

# Shore Conserver

Spring / Summer 2004

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

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### What is the difference between "Dirt" and "Soil"?

"Dirt" can be dust on the floor and mud on your shoes;

"Soil" is the medium in which plants grow and animals live, a material without which people can't survive.

### Tributary Strategies aim at reducing nutrient and sediment pollution in the Bay

Virginia has been a partner in the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay since signing the first multi-state Chesapeake Bay Agreement in 1983. The state's involvement is continuing with the most recent Chesapeake 2000 Agreement, known as "C2K".

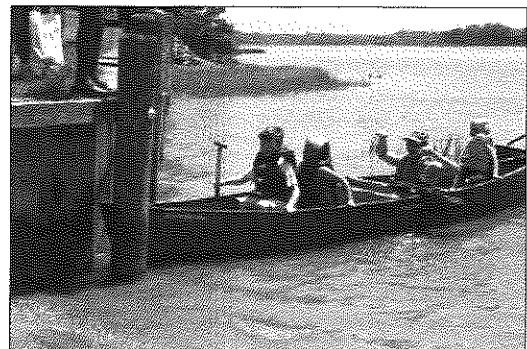
Central to the state's commitment to the Bay, have been efforts to reduce excess quantities of nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) and sediments in runoff from the land or from eroding shorelines. Plans related to nutrient and sediment pollution reduction, called *Tributary Strategies*, were developed beginning in 1992. Currently, the strategies are being revised to meet more stringent reduction goals to restore the Bay.

#### Why reduce nutrients and sediments?

Sediment is soil carried to our waterways through runoff. It clouds the water, making it difficult or impossible for aquatic plants to grow. It destroys aquatic habitats and silts in waterways.

Excess nutrients can cause algae blooms. When algae die, they sink to the bottom and decompose in a process that removes oxygen from the water. Fish and other aquatic organisms can't exist in water with low dissolved oxygen levels.

According to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), nitrogen pollution is the single largest problem facing the restoration of the Bay. A recent CBF analysis estimates that a staggering 459 million pounds



*Clean water in the Bay and her tributaries will bring enjoyment for future generations*

of nitrogen reached the Bay in 2003. "It was clear that the Chesapeake was in trouble this summer, as witnessed by the size of the 'dead zone' and harmful algae blooms, fish kills, and crab jubilees," said CBF President, William C. Baker.

Recently, leaders from recreational, commercial and charter fishing organizations in the Chesapeake Fishermen's Forum cited nitrogen pollution as the number one problem creating the Bay's expansive "dead zone" which was one of the worst on record. In addition, 100% of fishery stakeholders responding to a CBF survey, said their fishing, crabbing, or related activity was adversely affected by bad water quality.

#### Strategies to clean up the Bay concern us all.

Revised tributary strategies are being written specifically for the Eastern Shore's creeks and their watersheds. Local stakeholders, from farmers, seafood (continued on page 4)

## Spring/Summer 2004

**EASTER SHORE SWCD****DIRECTORS:**

Robin Rich-Coates, Chairman  
 Richard F. Hall, III, Vice-Chairman  
 Robert S. Bloxom, Jr.  
 James M. Belote, III  
 W. Rawlings Scott, Jr.  
 Fred Holland, II

**ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS:**

Edwin R. Long  
 Gretchen Arnold  
 John Chubb  
 Leslie Dreher  
 Bill Shockley  
 Rikki Sterrett  
 Jeb Wilson  
 Robbie Lewis

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 (757) 787-0918, ext. 101  
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**NATURAL RESOURCES  
 CONSERVATION SERVICE**

Accomack Service Center  
 22545 Center Parkway  
 Accomac, VA 23301-1330

Robert Williams,  
*District Conservationist*  
 (757) 787-0918, ext. 120

Marian Huber,  
*Resource Conservation and  
 Development Coordinator*  
 (757) 787-2786

The public is welcome to attend ESSWCD 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.

