



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD)
2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A
Columbia, SC 29204
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October 17, 2022 • 6pm
 3147 Forest Dr., Columbia, SC 29204

Commissioners Present

Kenny Mullis, Chair
 Jeff Laney, Vice Chair
 Mary Burts

Associate Commissioners Present

Logan Richardson
 Tim McSwain
 Mary Frances Hendrix

Others Present

Chanda Cooper
 Quinton Epps
 Aric Jensen
 Elizabeth Laffitte
 Jennifer Mancke
 Nick Walker

Welcome and Call to Order: Mullis called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. Laney gave the invocation.

Introductions: The group welcomed Nick Walker of the Lexington Soil and Water Conservation District and Elizabeth Laffitte of the Palmetto Garden Club.

Approve Agenda and Minutes: Burts moved to approve the agenda as presented; Laney seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Mancke noted the count of license plates at Congaree National Park was conducted earlier this year, not last week as reported in the draft September minutes. Burts moved to approve the minutes from the September 12, 2022 meeting as corrected; Laney seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Financial Report: Cooper provided the following financial overview:

- **Operating Account (9/30/22 Statement)**
 - Starting Balance: \$37,484.64 (8/31/22)
 - Deposits and Credits: \$1,051.50
 - Expenses and Debits: \$1,029.49
 - Ending Balance: \$37,506.65 (9/30/22)

- **Credit Card (10/5/22 Statement)**
 - Starting Balance: \$168.36 (9/5/22)
 - Payments: \$168.36
 - Purchases: \$344.67
 - Ending Balance: \$344.67 (10/5/22) <paid in full 10/17/22

- **Easement Stewardship Account (9/30/22 Statement)**
 - Starting Account Value: \$52,630.89 (9/1/22)
 - Ending Account Value: \$50,946.20 (9/30/22)

- **SCACD Contribution Agreement Account (9/30/22 Statement)**
 - Starting Balance: \$252.51 (9/1/22)
 - Ending Balance: \$252.51 (9/30/22)

- **PayPal Account (9/30/22 Statement)**
 - Current Balance: \$0.00 (9/30/22)

During the last meeting, Laney requested information about the RSWCD credit card. Cooper reported it is a First Citizens Cash Rewards Business Visa. Rewards include \$100 cash back after you spend \$3,000 in the first 90 days; 5% cash back on utility and wireless phone purchases for the first 12 months, then 3%; 2% cash back on gas and office supplies; and 0% intro APR on purchases and balance transfers for 9 months, then 14.24% to 23.24% variable APR.

RSWCD currently has \$255.94 available in reward dollars from office supply purchases. These reward dollars can be redeemed for cash back (statement credit or direct deposit), pay me back (statement credit), or a donation to Teen Cancer America. Laney moved to donate \$50 to Teen Cancer America and receive the remainder as a statement credit; Burts seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Friends of RSWCD Report: Laney reported Carol Kososki and Ravi Surendran have renewed their support and RSWCD has 37 current active Friends of RSWCD. Many Friendships will expire by the end of the year; staff plans to mail “time to renew” reminders in November and will bring a list of members to the next meeting for review.

Pinewood Lake Park Pollinator Garden Report: No report was available.

NRCS: No report was available.

SCDNR: No report was available.

Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC): McSwain reported the RCCC continues to participate in the Land Development Code revision and thanked Jensen for his participation in this effort. Jensen noted the biggest change connected to the Land Development Code is probably the division of the Rural Zone into three different zones: Ag (>35 acres); homestead (minimum 2 acres); and rural transition zone (minimum 1 acre). RCCC continues to advocate for the Lower Richland Tourism Plan. RCCC staff are working with historic preservation and natural resource conservation grant recipients. The RCCC is working on conservation easements and is considering properties for purchase. RCCC offered conditional approval of a draft Ag + Art Tour funding proposal from RSWCD.

Education Report: Mancke and Cooper reported the following activities since the last meeting on September 12, 2022:

- Diana Llaca-Curiel has joined RSWCD as a Community Outreach Intern.

