



Shore Conserver

Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District

22545 Center Parkway, Accomac, VA 23301

ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012

DISTRICT STAFF

Carmie S. Duer, *District Manager*

Cole Charnock, *Conservation Specialist*

Latonya E. Justice, *Conservation Technician*

Bonnie Mahl, *Education Director*

ELECTED DISTRICT DIRECTORS

Robin Rich-Coates, *Chair*

Fred Holland, II, *Vice-Chair*

Davis Lovell

James A. Evans

W. Rawlings Scott, Jr.

Theresa J. Long

DISTRICT ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

Robbie Lewis

Dr. Gail Lee

Richard F. Hall, III

John Chubb

Dave Vaughn

Edwin R. Long

Brian Broadwater

William Shockley, Jr.

Accomack County
Northampton County
Federal and State Agencies
Stakeholder Organization

The Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District is pleased to offer the FY2012 Annual Report as a summary of our work over the past year. As a local entity we strive to increase public awareness and participation in natural resource conservation.

Formed in 1945, the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth defined and established by the Code of Virginia, Title 10.1, Chapter 5.

The District's service area covers the Eastern Shore of Virginia—a region on the Delmarva Peninsula comprised of Accomack and Northampton Counties and bounded by the Chesapeake Bay, the Atlantic Ocean and Maryland. The abundance of natural resources has produced an economy based on agriculture and seafood production.

Farming has long been a trademark industry and accounts for an estimated \$350 million in annual sales. The region produces over 80% of the State's vegetable crop. An estimated 120,000 acres (or about 50% of the land use) supports row crop production. Because of the importance of sensitive Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean ecosystems within the area's watersheds, the impacts of farming on surface and ground water quality are a primary focus for the District's conservation programs and services. The District works closely with area growers through voluntary incentive programs and outreach to address resource concerns resulting from agriculture.

Since conservation involves everyone, the District provides various programs to students and adults promoting awareness, action and support for the area's natural resources. The District also serves as a valued partner and service provider to various agencies and organizations working together towards resource conservation on the Shore.

The work of the District is determined by directors, elected by the people of the District at general elections or appointed by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board. Directors serve four-year terms and designate non-voting associate directors to help guide District efforts. Directors and Associate Directors serve as volunteer public servants.

Funding for the District office and for special programs comes primarily through grants with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. The District seeks outside grants to expand its work efforts and the two counties within the District's service area contribute supporting funds.

2012 Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share

Nutrient Management Plans

Accomack	27,556.6 acres
Northampton	20,580.7 acres

Nutrient Mgt. Plan Recordkeeping

Accomack	3,527.8 acres
Northampton	6,322.9 acres

Small Grain Cover for NM

Accomack	6,706.2 acres
Northampton	1,978.5 acres

Harvestable Cover Crops

Accomack	4,442.8 acres
Northampton	1,652.9 acres

Small Grain Cover behind Vegetables

Accomack	1,405.6 acres
Northampton	2,038.5 acres

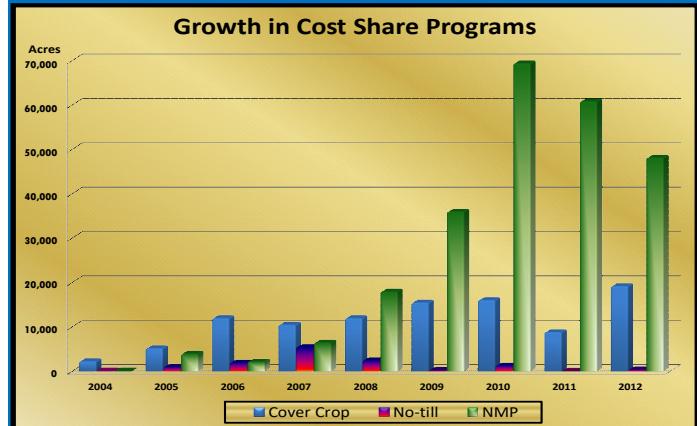
Vetch Cover Crop

Accomack	1,745 acres
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The VA Agricultural Best Management Practice Cost-share Program (VACS) is administered by the VA Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) through local Soil & Water Conservation Districts to improve water quality in the State's streams, rivers, Chesapeake Bay and the ocean. The program encourages voluntary installation of agricultural BMP's by offering cost-share assistance for implementation.

