

# Lexington Soil and Water Conservation District Annual Report 2008-2009



## A Message from the Chair

Once again, it is my pleasure to report to you that this past year has been a terrific year for the Lexington Soil and Water Conservation District.

The District is the local political organization, crafted by state law, that aids landowners and users in managing natural resources. The five basic natural resources are soil, water, air, plants, and animals. Your District was established on June 4, 1939.

Some of our accomplishments this past year were:

Mr. Raymond Caughman was inducted into the Southeast National Association of Conservation Districts Hall of Fame. Mr. Raymond has served the Lexington District for over 30 years as both Commissioner and Associate Commissioner. Congratulations!

We welcomed retired Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist, Walt Douglas, as an Associate Commissioner. (Thanks, Walt, for your service.) Also, our faithful religious leader, Reverend Garth Hill retired as our District Chaplain. (Garth, you will be missed.)

One of our Board meetings was hosted by the Lake Murray water treatment facility. Mr. Buzz Kohn, Assistant Superintendent, gave the Board a tour of the plant.

Two high school and three middle school students "shadowed" District staff members while the staff performed job duties this past year. The students were Brandon Corder, Brooke Whitaker, Rocio Mendez, Rafael Mendez, Jr., and Karielys Sabeat.

The District sponsored another Tree Care Workshop coordinated by Commissioner Rhett Bickley. The Board also helped sponsor an educational trip for a Future Farmers of America student to the Peoples Republic of China, (Excellent work, Will Amick!), and our own Commissioner Larry Nates is now South Carolina's representative to the National Association of Conservation Districts.

These accomplishments are the result of the hard work and dedication of our staff and commissioners. We are looking forward to another great year!

Lastly, a hearty **THANK YOU** to our constituents of the Lexington District. We had almost 100 Affiliate Members that contributed financial support this past year. You helped make it all possible!

Again, thank you for the support for **your** District!

*Fred Taylor*

## Objective One

### Conservation Education

**Teach the basic concepts of wise use of our natural resources through education and outreach programs, targeting students, private citizens, and units of government, in partnership with organizations involved in land development, land management, or land protection.**

### Commissioner Kathy Hensley

Bill Melven and Joy Sullivan have provided classroom presentations to local schools in the county covering such topics as watersheds, point and non-point source pollution, water chemistry, soils, and wildlife. Over 2,900 students have been reached through these programs.

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On August 11, 2008, Mr. Raymond Caughman was inducted into the Southeast Region Conservation Hall of Fame in Biloxi, Mississippi at the Southeast National Association of Conservation District Regional Meeting.

Mr. Raymond Caughman; banker, salesman, farmer, commissioner, and friend, was nominated for the Southeast Region Conservation Hall of Fame by the Lexington Soil and Water Conservation District. Mr. Caughman served as Commissioner on the Conservation District board for over 20 years, and has



## District Board Meetings

The Lexington Soil and Water Conservation District Board meets at 4:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of every month except December at the USDA Service Center conference room, 123 Park Road, Lexington. The public is cordially invited to attend. For information call 359-3165, ext. 3.

served as an Associate Commissioner for over ten. In addition to serving on the board, he was the treasurer of both the SC Association of Conservation Districts and the Conservation Districts Foundation.

Mr. Caughman has consistently supported conservation efforts throughout his life, not only through his work on the conservation district board, but through his years as a banker, through his political involvement, and through his own work farming. He has set an example for younger generations by being an ideal steward of the land and a man of his word.

Anyone who knows him, knows he is well deserving of this honor. Congratulations Mr. Caughman, and thank you for your dedication and years of service to Conservation Districts!

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Two students from Lexington County attended the Carolina Coastal Adventure held at the Santee Cooper Somerset facility on Lake Moultrie. The students were exposed to natural resource conservation issues facing South Carolina, while enjoying nature itself canoeing,



*Pictured - Aubrey Smith (left) and Sam Taylor (right).*

fishing, touring the marsh, and studying unique flora and fauna. Every year the Lexington Conservation District sponsors students in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades who are interested in the outdoors. This year's delegates were Sam Taylor, from Gilbert High School and Aubrey Smith, from Irmo High School.

