



Serving Beaufort County for over 78 years

Annual Report for FY24



Produce grown in Beaufort County. Photo credit: Walter Mack

Who We Are

Mission

“To help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment by promoting wise land use practices, environmental education, and technical assistance”

Board of Commissioners:

Alan A. Ulmer, Jr., Chair

Claude McLeod, Jr., Vice Chair

Denise Parsick, Secretary/Treasurer

Luke Inabinett, Commissioner

Dannie Lesesne, Commissioner

Art Holland, Associate Commissioner

Carol Murphy, Associate Commissioner

Howard Heckrotte, Associate Commissioner

Hilary Gallop, Associate Commissioner

District Staff Members:

Leslie Meola, District Manager

Hilary Gallop, Education Coordinator thru 11/23

Eliza Mehle, Education Coordinator as of 11/23

Debby Way, Education Specialist

Walter Mack, Field Agent

We are YOUR Conservation District working for YOU and YOUR community. We are involved in natural resource projects in all areas of Beaufort County - both urban and rural.

We are a sub-unit of state government that works in partnership with USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service and SC Department of Natural Resources to serve the conservation needs of Beaufort County.

The District is directed by a local board of volunteer commissioners who determine the local conservation needs of the county. Two of the commissioners are appointed and three are elected.

Our Conservation Partnerships:



USDA-NRCS, Natural Resources Conservation Service:
Ben Padget, Interim District Conservationist
Jessica Parrish, Soil Conservationist



SC Dept. of Natural Resources, Land Conservation Division:
Tyler Brown, Program Coordinator for Conservation Districts
Jennifer Morris, Lowstate Conservation Districts Coordinator



NACD— National Association of Conservation Districts



SCACD—SC Association of Conservation Districts



SCCDEA—SC Conservation District Employees Association

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Accomplishments

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

This program helps farmers and landowners build on existing conservation efforts while strengthening their operations.

Beaufort County in FY 2024:

1 Active CSP Contract in Beaufort County

Info for Fiscal Year 2025 CSP Applications call the Ridgeland office to schedule a field visit; (843) 726-8148.

The first application deadline for FY25 was October 4, 2024.

NRCS will announce if there will be more sign-up periods throughout the year.

More information is available on their website:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/south-carolina>

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

This program is NRCS' flagship conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands.



Seasonal high tunnel to protect plantings from harsh environmental conditions

Beaufort County in FY 2024:

7 New EQIP Contracts

5 Active EQIP Payouts

2 Completed Contracts

\$77,884.45 New EQIP Obligations

\$37,573.40 EQIP Payouts



Manual auger and core sample taken by NRCS to test the type and health of the soil



Soil pit profile depicting different soil horizons and types

Amidst staffing changes, the Ridgeland NRCS Field Office has met with many landowners within Beaufort County to provide technical and/or financial assistance.

The Soil Conservationist has also assisted SCDNR with oyster reef restoration, endangered species surveys, and attended many continuing education trainings to better serve Beaufort County.



NRCS soil conservationist for Beaufort County documenting soil type and condition in a soil pit at the Coastal Plain Soil Water Conservation Research Center in Florence, SC

Our Successful Partnership with The Nature Conservancy of SC

Before our partnership with The Nature Conservancy of SC (TNC) was created, we were not able to obtain a list of Beaufort County farms. Most of our Black, Indigenous, & People of Color (BIPOC) farmers were struggling and failing, but we had no way of knowing or helping. With the financial support and guidance of TNC, we now know the farms in our area, and we have been able to perform site visits in order to assess their needs and challenges. Meeting that goal, we have also been able to educate and assist the farmers with the programs available to them, and aid them in applying.



