



Shore Conserver

Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District • promoting locally led conservation
22545 Center Parkway • Accomac VA 23301

DECEMBER 2008

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757-787-0918 x6

Protecting farmland to maintain a viable Agricultural Industry for the Eastern Shore

You are invited...

The Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District and the Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust invites interested farm landowners to a 2-hr seminar on conservation options at the Ag Conference and Trade Show at the Moose Lodge in Belle Haven, VA on January 8 at 1:30 p.m.



The seminar will include an overview of existing conservation easement programs and incentives available to area landowners including the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program in Northampton County, the Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust and Virginia Outdoors Foundation programs, and the Federal and State Conservation Reserve Programs (protecting riparian buffers and quail habitat). Join the discussion of our panel members Peter Stith, Northampton County PDR Program Administrator, Kevin Schmidt from VDACS Office of Farmland Preservation, Peter Henderson with the VESLT, Farm Service Agency's H.L. Kellam, and a landowner who has executed an agreement under the Virginia Beach PDR program.

Please plan on spending the second afternoon of the Ag Conference with us!

Why Save Farmland?

Every minute of every day, we lose two acres of agricultural land to development in the United States. Why? Farm and ranch land is desirable for building because it tends to be flat, well drained and affordable. And the rapid rate of agricultural land converted to development is unnecessary—over the past 20 years, the average acreage per person for new housing almost doubled—with our best agricultural soils being developed the fastest.

Economy and Food Security

Saving American farmland is a prudent investment in the world food supply and an economic opportunity. In Accomack and Northampton Counties, agriculture is the #1 industry generating annual sales of over \$340,000,000 with a total economic impact of over \$1,000,000,000.

Protection of the Environment
Well-managed agricultural land supplies important non-market goods and services for our environment. Farm and ranch lands provide food and cover for wildlife, help control flooding, protect wetlands and watersheds and maintain air quality. They can absorb and filter wastewater and provide groundwater recharge.

Fresh, Healthy Food and Strong Communities

for many Americans, compelling reasons for saving farmland have to do with protecting the quality of life in their communities—scenic and

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District Conservation Specialist wins Chaffin Award

Carmie Duer joined the District in January 2003 as the Administration Specialist. As office staffing needs grew commensurate with increases to the cost-share programs in 2005 and 2006, Carmie began to work with the technical components of the agricultural best management practices (BMP) programs. Carmie quickly became the go-to person answering farmers' questions about the programs. In addition to supporting outreach and recruitment to BMP's, Carmie improved the additional record-keeping and tracking of cost-share practices. Out of both necessity and interest, Carmie has trained in several technical areas including Toolkit, RUSLE and most recently, Nutrient Management Planning. Carmie's favorite facet of her position rests with the interaction between herself and the farmers and landowners. Drawing on her background of growing up on an Eastern Shore farm, she maintains excellent rapport with District clients and is able to converse with any experienced land manager and agricultural producer.

The District nominated Carmie Duer for the Chaffin Employee of the Year Award which was begun by Dora and Wilkie Chaffin who believe 1) productive soil and water conservation districts are essential to the conservation of soil, water and related resources in Virginia and 2) district employees are the foundation of district operations and meeting district goals. Carmie Duer was nominated for outstanding technical knowledge needed to successfully carry out district activities; being highly motivated to accomplish short-term district objectives and as a leader in working toward long-term district goals; working well with landowners and district citizens to help them participate in district programs; working well with other employees in the district, district directors, associate directors and district volunteers; and promoting conservation by participating in activities involving other districts, state associations, or partner agencies. Recognized for excellence and dedication of Virginia's conservation district programs, Carmie was presented the Chaffin Employee of the Year Award at the Annual Meeting in Roanoke on December 9, 2008.



...Continued from page 1 Why Save Farmland?

cultural landscapes, farmers' markets, recreational opportunities, local jobs and community businesses.

Fiscal Stability for Local Governments

New development requires services such as schools, roads and fire/police protection, whereas privately owned and managed agricultural land requires very few services. Cost of Community Services (COCS) studies show that, nationwide, farm, forest and open lands more than pay for the municipal services they require, while taxes on residential uses, on average, fail to cover costs.

(Source: American Farmland Trust)

Farmland is rapidly being lost

Land use statistics for the Chesapeake Bay watershed are staggering. Between 1990 and 2000, impervious cover increased by nearly 250,000 acres—about 41 percent, or the size of five District of Columbias. During that same time period, the Bay watershed's population grew by just 8 percent. This increase in impervious cover indicates that our personal footprint on the landscape is growing. Since the 1970s, the number of people per household has steadily decreased, while the average home size and number of vehicles per household has risen. "Big-box" stores and shopping centers common to urban and suburban lands have also created large areas of impervious cover. A typical "big-box" store consumes about 2 acres of land, with an additional 7 to 9 acres for parking. At the current rate of change to impervious cover—nearly 25,000 acres per year—the watershed is estimated to have about 1.1 million acres of impervious surface by 2010.