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The district helped co-sponsor a workshop on the selection and care of trees. It was held on Friday, February 20th, 2009 from 9 am until 2 pm at the Lexington County Fire Training Facility located at 436 Ballpark Road in Lexington. The program was coordinated by Rhett Bickley, Commissioner of the Lexington SWCD and the Landscape Administrator with Lexington County, with assistance from the Lexington County Community Development and the SC Forestry Commission.

The program was designed for local officials and staff who have responsibility for supervising ordinances relating to landscaping, and staff charged with vegetation and plant maintenance.



Nearly 60 people attended the workshop, credits by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) were awarded for those certified arborists attending.

Course material included species selection, planting techniques and proper pruning, and Lexington County's efforts to meet EPA mandated NPDES water management requirements.

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Each year one of the subjects of the Envirothon changes. There's always forestry, wildlife, soils and aquatics, but the fifth topic changes based on the host state's preference. The 2009 topic, chosen by North Carolina, was Biodiversity in a Changing World. Coaches began studying this topic back in February when the Coaches' Training was held.

When the competition was held on May 1st, there were twenty-three teams that attended. Although students were prepared for the rigorous testing that each station had in store for them, they weren't so prepared for the downpour that was the first ever in thirteen years of the event. The rain brought a literal meaning to '*accepting the natural challenge*' of the Envirothon, and the students and volunteers were real troopers to keep the competition on schedule.

*Spartanburg's Winning Team (Team A)*



After slogging through puddles and fire ant piles, the students waited patiently for the results: Chapin High School's Eagle Two team stole Honorable Mention (Lexington County), Pinewood Preparatory School (Dorchester County) earned Third Place, and the two Spartanburg High teams rolled in as First (Team A) and Second (Team B). Station Awards were also given for the top scores in each area and Spartanburg Team A walked away with four station awards; Aquatics, Biodiversity, Forestry and Oral Presentation, while Pinewood Preparatory scored the highest in Soils, and Spartanburg Team B took top honors at the Wildlife Station. In addition to these awards, the Future Farmers of America (FFA)



*Chapin High School Eagles Team Two, Honorable Mention Winners. Pictured Left to Right: Lisa Ruth (Coach), Olivia Bueno, Jordan Broadway, Amber Engel, Noelle Chasmar, and Kathleen Barrett.*

present top three awards to the highest scorers out of all the FFA teams participating. The Envirothon functions as the state FFA Career Development Event and Mr. Billy Keels, State Director of Agricultural Education with

Clemson University, and Adam Gore, State FFA Secretary, presented those awards: Loris High's FFA took top honors, Indian Land High FFA came in Second, and Calhoun Falls Charter FFA placed Third.

Scholarships and cash prizes totaling more than \$6,000 were presented to the winning teams, and the members of Spartanburg Team A will go on to compete at the Canon Envirothon to be held at the University of North Carolina in Asheville from August 2<sup>nd</sup> through the 8<sup>th</sup>. There the team will qualify for additional scholarships and prizes valued at over \$100,000. The scholarships and prizes at the state level were provided by the generous donations of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of the state, their State Association, the SC District Employees Association, the Environmental Education Association of SC, the Soil and Water Conservation Society, the Low Country RC&D Council, the Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund, the Canon Envirothon Committee, and various personal donations made by the 'Friends of Envirothon'.

For more information about the Envirothon and how you can support this environmental program, please visit the website at [www.dnr.sc.gov/education/Envirothon](http://www.dnr.sc.gov/education/Envirothon).

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 Commissioner Rhett Bickley participated in the Gaston Improvement Council's First Annual Gaston Arbor Day Celebration on May 2, 2009 at the Gaston Town Park. The Arbor Day Celebration included an Essay Contest Awards Ceremony, a Tree Planting Ceremony, Lunch, and a Leisure Softball Game.

The Gaston Improvement Council (GIC) worked with Francis Mack Primary School in a collaborative effort to promote local greenery and town pride with an essay contest for the students in the second grade on "Arbor Day - How Trees Are Important". The GIC received a substantial amount of essays to review from the second graders. The winners were **Jada Marie Stroud**, Grand Prize; **Ariandi Lopez**, 1<sup>st</sup> Runner-Up; **Kristy Lanham**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Runner-Up; **Wil Baker-Matthews**, 3<sup>rd</sup> Runner Up; and **Holly Hill**, Honorable Mention.



