Area III Report
Winter 2022

Area III Chairman
Anne-Marie Leake
Henricopolis SWCD

Area III Vice-Chairman
Robert Pickett
Northern Neck SWCD
Cover Cropping and Cover Cropping Accessories

Harvest season is in full swing and most of our producers are either putting cover crop in the ground or about to. A lot of farmers signed up for our killable Rye cover crop option but we have had other crops recorded like wheat, barley, oats, triticale, and daikon radish. Each crop brings a unique benefit or trait to the table and we are happy to see any cover crop covering our fields in the winter. More farmers are noticing a difference in soil retention and increased yields every year causing neighbors to reach out to their local SWCD with questions and inquiries. We have had a record cover crop signup this year and are expecting great things for the future!
We Are Looking for a New Team Member!

Since the departure of our dear coworker earlier in the year, Tri-County/City SWCD has been preparing to invite a new applicant to join our team here at the District. This position would be an Education Specialist and would include teaching soil and water topics to kids and school systems. Additionally, this specialist would administer the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP). We are putting this posting out there for the world to see soon so keep an eye out and encourage your friends and colleagues to apply!

Events

This Quarter, we at the District have attended and put on many events and trainings that were an overwhelming success! Our Boots and Barbeque, and Echo Dell events were a great chance to talk to local landowners, homeowners, and agricultural producers about our practices and how we can benefit their properties!
**Tidewater SWCD Happenings**

**CONSERVATION UPDATES:**

Cost Share approval letters went out at the beginning of October. We have been receiving planting reports and are updating tracking accordingly. We have completed the continued implementation inspections of Resource Management Plans for our District.

Tidewater SWCD with the assistance of the VA Department of Forestry nominated John Elkin, Jr. to compete for the state’s BMP Forestry Award. Mr. Elkin was selected as the 2022 recipient of this award. We are delighted that he and his wife will be joining District staff, directors, and our partner agency representatives to receive his award at the Annual Meeting in Roanoke.

**EDUCATION UPDATES:**

Tidewater SWCD held their Annual Poster Contest and awarded Kyla Walden, a 5th grader at Middlesex Elementary School, the winning poster for her category.

On November 3rd, we had the opportunity to be an exhibitor in the 65th Urbanna Oyster Festival Foundation and Marine Legacy Program’s Education Day at the Town Marina waterfront. The Oyster Festival Foundation and Legacy Program’s goal was to offer as many hands-on activities to seize the attention of 3rd and 7th grade students from 5 local public and private schools in the area covering different aspects of environmental science. District Staff, with help from our NRCS District Conservationist, gave students 2 interactive demonstrations covering soil, erosion, runoff, and the opportunities students possess to take action in their homes, schools, and communities, even at a young age.

The District has purchased Dogwood Seedlings through the Virginia Department of Forestry Seedling Sale Program in preparation of providing assistance to the Virginia Department of Forestry’s Arbor Day Education in local schools within our District.
Colonial SWCD Happenings
Highlights from PY2022 Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund Education and Outreach Project

The Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District received funding from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund in 2021 to support the development of educational and promotional materials to be used in its outreach programs and events. This project has been Colonial District's most recent effort to expand its community outreach to general audiences. Recognizing that most of our technical and financial assistance programs target homeowners, landowners, and farmers, our goal was to expand our conservation reach beyond audiences traditionally serviced by District programming.

The Colonial SWCD Outreach and Education Committee along with staff identified two target audiences for this project: 1) Spanish speakers, and 2) community members who are not land- or homeowners. Three conservation themes were chosen for this project, which guided the content that we created and shared on our Facebook page and printed materials. We focused on water conservation, food waste, and plastic waste (specifically microplastics), which affect all residents in the Chesapeake watershed. We curated information for youth, families, and the general public using accessible language, images, and promoting conservation-minded behaviors that everyone can adopt. Our desire was to show that we are all influenced by and have an impact on the natural resources around us.

A major focus of this project was translating materials into Spanish. Through our broad conservation network, District staff connected with two amazing translators/interpreters who were contracted to provide translation services. Marisela Rumberg and Ines Alicea, both based in Northern Virginia, have provided interpretation and translation services to various environmental and conservation organizations in the past years, which was a huge benefit when translating our scientific and technical conservation/agricultural information. Staff had a wonderful experience collaborating with both Ines and Marisela while translating six brochures into Spanish. We hope to collaborate with them again in the future and encourage other SWCD’s and our partners who might be interested in their services to reach out!
Our end goal with this project was to distribute printed materials in public spaces across the District. Directors and staff have been sharing brochures among our networks and reaching out to local organizations, public parks, libraries, etc. to make these brochures available to the public. Staff have also participated in several community events, where brochures have been distributed to event participants.

