

A photograph of a winter forest scene. The trees are heavily covered in snow, and the ground is a smooth, white expanse. The sky is a clear, bright blue.



**Richland Soil and Water  
Conservation District**

ORGANIC  
Richland

Through the Organic Richland program, the Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD) and several partners, including NRCS, Sustainable Midlands, Clemson University, and COPASCities hosted a regional food summit on November 8. Approximately 35 farmers, restaurateurs, retailers, distributors, and support organization representatives evaluated the status and envisioned the future of the midlands local food system.

Executive Director of the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, presented the ideal of a sustainable, environmentally sound, economically viable, socially just food system. He described seven components of such a system (land, water, farmers/labor, inputs, infrastructure, consumers/markets, and waste), then facilitated a locally-focused discussion of each. During the discussion, participants identified challenges and opportunities related to each component.

Participants emphasized the need for a aggregator to assist in the distribution of local foods and a comprehensive, data-based regional food system analysis, as well as for political action to address regulatory concerns which impede local food systems. A full summary of the event is available at [www.rcgov.us/rswcd](http://www.rcgov.us/rswcd).



*Keywords from participants' vision statements at the Midlands Local Food Summit.*

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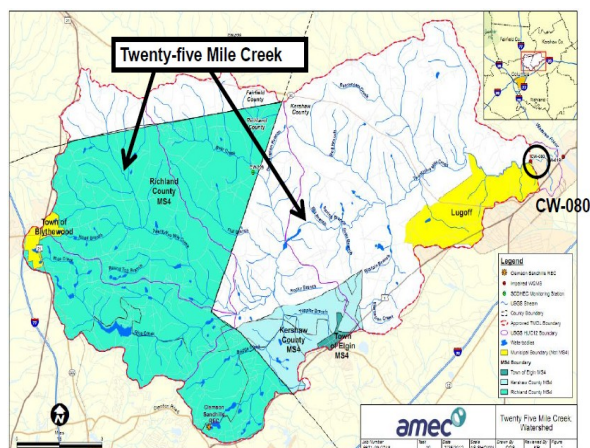
# Twenty-five Mile Creek 319 watershed grant awarded

Kershaw, Richland, and Fairfield Counties have received a 319 grant from SCDHEC to develop a watershed-based plan to address water pollution in the Twenty-five Mile Creek watershed. The Twenty-five Mile Creek watershed has headwaters in Fairfield County and extends through Richland and Kershaw to the Wateree River. The 124 square mile watershed consists of mostly rural lands, although portions of the Town of Blythewood, Town of Elgin, and Lugoff are included.

Twenty-five Mile Creek contains high levels of fecal coliform bacteria and

has an impaired macroinvertebrate community. High levels of fecal coliform bacteria can be caused by runoff from livestock areas, improper land applications of manure, as well as failing septic systems, sanitary sewer overflows, and wildlife. Macroinvertebrate impairment can be caused by sediment, nutrients, toxic pollutants, and increased stream flow in urbanized areas.

The RSWCD is partnering with the Stormwater and Public Health Departments of Kershaw, Richland, and Fairfield Counties; USDA-NRCS; Town of Elgin; Town of Blythewood; Clemson Extension; and the Kershaw and Fairfield SWCDs to identify pollution sources and solutions in the watershed. AMEC will provide technical assistance for the project. Once the watershed based plan is complete, the partners will apply for funding to implement the plan and take corrective action to improve water quality in the watershed.



## Master Planning in Lower Richland, Spring Hill

Richland County is developing two new master plans which will impact the future conservation of agricultural lands in Lower Richland and Spring Hill.

Residents of Lower Richland and Spring Hill are invited to provide their vision for the future of their communities either in person at a series of community meetings or

online. Community meetings are currently underway with the plans expected to be completed in Spring 2013.

For more information about the master plans, contact LaToya Grate, Richland County Comprehensive Planner, at [GrateL@rcgov.us](mailto:GrateL@rcgov.us) or (803) 576-2162.

