



Serving Beaufort County for over 79 years

Annual Report for FY25



Okra grown on Randy Daise's farm. 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

Eliza Mehle, Education Coordinator thru 11/24

Debby Way, Education Specialist

Michelle Onoff, Education Specialist

Samantha Campbell, Eco Camp Coordinator

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:

Jessica Parrish, Soil Conservationist



SC Dept. of Natural Resources, Land Conservation Division:

Tyler Brown, Program Coordinator

Jennifer Morris, Edisto-Savannah Valley Conservation District Coordinator



Beaufort County Council

Our Conservation Associations:



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

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is NRCS' flagship conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners integrate new conservation efforts into working lands.



NRCS engineers (left) & field office staff (right) discussing details of dike stabilization with a Beaufort County landowner (center). Not pictured- US Fish & Wildlife biologist

Beaufort County in FY 2025:

\$39,980 secured for new EQIP & CSP program contracts across 58.7 acres

**3 new program applications selected for funding:
2 EQIP and 1 CSP**

\$55,744 paid out for active CSP & EQIP contracts

This year USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service experienced major changes, including staffing, priorities, partners, and policies. NRCS programs received reduced funding, which resulted in less funding for landowners.

Despite these challenges, Ridgeland NRCS worked hard to provide technical and financial assistance to our local farmers, ranchers, and landowners.

Local NRCS staff made 65+ site visits throughout the year.



Sa' (NRCS State Office) & Jessica (NRCS Ridgeland) attending the grand opening of the St. Helena Island Community Garden



Jessica Parrish (NRCS soil conservationist), Walter Mack (Beaufort SWCD field agent), & soil scientists from USDA's Agricultural Research Service after a day of soil testing

**Info for Fiscal Year 2026 applications and deadline dates, or to schedule a field visit, call the Ridgeland NRCS office
(843) 726-8148 ext. 3**



Ridgeland's NRCS staff, Kitty (soil conservationist), Tammy (soil technician), and Jessica (soil conservationist) at a conservation planner training at a NRCS participant's tree farm

Photos provided by NRCS Staff

Boots on the Ground Outreach Field Work

Through a grant opportunity, we have been able to continue our outreach to Beaufort County landowners and farmers. This grant funds the field agent position, which educates and assists Beaufort County landowners and farmers with the programs available to them and helps them in the application process.



Seasonal High Tunnels, also known as hoop houses, collapsed under the weight of layers of ice and snow dumped on the lowcountry in January 2025. Our Field Agent worked tirelessly to find financial assistance for these landowners

Our Field Agent, Walter Mack, is well known throughout the farming community, giving him the ability to gain the trust of 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 getting the support they need in order to grow and succeed with their farming efforts while conserving natural resources.



Jacky says his new 40 HP tractor is excellent for cultivating small acreage

We proudly selected **John “Jacky” Frazier**, owner of Barefoot Farms, for the *Minority Landowner Magazine’s Farmer of the Year*



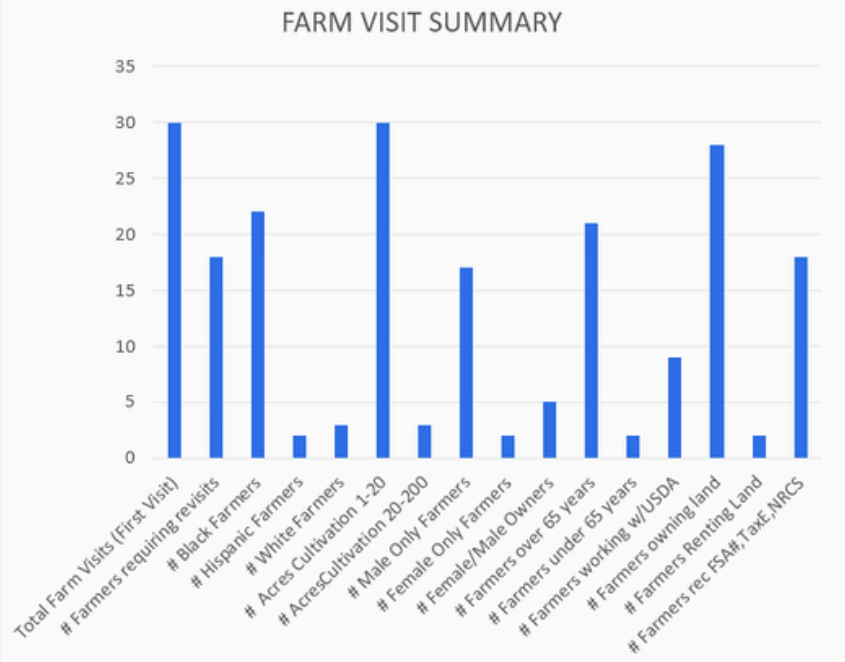
Jacky is demonstrating his small seed planter



