

The Wylie Pilot
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Edmunds given S.C. honor

From staff reports

CLOVER

Evelyn G. Edmunds of Clover has been honored by Gov. Nikki Haley with the Order of the Palmetto, the highest civilian honor in South Carolina.

State Sen. Harvey Peeler



Edmunds

presented the award to Edmunds during the annual Partners in Agriculture and Conservation Legislative

Dinner last week in York.

She was nominated for the award by the York County Soil & Water Conservation District, where she has served as a commissioner for 19 years.

Edmunds, 87, has farmed since 1950 and, when her husband died in 1978, she assumed full management of Circle E farm while raising her six children.

She has been active in South Carolina Cattle-men's Association and Farm Bureau, often being the only woman in the room at committee meetings.

She also blazed a trail of leadership, and was so successful in earning the respect of her male peers that today there are many women at the table in agricultural organizations.

She has served at the state and national level of many organizations for more than 30 years.

According to the conservation district, countless young people have pursued agricultural careers because of Edmunds' work with 4-H, Scouting and Angus associations.

At 87, Edmunds is still active on her farm, a contributing member of several farm organizations and is still helping youngsters raise and show livestock.

The Order of the Palmetto is given for extraordinary lifetime service and achievements of national

or statewide significance.

The conservation district and York County Farm Bureau hosted the Partners in Conservation & Agriculture Legislative Dinner, where two local awards also were presented.

The Champion of Conservation Award, sponsored by the Conservation District, recognizes a local farmer who has been a leader in conservation and agriculture. The award was presented to the Rusty Thomson family of Blue Lake Farm in Sharon.

The Conservation Teacher of the Year Award is cosponsored by the Conservation District and York County T.Y.L.-E.R. program, or Teaching York County to Live Environmentally Responsible. It is presented to an educator who has worked to enhance environmental and conservation education. The award was presented to Alice Hildebrand, a teacher at York Road Elementary School in Rock Hill.

How exotic are we in the Deep South?

MacLeod and Jerry Bellune are spending their children's inheritance traveling the country and enjoying every minute. Here is an account of their travels from South Carolina to the Southwest and back, a 4,700-mile trip through 11 states.

On the road again

"The rest of the country has always viewed the Deep South as an exotic region."

Those are the somewhat condescending words of author Jamie James.

The Deep South, he contends, is "only technically a part of the Union, populated by charming, flamboyant people who are half-civilized and dangerous when riled."

He was writing in the Wall Street Journal recently about a travel book, "Deep South: Four Seasons on Back Roads," by New Englander Paul Theroux.

Mr. Theroux set out to discover the truth of such myths about us who live in the Deep South by abandoning the interstates to the truckers and people who need to get somewhere fast.

He set out on back roads to find the South of destitute country folk and bleak small towns, places of high unemployment, fast food outlets, Walmarts, pawnshops and gun retailers.

Seek and ye shall find.

America the beautiful

Having visited Mr. Theroux's New England, I can weave a similar story of the urban and rural poor.

But I also found ample evidence of initiative and enterprise which he could have found in the modern South of today. He only had to look around him.

The Deep South, like the rest of America, is a mix of haves and have nots, successes and failures.

You find what you seek.

America is a tapestry of beauty as well as squalor.

Mr. Theroux practiced a favored ploy of intellectuals who picture Southerners much as James Dickey did in "Deliverance" — cross-eyed, gap-toothed ignoramuses whose talents run to playing banjos and victimizing unarmed adventurers.

The unarmed are always at a disadvantage.

The other South

That South exists in some quarters, I'll admit. But it is not the South of robust economic development and growing ethnic, racial and sexual tolerance.

You need look no further for evidence than our governor, Nikki Haley, a first generation American whose parents immigrated from India. Nikki is our neighbor and one of the hardest working women (aside from MacLeod) I know.

MacLeod and I set out on a dream trip a few

weeks ago in our own search for hearts in the Heartland.

We drove Blue Highways — the secondary roads that lead through small towns where they set pitchers of iced tea on long tables. Everyone eats together like a family and you talk about who they are, what they do and their hopes and dreams.

William "Least Heat Moon" Trogdon celebrated the life he found along such American roads in his book "Blue Highways" more than 30 years ago. If you haven't already, you must read it.

Going but where?

Some of our most memorable journeys have been along such roads with only a general direction in mind.

We have no set itinerary. We are in no hurry.

