

Shore Conservor

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Spring 2005

Eastern Shore SWCD Directors

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Edwin R. Long
Leslie Drewer
Jim Belote
Rikkei Sterrett
Jeb Wilson

District Personnel

Jane Corson-Lassiter,
District Mgr. 787-0918, Ext 126
jane.lassiter@va.nacdn.net

Tamsey Ellis,
Conservation Ed. Planner, Ext 129
tamsey.ellis@va.nacdn.net

Carmie S. Duer,
Admin. Secretary/Treas., Ext 101
carmie.duer@va.nacdn.net

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Acomack Service Center
22545 Center Parkway
Accomac, VA 23301-1330
(757) 787-0918
Robert Williams,
District Conservationist

Resource Conservation and Development

Acomack Service Center
22545 Center Parkway
Accomac, VA 23301-1330
(757) 787-2786
Marian Huber,
RC&D Coordinator

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Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District
22545 Center Parkway, Accomac, VA 23301-1330

Eastern Shore Farmer recognized by the Virginia General Assembly

William and Melinda Thornton were presented with one of ten state-level conservation awards at a regional meeting of soil and water conservation districts on March 9, 2005, at Suffolk's Tidewater Research Station. The Thorntons' farm near Hallwood was the Bay Friendly Farm Award winner for the Coastal watershed.

Following the announcement of Virginia's 2005 Clean Water Farm and Bay Friendly Farm Award recipients, the General Assembly passed a resolution commending the winners. Given by Virginia's Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the awards recognize agricultural enterprises that take significant steps to improve water quality by minimizing erosion and managing crop nutrients.

At the March 9 meeting, DCR's Soil and Water Conservation director, Jack Frye, presented the Thorntons with a framed copy of the resolution and a sign for their farm. Frye praised the couple for fully implementing a conservation plan, which was formulated with input from DCR's Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance unit.

The Thorntons' farm includes fields of corn, wheat and soybeans as well as an extensive poultry operation. A no-till wheat/soybean rotation helps to reduce erosion, and buffer vegetation along crop fields and streams help filter runoff.

The Thorntons use the poultry litter generated on the farm as a source of fertil-

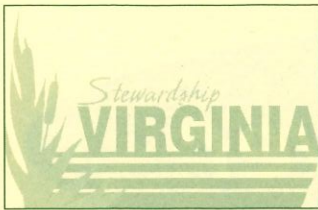
izer, mechanically clearing the animal waste and storing it in a modern, sanitary facility. This is doubly beneficial, as it supplies nitrogen and phosphorus to growing plants while keeping those chemicals from entering streams by way of runoff. The same nutrients that benefit crops can harm Chesapeake Bay fish and shellfish when present in excessive amounts.

Similarly, the Thornton's conservation plan provides them with established thresholds for pesticide use. When insects or weeds are identified on the farm, the guidelines specify the minimum amount of pesticide necessary to eradicate them. This keeps the chemicals from entering rainwater runoff and prevents pests from developing immunity.

Continued on page 2



DCR's Soil and Water Conservation director, Jack Frye, pictured with Bill and Melinda Thornton as they proudly show their awards.



**April 1—May 31, 2005
Sept. 1—Oct. 31, 2005**

**Interested?
Then get involved!**

*Information and
registration forms are
available online at
www.dcr.virginia.gov/stewardship*

2005 Poster Contest Winners

"Celebrate Conservation"

Grades K-1

1. Lindsay Kennedy, Kiptopeke
2. Victoria Saldana, Kiptopeke
3. Austin Brady, Kiptopeke
4. Hannah Eder, Kiptopeke

Grades 2-3

1. Jacob Green, Arts Enter
2. Lee Tyndall, Arts Enter
3. Michael Thomas, Kiptopeke
4. Jessica Stanfield, Chincoteague

Grades 4-6

1. Rachel Seaman, Broadwater
2. Rachel Thornton, Broadwater
3. Iovana Perez-Montez, Kiptopeke
4. Carlee Vincent, Broadwater

Grades 7-9

1. Justin Bagwell, Nandua Middle
2. Clelia Sheppard, North. Middle
3. Linsay Fowler, Broadwater
4. Ashlyn Phillips, Broadwater

Grades 10-12

1. James West, North. High
2. Kerrie Iseman, Central Baptist
3. Andrew Krunn, Central Baptist
4. Geoffrey Bell, Central Baptist

Eastern Shore farmer recognized by the Virginia General Assembly

(continued from page 1)

As one of the commonwealth's ten river basin honorees, the Thornton's farm represents the top tier of the local Clean Water Farm and Bay Friendly Farm Award winners named in its 19th year.

Experts from DCR, Soil and Water Conservation Districts and other agricultural organizations choose the basin winners for outstanding farm management and conservation techniques that directly improve water quality. These efforts affect water in

their communities and in others downstream. The Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District nominated the Thornton's farm for the award.

