In October of 2015 the state of South Carolina receive a widespread rainfall from 15-20 inches and localized amounts of over 25 inches of rainfall. This destroyed or damaged crops across the state causing extreme amount hardship on the state’s agricultural producers. Although the Lower Savannah River Valley and Hampton County did not receive as much rainfall as most of the state the area did experience adverse effects from initial storm and the storms that persisted through the rest of the harvest season. With these event eventually came the South Carolina Farm Aid, which was put in place to help growers with more than 40% crop loss in a particular crop. Once put in place Area Extension Agents, Crop Insurance Agent, FSA, and the South Carolina Department of Agriculture worked together to help agricultural producers fill out and send off grants to relieve some of the cost created by this unexpected storm. Hampton County alone was awarded $457,748 in South Carolina Farm Aid, which greatly benefited the growers and the local community.
On-Farm Peanut Maturity Clinic Help Growers

Andrew Warner, Area Agronomic Agent

This peanut growing season local area agronomic agent, Andrew Warner, helped Hampton County farmers decide timing of peanut digging. With about 30% of total yield for peanuts being put on during the last three weeks of growth digging decisions are critical to maximizing yields and profits. Digging too early will result in a loss of potential yield of the crop, while digging too late will result in over-maturity of the crop that leads to increase digging losses. Hampton County farmers generally grow approximately 8000 acres of peanuts a year, so to help farmers Andrew Warner offers on-farm peanut maturity clinics to determine peanut maturity. To do this Andrew uses the simplified three pile method of determining crop maturity. This is done by the agent blasting the peanuts with a pressure washer to reveal the peanuts mesocarp color which is one of the determining factor of maturity of the crop. Once blasted and sorted into three separate pile the agent can then make a decision on digging time based on percentage of matured pods. Generally, Virginia peanuts require 70% mature pods while Runner peanuts require ~80% mature pod. These local on-farm peanut maturity clinics are very beneficial to local farmers and Clemson Extension Hampton plans on providing these service in future growing seasons for the county.

Serving Safe Food

Christine Patrick, Area Food Safety Agent

Every year many deaths and hospitalizations are caused by foodborne illness within the United States. Just one incident of foodborne illness caused by a lack of training can damage a business image, increase insurance premiums, result in legal battles and fees, shrink revenues, and finally, close the establishment doors forever. Food safety training is critical because food safety is critical. Public concern about food safety has never been greater. New headlines every day prove that no operation is exempt from a foodborne illness outbreak. After an outbreak has occurred, it is too late!

ServSafe Employee and Manager Certification classes were taught in various counties and several ServSafe Managers test were also proctored. A total of thirty-seven food service employees, restaurant owners and others participated in the course. ServSafe is a program for food service employees based on Servsafe, the leader in food safety training. Course content: included, An Introduction to Food Safety, Personal Hygiene, Using Thermometers and Keeping Temperature Logs, Receiving and Storing Food Safely, Preparing and Serving Safe Food, and Cleaning and Sanitizing.

Eighty percent of the participants became certified after completing a written exam. Evaluation results showed that all participants gained increased knowledge about the benefits of serving safe food.
Farming remains one of the most hazardous industries in the United States with one of the highest fatality rates per 100,000 workers in the nation and surpasses all other industries including mining, construction and manufacturing. Farmers and their families are exposed to hazards inherent to farming situations such as tractors, machinery, livestock and pesticides. These hazards can have a specific impact on the safety and health of the farm family.

Farmers and farm workers experience one of the highest rates of hearing loss among all occupations due to the noisy environments in which they work and live. While noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) is not fatal, it can seriously degrade the quality of life of those affected. The sad part is that noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) is permanent and irreversible but it is preventable.

Two farm safety presentations titled, Noise Induced Hearing Loss- It’s Preventable, were given by Senior County Extension Agent Marion Barnes to the Low Country Cattlemen’s and the Salkehatchie Cattlemen’s Association’s during September. Learning objectives for these programs included how noise is measured, how noise can damage your hearing and steps to prevent noise induced hearing loss. Fifty-five producers from Colleton, Hampton, Allendale and surrounding counties attended these meetings. Those attending the presentations indicated an increase of awareness of the negative impacts that NIHL has on their lives and would take steps for preventing damage to their hearing when working in noisy environments in the future.

