

Summer
2017



2017 SC Envirothon

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Richland Soil and Water
Conservation District



Healthy Soils are Full of Life Youth Poster Contest Winners

Eighteen students received awards in the 2017 Conservation Poster Contest sponsored by the Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD), including 8th Grader Emiya Carolyn Gallman of Longleaf Middle School, pictured at right with RSWCD Commissioner Jeff Laney during the awards presentation. Gallman was named this year's Grand Prize Winner for her poster entry, pictured below.

Student posters addressed the topic "Healthy Soils Are Full of Life," raising awareness about the importance of healthy soils and their uses. Student posters represented healthy soils in a variety of ways, from colorful cross-sections of the earth showing soil horizons full of earthworms, insects, fungi, and other organisms to paintings of people, plants, and the earth made with soil pigments.

Winners received cash prizes and were recognized at the RSWCD's Annual Awards Banquet in May. Some of the winning posters were displayed in the Richland County Public Library in May. Five entries, including Gallman's, will progress to the state poster contest sponsored by the SC Association of Conservation Districts this fall.

More than ninety students at eight schools submitted entries to this year's contest, and many more—some 755 students at 14 schools—learned about the contest topic through interactive presentations conducted in classrooms across Richland County.

"I think it is imperative that children learn...how a healthy soil translates into healthy plants and a healthy environment, and how our actions directly impact the health of these resources," says Richland SWCD Commissioner Jeff Laney. "They say 'if you want anything to grow, you have to love it.' Well, we love our children, and we love helping them grow their knowledge and appreciation for healthy soil and a



healthy planet through the education programs of the Richland SWCD."

The Conservation Poster Contest is an annual education program hosted by the Richland SWCD with support from the SC and National Associations of Conservation Districts. For more information about this or other conservation education programs, contact Chanda Cooper at cooperc@rcgov.us.

2017 Richland County Conservation Poster Contest Winners

Emiya Carolyn Gallman, Evan Carl Outlaw, Ethan Carl Outlaw, Susie Kohel, Natalee Kaufman, Abdulrahman Mohammed Kamil, Ella Catherine Gillam, William Taylor Fair, Devin J. Gamble, Xavier Lopez, Erin Nicole Kohn, Abrianna Nicole McClerklin, Henry Windham, Catherine Grace Milburn, Vijay Katiah Gottipaty, Taylor Noelle Kohn, Jasmine Taina Gonzalez, and Mary Kathryn Davidson.

Conservation Cooperators of the Year Announced



Robert D. Stockman (second from left) and Roger L. Ross (second from right) have been named RSWCD's 2017 Cooperators of the Year. Both producers operate cattle farms near Elgin, SC, and have worked with the RSWCD to develop and implement conservation plans to protect water quality in the Twenty-five Mile Creek Watershed. Their awards were presented by RSWCD Chairman Kenny Mullis (left and right).

Robert D. Stockman of Cedar Valley Farms (Richland County) and Roger L. Ross of R&G Enterprises (Kershaw County) have been named 2017 Conservation Cooperators of the Year by the RSWCD. Both farmers have partnered with the RSWCD to protect and improve water quality in the Twenty-five Mile Creek Watershed by implementing conservation plans and installing best management practices (BMPs) on their cattle farms.

Stockman is a third generation Tookiedoo farmer who manages a herd of 150 Black Angus cows on 850 acres. Previously, these cattle were watering in Flat Branch Creek and four ponds. With support from the Twenty-five Mile Creek Watershed project, Stockman constructed more than three miles of fencing to restrict the cows' access to surface water, then installed more than a mile of pipeline and 10 troughs for livestock watering—no small task.

Ross grew up on a farm in the Tookiedoo community near Elgin and still works his family's land. Originally, livestock on his farm were watering in two ponds and a spring head. With support from the Twenty-five Mile Creek Watershed project, Ross has constructed fencing around the ponds and wetlands to prevent livestock access and installed water pipelines and four water troughs to provide alternate water sources for his herd.

These BMPs will protect pond- and stream-banks from erosion and compaction, reduce the introduction of animal wastes to surface waters, and promote healthier pastures. Ultimately, these benefits should improve water quality in the Twenty-five Mile Creek Watershed, which includes portions of Blythewood, Pontiac, Elgin, and Lugoff. The Watershed is a conservation priority area because Twenty-

five Mile Creek has been found by the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control to experience periodically elevated bacteria levels and macro-invertebrate community impairments.

