



# Shore Conserver

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

## ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022

### DISTRICT STAFF

Carmie M. Savage, *District Manager*  
Bill Savage, *Conservation Specialist*  
Julie Head, *Education Director*  
Palmer Smith, *Conservation Technician*

### ELECTED DISTRICT DIRECTORS

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

### Locally-Led Conservation

Accomack County  
Northampton County  
Federal and State Agencies  
Stakeholder Organizations  
Local Citizens

### DISTRICT ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

Hunter Blake  
Richard F. Hall, III  
Matt Hickman  
Robbie Lewis  
Edwin R. Long  
Norman Pitt  
William Shockley, Jr.  
Chip Turlington

Virginia Department of  
Conservation and Recreation

Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board

The Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District's FY22 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 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, Chap 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 service as volunteer public servants.

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 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 to administer the 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.

## **2022 Agricultural Best Management Practices Incentive Program**

### **Nutrient Management Planning (NM-1A)**

Accomack	Bayside 15,954 Ac / Seaside 18,167 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 11,703 Ac / Seaside 7,252 Ac

### **Small Grain Cover for Nutrient Management (SL-8B)**

Accomack	Bayside 5,839 Ac / Seaside 7,816 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 3,940 Ac / Seaside 2,230 Ac

### **Harvestable Cover Crops (SL-8H)**

Accomack	Bayside 2,663 Ac / Seaside 3,634 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 2,268 Ac / Seaside 1,384 Ac

### **Protective Cover for Specialty Cropland (SL-8)**

Accomack	Bayside 213 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 232 Ac / Seaside 267 Ac

### **Legume Cover Crop (WQ-4)**

Accomack	Bayside 1,580 Ac / Seaside 1,089 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 729 Ac / Seaside 66 Ac

### **Continuous No-till 5-Yr Program (SL-15A)**

Accomack	Bayside 1,210 Ac / Seaside 1,089 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 244 Ac

### **Long Term Continuous No-till Planting (CCI-CNT)**

Accomack	Bayside 3,961 Ac / Seaside 2,760 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 359 Ac

### **Split Application of Nitrogen on Corn (NM-3C)**

Accomack	Bayside 3,185 Ac / Seaside 5,322 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 691 Ac / Seaside 579 Ac

### **Split Application of Nitrogen on Small Grains (NM-4)**

Accomack	Bayside 1,273 Ac / Seaside 1,821 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 1,183 Ac / Seaside 697 Ac

### **Funding for additional programs included:**

**Animal Waste Control Facilities (WP-4)** \$577,806

**Composter Facilities (WP4C)** \$34,015

**Resource Management Plan Implementation (RMP-2)**  
\$37,936

**Whole Farm Approach Pilot Program (WFA-1)**

\$320,116

**Total Amount Distributed to Eastern Shore Producers**  
**\$2,893,756**

In FY22, the District provided \$2,893,755.61 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 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.

## Resource Management Planning Program (RMP's)

The Virginia Resource Management Planning program provides a voluntary way to promote the use of conservation practices that improve farming operations and water quality. Resource management plans can help farm owners and operators take advantage of all the conservation measures at their disposal. The plans are designed to encourage farmers, either the farm owner or operator, to use a high level of best management practices (BMPs) that reduce runoff pollution to local waters and, in many cases, improve the farmer's financial bottom line.

A VA Resource Management Plan (RMP) is a comprehensive conservation plan that includes proven agricultural best management practices to ensure the farm is meeting a conservation farming standard. A farmer's decision to have an RMP written, or to implement the plan, is completely voluntary.

The plans are written by certified RMP developers and are specific to the farm operation. Once all required BMPs are implemented, the RMP can be certified. In addition to the environmental benefit to the operation and the community, RMP certification means several things for the farmer, including "certainty" that they are considered environmentally compliant. Should more stringent state regulations be adopted, the certified RMP farm operation is considered already compliant with any nutrient and sediment water quality measures needed to meet the state's water quality goals for both the Chesapeake Bay and local waters. The certification is valid for nine years provided the farmer continues to implement the RMP.

In FY22, the District Board approved the review of twenty-eight (28) RMPs by the District's Technical Review Committee (TRC). The Board approved the certification inspections of all twenty-eight plans. All twenty-eight have reached RMP certification totaling 7,587 Chesapeake Bay Acres. The District disbursed \$37,936 in cost share funding for the implementation of RMPs



## Eastern Shore SWCD participates in the Whole Farm Approach Pilot Program

The Whole Farm Approach, or WFA, was introduced as a pilot project in 2019. It allowed a farmer to submit a single cost-share application for a bundle of agricultural best management practices, including their choice of nutrient management and cover crop practices. WFA was successfully implemented in the counties of Essex, King and Queen, and King William and in FY21 became available in the Chesapeake Bay watershed of the Eastern Shore to farmers who had, or were willing to obtain, an RMP. This pilot program was a two year program also offered in FY22. Of those participating on the Eastern Shore in FY22, a total of \$320,116 was disbursed covering 6,475 acres.



# Virginia Conservation Assistance Program

Presented by Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) is a cost-share program that provides financial incentives and technical and educational assistance to home and property owners installing eligible Best Management Practices in Virginia's participating Soil and Water Conservation Districts. These practices can be installed in areas of your yard or property where problems like erosion, poor drainage, or poor vegetation occur. Qualified sites may be used for residential, commercial, or recreational purposes. Best management practices include things such as living shorelines, conservation landscaping, rain gardens, impervious surface removal, constructed wetlands, rain water harvesting, and more.