We take it all in as we go, stopping wherever we take a notion, talking with the locals about whatever they want to talk about, exploring small towns, finding a bed and breakfast or tourist cabin along the way and taking notes each evening about what we discovered.

Columbus and Magellan could not have had more exciting adventures than we find along these roads.

After four days of flooding in our state earlier this month, we finally started, but in no hurry.

Our colleagues at the *Chronicle* are competent to publish first rate online and print newspapers without us.

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A new day dawns

After what seemed like a week of rain and gloomy overcast skies in early October, our journey began on the south shore of Lake Murray.

We headed across the Southeast on U.S. 378 into Georgia, where we stopped in Lexington, the first of five Lexingtons we visited along the way.

Our travels took us deep into the Southwest

in places we had never visited and to meet people we will probably never see again.

But that is the stuff of adventure no matter who you are or how old you are.

We even solved a mystery: Where is the fabled and famous Route 66?

You will find it on no road maps any longer. But it still exists. It is just buried under hundreds of miles of asphalt and

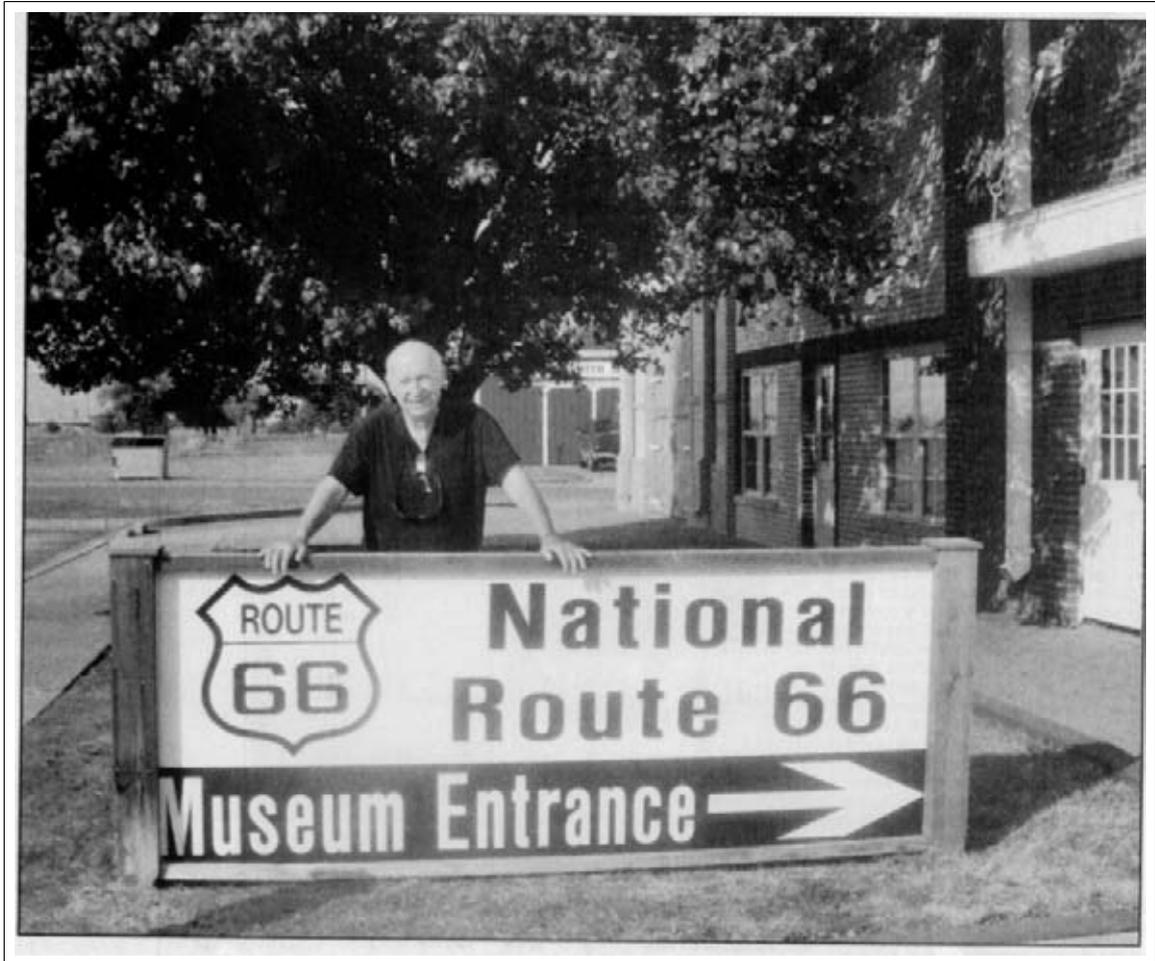
concrete now traveled by millions of vehicles on interstate highways.