To address these issues, Richland, Kershaw, and Fairfield Counties and the Richland and Kershaw SWCDs coordinated funding from a Section 319 Grant and other sources to cover up to 70% of the cost of approved conservation practices on agricultural lands in the watershed. Since then, RSWCD Conservation Technician Mike Newman has worked with landowners to develop and implement eight conservation plans at six farms in the watershed. At the end of the three-year project later this year, landowners will have installed nearly six miles of fencing, six miles of water lines, and 28 alternate water sources to keep livestock out of surface waters and improve grazing management.

“This [Twenty-five Mile Creek Watershed Program] has been successful because of people like Bobby Stockman and Roger Ross,” says RSWCD Chairman Kenny Mullis. “These farmers were willing to do things differently, to voluntarily spend their time and their money to make changes to their operations that will ultimately benefit the environment. We appreciate their partnership and want to applaud their efforts.”

Both farmers were recognized at the RSWCD Annual Awards Banquet and a recent meeting of the Richland County Cattlemen's Association. For more information about the Twenty-five Mile Creek Watershed Water Quality Improvement Program, contact Chanda Cooper at cooperc@rcgov.us.

Financial Assistance Available for Septic Repair in the Twenty-five Mile Creek Watershed

Funds are available to help pay for approved septic repairs/replacements for failing systems in the Twenty-five Mile Creek Watershed to improve water quality. Symptoms of septic system failure include gurgling toilets, water backing up into drains, sinks and toilets draining slowly, damp spots persisting in your yard even during dry weather, lush grass growing in certain areas of your yard, and the tell-tale smell of sewage around your home.

Twenty-five Mile Creek is a tributary of the Wateree River, and its watershed includes lands in northeastern Richland, western Kershaw, and southern Fairfield Counties. Much of this area is rural, but the watershed does include some urban and suburban areas in and near Blythewood, Pontiac, Elgin and Lugoff. To determine if you live or work in the Twenty-five Mile Creek Watershed and learn more about the financial assistance program, visit www.rcgov.us/twentyfivemile or call (803) 425-7230.



Partnerships: City Roots Farm and CFSA



In June, the RSWCD board met at City Roots Farm for a picnic and farm tour led by City Roots Co-Owner and Manager Eric McClam. City Roots is an urban organic farm located near Owens Field Park and the Jim-Hamilton Airport in the Rosewood neighborhood of Columbia. The farm produces dozens of products, including organic microgreens, mushrooms, a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, and cut flowers. Commissioners, staff, and guests explored the farm's high tunnels, greenhouses,



fields, composting area, solar array, farm kitchen, coolbot storage unit, and other preparation and production areas while McClam shared the farm's story and spoke about the many partnerships that have contributed to City Roots's growth and success.

After the tour, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA) SC Policy Coordinator Katie Welborn spoke to commissioners about CFSA's programs and the services CFSA provides to local farmers. Recently, CFSA

partnered with City Roots, Clemson, and the RSWCD to host an "Understanding, Building, and Maintaining Soil Health Workshop." More than 30 people attended the event to learn more about soil health and soil management. In addition to educational programming, CFSA also provides on-farm consulting services for high tunnels, organic certification, conservation activity plans, good agricultural practices, and farm and food business development. To learn more about these and other services, visit www.carolinafarmstewards.org.

The RSWCD board meets on the second Monday of most months and meetings are open to the public. Details about these meetings and meeting agendas are available online at www.rcgov.us/rswcd.

Conservation Education Mini-Grants Available



Faculty and staff members of public, private, and alternative schools in Richland County are eligible to apply for grants in the amounts of **\$500 or \$1,000** to support campus conservation projects and youth environmental education initiatives through Conservation Education Mini-Grants and Clean Stream Columbia Awards.

All schools located in Richland County, including those located in the City of Columbia, are eligible to compete for **Conservation Education Mini-Grants**. Mini-Grants may be used to support conservation-related student projects

including, but not limited to, outdoor classrooms, school gardens, nature trails, wildlife habitats, rain barrels, composting initiatives, air quality campaigns, litter clean-ups, rain gardens, erosion control, and stream restoration. Awards are competitive and proposals will be evaluated on the project's conservation impact, feasibility, student and community involvement, and educational outcomes. Three \$500 mini-grants and one \$1,000 mini-grant are available in each award cycle. Applicants should design a budget based on what is most appropriate for their project.

