Economic Impact of State Cuts

The past physical year brought many new challenges to South Carolina residents in general and locally to Greenwood County. The economy continued to decline reducing funding for extension programs for a second year. Even though the economy declined, demand for Extension services remained high. In response to reduced funds, Clemson University offered a voluntary separation program and retirement options to Extension staff across the state. Toby Boring in our office accepted early retirement at the end of June. Many other county offices have experienced reductions in staff. Across our state and across county lines and within local offices, extension personnel are working together to provide services, programs and information to citizens of South Carolina.

Local Support & External Grants

Greenwood County provided strong financial support to local programming and 4-H agent support to the Greenwood office (more than $25,000 total). The county support for a part time 4-H agent drastically increased activities for youth in Greenwood.

Our office provides program support to the forestry, beef and other animal producers, commercial horticulture producers and landapers, and training for local private and commercial pesticide applicators. We provide training for Master Gardeners who enhance our educational programming to consumers.

Staff provides guidance to the county appointed Farmers Market Advisory Board and the Greenwood Beautification Commission in Greenwood.

Outstanding operation of the Greenwood Farmers Market Senior Nutrition Grant program resulted in an increase in funds for seniors to $35,000.00 for the 2010 market season.
4-H Programs on the upswing during the year

In March, 2010, Connie Lake, County Extension Agent, began working in Greenwood part-time with the 4-H program. Since then the program has grown. Greenwood County has had a very active horse club called the Ninety Six 4-H Horse Club.

Second grade students at Lakeview and Merrywood Elementary had the opportunity to hatch eggs in their classrooms. Also, the summer program hatched eggs as part of their science exploration. Over 190 youth have participated in this program during the year.

“Kids in the Kitchen” is basic cooking classes taught to 20 youth during our summer day camp. Teen leaders, parents and adult volunteers joined Connie Lake in teaching these classes.

Sewing classes teach many basic techniques like cutting patterns, machine stitching and serger stitching. Beginner’s classes made shorts with two adult volunteers from the FCL.

The largest project undertaken was a livestock show coordinated by members of the Ninety Six Horse club. Nearly 100 youth participated and donors contributed $3,143.00 to sponsor the event.

Farmers Market Strong

Clemson provided guidance and meeting support for the Advisory Board and co-sponsored the Annual Farmers May meeting and the April Plant Festival. The plant sale generated $20,000 in plant and flower gross sales for local small growers. Master Gardeners provided information and bulletins to 150 visitors during the event.

The market provided space to more than 50 local farmers from Greenwood and surrounding counties this year with sales that market exceeded $100,000.00 for the season.

Encouraging Good Nutrition for Seniors at the Greenwood Farmers Market

Good nutrition plays a very important part in good health. It is even more so as people age. Fresh fruit and vegetable consumption in seniors is often low. Programs such as the Senior Nutrition program encourage seniors to visit local markets and purchase fresh vegetables while helping local small farmers to survive. Greenwood’s market continued to receive funding from the Department of Agriculture for vouchers to low income seniors for the purchase of fresh vegetables from the market. This was the ninth year in a row that the market has participated in this program. Greenwood received $35,000.00 in grant funds that were distributed to 1400 residents. Clemson staff organized and coordinated with Master Gardener volunteers and local agency staff to distribute the vouchers at the market in June. Redemption rate of the vouchers at the market is historically greater than 95%.
Forestry & Natural Resources Provides Expertise

Extension Agent, Tom Brant, assisted the Greenwood Forestry Association with 4 quarterly programs for the association and general public audiences. Dr. Hope Mizzell, State Climatologist, presented a program on Impacts of Drought on South Carolina natural resources, (49) attended. Dr. George Kessler presented a program on the American Tree Farm System. Over 90,000 family forest owners have 24 million acres of privately owned forestland certified under the program. Tree farmers are a vital part of forest stewardship, wildlife management and conservation of soil and water resources, (62) attended.

Brian Stoddard, District Conservationist of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, presented a program on various programs that are available through the USDA to assist forest land owners with improving and protecting forests (60) attended.

Tim Adams, Resource and Business Development Director with the SC Forestry Commission discussed the potential for biomass energy development in SC, (63) attended meeting.

During the year 29 calls were made to local forest landowners.

Livestock and Forage Programs

This year was a tough year for forage producers. Army-worms and chinch bugs proliferated in huge numbers in the upstate. A large number of producers spent the summer battling these pests. Loses were often heavy and many pesticide sprays were made to control damage to hay and pastures. A fact sheet was assembled and 500 distributed to cattle producers, small ruminant producers and horse owners and 219 farm visits were made to identify the specific pest and discuss control measures. Losses were severe in many cases but could have been much greater without timely control measures.

Our team of forage experts at Clemson teamed with UGA and Auburn University scientists in forage studies and demonstration plantings of newly developed cultivars of various forages and untested forage species. Newly developed cultivars of alfalfa and Bahia grass were planted along with Switch-grass, gamma grass, ball clover, crimson clover, arrow leaf clover and chuckling vetch to compare their performance and use as demonstration plots for future meeting with producers. There was over $5,000 in seed planted in demonstration plots. Results indicate that planting clover in established grass can provide $50 worth of nitrogen to the grass crop and a significant increase in animal performance.

Grass Master Training for Farmers in the Upstate

Agent, Kevin Campbell participated in teaching local livestock producers Clemson University’s Grass Masters program on the basics of forage production.

While growing the proper forages on the proper sight is crucial for livestock producers, managing those forages is equally important. Clemson University offered the Grass Masters program to area livestock producers to learn the basics of forage production and management. The program is a four night series that covers two topics per night. The producers leave with several reference resources as well as the knowledge to select and manage forages that are appropriate for their livestock enterprise. To date, 180 producers have successfully completed the course. 98% of the participants responded to the survey after the program and said it was "very educational".
Greenwood County is a diverse community of Urban-suburban development with rural farm and forest lands and a large lake that provide an excellent environment to live and raise families. Our educational programming is geared to balance growth and development with farm and forest. Our branches of programming include commercial horticulture, consumer horticulture, pesticide applicator training, water quality education, written articles and newsletters and Master Gardener volunteer training. Programs are designed to provide environmentally sound techniques and information to improve and protect our county.

Master Gardeners provide a tremendous assistance to extension agents in answering questions after completing 40 hours of training. During the fall, 21 new individuals completed the 14 week course to become Master Gardeners. County Agent, James Hodges, works with the advisory board for the Lander Arboretum committee and Piedmont Tech Horticulture to enhance educational and physical programs across Greenwood.

Consumer demand for information remains high in Greenwood. Agent, James Hodges and Master Gardener volunteers average 100 contacts per month at the office, by phone or home visits during the year. A weekly horticulture article for the Index Journal (15,500 circulation) provided timely information.

Frequent visits and programs have been used to help commercial growers and lawn care professionals to solve problems. Over 100 contacts by phone, office visits and site visits were made to professionals.