

# Pollinator Conservation Short Course Creates a “Buzz” in Columbia



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## Richland Soil and Water Conservation District



With more than three-quarters of the world’s flowering plants and more than one-third of the world’s food crops relying on insect pollinators, pollinator conservation is vital to food system security, environmental sustainability, and human well-being.

In June, the Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) partnered with The Xerces Society, Clemson Extension, and the SC-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to present a Pollinator Conservation Short Course at the Clemson Sandhill Research and Education Center in northeast Columbia. More than seventy people, including growers and resource professionals, attended the workshop to learn more about protecting and supporting native pollinators.

The course began with the planting of a pollinator habitat plot with native wildflowers and grasses. The seed blend, donated by Ernst Conservation Seed and Roundstone Native Seed, contained over 50 species of forbs including wild indigo, tickseed, beardtongue, goldenrods, coneflowers, and blazing stars.

Under the direction of NRCS Wildlife Biologist Sudie Daves Thomas, participants mixed the wildflower seeds with a variety of carriers such as sand, sawdust, kitty litter, and pelletized lime to promote easier and more even seed distribution. The seeds were then hand-broadcast, and the area was lightly raked to increase seed-to-soil contact. Extension Agent Tim Davis discussed site preparation and demonstrated a variety of

mechanical seeders which could be used to plant larger areas. Back in the classroom, Pollinator Conservation Specialist Dr. Nancy Adamson shared information about pollinator biology, pollinator-friendly farming, and habitat restoration.

Several USDA Farm Bill programs can provide financial cost-share assistance to help eligible agricultural producers conserve and create pollinator habitat. NRCS staff can also provide technical assistance, including conservation planning. Beneficial conservation practices include field borders, hedgerows, grassed waterways, vegetative barriers, and cover crops, all of which can be planted with diverse legumes, forbs, and/or grasses to provide pollen, nectar, and habitat for native bees. For more information, contact your local NRCS District Conservationist. (Richland and Calhoun County residents should contact District Conservationist Ajoa Harris at (803) 874-3337). To learn more about pollinator conservation, visit The Xerces Society online at [www.xerces.org](http://www.xerces.org).

*The Pollinator Conservation Short Course was presented through Organic Richland, a cooperative program with SC-NRCS.*





Photos by Jason Carter

# Save the Date: Soil Health Field Day

Pesticide applicator  
continuing  
certification hours  
will be offered!

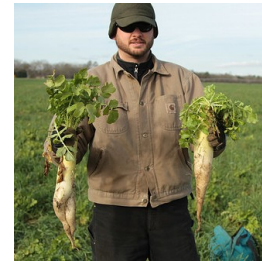
**Tuesday, October 7, 2014**

9:00 am—12:30 pm

Lunch Provided

at

Carter Farms  
120 Merrylane Road  
Eastover, SC 29044

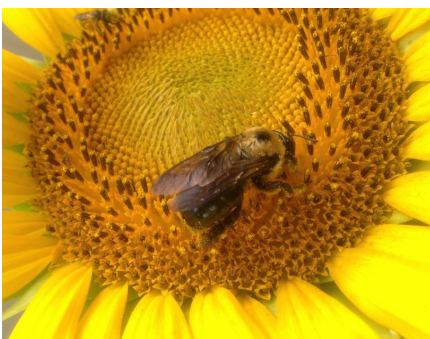


**RSVP to Charlie Fisher by 9/26 at (803) 576-2080 or [fisherc@rcgov.us](mailto:fisherc@rcgov.us).**

More details TBA. This workshop is sponsored by the Richland SWCD, the University of South Carolina, and the USDA-NRCS through a Conservation Innovation Grant in partnership with the Dillon, Marlboro, Kershaw, Calhoun, and Orangeburg SWCDs.