*Left to Right:  
 Kristy Lanham,  
 Jada Stroud ,  
 Rhett Bickley,  
 Holly Hill, and  
 Wil Matthews.  
 Not pictured is  
 Ariandi Lopez.*

This year, the district offered two scholarships. The scholarships were in the amounts of \$1,000 and \$500. They were available to senior high school students in Lexington County interested in pursuing careers in the conservation field.

Zachary Taylor, a senior who attended Gilbert High School, was the recipient of the \$1,000 scholarship. He has served as Sentinel of the Gilbert FFA Chapter and was a cellist in the Gilbert Orchestra. He earned his State FFA Degree in 2008, and was a member of the First Place State FFA Forestry and Tractor Operation and Safety Career Development Event (CDE) Teams. He has participated in conservation efforts through the FFA and work on the family farm, where he has been actively involved in water conservation and protecting land from erosion by planting cover crops and wind breaks. Zach will be attending Clemson University in the Fall, where he will be majoring in Agriculture. His proud parents are Larry and Joye Taylor, of Gilbert.



*Zachary Taylor and  
 Nathan Price with  
 Jim Low, Associate  
 Commissioner and  
 Scholarship  
 Presenter*

Nathan Price, a senior who attended Gilbert High School, was the recipient of the \$500 scholarship. He has served as the Chaplain and Treasurer of the Gilbert FFA Chapter. He earned his State FFA Degree in 2008, and was awarded the SC FFA Star in Agribusiness for his lawn care business; New Horizons Lawn Care, that he owns and operates. In addition to his lawn care business, Nathan is co-owner of Foxtrail Farms, where he hatches and raises Bobwhite Quail for hunting preserves and those who train bird dogs. He has learned of the consequences of soil erosion and water run-off through his lawn care business. Nathan will be attending Spartanburg Community College in the Fall and will be majoring in Ornamental Horticulture with an emphasis on Landscape Technology. His proud parents are Timmy and Janet Price of Gilbert.

Zachary and Nathan were presented their scholarships at the District's Annual Awards Banquet on Tuesday, May 19th at T&S Farms in Leesville.

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 The Annual Photography Contest was held again this year. It marked the seventh year the contest was held. There are two divisions in which students compete; Division I is for students in Grades 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> and Division II is for students in Grades 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>. The categories in which

students enter photos are Trees and Plants, Landscapes, Wildlife, and Rural Life. Photos are judged on composition, originality, and effectiveness of conveying the theme of the category. Judges for this year were Mrs. Amy Maxwell and Mrs. Amy Hoffman.

Winners in **Division I** are as follows: Rachel Murrah of Lexington, won first place in the **Trees and Plants** category with her “Outstretched”, followed by Chelsea Pfaehler of West Columbia, receiving second place with her “Sherbet”, and Katie Wilson of Lexington, receiving honorable mention with her “Dusting of Snow” photo. Jessie Gold of Gilbert, won first place in the **Landscapes** category with her “Gold’s Landscape”, followed by Rose Cisneros of Lexington, receiving second place with her “Linear Contrast”, and Alison Hamm of Lexington, receiving honorable mention with her “Procession” photo. Hayden Graham of West Columbia, won first place in the **Wildlife** category with his “Raphael”, followed by Emily Barfield of Lexington, receiving second place with her



**Photo Winners - Division I** - Left to right: First Row: Rebekah Muckenfuss, Jessi Gold, Alison Hamm, Rachel Murrah, and Chelsea Pfaehler. Back Row: Katie Wilson, Rose Cisneros, Sam Stratton, Emily Barfield, Hayden Graham, and Jim Low, Lexington SWCD Associate Commissioner.

“Taking Flight”, and Tommy Murphy of Lexington, receiving honorable mention for his “Prince” photo. Sam Stratton of Lexington, won first place in the **Rural Life** category with his “Marked By

an Angel”, followed by Rebekah Muckenfuss of Lexington, receiving second place with her “Still Standing”, and Sam Stratton of Lexington, receiving honorable mention with his “Unrestrained” photo.

