



Shore Conserver

Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District

promoting locally led conservation

22545 Center Parkway Accomac, VA 23301 (757)302-4431 www.esswcd.org

February 2021

Board of Directors

Robin Rich-Coates
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Kyle Sturgis
Ursula T. Deitch
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Sands Gayle

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Edwin R. Long
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Chip Turlington

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Big Hugh and the History of Soil Conservation

by Mike Parker, Columnist, Kinston (NC) Free Press, modified by Julie Head

The history of soil conservation centers on one visionary. Hugh Hammond Bennett, known as "the father of soil conservation." Before Franklin D. Roosevelt became the U.S. President, Bennett had already begun his campaign to preserve the soil through reforming farming practices. He joined the Department of Agriculture in the early 1900s.

Bennett sought to address problems of land depletion largely created by the 1909 announcement by the Bureau of Soils that "[t]he soil is the one indestructible, immutable asset that the nation possesses. It is the one resource that cannot be exhausted; that cannot be used up." Throughout his career, Bennett worked to prove just how wrong this statement was.

In 1933 Bennett became director of the newly-formed Soil Erosion Service. That government agency sought to combat erosion caused by dust storms by reforming farming methods. He was adamant about the need for reform. He called for "a tremendous national awakening to the need for action in bettering our agricultural practices."

Although his criticisms of Dust Bowl farming techniques incensed many farmers, Bennett saw his reforms as essential in avoiding similar catastrophes in the future. In the early 1930s, the extent of the damage inflicted on the southern plains by drought and dust storms received little noticed outside of the region. The nation, led by the newly elected Franklin D. Roosevelt, was desperately trying to help the nation recover from the shock of the Great Depression.

Most citizens were too worried about getting food on their plates to even think about the plight of farmers in the Great Plains. However, certain members of Roosevelt's administration realized that the average American's fate was closely tied to that of Dust Bowl farmers. A dust storm that hit Washington, D.C. convinced Congress to put its weight behind the Soil Conservation Act of 1935.

That act focused on improving farming techniques. A key element of the SWCD movement was the notion of voluntary compliance. American farmers were – and are – an independent breed of people. Officials understood farmers would never embrace mandatory regulations. Instead of trying to force multiple thousands of farmers to reform their practice, Bennett and his agency urged soil and water conservation districts to promote voluntary compliance. These efforts took the form of demonstrations, pilot projects, and cost-sharing programs to encourage the adoption of best soil management practices.

Formed in 1945, the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District (Eastern Shore SWCD) represents one of 47 Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The District's service area covers the Eastern Shore of Virginia- a region on the Delmarva Peninsula comprised of Accomack and Northampton Counties, bounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the Chesapeake Bay and Maryland.

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www.facebook.com/ESSWCD

Updates

Big Hugh and the History of Soil Conservation, continued

Bennett's work continues today through the work of nearly 3000 soil and water conservation districts across the United States. More than 17,000 citizens serve on conservation districts governing boards. Conservation districts go by different names but they all share a single mission - to coordinate assistance from all available sources to develop locally-driven solutions to natural resource concerns.

In addition to serving as coordinators for conservation in the field, districts:

- implement farm, ranch, and forestland conservation practices to protect soil productivity, water quality and quantity, air quality, and wildlife habitat;
- conserve and restore wetlands, which purify water and provide habitat for birds, fish, and other animals;
- protect groundwater resources;
- assist communities and homeowners in planting trees and other land cover to hold soil in place, clean the air, provide cover for wildlife, and beautify neighborhoods.
- reach out to communities and schools to teach the value of natural resources and encourage conservation efforts.

ESSWCD welcomes new District Director



The ESSWCD is pleased to announce Sands Gayle as their newest board member. Sands grew up on the eastern shore and graduated from high school in 2007. He attended the Ag Tech program at Virginia Tech and took classes at New River Community College. When he returned to the shore, Sands and his father, Lynn Gayle, bought the business his father had always worked for and Mount Nebo Farms LLC was born. They grow a rotation of crops including soybeans, wheat, corn, rapeseed, and sorghum on 2300 acres.

Sands and his wife Bobbi Kae enjoy teaching their 2 1/2 year old daughter Quillyn about all that the shore has to offer and passing on a love for farming.

Sands states "We do not pass any piece of equipment that goes unnoticed by my daughter. She quickly points out every tractor and claims that it is my tractor - whether it is or isn't." In his spare time Sands enjoys competitive skeet shooting, hunting, and fishing.

