

South Carolina Farm and Forest Land Conservation Training

Final Report for ES01-057

Project Type: Professional Development Program

Funds awarded in 2001: \$25,428.40

Projected End Date: 12/31/2002

Matching Non-Federal Funds: \$5,500.00

Region: Southern

State: South Carolina

Principal Investigator:

[Ben Boozer](#)

Clemson Institute for Economic & Community Develop

Project Information

Abstract:

This project assembled a partner-based group of stakeholders to develop a series of train-the-trainer workshops across South Carolina to help natural resource educators, policy makers, agency representatives and other professionals discuss land use issues and effective conservation tools for farm and forest land owners. Workshop participants received information and resources to discuss the social and economic issues surrounding changes in land use, engage the public in community discussions on conservation, examine tools and practices available to promote conservation, learn of South Carolina experiences with conservation tools, and consider the next steps for individual landowners and state policies.

Project Objectives:

1. As a result of these training workshops, 50 of the 100 USDA field personnel, other agricultural educators, farm and forestry leaders and natural resource personnel that attend the workshops will utilize the workshop training within the first six months to provide agricultural land conservation technical/educational assistance to their constituents. Technical/educational assistance is defined as any of the following: providing information through newsletters, bulletins, fact sheets and other materials; providing information through telephone and e-mail requests; and/or providing information directly through workshops, conferences, meetings, training and on-site visits.
2. As a result of these training workshops, 25 of the 50 USDA field personnel, other agricultural educators, farm and forestry leaders and natural resource personnel that utilize the workshop training within the first six months to provide agricultural land conservation technical assistance to their constituents will report increased communication in the following topic areas: land use and farm and forest land conservation options; and social/cultural implications of land use and farm and forest land conservation.

Introduction:

Agriculture has historically defined the character of South Carolina and other Southeastern states. It is the backbone of much of the rural culture, a significant part of the landscape, and an important part of the economy.

The SC Agricultural Statistics Service preliminary cash receipt report for 1999 lists the top ten commodities for SC as broilers, greenhouse, nursery & floriculture, turkeys, tobacco, cattle and calves, cotton, eggs, milk production, soybeans and hogs. Agriculture preliminary cash receipts for 1999 total in excess of 1.4 billion dollars of which the top ten commodities listed above account for 84.6%. In South Carolina, wood and paper products are the leading export commodity, timber is the largest cash crop and the forestry industry ranks third among manufacturers.

As Southeastern cities grow at a rapid rate, the region is losing more farm and forest land than ever before. From 1986-1993, urban expansion and other related uses diverted almost 200,000 acres from the SC timber base. While over 11 million acres of land nationwide was developed between 1992-1997, over 362,000 acres were developed in South Carolina in the same time period. South Carolina ranks 10th in the nation for total land developed from 1992 to 1997, according to a study recently released (December 2000) by the National Resources Inventory. In one urban area of South Carolina, the Charleston tri-county region increased its urban area by 255% between 1973 and 1994.

The conversion of farmland is a complex process, often taking decades to complete (Coughlin et al., 1980). It involves farm profitability, urban growth pressures, land values, personal decisions about work and retirement, community expectations, taxes and government programs, and incentives and regulations (AFT, 1997; Daniels and Bowers, 1997). It also tends to be highly incremental, with a farm going out of production here and another there (Lapping, 1995). As a consequence, the cumulative impact of agricultural land loss is rarely appreciated until it is almost too late to reverse.

Equally troubling is that much of the impact of increasing residential development is on farms that remain (Daniels and Bowers, 1997). With more vehicular traffic, neighbors' complaints and trespassing, and fewer acres of available land to lease, many farmers either sell or retire. Ironically, this same residential and commercial development can also create opportunities for those farmers who fight to remain. The longing to reconnect with the land has led to a growing desire for locally grown, organic and specialty produce. This, in turn, creates demand for farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture, and specialty farming (Stokes et al., 1997).

The challenge is making sure those people who chose to remain in farming and forestry can do so. This SARE-funded grant created an opportunity to help this crucial audience by training educators, extension personnel, other natural resource personnel, local government planners and farm and forestry leaders about their roles in land use planning and what tools and techniques are available to their constituents to manage growth.

The Farm Foundation identified the pace of change at the rural-urban fringe as one of the most pressing issues in this country (Land Use and Rural-Urban Interface Task Force of the Farm Foundation, 1997). They concluded that, in many cases, the state and local authorities and procedures used for dealing with concerns about land use were inadequate. Rural institutions, including those for guiding land use, public participation, education and managing conflict, were ill-equipped to resolve the complex conflicts brought about by rapid change. The Farm Foundation task force agreed that a central objective of public policy in this arena should be to reduce the uncertainty and unpredictability of land use changes at the rural-urban interface.