On April 9, 2016 a Hay Production Field Day was held at the Edisto Research and Education Center near Blackville S.C. A presentation by Senior County Extension Agent Marion Barnes titled, Putting Up Hay the Safe Way was one of the many topics included at the field day. Farm safety practices while baling, transporting and storing hay were outlined during the presentation. Fifty-five producers were in attendance. Seventy percent rated the presentation as excellent.

In late May and early June Tropical Storms Bonnie and Colin hit the SC low country dumping over a foot of rainfall in some areas of Colleton and Hampton counties in just a matter of days. This excessive amount of rainfall saturated soils, leaving cropland soaked and farmers unable to plant and tend their crops. Stuck and bogged-down equipment was a common site in these areas as farmers struggled to get back into their fields. Extracting farm equipment mired in mud can be a dangerous task if not preformed correctly. Seeing the need to educate producers on extracting stuck equipment safely, Clemson Extension distributed 50 copies of a farm safety publication from Purdue University titled, Extracting Stuck Equipment Safely: How to Avoid Costly & Painful Incidences to area farmers. This publication contains helpful information and advice for anyone attempting to extract farm equipment from the mud. Everyone producer who received a copy of this publication offered positive comments concerning the usefulness of the publication as well as the importance of farm safety on their operations.
Variable Depth Peanut Digger Research Conducted in Hampton County

Andrew C. Warner, Area Agronomic Agent

Dr. Kendall Kirk, Clemson Extension Precision Ag Engineer, is conducting several variable depth peanut digger trials on two local farms in Hampton County. The variable depth digger is an in-house Clemson University system designed to reduce peanut digging losses across highly variable soil textures normally found in the coastal plains of South Carolina.

Why is this importantly? Because although soil texture may change the depth at which peanuts grow generally does not. Currently, there is no way for growers to adjust the pitch of their machines on-the-go to best match soil texture so that the implement doesn’t dig too deep or too shallow. This ends up leading to preventable digging losses which cost growers profit. The variable depth digger uses a patented depth gauge design that adjust a hydraulic top link controlling the pitch of the implement. The pitch of the implement determines the peanut digger digging depth. So, the theory behind the variable depth digger is that if you can control the pitch and measure the depth of the implement on-the-go then you can design a system that maintain a constant depth across a field. This in return should reduce peanut digging related losses and increase profits for growers.

Hampton County Extension is excited to see if this systems work, and will to continue to work to connect researchers with growers to better develop technologies that will benefit many others down the road. I would like to thank Dr. Kendall Kirk for all the work he does with Hampton County growers, the farms participating in these trials, and the South Carolina Peanut Board for funding this research project. For more information contact Andrew Warner at the Hampton County Extension Office at (803)943-3427.

Small Garden Project Regional Winner

Dawn Stuckey, Area 4H Agent

Sarah Machtley, from Early Branch, was awarded the county and regional title in the 4-H Small Garden Project. Sarah worked diligently to establish and maintain a 100 square foot garden providing evidence and chronicling her experience in her project book. One of the unique features that allowed her garden to stand out above others was the unique trenching system she and her family designed to conserve the use of water in the garden.
The Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status and is an equal opportunity employer.

Hampton Counties Wild at Webb 4-H Camp Celebrates 10th Year

Dawn Stuckey, Area 4H Agent

4-H’ers from around the state gathered in Garnett, SC once again for wildlife and natural resource camp held at SC Department of Natural Resources Webb Wildlife Center. Developed in partnership between Hampton County 4-H and SCDNR, Wild at Webb celebrated its 10 year teaching youth between 9 and 12 years of age a multitude of lessons that expose them to the many aspects of nature and its resources. For an entire week, students were immersed in hands and minds on activities that featured forestry, wildlife management, conservation of habitat, team building, and shooting sports. First time attendees completed the South Carolina Hunter education course and received certification which will allow them to become eligible to own a hunting license in SC.