Area III Report
Spring 2022

Area III Chairman
Anne-Marie Leake
Henricopolis SWCD

Area III Vice-Chairman
Robert Pickett
Northern Neck SWCD
NNSWCD Program Updates—FY22 3rd Quarter

Virginia Agricultural Cost Share (VACS)/Technical

In progress:
- 10 erosion projects including surveys and construction meetings
- Wrapping up Chesapeake Bay Act Assessments for the counties of Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland
- Working on agronomic VACS contracts (NM-1A, SL-8B, SL-8H, WQ-4, SL-1, FR-1,NM-4, NM-3, NM-5N, and NM-5P)

Completed:
- Three RMP verification inspections
- Ten conservation plans

Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP)

Inquiries – 8
Site visits – 2

Applications in progress—4
Projects in progress—2

Completed and paid projects – 1

Area III Dominion Energy Envirothon Planning Underway

The NNSWCD is pleased to host the 2022 Area III Dominion Energy Envirothon on April 27, 2022 at Longwood University’s Hull Springs Farm in Westmoreland County. This will be the first in-person Area III competition since 2019. COVID-19 restrictions caused the cancellation of the 2020 competition and made it necessary to hold both the Area and State 2021 competitions virtually.

The Area III teams, coaches, and all others will begin the day at the Ames House, where opening remarks will take place in the Mallory Room. Everyone will then proceed to the Gerald L. Baliles Center for Environmental Education, where the building and surrounding grounds will serve as the actual competition site, providing enough distance between testing stations to keep teams separated and to maintain a quiet area for teams to take their tests. The oral presentation portion of the competition will take place inside the Baliles Center.

Following the competition there will be a brief assembly to recognize the winning teams. The top three teams will then advance to the state level Dominion Energy Envirothon Competition which will take place May 15-16, 2022 at Eastern Mennonite University located in Harrisonburg, VA.
College Scholarships Available

Applications Due March 24th

The Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District, through the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, has TWO scholarship opportunities available. These scholarships are intended to promote the education of Virginia citizens in technical fields of natural resource conservation and environmental protection. The awards will be considered for students majoring in, or showing a strong desire to major in, a course curriculum related to natural resource conservation and/or environmental studies. All applicants must be residents of Gloucester, Mathews, or Middlesex County.

One scholarship, in the amount of $1,000.00, was established in memory of Mathews County resident, Mr. Martin J. Menges, a former District Director. Mr. Menges was co-founder and past president of the York River Chapter of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and co-founder of the watershed group Save the Ole Piankatank. Tidewater Soil & Water Conservation District will select the winner for the Martin J. Menges scholarship.

The Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts will award four freshmen level scholarships in the amount of $1,000.00 each on a statewide competitive basis. Each SWCD is to select one freshman applicant and forward the application to the VASWCD office for consideration. Applicants need to complete only one application which will be used for both the VASWCD and Martin J. Menges scholarships.

All programs and services of the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation District’s Educational Foundation, Inc. are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or disability. All submitted paperwork is confidential and becomes the property of the VASWCDEF.

Scholarship guidelines & application are available at the district office at 6969 Fox Hunt Lane in Gloucester, VA – or online: www.tidewaterswcd.org/Scholarship.htm

Applications are due March 24, 2022

Mail completed applications to:
Tidewater SWCD
P. O. Box 677
Gloucester, VA 23061
2021 Clean Water Farm Award Charles Rich - Richland Farms

Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to honor Mr. Charles Rich of Richland Farms, with the 2021 Clean Water Farm Award. Mr. Rich has had quite the farming career! He grew up on a farm in Gloucester Virginia, and began farming on his own after graduating high school in 1967. Throughout the years, he has entered into many different agricultural ventures including raising cattle, hogs, grains and timber. No matter the avenue, Mr. Charles Rich always recognized the importance of conservation practices and the benefit they have on his land.

Charles Rich adopted conservation practices into his operation very early into his career. He noticed the advantages of controlling erosion and installed grass/sod waterways and drop structures into his farm. Both of these practices substantially cut back the risk of gully erosion. Charles has also been practicing no-till farming for over 40 years and grows cover crops through the winter. No-till farming and cover cropping keeps the soil in place and helps to maintain a beneficial soil structure and biological life. He maintains and follows an up-to-date Nutrient Management Plan on all of his cropland acres and has also been split applying his nitrogen fertilizers on both corn and small grains.