They conclude “the emerging issues related to land use at the rural-urban interface present a significant opportunity to Cooperative Extension and other educational organizations.”

Reducing the uncertainty of land use changes at the rural-urban interface is a teachable issue. We have learned several important lessons from the last two decades of farmland protection (Sorensen, 1996). First, to encourage farmland retention and guide the pattern of development, you need the active participation of farmland owners and a broad coalition of support from the entire community. Local efforts are always likely to be more successful and garner more support than efforts at either the state or federal level (although state policies can be invaluable in providing support for and legitimacy to local initiatives). Second, farmland is just one element of a much larger land use puzzle. Third, no one approach by itself is likely to work. Farmland protection programs need to be multi-faceted. Fourth, it is essential to act early before development pressures and politics take precedence over objective, strategic planning to meet long-term goals. And fifth, you must utilize all of the resources at your disposal.

Workshop participants learned about issues relating to land use changes, and about techniques available for conserving farm and forest land so that they could convey what options are affordable and available to the people who work the land.

While many Southern states are losing prime and unique farm and forest land, several factors made this an ideal time for this training project in South Carolina. For example, numerous counties are discussing farm and forest land conservation as they update their comprehensive plan, a requirement of legislation passed in South Carolina in 1994. Also, the quickly dwindling base of farm and forest land is motivating some communities to take action to save the remaining land. Beaufort, York, Charleston and Richland are among the counties that are developing land protection plans and creating land protection policies. They recognize the economic, environmental, cultural and scenic values of farm and forest land. Other communities are just beginning to explore why and how to protect their rural landscape. For most counties, there are few places within the state that people can turn to for information on land conservation that will help them make the best land use decisions. Finally, at the time of the workshops, statewide land protection programs were being discussed during the current legislative session.

Farm and forest land conservation and land use is a complex issue. It is also largely a local issue. Therefore, a diverse planning group comprised of partnering organizations was convened to target these workshops to South Carolina’s needs. Additionally, each regional workshop included speakers who could detail local issues for each area of the state.

With the support of Southeast SARE four daylong train the trainer workshops were offered which targeted USDA field personnel and other agricultural educators and farm and forest leaders in South Carolina. The purpose of each of these workshops was to provide USDA field personnel and others with the information and resources they need to respond to farmers and communities by providing technical assistance to help existing and would-be farmers gain access to land, keep it in production and pass it on to future generations. Workshop participants obtained materials and skills necessary to confidently discuss land use and farm and forest land conservation options with their clientele.

Cooperators

- [Fred Broughton](#)

fbroughton@scsu.edu

SC State Univ. 1890 Extension

PO Box 200

Elloree, SC 29047

(800) 737-1890 (office)

Education & Outreach Initiatives

Objective:

Description:

Methods

- In the summer of 2001, a collaborative planning team was assembled to contribute to the South Carolina Farm & Forest Land Conservation Training Workshops. This planning team was made up of 32 representatives from over 14 organizations and agri-businesses.

Throughout the fall of 2001, planning team members met and contributed to workshop design and materials preparation. This planning team:

- Defined the primary audience and assisted in marketing to that audience;
- Identified four sites to conduct trainings throughout the state that would be easily accessible to the target audience;
- Contributed contacts, research, fact sheets and other information to training workbooks and Powerpoint presentations;
- Assisted in editing of workshop workbook;
- Designed the workshop agendas and identified appropriate speakers for those topics;
- Evaluated marketing flyers; and
- Provided other necessary input.

Trainings were conducted in January and February, 2002 at the following dates and locations:

- January 15, 2002 at Piedmont Technical College in Greenwood, SC;
- January 16, 2002 at Clemson University's Pee Dee Research and Education Center in Florence, SC;
- January 17, 2002 at Berkeley Electric Cooperative in John's Island, SC; and
- February 19, 2002 at the Harry E. Daniels Conference Center in Elloree, SC.

Evaluations were conducted at the conclusion of each session, and supplementary evaluations were distributed in July 2002 for compilation. Additional notebooks and materials were distributed as requested by interested parties.

Results and Discussion/Milestones

(Include copies of training materials/agendas as appendices)

With the support of Southeast SARE, four daylong train the trainer workshops were offered which targeted USDA field personnel and other agricultural educators and farm and forest leaders in South Carolina. The purpose of each of

these workshops was to provide USDA field personnel and others with the information and resources they need to respond to farmers and communities by providing technical assistance to help existing and would-be farmers gain access to land, keep it in production and pass it on to future generations. Workshop participants obtained materials and skills necessary to confidently discuss land use and farm and forest land conservation options with their clientele.

