



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

January 2026

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Pictured above (left to right): Matt Lohr, Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry; Tommy Davis; and Stefanie Tailon, Secretary of Natural and History Resources.

2025 Clean Water Farm And Grand Coastal Basin Award Winner

Tommy Davis was raised on his family's farm near New Church in Accomack County, VA. He is the son of Tom Davis and a 5th generation farmer. Like his father, Tommy graduated from Broadwater Academy. He then attended James Madison University and graduated in 2006 with a major in marketing.

Tommy lives on the same farm that was purchased by his great Grandfather during the closing years of the Great Depression. Money was difficult to come by, so extra funds needed for the purchase were acquired through the sale of timber from the farmland.

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www.facebook.com/ESSWCD

Award Winners

2025 Award Winner (cont.)

Tommy grew up living the farm life. As a boy, he loved operating the farm equipment and helping with the chores, including feeding the cows. He also spent many hours at the family's potato grader known as Davis Farms Triple D potatoes. In the 1990's, the Davis's decided to pursue another business and stopped farming. In 2018, Tommy & Tom decided to begin farming again and even expanded the farming operation from 700 to 1,500 acres.

The Davis's are grain farmers now & grow wheat, soybeans and corn. They practice no-till farming exclusively with minimal turbo till use. A special chopper header has been added to the operation to maximize residue cover on the fields.

Cover crops of vetch, Barley & winter wheat are planted to reduce erosion and nitrogen leaching as well as provide a good residue base for the next field crop. Besides planting cover crops, the Davis's maintain 25ft buffers around field edges with streams or sensitive areas. Clover is planted to help reduce crop loss and to support local wildlife. The Davis's maintain a current nutrient management plan with the District. They participate in the cover crop program under the Whole Farm Approach.

Tommy enjoys spending his free time with his wife Meredith, daughter Audrey and sons Ty, Colby and Willie. He also enjoys coaching basketball at Holly Grove Christian School and traveling the country. Tommy's resilience in returning to farming and rebuilding a successful farming operation, along with his use of modern farming techniques reflects well on his character and family. His strong Faith and family core guided him to success and kept him focused.

The VA Department of Conservation and Recreation sponsors the Clean Water Farm Award to recognize farmers who are doing their part to preserve water quality. The District nominated Tommy for this State award. He received a certificate signed by the governor and a Clean Water Farm Award sign to display at his farm. The District also awarded him with a plaque.

From the pool of VA Clean Water Farm Award recipients, up to 10 grand winners representing VA's major river basins are selected each year. The District nominated Tommy for the Grand Coastal Basin Award as he demonstrates exceptional conservation on the land and in managing his operation. He was selected and awarded the Grand Coastal Bain Award during the VA Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting in Williamsburg. He received a signed certificate, a Grand Coastal Basin Award sign to display and will receive a framed joint-resolution signed by the VA General Assembly.



Award Winners

2025 Conservation Educator of the Year Dr. Richard Snyder, VIMS - Wachapreague



Julie Head, Education Director; Dr. Richard Snyder, VIMS; and Nick Thomas, ESSWCD Chair

This year the Conservation Educator Award is presented to Dr. Richard Snyder, the Director of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science's Eastern Shore Laboratory. As the Director of VIMS Eastern Shore Laboratory, he is responsible for ensuring safe and effective access for visiting students and faculty to the spectacular coastal habitats of the Eastern Shore of Virginia and providing laboratory facilities for classroom and experimental work capitalizing on that access.

Mr. Snyder has been instrumental in facilitating a number of events for ESSWCD. He has been helpful for a number of years. In 2020, VIMS ESL hosted the tour for the Area VI Region Spring Meeting. In 2024, the Northampton 4-H Agent and I decided to bring back the Eastern Shore Regional Science Fair. When we were having a problem finding a place to host the science fair, Dr. Snyder and VIMS quickly stepped forward to offer their facilities. When approached about hosting the Area VI Regional Envirothon in 2024, they happily agreed even though it was only three days before the regional science fair.

For the past two years, ESSWCD has partnered with VIMS to offer Seaside Explorers, a day camp focused on marine ecology. This camp has been so well received that we will be doing two of them in the summer of 2025.

All of these events required not only letting us use the space, but set-up, clean-up, and other support. In addition, he has volunteered to judge the science fair and wants to continue in that role when he retires. Dr. Snyder and his staff have gone above and beyond to help to make science available to the Eastern Shore and its' students.

Congratulations Dr. Snyder!

Award Winners

Chaffin Soil and Water Conservation District Employee of the Year

Each year at the Annual Meeting of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Districts, three employees from across the Commonwealth are recognized for exemplary contributions toward meeting the goals of the individual Conservation Districts. Julie Head, Education Director, was selected as one of the three Employee of the Year recipients at the Annual Meeting in December 2025.