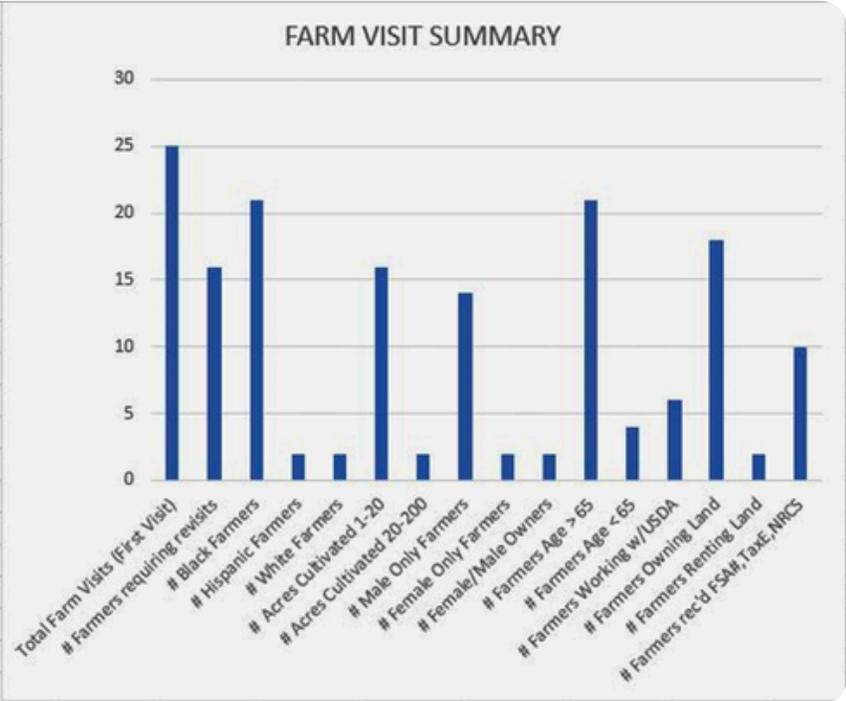
Harvest
time and
packing.
Photo
credit:
Walter
Mack



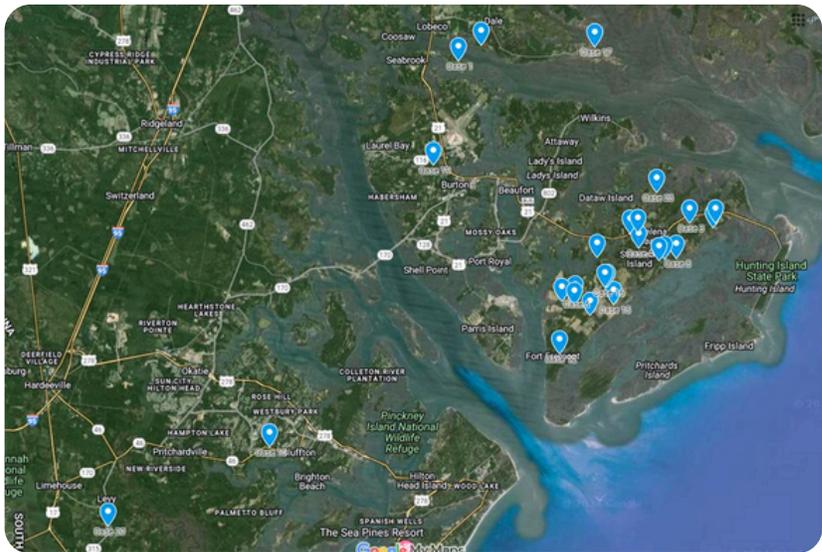
Our success is mainly due to the efforts of our Field Agent, Walter Mack. He is also a BIPOC farmer in the County, and is well known throughout the farming community. This was key to gaining the trust of BIPOC farmers to participate in federally funded programs. Although the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides a conservationist to SC counties, they are spread very thin. The NRCS District Conservationists cover multiple counties making it difficult to visit farms in person, and build relationships with farmers. Through the efforts of Mr. Mack, those farmers are now able to get the support they need in order to continue, grow, and succeed with their farming efforts.