Jacky shows how his innovative deer fencing is protecting his berry fields

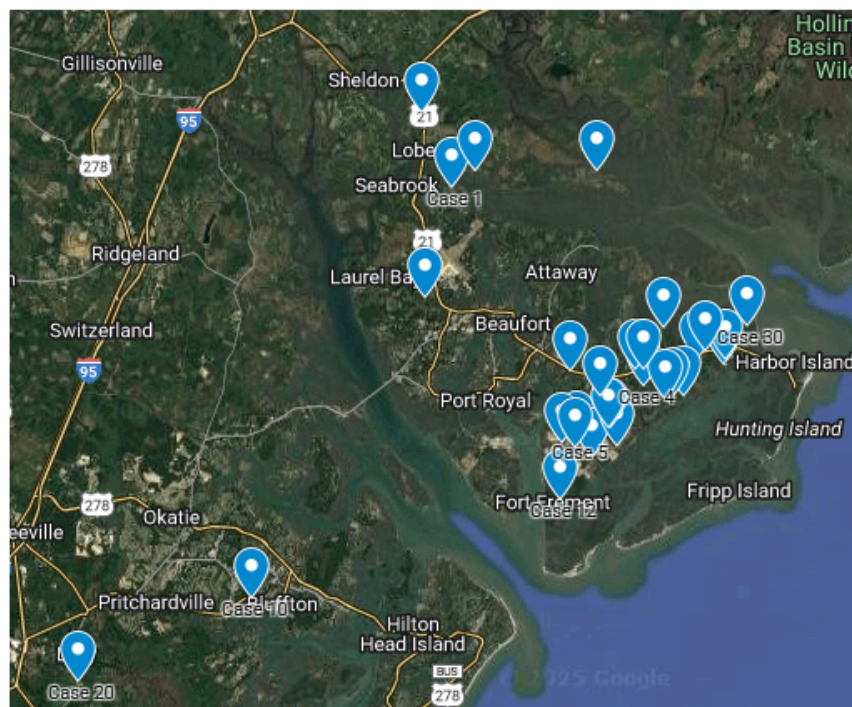
Individual Farm Summary

Indicators	Data /Numbers
Total Farm Visits (First Visit)	30
# Farmers requiring revisits	18
# Black Farmers	22
# Hispanic Farmers	2
# White Farmers	3
# Acres Cultivation 1-20	30
# Acres Cultivation 20-200	3
# Male Only Farmers	17
# Female Only Farmers	2
# Female/Male Owners	5
# Farmers over 65 years	21
# Farmers under 65 years	2
# Farmers working w/USDA	9
# Farmers owning land	28
# Farmers Renting Land	2
# Farmers rec FSA#,TaxE,NRCS	18



The data from FY25 shows that 30 farms were visited by our Field Agent; 18 of those farms were revisited to assist with Farm Service Agency and NRCS application paperwork.

He made 87 farm visits in total; the map below indicates the locations of the visited farm sites.



Highlights of Some Outreach Field Work



Harvest time for Earl Brown's corn crop, St. Helena Island. Mr. Brown and his son delivering the harvest to the Gullah Farmers Cooperative



Utilizing & repurposing the use of shipping containers: The Exotic Mushroom Dispensary on St. Helena Island produces and packages specialty mushrooms



An icon along Sea Island Parkway, Dempsey Farms continues to produce strawberries, corn, tomatoes and more with the farm now protected from deer by 9-foot fencing



Okatee River Farms, located just off 170 in Okatie, produces a large variety of fruits, vegetables, and microgreens



Education Conservation Outreach

In FY25, Beaufort SWCD presented environmental programs to over 3,800 children and adults in 94 classrooms, at 16 festivals, and at Eco Camp



Using various shells from our beaches, students learn all about these creatures' adaptations and ecosystems as Educator Michelle Onoff presents the Beach-in-a-Bag program at Bridges Preparatory School's Summer Reading Camp (above left).



Okatie Elementary School students are learning about sharks' physiology, behaviors, and feeding habits as Educator Debby Way presents another of our marine life programs (above right)



Debby Way presenting the indoor portion of the Interpretive Tour of Crystal Lake Park to children in the BC Migrant Education Program. They had the chance to feel the pelts of the wildlife that may live in the park before venturing outside

Teaching point and non-point source water pollution using the EnviroScape Watershed Model to Beaufort County School District's 7 graders while other students get kayaking lessons from the Outside Foundation's "Kids in Kayaks" program at the Coastal Expedition site on St. Helena Island



Eco Camp 2025 – “Stay Wild, Nature Child!”

