

Tidewater Soil & Water Conservation District Annual Report July 2015 - June 2016

The Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia that serves the counties of Gloucester, Mathews, and Middlesex. The District is empowered to develop comprehensive programs and plans that conserve and improve the quality of soil and water resources. The leadership of the District is committed to two basic concepts; local citizens can best identify and find solutions to local environmental and conservation issues and the District, or through assistance with its cooperating agencies, will assist individuals with their natural resources conservation planning and problem solving. The District is governed by an eight member board of directors who serve a four year term. Six directors, two from each county, are elected in a general election. Two directors are appointed by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board, one of these appointees must be a Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent. Non-voting associate directors may be selected by the Tidewater SWCD Board of Directors.

The daily operations of the District are conducted by the staff which consists of a District Manager, Conservation/Education Specialist, and Conservation Assistant. Technical assistance is provided by the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The District maintains a close working relationship with the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Forestry, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency, and other federal, state, and local agencies. Operating funds are provided by grants and appropriations from state and local governments. The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. All programs, services, and employment opportunities of the Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, handicap, or political affiliation.

DISTRICT DIRECTORY

District Directors

Ronnie Lewis - Mathews
Robert Respess, Jr.- Mathews
Jason Bray – Middlesex
Alan Sutherlin - Middlesex
Keith Horsley - Gloucester
Daniel Rilee - Gloucester
William Richardson, Jr.- At Large
David Moore -VCE Agent

District Staff

LaVerne Calhoun - District Manager
Carl Thiel-Goin – Conservation/Education Specialist
Kristal Evens - Conservation Assistant

NRCS Staff

Michael Combs - District Conservationist
Sean Allen - Soil Conservationist

Public Information and Education

Provided the Enviroscape model demonstration at Chesapeake Bay Day to **80** Thomas Hunter Middle School **students**. This demonstration helps students realize the sources and prevention of water pollution. They learn through using visual aids that what we do in our backyard makes a difference and impacts the environment. The event was sponsored by Mathews Maritime Foundation.

At Achilles Elementary School Bay Warriors Day provided the Enviroscape model demonstration to **160 students**.

At Thomas Hunter Middle School Eco Expo helped **65 students** build **6 rain barrels** that were sold to benefit the nature trail program.



Volunteered at the Area III Envirothon at Germanna Community College in Fredericksburg. Envirothon is a hands-on environmental problem solving competition for high school students. Teams compete in five areas: soils, aquatics, forestry, wildlife, and a current environmental issue. The competition is held in the field and teams have the opportunity to work with natural resource professionals.

Jason Hanley was awarded a Youth Conservation Camp scholarship (**\$550.00 value**) by Tidewater SWCD. This a weeklong camp at Virginia Tech that is sponsored by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. While at camp students bunk in the college dorms and are involved in many conservation activities and educational programs.



Virginia Department of Forestry and Tidewater SWCD celebrated the week of Arbor Day by providing trees to **386 local elementary students**. Each student planted their tree in a cup to take home. Then students were provided an educational program on the benefits of trees to our environment. Five local elementary schools participated in this event.



Back Row Left to Right: Carl Thiel-Goin Tidewater SWCD & Ken Sterner VDOF
Front Row Left to Right: Kristal Evens, LaVerne Calhoun Tidewater SWCD
& Lisa Deaton VDOF

Participated in the Urbanna Oyster Festival Education Day by providing “**Who Polluted the River**” program to **260 4th & 7th grade students**. Students participated in an interactive story demonstrating that when the population increases and land use changes the water becomes polluted. This graphic example demonstrates that everyone contributes to the pollution problem and must work together to find the solution. Students discussed ways to reduce pollution and conserve our natural resources.

“**Local Heroes-Your Hardworking Pollinators**” was the theme for 2015 national youth poster contest sponsored by the National Association of Conservation Districts. Tidewater SWCD accepted entries from Mathews, Gloucester, and Middlesex youth in grades K-12. This contest begins at the local level where the winners are selected and advance to the state level competition. State level winners then advance to the national level competition. There were **two** local winners selected and awarded a **\$25.00** Wal-Mart gift card compliments of Tidewater SWCD.

Poster Contest Winners

Mary Isabell, 4th -6th grade winner
& Carl Thiel-Goin



Art Teacher Elizabeth Blackwell, **Devin Cooke**,
7th - 9th grade winner & Carl Thiel-Goin



Tidewater SWCD promoted the **\$1,000.00 Martin Menges college scholarship**. The Martin Menges scholarship 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. Recipients must plan to major in natural resources conservation or environmental studies and also have 3.0 or greater grade point average.

