



Shore Conserver

Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District

promoting locally led conservation

22545 Center Parkway • Accomac, VA 23301 • (757)787-0918 • www.esswcd.org

November 2019

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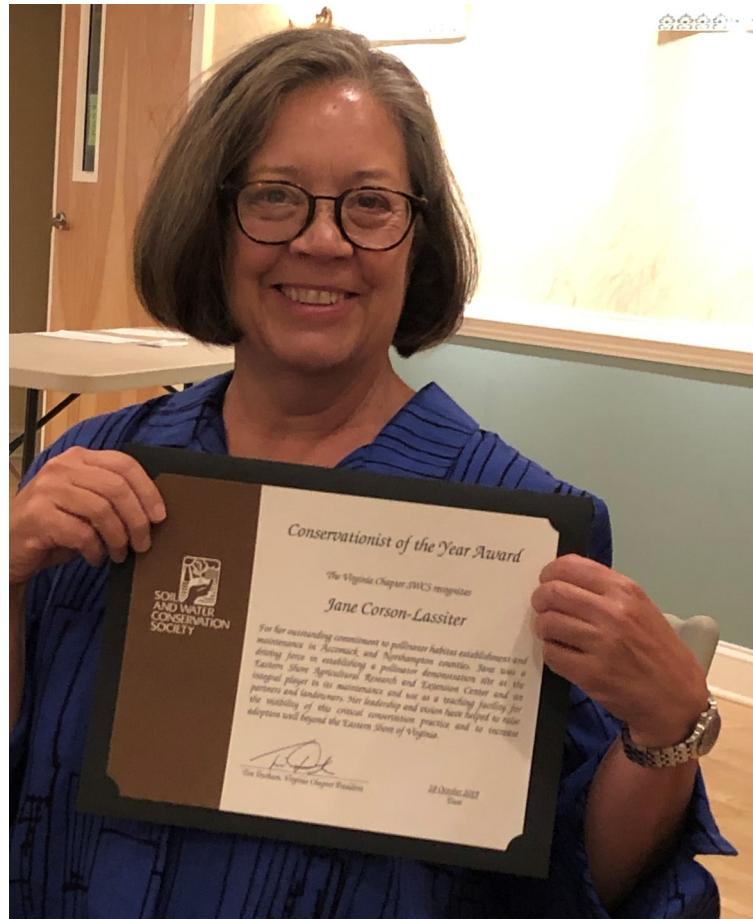
(757) 302-4432

Jenny Templeton

Soil Conservationist

Jane Lassiter Selected as Conservationist of the Year

The Virginia Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society named Jane Lassiter of the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service in Accomac, Virginia as the Conservationist of the Year at its annual meeting on October 28 in Charlottesville. Jane has been instrumental in promoting the establishment and management of pollinator habitat on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Jane gained an early understanding of the importance of the critical elements of the practice: clean firm seedbeds, precise seeding rates and equipment calibration, packed seedbeds after sowing seed, and weed control with mechanical and chemical strategies. She has done the necessary follow-up with landowners to ensure that stands were established and maintained properly. Jane also leads a partnership that established and manages demonstration plots at the Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center and conducts workshops at the Center. Other partners in the effort include the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District, the Cooperative Extension Service, and Virginia Tech. Her efforts ensure the recommendations made by the area private lands biologist result in good habitat.



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2019 Conservation Awards

Conservation Farmer

Jim Evans was named the 2019 Conservation Farmer. Jim grows primarily corn, soybeans, wheat and string beans on his 2,297 acre farm and farms another 1700 acres with partners. He maintains a current Nutrient Management Plan on all his acreage and annually participates in the cover crop program planting wheat and barley cover crops on his farmland. Jim uses minimal tillage practices (no-till) to reduce soil loss and improve soil health by maintaining the soil's organic matter and biological activity. He uses precision variable rate nitrogen application equipment, as well as low drift spray nozzles to more accurately apply nitrogen and chemicals to his croplands as well as reduce runoff. With conservation in mind, he planted two acres of pollinator habitat through the NRCS Conservation Stewardship program this year.



2019 Wildlife Conservationist

Ken Blair's love of agriculture began when he started working on a potato farm at the age of 12. Ken now raises poultry for Tyson and has steadily grown the operation, building three more chicken houses on 27



acres of land over the last 15 years. He first began working with NRCS to explore options for reducing emissions from his operation. He started with a granular litter treatment and expanded his conservation plan to include concrete heavy use area pads, a waste storage facility, and tree plantings to serve as a windbreak for odor control. Ken has recently planted about 12 acres of pollinator meadow in front of his farm, and is now raising bees. Blair has developed a good relationship with a nearby nursery that offers a bountiful menu of flowering plants and makes sure to schedule insecticide spraying at times when the bees are not as active.