Employed with the district since 2019, Julie has proven herself a valuable asset during her tenure at the District. Julie conducts educational programs for pre-K through adult in both Accomack and Northampton Counties. Programs cover public school, private school, and homeschool groups. She is also present at many public events with conservation information or the District's Soils trailer. She focuses on hands-on learning to help bring science, agriculture, and science to life. She believes that active learning helps to keep students engaged and interested.

Julie has continued to expand her educational skills while at ESSWCD. She has completed training to be a Project Learning Tree, Project WET, and Project Wild Facilitator. This means that she is able to train others to use these programs in an official capacity. Because of her passion for Agriculture, she also serves as an Agriculture In The Classroom Ambassador program through the Virginia Farm Bureau.

Julie, along with several co-collaborators, have been instrumental in bringing new summer camps to benefit Eastern Shore Students. Adventures in Nature, Ag Camp, Junior Ag Camp, and Seaside Explorers are held each summer at minimal cost to make sure the programs are accessible to Eastern Shore Students. Each of the camps has a separate focus or age-range, but the goal is fun, hands-on learning with the "wow" factor.

Due to Julie's efforts, ESSWCD and Northampton 4-H, have been instrumental in bringing back the Eastern Shore Regional Science Fair. The Regional Science Fair had not been held in several years, in part due to COVID. This is a chance for local students to design and implement a science experiment and gain hands-on experience.

Julie and her husband, David, have 4 married children, 2 grandchildren, and two more on the way. Her love for education, agriculture, and science blends seamlessly into her personal life, as she instills in her children and grandchildren the values of stewardship, curiosity, and kindness. Through her actions, she fosters an environment where learning is celebrated and family connections are treasured, further enriching the legacy she builds both within her household and throughout the Eastern Shore community.

Congratulations and thank you for all of your hard work.!

Nick Thomas, ESSWCD Chair and Julie Head, Education Director



Award Winners

NRCS Conservationist of the Year

Also at the VASWCD Annual Meeting in Williamsburg, Jenny Templeton, District Conservationist of the Accomac Service Center, was named as the NRCS Conservationist of the Year in Virginia. The Eastern Shore has a diverse landscape of producers with diverse land management goals. Jenny is extremely involved in the Eastern Shore community and has nurtured a strong relationship with numerous partners, agencies, diverse landowners, and nonprofits. She takes all opportunities to present to stakeholders and the public about NRCS and their programs, whether at conferences, the state fair, individually, or in written articles.

The Accomac Service Center was the first field office in Virginia to incorporate the Working Lands for Wildlife's American Black duck Program, in conjunction with Ducks Unlimited. The program started in 2017 and has become increasingly popular on the Eastern Shore. Jenny works extensively with DU to provide assistance, conservation planning, contract management, design and construction check-outs, and landowner and contractor relationships.

Jenny maintains continuing education credits for both DCR's Nutrient Management Planner certification and NRCS Certified Planner certification. She is currently working on becoming a Master Certified Planner. Jenny has also taken the initiative to earn her Ecological Sciences Job Approval Authority in the Soil Carbon Amendment, Wetland Restoration, and Wetland Creation Practices.

Jenny is active in a number of professional personal activities. She is on the Executive Board of the VA Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society. She is also a member of Quail forever and Ducks Unlimited. She was recently nominated to be on the advisory board of the Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust. She also volunteers with organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to assist in restoring shorelines and learning about the process and implementation.

Congratulations Jenny!

L to R: Nick Thomas, ESSWCD Chair; Carmie Ross, District Manager; Julie Head, Education Director; Dr. Edwin Martinez, NRCS State Conservationist; Ben Young, Conservation Specialist; Jenny Templeton, NRCS District Conservationist (Accomac Service Center); Lucy Earl, Conservation Specialist; and Leeann Van Nort, NRCS State Assistant Conservationist