Promoted the Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts Educational Foundation scholarship program which awards **four \$1,000.00 college scholarships**. The VASWCD Educational Foundation scholarship program promotes the education of Virginia citizens in technical fields with a natural resource conservation and environmental protection emphasis. The program provides financial support to students majoring in or showing a strong desire to major in a course curriculum related to natural resource conservation and/or environmental studies.

Newsletters, Annual Report, and “Conserving Water at Home”, “Rain Barrels”, “Making Compost from Yard Waste”, “Scoop the Poop” brochures, and other publications relating to soil conservation and water quality were provided to the community.

Monetary donations were made to Area III Envirothon, Holiday Lake Forestry Camp, and Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Assistance was provided to consultants and citizens requesting aerial photographs, topographic maps, and additional information.

Our website www.tidewaterswcd.org was maintained and updated with current information.

Natural Resources Management

The Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District provided, through the Virginia Agriculture Cost-Share Best Management Practices Program, **\$381,458.00** of Cost-Share assistance to individuals who wanted to improve water quality. The voluntary BMP practices completed include: **6,973 acres of Cover Crop** for Nutrient Management and Sediment Retention - **19,798 acres for Nutrient Management Plans** - **7,420 acres of Split Application of Nitrogen on Corn** and **2,386 acres of Split Application of Nitrogen on Small Grain**. Local farmers who implement these voluntary BMP practices improve water quality and soil health.

The 2015 Clean Water Farm Award for the York River Basin Watershed was proudly presented to **Charles Foster of Fosters Farming**. This award is sponsored by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and is given to recognize and thank Virginia farmers who implement nutrient management plans and are exemplary in their protection of the state's soil and water quality.



Left to right: Daniel Rilee, Charles Foster, Carl Thiel-Goin

Provided Cost Share BMP program updates and was a sponsor of the Virginia Cooperative Extension Lower Middle Peninsula Winter Agricultural Conference.

Attended and sponsored the VCE Middle Peninsula Summer Field Day.

Attended and sponsored the Middle Peninsula & Northern Neck Cover Crop and Precision AG Field Day.

Continued the partnership with NRCS and Virginia Cooperative Extension on a three year multi-species cover crop test plot.



Prepared pasture clearing plans as guidance for small acreage landowners who had concerns with soil erosion and pasture improvement. Identification of environmentally critical areas, slopes, soil characteristics, and adjacent bodies of water are important in developing a land disturbance management strategy.

Pasture seeding information was distributed to pasture owners to promote the importance of a protective vegetative cover to reduce erosion

Administration

Tidewater SWCD proudly welcomed Kristal Evens as the new Conservation Assistant on December 1, 2015. She graduated from Mathews High School and while in attendance there she served as an Associate Director on the Tidewater SWCD Board. She earned a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Environmental Biology from Warren Wilson College.

In December 2015 staff and directors attended the annual meeting of the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Richmond, Virginia.

Attended the Area III Spring Meeting of the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts at the St. Margaret's School, Tappahannock. Senator Ryan McDougle and Delegate Keith

Hodges were in attendance and addressed local concerns.

Attended the annual Virginia Association of Conservation District Employees training at Graves Mountain.

Gloucester, Mathews, and Middlesex County Board of Supervisors were given a presentation that highlighted the many valuable services provided by Tidewater SWCD.

Staff attended trainings with partner agencies: Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Virginia Association of Conservation District Employees, Department of Conservation & Recreation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Virginia Cooperative Extension.

The Board of Directors updated the 2016-2017 annual plan of work, budget, and office policies.

The Board of Directors met monthly to discuss local conservation efforts and receive updates from District partners: Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Forestry, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Farm Service Agency.

Tidewater Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Directors



(Left to right- front row) William Richardson, Jr., Robert Respass Jr., David Moore
(Left to right- back row) Jason Bray, Alan Sutherlin, Keith Horsley, Daniel Rilee, Ronnie Lewis



P.O. Box 677
Gloucester, VA 23061

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District Directors

Daniel Rilee-Gloucester-Chairman
William Richardson, Jr.-At Large Vice Chairman
Keith Horsley-Gloucester-Treasurer
Jason Bray-Middlesex-Secretary
David Moore- VCE
Robert Respass, Jr-Mathews
Ronnie Lewis-Mathews
Alan Sutherland-Middlesex

Return Service Requested

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. All programs, services, and employment opportunities of the Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, handicap, or political affiliation.

District Personnel

LaVerne Calhoun - District Manager

Kristal Evens - Conservation/Education Specialist

NRCS Personnel

Mike Combs-District Conservationist

Sean Allen- Soil Conservationist

Newsletter Mailing

In order to help us conserve our natural resources please notify the office if you would like to be removed from our mailing list or would prefer to have the newsletter emailed to you.

Call 804-693-3562 Ext. 5

or

Email lcalhoun@tidewaterswcd.org