(Source: Chesapeake Bay Program)

FALL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Do you like to draw? District is sponsoring a Poster Contest

2009 Theme: "Dig It! The Secrets of Soil"

Great cash prizes are available for local students and their winning entries in the ESSWCD annual Conservation Poster Contest. For more information on entering this contest, contact the district's education specialist Tamsey Ellis. In addition to prizes, students are recognized at the Eastern Shore Science Fair and their posters are displayed at the Public Library in Accomac. Local winners are sent on to the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation District's statewide contest and every year the Eastern Shore has state-level winners! In 2008 these students were first place VASWCD winners.

Congratulations to the 2008 State winners!

- Esha Hore from Northampton High School in Grades 10-12
- James Baker from Northampton High School in Grades 7-9
- Alyson Gorske from Broadwater Academy for Grades 4-6



District teaches soil at Farm Field Day

"How Soil is Created" was presented by the District to over 500 third graders at the Farm Field Day sponsored by the Virginia Cooperative Extension Office on September 23, 2008. Several partner agencies such as ANEC, Master Gardeners, and Dept. of Forestry gave presentations on electricity, fire, forests, soil, farming in colonial times, local crops, and other aspects of rural life in a farming community. The District's presentation focused on several SOL-based concepts for third grade. Duncan Farms was a great setting for this event where a crop duster applied crop protectants and a combine harvested corn. The New Church fire company had the U.S. flag flying high during the day's events.

District brings Wetlands on Wheels to Northampton Schools

This fall ESSWCD was pleased to provide the Wetlands on Wheels (WoW) mobile classroom to elementary schools in Northampton County. A nationally recognized wetlands education program from Environmental Concern, Inc. in St. Michaels, MD, Wetlands on Wheels brings the field trip to the school with a hands-on program about the importance of wetland ecosystems. Over 510 students and their teachers attended sessions with instructional staff from WoW. Following the weeklong visit to the county schools, the traveling exhibit was stationed at the Eastern Shore Birding and Wildlife Festival in Cape Charles with over 150 visitors. Last year the District sponsored this mobile classroom for Accomack

County students. ESSWCD gave participating teachers a classroom set of "Living in Your Watershed—the Watersheds of Virginia's Eastern Shore" booklets. This booklet is designed for school children covering several elementary grade SOL's, although it also serves as an excellent, easy-to-read introduction to watershed concepts and local resource issues for adults. The booklet provides a useful directory of agencies and websites where readers can seek additional information. If you would like a copy or classroom set of "Living in Your Watershed" for classroom or church group, contact Latonya Justice at ESSWCD, (757)787-0918.

District staff make presentations on a variety of topics reaching both adult and student groups. If you are interested in having the District bring a program to your site, contact Education Specialist Tamsey Ellis at (757)787-0918 or tamsey.ellis@va.nacdnet.net.

- SOL-based classes on Environmental Concepts
- Water Quality and Agriculture
- Using Native Plants in the Home Landscape
- History of Eastern Shore Agriculture

District helps promote native plants in home landscapes

What is the relationship between our water quality, wildlife and native plants? More than you might imagine. ESSWCD is working with partner agencies on a campaign to "Plant for the Shore". The District is promoting native plants by coordinating outreach materials, website updates and nursery retailer promotional. ESSWCD is contributing to the www.shorewatersheds.net website to list Shore locations where native plants can be purchased. Through efforts by the State's Coastal Zone Management Program, ESSWCD is participating with other partner agencies, focus groups of the Shore's citizens and local nursery owners to assess awareness and demand for natives. The District is working to add more natives than ever to local

retail markets.

In the past there has been a disconnect between homeowners' landscaping needs and what the customers were actually buying. Nurseries sell what is in demand but a consumer may not realize the benefits of planting natives. The plant project partners believe in bridging this gap.

Native plants are suited to this climate and specific landscape requirements. Various species are salt tolerant, drought tolerant, deer resistant, flood resistant and deer resistant. Using the proper kinds of plants in the right places helps both water quality and conservation.

The District is hoping to see native plant gardens blossom. Currently ESSWCD is working with Eastern

Shore Rural Health Systems in designing a Bayscape installation for the new clinic in Onley. Plans include a constructed wetlands for clean-up of stormwater coming from the roof and parking lots. With added signage and plant guides, clinic visitors will learn the environmental benefits of native plants. Funding and technical support has been provided for the project by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Virginia's Coastal Zone Management Program and the Eastern Shore Resource Conservation and Development Council.



The Shore Conserver is published quarterly by the Eastern Shore SWCD to provide information to land users. The District meets monthly on the second Wednesday of the month at 5:00 p.m. at the USDA Service Center in Accomac. The public is welcome to attend.

Please contact the District office to be added to the mailing list at 757-787-0918.

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

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