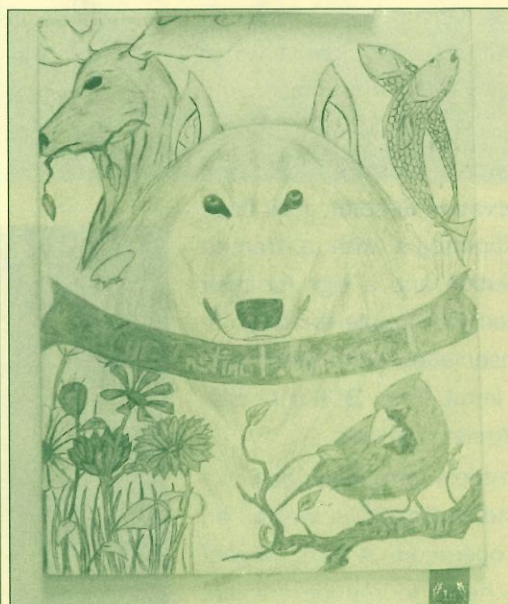
For information about the Clean Water Farm/ Bay Friendly Farm Awards Program, nutrient management or other conservation programs, contact DCR at (804) 786-2064 or visit the website at www.dcr.state.va.us.

Local Students win awards in 2005 Conservation Poster Contest

Congratulations to the winners in the District's 2005 contest. Over 90 students submitted entries. Their artwork was judged on creativity, artistic merit, and presentation of this year's theme, "Celebrate Conservation." Winners received ribbons and cash awards during the April 23 Shore-wide Science Fair at the

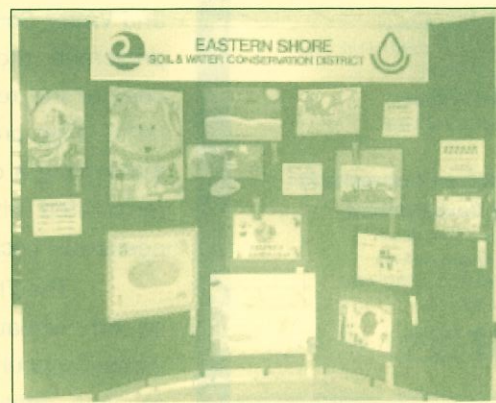
Eastern Shore Community College.

During the month of May, the winning posters will be on display at the Eastern Shore Public Library in Accomac. Then, first place posters will be forwarded to a state level competition sponsored by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.



1st place winning poster by 8th grade student, Justin Bagwell of Nandua Middle School

Celebrate Conservation!



Winning posters displayed at the Shore-wide Science Fair at Eastern Shore Community College in Melfa

Eastern Shore teachers design outdoor classrooms

On Saturday, February 12, 2005 a workshop on how to develop a schoolyard native wildlife habitat was held at Eastern Shore Community College. This project was a partnership between the District, Accomack 4-H Extension office, and the Eastern Shore Master Gardeners.

The purpose of developing a native schoolyard habitat is two-fold. First it provides an outdoor classroom where students can master part of the mandated school curriculum through hands-on activities. Instead of looking at pictures or reading about the subject matter, students can actively participate in learning activities. Research indicates that when students participate in

hands-on activities, they retain the information for a longer period of time. The second purpose of this program is to create schoolyard habitats to help preserve local native wildlife.

Teams consisting of faculty members from ten schools in Accomack and Northampton Counties attended. Each team was assigned a professional native landscape designer and a Master Gardener.

Each team was given an aerial photograph (26" x 34") of their proposed schoolyard site, along with another aerial photograph of the entire school grounds. By using these photographs, each team was able to design their habitat to scale.

Special thanks extend to the native habitat designers who gave freely of their time, Richard Ayres, Matt Corman, Joe Scalf, Dot Field, Steve Mallette, Carol Heiser, Carolyn Kolstad, and Karen Kelly Mullen. Special thanks also extends to the following Master Gardeners for their enthusiasm and dedication: Irvan Ailes, Ann Dassler, Kitty Croke, Tim Croke, Jack Humphreys, Sara Goffigan, Eileen Cobb, Sharon McQuaid and Patsy Hand.

The development and coordination of the workshop was done by Tamsey Ellis, Conservation Education Planner for ESSWCD and Peggy Kellam, 4H Extension Agent for Accomack County.



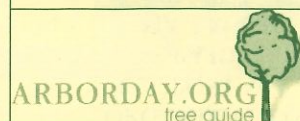
Eastern Shore SWCD celebrates Arbor Day on the Shore

On Saturday, April 23, the Eastern Shore SWCD recognized Arbor Day by giving away over three hundred native trees at the Shore-wide Science Fair held at the Eastern Shore Community College.

The tree give-away was in honor of both Earth Day (April 22) and Arbor Day (April 29). Six species were offered which included Black Walnut (pictured above), Red Oak, Black Oak, Willow Oak, Sycamore, and Button Bush. These seedlings were donated by the Department of Forestry.