Additionally, schools located in the City of Columbia are eligible to compete for **Clean Stream Columbia Awards**. These awards provide funding for projects that promote, protect, or improve water quality such as rain gardens, rain barrels, erosion control, pet waste programs, stream monitoring, composting, etc. One \$500 Clean Stream Award is available in each award cycle.

Two award cycles are available: applications received by **September 29, 2017** will be considered for fall 2017 funding; applications received by **February 2, 2018** will be considered for spring 2018 funding. Funding is issued as a reimbursement for project expenses. Project work and the expenditure of funds must be completed by **June 15, 2018**. Funding for these awards is provided by the Richland RSWCD and the City of Columbia. For more information, contact Chanda Cooper at (803) 576-2084 or cooperc@rcgov.us.

Youth Scholarship Opportunity

A \$1,000 scholarship is available to one conservation-minded Richland County student who plans to pursue undergraduate studies related to natural resource conservation, sustainable agriculture, or the environment at a college, university, or technical school in South Carolina. The scholarship will be paid to the student's academic institution upon admission.

- Applicants must be Richland County residents OR attend school in Richland County.
- Applicants must be high school seniors in the 2017-2018 school year.
- Applicants must have a demonstrated interest in natural resources, conservation, sustainable agriculture, and/or the environment and plan to pursue a related career.
- Interested applicants should submit an application form (available online), a letter of recommendation, a high school transcript, and a personal essay of at least 500 but no more than 1,000 words.

Applications must be postmarked or received electronically by February 2, 2018. Details and the application are available online at www.rcgov.us/rswcd.



S.C. Envirothon team members from W.J. Keenan High School competed for scholarships at the Clemson Sandhill Research and Education Center in May.

2017 Conservation Educator Awards

Rabbi **Meir Muller** (pictured at right), Principal of the Cutler Jewish Day School (CJDS), has been named Richland County's 2017 Conservation Principal of the Year by the RSWCD due to his inspiring leadership, steady support for environmental literacy, and commitment to providing opportunities for children to develop relationships with the natural world.

Thanks to Muller, children at CJDS have unique opportunities to spend time in nature. Over the course of several years, Muller has fostered the development of an extensive outdoor classroom featuring an accessible bridge and boardwalk, raised bed gardens, nature trail, play area, and an amphitheater with stump-style seating. Teachers of students aged one through fifth grade bring students into these areas regularly to enhance academic instruction and to help students learn to care for the earth. "Almost every elementary school class [at CJDS] goes into the woods every day," says Muller. "While local public schools offer a twelve minute recess, CJDS offers a minimum of 45 minutes each morning and 45 minutes each afternoon. One of these periods is often in the woods."

"People like Rabbi Muller are introducing young people to the environment and helping them to build a long-standing appreciation for the world we live in," says RSWCD Commissioner Jim Rhodes. "We are excited to support and encourage the efforts of teachers and administrators to create these connections."



David Kenga (pictured at left), Science Lab Teacher at St. John Neumann Catholic School (SJN), has been named Richland County's 2017 Conservation Teacher of the Year by the RSWCD.

"The slogan 'Where there's a will, there's a way' was coined for people like Kenga," says Jane Hiller, Education Coordinator for Sonoco Recycling and Director of the statewide Green Steps Schools Initiative. Hiller nominated Kenga for the conservation award because, "in the three years since he joined SJN, Kenga has transformed the school's science lab," expanded and strengthened the school's environmental programs, and garnered thousands of dollars in grant funding to support student-focused conservation projects.

Notably, Kenga has pursued grant funding and donations to purchase recycling signage and a portable lunchroom sink that allows students to empty, rinse, and recycle a variety of items. He and his students have installed drip irrigation in the school's extensive raised bed gardens to maximize production while conserving water, and he has overseen the creation and refurbishment of butterfly gardens, herb gardens, vegetable gardens, and other themed planting areas.

"The RSWCD recognizes and celebrates the achievements of teachers like Mr. Kenga because we believe it is important for students to understand the environment and how to care for it," says RSWCD Chairman Kenny Mullis.

Both awards were presented at the 2017 RSWCD Awards Banquet.