Winners for **Division II** are as follows: Andrew Moore of Cayce, won first place in the **Trees and Plants** category with his “Full Bloom”, followed by Jordan Sommer of Lexington, receiving second place with her “Natural Contrast”, and Jenna Kleckley of Lexington, receiving honorable mention with her “Hope” photo. Elizabeth McMillan, won first place in the **Landscapes** category with her “Sunlit Path” photo. Jordan Sommer of Lexington, won first place in the **Wildlife** category with her “Mr. Snail”, followed by Malachi Koenig of West Columbia, receiving second place with his “Hanging Out”, and Jordan Sommer of Lexington, receiving honorable mention for her “Repulsive Type” photo. Elizabeth McMillan of Lexington, won first place in the **Rural Life**

**Photo Winners- Division II** -- Left to right: Andrew Moore, Jenna Kleckley, Jordan Sommer, and Elizabeth McMillan. Jim Low is in the back.



category with her “Country Side Barn”, followed by Jordan Sommer of Lexington receiving second place with her “80 Degree Day”, and Andrew Moore of Cayce, receiving honorable mention with his “High Cotton” photo.

Each first place winner received a \$50 cash award, each second place winner received a \$25 cash award, and each honorable mention winner received a magazine subscription to the *S.C. Wildlife Magazine*, as well as a certificate. Winners received their awards at the District’s Annual Banquet that was held on Tuesday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at T&S Farms. The winning photos were displayed at the annual banquet using a PowerPoint presentation and will be displayed on the district’s website at [www.lexswcd.org](http://www.lexswcd.org). Awards are made possible by our wonderful affiliate members’ donations.

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Rev. Garth Hill was honored at the District’s Annual Banquet on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at T&S Farms for serving as the District’s Chaplain and spiritual leader for over 17 years. Rev. Hill has since retired as the district’s chaplain, but his love for the land and protecting our natural resources still remains.



Rev. Garth Hill and Mr. Raymond Caughman

Rev. Hill helped with the Annual Soil Stewardship Program and would open each board meeting with prayer. He would help us to think of others and not ourselves; as well as, help us to remember to be thankful for God’s many blessings.

Rev. Hill is not only a chaplain, but a friend, neighbor, and farmer. He has always been available to say a prayer, lend an ear, or even a helping hand. Now that Rev. Hill, has a little more spare time, you will probably find him on his farm taking care of his cows, as well as spending time with his children and grandchildren.

Thank you for your years of service to the Lexington Soil and Water Conservation District. We will miss you! Hope

you have a wonderful retirement!



Over the past school year, the office had a number of requests to provide job-shadowing opportunities. Brandon Corder from White Knoll High School was the first, followed by Brooke Whittaker from Pelion High School, and lastly, a group of three from White Knoll Middle School; Rocio Mendez, Rafael Mendez, Jr., and Karielys Sabat.



Rocio Mendez, Karielys Sabat, and Rafael Mendez, Jr.

These students surveyed and made field visits with the District Conservationist, assisted Bill Melven, District Manager on some of his excursions dealing with pond management and home water problems, and the three middle school students surveyed a pond, took GPS points and learned how to use ArcGIS to create a digital map with Tommy Stone and Joy Sullivan.

## Objective Two

### Conservation in Urban and Developing Communities

**Help developers and property owners plan and design onsite stormwater infiltration practices to better control erosion, slow runoff, protect and improve water quality, and protect lives and property downstream.**

#### Commissioner Rhett Bickley

More than 40 calls were received from individuals and subdivisions having storm water runoff problems. Site visits were made to assess the situation and recommend possible solutions. Some situations took several visits to get sediment movement under control.



S. Jahue “Jake” Moore was presented a Conservation Leadership Award at the District’s Annual Banquet that was held on May 19th, 2009. He received this award for his leadership in tree planting and enhancing Lexington County’s quality of life. So far, 2,000 trees have been planted in the Irmo area under Mr. Moore’s guidance. His goal is to plant an additional 5,000 trees.



Jahue “Jake” Moore (left) and Rhett Bickley (right)



On May 19th, 2009 at the District’s Annual Awards Banquet, held at T&S Farms, Representative Mac Toole was presented the Environmental Stewardship Award for his commitment to protecting the state’s soil and water resources.



