



May 2024

Soil & Water Report



School Programs



Soil and Water visited Legacy Early College Elementary School second graders in partnership with Greenville Water to educate 125 students about watersheds, pollution, and aquatic food webs. Students enjoyed rotating through five stations with different topics and were able to draw parallels between the activities and the increased rain we saw during the month of May!



Project WET National Conference

Abbi, Acting Project WET (Water Education for Today) SC State Coordinator, traveled to San Antonio for a week of education and novel ecosystems at the 2024 National Project WET Conference. This conference was held in conjunction with Project WILD and Project Learning Tree, all of which are quality curricula used by environmental educators across the nation. Attendees were tasked with dressing to represent their home state. South Carolina attendees, styled by Lynn Pilewski, dressed in ornate skirts to pay homage to the Gullah-Geechee people of the Lowcountry.

Conservation District professionals gathered for a meet-up and photo op. South Carolina's Soil and Water Conservation Districts were well-represented!



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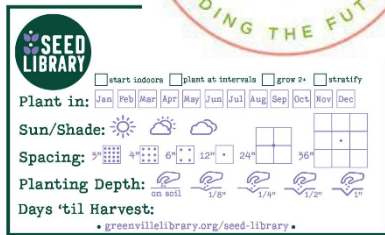
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Seed Library Network Recognition



Earlier in 2024, Soil and Water participated in an international seed library census orchestrated by The Seed Library Network. This month, Soil and Water was recognized for their standout seed envelope design and thorough growing guide.

These designs will be shared as a part of The Seed Library Network's upcoming workshops on Envelopes & Labeling, which will take place in June of this year. These workshops are part of The Seed Library Network's series titled *Seed Library Best Practices and Inspiration*. We value this recognition and the opportunity to share resources with seed libraries across the world!



Welcome Lainey and Haley!

Welcome our new Administrative Specialist, Lainey Veltri!

Lainey is a former journalist turned freelance writer/author. She will provide support for the team in a variety of capacities. The West Virginia native has made the Palmetto State her home since 1985 and held residences in Myrtle Beach and now in Greenville. She enjoys all that the Upstate has to offer from its mountain vistas and waterfalls to its scenic parks and tree-lined communities. She enjoys hiking, visiting coffee shops and playing pickleball. Three grandchildren and her toy poodle Maggie keep her on her toes. Lainey looks forward being part of a team whose mission it is to protect our natural resources for future generations as well as for all of us to enjoy.



Welcome our new Education Intern, Haley Kolak!

Born and raised in Greenville, South Carolina, she has always been passionate about studying conservation and wildlife. When she is not completing coursework for her degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology at Clemson University, you can find her spending time with her three pets (rabbit, cat, and dog), reading a good book, or heading off to a concert with her friends. She is excited to serve and give back to her community this summer at GCSWCD!

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2024 Awards and Appreciation Banquet

GCSWCD hosted their annual Awards and Appreciation Banquet on May 1st, 2024 at Famoda Farms. Three award winners were recognized including: Farmers of the Year, CE and Rachel Lawton; Teacher of the Year, Katie Martin; and Conservationist of the Year, Erin Knight. This event would not have gone off without a hitch if not for the event planning (and flower arranging) capabilities of our very own, Lynn Pilewski. We would also like to thank Commissioner Jim Blackwell and friends for providing the evening's musical accompaniment.



2024 Award Recipients



Farmer of the Year: **CE and Rachel Lawton**, who use regenerative grazing practices and help stabilize the Saluda River banks they live and farm on. Their work to restore the natural function of the floodplain they live on is inspiring.



Educator of the Year: **Katie Martin**, Woodmont Middle FFA, who has introduced a large fraction of Woodmont's students to FFA and led them to multiple competition wins at both the state and national levels.



Conservationist of the Year: **Erin Knight**, Conestee Nature Preserve, who has been a champion of land conservation in every role throughout her career while also providing thoughtful environmental education to countless people.

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Remembering Lynn Pilewski

It is with the heaviest of hearts that we must share our dear coworker and friend, Lynn Pilewski has passed away. Lynn served as our District Programs Coordinator for just over ten years and greatly expanded the reach of many district programs.

Lynn was never shy to volunteer for leadership positions and let her capabilities as a leader and organizer shine through to countless organizations. For several years, she served as the President of the South Carolina Conservation Districts Employee Association, leading the group through many challenges such as funding issues, conservation district employee development, outreach initiatives, the COVID pandemic, and ultimately enhanced support for locally led conservation.

Furthermore, Lynn held the position of Project WET State Coordinator for many years. In this role, Lynn trained educators on Project WET curriculum, helped to plan the annual conference, and provided continual support for a large network of Project WET facilitators in South Carolina and beyond.

Despite entering her role as District Programs Coordinator with limited soil and water conservation knowledge, Lynn truly grew into an inspiring and knowledgeable environmental educator throughout her tenure with GCSWCD. Her background in theatre and web design, combined with a love for gardening, allowed her to make comprehensive, cohesive, and creative graphic design campaigns for the district. Also notable was her tireless role in planning our annual awards banquets, a task in which she truly excelled.

Over the last few years, Lynn bravely fought cancer while never ceasing to be a reliable friend, coworker, and educator. While we are deeply saddened by her passing, we are able to take comfort in knowing Lynn is no longer in pain and is able to rest. We will always remember Lynn's can-do attitude, her efficient and organized nature, and her incredible knack for choosing color palettes!



Amp'd Up Friday at Mauldin Cultural Center

Haley and Abbi attended the first concert of Mauldin's Amp'd Up Fridays concert series, hosted at the Mauldin Cultural Center. Children and adults alike were able to try and defend their drain from stormwater pollutants, with winners walking away with a packet of native flower seeds from the Seed Library—all to the sound of beach music courtesy of the Swingin' Medallions!

