District staff has been busy with the 2nd year of the “Whole Farm Approach” (WFA-1) Cost Share Grant and the VA Ag BMP Cost Share Program. This year’s Cost Share budget for both programs is $3,766,933.00. The 245 applications consisted of Nutrient Management Plan Writing, Cover Crop, Split Application of Nitrogen on Corn, Long Term Vegetative Cover on Cropland, Water Control Structure, Stream Exclusion with Wide Width Buffer and Grazing Land Management, and Precision Nutrient Management with 100% of funding allocated.

The Staff has begun work on overhauling and modernizing the District website. We hope to have the new site up and running in January 2021.

Three Rivers SWCD Mini Grant Program awarded $2,017.00 to 4 applicants.

Hamilton Holmes Middle School - $517
“Schoolyard Habitat & Outdoor Classroom”

Chesapeake Bay Governors School (Bowling Green, Glenns & Warsaw Campuses) - $1,500
“Student Citizen Science: Microclimate Analysis in the 5 County region of the Middle Peninsula”

We are hosting the Area III Dominion Energy Envirotthon this year in partnership with Area VI. Both the training and the competition will be virtual to ensure the safety of students, coaches, judges, volunteers etc. Competition is scheduled tentatively for mid-April.
Colonial SWCD Quarterly Report

Virginia Agricultural Cost Share Program (VACS)

The CSWCD received a record level of VACS applications for the second consecutive year. After reaching a historic high-water mark with the FY 2020 program, staff was able to sell the benefits of the program, which yielded an even greater level of BMP implementation. Thanks to increased payment rates, the District’s cover crop program continued to grow, despite challenging weather conditions during the planting season. If all cover crops approved by the District Board are certified, approximately 1/3 of all the cropland in the CSWCD will be enrolled in a VACS cover crop contract.

Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (CBPA) Ag Land Assessments

Annually the CSWCD conducts 20 agricultural land assessments for three of the District’s five localities. Late in the calendar year District staff randomly select parcels to be assessed and offer local government staff an opportunity to provide input or suggest alternative parcels. Notifications to landowners of the pending assessment are sent in early December targeting a late winter or early spring site visit. After conducting the on-site assessments, District staff submit documentation of each visit to the locality, which is then shared with DEQ during the locality’s CBPA compliance review. Reactions from landowners receiving notification that their property has been selected for evaluation varies from indifference to irate. District staff have used the opportunity to educate landowners who may not be familiar with District programs and initiatives, which ultimately has resulted in an increase in requests for other services, including VACS, VCAP and Conservation Planning.

During an CBPA agricultural land assessment, District staff evaluate RPA buffers, look for signs of erosion, and verify the parcel has a current nutrient management plan.
After more than twenty years of dedicated service as a conservation specialist with Hanover-Caroline SWCD, our very own crotchety cowboy, Jim Tate, is retiring in December. As we bid Jim a fond farewell, here's a little bit about him, in his own words:

JIM TATE WAS A PROUD MEMBER OF THE CLASSES OF ’71, ’73 AND ’75 BEFORE FINALLY WEARING DOWN VIRGNA TECH AND CAUSING THEM TO GIVE HIM A DEGREE IN ANIMAL SCIENCE, JUST TO GET RID OF HIM.

HE WORKED FOR SEVERAL YEARS AS AN ITINERANT COWBOY AT SEVERAL REGISTERED ANGUS OPERATIONS BEFORE FINALLY DECLARING THAT HE WOULD NEVER TOUCH ANOTHER DAMNED COW UNLESS HE OWNED HER.

THAT CAME TO PASS IN 1986, WHEN HE JUMPED THE CLAIM ON A SMALL PATCH OF GROUND IN BEAVERDAM VIRGINIA AND STARTED PIPE DREAM FARM, WHICH HAS HAD ITS UPS AND DOWNS OVER THE YEARS BUT DESPITE OWNING A FEW HUNDRED COWS AND LITERALLY DISTRIBUTING HIS OWN BRAND OF BULLS AROUND THE AREA OVER THE YEARS, THE SHOESTRING OUTFIT IS STILL IN EXISTENCE.