Mr. Charles Rich also has done quite a bit of work to ensure those who are interested in learning more about conservation practices have had the opportunity to do so. He played a critical role in the Gloucester Agronomy Tour, an education event for Gloucester farmers that highlighted different farmers’ fields and crops as a way for farmers to learn from one another and to hear alternate perspectives and experiences on agronomic practices. He has also partnered with Virginia Cooperative Extension to host a Gloucester Area Field Day for middle peninsula farmers and agribusiness representatives. This educational event showcased field plots looking at hybrid seed varieties, tillage, and yield enhancers. Charles’ farm has been used many times over the years for research endeavors by Extension Agents and Specialists.

Charles Rich has truly had an exceptional career, and was on the forefront of advancements in conservation practices. Through these and other efforts, Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to recognize Charles Rich of Richland Farms as the Chesapeake Bay Coastal Clean Water Farm Award winner for 2021!

2021 Poster Contest Winners

The annual Conservation Poster Contest provides K-12th grade students an opportunity to convey their thoughts about soil, water and related natural resource issues through art. It also highlights the educational outreach efforts of conservation districts and their state conservation associations, auxiliaries and agencies. Julianna Laign, Ivar Golden and Scotty Chase are recognized as the winners of Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District’s 2021 annual poster contest. The theme for 2021 was “Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities.” They all received a $25 gift certificate for winning in their age group and their posters went on to be judged in the state competition.
2022 Poster Contest Announced

The annual Conservation Poster Contest provides K-12th grade students an opportunity to convey their thoughts about soil, water and related natural resource issues through art. It also highlights the educational outreach efforts of conservation districts and their state conservation associations, auxiliaries and agencies. The 2022 theme is “Healthy Soil: Healthy Life”. Contact our office for complete contest rules and applications.

Posters and applications due by September 21st, 2022

2021 Forestry BMP Award John M. Elkin, Jr.

Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to present Mr. John Elkin, Jr. of Hunters LLC and Bigfoot LLC with the 2021 Forestry Best Management Practice Award. Mr. Elkin has managed farm and forest land in Gloucester County since 2005, and nearly a quarter of his land serves to protect water quality as streamside management zones.

Mr. Elkin approached both of his land purchases from a stewardship perspective at the onset. He has carried out some of the work on his own, such as precommercial thinning with a brush-saw, tractor spraying areas for site preparation and weed control, and burning for site preparation. He maintains the hunting roads on both properties to prevent erosion through proper grading techniques and by establishing wildflower mixes on loose soil. Mr. Elkin has taken time to attend woodland owner education events, including a longleaf pine program and he became a Virginia Certified Prescribed Burn Manager.

By working with the Virginia Department of Forestry, Mr. Elkin received funds to offset the cost of some of his forest management activities. Pine Bark Beetle Prevention Program funding covered 60% of the cost of the longleaf pine establishment and precommercial thinning of loblolly pine. Reforestation of Timberlands funds assisted with site preparation and planting costs for some of the loblolly pine stands. In addition, the forested buffers alongside timber harvest boundaries provided Riparian Buffer Tax Credits for Virginia income tax.

The number of acres Mr. Elkin has set aside to serve as forested buffers between timber harvests and ephemeral, intermittent and perennial waterways, is well beyond what is required by federal, state, and local laws and policies. John has worked to increase species diversity by establishing longleaf pine and a small sugar maple grove. He has assisted with forest health monitoring by allowing the Virginia Department of Forestry to hang traps and scrape his ash trees for emerald ash borer, an invasive pest.

John Elkin, Jr. has been described as “innovative,” which was demonstrated when he made his own wicking brush-bar for his tractor to target blackberries, a problem species, in his longleaf pine plantation. Additionally, he is not afraid to try anything new, illustrated by being a beekeeper, establishing longleaf pine and sugar maple, collecting acorns and hand planting them in his hardwood management areas, and installing a solar-powered well. His enthusiasm and curiosity for trying new management ideas and dedication to conservation, make it an honor to present John Elkin, Jr. the 2021 Tidewater Soil & Water Conservation District’s Forestry Best Management Practice Award!
Changes at the District

Waring Baylor has transitioned into the position of Conservation Specialist. Waring attended Virginia Tech, graduating in 2014, where he majored in Crop and Soil Environmental Science and had a focus in Agroecology. He has experience on the farm as he helps his father, Bob Baylor, on their row crop operation raising corn and soybeans in Essex County. After being involved with education and outreach over the last five and a half years with Three Rivers SWCD, Waring looks forward to his new role.