As a little boy Sands could be found all over the house farming with his tractors. "I farmed many a square foot with these small toys not knowing what it would lead to today" says Sands. "I am happy to be on the Eastern Shore Soil and Water board to help current and future generations improve their practices each year."



2021 Poster Contest Winners



Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities

Kindergarten - 1st Grade Winners



1st Place
Bailey Sivka, Chincoteague Elementary



2nd Place
Harrison Taylor, Broadwater Academy



3rd Place
Winter Ford, Montessori



Honorable Mention
Wescott Lusk, Montessori

2021 Poster Contest Winners

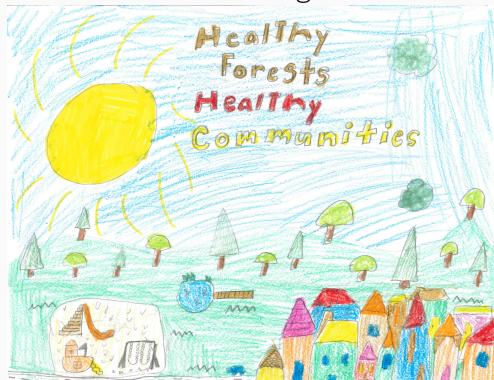
2nd - 3rd Grade



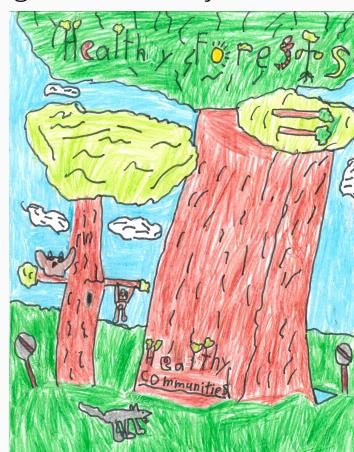
1st Place
Ava Toth, Chincoteague Elementary



2nd Place
Liam Burgess, Broadwater Academy



3rd Place
Summer Bell, Chincoteague Elementary



Honorable Mention
Landon Lockhart
Cape Charles Christian

4th - 6th Grade



1st Place
Sophie Tayloe, Cape Charles Christian



2nd Place
Holiday McCormack, Cape Charles Christian



3rd Place
Rylee Giddings, Chincoteague Elementary



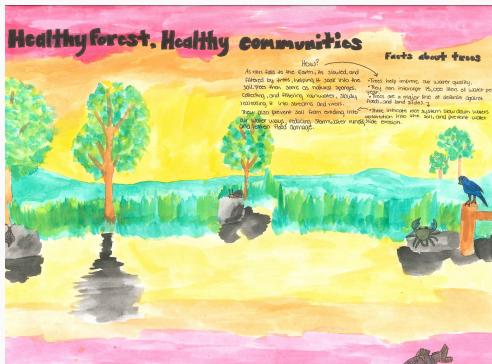
Honorable Mention
Grace Smith, Cape Charles Christian