We recognize that the materials created and outreach efforts made through this grant project are beginning steps towards connecting with our broad constituency about conserving natural resources. Staff and directors have gathered lessons-learned to continue expanding these efforts. We look forward to continuing spreading this information and building on this initial project!

Colonial SWCD appreciates the support provided by the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund, which made this project possible.

If you’re interested in working with Marisela and Ines, feel free to connect with Tabea Zimmermann (tabea.zimmermann@colonialswcd.org) to learn more about Colonial District’s contractual work with them. You may also connect directly with Ines and Marisela: Ines Alicea (inespalicea@gmail.com) and Marisela Rumberg (Marisela@CARULanguageServices.com)
A Warm Welcome to Our Newest Staff Member

In October 2022, we welcomed Kelly Brann, the NNSWCD’s Marketing & Outreach Specialist. She has been a resident of Richmond County her entire life and previously worked as a farm and crop insurance agent. Since her first day on October 3rd, Kelly has become a vital member of our team by providing new insight to the marketing & outreach field. On October 31st, she participated in the annual Trunk-or-Treat held by the Warsaw Richmond County Main Street Program.
November 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.

Agricultural Incentive Programs

The Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practice (BMP) Cost Share Program is currently open for sign up. All eligible applications will be considered and any approvals will be made during monthly Board meetings in accordance with the primary and secondary considerations that have been approved by the District Board.

Please email the District Office at liv042@henrico.us or call (804) 501-5170 to discuss your options and sign up.

Virginia Conservation Assistance Program

The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) is an urban cost-share program that provides financial incentives and technical and educational assistance to property owners installing eligible Best Management Practices. These practices can be installed in areas of your yard where problems like erosion, poor drainage, or poor vegetation occur.

Our Conservation Poster Contest Stars!

This was a banner year for our annual conservation poster contest- with 12 schools and 633 entries. The county winners of Healthy Soil Healthy Life were: Grades K-1 Kangana Kathikeyan from Twin Hickory Elementary, Grades 2-3 Sameira Villadran from Rivers Edge Elementary, Grades 4-6 Vicky Yang from Pemberton Elementary, Grades 7-8 Norah O’Donnell from Tuckahoe Middle, and Grades 10-12 Lilith Fick from Varina High. Now all five posters go to the state contest! The five county winners will be on display at Tuckahoe Library beginning November 15.

Numbers to Remember

Soil Test Vouchers - Lindy Durham, dur24@henrico.us
Stream Clean Ups - Stacey Swick, he001@henrico.us
VCAP Assistance - Stacey Swick, he001@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.

Henricopolis Board of Directors

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Three Rivers SWCD Annual Report Available

The District’s Annual Report for June 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 is available on our website at www.trswcd.org. The report highlights not only conservation BMP field work through the Whole Farm Approach and VACS Cost Share Programs but Outreach/Education in our community for youth and adults.

Wildlife Food Plot Competition

Three Rivers SWCD sponsored a Wildlife Food Plot competition this year for local high school students 13 to 18 years of age. The program is not only used to attract wildlife but also provides the students with an opportunity to learn about conservation and wildlife. Applications were submitted by September 30 and the plots were judged on criteria such as seed production, variety of seeds used, and location of plot. Bonus points were given for evidence of wildlife using the plots.

This year we had six entries from King William High School: Trenton Johnson, Patrick Upshaw, Emma Sparks, Tucker Townsend, Wylie Johnson and Spencer Lipscomb. All six participants planted soybeans, clover, rape, radishes, winter pea and rye grass that was donated by Lane Brooks of Simplot.

CONGRATULATIONS - This year’s winners are: first place – Trenton Johnson and Wylie Johnson, second place – Tucker Townsend and Patrick Upshaw and third place – Emma Sparks and Spencer Lipscomb.
Annual Awards Banquet
Three Rivers SWCD was proud to celebrate outstanding producers and partners in the area on November 15, 2022 at our Annual Awards Banquet. The Banquet was held at Nick's with 55 in attendance.

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. Kevin Norman of T.O. Longest & Sons, LLC is the 2022 recipient of the Outstanding Stewardship Award for the Three Rivers district.

Kevin had a passion for farming from a very young age and credits his grandfather, a self-proclaimed “hobby farmer,” for instilling in him his strong work ethic. Kevin graduated from Rappahannock Community College with a degree in electrical engineering and began a career at the West Rock paper mill in West Point prior to joining the T. O. Longest & Sons, LLC operation full time in 2013.