- Cooper submitted a Dominion Energy Grant proposal requesting \$10K: \$6K for the Seed Sanctuary and \$4K for RSWCD's "One Water" education campaign. Award announcements are expected in December.
- RSWCD partnered with Carolina Farm Stewardship Association to host a High Tunnel Production Workshop at Sal's Ol' Timey Feed & Seed; 18 people attended the event.
- RSWCD hosted a quarterly Midlands Local Food Collaborative Meeting for 14 participants.
- Burts represented RSWCD at the ground-breaking of Living Wright Foundation's community garden at Senate's End.
- Cooper presented a Pollinator Conservation Workshop for 29 participants at an SC Family and Community Leaders meeting. RSWCD provided 85 seed packets and pollinator conservation brochures for the SCFCL's state conference.
- Cooper served as a panelist at the Richland County Neighborhood Improvement "Planning for Resiliency" Conference. RSWCD set up a vendor/exhibit table at the event, and Cooper also led a "One Water" youth activity.
- Cooper led a "Soil Science for Elementary Educators" workshop for 24 students enrolled in a UofSC Science Methods Course.
- Several RSWCD representatives attended the SCACD East Piedmont and Mid-Year Meetings.
- 20 students from Karen Campbell's U101 course and 20 students from the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority packed seeds for the Seed Sanctuary during two separate volunteer workdays. Six RSWCD team members packed seeds at a third volunteer workday. Summer seeds have been replaced with winter seeds at Richland Library Eastover; the Library's hours have changed and the Library is now open only three days each week. RSWCD will host a Pop-Up Seed Sanctuary on Friday, 10/28, from 3-5pm. Dr. Arlene Marturano will assist with the event.
- RSWCD received 10 Conservation Education Mini-Grant Applications totaling \$8,693 in requests; RSWCD has approximately \$2K to award this fall. Several commissioners, associate commissioners, and staff are reviewing the applications.
- RSWCD has provided poster contest materials to Eau Claire High School and Bethel-Hanberry Elementary School.
- Staff are planning the Environmental Education Association of SC's (EEASC's) 2023 conference for June 21-24 at St. Helena Island. The theme is Inclusivitee: Environmental Education for Everyone.
- Mancke, Cooper, and Llaca-Curiel attended the latest EEASC Midlands Meetup at Walther Farms.
- Mancke and Cooper participated in the recent EEASC Board Retreat.
- Cooper attended the Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance Conference in Helen, GA.
- Cooper and Mullis are assisting with planning the SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition annual meeting on Friday, November 4. Cooper is leading SCFGLC strategic planning work sessions.
- Mancke is mentoring Glenforest School and Heathwood Hall School as they enroll in the Green Step School program.

Advocacy Report: Mullis will deliver RSWCD's annual report to County Council tomorrow night.

RSWCD Strategic Planning: RSWCD is in the process of updating its 2018-2022 strategic plan. The group reviewed and revised RSWCD's existing Goals 1 and 2 (Appendix A).

November Meeting Location: Following discussion, Laney moved to hold the November meeting at Lizard's Thicket on Garners Ferry Road and, if unavailable, at the Lizard's Thicket on Forest Drive. Burts seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Officer Elections: Mullis, Laney, and Rhodes are willing to continue serving in their current officer roles. Hemphill Pride does not plan to run for re-election this fall. Burts moved to keep RSWCD's current officers in place (Mullis – Chair, Laney – Vice Chair, Rhodes – Secretary/Treasurer). Laney seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Ag + Art Tour Funding Proposal: The Richland County Ag + Art Tour Committee has, to date, functioned as an all-volunteer entity and needs dedicated staff support to host a 2023 Tour. The Ag + Art Tour is a great fit for the missions of both RCCC and RSWCD. RCCC has agreed to fund a \$10K RSWCD proposal (Appendix B) to support the 2023 Ag + Art Tour, pending RSWCD's approval of the proposal. Following discussion, Laney moved to approve the proposal as presented. Burts seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. RSWCD can easily track data such as the number of attendees, number of farms, and number of artisans who participate in the 2023 event.