TO SUPPORT HIS LIVESTOCK ADDICTION, TATE HAS SUFFERED THROUGH ALL KINDS OF WORK-RELATED INDIGNITIES. HE DID A STRETCH PEDDLING MILK FOR A MILK-MARKETING COOPERATIVE. AFTER RUNNING THAT INTO THE GROUND, HE TOOK TO PEDDLING DAIRY CLEANERS AND SANITIZERS OVER A SEVEN STATE AREA AND LEFT HIS POOR WIFE TO RUN THE FARM SINGLE-HANDEDLY. HE EVEN DID A STRETCH IN THE INDUSTRIAL BATTERY BUSINESS, DOING SALES AND SERVICE.


We wish Jim all the best in his retirement; he will finally have time for plenty of rides with his "therapist," Condi.
Welcoming a New Staff Member:

The HCSWCD is pleased to welcome a new conservation specialist, Kemper Marable, who joined the staff in October.

Kemper grew up in Mechanicsville, Virginia where he took an early interest in agriculture, helping his "Mumma" to care for their large vegetable garden every summer. As a teen, Kemper attended Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts' Youth Conservation Camp, a week-long summer conservation camp for Virginia high school students on the campus of Virginia Tech. After high school Kemper's interest in agriculture continued, leading him to Virginia Tech where he majored in agriculture technology and was awarded one of the District's 2003 Academic Scholarships.

After college Kemper interned with VASWCD then joined the staff there briefly before accepting a conservation technician position with Henricopolis SWCD, where he remained for six years. Kemper then tried his hand working for the railroad and in commercial landscaping for a few years before returning to his roots in the conservation family with Hanover-Caroline SWCD. Kemper is a prime example of how District education programming can produce home-grown conservationists!

Kemper married his long-time sweetheart, Jessica Poe, in September, 2020. A dedicated bourbon enthusiast, Kemper's hobbies also include entertaining friends at home, being on the water and spending time with his Great Pyrenees-Mastiff mix, Hopkins.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION SERIES

Beginning in January, the District will host a new video series focused on watershed basics and best management practices citizens can implement at home. Stay tuned for more details to come.

FY2021 Cost-share

Hanover-Caroline was given $1,280,442.00 for the FY2021 Cost-share Program. The entire amount is being dedicated to cover crop signup. Our conservationists are in the process of spot-checking those fields for stands (pictures are from recent spot-checks). We currently have a number of structural practices, including waste facilities and grazing systems, that are still awaiting funding.
**Henricopolis SWCD Quarterly Report**

We have been busy working in our main program areas – Agriculture, Education, and Urban. These programs are running strong, with expansion in some cases. Over the past 8 months, we have had the unique opportunity to re evaluate the way in we conduct business. We have been improving in many ways and striving to work smarter.

Our VACS program is running strong with good signup and participation.

Our outreach educational programs are in good demand. We have moved a number of these programs into virtual format to meet pandemic needs.

We are excited to have recently welcomed some new and returning Associate Directors to include:

- Herb Dunford
- Terri Higgins
- Leon App
- Spec Campen
- Elizabeth Beckley
- Joyce Davis
- Jon Hruska

We look forward to a strong finish to 2020 and are thankful for unique opportunities that have come through this year.

**Monocan SWCD Quarterly Report**

This fiscal quarter has been eventful. Pam Pleasants, Senior Office Manager, will officially retire at the end of December after 31 years of service. She was recognized for her work at the December Goochland Board of Supervisors meeting and awarded a letter of resolution.

Monacan paid an SL-1 cost share practice at the beginning of November. Staff is working with Area VI on the upcoming Envirothon.

MSWCD’s intern from Marshal University recently completed her internship for her Fall semester.
On August 17 in 1990, Tri-County/City SWCD welcomed a new Conservation Specialist. Etta Lucas, who previously worked for the Farmers Home Administration (currently known as the United States Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development), was given two options – either work on the emergency loan program and go into field work. Her passion for helping others guided Lucas to Tri-County/City, opting for outdoor work rather than “be stuck behind a computer all day”. Fast forward to today, Lucas remains the District’s Conservation Specialist until early 2021 after serving for 30 years.