## Did You Know? Pollinator Tips & Trivia

- ☼ There are more than 4,000 species of wild native bees in North America.
- ☼ Many native bees forage earlier or later in the day than honey bees, and native bees often visit flowers in wet or cold conditions when honey bees remain in the hive.
- ☼ Native plants are four times more attractive to native bees than exotic flowers.
- ☼ 70% of native bees nest in the ground. Conserve nesting sites by reducing tillage and protecting sandy and bare areas when possible.
- ☼ Diversify. Diverse wildflower diets enhance disease resistance in honey bees, and bee and butterfly diversity increases with plant diversity.
- ☼ Scientists have documented an ~80% decline in Monarch butterfly populations since 2000 in areas with heavy corn and soybean agriculture.
- ☼ Infrequent mowing, grazing, or burning can help maintain pollinator habitat. Do not disturb more than one-third of a habitat area each year.



☼ There are 45 species of bumble bees in the US. These bees pollinate blueberries and cucurbits (squash, cucumbers, and melons) more efficiently than honey bees.

# The Future of Midlands Farms and Food Summit



**Monday, August 4th, 9am-2pm**  
Phillips Market Center at the State Farmers Market  
3483 Charleston Hwy., West Columbia

Local foods, small farms, and specialty crops are gaining ground in South Carolina. From the buzz created by the recent Making Small Farms Big Business report to new developments in the Greenville and Charleston food systems, change is coming to our state! The Midlands Local Food Collaborative invites YOU (farmers, ranchers, distributors, wholesalers, chefs, grocers, and other food systems stakeholders) to join us to discuss the potential of Midlands farms and foods. We will learn about food system developments in the upstate and lowcountry, speak with Midlands growers and buyers about our region's food system opportunities, and hear updates on food safety, the pending Food Safety Modernization Act, and the new Farm Bill. A locally-sourced lunch will be served at this **free** event.

## RSVP

Online: <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/thefutureofmidlandsfarmsfoodtickets11778906025>

By E-mail: [welborn.katie@gmail.com](mailto:welborn.katie@gmail.com)

By Phone: (803) 360-3358

*The Midlands Local Food Collaborative is a group of organizations dedicated to a robust local food system in the Midlands of SC. Collaborative members provide education, technical and financial assistance, and community advocacy to promote sustainable agriculture, land stewardship, and equitable food access. Participants include:*



The Richland SWCD's no-till drill was recently used to plant a cover crop blend of browntop millet and sorghum-sudan grass at the Clemson Sandhill REC. Cover crops and no-till management provide conservation benefits such as improved soil health and water quality. Many Conservation Districts offer low-cost rental of no-till drills and other implements to encourage the adoption of conservation practices.

For more information about the Richland SWCD drill, call (803) 576-2080. For a complete list of equipment available for rent through SC Conservation Districts, visit <http://www.dnr.sc.gov/conservation/pdf/CDEquipmentList.pdf>.

Midlands representatives from federal, state, and local agencies gathered in St. Matthews on June 12 to learn more about the Midlands Local Food Collaborative (MLFC) and new developments in the local food system. This Agency Stakeholder Meeting was hosted by the MLFC and sponsored by Organic Richland, a cooperative program with SC-NRCS.



# Dig Deeper: Richland County Poster Contest Winners



Four students have been named winners in Richland County's 2014 Conservation Poster Contest, sponsored by the Richland SWCD:

- K-1<sup>st</sup> Grade: **Anna Louise Lindler**, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade  
Brockman Elementary School
- 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade: **Ella Grace Comer**, 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade  
Brockman Elementary School
- 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade: **Brianna D. Hinson**, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Longleaf Middle School
- 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Grade: **Morgan Linet Simmonds**, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Longleaf Middle School

These students received cash prizes, and their posters will advance to the state competition sponsored by the SC Association of Conservation Districts.



7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Grade Winner  
Morgan Linet Simmonds

This year's poster contest theme was "Dig Deeper: Mysteries in the Soil." Students' posters were created to educate others about soil science and to encourage soil conservation.

"Soil conservation is such an important message for Conservation Districts to convey," says Richland SWCD Commissioner Kenny Mullis. "Districts were founded during the Dust Bowl Era specifically to protect soils against erosion and depletion. While much has changed

# Three Schools Represent Richland at SC Envirothon



The Richland SWCD sponsored student teams from Lower Richland High School, Keenan High School, and Dreher High School (pictured above, left to right) to represent Richland County in the annual SC Envirothon competition held in May at the Clemson Sandhill Research and Education Center in Columbia.