2019 Clean Water Farm Award

The Clean Water Farm Award is a State award sponsored by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, given to Virginia farmers who implement nutrient management plans and are exemplary in their protection of the State's soil and water resources. This year's Clean Water Farm Award is presented to David Rew of Rew Farms Inc. Rew Farms, Inc. has evolved into a continuous no-till grain operation utilizing the latest advances in machinery and techniques. He now grows strictly small grain crops including primarily corn, wheat and soybeans on 3,500 acres. This reduces soil loss from fields while helping to maintain and promote the soil's organic matter and biological activity. Sacrificial 30-foot field wildlife borders of soybeans are planted yearly to provide food for the wildlife population and help protect his grain crops. David has planted five acres of pollinator habitat to attract local pollinating insects and to serve as an ecosystem for other wildlife including song birds. David strives to constantly improve his conservation practices and techniques while protecting the water resources around his farming operation.



2019 Conservation Awards

Conservation Educator Award



William Dyas, affectionately known as Ranger Bill to many local students, was selected because of the significant contributions he has made towards educating others about our natural resources and conservation practices. His outstanding commitment to educating and inspiring local youth has impacted hundreds of young people and exposed them to the outdoors. Bill spent several years as an interpretative park ranger at Kiptopeke State Park, has volunteered numerous hours at Kiptopeke Elementary School, and still leads Owl Prowls and other educational programs in Cape Charles.

Conservation Forester Award

Nickawampus Farm, Willis Eastern Shore, LLC is this year's winner of the Conservation Forestry award. Managed by Ben Willis, the family timberlands are managed for wildlife habitat enhancement and timber production. With the help of the Virginia Department of Forestry, Eastern Shore Area Office, an in-depth forest stewardship plan was recently written to help steer management activities towards those objectives. Ben has established wildlife food plots, shallow water impoundments, new forest stands, and early succession cover patches. Traditional forest management practices such as tree planting, timber harvesting, commercial thinning, pre-commercial thinning, and prescribed burning all benefit forest stand establishment and growth, and wildlife habitat. Game species that benefit from the use of traditional forest management practices across the landscape of the Shore are the bobwhite quail, eastern wild turkey, and the whitetail deer.



ESVA Ag Conference

Wednesday, February 5, 2020
Thursday February 6, 2020

Eastern Shore Community College Workforce Development Center
29300 Lankford Hwy, Melfa, VA 23410

2nd Annual Northampton Farm Field Day

On October 9, 2019, more than 150 3rd graders from Kiptopeke Elementary School, Cape Charles Christian School, Montessori School, and Occohannock Elementary School, attended the 2nd Annual Northampton Farm Field Day. Students converged at the Nassawaddox Sawmill to learn about agriculture on the Eastern Shore. This was a joint event put on by Northampton County office of Virginia Cooperative Extension, the Peninsula Tractor Organization, NRCS, and the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District. Students had a chance to take a trip underground in the District's Mobile Soils Classroom, learn about farm equipment, play machinery bingo, learn about the importance of pollinators, identify commodities grown on the Eastern Shore, learn how local foods are a part of healthy eating, and interact with some real farm animals.

October 9th was set aside as the day for the "Crunch Heard Round the Commonwealth." As part of a statewide celebration of Farm to School Week, all students and presenters took a bite out of a Virginia grown apple at 10:00 a.m. Farm to School Week promotes programs that connect students to local farmers and producers through the food they are consuming in schools.



Educational Outreach Programs

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge Celebration—October 12th
 Painting with soil from the different regions of Virginia.



Classroom Programs at Arcadia Middle School and Northampton High School



NHS
 Topographic
 Maps
 AMS
 Enviroscape



American Black Duck Habitat and Wetland Restoration Workshop

JOIN US to learn about the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Working Lands for Wildlife Program for the American Black Duck. Ducks Unlimited and NRCS have partnered to increase crucial wintering Black Duck habitat.

If you have marginal cropland, or constant standing water, and want to improve waterfowl habitat, plan to join us.



Workshop Details:
 November 12, 2019
 9:30am - 12:00pm

Virginia Tech, ESAREC
 33446 Research Dr.
 Painter, VA 23420

RSVP: Chase Colmorgen,
ccolmorgen@ducks.org
 or 302-245-3235 by
 November 8. Request special
 needs by 11/6/2019.



ESSWCD introduces new Life Underground Mobile Classroom

After more than a year in the making, the new Life Underground Mobile Classroom made its debut at the Accomack Farm Field Day. The 24 foot long trailer takes visitors on an underground field trip to see what is underneath our feet. One side of the trailer has the textbook soil horizons of top soil, subsoil, parent material, and bedrock. The other side shows the Eastern Shore soil horizons of top soil, subsoil, and parent material. Roots hang from the ceiling, creepy crawlies inhabit the top soil layer, and there are dens of a fox, a mole, and a woodchuck, and taxidermied animals that live in them. The front wall of the trailer shows the Columbia and Yorktown aquifers along with information on how a ground well works.

The mobile classroom has been busy with visits to both Accomack and Northampton Farm Field Days for 3rd graders, Outdoor Exploration Day, and the Northampton County Ag Fair. The mobile classroom is available for school and community visits along with appropriate environmental programming. Please contact our education director, Julie Head, at 757-302-4433 or julie.head@esswcd.org. Information on the soils education programs offered by ESSWCD, can also be found at our website, esswcd.org, under the Education & Outreach tab.