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

# District says goodbye...

## Best Wishes to Peggy Hutchinson, Melissa Kellam, Rick Dills, and Tim Holloway



**HUTCHINSON-** After more than sixteen years as Administrative Secretary, Peggy Hutchinson retired this January to spend more time with her family.

Through several staffing and board changes, Hutchinson brought consistency to all district operations. With genuine goodwill and a great sense of humor, she always kept things running smoothly.

From the family farm near Melfa, with over a 100 year history, she understood area farmers and their concerns. Hutchinson contributed to the success of the district on behalf of the Shore community.

**KELLAM-** In November, the district's Watershed Coordinator, Melissa Kellam joined the Northampton County Planning and Zoning Department.

While with ESSWCD, Kellam served as District Manager and Watershed Coordinator. Through her efforts, the district developed several grant-funded projects to monitor water quality in bayside creeks and develop watershed management plans. She was also instrumental in forming the Virginia Eastern Shore's Watersheds Network, bringing together agencies and individuals interested in protecting local water resources.

In addition, Kellam worked to develop the district's most recent 5-year stra-

tegic plan which has served as a model for soil and water districts across the state.

Kellam brought a strong background in planning and design to the district. A graduate from Penn State in Landscape Architecture, Kellam previously worked as a planner for Northampton County and the City of Charleston, SC.

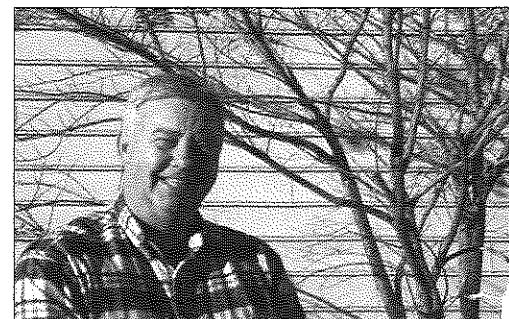
**HOLLOWAY-**

In March, Tim Holloway left his District Manager's role to also join the Northampton County Planning and Zoning Department. Working for the district in 1997 to 1999 and again from 2000 to 2004, he maintained a high level of professionalism, and offered a solid perspective in resource conservation from a background that includes a degree in Environmental Science from the University of Virginia and state certification in nutrient management planning, erosion and sediment control and pesticide application.

While with the district, Tim not only managed the VA Agricultural BMP programs, but developed new directions for the district by coordinating the Northampton County Conservation Corridor plan and documenting the first easements of the Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust.

**DILLS-**

With a degree in Forestry from New York State College of Forestry and Environmental Science, Syracuse, Rick



Dills began his 37-year career with the Natural Resource Conservation Service,

## And hello...

### Administrative Secretary for ESSWCD

In December, Carmie Savage Duer joined the district as the new Administrative Secretary. Duer has



an Associates Degree in Business Management with a specialization in Information Systems Technology from ESCC.

The Savage family farm is located near Quinby along the Matchipongo River. The family has farmed on the Eastern Shore for over four generations.

Duer said she looked forward to serving the district and helping promote conservation on the Eastern Shore.

**“Civilization itself rests upon the soil”**

—Thomas Jefferson

### Dills (continued from page 2)

formerly the Soil Conservation Service, in the finger lakes region of up-state New York.

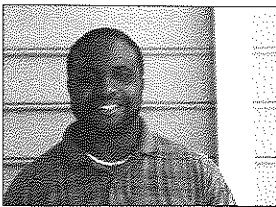
Dills spent an additional 18 years in Baltimore County, MD and then nine years on the Eastern Shore.

While District Conservationist in the Accomac USDA Service Center, Dills assisted local landowners with implementing a variety of federal programs for water quality improvement, land conservation, wetland restoration, and wildlife habitat improvement.

Of his work here, Dills said, “I’ve enjoyed working with the district staff and directors and with area farmers.” He also expressed hope

### NRCS District Conservationist

On June 28, Robert Williams started work as the new District Conservationist with the NRCS office



in Accomac. Williams began his career with NRCS, formerly the Soil

Conservation Service, in 1987 as a student intern from Alcorn State University in Lorman, Mississippi. After receiving a B.S. in Agronomy, he joined the Courtland, Virginia Field Office in 1981 as a soil conservationist. Since then, he has worked with many federal resource conservation programs administered by NRCS, including the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Reserve Program (WRP).