James H. Cary Intermediate School

Three Rivers SWCD staff had the opportunity to visit Ms. Rector’s 6th grade classroom! Topics that were covered consisted of soils, erosion, point vs non-point pollution, water quality, and Chesapeake Bay tributaries. Rainfall simulation - students pictured to the right are holding runoff from fields with cover/plants actively growing vs. bare fields demonstrating the difference in water quality.

Three Rivers SWCD Teacher Mini Grants Awarded

TRSWCD annually offers a limited number of Mini Grants to Essex, King & Queen and King William teachers. The Mini Grants are intended for projects that integrate soil and water conservation into any curriculum. For the school year 2021-2022, the recipients are:

◊ Lawson Marriott Elementary School—FEEL THE STING - A Bee Project: Second graders will examine and investigate the importance of bees in the ecosystem by answering the following essential question. “WHY ARE HONEYBEES DISAPPEARING; AND ONCE THEY ARE GONE, WHO FEELS THE STING?” Plan: plant bee friendly flowers and plants, build bee houses and donate them for community placement and further research.

◊ Central High School - FARM TO TABLE: Through classroom instruction and hands-on laboratory activities, students will explore the fields of agriculture, food, and natural resources (AFNR) Students plan to construct raised vegetables beds, to be shared with the school’s cafeteria.

◊ Aylett Country Day School - Macro/Micro Invertebrate & Plankton ID Program: Aylett Outdoors Program (AOP) aims to get students out of the classroom and into the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Through a series of on water excursions to well known viewsheds and tributaries such as Fones Cliffs, the Dragon Run, Occupiacia Creek and Cat Point Creek, ACDS students will engage in macro/micro invertebrate and plankton identification, restoration and conservation activities.
Awards Banquet—November 16, 2021

Three Rivers SWCD was proud to celebrate outstanding producers in our area with the following awards:

The Outstanding Stewardship Award is presented to stewards of the land who are conscious in their efforts to maintain and improve soil health and water quality. Mr. Thomas H. Fox, Jr. is the 2021 recipient of the Outstanding Stewardship Award for the Three Rivers district. Mr. Fox joined his family’s operation in 1976 with his father and became a fourth-generation farmer. The family operation dates back to 1905 and Thomas currently works just over 800 acres of land, 300 of which are located on the Mattaponi River in King William County. The Fox operation consists of crops such as corn, soybeans, barley, wheat, rye, sorghum, and hay. Thomas also raises approximately 15-20 beef cattle.

The 2021 recipient of the Clean Water Farm Award is Ryan Ellis, a producer who goes to great lengths to identify the true meaning of conservation. Ryan is a fourth-generation farmer who began his operation in 2011 with 25 acres of land. Ryan has now grown his operation to approximately 1300 acres of land in Essex, Caroline, and King & Queen Counties. Ryan utilizes precision ag on all of his acreage, as well as numerous best management practices such as no-till and winter cover crops which help reduce runoff and erosion on the farm. Ryan’s operation is located in the Rappahannock River Basin.

Three Rivers SWCD was also pleased to recognize two operations in the District with Partnership Awards. The District appreciates the cooperation of area producers willing to partner and support our continued interest in evaluating the use of cover crops to improve soil health and crop production on some of our sandy soil types. These farm operators are critical to the district carrying out its educational and outreach goals, as putting in test plots requires a significant time and equipment commitment.

Annual Report Available

The June 30, 2021 Annual Report is available. The report highlights all accomplishments in Conservation, VACS Cost Share, Whole Farm Approach Cost Share, Resource Management Plans and Education/Outreach. While we are proud of the work we did, we are determined to carry the momentum into FY22 and accomplish even more! https://www.trswcd.org/annual-reports/
Wildlife Food Plot Competition

Three Rivers sponsored two Wildlife Food Plot competitions this year for local students. The Junior Division was for students 9 to 12 years of age and the Senior Division for students 13 to 18 years of age. Each division is awarded a 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winner. The program is not only used to attract wildlife but to provide an opportunity for the students to learn about conservation and wildlife while helping them to develop an appreciation for the world around them. Applications were submitted by September 30 and the plots were judged on seed production, variety of seeds used, location of plot and bonus points were given for evidence of wildlife using the plots.

For the Junior Division we had one entry from Hamilton Holmes Middle School, Tucker Townsend. Tucker planted turnips and used a rotor tiller to prepare his seed bed, then broadcasted his seed with a walk spreader. His plot had good uniform cover and was close to the woods for security. Evidence of deer and rabbits using his plot were found.