Rep. Mac Toole (left) and Rhett Bickley (right)

Rep. Toole is a friend of the district, as well as the environment. He was instrumental in helping the Lexington Soil and Water Conservation District get into building wood duck boxes about six years ago, when the SC DNR Wood Duck Box program was halted due to budget cuts. During the time period of 2003 to 2007, the district sold nearly 100 wood duck boxes.

The district is appreciative of Representative Toole’s dedication, commitment, and assistance to protect our state’s natural resources.



Medical Services of America was presented the Landscape Enhancement Award at the District’s Annual Banquet for enhancing the right of way in front of the business on Interstate 20 located before the US Highway 1 intersection, when traveling from Columbia.



Cristy Bochette (left) and Rhett Bickley (right)

Medical Services of America is the only business in Lexington County that has taken advantage of SC Department of Transportation’s (SCDOT) “day-lighting” program. The “day-lighting” program is where a business develops a plan to beautify a part of the right of way on an interstate. After the plan is developed by the business, the SCDOT approves the plan, and then the business is able to move forward with the installation of the plan.

Medical Services of America oversaw the clearing, leveling, and landscaping of the right of way area. They even had an irrigation system installed to keep the palm trees and shrubs that were planted alive. The project cost was approximately \$30,000.

Cristy Bochette, accepted the award on behalf of Medical Services of America.



## Objective Three

### Conservation in Rural Communities

**Plan and put on the ground conservation systems that help agricultural producers and others improve both surface and ground water quality, improve soil health, and develop or protect wildlife habitat.**

**Commissioner Dwight Davis**

Having the primary responsibility of managing NRCS programs and serving Lexington County citizens, this is a brief summary of what has been accomplished during the past year by the Conservation Staff.

2009 brought a new Farm Bill, a new USDA Administration, and the American Recovery Investment Act of 2009. We have received more than 60 phone calls requesting technical assistance that will benefit our natural resources. We have written conservation plans on more than 2,500 acres. In fact, 2 applications were filed for Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP), 17 applications were filed for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and 1 for Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) requesting total funds of approximately \$350,000. At this time, 4 of these applications have been funded. We are waiting to see if others will be funded during our second round of funding that will occur at the end of July 2009. Most of the cost-share practices that have been planned and funded were to address water and soil quality and wildlife improvement concerns.

Bill Melven received over 60 calls from pond owners requesting help with their fish ponds. Most of the problems dealt with aquatic plants, however, there were a few calls dealing with pond turnovers and fish kills.

Over the past year, we have worked with many of our existing customers, as well as a lot of new customers. We have enjoyed working with the each of you and look forward to another year.

From the desk of your District Conservationist,

Rafael O Mendez

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*"Conservation is a state of harmony  
between men and land."*

*Aldo Leopold*

NRCS Performance Measure for Lexington County	Goal	Total Progress	Prog. %
Conservation Plans Written (acres)	5,200	2,618	50
Cropland w/ Conservation Applied to Improve Soil Quality (acres)	2,010	1,464	73
Land with Conservation Applied to Improve Water Quality (acres)	2,871	1,946	68
Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP) Written (number)	5	3	60
Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP) Applied (number)	4	5	125
Grazing and Forest Land with Conservation Applied to Protect and Improve the Resource Base (acres)	1,804	824	46
Non-Federal Land with Conservation Applied to Improve Fish and Wildlife Habitat Quality (acres)	1,504	889	59



*"Still Standing" by Rebekah Muckenfuss, 2nd Place ~ Rural Life*

## District Commissioners and Staff

### Commissioners:

Fred Taylor, Chairman  
Rhett Bickley  
Dwight Davis  
Kathy Hensley  
Larry Nates

### Associate Commissioners

Raymond Caughman  
Walt Douglas  
Jim Low  
Brent Weaver

### Chaplain:

Vacant

### District Staff:

Bill Melven, Dist. Manager  
Alivia Gunter, Admin. Asst.

### NRCS Staff:

Rafael Méndez,  
District Conservationist  
Tommy Stone,  
Conservation Technician

### OCIO-ITS Staff:

Randy Taylor, IT Specialist

### DNR-LW&CD Staff:

Joy Sullivan,  
Program Coordinator

**For assistance contact us at:  
(803) 359-3165 ext. 3.**

Web Address:

<http://www.lexswcd.org>