You may still find vestiges of it in small towns like Elk City, Okla., where we stopped for a visit to the Route 66 Museum.

More about that in upcoming weeks as we take you along with us to the Southwest.

Next: A family business.

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MacLeod Bellane | Chronicle

MacLeod snapped this photo of Jerry on the vanished Route 66 in Elk City, Okla. The fabled road still lives in memory but is buried beneath thousands of miles of interstate asphalt.

ON THE ROAD

Follow the Bellunes' other adventures online at lexingtonchronicle.com



148 Cypress Creek Renewables Establishing Solar Operations

COLUMBIA, S.C. (October 30, 2015) – Cypress Creek Renewables, a company that specializes in the ownership and development of long-term solar energy projects, has taken the first step towards investing \$34 million in three new solar energy facilities in Calhoun County.

With offices in Arizona, Missouri, New York and North Carolina, as well as Los Angeles and San Francisco, CA, Cypress Creek Renewables strives to make solar power economically attractive to utilities and consumers. Primarily focused on two to 10 megawatt utility scale projects, Cypress is working with regulators, utilities and business development groups throughout the United States to build more than one gigawatt of new solar projects between now and the end of 2016.

The company is working in partnership with Sustainable Energy Solutions, which is assisting Cypress by identifying sites, obtaining necessary permits and coordinating with the utilities. Together, they have received approval to build three facilities in and around two different towns within Calhoun County, all of which are expected to be fully operational by the end of 2016.

In St. Matthews, SC, Cypress is constructing a 10-megawatt facility off of Preference Road. In Cameron, SC, the company is constructing a four-megawatt facility and a 20-megawatt facility off of Cameron Road.

For more information on Cypress Creek Renewables, visit www.cypresscreekrenewables.com. For more information on Sustainable Energy Solutions, visit www.sccleanenergy.com.

QUOTES

“Cypress Creek Renewables is a national leader in solar development and we are thrilled with the opportunity to provide clean, stable energy to thousands of homes in Calhoun County. We are grateful to county leaders, the State of South Carolina, and Sustainable Energy Solutions for their leadership and we hope to create more win-win opportunities together in the future.”
–Cypress Creek Renewables CEO Matthew McGovern

“The experience we’ve had

working with Calhoun County is another example of how the state of South Carolina wants more clean energy and all of the benefits it provides. Projects like these don’t happen without the support of the local government and strong partnerships with organizations like Cypress Creek and the rest of our development team.” –Sustainable Energy Solutions, LLC Owner and Director of Business Development Paul Fleury

“Cypress Creek’s continued investment in South Carolina and our people is a reason to celebrate. This Calhoun County project is further proof of the business-friendly environment we have worked to create across our state for companies in all industries and from all around the world.” –Gov. Nikki Haley

“This investment by Cypress Creek Renewables will further strengthen South Carolina’s growing reputation in the area of renewable energy. Providing both positive economic and environmental impacts, I’m proud to welcome Cypress Creek to our state and look forward to growing this terrific partnership in the years ahead.” –Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt

“Calhoun County continues to prove that low taxes, reasonable regulation and a business-friendly environment will make you a fertile field ripe for new investment. These solar projects coming into our county will not only bring us a new revenue stream and construction jobs, but also a new era in helping meet our state’s energy needs. The 34 megawatts generated here in St. Matthews and Cameron will help South Carolina and the United States meet the goal of over one new gigawatt in solar projects by the end of 2016. We welcome Cypress Creek Renewables to Calhoun County!” –Calhoun County Council Chairman David K. Summers, Jr.

“We welcome Cypress Creek Renewables to Calhoun County and again to the Central S.C. Region. Their commitment to clean renewable energy is a great benefit to the citizens and stakeholders of this community and for future generations to come.” –Central SC Alliance Chairman Mike Brenan

FIVE FAST FACTS

Calhoun Times
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- Cypress Creek Renewables is establishing solar power operations in Calhoun County.

- \$34 million investment in Calhoun County operations.

- Cypress Creek is a national company with offices in Carrboro, North Carolina.