## EQIP cost-share deadline February 15

SC NRCS is accepting applications for the organic, seasonal high tunnel, longleaf pine, and energy initiatives through the agency's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). These initiatives offer nearly \$2.74 million dollars in financial assistance, in addition to valuable technical assistance.

Farmers and landowners can sign up for conservation programs throughout the year, but funding selections are made at specific times and the first application deadline is February 15, 2013. It is important for producers to submit their applications as soon as possible to be eligible for limited funding.

"EQIP is our most robust offering with many options for South Carolina producers," said SC NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs Kellee Melton. "This year, we have popular soil health practices such as cover crops, crop rotation, nutrient management, and rotational grazing as well as payment options for farmers to develop plans to better manage their resources."

If you are interested in EQIP programs, contact your local NRCS office to identify the conservation measures you would like to implement on your land. The NRCS District Conservationist can help you develop a conservation plan, identify recommended practices, and pursue funding through one of the many Farm Bill program options available. The NRCS service center for Richland County residents is located in St. Matthews and can be reached at (803) 874-3337.

# RSWCD News Briefs

Chairman **John V. Green** was re-elected to the RSWCD Board in the general election and Commissioner **Kenny Mullis** was reappointed to the RSWCD Board by SCDNR in November.

Conservation Districts operate under the direction of five-member Boards. Three Commissioners are elected in the General Election; two are appointed by SCDNR. Commissioners volunteer their time and services to improve local natural resource conservation.

The **USC Equestrian Center** facility, One Wood Farm in Blythewood, received technical assistance from the RSWCD and USDA-NRCS to correct runoff and erosion problems at the facility. NRCS provided a priority listing and cost estimates for improvements to the facility totaling \$300,000. Recommended improvements include grassy waterways, bioswales, and improved paddock and manure management techniques.

A **no-till drill** is available for rent for spring planting through the RSWCD. Contact Kenny Mullis at (803) 331-6612 for details.

## Save the Date

**SC Organic Growing Conference**  
**Saturday, March 2, 2013**  
**Longleaf Middle School**  
**Blythewood, SC**

Watch for details about the conference at the SC Organization for Organic Living website, [www.scorganicliving.com](http://www.scorganicliving.com).

## Katie Eisenhower joins the RSWCD Team



*Katie Eisenhower, the District's new intern, seated atop an antique John Deere at the FarmVille celebration at EdVenture Children's Museum.*

There's a new smiling face in the RSWCD office—that of intern Katie Eisenhower! Katie is a senior Geography major at the University of South Carolina, and she joined the RSWCD in September as an intern on the Organic Richland project. She is currently helping to improve data collection and management for a local food directory, as well as develop educational materials and spearhead a local food initiative at the Richland County Administration Building.

A self-proclaimed farm girl from Fredericksburg, PA, Katie grew up

milking cows, showing horses, and living the rural life. She has competed in the Pennsylvania State 4-H Horse Show, Lebanon Area Fair, and Pennsylvania State Farmshow; and she has been an ambassador of agriculture as the Lebanon Area Fair Queen. In addition to serving as a Resident Mentor at Bloomsburg University and the University of South Carolina, she has interned with the Penn State Cooperative Extension and South Carolina Department of Agriculture.

The RSWCD is pleased to welcome Katie to the team!

## Richland County Development Roundtable News

The Richland County Development Roundtable is currently developing a new Open Space ordinance to guide conservation-related development in the County. The voluntary ordinance allows developers to set aside important conservation areas, such as wetlands, floodplains, stream buffers and native forests in exchange for density based zoning.

The new ordinance will replace and expand on the current "Green Code" which is set to be repealed in spring 2013. District staff have been working with the Development Roundtable to ensure forward-looking conservation goals are included in the ordinance and to work towards the long-term protection of the remaining agricultural lands in Richland County.

The draft Open Space ordinance is scheduled for County Council consideration in April 2013.

For more information, contact Buddy Atkins at (803) 576-2082 or [atkinsj@rcgov.us](mailto:atkinsj@rcgov.us).