At the time when she started, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) needed assistance. Lucas stepped up to the challenge, absorbing everything she could with on-the-job training she received to best serve her community. She particularly enjoyed the variety of work that it offered as she continued building her expertise. With any new employee, it takes time to forge positive relationships between the District and the farmers. Lucas worked hard to establish those connections over the years. A memorable moment she recalled is when a particularly skeptical client once told her, “I’m so glad that I listened to you to go no-till. It has been the best decision I’ve made for my farm.”

“It takes a special kind of person – not that I would say I’m necessarily special – to work with farmers.” Lucas stated, looking back on her three decades with the District, “They want to be assured that who they’re working with knows what they’re talking about.” Lucas mentioned while there may have been ups and downs, working for the District was an enjoyable experience. In any situation, Lucas prefers to “be part of the solution, instead of the problem” and her work with the District allowed her calling to flourish by advising and guiding farmers on best conservation practices.

But her plans do not stop after retirement! While she says she will be relaxing for a bit after hanging the mantle of Conservation Specialist, Lucas hopes to continue working with her community. “I’m not sure where it will be, perhaps in healthcare, but all I know is that I like helping people and that is what I’ll do.”

**Summer, Scouts, and Storm Drains… oh my!**

While the task of keeping our waters clean is daunting, Spotsylvania’s Cub Scout Pack 22 wanted to meet the challenge head-on! On a hot Saturday morning in September, the Cub Scouts gathered in the Lee Hill Park neighborhood to embark on a journey to discover the state of the Chesapeake Bay. Tri-County/City’s Education Coordinator, Mariya Hudick, presented a two hour training teaching Pack 22 how water travels within the water cycle by having the Cub Scouts transform themselves into rain droplets as part of Project Wet’s The Incredible Journey lesson. Once they mastered the flow of water, the Scouts then discussed pollution’s connection to the water cycle and its ecological impact. But talking about an issue does not solve the problem.

With a paint brush in one hand and a stencil in the other, the Cub Scouts set out to divide and conquer the storm drains of a local neighborhood. Each group was assigned 2-3 storm drains to paint the messages “Don’t Dump” and “Chesapeake Bay Drainage.” Not only do the messages raise awareness on
their own, they also invited community conversation that day. As the scouts worked on the community project, nearby neighbors came out to ask, “What are you doing?” And with that hook, the Cub Scouts became the teachers and proceeded to use their new understanding to explain the importance of curbing water pollution and the role of storm drains. By sharing information in a creative and engaging manner to nudge us toward long-lasting behavioral changes, these Spotsylvania Cub Scouts are doing their part to help keep the Chesapeake Bay clean.

Nothing is going to stop these Cub Scouts from becoming stormwater stewards!

**Virginia Farm Bureau TV Show Features Spotsylvania Farmers**

A Summer episode of Virginia Farm Bureau’s weekly TV program, “Real Virginia” featured Spotsylvania farmers including Tri-County/City Director Jan Massey and long-time friends of the District, William Biscoe and Sam Harris. The filming and concept were highlighted in a Free Lance Star newspaper article by local reporter Cathy Dyson.

“Burke Moeller knew Spotsylvania represented a tale of two counties: the development and congested roadways near Fredericksburg and Interstate 95 versus the more pastoral scenes of rustic barns and cornfields in the southwestern end.

But until he brought a camera crew to film a segment for an upcoming Virginia Farm Bureau show, Moeller—who’s lived in Spotsylvania since 2005—didn’t realize just how much farming takes place, particularly in the Lake Anna area.

“I’ve been to a lot of counties in the state,” said Moeller, a video producer for the Farm Bureau, “and I really am impressed by how much agriculture is still going on” in Spotsylvania.”