- The company currently manages a development pipeline of more than 200 projects.

- Cypress Creek's three Calhoun County facilities are expected to be fully operational by the end of 2016.

About Cypress Creek Renewables

Cypress Creek Renewables is pursuing opportunities across the United States. Our business model is primarily focused on utility-scale ground mount projects from 2-10MW AC in capacity. Cypress brings extensive development experience and very aggressive financing to create new opportunities in emerging solar markets. Our goal is to make solar an economically attractive option without additional state incentives. For more information, visit www.cypresscreekrenewables.com.

www.cypresscreekrenewables.com.

About Central South Carolina Alliance

The Central SC Alliance (CSCA) is a full-service professional economic development organization, founded in 1994 as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, public/private partnership, engaged in the recruitment of capital investment and jobs to the Central Region of South Carolina. Since inception, CSCA and its partners and allies, have attracted over \$10.7 billion in capital investment nearly 64,000 new jobs to the Central Region of South Carolina.

CSCA represents nine counties and the City of Columbia. (The nine county region includes, Calhoun, Clarendon, Fairfield, Kershaw, Lexington, McCormick, Newberry, Orangeburg and Richland). To learn more about the Central SC Alliance please visit our website at www.centalsc.org and be sure to follow us on Twitter @Central_SC and like us on Facebook.

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Chapin Times
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South Carolina Flood Response: A tale of two state mottos

By: Congressman Joe Wilson

Throughout October, our state has been tested by the devastating effects of a thousand-year rainfall and tragic flooding. While our citizens have faced adversity before, the unprecedented rain created widespread destruction that affected all corners of the state.

While inspired by our state's resilience, I mourn those who lost their lives in the flooding and keep the families who lost their homes, businesses and vehicles to damage in my thoughts.

It would be easy, even understandable, for us to be resigned to the tragedy that has overwhelmed families, homes and businesses. But that isn't how our citizens respond to adversity.

South Carolina, a state rich with history, has been blessed with two mottos: *Animis Opibusque Parati* and *Dum Spiro Spero*.

These mottos have guided and uplifted our state during times of struggle and continue to guide us in the face of this tragedy.

The first – *Animis Opibusque Parati* – means “Prepared in Mind and Resources.” Advanced and early preparations after National Weather Service alerts were critical to our recovery efforts. Governor Nikki Haley and Adjutant General Bob Livingston took warnings seriously, and helped prepare and lead the state through this difficult

time. I am grateful for our well trained and devoted first response teams and our local media who worked tirelessly to provide assistance and information to our state. Our preparedness in mind and resources has produced an outstanding response to this disaster.

The second motto – *Dum Spiro Spero* – means “While I Breathe I Hope.” This tragedy has reiterated to me the strength and character of South Carolina. I was filled with hope by the inspirational, spontaneous acts of volunteers such as Frank Roddey, Ryan Truluck, Drew Bozard and Zack Hudson and dozens of others who rescued residents by boat from their submerged homes around the Midlands. I was touched by local organizations and churches who rallied volunteers, charities like the Red Cross who operated 26 shelters and have distributed over 13,000 clean up kits, and the Salvation Army who has donated over 50,000 meals during the crisis. These acts have breathed hope into the hearts of South Carolinians whose lives were disrupted by this tragedy.

I am hopeful for a quick and full recovery and I urge individuals

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South Carolina Flood Response: A tale of two state mottos

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to apply for disaster relief from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and for disaster loans for their homes and small businesses from the Small Business Administration (SBA). More information and contact details are available on the website www.joewilson.house.gov/flood.

I am grateful for the strength and of our state and I pray our

citizens will never be forced to endure another natural disaster or tragedy in our community. But, I am comforted in knowing that if we are tested once more, our citizens will, yet again, respond with resilience and grace.

God Bless South Carolina.
*Animis Opibusque Parati.
Dum Spiro Spero.*

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**THE TIMES & DEMOCRAT
 OF ORANGEBURG**

Nov. 4

**COMMERCE DEVELOPMENT
 ONGOING MISSION**

"South Carolina continues to lead the nation's manufacturing renaissance," S.C. Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt said in Tuesday's announcement on an industry expansion in Williston.

Hitt and Gov. Nikki Haley speak regularly about South Carolina's manufacturing sector thriving since they took office. They cite 28,000 new manufacturing jobs over the past four years, more than created in Georgia and North Carolina.