In FY2012, the District provided \$909,037.60 in cost-share assistance to landowners and producers for the implementation of 19,966 acres of fall cover crop, 429.9 acres of continuous no-till (which is a 5-year program) in Accomack and Northampton Counties. In addition, cost-share assistance was provided for the implementation 48,137.3 acres of nutrient management planning and 9,850.7 acres in Nutrient Management Record Keeping.

Growth in Cost Share Programs



2012 Environmental Education Programs

Envirothon: 2012 marked the 20th year that the District has sponsored the Envirothon, a competition about the environment for high school students. The support and hospitality of our Envirothon hosts are essential to this great youth program. Team training is conducted by District staff, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Forestry along with other agencies who volunteer their time, facilities and transportation. Each year, since the beginning of this program, the District's winning team has represented the Tidewater area in the State competition. This year Broadwater Academy were the 1st place winners of the local Envirothon competition and represented the Eastern Shore in the State competition. The Broadwater Academy team traveled to James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA for the State competition in May 2012.



2012 Envirothon participants and coaches

Conservation Poster Contest: The District received approximately 275 student entries on the 2012 theme "Soil to Spoon". First place winning posters for the 2011 NACD "Forests for People—More Than You Can Imagine" were submitted for entry into the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Contest. The Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District (ESSWCD) had two State first place winners this year! **Lauren Hunter** of Nandua Middle School for grades category 7-9 and **Chase Doughty** of Northampton High School for grades category 10-12.

Publications: The District published four issues of the ***Shore Conserver*** in FY12 reaching over 850 households each time with updates on District activities and information on various resource concerns. It's a wealth of information. If you are not already on the mailing list, call the District at (757)787-0918 x101.

Spring Conservation Grants: Each spring the Endowment Committee offers Billie Fitzgerald Memorial Spring Grants to educators, schools and community groups. In 2012, the grant budget was set at \$1,500 with a \$250 maximum for each grant approved. Five grants were requested for the 2012 year. The committee was able to approve and fully fund five grants to help support many environmental education programs, equipment and activities as listed on this slide. The District awarded grants to area

educators for projects ranging from a school permanent science lab to biomes for a science class.

Native Plant Campaign: The District plays a leading role on the Steering Committee for the "Plant Eastern Shore Natives" campaign. This social marketing campaign is under the guidance of the Coastal Zone Management Program and encourages the inclusion of native plants in local landscapes to support migratory birds and improve local water quality. This campaign has resulted in increase of general public awareness on the value of natives, local nurseries raising more natives, and the garden centers providing more natives. A 44-page full -color native plant guide was created to provide valuable information on appropriate natives for the garden. The District partnered with the Eastern Shore Community College and the Anheuser-Busch Coastal Research Center (ABCRC) of the University of Virginia in a seminar to train leaders in the community as "Plant Eastern Shore Natives" campaign educators.



Birding and Wildlife Festival: The Birding and Wildlife Festival is an internationally recognized festival which celebrates the arrival of migratory birds to the Shore. To increase attendance of children, ESSWCD designed the passport system which guides the children to the

Arbor Day and Hazardous Waste Collection Day: The District partnered with local nurseries of the Eastern Shore Nurserymen's Association who donated over 250 ornamentals. The Virginia Department of Forestry generously transported the nursery stock to the two locations in Accomack and Northampton County—The Eastern Shore Community College, Melfa, VA and the Eastville Courthouse Greens, Eastville, VA respectively. This year, the seedlings were sponsored by the Vaughn Bassett Company and were raised by VA Dept. Of Forestry Nursery in Augusta County.

The District also partnered with the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission to provide a collection site of hazardous waste in Northampton County at the Eastville Courthouse Greens.

