



# Shore Conserver

Volume 20, Issue 2

Winter 2005

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## Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District

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## June Sekoll Media Award presented to Eastern Shore Environmental Education Council

Several years ago the Virginia Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) initiated a unique media award in memory of June Sekoll, editor of the *Farm Chronicle*. The award recognizes an individual or group that writes or produces materials which significantly increase public understanding and promote the wise use of Virginia's natural resources. The Soil and Water Conservation Society is a non-profit professional organization of people who work in natural resources fields and support the conservation of soil and water.

The 2004 June Se-

koll Award was presented to the Eastern Shore Environmental Education Council for their quarterly newspaper insert *Shore Outdoors*.

Distributed to over 65% of Eastern Shore households in the local newspaper, each issue of *Shore Outdoors* covers a specific theme such as migratory birds, groundwater and coastal resources restoration. The insert also serves as a seasonal guide to exploring the area's natural resources and highlights the environmental work of the many individuals, teachers, agencies and organizations that make up the council.



"Shore Outdoors" insert printed in the December 8, 2004, issue of the Eastern Shore News.

The District serves as coordinator for the Environmental Education Council. Contact the district office for more information about the exciting projects sponsored by this group.

## State BMP Cost-Share program

In order to protect water quality and reduce nutrient and sediment runoff from farming activities, the state works with Districts and the agricultural community to plan and install conservation practices. Under the Virginia Agricultural Best Management (BMP's) Cost-Share Program, districts recruit participants in numerous efforts that can make a positive impact on water quality.

This year's program on the Eastern Shore includes over \$0.000 earmarked for the 2004 fall planting of cover crops. Cover such as vetch and rye are cost effective measures that utilize excess nutrients left from earlier crops. Fall cover is especially effective when planted early and

(Continued on page 3)

## Ellis joins ESSWCD staff

*"If you are a citizen of the Earth, then you have an obligation to use your gifts to help preserve her natural resources and to share the knowledge you have gained with future generations."*



On August 4, 2004, Tamsey Ellis joined the District staff as Conservation Education Planner.

She received her B.S. from James Madison University and her M.S. in Biology from Old Dominion University. She has taught biology and environmental sciences in both public and private schools for 28 years and worked for four years as a seed analyst and assistant state botanist for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

Ellis co-wrote the biology and environmental curriculum guides for the Phoenix Union High School District. She also served on the Southeast Region Writing Committee to develop

the hands-on, interdisciplinary program

*Project Aquatic.*

Ellis was one of thirty teachers nationwide and one of the three master teachers participating in the research program, *Human Impact on the Grand Canyon*. She also feels fortunate to have been selected by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation to participate in a five week program, *Environmental Studies of the Rainforest in Costa Rica*.

She states that she is most appreciative of the opportunity to work with the Eastern shore SWCD and to do outreach with the farmers, schools, and general public.

### Roundtable on Eastern Shore Tributary Strategy

March 8, 1:30 PM

Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce Building, Melfa, VA

On February 2, the Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources, W. Tayloe Murphy, Jr., released the latest action plan to reduce nutrients and sediments in Virginia's waterways feeding the Chesapeake Bay. Action is needed to remove the Chesapeake Bay from the federal list of impaired waters.

Plans address the challenges that lie ahead, from installing conservation best management practices to improving wastewater treatment plants. "This is much more than a listing of practices and a discussion of treatment levels," said Murphy. "This strategy outlines the direction for bringing about action. Implementation will take place on the ground as we work treatment plant by treatment plant, farm by farm, parking lot by parking lot, and locality by locality."

Specific plans for the Eastern Shore of Virginia will be discussed at an upcoming roundtable on March 8. If you are interested in further information about the March 8 Roundtable, contact Noah Hill with the Department of Conservation and Recreation at 757-925-2468 or noah.hill@dcr.virginia.gov.



### Natural Resources Conservation Service programs

**EQIP-** The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) works primarily in locally identified priority areas where there are significant natural resource concerns, such as soil erosion, water quality and quantity, wildlife habitat, wetlands, and forest and grazing lands. Activities must be carried out according to a conservation plan. EQIP is one of several Federal, State, and local conservation programs that farmers and ranchers can use to solve their natural resource concerns. EQIP offers financial, educational, and technical help to install

or implement structural, vegetative, and management practices called for in 5 to 10 year contracts. These practices, which include manure management systems, pest management, and erosion control, help improve and maintain the health of natural resources. Federal cost-sharing may pay up to 75% of the costs of certain conservation practices. *The program is not open but applications are being accepted.*

**WHIP-** The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program provides financial incentives to develop habitat for fish and wildlife on private lands. Participants agree to imple-

ment a wildlife habitat development plan, and USDA agrees to provide cost-share assistance for the initial implementation of wildlife habitat development practices. USDA and program participants enter into 5 to 10 year cost-share agreements for wildlife habitat development. *The program is not open but applications are being accepted.*

For more information regarding these programs please contact Robert Williams in the Accomack Service Center at 757-787-0918, ext. 3.