Held outdoors, the Envirothon is a dynamic environmental competition for high school students which promotes a passion for environmental science and conservation policy.

Students are tested in the subject areas of aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and a topic that varies from year to year. The 2014 concentration was sustainable agriculture.

Envirothon competitions have been hosted in SC since 1997 and have provided over \$85,000 in scholarship funds to local high school students. The Envirothon is coordinated by DNR in cooperation with several natural resource agencies including SWCDs. The Richland SWCD is a major financial sponsor of the event.

## 2014 Awards Banquet Highlights



Associate Commissioner Mary Burts and Commissioner Hemphill Pride, III recognize Conservation Teacher of the Year Brooke Scott (top) and Principal of the Year Rose Tindall (bottom).

The Richland SWCD celebrated conservation partnerships and education award winners at its annual Awards Banquet on May 13, 2014. Among the award recipients were Richland County Conservation Teacher of the Year, Brooke Scott, and Conservation Principal of the Year, Rosemary Tindall.

Scott, a 4th grade teacher at Sandlapper Elementary School, has spearheaded the expansion of Sandlapper’s recycling program to accept more than 20 items, including shoes, small electronics, and glue sticks. Her students share their recycling knowledge with the community through outreach efforts, and this year alone, Scott and her students have raised more than \$5,000 for school conservation projects through grants and recycling challenges. “My main goal is to help students care...about

others and...about their world,” says Scott, explaining what motivates her to focus on conservation in the classroom.

Tindall serves as principal of St. Joseph Catholic School. Under her leadership, St. Joseph has become a Certified SC Green Steps School, establishing and sustaining eight model quality projects to conserve, protect, and restore natural resources. These projects include conserving resources through reduction, reuse, and recycling; protecting air quality; conserving water with rain barrels; composting; preventing litter; gardening and providing wildlife habitat. St. Joseph was also named SC Conservation School of the Year in 2012.

Find more photos and award winners on the Richland SWCD Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/rswcd](http://www.facebook.com/rswcd).

## Farewell to Dr. James B. “Buddy” Atkins

The Richland SWCD bade farewell to Richland County Conservation Department Director Dr. James B. “Buddy” Atkins at a reception held at the Belser Arboretum in June.

Atkins joined the District’s staff in December 2010 as Manager of the Richland County Environmental Planning Division, which became the Conservation Department in 2012.

“Buddy was a pleasure to work with, and I hope he will remain involved with the SWCD’s work

in the months and years to come,” says Associate Commissioner Jeff Laney. “Buddy’s passion for conservation and his technical expertise helped the Richland SWCD remain relevant in an urbanizing environment. Several SWCD programs, including Organic Richland, came about as a direct result of Buddy’s leadership and vision.”

Atkins plans to spend time with his family, pursue his passion for photography, and contribute to local and statewide conservation efforts in his retirement.



Left to right: former Conservation Department Director Buddy Atkins with Buz Kloot (USC) and Amy Overstreet (NRCS).

## Recent Events



Environmental educators participated in a Project Learning Tree (PLT) activity, “Tree Factory,” at the Environmental Education Association of SC’s (EEASC’s) annual conference in June during a session presented by the Richland SWCD.

The Richland SWCD works with both PLT and EEASC to provide environmental education programming for K-12 students and teachers. To learn more about PLT, visit [www.plt.org](http://www.plt.org). To learn more about EEASC, visit [www.eeasc.org](http://www.eeasc.org).



Congaree National Park Ranger David Shelley led thirty teachers from Richland County School District One (RCSD1) on a boardwalk hike as a part of this year’s **Nature-Based Inquiry Institute**.

The Nature-Based Inquiry Program, now in its eighth year, is a professional development initiative for early childhood and elementary educators presented through a partnership between the USC Center for Science Education, RCSD1, the Richland SWCD, and Congaree National Park. Funding for Nature-Based Inquiry is provided by the Commission on Higher Education.