Farm Tour Day: District presented the "Story of Soil" to over 500 3rd grade students in Accomack County and Broadwater Academy at the Cooperative Extension's annual event. The students received educational materials to take with them after their day on the farm.

Eastern Shore Chapter Master Naturalist: The District's Education Director founded the local Master Naturalist program in 2007. The Master Naturalist program became chartered in January of 2008. The Master Naturalist have been a great addition to the environmental community of the Shore contributing thousands of volunteer hours in stewardship, citizen science, and education outreach.

Habitat @ Home Workshop: This workshop was presented by the District to the Master Gardeners Chapter. This State program teaches how to make landscaping wildlife friendly and their property a certified wildlife habitat. The importance of native plants and their inter-relationship with specific local wildlife was included in this program.

Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE): A Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) is not a single field trip or activity but rather a series of integrated experiences that enable students to participate in hands-on environmental learning about the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Tamsey Ellis organized a three part MWEE for 203 students consisting of discussion and research of a watershed issue, hands-on activities and classroom reflection. The watershed issue concerned flooding of school grounds. Next was a day of outside hands-on

activities such as seining, water testing, crabbing, pelt study beach habitat and area history.

Project Aquatic/Project Wet Workshops: The District Education Director trained and certified educators in the Project Aquatic and Project Wet curriculums. Part 2 of the Project Wet Workshop trained educators to be facilitators of the Project Wet curriculum thereby certifying them to teach the curriculum.

Environmental Education Council

The District coordinates this group that works collaboratively to increase environmental awareness in the community. The Environmental Education Council's (EE Council) major projects are below.

Shore Outdoors: The latest issue was published in the Eastern Shore News on September 7, 2011 with the main focus being the Chesapeake Bay and issues that affect its water quality.

Skill-a-thon: This program was started in 2005 by Rikki



Sterrett in Northampton County through the 4-H Extension Office. It is now under the umbrella of the EE Council and is being extended to Accomack. Its purpose is to review the 4th grade SOL science requirements through hands-on activities a few days before the test in hope of improving these scores. The District supports this program by helping with SOL review.

Watershed Walk: The Watershed Festival was revitalized as the Watershed Walk in September 2009 held in conjunction with the Onancock Harborfest. Live animals, hands-on instruction, prizes, musicians and much more will be at this annual event, Saturday, September 8, 2012. This year's theme will be superheroes of the Watershed. Children should come in costume as their favorite superhero to receive a prize!

The Environmental Education Council received a grant from the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) to support its environmental education programs. This grant partially paid for the administration of the MWEE. The District thanks VASWCD for their support of our programs.

Conservation Awards 2012

The District honors local students, teachers, farmers and community members for their efforts in the conservation of our natural resources.



Clean Water Farm Award

The DCR 2012 Clean Water Farm Award was awarded to **John Johnston**. John has farmed since 1984 on his 45 acre facility in the Burton Shore area harvesting a variety of herbs and vegetables. This farm is unique in the sense that John's crops are picked, packaged and shipped by hand. Through FSA Conservation

Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the NRCS' technical assistance, John maintains CREP buffers bordering his ditches and streams. John follows a current nutrient management plan and receives cost share funding through the VA Best Management Program administered by the District. In addition, John is enrolled in NRCS' Conservation Stewardship Program to improve the plant diversity and structure of non-cropped areas for wildlife food and habitat.

Conservation Teacher Award



ESSWCD awarded **Sally Richardson** the Conservation Educator Award for making significant contributions towards educating others about our natural resources and conservation practices. Sally Richardson has taught Marine Biology, Anatomy and Biology for 29 years. Sally helped start the Envirothon Program in Virginia in 1991 and has been coaching Northampton High School's Envirothon Team ever since.

Conservation Student



Each year the District awards an exceptional student who participates in environmental studies. ESSWCD recognized **Steven Yeung** with its 2012 Conservation Student Award. Steven is a rising senior and Class President at Broadwater Academy. He was the Envirothon Team Captain, which placed 1st in local competition. When asked of Steven's feelings regarding conservation, he said, "Conservation is the link between the past and present and the key to the future."