Williams brings a great deal of expertise to our farming community from his work in south-central Virginia.

that Eastern Shore residents will work to find ways to protect the area's rural character and unique natural resources.

### New Directors provide leadership on ESSWCD Board

Last November general elections brought two new members to the ESSWCD Board of Directors. In January, W. Rawlings Scott, Jr. and Fred Holland, II began serving their four-year terms.

Rawlings Scott represents Northampton County and resides with his wife, Gail, in Cape Charles. Rawlings grew up on the Eastern Shore, and has made his home here after graduating from North Carolina

### NRCS Resource Conservation and Development Council Coordinator



Marian Huber arrived as coordinator for the Eastern Shore Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) office on May 19th, 2003. She had worked on several Eastern Shore projects in her former jobs with the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Gateways program and Norfolk District Corps of Engineers. Her planning and grant-writing experience is proving useful on RC&D work in farmland protection, solid waste management, watertrails and community development. Her husband, John Blandin, is web development coordinator for Catholic High in Virginia Beach and glad to be living almost in the country.

Wesleyan majoring in Economics and Religion. He and Gail are self-employed in their crop insurance agency. Rawlings also farms 500 acres.

Fred Holland, representing Accomack County, works with the family operation, W. T. Holland and Sons, that farms over 3,000 acres near New Church. Fred also grew up on the Shore and returned after receiving a degree in Agriculture from Delaware Tech in Georgetown. Fred resides in New Church with his wife, Lori and their two children.

The district looks forward to the new ideas and enthusiasm these directors will be bringing to resource conservation over the next four years.

## Tributary Strategies

(continued from page 1)

industry representatives, research scientists, advocacy groups, landowners, and local government officials are being asked to assist in determining how to meet shorewide reduction goals.

Although water quality in our local creeks is better than in many Bay tributaries, goals for pollution reduction from Virginia's Eastern Shore have been set for a 2010 deadline. Currently, these include nitrogen reduction of nearly 1.5 million pounds per year; phosphorus by 100,000 pounds per year; and, sediment by 14,000 tons per year.

Primarily pollutants in our local waters comes from non-point sources. These pollutants cannot be traced to a specific origin or starting point such as a sewage treatment plant or factory. Instead, they are generally carried off the land by

stormwater runoff. Commonly used categories for nonpoint sources are agriculture, forestry, construction, land disposal and urban. Urban includes the pollution from highways and parking lots, lawncare, and littering. Essentially, what goes on the ground ends up in our water; and all of us can contribute to nonpoint pollution abatement.

The complexity of meeting reduction goals should not be underestimated. In the 1999 *Tributary Strategies*, plans focused on the installation of agricultural best management practices, such as cover crop, nutrient management, and no-till planting. Their implementation continues to gain significant nutrient reductions.

The 1999 plans also recognized the need to increase research and data collection on our local creeks to help develop baseline conditions and take a more accurate assessment of the pollution situation.

to meet the 2010 reduction goals and keep our waterways clean.

One research outcome has shown that sediments, more so than excess nutrients, may limit healthy growth of aquatic vegetation in our local waters. Both shoreline and upland erosion continue to load our streams, creeks, and ultimately, the Bay.

The 2004 *Strategies* will anticipate continuing with effective agricultural best management practices. However, the Strategy will also address the conversion of our rural landscape to more urban development and how to abate nutrient and sediment pollution from these sources.

The 2004 *Strategies* will also promote educating Shore citizens on the roles each of us can take in cleaning up the Bay and in maintaining our own, relatively good, water quality. This resource is one we should not take for granted.

