



Shore Conserver

Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District

22545 Center Parkway, Accomac, VA 23301

ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015



Virginia Department of
Conservation and Recreation

Accomack County
Northampton County
Federal and State Agencies
Stakeholder Organizations
Local Citizens



The Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District's FY15 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.

2015 Agricultural Best Management Practices

Cost-Share

Nutrient Management Planning

Accomack Bayside 16,470/Seaside 15,499 acres
Northampton Bayside 10,204/Seaside 4,649 acres

Small Grain Cover for Nutrient Management

Accomack Bayside 4,240 /Seaside 3,887 acres
Northampton Bayside 703 /Seaside 218 acres

Harvestable Cover Crops

Accomack Bayside 2,530 /Seaside 1,330 acres
Northampton Bayside 1,130 /Seaside 821 acres

Small Grain Cover behind Vegetables

Accomack Bayside 1,015 /Seaside 550 acres
Northampton Bayside 613 /Seaside 77 acres

Vetch Cover Crop

Accomack Bayside 1,248 /Seaside 1,340 acres

Continuous No-Till 5-Yr Program

Accomack Bayside 711 /Seaside 631 acres
Northampton Bayside 782 / Seaside 402 acres

Stream Exclusion with Grazing Management

Accomack Bayside 11,000 Linear feet of
streambank protection

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. In FY2015, the District provided \$901,308.33 in cost-share assistance to landowners and producers.

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 District 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 serve 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 Chesapeake Bay, the Atlantic Ocean and Maryland. Accomack and Northampton counties are both among the top ten counties for grain production in the State. Across Virginia, the Eastern Shore is #1 in vegetables, #1 in aquaculture, and #1 in nursery crops. Accomack County alone is #1 in soybeans, #2 in Virginia for broiler production. Northampton County is #1 in Virginia for winter wheat production and has the largest fresh-market snap bean processor on the East Coast. The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the United States and is considered a National Treasure.

Agriculture is Virginia's largest industry, contributing over \$55 billion annually to the State's economy. Approximately 120,000 acres (or about 50% of the land use) supports row crop production. Because of the importance of sensitive Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean ecosystems, the impacts of farming on surface and ground water quality are a primary focus for the District's conservation programs. The District works closely with area growers through voluntary incentive programs and outreach to address resource concerns resulting from agriculture.

Through funding provided by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and both Accomack and Northampton Counties, two of our major roles are to administer the VA's incentive programs 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. The District has also been actively supporting and educating landowners to meet the buffer requirements set forth in the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. At the heart of the Bay Act is the concept that land can be used and developed to minimize negative impacts on water quality. The District partnered with Water Stewardship Inc. (WSI) in 2013 and was awarded a two-year grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to conduct **90 active ag land assessments** in both Accomack and Northampton Counties. Working with WSI and our local county partners, the District is in its final year of the grant to date and has **assessed over 6,000 acres** between the two counties.

Environmental Education Programs



Nature Detectives Camp: New this year was the Nature Detectives Camp! Working in conjunction with Ker Place, the District held a weeklong camp in the afternoons after the Spy Camp held by Ker Place. The Camp had 16 campers who learned about their environment around them through bird identification, animal track identification, solar heat cooking, water quality testing and many more hands-on fun-filled outdoor activities.

Envirothon: This is the 23rd year that the District has sponsored the Dominion Envirothon, a natural resources competition testing high school students on aquatics, wildlife, forestry, soils and a special topic decided on yearly. Arcadia High School Envirothon team with Coach Marianne Simko on the right, placed 1st at the local competition and second in the Area competition advancing them to the State competition at Longwood College, Longwood, Virginia. Arcadia represented the Eastern Shore well, placing tenth place overall.



Arcadia, winning team of the 2015 Local Envirothon competition

Conservation Poster Contest: The District received over 300 poster submissions for the 2015 “Local Heroes: Your Hard-working Pollinators” Poster Contest. This year students from the Eastern Shore Community College Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society judged this year’s entries. First place winning posters are sent to the state level to compete. For the 2014 “Dig Deeper—Mysteries in the Soil” Poster contest the Eastern Shore SWCD had two 1st place state winners— **Quintara Lyons** of Northampton High School for grade category 7-9 and **Diana Rueda-Arzate** of Northampton High for grade category 10-12.

