



Shore Conserver

Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District

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Annual Report

July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025

Locally-Led Conservation

District Staff

Carmie S. Ross, *District Manager*
Julie Head, *Education Director*
Ben Young, *Conservation Specialist*
Lucy Earl, *Conservation Specialist*

District Directors

Nick Thomas, *Chair*
James A. Evans, *Vice-Chair*
Helene Doughty
Sands Gayle
Kyle Sturgis
Sally Williams

Accomack County
Northampton County
Federal and State Agencies
Stakeholder Organizations
Local Citizens
Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board
Virginia Department of Conservation and
Recreation

Associate Directors

Hunter Blake, Brian Broadwater, Ursula Deitch,
Richard F. Hall III, Matt Hickman,
Robbie Lewis, Edwin R. Long, Norman Pitt, Chip
Turlington

The Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District's FY25 Annual Report is a summary of our work over the past year. As a local entity, we strive to increase public awareness and participation in natural resources conservation

Formed in 1945, the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia defined and established by the Code of Virginia, Title 10.1, Chapter 5. The work of the District is determined by directors, elected by the people of the Districts at general elections or appointed by the VA 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 are volunteers. The District serves as a valued partner and

service provider to various agencies and organizations working together towards resource conservation on the Shore. 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.

The Commonwealth of VA supports the District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the VA Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Accomack and Northampton Counties also provide financial assistance and support to the District. Two of the District's major roles are the administer Virginia's incentive program for agricultural best management practices and provide environmental education. Since conservation involves everyone, the District provides various programs to students and adults promoting awareness, action, and support for the area's natural resources.

2025 Agricultural Best Management Practices Incentive Program

WFA - CC Whole Farm Approach - Cover Crops

Accomack	Bayside 20,773 Ac / Seaside 18,916 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 8,286 Ac / Seaside 15,258 Ac

WFA - NM Whole Farm Approach - Nutrient Mgmt

Accomack	Bayside 26,296 Ac / Seaside 25,408 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 21,053 Ac / Seaside 10,589 Ac

NM - 1A Nutrient Management Plan Writing

Accomack	Bayside 20,124 Ac / Seaside 18,061 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 13,537 Ac / Seaside 8,431 Ac

SL - 8B Small Grain Cover for Nutrient Management

Accomack	Bayside 90 Ac / Seaside 404 Ac
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CCI - CNT Long Term Continuous No-till Planting

Accomack	Bayside 2570 Ac / Seaside 197 Ac
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SL - 15A Continuous No-till 5 Year Program

Accomack	Bayside 147 Ac / Seaside 1,374 Ac
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WP-4 Animal Waste Control Facility

Accomack	1 shed
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**Total Amount Distributed to Eastern Shore Producers
\$5,768,377.46**

In FY25, the District provided \$5,768,377.46 in cost-share assistance to landowners and producers on the Eastern Shore. The VA Agricultural Best Management Practice Cost-share Program is administered by the VA Department of Conservation & Recreation through the 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.

Virginia Conservation Assistance Program

Land Development and Storm Water Runoff Assistance For Property Owners

Roads, parking lots, sidewalks, homes, and offices replace natural landscapes. Rainfall that once soaked into vegetated ground now becomes storm water runoff carrying pollution such as sediment and nutrients. This runoff flows into the Chesapeake Bay and has a detrimental effect on water quality.

The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) is a cost-share program for homeowners and landowners that provides financial reimbursement to property owners installing eligible Best Management Practices (BMP's) in Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Watershed. These practices can be installed in areas of your yard where problems like erosion, poor drainage, or poor vegetation occur.

Through VCAP, you can:

- maintain or improve property values
- receive technical assistance
- receive cost-share assistance
- help protect our natural resources



Conservation Landscaping



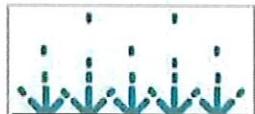
Permeable Pavement Installation



Living Shorelines



Dry Wells



Impervious Surface Removal



Rainwater Harvesting



Rain Gardens

VCAP can help:

- restore problem areas
- control and minimize erosion
- conserve water within the landscape
- restore riparian buffer areas
- promote wildlife habitat
- re-vegetate bare slopes
- stabilize draining ways
- treat storm water runoff

For more information or questions, call Bill Savage, Conservation Specialist, at 757-302-4437 or bill.savage@esswcd.org

These two photos are of a current VCAP shoreline erosion remediation project being done here on the Eastern Shore. When complete it will help water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and protect about 500 feet of the bay with a living shoreline. Photos by Ellen Grimes.



Environmental Education Programs

In FY 2025, ESSWC staff provided programming to over 8,300 participants of all ages.

Classroom and Community Programming: It was a very busy year for classroom programming and outreach. The ESSWCD provides programming that pertains to agriculture, natural resources, plastic pollution, scientific investigation, and a number of others in addition to soil and water conservation. Staff is trained in specialty curriculums including Ag In The Classroom, Project Learning Tree, Project Wild, and Project Wet.



Nandua Middle School students learning about wind power.

The 2025 Fletcher Beasley Scholarship was awarded to Leah Smith Broadwater Academy. Leah is a 2025 graduate of Broadwater Academy and is attending Washington and Lee with a focus on Environmental Studies.



Arbor Day: The District partnered with the ESVA Master Gardeners to hand out over 700 native plant plugs and tree seedlings at the Return to Our Roots festival in Exmore. Look for us next year at the ANEC Arbor Day Celebration where we will again be handing out native plant plugs.

Billie Fitzgerald Memorial Spring Grants: In 2025 the District's Endowment committee awarded three grants. The ESVA Master Gardeners received funds for maintenance and new signage for a native plant demonstration garden at the CNWR. The Cape Charles Library received funds to supply their seed cart which provides educational materials and seeds for native plants. The ESVA Master Gardeners received funds to continue an outdoor educational garden for 2nd grade classes at Pungoteague Elementary.

Eastern Shore Regional Science Fair: In collaboration with Northampton 4-H and VIMS, the District coordinated the ES Regional Science Fair. We had 45 participants with some great exhibits.

Envirothon: Broadwater Academy represented the Eastern Shore at the Area VI Envirothon. They placed 3rd in the competition and advanced on to the state level.



Summer Camps:

Adventures in Nature: A collaboration of ESSWCD, 4-H, and the ESNWR. Campers learned about pollinators, animal tracks, painted birdhouses and much more.



Jr. Ag Camp and Ag Camp:



Campers learned about agriculture, pollinators, made bread and ice cream, and made pollinators bombs among other activities. They also got to interact with sheep and goats. This camp is collaboration between ESSWCD, 4-H, and the Barrier Islands Center.

Seaside Explorers:

Sponsored by ESSWCD and VIMS, with financial support from the Elks Lodge, campers spent three days learning about aquatic biology and ecosystems. They explored the marsh, dissected oysters, learned about ecosystems, and had a good time getting dirty.,





Farmland Easements

Sixty percent of Chesapeake forests have been divided into disconnected fragments by roads, homes, and other gaps that are too wide or dangerous for wildlife to cross. The District is proud to do its part and serves as a co-holder of conservation easements in an effort to help conserve open spaces. The District currently co-holds 28 easements totaling nearly 5,000 acres with Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust and co-holds one with the Virginia Outdoor Foundation for the benefit of future generations.

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, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, color, age, religion/religious creed, veteran status, or genetics. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.