These workshops consisted largely of a combination of presentation, question and answer period and small group discussion. They also included two interactive communication components. The first interactive component includes an exercise to improve participants' communication skills in order to effectively discuss social/cultural issues that surround land use and farm and forest land conservation among South Carolina's diverse audiences. The second exercise is designed to improve participants' presentation skills when teaching the adult learner.

Workshop participants also received a detailed training workbook as part of the training. The workbook contained support materials, fact sheets, relevant statistics, and resources and speakers lists, including a PowerPoint presentation on disk to visually support workshop topics. These notebooks were created by American Farmland Trust, with regional input from the advisory committee.

These workshops reached an audience of 71 individuals representing agencies and organizations including the USDA, the SC Forestry Commission, the SC Department of Natural Resources, the Clemson Extension Service, SC State 1890 Extension, regional technical college programs, local conservation districts, local planning commissions, land trust organizations and other agri-industry affiliated organizations.

76% of those attending a workshop (n=54) completed and returned an evaluation at the program's conclusion. Of those completing an evaluation:

- 100% gained knowledge as a result of attending this program
- 85.2% expected to use notebook materials in the future as a teaching tool
- 98% believed knowledge gained from the workshop improved their ability to communicate with their clientele and peers about these topics
- 88.9% were exposed to new individuals or agencies that they may collaborate with in the future
- 44.4% rated the program overall excellent, while 3.7% rated the program as excellent to good, and 51.9% rated the program as good overall. None rated the program as fair or poor.

Outreach and Publications

The primary publications was the "SC Farm and Forest Land Conservation Training" notebook, which was distributed to all workshop attendees and to other interested parties.

Outcomes and impacts:

1. Six months following the workshops, questionnaires were mailed to all participants. Below is a summary of the responses to this questionnaire
 1. Have you used the materials or knowledge gained from the SC Farm & Forest Land Conservation Training workshops with your clientele land or/peers
Yes - 91% No - 9 %

- a. If yes, how have you used these materials?
 - 5 - Programs, workshops, conferences or training
 - 3 - Newsletters, bulletins, articles, or other written materials
 - 8 - Telephone or e-mail contacts with peers and constituents
 - 6 - Direct contact with constituents
- b. If yes, what materials/topics have been most useful
 - 2 - Land trust information
 - 4 - Information on conservation easements
 - 1 - American Farmland Trust Case Studies
 - 3 - Entire notebook
 - 2 - Farmland Protection
 - 1 - Building trust with clients
2. Did you improve your ability to communicate with your clients and peers on land use, farmland conservation and/or social issues related to land use and conservation as a result of this workshop
 Yes - 91% No - 0%
3. How has this material impacted those clientele and peers that you work with? What are specific examples of how you have used these materials?
 - Used in family discussions
 - Local land trust more able to procure conservation easements
 - Better understanding and insight with clients
 - Used in program to work on statewide effort to pass Agricultural District Legislation
 - Used materials in role as member of County Long Range Planning Committee
4. What additional training/information would be useful?
 - Updates on success stories
 - Tax implications
 - US Farm Bill training as it pertains to farmland protection
 - Training targeting local elected officials
5. Other comments/recommendations
 - Great program
 - Continue the effort
 - Enjoyed training very much
 - Excellent workshop
 - I will be better prepared

Project Outcomes

Recommendations:

Future Recommendations

The preservation of farmland is a topic that needs on-going study and monitoring as local and federal changes in regulations and laws alter the circumstances.

Potential Contributions

It is estimated that 40-50 farmers and foresters received the entire notebook or portions thereof as a direct result of the workshops. While there was no mechanism in place to determine longer term dissemination of the materials, follow-up requests for copies of the notebook indicate continued interest and use.

Information Products

- [South Carolina Farm and Forest Land Conservation Training Workbook, Part 1](#)
(Book/Handbook)
- [South Carolina Farm and Forest Land Conservation Training Workbook, Part 2](#)
(Book/Handbook)
- [South Carolina Farm and Forest Land Conservation Training Workbook, Part 3](#)
(Book/Handbook)

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or SARE.



Sustainable Agriculture
Research & Education [US Department of Agriculture](#)



This site is maintained by SARE Outreach for the SARE program and is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award No. 2019-38640-29881. SARE Outreach operates under cooperative agreements with the University of Maryland to develop and disseminate information about sustainable agriculture. [USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.](#)