Area III Report
Spring 2023

Area III Chairman
Anne-Marie Leake
Henricopolis SWCD

Area III Vice-Chairman
Robert Pickett
Northern Neck SWCD
On December 14th, Northern Neck SWCD hosted the annual Holiday Dinner at the Old Rapp Taphouse in Warsaw. Elected Directors Robert G. "Bobby" Vanlandingham (top) and H. Shirley Powell (bottom) were recognized for their years of service to Northern Neck SWCD’s Board. While serving as an Elected Director representing Northumberland County for 20 years, Bobby is also a farmer and realtor. Shirley, also a farmer, has represented Westmoreland County as an Elected Director for 15 years. The District appreciates the time and dedication all of our Directors give to Northern Neck SWCD’s Board.

NNSWCD and Menokin Foundation presented to the sixth-grade students at Montross Middle School. Students “developed” their own property and learned how the ways we use the land impact the health of the water downstream. Additionally, Lowery used erosion boxes to show how different land coverings handle runoff, including cover crops, loose soil and impervious pavement.

NNSWCD’S VCAP currently has four approval projects in the works!
New BMP Signage

NNSWCD ordered new BMP signage highlighting the Cover Crop program. Aaron has placed these signs in a few fields throughout our service area to showcase farmers who participate in the Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost-Share Program.
Tri-County/City SWCD
Area III Spring Report
PY2023

Conservation

Spring is rapidly approaching and we are making a last push to sign up grain producers for corn side-dress and variable rate application practices. Based on a moving average of the last three years, we estimate approximately 5,200 acres will be signed up for these practices this coming Spring in King George, Spotsylvania and Stafford Counties.

This Spring we are looking to finish up two CREP projects and a wide stream exclusion with a stream crossing. A large stream exclusion project is underway in Stafford County on a cattle operation. Stream exclusions are getting popular among smaller producers with goats and other miscellaneous livestock.
New Team Member!

We will have a new Education & Outreach Coordinator starting in February. Mary Zulauf comes to us from Marshall University where she earned her Bachelor’s in Environmental Science and is finishing up her Master’s program in Biological Sciences. She has experience as a teaching assistant and is not afraid to go outside and do the dirty work. Her research is on various species of insects, small vertebrates and invertebrates, and the effects on their habitats. We are very pleased to have Mary as part of our team.

Partnership

We have partnered with The Friends of the Rappahannock to assist is with our VCAP responsibilities. The agreement is for a one year term. They have been a tremendous help in taking on the role of helping those interested in VCAP.
Conservation:

The cost share year is in full-swing for Tidewater SWCD. Our District is participating in the expanded pilot program offering the Whole Farm Approach Cost Share program. We had a great adoption rate with all of our producers opting to participate.

The District has gotten cover crop inspections completed and is beginning to receive Nutrient Management Plans, as the March 15th deadline is fast approaching.

In January, at our annual Awards and Holiday Dinner, Chairman, William “Buck” Richardson, Jr. presented Roger and Dustin Calhoun of Carlton & Calhoun Farms, Inc. with the 2022 Clean Water Farm Award. Roger has been farming for 41 years. He attributes becoming a farmer to his “Papa,” William H. Carlton, who can be credited for Roger’s desire and passion for farming. The Carlton portion of the business name “Carlton & Calhoun Farms, Inc.” is in honor of William H. Carlton. Roger feels blessed he had Mr. Carlton’s teaching, training, and being able to witness his Papa’s compassion for being a farmer. He inherited that compassion and work ethic and has passed it on by teaching his son, Dustin, and grandsons the benefit of utilizing Best Management Practices. Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to honor the values passed down from William H. Carlton by awarding Roger Calhoun of Carlton & Calhoun Farms, Inc. the 2022 Tidewater Clean Water Farm Award.

Education:

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. Deadline for applications is March 20, 2023.

In partnership with the Virginia Department of Forestry and participating elementary schools in our District, Tidewater SWCD is gearing up to administer Arbor Day presentations to local third graders in the months of March and April. The District has purchased 500 flowering dogwood trees through the VA Department of Forestry’s Seedling Program to plant and send home with each student participating in this hands-on educational opportunity. We hope to see many of these native species planted and cared for throughout our community.