During Haley's tenure as governor, South Carolina has become the top state for exporting tire and passenger vehicles. The list of top companies locating or planning to locate in the state since she took office in 2011 is impressive: Continental Tire plant in Sumter County, Giti tire in Chester County, the Daimler van plant expansion in North Charleston and Volvo in Berkeley County.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics numbers show the total number of factory jobs rose 12.7 percent in the state between 2010 and 2015 to more than 231,000, a bigger percentage increase than in 39 other states.

And the prospects for the future are good.

Projections by the South Carolina Department of

Employment and Workforce are that manufacturing jobs will grow by 16,000-17,000 between 2010 and 2020. And growth in key manufacturing areas such as the Midlands (9 percent) and Upstate (12 percent) is expected to be strong.

But South Carolina cannot rest on its laurels. The competition is intense and nearby.

On Monday, Site Selection magazine named Georgia as the state with the Top Business Climate for the third consecutive year. As revealed in the November 2015 issue of the magazine, research based in part on a survey of corporate real estate executives and in part on the magazine's index of criteria led to Georgia repeating its first-place finish. And South Carolina's neighbor to the north, North Carolina, is second. Kentucky, Louisiana and Texas round out the top five.

"Capital investors tell us the ideas we put in place

are actually working," Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal said. "Our tax reform in the manufacturing arena, for example, to remove the sales tax from energy use was a huge boost to our manufacturing sector."

The governor also points to removing as many regulatory impediments as possible and providing a well-educated and trained workforce as deliverables of particular interest to companies looking at Georgia locations. Corporate executives routinely cite Quick

Start, Georgia's workforce training program; logistics assets, such as the Port of Savannah and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport; and tax reform as the factors that brought them to Georgia.

Fifty percent of the overall Business Climate Ranking is based on a survey of corporate site selectors who are asked to rank the states based on their recent experience of locating facilities in them.

The other 50 percent is based on an index of seven criteria: performance in Site Selection's annual competitiveness ranking; total Conway Projects Database-compliant facilities in 2014; total new facilities in 2014 per capita; total 2015 new projects year to date; total 2015 projects year to date per capita; state tax burdens on mature firms and on new firms according to the Tax Foundation and KPMG Location Matters analysis.

South Carolina ranked 13th overall and fifth in the survey of corporate executives.

The state fell down in the magazine's index of seven criteria, notably ranking 47th in total number of new plants locating in the state in 2014 and 45th in new plants per capita in the same year. The ranking is a lot better for January-August 2015, with the state at 11th and ninth, respectively in the new-plants scoring.

The battle is fierce and the top contenders among states are our neighbors.

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JANET BLACKMON MORGAN/THE SUN NEWS VIA AP

This aerial photo shows flooding around homes in the Bridge Creek neighborhood of Socastee on Oct. 6.

S.C. Flood Response: A tale of two state mottos

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Wilson

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of volunteers such as Frank Roddey, Ryan Truluck, Drew Bozard and Zack Hudson and dozens of others who rescued residents by boat from their submerged homes around the Midlands. I was touched by local organizations and churches who rallied volunteers, charities like the Red Cross who operated 26 shelters and have distributed over 13,000 clean up kits, and the Salvation Army who has donated over 50,000 meals during the crisis. These acts have breathed hope into the hearts of South Carolinians whose lives were disrupted by this tragedy.

I am hopeful for a quick and full recovery and I urge individuals to apply for disaster relief from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and for disaster loans for their homes and small businesses from the Small Business Administration (SBA). More information and contact details are available on the website www.joewilson.house.gov/flood.

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I pray our citizens will never be forced to endure another natural disaster or tragedy in our community. But, I am comforted in knowing that if we are tested once more, our citizens will, yet again, respond with resilience and grace.

**God Bless South Carolina.
*Animis Opibusque Parati.
Dum Spiro Spero.***)

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148 **Gov. Haley**
Monday, Nov. 23 is the new date for SC Governor Nikki Haley to visit McCormick and the Savannah Lakes Village Recreation Center.
The event is a Women in Business Luncheon sponsored by the McCormick Chamber of Commerce and is set to start at 11:30 a.m.
Tickets are priced at \$25 per person and are available from the Chamber, 864-852-2835. Ticket purchase deadline is Tuesday, Nov. 17.



Williston¹⁴⁸ industry expansion creating 19 new jobs

JONATHAN VICKERY
Managing Editor
jonathan.vickery@morris.com

Nineteen new jobs are coming to Barnwell County as an existing Williston industry expands.

