist/NRCS

## Getting Conservation on the Ground in Greenville

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides funding through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) to address resource concerns such as erosion, water quality, soil health or wildlife.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps farmers build on their existing conservation efforts while strengthening their operation. Whether farmers are looking to improve grazing conditions, increase crop yields, or develop wildlife habitat, NRCS can design a CSP plan to help meet those goals.

This year, \$185,468 of EQIP and CSP funding was obligated covering 719 acres of Greenville County cropland, pastureland and forestland.

If you have a farm or timberland and would like assistance in improving the resources on your land, give us a call to schedule a visit.



# Sprouting at the Seed Library...

## Seed Library Partnership Grows!

In 2019, we teamed up with the Greenville County Library System to open the county's first seed library at the Sarah Dobe Jones Branch Library in Berea. The seed library provides free, year-round access to over 60 varieties of flower and food seeds to library-card holders. In the first year alone, over 17,000 seed packets were checked out!

Library card holders may select up to 10 seed packets per visit. In addition to seeds, the seed library also has a Greenville growing guide that will include information about when to plant, how far apart the plants need to be, and the number of days until harvest. The program also includes monthly workshops. In 2019, these workshops included square foot gardening, hydroponic growing, edible landscaping, soil health, and container growing.

Of the 60 varieties, the seed library has favorites such as tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers, but also includes less-familiar varieties like ground cherries, kohlrabi, and tatsoi, an Asian green. The seeds are donated from Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds, High Mowing Organic Seeds, Seed Savers Exchange, Slow Food Upstate, and Sow True Seeds.

With the Seed Library's growing demand and a recent grant awarded from Duke Energy, the program will be making appearances across Greenville County in 2020 (and of course, the Berea Branch will continue to be stocked with a variety of heirloom and organic seeds). These "pop-up" events will be held in conjunction with the library system's bookmobile, as well as gardening-related events at other library branches.

Upcoming workshops and information about the seed library can be found at:

[www.greenvillelibrary.org/seed-library](http://www.greenvillelibrary.org/seed-library)

If you have questions about the seed library program or would like to request a pop-up at a community event, please contact Shelby Cohen at [scohen@greenvillecounty.org](mailto:scohen@greenvillecounty.org) or 864-920-6401.

## POP-UP SEED LIBRARY

Books on wheels & flower and food seeds to take home! Visit the pop-up Seed Library during your Bookmobile visit and get 5 free packets of seeds.

### W.E. Willis Grocery

Feb 26 • 1:30p-2:30p

3601 Highway 414, Landrum

### Fews Chapel United Methodist Church

Feb 26 • 3p-4:30p

4000 N Highway 101, Greer

### Old Forks Shoals School

March 10 • 1:45p-3:15p

916 McKelvey Road, Pelzer

### Cedar Shoals Baptist Church

March 10 • 3:45p-4:30p

1045 Cooley Bridge Road, Belton

### Food Lion

March 12 • 1:45p-4:45p

March 14 • 10a-12p

8024 Augusta Road, Piedmont

### Rolling Green

March 23 • 10a-11:30a

3 Hoke Smith Boulevard, Greenville

### Lee & Sims Well Drilling

March 30 • 2p-4:30p

10659 Augusta Road, Belton

### Tigerville Post Office

April 1 • 1:45p-4:30p

7864 N Tigerville Road, Tigerville





**SEED LIBRARY Container Growing 101**

1. Find a sunny spot.
2. Water daily.
3. Tomatoes need support as they grow. Use a tomato cage, a trellis, or place along something it can climb, like a railing.
4. Add compost or organic plant food every month to keep your plant happy!

For more info, visit: [hgic.clemson.edu](http://hgic.clemson.edu)



# Meet Our Staff

## USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Staff

From left: **Lynne Newton**, District Conservationist,  
**Collin Buckner**, Soil Conservationist, **Drew Williams**, DNR Program Coordinator



## Soil and Water Conservation District Staff

From left: **Kirsten Robertson**, District Manager,  
**Lynn Pilewski**, Community Relations Coordinator, **Shelby Cohen**, Community Relations Coordinator  
(Not Pictured) **Linda Creel**, Administrative Support



### Staff Directory

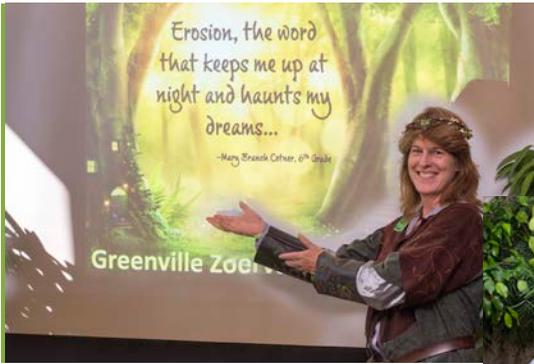
Kirsten Robertson  
Linda Creel  
Lynn Pilewski  
Shelby Cohen  
Lynne Newton  
Collin Buckner  
Drew Williams

District Manager  
Administrative Support  
Community Relations Coordinator  
Community Relations Coordinator  
NRCS District Conservationist  
NRCS Soil Conservationist  
DNR Program Coordinator

864-920-6404  
864-920-6405  
864-920-6397  
864-920-6401  
864-920-6402  
864-920-6396  
864-920-6403

**Greenville County Soil and Water Conservation District**  
301 University Ridge, Suite 4800  
Greenville, SC 29601  
864-467-2755  
[www.greenvillesoilandwater.com](http://www.greenvillesoilandwater.com)

# Enchanted Forest Gala



Affiliate Appreciation and Awards Gala

**GREENVILLE COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

301 University Ridge, Suite 4800  
Greenville, SC 29601

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

PLEASE DELIVER TO:

## Upcoming Events

Save the date for these District events that will be happening over the next several months!  
Stay tuned for more information!

Annual Essay Contest  
March Into Earth Day @ County Square  
Tails and Trails  
GCSWCD "Bee Our Guest" Gala  
Wet & Wild Water Camp

Entries Due March 12  
March 17  
May 9  
May 14  
July 13-17