# Richland County Celebrates SC Arbor Day



*Representatives of Richland County Council, Richland Soil and Water Conservation District, Richland County Conservation Commission, and Forest Lake Elementary planted a tree on the grounds of the Richland County Administration Building.*

The Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD) and the Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC) commemorated Arbor Day 2012 with a series of events and ceremonial tree-plantings. Members of Richland County Council and special guests from the RSWCD, RCCC, and Forest Lake Elementary School kicked off the festivities with a proclamation, readings, and the planting of a Chinese Elm on the grounds of the Richland County Administration Building on Tuesday, December 4.

On Thursday, December 6, Richland County Arborist Carroll Williamson joined the RSWCD, RCCC, and over 100 preschool and kindergarten students at John P. Thomas Elementary School in Richland County School District One to plant a White Oak on the school's campus. Following the tree-planting, actors from EdVenture Children's Museum Theater Team performed *Ellie and Evie Branch Out: An Arbor Day Play* for students and teachers.

Preschool and kindergarten students helped plant another White Oak on the playground at Pontiac Elementary School in Richland County School District Two on Friday, December 7 (officially Arbor Day in South Carolina) following an assembly featuring educational entertainer Tim Womick. A native of North Carolina, Mr. Womick is celebrated as a modern-day Johnny Appleseed and has traveled the world planting trees and spreading the message of the importance of trees.

South Carolina Project Learning Tree hosted a special Arbor Day family event on Saturday, December 8, at Harbison State Forest. The RSWCD sponsored an exhibit at the event called "Wildlife Needs Forests," where guests were able to learn about native species and create plaster casts of animal tracks.

Arbor Day events concluded on Tuesday, December 11, with a program at Harbison West Elementary School in Richland/Lexington School District Five. Students performed original tree-themed songs, cheers, and readings, and members of Student Council assisted with the planting of an Eastern Redbud tree at the front of the school.



*Students and teachers at John P. Thomas Elementary celebrated Arbor Day with a tree-planting and a performance of Ellie and Evie Branch Out: An Arbor Day Play by actors from the EdVenture Children's Museum Theater Team. The program was featured on the WACH Fox morning show.*





In addition to these events, the RSWCD and RCCC sponsored an Arbor Day photo contest. Judges selected twenty-four photos of trees from the entries, and the winning photographs are featured in a Trees of Richland County 2013 calendar. Calendars were presented to County Council at the December 11 Council Meeting.

Calendars may be purchased for \$12.00 each, and all proceeds support conservation education initiatives in Richland County. Ordering instructions are available at [www.rcgov.us/rswcd](http://www.rcgov.us/rswcd).



**Trees of Richland County 2013  
Calendar  
\$12.00 each  
Order today at (803) 576-2080!**

*Photos at left: Educational entertainer Tim Womick performed at Pontiac Elementary School's Arbor Day program and helped students plant an oak tree on the playground. Families visiting the RSWCD booth at the Project Learning Tree Arbor Day Celebration learned how local wildlife depend on forests. Student Council members at Harbison West Elementary School planted an Eastern Redbud after their school Arbor Day assembly.*





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*Students, teachers, and community volunteers recently made improvements to the school garden and outdoor classroom at Bookman Road Elementary School with funding from an RSWCD Earth Day Mini-Grant.*

## Apply Now for 2013 Earth Day Awards

The RSWCD is accepting applications and nominations for the following Earth Day Awards:



- **Earth Day Mini-Grants for Conservation Education**—Provide up to \$250 for youth education projects
- **Earth Day Senior Scholarship**—\$500 scholarship for a conservation-minded high school senior
- **Conservation Principal of the Year**—Recognizes school administrators who promote and support school conservation efforts
- **Conservation Teacher of the Year**—Recognizes teachers who demonstrate an exceptional commitment to conservation in the classroom
- **Conservation Youth Award**—Recognizes students and youth groups who have made a positive impact on the environment in their school or community

For more information or to apply for one of these awards, visit [www.rcgov.us/rswcd](http://www.rcgov.us/rswcd).

**Applications are due by March 15.**