2021 Poster Contest Winners

7th - 9th Grade



1st Place
Nicholle Perkins, Broadwater Academy



2nd Place
Kiera Wheatley, Nandua Middle



3rd Place
Eva Wright, Nandua Middle



Honorable Mention
Ava Siegrist
Cape Charles Christian

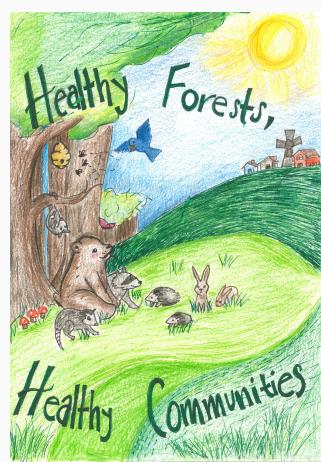
10th - 12th Grade



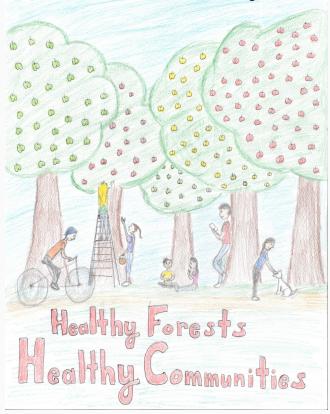
1st Place
Annika Fread
Nandua High



2nd Place
Michelle Castaneda
Nandua High



3rd Place
Allison Shockley
Broadwater Academy



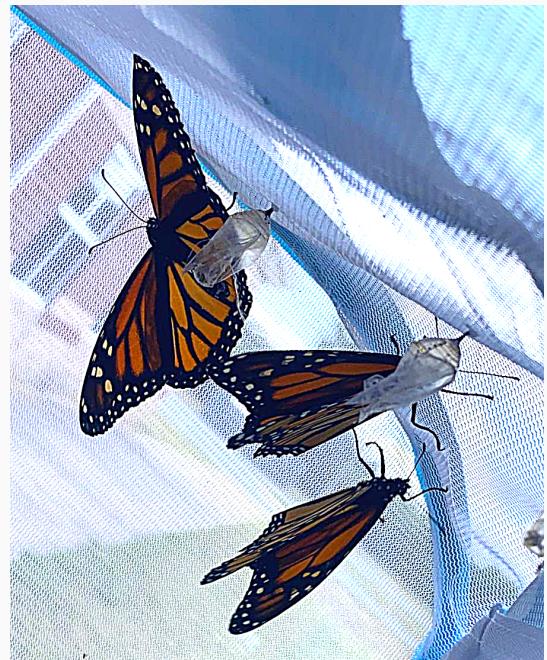
Honorable Mention
Katie Dunkel
Broadwater Academy

Educational Programs

Bye-bye butterflies!

Two second grade classes at Accawmacke Elementary got to experience the butterfly life cycle right in their classroom.

Working with the ESSWCD Education Director, Julie Head, Mrs. Vinnie and Mrs. Johnson's students were provided with monarch caterpillars, milkweed, enclosures, educational materials, and technical support to raise the caterpillars in their classroom and release the butterflies after metamorphosis. A great time was had by both the students and the teachers!



Learning About Soil

ESSWCD Education Director, Julie Head, spent a couple of days at Northampton Middle and High School in late May. Students in Mr. Finnie's classes participated in the "That Comes From Soil" presentation and took a trip underground in the ESSWCD mobile classroom. While underground, students learned about soil horizons, groundwater, and agricultural best management practices in addition to ways that individuals can help protect our soil and water. Students also made their very own soil horizon tubes to take with them!

Ag Camp at the Barrier Islands Center Farm

Thursday, July 22, 2021 - Friday, July 23, 2021

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

1st - 4th grade, \$40 per camper



Campers will make their own butter or ice cream, see a real cow being milked and pet a real sheep. Other activities include dyeing wool, making cornhusk dolls and scientifically investigating a variety of seeds. Campers should bring a lunch both days and clothes that they can get dirty in. ESSWCD, BIC, and 4-H are partnering together for this educational fun on the farm camp.



Register at barrierislandscenter.org

FY 22 Cost Share Programs



**COST SHARE SIGN UPS ARE
COMING!!**

MAKE YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY!!

**Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District
22545 Center Parkway, Accomac, VA 23301**

SIGN-UP for FY22 State BMP Cost Share

When: Wed., July 14 - Wed., August 18, 2021

APPOINTMENT ONLY to schedule an appointment contact:

- Bill Savage, Conservation Specialist, 757-302-4437 or
- Carmie Savage, District Manager, 757-302-4431

- ◆ **NEW Early Planting Dates:** SL-8B & SL-8H Cover Crops planting dates extended by two weeks - Details provided during signup appointment.
- ◆ **NEW Participant Cap:** Raised to \$150,000 per participant for FY22.
- ◆ **SIGN-UP PERIOD:** Sign-up for BMP Cost Share or VA Tax Credits prior to August 18th for the first round of ranking. Many programs offered.
- ◆ **REMINDER:** Current Nutrient Management Plan is **required** for participation in **ALL** VA State BMP programs or to receive VA State Tax Credits. Sign-up for cost share for nutrient management plans by August 18th.
- ◆ **VA State Tax Credits:** VA State Tax Credits available. Details provided during signup appointment. Increased credits for FY22.

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

Eastern Shore SWCD programs, activities and employment opportunities are available to all people regardless of disability, race or color, national origin, traits historically associated with race or religion including traits associated with hair, religion or creed, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy status, childbirth or related medical conditions, marital status, veteran status, whistleblower status or genetic information.