We are very proud to have provided our local children with a week-long, fun filled camp for 34 years! This year’s Eco Camp was dedicated to the connection between children and our environment. Campers explored various ways to experience nature up close and personal by exploring the outdoors, discovering habitats, and getting their hands dirty in celebration of all things creepy, crawly, muddy, wild, and wet! They finished the week by making camp scrapbooks, and enjoying lunch provided by the Farm Bureau of Beaufort County Women’s Committee.



Eco Campers learned about insect and amphibian metamorphosis during the pond ecology activity

Photo credits: Eco Camp Staff

Shout-outs to our Eco Camp Presenters & Volunteers

We’d like to thank Annie Boyd, Lowcountry Montessori; Elaine Tholen, Lowcountry Master Naturalist; Kim Richie PhD., USCB; Joe Staton PhD., USCB; Cassie Critchlow, USCB Faculty; Sloane Wiggers, Spring Island Trust; Colleen Geoff, Fripp Island Naturalist; Carole Protch & Carole Ramsey, HHI Turtle Trackers; Valentina Palacio, Beaufort County Public Works; Pam Floyd, Retired BSWCD; Hilary Gallop, BSWCD; Piper, Matty Holt & Lydia Norris, USCB Students; and Laura Hansen, Farm Bureau

More Education Outreach



These children are placing critters in their natural habitat: in tree branches, under tree roots, and in tree cavities at our Earth Day event at the Port Royal Farmers Market

Festivals

July 2024	Beaufort Water Festival Kids' Day
	Back-to-School Expo
	Keep the Broad Creek Clean
August 2024	PRSF STEAM Festival
October 2024	Barrels & Beer
	Hunting Island Trunk or Treat
November 2024	Hosted Leadership Beaufort
December 2024	Touch-A-Truck
January 2025	Oyster Festival
March 2025	PRSF Volunteer Fair
April 2025	Earth Day @ PR Farmers Market
	Earth Day @ Sun City
	Earth Day @ Parris Island
	Earth Day @ Beaufort County Gov't Campus
	Birthday for the Birds @ Cypress Wetlands

Rain Barrel Event - October 2024



In partnership with BJWSA and Lowcountry Stormwater Partners, we held a Barrels & Beer rain barrel event at Shelling Ale Works.



Folks had the opportunity to visit other conservation-based groups and learn wise water practices. We also raffled off an upcycled barrel with converter kit

We sold Ivy brand rain barrels at cost. We also sold "No Water, No Beer" t-shirts. The proceeds of which helped offset costs of providing programs to local school groups and organizations within Beaufort County.

BEAUFORT-JASPER WATER & SEWER AUTHORITY,
BEAUFORT SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT AND LOWCOUNTRY STORMWATER PARTNERS

Barrels & Beer

October 20, 2024
Shelling Aleworks, Port Royal
from 2-4 PM

Also enjoy:

- live music
- vendors
- fun activities
- Shelling food & beer

Barrels: \$77

Scan QR code for tickets

PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE BEAUFORT SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Fondly Remembered

We lost a long-time member of our conservation district on May 19, 2025.

Our beloved Carol Murphy succumbed to her second fight with cancer.

Carol was currently serving as an Associate Commissioner, prior to that she was also District Manager and Education Coordinator on and off since 1977.

We credit her for establishing new programs like our very popular Soil Tunnel, as well as our long running Eco Camp, and cultivating new partnerships along the way; a true environmental advocate of the lowcountry.



Award winner
Author
Volunteer recruiter



Inventor
Teacher
Collaborator



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

FY25 District Affiliates - Supporters of Conservation

Thank you for your financial support!

Coosaw Ag LLC	Business Silver - 2 Ed Programs
Farm Bureau Womens Committee	Business Gold - 2 Eco Camp Scholarships & Friday Lunch
Publix Super Markets	Business Silver - Eco Camp Friday Lunch
Debby Way	Patron Member - 1 Eco Camp Scholarship

BUSINESS AFFILIATE DONATION LEVELS

Business Silver— \$100.00

Sponsors TWO Classroom Program Presentations

Business Gold—\$200.00

Sponsors TWO Eco Camp Participants

Business Platinum—\$500.00

Sponsors SIX Classroom Program Presentations AND TWO Eco Camp Participants

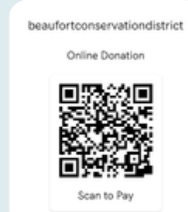


INDIVIDUAL AFFILIATE DONATION LEVELS

Supporting Member: \$35.00

Sustaining Member: \$50.00

Patron Member: \$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

Website: www.beaufortconservationdistrict.org Office hours are 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/donate
- scan the QR code on previous page
- by check along with the form below



Be a Beaufort Soil & Water Conservation District Affiliate Member

Supporting — \$35.00

Sustaining—\$50.00

Patron —\$100.00

Business Silver—\$100

Business Gold—\$200

Business Platinum —\$500

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 _____