Ag + Art Tour Coordinator Position: RSWCD will hire an independent contractor to serve as a 2023 Ag + Art Tour Event Coordinator. Following discussion, Burts moved to approve the proposed Ag + Art Tour Coordinator Position Description (Appendix C) with staff allowed to modify the dates for the application submission deadline and the contract position start based on the date the position is posted online. Laney seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Public Input: Burts will volunteer at the Wood Magic Forest Fair.

Next Meeting: The next board meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 14, 2022 at 6pm.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:10pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Chanda L. Cooper, Conservation Education Analyst

Appendix A: RSWCD Strategic Plan Update

January 2018 - December 2022 Plan	January 2023 – December 2027 Plan
<p>Goal 1: To encourage agricultural and timber producers to adopt best management practices to conserve natural resources with a focus on soil and water.</p>	
<p>Desired Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richland County farmers, large and small, will increase the utilization of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to conserve natural resources. • New and beginning farmers will receive technical assistance and support. • Agricultural sources of pollution will be reduced. • The use of forestry BMPs by Richland County timber farmers will increase. • Equipment rental (ex. no till drill) will increase. 	<p>Staff Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richland County farmers and timber producers will increase the utilization of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to conserve natural resources. • Agricultural sources of pollution will be reduced.
<p>Current Strategies:</p> <p>Strategy A: Expand RSWCD capacity for farmer education by securing additional staff.</p> <p>Strategy B: Eliminate projects to allow current staff more time to increase education efforts for local farmers.</p> <p>Strategy C: Enhance and increase workshops, demonstrations, and specific financial support on farming techniques that promote the wise use of natural resources including protection of surface water, groundwater, and soil health and reduce non-point source pollution.</p> <p>Strategy D: Explore cooperative agreement with SC Forestry Commission to expand education programs particularly for timber farmers.</p>	<p>Staff Recommendations:</p> <p>Strategy A: Provide and promote workshops, demonstrations, equipment access, publications, research projects, and financial support for farming techniques that encourage the wise use of natural resources and reduce non-point source pollution.</p> <p>Strategy B: Promote conservation planning and conservation incentive programs.</p>
<p>Goal 2: To empower teachers and informal educators to educate students about the conservation of our natural resources.</p>	
<p>Desired Outcomes:</p>	<p>Staff Recommendations:</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environmental education will be integrated into Richland County School Districts and local pre-service teacher training programs.• Participation in workshops for environmental educators will increase.• RSWCD staff will focus efforts on providing teacher education workshops.• Teachers will be supported in their campus-based efforts to provide environmental education opportunities for students.• Grade-appropriate tools and curricula for environmental education will be available to local educators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers will be supported in their campus-based efforts to provide environmental education opportunities for students.• Grade-appropriate tools and curricula for environmental education will be available to local educators.
<p>Current Strategies:</p> <p>Strategy A: Expand capacity by hiring additional staff to assist with youth and teacher programs.</p> <p>Strategy B: Support school-based conservation projects through the mini-grant program and project mentorship.</p> <p>Strategy C: Provide teacher/educator training in peer-reviewed, standards-aligned environmental education curricula such as Project Learning Tree, Project WET, and Project WILD, Adopt-A-Stream, and others.</p> <p>Strategy D: Provide non-curriculum-based professional development and networking opportunities for teachers and environmental educators through partnership programs with the Environmental Education Association of South Carolina (EEASC), the SC Outreach and Informal Educators Summit, and others.</p>	<p>Staff Recommendations:</p> <p>Strategy A: Provide financial support for school-based conservation projects.</p> <p>Strategy B: Provide and promote technical support for school-based conservation projects through the SC Green Steps Schools program.</p> <p>Strategy C: Provide and promote professional development opportunities for teachers/educators to learn best practices in environmental education and access peer-reviewed, standards-aligned curricula such as Project Learning Tree, Project WET, Project WILD, Take Action SC, and others.</p> <p>Strategy D: Provide educators with access to materials, tools, and kits to facilitate environmental education experiences for their students.</p>

Appendix B: Ag + Art Tour Funding Proposal

Summary

The Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD) seeks \$10,000 in funding from the Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC) to continue and expand Richland County's participation in the 2023 Ag + Art Tour. As a part of this program expansion, RSWCD will work to increase participation in the Tour by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) farmers, artisans, and patrons.