Watershed Festival: The Watershed Festival was held at the Historic Onancock School (HOS) in October 2014. The EEC Council under the umbrella of the ES Soil and Water Conserva-

tion District sponsors the Watershed Festival. This annual educational festival focuses on aquatic and biological activities demonstrating our relationship to the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. The 17 exhibitors were organizations and governmental agencies who taught the students how the watershed of today differs from the watershed of the 1800's. New this year, the festival was reformatted and held at the HOS for all sixth graders in Accomack County. Next year, the festival will expand and offer a separate watershed festival for Northampton County sixth graders as well as Accomack County. The Watershed Festival was part of a larger event, a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE). Participants received stickers, educational booklets, pencils from partner agencies and watershed tokens that showcased plants or animals that one would find on the Shore.

Rain Barrel Workshops:

The Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District in partnership with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality



Rainbarrel Workshop at Chincoteague, VA during Mother Earth Day Festival.

and the ES RC&D Council under the umbrella of the Eastern Shore Watersheds Network, hosted three Rain barrel workshops this year—one at Cape Charles after the Blessing of the Worm Ceremony at the New Roots Garden in April, one at Chincoteague at the Mother Earth Day Festival in May and one at the Onancock Town Square in June. Rain barrels are handy in capturing and utilizing rain water rather than allowing it to run off the land. There were 60 rain barrels distributed through these workshops.

Spring Grants:

The ESSWCD Endowment Committee awarded all the



Spring Grant applications this year totaling \$1,500: a vegetable and native plant garden at Montessori Children's House of Franktown, a Pollinator Garden at No Limits, a garden for Kiptopeke Elementary co-sponsored by 4-H Extension and an educational field trip to the Virginia Elementary second graders. The grant projects are far-reaching

Dear Ms. Bahhies
Thank you for funding
the second grade field
trip to the Virginia
Living Museum. We attended
the cycles of survival
class. We got to see
two butterflies and
was mimicry one
color, our class took
guided tour of the
museum. I saw a
puffer fish. My favorite
part of the trip is when we
took with a photo
of the fish.

Sincerely,
Zayden

Educational Programs...Continued from page 3



2014 Winning Painting of Birding and Wildlife Festival Contest by Taylor Lilliston of Nandua H.S.

Eastern Shore Birding and Wildlife Festival (ESBWF): The ESBWF celebrates the arrival of migratory birds to the Shore with tours, trips, exhibitors and vendors. At the last festival there were over 225 registered attendees, 500+ people attended the Cape Charles Fire Hall Exhibitors, over 100 people visited Kiptopeke State Park and 101 children participated in the Passport Program! The District had a booth teaching children and parents how to ID birds. The District helped organize the Flight of the Raptor program where over 500 students from Cape Charles Christian and Occohannock Elementary Schools were able to learn about raptors and see them up close. Coastal Zone Management, one of the District's many partner agencies, sponsors the Eastern Shore Birding & Wildlife poster contest with the local high schools on the Shore and the winning artwork is the ESBWF's yearlong signature logo. **Taylor Lilliston of Nandua H.S.** was this year's winner. She painted the tri-colored heron in a marsh above.



Erica on the War Spurs Trail

Youth Conservation Camp: The Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts has sponsored the weeklong Youth Conservation Camp at Virginia Tech annually for 39 years. Ye Accawmacke Garden Club and the District co-sponsored one camper, **Erica Head** of Northampton High School this year.

ES Environmental Education (EE) Council: In FY15 the EE Council created a "Pizza Garden" of peppers, tomatoes, basil, onions, thyme and oregano. In August, students from the Accomac Head Start program came to the garden and picked peppers, tomatoes, and zucchinis to make their own pizzas back at school. The EE Council also educate people, young and old, on how they can grow their own food and the benefits of doing so at the garden.

Preserving Farmland By Co-holding Easements

Conservation easements conserve rural lands which best preserve the forests, fisheries, farms and heritage of Virginia's Eastern Shore for the benefit of future generations. They protect specific natural, scenic and historic features of the land by limiting future development. The District is proud to be a co-holder of conservation easements in an effort to help conserve open spaces.

The District currently **co-holds 32 easements** with the Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust and Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) totaling over **4,985 acres and monitors 19 easements totaling 2,828 acres** in partnership with VOF.

Newsletter Publications: The District published four issues of the *Shore Conserver* in FY15 reaching over 850 households each time with updates on District activities and information on various resource concerns. If you would like to be placed on the mailing list, call the District at (757)787-0918 x101.

All programs and services of the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service are offered on a non-discriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap. The Shore Conserver is published quarterly by the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District to provide information to land-users. The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

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