Additionally, Gloucester County Public Schools requested to have a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience at Beaverdam Park this spring. This is the first time resuming this since COVID-19. The agencies providing instruction April 17th through April 21st to Gloucester County 4th graders include: Tidewater SWCD, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and Gloucester’s Clean Community Program. Tidewater staff are excited to once again participate in this event.
Three Rivers Soil & Water Conservation District
March, 2023

The District has been very busy promoting:
- four Academic Scholarships to high school students in Essex, King William and King & Queen Counties
- Youth Conservation Camp
- Camp Woods & Wildlife
- Soil & Water Stewardship Week materials to scout groups, churches and citizens in our community
- VASWCD Photo Contest

The District has signed an MOA with the Friends of the Rappahannock to support the VA Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) in Essex County. We look forward to the potential of signing with FOR in the counties of King William and King & Queen next fiscal year.

The District has already scheduled VACS sign-up (July 5-August 16, 2023 for FY24 program.
- Save the Date: July 12, 2023 – Middle Peninsula Producer Conference @ Tappahannock/Essex Volunteer Fire Department

Three Rivers SWCD Mini Grant Program

*The District’s Teacher Mini Grant Program has been hugely successful with our local public and private schools. The grants are intended for projects that integrate soil and water conservation into any curriculum. Below are two recent recipients highlighting their amazing classroom projects.*

Lawson Marriott Elementary – “Feel the Sting: A Bee Project”

Report from Vivian Kazee, Teacher: “The overarching goal of this project was to support second grade students in understanding their role in protecting the environment and making a positive contribution to their communities. Using bees becoming endangered as an illustration, this project sought to ignite a passion in students to become more active participants in problem solving in the world.
Together, we studied the life cycle of a honeybee, explored the many ways they contribute to our environment, and created safe bee homes and pollinator gardens around our school tree line. Throughout this 3-week unit, our students developed empathy for our environment and spent countless time discussing the ways they can protect the bees now and in the future. With the grant funds provided, we purchased the materials to build the bee homes, raised garden beds, pollinator seeds, pollinator trees, critter fencing, and garden soil. Thank you again for your support in our classroom. We are so appreciative!”
Aylett Country Day School: “Aylett Outdoors’ Species ID Program”

Report from Richard Moncure, Teacher: “On behalf of Aylett Country Day School I would like to thank Three River Soil and Water Conservation District for their support of the Aylett Outdoors’ Species ID program. This year 7th Grade Life Science Students explored the watershed with field scopes, waders, plankton and seine nets. In addition to trips based from June Parker Marina, students used the new gear to explore Piscataway Creek and the Dragon Run. Our school year culminated with a species ID competition between 2 groups in the 7th grade. Using equipment purchased with funds from the Three Rivers Soil and Water and Conservation District the two groups each identified 62 and 69 species from the Dragon Run, respectively. We are currently working on a press release with Friends of the Dragon Run to highlight this fantastic opportunity and give thanks to TRSWCD for their support of the Aylett Outdoors’ Species ID Program. We look forward to working with the district on conservation projects in the watershed during the upcoming school year.”
Director Highlight—HCSWCD Director Don Wells

NACD Induction in the Prestigious Hall of Distinction

We would like to recognize our Director, Donald L. Wells, for his nomination, acceptance and induction into the NACD Prestigious Hall of Distinction. Don has made his career in the field of conservation, serving various federal and state agencies. Throughout his career he has developed individual, agency, and corporate relationships across the Commonwealth of Virginia and the country. For the full article on Don’s award and extensive conservation career, please visit the NACD website at https://www.nacdnet.org/hall-of-distinction/Donald-Wells-of-Virginia. Congratulations to Don! The Hanover-Caroline staff and directors have been blessed to have him on our board for 25 years this April.