Also in celebration of Arbor Day, schools participating in the Schoolyard Native Wildlife Habitat Workshop will receive funds from the District to aid in purchasing materials for their outdoor classroom sites.

School team working with Carol Heiser, Habitat Education Coordinator for Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, on scale design for their school's habitat.



ENVIROTHON

On February 16, 2005, over forty local high school students gathered for a day of hands-on learning about wildlife, forestry, soils, and aquatics. On March 15, student teams reconvened to test their knowledge and present a 10-minute oral program to a panel of judges. Competition was close and all eight teams did a great job! With final scoring, Central Baptist Academy ranked first in the overall competition, with Nandua following in second place and Broadwater Academy placing third.



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From the local event, Central Baptist Academy advanced to regionals on April 21 which was held at Virginia Tech Agricultural and Research Center in Painter. They competed against other teams from Area VI and won first-place overall. Central Baptist Academy will now be going to the State Competition on May 15-16 to compete against other teams across Virginia. Good Luck Central Baptist!

1st Place Overall: Central Baptist Academy
2nd Place Overall: Nandua High School
3rd Place Overall: Broadwater Academy

1st Place Aquatics, Forestry : Central Baptist Academy
1st Place Wildlife, Soils: Arcadia High School
1st Place Resource Issue: Broadwater Academy
1st Place Oral Presentation: Nandua High School



District has good response to early sign-up for 2005-06 VA BMP Cost-Share. Program is open through May 31

Farmers may now apply with the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District for cost-share assistance and/or tax credits under state programs for the coming year. A complete list of BMP's (Best Management Practices) that are eligible for assistance can be obtained in the District office and includes cover cropping, nutrient management planning, and converting to continuous no-till.

Priority is given to land with the highest potential

for water quality improvements, first-time participants, and selected watersheds. Other program requirements and restrictions vary per practice.

Those interested in cost-share are encouraged to apply now through May 31. Further details and program requirements are available by calling the District at (757) 787-0918, ext. 126. To sign-up for any of the state's cost-share programs, farmers will need to stop by the ESSWCD office in Accomac at the USDA Service Center.

Eastern Shore Watershed Festival

4th Annual



Members of the Eastern Shore Environmental Education Council, including ESSWCD, Eastern Shore RC&D, YMCA Camp Silver Beach, and The Nature Conservancy, coordinated this exciting program for our Shore community. Begun in 2002, the annual event provides a day filled with family-friendly activities and informative displays by agencies and organizations telling their stories of our exceptional watersheds. Attendance has steadily grown.

Saturday, May 14 at YMCA Camp Silver Beach, planners hosted over 35 exhibitors and nearly 400 participants. Popular activities included kayaking, touch tanks, fish printing, face painting, museum displays, watershed maps, and water-themed music. The first commemorative festival poster by Eastern Shore artist, Danny Doughty, was distributed as 5"x6" frame-ready prints, and one lucky festival goer went home with the original painting from the silent auction.

Funding for the 2005 Watershed Festival was provided through a grant to ESSWCD from the Department of Conservation and Recreation and with additional funds from ESSWCD, Eastern Shore RC&D and YMCA Camp Silver Beach.

The public is welcome to attend Eastern Shore SWCD board meetings which are held on the 2nd Wednesday each month at the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce building in Melfa at 5:00 p.m. Please call to confirm time.



RC&D in action

Conservation and management of natural resources will be a major focus of the Eastern Shore Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) over the next five years. As they finalized their strategic plan in late March 2005, Council members agreed they want to help improve local decision making. To do that, they committed to hosting an Eastern Shore Watershed Network Roundtable with a focus on technical issues relating to water quality. The Roundtable would bring a number of different specialists and scientists together with citizens and decision makers to share information and promote collaborative projects.

RC&D also intends to partner with the Virginia Department of Forestry and the Eastern Shore SWCD to create an issue of

Shore Outdoors which highlights the best practices for managing forests for habitat, water quality and timber. The Council will also take on several projects that will benefit and involve both youth and seniors, and is eager to partner with the Eastern Shore SWCD in developing schoolyard habitat. They would also like to provide assistance to communities and agencies that request facilitation or grant writing services to solve a local problem.

Although Council members are not certain what the outcome of the 2006 Federal budget process will be, they were reassured by strong support from their local sponsors, including the District, and look forward to implementing their strategic plan.

Correction:

Volume 20, Issue 2, Winter 2005

- Page 1, paragraph 2, under State BMP Cost share Program article, should read "...over \$102,500.00 earmarked for 2004 fall planting of cover crops."
- Page 3, paragraph 1, under same continued article, should read "Another \$60,000 has been allocated to farmers who are placing land under a five-year continuous no-till practice."

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

The Shore Conserver is published quarterly by the Eastern SWCD to provide information to land users. Please contact the district office to be added to the mailing list.

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Eastern Shore Soil & Water
Conservation District
22545 Center Parkway
Accomac, VA 23301-1330
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