In the Senior Division, we had four entries from King William High School Ag Production Technology, Horticultural Science and FFA Classes. Ashlee Powell, Trenton and Wylie Johnson, Patrick Upshaw and Kaleb Jimmo. All four participants planted soybeans, buckwheat, rape, ryegrass, cowpea, sorghum and crimson clover.

Roadside Signage

TRSWCD updated our roadside signage highlighting the Cover Crop program. In this initiative, we also wanted to make sure we were delivering the message “Farmers Working Every Day To Improve The Chesapeake Bay”. Signs were installed at VACS or Whole Farm Approach participating fields along the Rt. 360 and Rt. 17 corridors for the maximum exposure.
COMMUNITY IN TIMES OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As Spring flowers bloom, Tri-County/City Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is blossoming with opportunities in the greater Fredericksburg community. Organizations across the District are finding creative ways to continue providing programs for all learners while remaining safe during the Covid-19 pandemic. Tri-County/City SWCD is honored to partake in both online and in-person community events which includes serving as a guest presenter for Master Naturalists’ continuing education courses on water conservation, hosting a table at the Master Gardener annual seed swap, and educating the public on the importance of Chesapeake Bay pollution for Spotsylvania County’s “Keep Spotsylvania Beautiful” trash clean-up day. And with April just around the corner, Tri-County/City SWCD is excited to be part of Fredericksburg City’s Earth Day Festival as a partnering agency and community leader once more! The community continues to push for conservation education and outreach while staying mindful of everyone’s health needs through collaborative partnerships and engaging outdoor activities.

Education Coordinator, Mariya Hudick, at the annual local Master Gardener seed swap in Stafford, Virginia.

Conservation Specialists, Logan Ellis and Dan Kossler, are hard at work as they continue to send out the $530,000 allocated for cost share funds in the District for producers. They bring new energy and ideas, focusing on revamping the District’s marketing strategies, while building off the foundation our previous conservation specialist of thirty years, Etta Lucas, fostered in the community.

Tri-County/City SWCD is proud to announce the 3rd place winner for the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) poster contest in the Kindergarten-1st grade category – Aarohi Pani of Hugh Mercer Elementary School!

Congratulations, Aarohi!

CONSERVATION SPECIALISTS HARD AT WORK!

“Better Farming Through Conservation Practices We know that soil matters, but this panel discussion digs deeper to talk about agricultural conservation practices that can improve farm production. Join for a discussion followed by Q&A on best management practices (BMPs) and how they impact farm management, productivity, and runoff. Bonus: the panelists will talk about where to find funding for offsetting conservation practice implementation. Daniel Read, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science; Steve Darcey, Prince George’s Soil Conservation District, (MD); Mauricio Rosales, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, (PA), Sharon Conner, Hanover-Caroline Soil and Water Conservation District (VA)”

January 2022 brought an end of an era and a much deserved retirement for our Conservation Specialist, Marian Moody. Marian was with the District for 21 years and has been an amazing asset and will be missed greatly!

We would like to congratulate Kathy Shamblin for receiving the 2021 Outstanding Conservation District Professional Award from the VACDE. Kathy was awarded this during the 2021 Annual Meeting in December 2021.

Kathy has quickly established herself as a leader in our District, taking charge of Administrative and Financial duties with little oversight. As such, her position has been reclassified from non-exempt to exempt based upon her ability to provide leadership in that job role.

Not only does Kathy display leadership in her role at the District, she has taken on leadership roles serving on committees and in organizations beyond the District. She serves on the VACDE Board as the Area III Representative. She also serves on the VASWCD Admin/Ops and the Annual Meeting Planning Committees. She is quick to help new employees in other Districts. She believes that employee training is key to the longevity of these new District employees. As such, she exhibits leadership through her involvement with both VASWCD and VACDE committees.
Hanover-Caroline technical staff have worked diligently with our producers for the FY22 DCR Cost-share program. We have allocated almost $2,000,000 in agronomic and grazing system practices. A large portion of that allocation goes towards cover crops drilled and flown on by our producers.

Four of our District staff were able to attend the Virginia Biological Farming Annual Conference in Roanoke, VA in January 2022. We had a wonderful gathering complete with great speakers, meaningful breakout sessions and lots of opportunities for networking and sharing. Staff had many choices of classes to take from “Farm to Pharmacy”, “Grazing Abundance”, to “Managing Soil Microbes in Organic Cropping Systems” and “Advocating for Sustainable Agriculture”.