Approximately \$20,139 of in-kind matching funding will be provided by RSWCD staff members and Ag + Art Tour Committee members.

Project Background

The SC Ag + Art Tour is a free, self-guided tour of farms and markets featuring local artisans. Ten counties, including Richland, participated in the Ag + Art Tour in 2022. During the tour, visitors see first-hand where their food comes from, watch artists in action and purchase their works, enjoy the melodies of local musicians, and learn more about rural life. The tour is the largest free farm and art tour in the nation with over 80,000 visitors participating since 2012. (Learn more about the tour at <https://www.agandarttour.com/>.)

Richland County hosted its first Ag + Art Tour in 2019 with five farm sites and 1,273 visitors. The 2020 Tour was canceled due to COVID-19, but in 2021, Richland County's Tour was reinstated with 11 farm sites clustered in Blythewood and Lower Richland. Participation in the Tour also increased, with 2,309 visitors from 97 zip codes. Approximately one-third of these visitors came from out-of-county. In 2022, the Richland County Tour featured 13 sites but only attracted 1,465 visitors. This drop in visitation may be attributed, in large part, to leadership turnover and a lack of volunteer time/energy in planning, fundraising, and marketing.

By comparison, York County, which has the strongest Ag + Art Tour participation in the state, featured 28 tour sites and just under 100 artisans in 2022 and attracted over 5,200 participants. Approximately 33% of those participants were from out-of-county. Richland County's Ag + Art Tour aspires to this level of success, and, with the support of RCCC and RSWCD, we believe our program can recruit similar participation levels.

Quantitative demographic data on the number of BIPOC farmers, artisans, and patrons participated in the 2022 Richland County Ag + Art Tour are not currently available. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in 2022 only two of 13 Richland County Tour stops were hosted by BIPOC individuals (Pinewood Lake Park and Eastover Community Garden). If funding is awarded, RSWCD will work to engage more BIPOC farmers and artisans in the Tour through partnership with organizations including the SC Black Farmers Coalition, FarmaSis, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and the SC Arts Commission. This effort can ultimately help increase economic opportunities for BIPOC farmers and artisans through agritourism. RSWCD will also work to increase general Tour participation by BIPOC patrons through strategic marketing and awareness campaigns.

The statewide Ag + Art Tour is managed by Will Culler of Clemson University Extension. Each participating county has a designated Chair and Vice-Chair to lead their respective County Planning Teams. County Planning Teams are responsible for coordinating the tour within their respective counties. Richland County's Planning Team Chair has, to date, been a completely voluntary role. As a result, the Richland County Planning Team has lacked a dedicated Chair with sufficient time and energy to plan and grow the Tour.

Richland County's Ag + Art Tour Planning Team is concerned it will not be able to host a Tour in 2023 due to a lack of a dedicated Chair. RSWCD proposes hiring a professional event coordinator to take on this role. This event coordinator will lead and support other members of the Planning Team to host the 2023 Tour and increase Tour participation by BIPOC farmers, artisans, and patrons. With such dedicated leadership, the Richland County Ag + Art Tour can grow into one of the largest and most diverse Tours in the state!

