



Shore Conserver

Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District

22545 Center Parkway, Accomac, VA 23301

ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

DISTRICT STAFF

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

ELECTED DISTRICT DIRECTORS

Robin Rich-Coates, *Chair*
Nick Thomas, *Vice-Chair*
Ursula Deitch
James A. Evans
Sands Gayle
Kyle Sturgis

Locally-Led Conservation

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

DISTRICT ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

Edwin R. Long
Richard F. Hall, III
Robbie Lewis
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 FY21 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.

2021 Agricultural Best Management Practices Incentive Program

Nutrient Management Planning (NM-1A)

Accomack	Bayside 12,611 Ac / Seaside 16712 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 9,080 Ac / Seaside 5,843 Ac

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

Accomack	Bayside 3,486 Ac / Seaside 5,431 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 3,458 Ac / Seaside 2,353 Ac

Harvestable Cover Crops (SL-8H)

Accomack	Bayside 1,457 Ac / Seaside 4,196 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 1,254 Ac / Seaside 1,086 Ac

Protective Cover for Specialty Cropland (SL-8)

Accomack	Bayside 888 Ac/Seaside 672 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 147 Ac / Seaside 332 Ac

Legume Cover Crop (WQ-4)

Accomack	Bayside 1,523 Ac / Seaside 1,612 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 360 Ac/Seaside 646 Ac

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

Accomack	Bayside 101 Ac / Seaside 1.409 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 349 Ac

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

Accomack	Bayside 1,585 Ac/Seaside 796 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 1,058 Ac/Seaside 1,054 Ac

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

Accomack	Bayside 1,091 Ac/Seaside 430 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 959 Ac/Seaside 166 Ac

Funding for additional programs included:

Animal Waste Control Facilities (WP-4)

\$204,008

Resource Management Plan Implementation (RMP-2)

\$9,031

Whole Farm Approach Pilot Program (WFA-1)

\$279,933

In FY21, the District provided \$1,871,240.56 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 FY21, the District Board approved the review of eight (8) RMPs by the District's Technical Review Committee (TRC). The Board approved the certification inspections of all eight plans. All eight have reached RMP certification totaling 1,806.3 Southern Rivers acres. Additionally, the District Board has also approved another eleven (11) plans reviewed by the District's TRC. These plans are in the implementation stage and total 742.5 Chesapeake Bay acres and 824.1 Southern Rivers acres.



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 allows 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 has been 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 have, or are willing to obtain, an RMP. This pilot program is a two year program also being offered in FY22. Of those participating on the Eastern Shore, it is anticipated that nearly 900 acres of existing RMPs will be certified, and new RMPs will be written on more than 4,100 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 stormwater runoff, which flows directly into local waterways. As more natural landscapes are converted to impermeable surfaces or managed turf, stormwater moves across them, carrying pollutants such as sediment and nutrients to vulnerable streams and rivers. Stormdrains 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 stormwater runoff from existing impervious surfaces is a priority. VCAP is an opportunity to help you do your part to improve water quality.

Do you have a conservation project you have been putting off? FY 2022 sign-ups for VCAP are ongoing. Call Norman Pitt at 757-302-4437 to make an appointment. Additional information can be also be found by following the links on our website (esswcd.org).

Environmental Education Programs

Conservation Poster Contest

The theme for 2020 was “Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities.”



2-3 First Place
Ava Toth
Chincoteague Elementary



7- 9 First Place
Nicholle Perkins
Broadwater Academy



K-1 First Place
Bailey Sivka
Chincoteague Elementary



4-6 First Place
Sophie Tayloe
Cape Charles Christian



10 –12
Annika Fread
Nandua High School

Billie Fitzgerald Memorial Spring Grants

In the spring of 2021, the District's Endowment Committee awarded \$4,541.17 in grants to five different organizations. The ESVA Master Gardener Association received funds to help with the installation of a song bird garden and wildlife meadow. Kiptopeke Elementary School received supplies to start an Adopt A Plant Program. Northampton Middle School received funds for an Outdoor Classroom Greenspace. New Roots Youth Garden received funds to for Pollinator Restoration and Enhancement. Kiptopeke State Park received funding for a soils display at their visitor center along with other enhancements.

Classroom Programs:

Classroom programming continued to be a challenge because of COVID 19. However, the Education Director adapted many of our regular lessons so that they could be done virtually through Zoom and check-out boxes. Monarch caterpillars and supplies were provided to classrooms at Kiptopeke, Occohannock, and Accawmacke Elementary Schools so that students could study the life cycle of butterflies. Additional programs included webquests on minerals that we need from the soil, plastic pollution, and soils.

Ag Camp at the Barrier Islands Center

New this year was Ag Camp at the BIC. In conjunction with the Northampton County Extension, 11 children spent two days learning about agriculture. Over the two days, children interacted with a sheep, goats, and a cow. They also dyed and spun wool, investigated seeds, saw a cow being milked, made bread, butter, and ice cream, among other activities. Look for this camp in the BIC summer newsletter!

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.