## Update from the Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D)

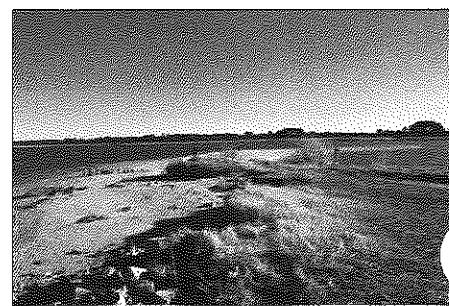
Resource Conservation and Development Council was proud to partner with Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District and other organizations in the Environmental Education Council to hold the 3rd annual Watershed Festival in May.

This past year the Council has also been seeking grants to accomplish several large projects. One grant application for a feasibility study to evaluate recycling or waste-to-fuel processing as options to landfilling agricultural plastic was recently turned down by USDA Rural Utilities. However, the Council still hopes there will be funding available through another Rural Development Program next year. In order to provide better

access to the water, the Council worked with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Town of Saxis, and a number of other agencies to apply for a grant from the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Gateways Program to develop maps and signs for areas in and around the Saxis Wildlife Management Area. Another joint application was submitted with the Town of Onancock for a Water Trail map that starts from a planned launch area adjacent to the main dock and will guide small boats exploring the creek all the way to the Chesapeake Bay.

Finally, the Council endorsed a project in 2003 to help Northham-

pton County's Purchase and Development Rights Committee develop a program with ranking criteria and ordinance language. The Board of Supervisors will be updated on progress at their July meeting and the committee hopes to finalize their plan soon.



Saxis Wildlife Management Area along the Chesapeake Bay.

## Tips on Keeping your lawn green... and the Chesapeake Bay clean

### The health of Virginia's waterways begins in your backyard.

There are 5 million lawns in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, each with the potential to send a potent dose of chemicals into local waters and the bay's fragile ecosystem. These lawns cover Virginia, five other states, and the District of Columbia.

Improper or excessive lawn fertilization is a significant source of nutrient runoff pollution, the most severe problem facing local waterways and the bay. Runoff that carries excess nitrogen increases the growth of algae and reduces water clarity, which stresses underwater plant and animal life.

Runoff from your property can enter one or more than 150 creeks, rivers and streams in Virginia that flow into the bay. The health of Virginia's waterways begins in your backyard.

You can have a great yard and, at the same time, help protect local water quality improve the Chesapeake Bay. Follow these simple steps, recommended by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and Virginia Cooperative Extension.

### Growing a greener lawn

Mow high with a sharp blade: 2 to 3 inches for cool-season grasses and 1-1 1/2 inches for warm-season grasses. Don't mow more than 1/3 of the blade at one time.

Don't mow or fertilize when grass is wet or under drought stress.

Leave clippings on your lawn—they reduce the need for nitrogen fertilizer as much as one-third. If clippings clump, spread them over the lawn with a rake or pick them up and make compost.

**HINT:** For a dark green lawn, select darker grass varieties—they require less nitrogen and water.

### Fertilizer guidelines

- Fertilize when grass is actively

growing and can take up the nutrients.

- Look for fertilizers with high levels of water insoluble nitrogen (WIN). It releases fertilizer slowly, and your lawn makes better use of it.
- Never apply more than 1 pound of soluble nitrogen per 1,000 square feet at one time.
- Remember, more is not better. Lawn fertilizer is measured in pounds per 1,000 square feet. To determine square feet, multiply the length by the width of the area to be fertilized.

### Does my lawn need fertilizer?

The best way to determine whether or not your lawn needs fertilizer is to test your soil. Information on soil testing is available through your local Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent. It's easy and inexpensive. The results you get back will include recommendations on amounts of plant nutrients and lime that would benefit your lawn. Soil tests do not determine nitrogen needs. Nitrogen should be applied based upon established requirements of grass species, seasons of growth, and intended use.

### What if I don't fertilize?

Your lawn will gradually thin and become more susceptible to weeds. Proper and timely fertilization can be good for both your lawn and the environment. There is less chance of nutrient and soil runoff to surface waters from a healthy stand of grass than from thin grass. Healthy lawns have less disease, insect and weed problems, which will reduce the need for pesticides.