- Rye flow into soybeans
- Rye with corn residue
- Small grain cover crop with corn residue
- Fermented Foods
  - Cleanse
  - Inoculate the gut with probiotics
  - Aid digestion
  - Destroy pathogens
  - Break down polyps, tumors
Monacan has been busy with the VACS program. This year's funding is twice as much as PY21 allocations, and as of now, Monacan has approved half of the cost share. The majority of practices include cover crops, nutrient management plan writing, and stream exclusion systems with a wide buffer.

Staff has been planning with a producer to complete a stream exclusion project for their 1,000-acre farm by 2024. The farm is located on Lickinghole Creek, a major Goochland tributary of the Middle James River. The total estimated cost at this time is close to $600,000. The project will consist of creating 34 acres of buffer, excluding 30,000 feet of streambank on 540 acres of pasture. Several contracts on the farm expired & were picked up in December under a CCI contract. The contract consisted of 11,000 feet of streambank excluded which created 28 acres of buffer.

A Nutrient Management Plan Writing Policy was recently approved by Monacan's Board of Directors. This will allow staff to write small, commercial fertilizer Nutrient Management Plans, when time allows.
Colonial SWCD Happenings

Colonial SWCD Updates

The Colonial SWCD has spent the last quarter carrying out many efforts to “sharpen the saw”. We have found value in revisiting many items within our internal processes and reflecting on different ways to continue improving ourselves and our services. In addition to all these behind-the-scenes efforts, we have focused outward facing efforts on targeted outreach to producers on erosion issues (see photo!). While we are thankful that problems of this scope and size are not overly common, the swell of financial assistance dollars and heavy precipitation events have been prompting us here at the CSWCD to keep a close eye on legacy ravines and our odd-shaped field edges. We hope to work with several landowners in the coming months to years on stabilization projects to ensure we retain as much of these field edges as possible!

Other recent and ongoing developments include:

- Co-hosting a virtual information session with DCR and VSU’s Small Farm Outreach Program to inform small-scale producers about programs and services offered by SWCD’s
- Outreach to and conversations among staff and directors with local legislators
- Membership and collaboration with the regional Living Shoreline Collaborative exploring opportunities for implementing resilient practices along shorelines in the James River watershed
- Engaging with constituents at community events this spring

Taking time this winter to reflect, assess, and strategize our priorities and programs is setting us up for a full season ahead. We’re looking forward to warmer weather bringing people outside and getting new projects underway!
Henricopolis Monthly News

March 2022
www.henrico.us/henricopolis
804-501-5175

Our Mission
To educate and guide Henrico County citizens in the sustainable use of our natural resources.

Envirothon
Lets cheer on our Henrico County Envirothon Team from Highland Springs High School! The team will be competing in the regional competition at Gerald Baliles Environmental Education Center in Westmoreland County on April 27. And then possibly on to the state contest at Eastern Menonite University in May. Many thanks to the topic experts who gave their time to help the team prepare.

Scholarships
Henricopolis gives scholarships each year to deserving Henrico County students. The deadline to apply is April 1. For more information or to apply, contact Lindy Durham at dur24@henrico.us.

Tree Seedling Giveaway
Our Tree Seedling Giveaway is back! This year we will join Keep Henrico Beautiful and Root Five Family Farms at their Native Plant Festival to giveaway native tree seedlings. See festival information by visiting: https://henrico.us/calendar/native-plant-festival/. For more information about our tree seedling giveaway, contact hef001@henrico.us. We will have River Birch, Beech, Scotch Pine and Red Maple. Up to 8 seedlings per property.

Agriculture BMP Program
Our agricultural BMP program sign up is currently still open. This program focuses on sustainable agricultural practices. We have a record 12,098 acres already signed up with our agricultural programs with funding still available for more.

Upcoming Community Event
Henricopolis will be participating in the Henrico 4H Farm Graze event on March 26 from 10am to 2pm at Deep Run Park Event Field. Come visit our booth and make a soil baby to take home!

Numbers to Remember
Soil Test Vouchers - Lindy Durham, dur24@henrico.us
Stream Clean Ups - Stacey Heflin, hef001@henrico.us
Technical Assistance - Stacey Heflin, hef001@henrico.us
Farmer Assistance - Charlie Lively, liv042@henrico.us

You are receiving this email update due to your participation in our FREE soil test voucher program. If you no longer wish to receive our Monthly News please send a message to Lindy Durham at dur24@henrico.us.