Preschool teachers learned about soil health for school gardens and worm composting for the preschool classroom in a session led by Richland SWCD Education Coordinator, Chanda Cooper, at the 2014 **Farm to (Pre)School Action Institute**.

SC Farm to School is a joint effort of the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, SC Department of Agriculture, SC Department of Education, and Clemson University.

# 2014-2015 Youth and Teacher Education Programs



Richland SWCD Educator Chanda Cooper examines a beaver skull with Virginia Grace Laney at the Richland SWCD's wildlife exhibit at the Sparkleberry Country Fair in April.

## Green Steps Schools



SC Green Steps Schools (GSS) is a statewide recognition program providing awards and support to schools in SC that take annual, sustainable steps toward environmental responsibility. In the 2013-2014 school year, the Richland SWCD mentored 29 GSS projects at ten Richland County schools. Examples of GSS projects include:

- School gardens, which provide habitat for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife
- Rain barrels, which encourage water conservation
- Plants in Every Classroom initiatives, which promote indoor air quality
- Classroom composting, which reduces waste and improves soil quality

The 2014 GSS Training for school personnel will be held on Thursday, October 9, at 4:00 pm at Sonoco Recycling in Columbia. For details and to RSVP, contact Jane Hiller at (803) 779-0608 or [jane.hiller@sonoco.com](mailto:jane.hiller@sonoco.com).

## Conservation Education Mini-Grants

Fall Application Deadline: October 15, 2014  
Spring Application Deadline: February 13, 2015

Faculty and staff members of public, private, and alternative schools in Richland County are eligible to apply for mini-grants (up to \$250) for campus conservation projects and youth environmental education initiatives. Project work and the expenditure of funds must be completed by June 30, 2015.

## Eagle Scout Mini-Grants

Fall Application Deadline: October 15, 2014  
Spring Application Deadline: February 13, 2015

The Richland SWCD supports Richland County Eagle Scout candidates whose projects promote natural resources conservation or conservation education initiatives. One Eagle Scout Mini-Grant (up to \$250) will be awarded each fall and spring. The application deadline for consideration for fall funding is **October 15, 2014**; the deadline for consideration for spring funding is **February 13, 2015**. The proposed project must be located in Richland County.

## Arbor Day Contest

Entry Deadline: October 31, 2014

Tree-themed poster, essay, bulletin board, and video contests will be announced for K-12 students in August, with an entry deadline of October 31, 2015. SC Arbor Day is observed on the first Friday in December. This year, Arbor Day falls on December 5, 2014.

## Conservation Education Awards

Nomination Deadline: March 31, 2015

Each school year, the District recognizes educators who have exhibited an outstanding commitment to conservation and environmental education. Nominations for Richland County's 2014-2015 Conservation Teacher and Principal of the Year are due by March 31, 2015. Winners receive cash prizes and are recognized at the District's annual banquet.

## Conservation Poster Contest

Entry Deadline: April 3, 2015

The National Conservation Poster Contest, sponsored annually by the National Association of Conservation Districts, raises awareness about soil and water conservation issues through youth outreach. The Contest is open to public, private, and home-schooled students in grades K through 12. The 2015 National Contest Theme will be announced in late 2014.

## 2014 Affiliate Members

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SC State Fair

### Gold Members

Ag South

Hugh Caldwell

Colliers International

Eastside Printing

Edwin Eargle

Margaret Gardner

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South Carolina Farm Bureau

*Thank you for  
your support!*

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## Support the District: Become an Affiliate

Affiliate Members are a vital part of our conservation team. The monetary support given annually by Affiliates helps us carry out our conservation and stewardship programs within the County. Please support our efforts by becoming an Affiliate Member today! Contributions are tax deductible.

- \$25—Affiliate Member
- \$50—Silver Affiliate Member
- \$100—Gold Affiliate Member
- \$250—Platinum Affiliate Member
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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I prefer to receive RSWCD Newsletters via (check one):  
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Please return this form and a check made payable to Richland Conservation District to the address below:

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