Precision Metal Fabricators, Inc., a firm that specializes in the manufacturing of metal and fabricated metal products, is expanding its existing Barnwell County operations by investing \$500,000 to relocate to a larger facility, announced the South Carolina Department of Commerce in a press release Nov. 3. This will create 19 new jobs in Williston over the next five years.

"Over the last 25 years, Precision Metal Fabricators Inc. has had a vision to continuously improve customer service, quality, and processes through ingenuity and dedication. By understanding the value of human capital and staying true to our original vision; Precision Metal Fabricators has grown from a 5,000-square-foot warehouse with four employees to a large scale contract manufacturing facility, with a wide customer base that spans into many industries," said Alan King, the company's president.

The relocation and expansion will help the company meet the demands of its growing customer base, according to the press release.

The company will move to a 75,000-square-foot facility at 201 State Street in Williston, which is nearly triple the size of the existing plant. "To achieve the expansion, the company will update the new facility's electrical system, as well as its office and workspaces, installing new air-lines, fiber optics and servers," stated the release.

"As the company grows and expands its operations

into other industries, I am looking forward to Precision Metal Fabricators being an asset in South Carolina's industrial community and creating even more career opportunities within our region," King said.

The move is expected to take place in January 2016, with hiring for the new positions anticipated to begin in the second quarter of 2016. Those interested in joining the Precision Metal Fabricators team should contact the Human Resources Department by email at HR@PMF-Inc.com.

Barnwell County Council Chairman David Kenner thanked King for his investment into the county and its people. "Every job created by Precision Metal Fabricators makes a difference for a family in our area, not to mention the surrounding supporting services, retail businesses, and indirect jobs. Good jobs bring a better quality of life."

Gov. Nikki Haley praised the announcement and its impact on rural Barnwell County. "A company that does business in one of our rural counties is extremely important to that community, and that's exactly why we couldn't be more excited to see Precision Metal Fabricators succeed in Barnwell County to the point that they are creating 19 new jobs there. This new investment shows how committed this great South Carolina company is to our people, and that commitment really is a reason to celebrate across the state."

Precision Metal Fabricators was established in 1990 as a homegrown, service disabled veteran-owned business, serving a wide variety of industry sectors.

Southern Carolina Alliance President Danny

Black thanked King for expanding in the region. "Not only is this a service disabled veteran-owned business, it is one that manufactures metal fabricated products for a wide variety of industry with the highest demands for quality and precision, which speaks to the quality of workforce since Mr. King plans to double the workforce at his facility."

Barnwell County Economic Development Commission Chairman Tommy Boyleston said the company will be an asset to the industrial community. "Their state-of-the-art capabilities enable them to work with industry leaders in a variety of metal fabri-

FIVE FAST FACTS

- Precision Metal Fabricators is expanding its operations in Barnwell County.
- \$500,000 investment creating 19 new jobs.
- Established in 1990, Precision Metal Fabricators is a homegrown, service disabled veteran-owned business.
- The company is relocating to a larger, 75,000-square-foot facility at 201 State Street in Williston.
- Those interested in joining the Precision Metal Fabricators team should contact HR@PMF-Inc.com.

cation, defense, and technology industries, and we are proud that they chose to call Williston home."

S.C. Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt said the announcement reinforces the notion that South Carolina continues to lead the nation's manufacturing renaissance. "We congratulate Precision Metal Fabricators on all of their success and look forward to supporting them as they continue to thrive in our state."

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¹⁴⁸*Barnwell among 29 counties declared primary natural disaster areas*

CHANEY ADAMS
S.C. Governor's Office

Governor Nikki Haley announced Oct. 28 that United States Department of Agriculture Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack has issued a disaster designation for counties in South Carolina that suffered damage and losses due to heavy rains and flooding. The governor requested the disaster designation in an October 19 letter.

A secretarial disaster designation makes farm operators in primary counties and those counties contiguous to primary counties eligible to be considered for certain assistance from Farm Service Agency (FSA), provided eligibility requirements are

met.

This assistance includes FSA emergency loans. Farmers in eligible counties, which include both primary and contiguous counties, have 8 months from the date of a secretarial disaster declaration to apply for emergency loans. FSA considers each emergency loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of production losses on the farm, and the security and repayment ability of the operator.

Local FSA offices, administered by the South Carolina State Executive Director of the Farm Service Agency, can provide affected farmers with further information.

