



Shore Conserver

Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District

22545 Center Parkway, Accomac, VA 23301

ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024

DISTRICT STAFF

Carmie S. Ross, *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*
Helene Doughty
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
Brian Broadwater
Ursula Deitch
Richard F. Hall, III
Matt Hickman
Robbie Lewis
Edwin R. Long
Norman Pitt
Chip Turlington

Virginia Department of
Conservation and Recreation

Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board

The Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District's FY24 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.

2024 Agricultural Best Management Practices Incentive Program

WFA-CC Whole Farm Approach—Cover Crops

Accomack	Bayside 16,871 Ac / Seaside 13,642 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 12,515 Ac / Seaside 6,108 Ac

WFA-NM Whole Farm Approach—Nutrient Mgmt

Accomack	Bayside 21,319 Ac / Seaside 20,426 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 18,837 Ac / Seaside 9,675 Ac

Nutrient Management Planning (NM-1A)

Accomack	Bayside 18,630 Ac / Seaside 19,192 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 11,155 Ac / Seaside 7,816 Ac

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

Accomack	Bayside 75 Ac / Seaside 298 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 153 Ac

Harvestable Cover Crops (SL-8H)

Accomack	Bayside 830 Ac / Seaside 253 Ac
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Protective Cover for Specialty Cropland (SL-8)

Accomack	Bayside 572 Ac / Seaside 1,265 Ac
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Legume Cover Crop (WQ-4)

Accomack	Bayside 2,163 Ac / Seaside 2,005 Ac
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Continuous No-till 5-Yr Program (SL-15A)

Northampton	Bayside 163 Ac
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Long Term Continuous No-till Planting (CCI-CNT)

Accomack	Bayside 840 Ac / Seaside 823 Ac
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Split Application of Nitrogen on Corn (NM-3C)

Accomack	Bayside 1,819Ac / Seaside 338 Ac
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Split Application of Nitrogen on Small Grains (NM-4)

Accomack	Bayside 765 Ac / Seaside 53 Ac
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Total Amount Distributed to Eastern Shore Producers

\$4,616,076

In FY24, the District provided \$4,616,076.05 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.



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.

Do you have a conservation project you have been putting off? FY 2025 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).

Environmental Education Programs

In FY 2024, ESSWCD staff provided programming to approximately 6,500 participants.

Classroom Programs:

It was a very busy for classroom programming and outreach. The ESSWCD provides programming that pertains to agriculture, natural resources, plastic pollution, scientific investigation, and a number of others in addition to soil and water conservation. Staff is trained in specialty curriculums including Ag In The Classroom, Project Wild, Project Wet, and Project Learning Tree.

Scholarships

The district was pleased to be able offer three \$1000 scholarships in the spring of 2024 to three outstanding young people. The William H. Beasley Scholarship was awarded to Colin Hopper of Cape Charles. He is a sophomore at Virginia Tech majoring in agriculture. His plans are to return to the shore and join the family farm.

Two W. Foster Fletcher scholarships were awarded. Harlin Johnson graduated from Broadwater in May of 2024 and is attending Virginia Tech with a major in agribusiness. Luke Young also graduated from Broadwater in May of 2024 and is attending Virginia Tech as an ag major. He plans to return to the family farm.

Arbor Day

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 2024, the District's Endowment Committee awarded \$800 in grants to two different organizations. The ESVA Master Gardener Association received funds to continue improvements at the native

plant gardens at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. The Eastern Shore Master Naturalists received funding in support of their Basic Training Program. The funds will be used to help purchase the Flora of Virginia App for each trainee.



Summer Camps

Ag Camp at the Barrier Islands Center

The 4th Annual Ag Camp at the BIC was held for the third time in 2024. In conjunction with Northampton County Extension, 12 children spent two days learning about agriculture. Over the two days, children interacted with a sheep, goats, and a calf. This year's focus was on poultry. They also made bread, butter, and ice cream, among other activities.



Due to the popularity of Ag Camp, this year we offered the 2nd Annual Junior Ag Camp for younger students. They were able to participate in similar age appropriate experiences. Both camps sold out quickly. Look for these camps in the BIC spring 2025 newsletter!

Nature Adventure Camp

New this year was Nature Adventure Camp. It was a co-operative effort of the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge, 4-H and ESSWCD. Seven campers attended. Some of the topics included habitats, ecosystems, bird migration, tracks, and learning to use a compass.



Environmental Education Programs

Marine Biology Camp

Held in conjunction with the VIMS Eastern Shore Laboratory, this was the inaugural year. 14 students attended and experienced everything from exploring the marsh to seaweed art. They learned about the value of oyster reefs, played in the touch tank, had sea themed snacks, and played marine themed games.



Youth Conservation Camp

Youth Conservation Camp is a week long camp held at Virginia Tech and sponsored by VASWCD. This year ESSWCD sent two campers, Ian Lewis and Travis Ayers, both from Nandua High School. The Fred Holland Memorial Scholarship was awarded to both campers to cover the cost of camp.



Conservation Poster Contest

The theme for 2024 was "May the Forest Be With You Always."



K-1
First Place
Carsyn Ames
Pungoteague ES



2-3 Grade
First Place
Brooks Johnson
Broadwater



4-6 Grade,
First Place
Eva Doughty
Broadwater

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.