Mission Connection

The RCCC is charged with "promoting nature-based recreation and eco- and heritage tourism," and agritourism is an important and growing facet of this outdoor tourism market. The Ag + Art Tour uniquely combines eco- and heritage tourism by pairing artisans—including painters, potters, weavers, quilters, musicians, bakers, and value-added producers—with farmers who can educate visitors about agricultural methods, conservation practices, and natural resource use. Additionally, several current and potential farm tour sites are clustered in Lower Richland, including Fox Hideaway Farm, the Eastover Community Garden, Mill Creek Greenhouses, and Pinewood Lake Park. Promoting agritourism activities at these sites will support the goals and strategies in the Lower Richland Tourism Plan.

RSWCD's mission is to promote the wise use and care of natural resources for long-term sustainability. Raising awareness about the importance of local agriculture in Richland County can increase public support for farmland protection programs. The Ag + Art Tour also creates economic opportunities for local farmers and encourages farmers to build stronger connections with potential customers. These actions make it more likely farmers will embrace best management practices to conserve and protect environmental resources.

Proposed Budget Request and Match

RSWCD seeks \$10,000 from RCCC to ensure a successful 2023 Ag + Art Tour. The funds will be used as follows:

- Coordinator time: 40 hours/month for 6 months @ \$25/hour (average) = \$6,000
- Coordinator travel: 24 round trips to tour sites @ 40 miles/trip (average) @ \$0.625/mile = \$600
- Coordinator office supplies/reimbursable expenses: \$400
- County cost (paid to Clemson Extension): = \$3,000* (*This number fluctuates year-to-year and the 2023 cost has not yet been set; in 2022, the County cost was \$2,431. Clemson estimates the 2023 cost will be between \$2,000 and \$3,000.)

RSWCD will match this funding with approximately 60 hours of staff time (\$2,169.60 @ \$36.16/hr). Other members of the Richland County Ag & Art Tour Committee will also provide in-kind matching funding through their voluntary time and travel; the value of these contributions is estimated at 60 hours/member x 10 members x \$29.95/hour = \$17,970. This total in-kind match is estimated at \$20,139.

Long-Term Sustainability

RSWCD will pursue additional funding sources to ensure the long-term sustainability and growth of the Richland County Ag + Art Tour in future years. These funding sources will include Richland County Hospitality Tax Grant Funds, County Council discretionary funds, corporate sponsorships, and other opportunities.

Recognition

RCCC will be recognized as a premier 2023 Richland County Ag + Art Tour Sponsor. Its logo will be prominently displayed on the Richland County Ag + Art Tour website, marketing materials, and signage.

Appendix C: Ag + Art Tour Coordinator Position

Call for Applications: Richland County Ag + Art Tour Coordinator

Description: The Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD) seeks a Richland County Ag + Art Tour Coordinator. The Coordinator will chair the Richland County Ag + Art Tour Planning Team and will implement the Tour using the Tour planning guide.

Primary Tasks:

- Chair the Richland County Ag + Art Tour Planning Team
- Coordinate Tour Resource and Planning needs with the SC Ag + Art Tour Director
- Coordinate monthly Richland County Planning Team meetings
- Support, direct, and oversee the work of other Planning Team member roles, including Farm Site Coordinator, Artisan Coordinator, Marketing Coordinator, Fundraising Coordinator, and Volunteer Coordinator
- Attend monthly statewide Tour Coordinator meetings
- Serve as liaison between Richland County Ag + Art Tour Planning Team and RSWCD
- Increase diversity of farmers, artisans, and patrons participating in the Tour

Position Type: The Ag + Art Tour Coordinator will serve as an independent contractor working remotely and will be paid on an hourly basis. The contract will run from November 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023 for an average of 7 hours/week of work. Pre-authorized travel will be reimbursed at the standard mileage rate.

To Apply: Email your resume and a brief cover letter to soilandwater@richlandcountysc.gov by November 1, 2022.

About the Ag + Art Tour: The South Carolina Ag + Art Tour is a free, self-guided tour of farms and farmers' markets in select South Carolina counties featuring local artisans at every stop! During the tour, visitors can see first-hand where their food comes from, watch artists in action and purchase their works, and learn more about South Carolina's rich agricultural and artistic heritage. Visit <https://www.agandarttour.com/> for more information.