The following 29 counties were designated as pri-

mary natural disaster areas after USDA determined sufficient production losses had occurred: Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Berkeley, Calhoun, Chester, Clarendon, Colleton, Darlington, Dillon, Dorchester, Edgefield, Fairfield, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Kershaw, Lancaster, Laurens, Lee, Lexington, Marion, Newberry, Orangeburg, Richland, Saluda, Sumter and Williamsburg

The following counties have been named as contiguous disaster counties:

Abbeville, Anderson, Beaufort, Charleston, Chesterfield, Greenville, Greenwood, Hampton, McCormick, Marlboro, Spartanburg, Union, and York.





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Thad Wimberly, left, and Jonathan Berry inspect the damage to a field of peanuts following record rainfall and flooding in Branchville, Friday, Oct. 9. Wimberly, co-owner of Wimco Farms in Branchville, said he expects to lose 75 percent of his crop. (AP Photo/Adam Beam)



Coastal
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POLITICS 59 + 148

Offshore drilling opponents find victory in vote for city council

BY JASON LESLEY
COASTAL OBSERVER

Voters in the city of Georgetown elected three Democratic candidates to City Council this week after members of a local environmental group campaigned for them on the basis of their opposition to offshore oil drilling in the Atlantic.

Democrats Al Joseph, Sheldon Butts and Clarence Smalls soundly defeated Republicans Richard Powers, Lee Padgett and Tom Winslow.

Jean Marie Neal, spokeswoman for Stop Offshore Drilling in the Atlantic, said members of the group campaigned door-to-door and by phone for

“The response to

the three who said they were against drilling. Georgetown City Council passed a resolution this year opposing offshore drilling. The Republicans promised to revisit the issue if elected.

“I’m not saying SODA decided the outcome in the city elections,” Neal said. “Many factors were involved. I think the three who won were also very good candidates. The response to our message was really overwhelming. I thought people in Georgetown felt that way, but I think we helped make them realize that their vote makes a difference on this issue. The good citizens of Georgetown sent a loud message.”

Neal said opposition to offshore drilling has gained momentum nationally, too. “We may not have the Washington lobbyists and big bucks,” she said, “but we have something more important: our love of

our message was really overwhelming.”

Jean Marie Neal
SODA

SEE “DRILLING,” PAGE 4





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Drilling | Foes see impact in Georgetown city elections

FROM FRONT PAGE
South Carolina's coast."

SODA founding member Peg Howell of North Litchfield spoke Wednesday at a rally at the U.S. Capitol. As a former petroleum engineer who worked for Chevron, she was invited to speak by the Sea Party Coalition, a bipartisan group of about 60 organizations against drilling in the Atlantic. South Carolina Rep. Mark Sanford was another speaker Wednesday.

On a state level, the Consumer Energy Alliance hosted a forum on offshore drilling in Columbia Wednesday. Representatives from the oil industry, S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley's office and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management were expected on the panel along with Hamilton Davis of the Coastal Conservation League. None of the 23 municipalities in the state that have opposed oil and gas drilling offshore were represented. SODA members Tom Stickler and Ed Yaw attended the forum.

Howell told members of the Winyah Chapter of the Sierra Club Monday that drilling in the South Atlantic puts the state's tourism industry at risk by threatening the coast's environmental health. "If oil and gas are drilled off our shores, it will be exported," she said. "There are essentially no benefits for South Carolinians."

On Wednesday, she told the Sea Party Coalition that being silent on the drilling issue is equal to accepting it. "Opening up the Atlantic to offshore seismic testing and drilling will forever harm the beauty of our coast," she said. "The potential damage to the ocean, our marshes, beaches and homes is not worth the risks that come from exploring, producing and transporting oil and gas. The onshore industrialization that comes with offshore drilling will be a blight on our communities and damage our already fragile infrastructure and environment. The unfounded promises from the petroleum industry are minor compared to the lost tourism income. Everywhere the oil and gas companies have drilled, there have been spills. We don't want this to be our legacy." Also attending the rally were SODA member Goffinet McLaren from Litchfield Beach and Don't Drill S.C. Lowcountry member Alice Morrisey of Sullivans Island.

Howell said state residents can expect an ad campaign and promises about the benefits of offshore drilling. "But those promises are nothing more than empty promises," she said. "The truth is that any money coming into our state from the oil and gas industry will be miniscule compared to the tourism dollars."