Real Virginia is broadcast every week on YouTube and on PBS and cable systems across the Old Dominion. The half-hour show is for consumers and families in Virginia and focuses on both agriculture news and family-oriented stories. The show also offers cooking and gardening segments that feature products from Virginia. You can find the Spotsylvania episode online at youtube.com/user/VirginiaFarmBureau.
2019 Clean Water Farm Award Winner Recognized!

Tri-County/City’s Board of Directors have the privilege and responsibility of awarding the local Clean Water Farm Award (formerly the “Bay-Friendly Farm Award”) within its localities of King George, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and the City of Fredericksburg, given in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation. This honor is awarded to farmers, selected in the Fall, who demonstrate outstanding management practices to protect the environment in the Rappahannock, Potomac, and York River watersheds and so helping preserve the Chesapeake Bay.

Typically, in the Spring, our county governments honor local winners of the Clean Water Farm Award as selected the previous Fall by the District. But, like so very many things in 2020, things did not quite follow the usual plan. Despite it being nearly a year later, we are still delighted to announce that on September 1, 2020 Earth’s Echo Farm of Stafford County, operated by Robert and Virginia Greenlaw, was recognized by resolution of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors for their exemplary conservation stewardship and were awarded the 2019 Clean Water Farm Award.

The Greenlaws inherited the 146-acre farm in 2012. Robert and Gini had previously lived in Harrisonburg, where Robert worked for the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). They moved back to Stafford County when they inherited the land with a vision of converting the farm from a traditional commercial corn/wheat/soybean operation to a direct-marketing, locally grown and raised farming operation.

They contacted Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in January 2014 for technical assistance converting the cropland to pastureland for grazing animals. A farm conservation plan was developed to address their conservation objectives. By the end of 2017, with the assistance of federal cost-share programs, they converted 110 acres from annually planted row crops to perennial pasture and planted the farm with 1.5 acres of trees, over 3,800 linear feet of windbreak trees, and 0.5 acre of pollinator habitat. Soil samples were taken and the newly planted pasture/hayland was limed and fertilized according to recommendations. One 16.1-acre field was planted with native warm-season grasses which allow the cattle to graze in the height of summer heat and not succumb to the “summer slump” common during July and August in this area.

Robert spoke with NRCS again in 2017 about a plan to move forward with his ecologically minded grazing plans for the farm. Robert and Gini had done quite a bit of research on various grazing operations and knew they wanted to implement strip grazing on their own farm. The Greenlaw family and NRCS came up with a plan to build permanent fencing to exclude livestock from all surface waters on the farm as well as interior fencing for larger paddocks that could then be further broken down into smaller “strips” using polywire fencing and step-in posts. A livestock watering system was developed that provided permanent frost-free “ball troughs” in all fields, however, the Greenlaws added numerous quick couplers throughout the water lines so that mobile troughs could be located within the individual strips of grass cattle were grazing. They have excluded livestock from accessing 2,800 linear feet of Rappahannock riverbank plus another 4,500 linear feet of other surface water on the farm. Altogether, they have installed over 30,000 feet of exclusion and cross fencing, approximately 12,000 feet of pipeline, 11 permanent frost-free watering troughs, planted another 1.3 acres of trees, and excluded over 13.5 acres of riparian wetland areas on the farm. This program year, they will be planting still more trees through the state cost-share program (VACS) offered by Tri-County/City.
Robert moves his cattle once daily; he has the process of moving fence down to an art. While they are still expanding their herd, he says that it only takes him about an hour to move the cattle into the next strip, pull up the old “back fence”, and move it forward for the next day. He positions mobile troughs and a purchased mobile shade structure to shade the animals. Behind the cattle, he brings in chickens to scratch through manure left behind to better distribute it while the chickens eat the flies, cutting down on fly larvae typically found in cattle operations. The Greenlaws have a flock of meat chickens and a flock of layers to supply meat and eggs to their customers and several farmers markets in Richmond and Northern Virginia.

The Greenlaws are advocates for improving soil health and water quality. They open their farm to other local agricultural producers who wish to see how their innovative ideas are implemented. Gini teaches Environmental Science at Riverbend High School in Spotsylvania County where she educates her students about the conservation practices installed to improve water quality and other valuable techniques to enhance our natural resources.