Arbor Day is a holiday set aside to plant, care for, and celebrate trees. This year, SC will observe Arbor Day on Friday, December 1, and Richland County students in grades preK-12 are invited to celebrate our local trees by participating in the Richland County Arbor Day Youth Contest. Contest winners will receive \$25 cash prizes. Entries may be individual, group, or class projects, but only one cash prize will be awarded per winning entry. The contest is open to students who live in, or attend school in, Richland County.

Student Instructions

Step 1: Choose a tree in your yard, neighborhood, school, or local park.

Step 2: Learn as much as you can about that tree.

Step 3: Share what you've learned by creating one of the three entries below!

Video: Create a video nominating your tree for inclusion in a fictitious *Real Trees of Richland County* reality TV show. Why is your tree important? Why should a TV show about Richland County's trees feature your tree? Videos may include skits, songs, dances, infomercial-style speeches, or other performances. Performances should not exceed five minutes in length. Submit the performance in a ready-to-play video format on CD/DVD or through an online video sharing service.

Biography: Become your tree's biographer. Using words, photos, drawings, maps, and/or other 2D media, create a brief biography of your tree telling its life story or important "personal stats" (e.g., species, height, age, hometown, habitat, special features, etc.). The biography may take the form of a poster (8.5x11" to 22x28") or a booklet (five pages or fewer).

Ornament: Create an Arbor Day ornament that represents your tree, or that represents something important about your tree. To create your ornament, you may use only upcycled materials (things that would otherwise be thrown away) or natural materials (twigs, leaves, bark, etc.) you forage from the habitat where your tree grows. The ornament must be smaller than 5"x5"x5", light enough to hang, and include a mechanism (loop, string, hook) for hanging. Along with your ornament, submit one index card's worth of explanatory information about your ornament and the tree it represents.

The submission deadline is Friday, **November 3, 2017**. Complete details and entry forms are available online at www.rcgov.us/rswcd.

Class Presentations

RSWCD representatives are available to conduct hands-on classroom presentations on topics related to the Arbor Day contest (trees, forests, forest ecosystems, etc.) on Tuesday and Thursday mornings during the fall semester.

Presentations can be adapted to any grade level and will be aligned with SC academic standards. To schedule a presentation for your class or classes, contact RichlandSWCD@gmail.com.

Join Richland County in celebrating Arbor Day on Friday, December 1, 2017!



Summer Intern: Melaina Dyck



This summer, RSWCD has benefitted from the efforts of Conservation Intern Melaina Dyck, a 2017 University of South Carolina graduate with a B.S. in Environmental Science. Since joining the RSWCD in May, Dyck has tackled a number of projects, including working with a team of educators to develop future Arbor Day Contests and with the Richland County Public Information Office to develop an educational tool about wetlands mitigation.

In August, Dyck will begin graduate studies in

Environmental Science and Policy at Yale University. RSWCD is grateful for her service this summer and wishes her luck in her future career!

Fall Intern: Elizabeth Karnavas



University of South Carolina senior Elizabeth Karnavas will join the RSWCD team this fall as Conservation Intern. One of her primary duties will be overseeing the Richland County Arbor Day Program, which will include class presentations, youth contests, and public outreach opportunities throughout the County.

EEASC Summer Conference



RSWCD co-hosted the Environmental Education Association of SC's (EEASC's) annual conference in Beaufort, SC in June. Fifty teachers and environmental educators from across the state participated in this conference, which provided professional development and networking opportunities as well as lots of outdoor fun! Conference highlights included a Spartina Eco-Boat Tour with Captain Amber Kuehn, a habitat safari at the LowCountry Institute led by naturalist and *Coastal*



Kingdom TV show host Tony Mills, Project Learning Tree and Project WET curriculum trainings, and a tour of the Port Royal Sound Maritime Center.



EEASC is a non-profit professional organization for formal and informal environmental educators. Midlands environmental educators are invited to participate in monthly meetups and workshops sponsored by EEASC; details about these events can be found at www.eeasc.org.

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- Mini-Grant Sponsor****: \$500 each

****Conservation Education Mini-Grants** are awarded to local schools to support conservation projects each fall and spring. Sponsors will be recognized in publicity materials.

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Name: _____

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2020 Hampton Street, Rm. 3063A
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Thank you for your support!