T.O. Longest & Sons, LLC currently works approximately 3,900 acres of land in King and Queen County and is primarily a row crop operation. Their first grain bins were installed in 2016 and at present day they are currently have a 12,000 bushel wet bin and a total 95,000 bushel capacity in dry bins. Kevin practices no-till farming and is a proponent of the benefits of cover crops. He maintains buffer strips and strives to improve the land her works. Kevin looks forward to utilizing more precision agriculture such as variable rate fertilizer and seeding based applications in the future. Kevin is happily married to his best friend, Janet, and they have two girls together.

Three Rivers SWCD was also pleased to honor the Farm Service Agency of the United States Department of Agriculture for their invaluable assistance to our cost share program. Courtnie Ellis and Felicia Washington were awarded with Partnership Awards. Lane Brooks of Simplot was also honored with the Business Conservation Award for his contribution to the Wildlife Food Plot program put on annually by Three Rivers SWCD.
The Clean Water Farm Award is presented in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to recognize producers who implement conservation practices to preserve water quality. The 2022 recipient of the Clean Water Farm Award is Randy D. Christian of the York River Watershed.

The Christian family began farming by raising vegetables. At the time, the operation consisted of Randy’s father, Randy’s brother, and two mules that were used to work the farm. Randy and his brother both had two sons, all of whom wanted to farm. Randy’s father formed a partnership in 1992 while his brother and his two sons formed their own operation. In 1995, Randy’s father retired, leaving the operation to Randy and his sons, who began a complete grain farming operation. Randy’s brother and nephews continued to raise vegetables and began what is Pole Green Produce today. At one point, Randy and his boys raised hogs and had approximately 400 pigs at the peak of their operation.

Today, Randy D. Christian and Sons operates on approximately 2700 acres between King William, New Kent, and Hanover counties. The operation functions as a row crop grain farm raising approximately 800 acres of small grain and 800 acres of corn each year. Randy’s son Brian plants and hauls while his son Philip combines and sprays. The Christians also have approximately 500 acres of timber, 225 of which are open. As part of an ongoing conservation effort, some acreage was purchased by the Civil War Trust. Additionally, over 400 acres are covered by a Resource Management Plan.

Randy and his sons routinely utilize best management practices such as winter cover crops, no-till systems, grass buffers, and forested buffers. As part of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, these buffers reduce runoff entering waterways. Approximately 10 acres have been taken out of production to help protect the Chickahominy River, in addition to Randy practicing water-quality minded efforts around the York River. The Christians utilize yield maps for precision agriculture and have been participants in the Whole Farm Approach since its pilot implementation in 2019. In addition to his work with Three Rivers, Randy also participates with Hanover-Caroline Soil & Water Conservation District, as well as Colonial Soil & Water Conservation District.

Randy’s dedication and commitment to soil health and water quality has been superb, and we commend him for his ongoing efforts.
**Hanover-Caroline SWCD Happenings**

**Wave Berm Repair for Site 52-B Dam:** After going through the bid process this summer, our District hired Harbor Dredge & Dock to do our dam repair as we were awarded funding through DCR to make the berm repair. The lake was lowered and work began after Labor Day. With decent weather and efficient work, the contracted repairs were made and is wrapping up now. Pictures of the work on the dam below.

**Education:** Hanover-Caroline SWCD partnered with Colonial Farm Credit, Hanover Extension and other agencies and producers to have an in-person Ag Day for the Hanover County 4th graders. We had 1,268 kids come to the Meadow Event Park for a very fun and educational day for the kids to learn where their food comes from, how important conservation is to our natural resources, and see farm animals and other ag related demonstrations. The kids that came to our station got to have a worm’s eye view through our soil tunnel. This was a favorite among the students.
Hanover-Caroline was privileged to host the Virginia State FFA Soil Judging Contest on November 8 with approximately 135 students in attendance. The contest was held at Cabin Hill Farm in Hanover, VA.

**Cost-Share:** The District has allocated just over $3Mil of their $3.1Mil in VACS funding with much of the funds going towards cover crops in both Hanover and Caroline Counties. Our producers are putting cover crops on thousands of acres aiding in the improvement of our soils and reducing runoff and erosion.

Lastly, Kathy Shamblin, the Area III Representative for the VACDE was able to attend the Southeast Conservation District Employee’s Association (SECDEA) annual conference in Pigeon Forge, TN in November. This was the largest attended conference since it’s inception in 1998. There were 6 district employees in total from VA that were able to attend. The agenda held many great speakers and share-fares from all over the 8 states that were represented.
Staff attended Powhatan Ag Day, a program put on for all third grade students in the county. Over 300 students attended the event.

The VACS program has kept staff busy. Over $720,000 of the district’s allocation has been obligated. Over 11,000 feet of stream bank have been protected through stream exclusion practices.

VCAP has gained popularity this fiscal year. The district has received four applications for the program, and multiple inquiries.