Scholarships



This year, the District's Endowment Committee awarded two scholarships in the amount of \$1000 each. The **W. Foster Fletcher Conservation Scholarship** was awarded to **Shane Taylor** of Arcadia High School who will be attending Randolph-Macon College in the fall majoring in environmental studies. The second is the **William H. Beasley Sr. Memorial Scholarship** amount of \$1000 awarded to **Clara Vaughn**, (not pictured) who is attending graduate school at the University of Maryland, College Park majoring in journalism. Before the University of Maryland, Clara earned a B.A. in Environmental

Studies from the College of William & Mary.



Wildlife Conservationist Award

Nominated by Tina Jerome, NRCS, the District honored **Carroll Savage** of Pungo Creek Farm with the 2012 Wildlife Conservationist Award. Pungo Creek Farm is located seaside along the Machipongo River near Quinby, VA where Carroll farms over 60 acres. Carroll implemented a 10-year contracted CREP program, planting 20 acres in a variety of warm season grasses and forbs which include switch grass and partridge pea. Through FSA's Conservation Reserve Program, Carroll created a 1.1 acre shallow water area for wildlife and a rest stop for migratory birds.



Conservation Farmer Award

The 2012 Conservation Farmer Award which recognizes a local farming operation who regularly applies best management practices to promote soil and water conservation to improve water quality on the Eastern Shore was awarded to **Pacific Tomato Growers, LTD.** Pacific Tomato Growers farm over 471 acres in the Nassawadox area under management of Jimmy Hopper. They maintain riparian buffers adjacent to all streams along the edges of fields; and follow a current nutrient management plan to minimize nutrient leaching and runoff. Approximately 80 acres of

the tomato crop are certified organic. In September of 2010, Pacific Tomato Growers signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the District regarding the use of Best Management Practices in tomato production to control sediment loss to surface waters of the Shore.

Forestry Conservationist Award



Rick Kellam accepted on behalf of Stacy Hammond

Nominated by Robbie Lewis, the VA Department of Forestry (VDOF) Area Forester, this year's Forestry Conservationist Award was presented to **Stacy Hammond** who worked above and beyond to enhance forest health, wildlife habitat and protect water quality. VDOF has worked closely with Stacy in conducting forest management practices such as timber stand improvement and pre-commercial thinning of loblolly pine stands. Wildlife habitat has been enhanced by opening the stand canopies to establish early succession cover.

The District would like to thank the farmers, landowners, teachers, students and other partners whose contributions to conservation help assure clean water and productive soil and for the future.

Preserving Farmland by Co-holding Easements

Conservation easements conserve rural lands which best preserve the farms, forests, fisheries and heritage of Virginia's Eastern Shore for the benefit of future generations. They protect specific natural, scenic, or historic features of the land by limiting future development. The District is proud to be a co-holder of conservation easements in an effort to help conserve open spaces. The District currently co-holds 30 easements totaling over 8,000 acres with the Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust (VESLT) and Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) and monitors 19 easements in partnership with VOF.

- Co-holds 29 perpetual conservation easements with the VESLT on 4,958.7 acres
- Co-holds 1 easement with VOF totaling 156 acres and partners with VOF to monitor 19 perpetual conservation easements on Eastern Shore properties totaling 2,983.1 acres.
- Partners with Northampton County to provide technical assistance and monitoring services for their Purchase of Development Rights Program.

All programs and services of the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service are offered on a non-discriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap.

The Shore Conserver is published quarterly by the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District to provide information to landusers. Please contact the District office to be added to the mailing list at 757-787-0918.

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Department of Conservation and Recreation.



Pictured left to right:

New Conservation Specialist - **Cole Charnock**

District Manager - **Carmie S. Duer**

Conservation Technician - **Latonya E. Justice**

New Education Director - **Bonnie Mahl**

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