



# Shore Conserver

Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District

22545 Center Parkway, Accomac, VA 23301

## ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020

### DISTRICT STAFF

Carmie M. Savage, *District Manager*  
Bill Savage, *Conservation Specialist*  
Julie Head, *Education Director*  
Norman Pitt, *Conservation Technician*

### ELECTED DISTRICT DIRECTORS

Robin Rich-Coates, *Chair*  
Fred Holland, II, *Vice-Chair*  
Ursula Deitch  
James A. Evans  
Kyle Sturgis  
Nick Thomas

### Locally-Led Conservation

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

### DISTRICT ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

Edwin R. Long  
Richard F. Hall, III  
Robbie Lewis  
Richard Davis  
William Shockley, Jr.

Virginia Department of  
Conservation and Recreation

Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board

The Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District's FY20 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.

## **2020 Agricultural Best Management Practices Incentive Program**

### **Nutrient Management Planning (NM-1A)**

Accomack	Bayside 18409 Ac / Seaside 17935 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 8635 Ac / Seaside 5379 Ac

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

Accomack	Bayside 7196 Ac / Seaside 5530 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 1381 Ac / Seaside 705 Ac

### **Harvestable Cover Crops (SL-8H)**

Accomack	Bayside 3031 Ac / Seaside 2342 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 765 Ac / Seaside 776 Ac

### **Protective Cover for Specialty Cropland (SL-8)**

Accomack	Bayside 163 Ac/Seaside 872 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 347 Ac / Seaside 372 Ac

### **Vetch Cover Crop (WQ-4)**

Accomack	Bayside 1991 Ac / Seaside 1875 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 558 Ac/Seaside 78 Ac

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

Accomack	Bayside 183 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 477 Ac

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

Accomack	Bayside 1948 Ac/Seaside 871 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 791 Ac/Seaside 189 Ac

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

Accomack	Bayside 569 Ac/Seaside 513 Ac
Northampton	Bayside 341 Ac/Seaside 94 Ac

### **Funding for additional programs included:**

**Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)**  
\$7,626.50

### **Animal Waste Storage Sheds (WP-4)**

\$1,294,116

### **Composters (WP-4C)**

\$719,431

In FY120, the District provided \$3,183,216.94 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.

## Resource Management Planning Program (RMP's)

The Virginia Resource Management Planning program provides a voluntary way to promote the use of conservation practices that improve farming operations and water quality. Resource management plans can help farm owners and operators take advantage of all the conservation measures at their disposal. The plans are designed to encourage farmers, either the farm owner or operator, to use a high level of best management practices (BMPs) that reduce runoff pollution to local waters and, in many cases, improve the farmer's financial bottom line.



In fiscal year 2020, seven Resource Management Plans were reviewed and approved by the District. Plans were approved for 12.1 acres in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and for 1035.6 acres in the Southern Rivers watershed (seaside).



## 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.



During and after pictures of a project here on the shore. Photos by Ellen Grimes

In fiscal year 2020, the district funded two living shoreline projects. These installations protected 634 linear feet of bayside shorelines and covered approximately 9000 square feet.

Do you have a conservation project you have been putting off? FY 2021 sign-ups for VCAP will start be from September 1 to October 31, 2021. 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](http://esswcd.org))



## Environmental Education Programs

For fiscal year 2020, District educational programs reached almost 5000 people, mostly students, between July 1, 2019 and March 13, 2020. After March 13th most programs were cancelled or postponed because of COVID-19. The following programs include some of the environmental education outreach programs presented to residents of the Eastern Shore by the District.

### Life Underground Mobile Classroom



In September of 2019 the District debuted its new mobile classroom that was designed specifically for the Eastern Shore of Virginia. It was funded by the District's designated funds. Walking inside the mobile classroom takes you underground to see the soil layers, how water infiltrates, ground wells, and aquifers. On one side of the classroom are classic textbook soil layers. On the opposite side are the Eastern Shore layers (no bedrock). Hanging from the ceiling are roots and at the front there is a depiction of a typical groundwater well and the layers of soil and the two aquifers that are typical of the Eastern Shore.

In FY 2020, the mobile classroom was used at the Accomack and Northampton Farm Field Day programs for 3rd graders, Outdoor Exploration Day, Northampton Ag Fair, Nandua High School, and the Area VI meeting. Other visits were scheduled but could not be completed due to COVID 19. This mobile classroom is a valuable education tool and will serve the Eastern Shore community for many years to come.

### Conservation Poster Contest

The theme for 2020 is "Where Would We BEE Without Pollinators." Normally held in mid to late spring, the poster contest was moved to September. Winners will be announced in an upcoming issue of The Shore Conserver.

### Billie Fitzgerald Memorial Spring Grants

In the spring of 2020, the District's Endowment Committee awarded \$1,325 in grants to four different organizations. The ESVA Master Gardener Association received funds to help with the installation of a song bird garden and wildlife meadow. Holy Trinity Church received funds to install a rain garden and native plant demonstration that will help with drainage. The Accomack County Parks and Recreation received funds to continue their expansion of a monarch waystation at Sawmill Park. The Eastern Shore Regional Jail received money to start a vermi-composter which will reduce the food waste going to the land fill and fertilize the re-entry program garden.



## Educational Programs *(...Continued from page 4)*

### Dominion Energy Envirothon:

2020 marked the 28th year the District has sponsored the local Envirothon, a natural resources competition testing high school students on the use of water resources, aquatics, wildlife, forestry and soils. Students attend a day long training program and a month later return for the competition.



Broadwater Gold took first place and Northampton took 2nd place. Normally these teams would advance to the area competition but this was cancelled due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

**William H. Beasley Conservation Scholarships:** The District's Endowment Committee awarded one scholarship to William "Toby" Hamilton in the amount of \$750. Toby attends Virginia Tech.

### Outdoor Exploration Day:

More than 500 people attended this event which was co-hosted with Kiptopeke State Park and ESO Arts Center. A beautiful September day greeted people to a wide variety of activities including hands-on educational exhibits, native plant giveaways, a butterfly tent and release, kayaking, live music, and so much more. Look for this event in 2021!

### Wildlife Refuge Celebration Week:

Held in October of 2019, the District's Education Director attended this event and offered soil painting. Both adults and children enjoyed the opportunity to learn about the regions of Virginia and use soil from each region to paint a picture. More than 900 people attended and participated in a wide variety of events.

## 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.

### Classroom Programs:

The Education Director was busy during the fall and early spring presenting environmental education programs in classrooms on the Eastern Shore. Watersheds, soils, plastic pollution, water pollution, and ecosystems are just a few of the available programs. Check out the District's website under the education tab for more information ([Esswcd.org](http://Esswcd.org)).



### Farm Field Days:



The Accomack County Farm Field Day hosted all the 3rd grade students in Accomack County for a day of learning about agriculture on the Eastern Shore. The District debuted its new mobile classroom at this event.

The Northampton Farm Field Day was hosted by the District and Northampton County Extension. The 3rd graders experienced the mobile classroom, learned about farm equipment, the important of pollinators, and were able to interact with livestock, along with several other activities.

### COVID-19 Programming:

When schools shut down, the Education Director stayed busy providing programming on a variety of topics that teachers could send home with their students. Topics included lessons from Project Learning Tree that incorporated science, math, English, history, and social-emotional learning. Easy to do science lessons exploring soil were