

Rural Resource Coalition values natural resources

By Jeff Benton Dennis
Special to the
Colletonian

The first public meeting of the new Rural Resource Coalition of SC was held Tuesday. While the meeting was inside the USDA building in Allendale, the focus was on the rural counties in the Lowcountry region. The carefully crafted mission statement promotes sustainable economic development in rural communities through wise stewardship of Lowcountry land and waters.

An array of leaders keen on rural economic development were on hand to participate in the audience discussion portion of the meeting that followed several speakers. One audience member from Bamberg County asked for help to develop their Cathedral Bay Heritage Preserve as a tourist destination.

Creating a destination for visitors was a common idea. Colleton County already has the Great Swamp preserve, but somehow the urgent need for a public education and outreach center to accompany it has not been realized. Far more grandiose plans are lined up for County Council to consider, while the Great Swamp project still needs guidance to become a first-class destination with an education building.

Charles Lane is chairman of the ACE Basin Task Force and he spoke about the need for agricultural income to rise in our region. The meeting encompassed Allendale, Hampton, Barnwell, Bamberg, Colleton and Orangeburg counties, which all have a significant agricultural heritage. "A lot of ag practices have left our state, and the East Coast, but now there is more demand for locally grown food," said Lane. "We want to create jobs that are tied to the rural community."

Lane cited much higher ag income per acre in the neighboring states of North Carolina and Georgia.

Tim Adams with the S.C. Forestry Commission spoke about the pulp and paper industry that is a large part of our regional economy. "Ag lands have decreased while forest lands have increased, and we have more wood volume now than ever," said Adams. After showing a map



Birdwatching, like on this DNR tour, is a good example of nature-based tourism. Photo by Jeff Benton Dennis/Special to The Colletonian

of wood mills across the Lowcountry region, Adams cited the need for more "secondary" mills.

Colleton County Clemson Extension Agent Bob Franklin added that Colletonians should push for such mills. "Every County wants more industry but the focus seems to be only on high-tech jobs, when these secondary wood products industries might make more sense," said Franklin. A secondary mill is a workplace that takes wood products and builds something of greater value. Taking boards and then making tables or furniture for sale would be a good example.

Each speaker seemed to agree that outdoor recreation is the strong suit of these rural counties. The S.C. Wildlife Federation is heading up the Rural Resource Coalition and is looking for leaders in each county to speak up. One such party represented the Savannah Riverkeeper group, which provides tours and oversight along and in the Savannah River.

Whether it's fishing in the Salkehatchie swamp or hunting in the ACE Basin, Colleton County should continue to let our quality of life contribute towards drawing in new businesses. Historical and cultural tourism are other outlets to consider. But for people to come they will require improved rural roads, safe lodging and good restaurants.

The Rural Resource Coalition was formed

with input from affordable housing, community development, conservation, forestry, and tourism when they all recognized their overlapping goals. This coalition wants to capitalize on the human and natural resources of this region to produce income from local food markets, the conservation of working farms and forests, renewable energy, and by placing a high value on wildlife habitat.

One audience member expressed concern about the rate of hardwood cutting he had witnessed recently. This rural county leader wanted to make sure that hardwoods get planted back in these areas for future markets, and not to convert them to pine stands. At some point, hardwoods stands are most valuable as a natural catalyst for water quality, which is another concern for rural populations in the future.

So the challenge remains how to turn our ample green acres into steady greenbacks. The Rural Resource Coalition will conduct its next public meeting in Dillon County on December 6 in order to address the rural counties of the Pee Dee region. To find out more information about the Rural Resource Coalition contact Sara Rajca of the S.C. Wildlife Federation at 803-256-0670.

Jeff Dennis is a Lowcountry native. Read his blog at www.LowcountryOutdoors.com

Henderson coming for book-signing

Acclaimed author Jerry Henderson will speak and sign books at the Saints Center on Hampton Street at 10 a.m. today. The public is invited. For more information about Henderson, visit thepeacemakers.co. There is no "m" on the end of his website address.

2011 Tides & Feeding Chart

courtesy of

Baker Shrimp

Tide Chart

Tides for Edisto Beach, Edisto Island starting with December 3

Day	High / Low	Tide Time	Height Feet	Sunrise / Sunset	Moon Time Visible	% Moon
Sa 3	High 1:45 AM	5.5	7:06 AM	Set 12:32 AM	54	
3	Low 8:00 AM	1.4	5:15 PM	Rise 1:03 PM		
3	High 2:13 PM	5.4				
3	Low 8:24 PM	0.9				
Su 4	High 2:36 AM	5.6	7:07 AM	Set 1:46 AM	64	
4	Low 9:00 AM	1.4	5:15 PM	Rise 1:32 PM		
4	High 3:03 PM	5.3				
4	Low 9:14 PM	0.8				
M 5	High 3:26 AM	5.7	7:08 AM	Set 2:39 AM	72	
5	Low 9:54 AM	1.2	5:15 PM	Rise 2:03 PM		
5	High 3:53 PM	5.2				
5	Low 10:01 PM	0.7				
Tu 6	High 4:16 AM	5.9	7:09 AM	Set 3:33 AM	80	
6	Low 10:43 AM	1.0	5:15 PM	Rise 2:36 PM		
6	High 4:43 PM	5.2				
6	Low 10:47 PM	0.5				
W 7	High 5:04 AM	6.0	7:10 AM	Set 4:28 AM	87	
7	Low 11:28 AM	0.9	5:16 PM	Rise 3:12 PM		
7	High 5:30 PM	5.3				
7	Low 11:31 PM	0.4				
Th 8	High 5:49 AM	6.2	7:10 AM	Set 5:23 AM	93	
8	Low 12:12 PM	0.7	5:16 PM	Rise 3:53 PM		
8	High 6:15 PM	5.4				
F 9	Low 12:14 AM	0.2	7:11 AM	Set 6:17 AM	97	
9	High 6:32 AM	6.4	5:16 PM	Rise 4:39 PM		
9	Low 12:54 PM	0.6				
9	High 6:56 PM	5.4				

Feeding Chart

Date	Morning		Evening	
	Minor	Major	Minor	Major
3	12:06AM	5:45AM	12:17PM	6:06PM
4	1:01AM	6:26AM	12:47PM	6:47PM
5	1:55AM	7:09AM	1:17PM	7:30PM
6	2:49AM	7:52AM	1:50PM	8:14PM
7	3:44AM	8:37AM	2:27PM	9:00PM
8	4:39AM	9:24AM	3:08PM	9:49PM
9	5:33AM	10:14AM	3:53PM	10:39PM