### When to fertilize

This depends on the type of grass and the lawn's appearance—color, density, uniformity— you want. Summer is best for warm-season grasses, like Bermudagrass and zoysiagrass. September—November is best for cool-season grasses like

tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass and Perennial ryegrass. If you don't know what type grass you have, ask your Extension Agent, or a landscape professional. Never fertilize when grass is dormant (brown).

### Hints for selecting an appropriate fertilizer

All fertilizer packages must have three numbers on them (example: 10-10-10, 16-4-8). The numbers represent the percentages of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) - in that order—by weight. This is also referred to as the N-P-K ratio. So, 16-4-8 fertilizer is 16 percent nitrogen, 4 percent phosphorus and 8 percent potassium. While all three are necessary for proper growth, many soils have enough of certain nutrients. Your soil test will help you understand which nutrients your lawn lacks.

Remember, the best fertilizer for your lawn has a slowly available nitrogen source. "Slow-release" nitrogen sources are usually stated on the label, possibly as WIN or water-insoluble nitrogen, sulfur-coated urea, natural organic nitrogen, etc.

### Fertilizer application equipment and methods

Nitrogen fertilizer will generally "green-up" a lawn. Therefore it is important to apply the fertilizer uniformly. Use a drop-type or rotary spreader, and be sure to overlap adequately. Check the applicator setting often to be sure you're applying the fertilizer at the proper rate. Applying fertilizer by hand is not recommended.

These guidelines are basics for having a healthy, attractive lawn that protects water quality— both nearby and in the Chesapeake Bay. Your actions do make a difference.



Virginia  
Tech



CHESAPEAKE BAY  
PROGRAM

## EASTERN SHORE CELEBRATES ARBOR DAY

On April 3 tree seedlings donated by the Virginia Department of Forestry and the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District were given away to promote planting in our community. In addition to tree seedlings, a large selection of landscaping plants donated by the Eastern Shore Nurseryman's Association were given away as door prizes.

The plant give-away was held in two locations, the greenhouses at Nandua High School in Onley, and in the parking lot of Christ United Methodist Church on Chincoteague. Students from Nandua's Horticulture Program assisted in Onley as part of an FFA community service project. Students from Chincoteague Elementary School's Conservation Club assisted at the Methodist Church. They also presented a brief Arbor Day program.

The selection of free tree seedlings included flowering dogwood, loblolly pine, Norway spruce, willow oak, river birch, sawtooth oak, and red osier dogwood.



*Students from Chincoteague Elementary School's Conservation Club gave away free tree seedlings and nursery stock door prizes on Arbor Day.*

### District Education Notes:

- The Billie Fitzgerald Memorial Spring Grants program funded several local conservation education projects including boat trips for field study, bird house construction, wildlife mapping materials, supplies for a butterfly pavilion, and a water testing station for classroom.
- The Endowment Committee awarded the W. Foster Fletcher Conservation Scholarship / William H. Beasley, Sr., Memorial Scholarship to Lynn Walker who is currently attending James Madison University majoring in Biology.
- ESSWCD will sponsor Carey Loebs, of Central Baptist Academy, at the 2004 Youth Conservation Camp to be held at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg from July 11-17.
- For more information on these or other District education programs, call the ESSWCD office at 787-0918, ext. 101.

## EXCITING TIME AT THE 3rd ANNUAL WATERSHED FESTIVAL

This year's Watershed Festival was held at YMCA Camp Silver Beach on May 22. Families from across the Eastern Shore learned about the living resources in our watersheds through exhibits by agencies and organizations. There were hands-on activities for all ages, such as seine netting, kayaking, water quality testing, fish painting, touch tanks, face-painting, and more. Bob Zentz, minstrel and storyteller, entertained festival goers in the camp's amphitheater. The Virginia Marine Science Museum's mobile aquaria were a festival highlight.

The event was coordinated by the Eastern Shore Environmental Education (EE) Council, with funding from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund, NOAA, Shore Bank, and Royster Clark.