FY24 Farm Visit Summary

Indicators	Data /Numbers
Total Farm Visits (First Visit)	25
# Farmers requiring revisits	16
# Black Farmers	21
# Hispanic Farmers	2
# White Farmers	2
# Acres Cultivated 1-20	16
# Acres Cultivated 20-200	2
# Male Only Farmers	14
# Female Only Farmers	2
# Female/Male Owners	2
# Farmers Age > 65	21
# Farmers Age < 65	4
# Farmers Working w/USDA	6
# Farmers Owning Land	18
# Farmers Renting Land	2
# Farmers rec'd FSA#,TaxE,NRCS	10
# Farmers Working w/USDA	16



The data from FY24 shows that 25 farms were visited by our Field Agent; 16 of those farms were revisited to assist with Farm Service Agency and NRCS application paperwork. He made 82 farm visits in total; the map below indicates the locations of the visited farm sites. The Field Agent also participated in 43 meetings throughout FY24.



Field Work Outreach



Black Angus Cattle Farmer



Beginner Herb Farmer
Female U.S. Veteran



Goat Farmer



Berry Production



Goat Farmer



Rice Fields



Poultry Farmer



Planting Time



Cattle Farm



Produce Farmer



Cow Rancher



Deer Fencing

Conservation and Education Outreach

In FY24, Beaufort SWCD presented outreach programs to over 5,750 children and adults in 72 classrooms, at 16 festivals, and at Eco Camp

Classroom Program Presentations



These first graders are learning about the importance of soil and what lives in it. While crawling through the “soil tunnel” they discover man-made wells and septic tanks, root vegetables, animal burrows, insects, and worms. Each student also receives a Soil Tunnel Activity Book. The Soil Tunnel program was developed by our education staff and meets current SC Science Standards. It is one of our most requested programs!

Recommended for grades K-2.



Pre-K-1st graders learn about the travels of a loggerhead sea turtle and the many challenges throughout its life through *One Tiny Turtle*- an interactive book (left). Middle Schoolers learn about point and non-point source water pollution and how to adopt habits to protect water quality through the Enviroscope watershed model (right).



Photo credits: Education Staff

Eco Camp 2024 – “Lowcountry Explorers”

Campers learned about our unique rivers, salt marshes, ocean shores, cultures, and wildlife. Each day included a special Lowcountry expert who shared their knowledge and experiences about dolphins, birds, salt water marsh ecosystems, reptiles, pollinators, sharks, turtles, and farm goats. The campers dove into fun hands-on activities like experiencing the Combine Ag Simulator (provided by Beaufort County Farm Bureau), a nature scavenger hunt, birding, fishing games, indigo tie-dyeing, and crafted fish, bugs and jellyfish. They finished the week by making camp scrapbooks, and enjoying lunch provided by the Farm Bureau of Beaufort County Women’s Committee.



Photo credits: Eco Camp Staff

Eco Camp Volunteer Shout-outs

We’d like to thank Amanda Taylor, Clemson Extension; Rachel Marsh, Lowcountry Master Naturalist; Joanna Boney, Port Royal Sound Foundation; Sophia Truempi, SC Sea Grant Consortium; Sloane Wiggers, Spring Island Trust; Al Segars, Retired SCDNR; Pam Floyd, Retired BSWCD; Walter Mack, BSWCD; and Laura Hansen, Farm Bureau

More Education Outreach



Photo credit: Debby Way

Festivals

- July 2023 Beaufort Water Festival Kids' Day, Keep the Broad Creek Clean
- August 2023 STEAM Festival
- September 2023 OktoPRfest
- October 2023 Barrels & Beer, BJWSA Sustainability Fest, Touch-A-Truck, Hunting Island Trunk or Treat
- December 2023 Arbor Day Event @ PR Farmers Market
- January 2024 Oyster Festival
- April 2024 Kids Fest, Earth Day @ PR Farmers Market, Earth Day @ Sun City, Earth Day @ Parris Island, Cypress Wetlands Birthday for the Birds
- June 2024 SC Sea Grant Consorsium's Maritime Days

Rain Barrel Event - October 2023



In partnetrnship with BJWSA, we held a Barrels & Beer rain barrel event at Shelling Ale Works.