Local Producer Highlight—Engel Family Farms Top Producer of the Year Finalist

Hanover-Caroline SWCD had one of our very own producers as a finalist for Top Producer of the Year at the Top Producer Summit in Nashville 2023. The Engels farm over 23,000 acres in VA and NC and have been great stewards of the lands they own and rent. A family owned and operated business, all three of his children have important roles in the operations of the farm, including logistics, hauling, technology, precision, and all of the office and service aspects (and everything in between). For the full article, you can visit https://www.agweb.com/news/crops/crop-production/love-farming-and-land-historic-virginia

New Employee Alert

Hanover-Caroline SWCD is thrilled to welcome Hunter Gravatt to our team as a Conservation Specialist. Hunter is a 2008 and 2011 graduate of Virginia Tech with an Associate Degree in Agricultural Technology and a Bachelors in Agriculture and Applied Economics. He comes to the District with 11 years of vocational agriculture teaching experience at Caroline High School. He lives and works on his family’s farm with his wife and four daughters. Together with his father, they work 500 acres, raising soybeans, corn, hay and Black Angus beef cattle in Caroline County. Hunter brings a wealth of experience our soil and water conservation family.
Hanover-Caroline has offered no-till drills to our landowners and producers for many years. This year, we were able to utilize the DEQ Agricultural BMP Loan Program to purchase a new Haybuster 77 with a native seed box. The district is pleased to have so many folks rent the drills to seed cover crops, pastures, hay fields and the like without tilling their lands. This program is very helpful to our landowners who want to implement conservation practices without having the expense of owning the equipment.

Our conservation specialists have been hard at work in FY23 with allocating $3.2M of the $3.5M the state awarded our district this year. With a mix of several structural practices, nutrient management split applications and cover crops, our producers have been implementing BMP’s on their owned and rented lands. Our producers have covered almost 37,000 acres of land in cover crop this fall/winter.

There have been a lot of changes at the Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District this year. Not only have we made some much-needed updates to our office layout, but we have also hired three new staff members. Our first two new staff members, Emma Rich and Logan Ellis, both started in January 2023, and the third, Dr. Amanda Whispell, joined us in February.

Emma—our new Conservation Technician—is a New England native who moved south to assist with the administration of the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share program and to provide additional support to the District’s urban conservation programs. Emma originally attended the University of Maine for marine science but, after having the opportunity to work on a small vegetable farm and in a plant nursery during her first two summers in undergraduate school, she decided that studying agriculture and horticulture was the right path for her. Consequently, in 2019, Emma earned a Bachelor of Science in sustainable agriculture from the University of Maine. Emma is really looking forward to using her education and experience to serve the communities within the Colonial District.

Logan—our new Conservation Specialist—is from Tappahannock, Virginia and is a fifth-generation grain farmer with his father and uncle. Logan went to Virginia Tech and received his Associate Degree in agricultural technologies and his Bachelor of Science in crop and soil science. Logan is passionate about conservation and has been lucky to have the opportunity to bring conservation BMP’s onto his own farm. Logan is looking forward to serving the Colonial District and working directly with farmers toward a goal of cleaner waters and fertile soils.

Lastly, Amanda—our new Outreach Specialist—is originally from Maine, but most recently from Pennsylvania. Amanda hails from a background in academia and research. She earned her Bachelor of Science in marine biology from the University of Rhode Island and her Doctor of Philosophy in entomology from Rutgers University, where she studied dragonfly mating behavior and evolution. After completing her doctorate, Amanda spent a few years teaching organismal biology courses to undergraduate students at Kutztown University in Pennsylvania — at which point she learned that she really enjoys STEM outreach and public education. As such, her new role as Outreach Specialist is a perfect fit—combining her artistic skills, teaching skills, and love for the environment. Amanda is really looking forward to doing STEM outreach and to helping the CSWCD become more visible to the public.
Let’s cheer on our Henrico County Envirothon Teams from Glen Allen High School and Highland Springs High School! They will be competing in the regional competition at the VCU Rice River Center in Charles City on April 26. Many thanks to the topic experts who gave their time to help the team prepare.

Henricopolis will be participating in the Henrico 4H Farm Graze event on March 25 from 10am to 2pm at Deep Run Park Event Field. Come visit our booth and make a soil baby to take home!

Our HAWQS Team volunteers are out testing Henrico waters each month, collecting basic water quality conditions. The team is currently full-- but we have macroinvertebrate monitoring and stream cleanups in the fall where more volunteers can help.

Henricopolis gives scholarships each year to deserving Henrico County students. The deadline to apply is fast approaching. For more information on how to apply, contact Lindy Durham at dur24@henrico.us.