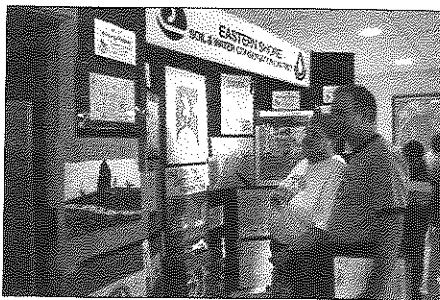


## Local Students win awards in Conservation Poster Contest

Congratulations to the winners in the District's 2004 contest. Over 180 students submitted entries. Their artwork was judged on creativity, artistic merit, and presentation of this year's theme, "The Living Soil." Winners received ribbons and cash awards during the April 24 Shorewide Science Fair at the Eastern Shore Community College.



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



### "THE LIVING SOIL" 2004 CONSERVATION POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

#### Grades K-1

1. Rachel Garbaldi, Chincoteague Elementary
2. Justin Scott, Kiptopeke Elementary
3. Leigh Tynall, Kiptopeke Elementary

#### Grades 2-3

1. Conrad Thomas, Chincoteague Elementary
2. Marisol Diaz, Kiptopeke Elementary
3. Donovan Williams, Kiptopeke Elementary

#### Grades 4-6

1. Alexis Hand, Broadwater Academy
2. Kristina Melles, Chincoteague Elementary
3. Kristin Collins, Broadwater Academy

#### Grades 7-9

1. Kayla McCain, Northampton Middle
2. Jordan Lassiter, Northampton Middle
3. Lindsay Fowler, Broadwater Academy
4. Lindsay Wilcox, Broadwater Academy

#### Grades 10-12

1. Maurice Pitt, Northampton High
2. Rachel Turner, Broadwater Academy
3. Rayna Helms, Central Baptist Academy
4. Sara Thornton, Broadwater Academy

## Sign-up for 2004-05 VA BMP Cost-Share Programs begins July

Farmers may now apply with the district for cost-share assistance and /or tax credits under state programs for the coming year. A complete list of best management practices can be obtained in the district office, and include cover crop, nutrient management planning, side dress application of nitrogen on corn, and building animal waste control facilities among others.

Priority is given to land with the highest potential for water quality improvements, first-time participants, and selected watersheds. Other program requirements and restrictions apply.

Those interested in cost-share for cover crop are encouraged

to apply by a September 1 deadline. Research has shown that planting immediately following harvest is more effective in taking up unused crop nutrients remaining in the soil. Cover crops also help control soil erosion and protect water quality. Although earlier is better, for small grain cover behind vegetables, seeding must be established by November 30. For legume cover, establish date is October 15.

**NOTE:** Sign-up is still underway for current cost-share funding for these federal programs administered under NRCS:

- WHIP- Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program
- CREP- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (both bayside and seaside)
- WRP- Wetland Reserve Program



### Calendar of Events

#### August 12 .....2004 Virginia Ag Expo

Held for the first time on the Eastern Shore at Woodlands Farm located on Seaside Road between Exmore and Nassawadox. Mark your calendar for the largest agricultural field day held in the State of Virginia. Contact Extension Agents Jim Belote (787-1361) or Bill Shockley (442-0731) for tickets or information.

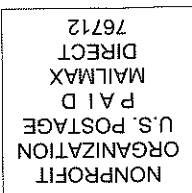
#### August 18.....Pesticide Disposal Program

Northampton and Accomack Counties will be conducting an Agricultural Chemical Cleanup. Any unwanted pesticides will be collected at Shore Fertilizer, Belle Haven from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Contact Extension Agents Jim Belote (787-1361) or Bill Shockley (442-0731) for more information.

#### September 1...Deadline for Cover Crop

**Cost-Share Sign-up !** Call the district office at 787-0918, ext 126 for more information.

Address Service Requested



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Eastern Shore Soil and Water  
Conservation District  
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Shore Conserver