BEAUFORT-JASPER WATER & SEWER AUTHORITY AND BEAUFORT SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Barrels & Beer

October 22, 2023
Shelling Aleworks, Port Royal
from 2-5 PM

PROCEEDS BENEFIT A BEAUFORT SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP MINI-GRANT

Logos: BJWSA, Beaufort Conservation, Shelling Ale Works, Coca-Cola Consolidated



Folks had the opportunity to paint their barrels at the event and had a chance to learn wise water practices.

We sold barrels and rain barrel converter kits that were donated by Coca-Cola Consolidated. Proceeds from the sale were used to provide programs to some local school groups and organizations within Beaufort County.

Accolades

At the South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts' (SCACD) annual conference held January 22-24, 2024 our Education Specialist, Debra Way (right), was selected by SCACD as the Outstanding Employee of the Year for 2023. She was nominated by our Board of Commissioners and Staff for her loyalty, devotion, and dutifulness. Ms. Way has been working as our part-time educator for 17 years.



Commissioners Denise Parsick (left) and Luke Inabinett (center) were awarded the 35 Years of Service Pin as Beaufort Conservation District Commissioners. Denise Parsick is also the longest serving female Conservation District Commissioner in South Carolina.

Thank you Community Partners in Conservation

Beaufort County Government
Clemson Cooperative Extension of Beaufort County
Beaufort County Farm Bureau
Port Royal Sound Foundation
Lowcountry Stormwater Partners
BJWSA
The Nature Conservancy of SC
Open Land Trust
Port Royal Farmers Market
SC Sea Grant Consortium
Outside Foundation
Spring Island Trust & Lowcountry Institute
Beaufort County School District

Coastal Conservation League
Friends of Hunting Island
Hunting Island State Park
Coca-Cola Consolidated
Friends of Cypress Wetlands
CAPA
Shelling Ale Works
Heritage Community Farm
Coastal Expeditions Beaufort
Lowcountry Montessori
SC Native Plant Society
USMC Natural Resources- Parris Island
Sun City Bird Club

FY24 District Affiliates - Supporters of Conservation

Thank you for your financial support!

Business Silver - 2 Ed Programs	Seaside Farms
Business Silver - 2 Ed Programs	W H McLeod & Son South
Individual -Sustaining Membership	Claude McLeod
Individual -Sustaining Membership	Danny Lesesne
Individual -Patron Membership	Howard Heckrotte
Individual -Patron Membership	Luke Inabinett
Individual -Patron Membership	Carol Murphy
Individual - Patron Membership	Denise Parsick
Individual -Patron Membership	Alan Ulmer
2 Eco Camp Scholarships & Friday Lunch	Farm Bureau Womens Committee
Eco Camp Friday Lunch	Publix Super Markets
2 Eco Camp Scholarships	Carol Murphy
2 Eco Camp Sponsorships	Carl Barr
Eco Camp Sponsorship	Denise Parsick

BUSINESS AFFILIATE DONATION LEVELS

Business Silver – \$100.00 Sponsors TWO Classroom Program Presentations

Business Gold—\$250.00 Sponsors TWO Eco Camp Participants

Business Platinum—\$500.00 Sponsors FIVE Classroom Program Presentations AND TWO Eco Camp Participants

INDIVIDUAL AFFILIATE DONATION LEVELS

Supporting Member: \$35.00

Sustaining Member: \$50.00

Patron Memeber: \$100.00



Beaufort Soil & Water Conservation District
PO Box 70
Port Royal, SC 29935



We are located at 124 Lady's Island Dr., Beaufort, SC 29907

Tel: 843-255-7306 Email: bswcd@islc.net

www.beaufortconservationdistrict.org Office hours Mon– Fri- 9am–2pm

Please consider becoming an affiliate member to help us educate Beaufort County citizens about conserving our natural resources.

Donations can be made online at www.beaufortconservationdistrict.org, or by scanning the QR code, or by check.



Be a Beaufort Soil & Water Conservation District Affiliate Member

Supporting — \$35.00

Sustaining—\$50.00

Patron —\$100.00

Associate—\$100 +

Circle the level you wish to support

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Please make checks Payable to: "Beaufort Conservation District"

Mail to: PO Box 70, Port Royal, SC 29935

Name & or Company _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____