**Why do Virginia's waters need improving?** Nonpoint source pollution is the leading cause of water quality problems. Rainfall or snowmelt from suburban lawns, golf courses, and paved surfaces picks up and carries away natural and human-made pollutants depositing them into lakes, rivers, wetlands, coastal waters and ground waters.



Roads, parking lots, sidewalks, homes, and offices replace natural landscapes. Rainfall that once soaked into vegetated ground now becomes storm water runoff, which flows directly into local waterways. As more natural landscapes are converted to impermeable surfaces or managed turf, storm water moves across them, carrying pollutants such as sediment and nutrients to vulnerable streams and rivers. Storm drains you see on the street do not provide any sort of water filtration.

Virginia's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) for the Chesapeake Bay identifies that urban/suburban runoff is contributing to impairment and efforts to retroactively address storm water runoff from existing impervious surfaces is a priority. VCAP is an opportunity to help you do your part to improve water quality.

In FY 2022, the District oversaw the implementation of one VCAP project. This living shoreline project stabilized 132 linear feet along Occohannock Creek .

**Do you have a conservation project you have been putting off? FY 2023 sign-ups for VCAP are ongoing. Call Bill Savage at 757-302-4437 to make an appointment. Additional information can be also be found by following the links on our website ([esswcd.org](http://esswcd.org)).**

## Environmental Education Programs

### Classroom Programs:

Classroom programming continued to be a challenge because of COVID 19 some schools did allow partners to provide educationally based lessons. From virtual learning to hands on with pumpkins and caterpillars, the district provided educational support in whatever form was available.



A highlight of the year was taking Farm Field Days to local elementary schools. Normally a larger Farm Tour is held but due to COVID that had to be cancelled. In March and April, ESSWCD and partners took the show on the road and visited all 7 local elementary schools and treated over 750 3rd and 4th graders to a morning of agriculture education.



The district provided all of the materials for 14 classrooms to study the butterfly life cycle. This year students were able to raise black swallowtail caterpillars and release them.

### Scholarships

The district was pleased to be able offer three \$1000 scholarships in the spring of 2022 to three outstanding young people. The William H. Beasley Scholarship was awarded to Elan Hess of Machipongo. Elan will be a sophomore at Appalachian State University this fall majoring in Sustainable Development. He graduated from Northampton High School in June of 2020.

Two W. Foster Fletcher scholarships were awarded. William Johnson will be a freshman at Virginia Tech this fall majoring in Agriculture. He graduated from Broadwater in June of 22. Kaeden Rippon will be a freshman at the University of Virginia this fall with a major in Environmental Science. He graduated from Nandua High School in the June of 2022.

### Arbor Day

Arbor Day returned in 2022. The district partnered with the master gardeners and the Cape Charles Tree Advisory Committee for this year's event.

Native plants were the focus. In addition to native tree



seedlings, native plant plugs were available for several pollinator friendly plants. The event was held in Cape Charles at Strawberry Square and was well attended.

### Billie Fitzgerald Memorial Spring Grants



In the spring of 2022, the District's Endowment Committee awarded \$1,200 in grants to three different organizations. The ESVA Master Gardener Association received funds to continue improvements at the native plant gardens at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. Cape Charles Christian School received a grant to help with costs of enhancing their outdoor learning environment. Accomack County Parks and Recreation has established a Monarch Waystation at Sawmill Park. Their grant will allow them to continue to add native plants and expand the garden.

### Ag Camp at the Barrier Islands Center

Ag Camp at the BIC was held for the second time in 2022. In conjunction with Northampton County Extension, 14 children spent two days learning about agriculture. Over the two days, children interacted with a sheep, goats, and a calf. They also made candles and lip balm with bees wax, and made bread, butter, and ice cream, among other activities. Look for this camp in the BIC summer newsletter!



## Environmental Education Programs

### Conservation Poster Contest

The theme for 2022 was “Healthy Soils, Healthy Life.”



K-1 First Place  
Charlie Burrell  
Montessori CHF

2-3 Grade  
First Place  
Caroline Bentley  
Montessori CHF

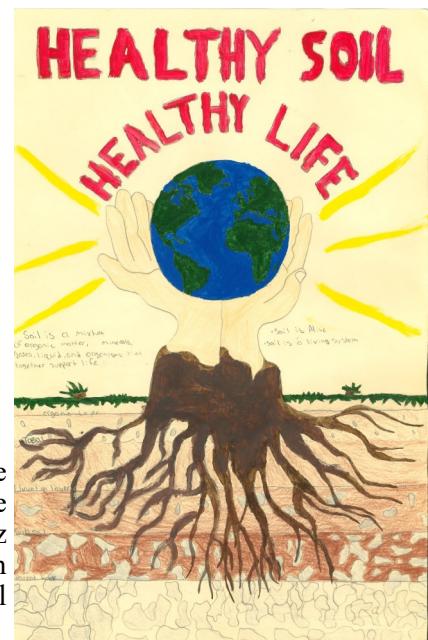


4-6 Grade,  
First Place  
Ruby Buck  
Cape Charles Christian



7-9 Grade, First Place  
Sophie Tayloe  
Cape Charles Christian

10-12 Grade  
First Place  
Emilio Gonzalez  
Northampton  
High School



## 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 serve 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.