Congratulations to Robert and Gini Greenlaw on a job well done!
Tidewater SWCD Quarterly Report

Cover Crop Cost Share

This year, despite the difficulties of a mail in sign up – our cover crop sign-up hit exponential numbers this year with over 15,000 acres signed up! With an original allocation just shy of $350,000 we were able to approve 1/8th of the total number of tracts signed up. With the cover crop planting season over, these numbers are adjusting as producers report their information. Tidewater SWCD remains hopeful that, with the adjustment of the dollar amount requested along with additional money procured from DCR, we will be able to fund 100% of our eligible cover crop acres this year.

In addition, due to the heavy rain we have been receiving this year, Tidewater’s Board of Directors was able to approve an Extreme Act of Nature two-week extension to the standard cover crop planting deadline. Data which was collected from the local weather stations and Extension office was presented to the Board. The weather information along with the Directors’ own experiences in their fields led them to the conclusion that the two-week extension was warranted.

Clean Water Farm Awards

Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to present the Clean Water Farm Award to Jason Benton of Benton Farms. Jason tends to over 1000 acres of cropland in our area and currently has over 800 of those acres enrolled in our continuous no-till program. In addition, Jason Benton has been participating in cost share for cover crops for the last 12 years straight. Jason is a true “Water-Quality Warrior”.

Virtual Oyster Festival Education Day

As everyone knows, Covid-19 has changed our world into one where the word “Virtual” exists in every aspect of life. Well we at Tidewater are very happy that the organizers of the Urbanna Oyster Festival Education Day were able to find away to keep this tradition alive in a virtual format. They requested educators upload digital lesson plans or videos for teachers to use in their classrooms.

Under normal circumstances, we would show the kids the Enviroscape (a model watershed) demonstration in person; this year, in keeping with the same theme, we submitted a lesson plan for the students to make their own model watershed out of crumpled paper and washable markers.

Poster Contest Winners

Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District had two Poster Contest winners this year (Posters pictured below). These two posters were sent to compete in the State Competition.
NNSWCD's field safety program and policies are highlighted in the fall issue of The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) publication, The Resource. The article appears on pages 26 –27 and can be found on the NACD website at https://www.nacdnet.org/news-and-events/publications/the-resource/.

The District is honored to be recognized in this national publication.

Wet Fall Weather Challenges Producers

Following a record setting VACS Cost Share signup of $2,350,680.00 last summer, fall brought the wettest harvest period on record for the Northern Neck. We are currently working with producers to readjust cover crop planting acres. Wet conditions prevented many producers from harvesting in time to plant all of their cover crops. Some producers were able to broadcast from the air or use seeder trucks in fields of standing crops in order to get cover crops in the ground.

No-Till Drill Rental Program

To promote no-till practices, the NNSWCD has two no-till drills available for rent to the public. See below for fall 2020 figures.

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<td>76.1 Ac. Planted</td>
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<td>Total Revenue of $962.00</td>
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Fall Hazardous Waste Events A Success

Residents of Lancaster, Richmond, and Northumberland counties dropped off a total of 60,761 lbs. of Household Hazardous Waste and 27,660 lbs. of E-Waste during three collection events held in October and November. Each of the three counties collected record amounts of old petroleum products, paint, chemicals and electronics. A total of 679 vehicles dropped off waste products during the collections. Due to COVID-19 the spring events for 2020 were cancelled.

VCAP

The NNSWCD submitted five VCAP applications for approval.

Education and Outreach

Education programs are going virtual, with classroom sessions conducted for Northumberland and Westmoreland County students. Kathleen Watson and Lowery Becker introduced Westmoreland County 6th grade students to watersheds. Lowery also worked with Northumberland County 6th graders on watersheds with an emphasis on oysters and their impact on waterways.

We’ve always had our beloved Northern Neck Ginger Ale at meetings we’ve hosted because it is a quintessential part of Northern Neck life. We are heartbroken that this Virginia tradition is being discontinued. If you’ve ever had it, you’ll understand.