



Shore Conserver

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

ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023

DISTRICT STAFF

Carmie M. Savage, *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*
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 FY23 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.

2023 Agricultural Best Management Practices Incentive Program

WFA-CC Whole Farm Approach—Cover Crops

Accomack	Bayside 12,087 Ac/ Seaside 12,078 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 10,195 Ac/ Seaside 5,669 Ac

WFA-NM Whole Farm Approach—Nutrient Mgmt

Accomack	Bayside 19,458 Ac/ Seaside 19236 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 18,123 Ac/ Seaside 9,846 Ac

Nutrient Management Planning (NM-1A)

Accomack	Bayside 15,462 Ac / Seaside 17,837 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 11,685 Ac / Seaside 8,406 Ac

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

Accomack	Bayside 450 Ac / Seaside 1,635 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 85 Ac / Seaside 93 Ac

Harvestable Cover Crops (SL-8H)

Accomack	Bayside 690 Ac / Seaside 503 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 146 Ac / Seaside 243 Ac

Protective Cover for Specialty Cropland (SL-8)

Accomack	Bayside 101 Ac
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Legume Cover Crop (WQ-4)

Accomack	Bayside 1,985 Ac / Seaside 1,111 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 209 Ac/Seaside 854 Ac

Continuous No-till 5-Yr Program (SL-15A)

Northampton	Bayside 244 Ac
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Long Term Continuous No-till Planting (CCI-CNT)

Accomack	Bayside 587 Ac/Seaside 214Ac
Northampton	Bayside 350 Ac

Split Application of Nitrogen on Corn (NM-3C)

Accomack	Bayside 1,727Ac/Seaside 5176 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 691 Ac/Seaside 579 Ac

Split Application of Nitrogen on Small Grains (NM-4)

Accomack	Bayside 456 Ac/Seaside 52 Ac
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Animal Waste Control Facilities (WP-4) \$203,069

Composter Facilities (WP4C) \$36,887

Total Amount Distributed to Eastern Shore Producers \$3,987,833

In FY23, the District provided \$3,987,832.61 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.

In FY 2023, the District oversaw the implementation of one VCAP project. This living shoreline project stabilized 110 linear feet along Silver Beach.

Do you have a conservation project you have been putting off? FY 2024 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 and Outreach Programs

With the lifting of COVID restrictions, district outreach and education programs took off. In FY 2023, ESSWCD staff provided outreach and programming to just under 8,000 participants.



Classroom Programs:

One of the missions of the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District is to provide educational programs to all ages. This year saw a renewed interest in in-classroom educational programs. The education director was busy with everything from identifying natural resources to the importance of soil. New programs included wind power, parts of the plant we eat, and fruits vs. vegetables among others.



Envirothon

The Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon is a team-based natural resources competition for high school students. Students who participate learn stewardship and management concepts and work to solve real-world environmental problems. The program is field-oriented, community-based, and gives students an opportunity to work with natural resource professionals.



The Eastern Shore 2023 Dominion Energy Envirothon was held at Eastern Shore AREC. Teams from Arcadia High School, Broadwater Academy, and Northampton High School participated with Broadwater placing first and Arcadia coming in 2nd. For the first time, middle school teams were invited to participate and three teams representing Cape Charles Christian School and Montessori Children's House of Franktown participated.

Scholarships

The district was pleased to be able to offer two \$1000 scholarships in the spring of 2023 to two outstanding young people. Two W. Foster Fletcher scholarships were awarded.

Colin Hopper of Cape Charles will be freshman at Virginia Tech in the fall of 2023. He graduated from Northampton High School where he was consistently on the honor roll and active on several sports teams. He plans to major in Agribusiness



The second recipient is Turner Saunders of Parksley. He graduated from Nandua High School in the spring of 2023 where he was active in a variety of activities and sports. He plans to attend Virginia Tech in the fall majoring in Wildlife Conservation.

Billie Fitzgerald Spring Grants

In the spring of 2023, the District was pleased to award \$1,855 through a spring grant program. The purpose of these grants is to promote environmental education and awareness.

This year's recipients included:

Northampton Community Youth Group—
Participants planted vegetable boxes in the Cherriton town park. The fruits and vegetables grown were used to help supply the table for Ruth's Garden in Cherriton.



Environmental Education and Outreach Programs (continued)

Kiptopeke Elementary School—Funds were used for each student to create a biosphere in a jar. This allowed students to participate in hands on learning to see how the water cycle works.



Ms. Bell's class, Nandua High School—Her class is responsible for several garden areas known as Warrior Garden. These funds allowed them to purchase more plants, mulch, and supplies to support student learning.

ESVA Master Gardeners—For a number of years the spring grant has helped the ESVA Master Gardeners to continue to expand and improve the native plant gardens at the Chincoteague National Wildlife Preserve. Demonstration gardens include a wildflower meadow garden, rain garden, pollinator garden, and songbird garden.

Cape Charles Memorial Library Seed Cart—This year CCML started a community seed cart. It was stocked with a variety of free seeds for fruits and vegetables as well as native pollinator friendly plants. The spring grant funds helped with keeping the cart stocked.

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.

Ag Camp at the Barrier Islands Center

Ag Camp at the BIC was held for the third time in 2023. In conjunction with Northampton County Extension, 14 children spent two days learning about agriculture and natural resources. Over the two days, children interacted with a sheep, goats, and a calf.

They learned about where everyday items come from in a source search game. They made bread, butter, and ice cream; tye-dyed pil-



lowcases, and tried edible honeycomb. They learned about how important pollinators are and made lotion with beeswax, beeswax wrap, and beeswax modeling clay. They learned about beef by-products, cotton, and edible parts of plant, among other things. It was a very busy 2 days!

Jr. Ag Camp at the Barrier Islands Center

Due to the popularity of Ag Camp, this year we offered a 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 2024 BIC summer newsletter!



Environmental Education Programs

Conservation Poster Contest

The theme for 2023 was “One Water.” This theme was chosen to focus on watersheds. These bodies of water are all connected, so every drop that falls becomes part of *one water*.

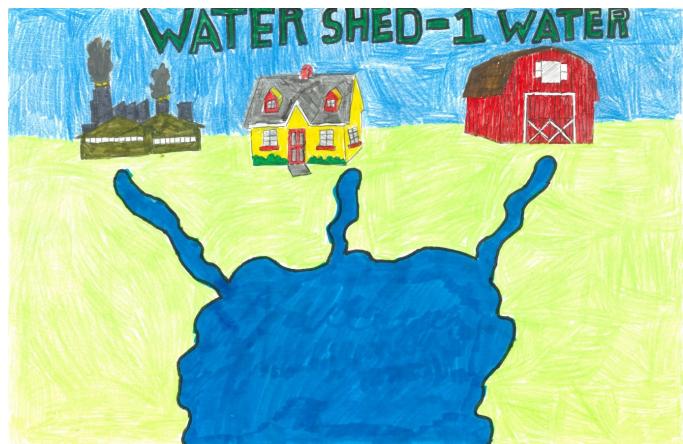
K-1 First Place
Charlie Burrell
Montessori CHF



2—3 Grade, First Place
Avaleen McGarvey
Broadwater Academy

4-6 Grade, First Place

Henry Watson
Cape Charles Christian School



7—9 Grade, First Place
Waylon Cowling
Nandua Middle School

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.