Poster Contest Winners

Home Is Where The Habitat Is

2nd & 3rd Grade



1st Place - Dixon Johnson
Cape Charles Christian School



2nd Place - Mattix Schmidt
Cape Charles Christian School



3rd Place - Braylon Evans
Cape Charles Christian School

4th and 5th Grade



1st Place - Birdsong McCormack
Cape Charles Christian School



2nd Place - Anson Sterrett
Cape Charles Christian School



3rd Place - Winston Ramah
Cape Charles Christian School

Poster Contest Winners

Home Is Where The Habitat Is

7th - 9th Grade



1st Place
Grace Papazian
Cape Charles Christian School

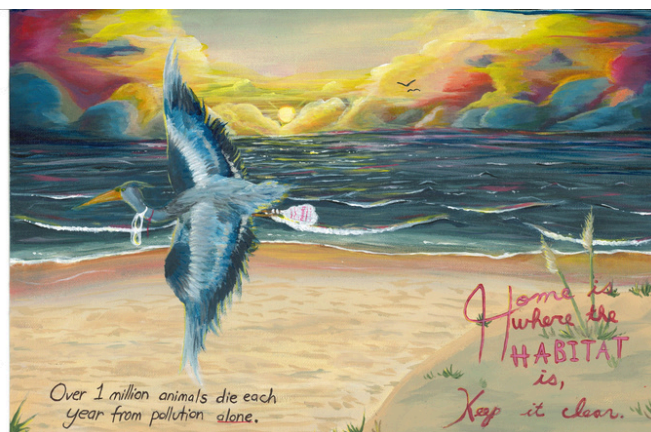


2nd Place
Lily Keltner
Nandua High School



3rd Place
Braylon Evans
Cape Charles Christian School

10th - 12th Grade

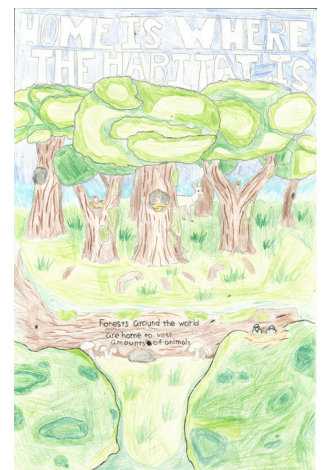


1st Place
Tricity Bell
Nandua High School



2nd Place
Erin Brown
Nandua High School

3rd Place
Cian Parks
Nandua High School



Attention Accomack Producers

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2026

SOUTHERN LANDFILL IN MELFA
16640 HOLLIES CHURCH RD, MELFA, VA 23410

FARM TIRE RECYCLING DAY

- Tickets are available to recycle up to 3 tons of tires for FREE for Accomack County producers.
- Tires are limited to tractor, large truck, and implement tires and tires must not have rims.
- All tires weighing in excess of the free ticket weight will be the responsibility of the producer at a rate of \$280/ton.

*Tickets
Required*

For More Information
757-787-4208 or
757-302-4431



TICKETS ONLY AVAILABLE AT:

- *Accomack County Farm Bureau Office*
(23157 Front St., Accomac)
- *Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District* (22545 Center Pkwy, Accomac)

Sponsored by Accomack County Farm Bureau & Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District

Upcoming Programs

Calling all Envirothon Teams!



Eastern Shore Envirothon Training Day
Tuesday, February 17, 2026
Eastern Shore AREC

Eastern Shore Envirothon Competition Day
Tuesday, March 17, 2026
Eastern Shore AREC

The Eastern Shore Envirothon Competition is open to teams of 5 -7 students. The local competition includes students in middle and high school. Groups may be composed of students in public, private, homeschool, and other youth groups. Please contact Julie Head at julie.head@esswcd.org for more information

Mommy or Daddy and Me Toddler Classes

Ages 2 - 5 at the Barrier Islands Center

Come spend some time with a little one in your life while learning about the world around us.

January 24, 2026

- come learn about the water cycle and colors

February 21, 2026

- farm animals and friends

March 21, 2026

- trees and sensory exploration



\$10 a class or \$25 for all three. Registration at barrierislandscenter.com



Arbor Day

Date: April 25, 2026
Location: ANEC

ESSWCD will be giving away native plant plugs.

Come learn more about native plants and everything they have to offer our local ecosystem.

Eastern Shore Invasive Plant Highlight

The Vine that Won't Give Up Japanese Honeysuckle

Information from dcr.virginia.gov

Japanese honeysuckle is trailing or twining woody vine that can grow to more than 30 feet in length (or height) in sunlight. It occurs primarily in disturbed habitats such as roadsides, trails, fencerows, abandoned fields, and forest edges. It grows rapidly in optimal and low light conditions. In forests, Japanese honeysuckle vines spread both horizontally and vertically by climbing up tree trunks and/or by trailing over the forest floor and associated vegetation. Japanese honeysuckle is often evergreen, unlike our native species.

Dense, strangling growths of Japanese honeysuckle can impact desirable vegetation by decreasing light availability, depleting soil moisture and nutrients, or by toppling upright stems and trees by the sheer weight of accumulated vines. Negative effects of Japanese honeysuckle invasion include development of malformed trunks in trees, suppression of plant growth, inhibition of regeneration in woody and herbaceous plants, and alteration of habitats used by native wildlife.

Japanese honeysuckle spreads by both seed and by vegetative growth. Local growth generally occurs by long vegetative runners that develop roots where stem and leaf junctions (nodes) come in contact with moist soil. Underground stems (rhizomes) help to establish and spread the plant. Long distance dispersal is by birds and other wildlife that eat the seeds.

Control is difficult. Manual and mechanical can be used when for small patches and when vines are young. For anything else, chemical methods are probably necessary. Because it is often evergreen, winter may be an appropriate time for chemical applications.

For more information see the following links:

[Read this article](#) from DCR

[For more information about controlling](#) Japanese honeysuckle, please see the second page of this fact sheet.



Richard Gardner, UMES



Lucy Bradley

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.