## **State BMP Cost-Share program** (Continued from page 1)

shows significant growth before winter. Fall cover also holds soil in place and helps reduce erosion during the winter months.

Another \$000.00 has been allocated to farmers who are placing land under a five-year continuous no-till practice. Under no-till, crop residue remains on the field to reduce erosion and build up organic material that benefits water absorption and reduces fertilizer requirements.

This year the District has also allocated funds for writing nutrient management plans and for building animal waste storage facilities. If you are interested in the cost-share program, please visit the District office and discuss the opportunities. Limited funds are still available for the current program year. You also can sign up to receive notices for the coming year.



Students at Youth Conservation Camp getting ready to explore with canoes!

## **Time to apply for Conservation Camp**

The application deadline for the 2005 Youth Conservation Camp is May 2. Camp is held at Virginia Tech from July 10-16. Students in grades 9-12 are eligible to apply for District funds to attend. Youth Conservation Camp is conducted by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

## **Envirothon dates are fast approaching**

The 2005 Eastern Shore District Envirothon will be held at the Virginia Tech Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Painter. The team training day is scheduled for February 16, with competition to be held on March 16. Eight teams from local high schools are registered for this environmental competition for high school students.

The two-day environmental education program will feature outdoor, hands-on training and testing in soils, aquatics, wildlife and forestry. In addition



to the four core subjects, teams tackle a challenging resource issue. This year's topic addresses the relationships between cultural heritage and natural resource.

Natural resource specialists and community volunteers are working with local educators to plan activities that will help students

learn more about team building, cooperative learning, communications, and conservation projects. Financial support has been provided by a grant from the Joy foundation for Ecological Education and Research.

## **Scholarships available to Shore residents**

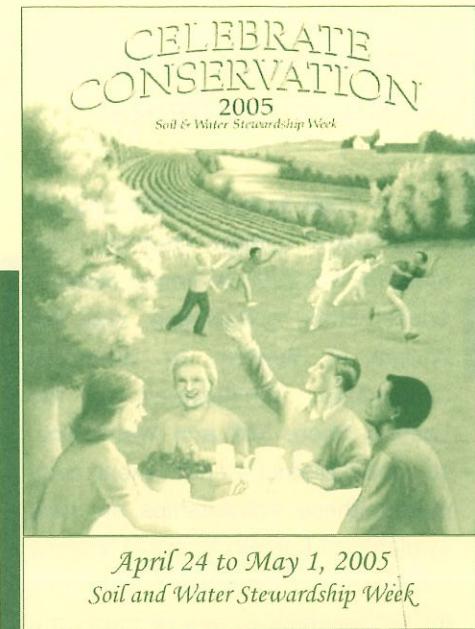
High school seniors and undergraduate college students may apply for the 2005 W. Foster Fletcher Conservation Scholarship and the William H. Beasley, Sr. Memorial Scholarship. Administered by the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District's endowment committee, these scholarships are only available to Eastern Shore of Virginia residents. Up to \$500 is available for scholarships to one or more students, depending upon their qualifications. May 2 is the deadline to apply.

*Camp, scholarships, and spring grant applications are available in the district office by calling 757-787-0918.*

## **Spring Conservation Grants Available**

The application deadline for the 2005 Billie Fitzgerald Memorial Conservation Grants is March 1.

Schools and community groups in Accomack and Northampton Counties are eligible for funding for conservation or environmental education projects such as outdoor classrooms, and nature trails, storm drain stenciling, recycling programs, materials for water quality testing and field trips for environmental study.



## ESSWCD Announces 2005 Conservation Poster Contest

ESSWCD has announced its 2005 Conservation Poster Contest for students in grades K-12 in Accomack and Northampton Counties. The theme of this 20th annual competition is "Celebrate Conservation," which provides students with an opportunity to share their thoughts about soil, water and related natural resources.

Cash prizes are awarded to winners of the contest. First place winners are then eligible for state competition. Posters should be submitted to

the district office in Accomac by March 15. Winners will be announced in early April and prizes will be awarded at the Shorewide Science Fair at Eastern Shore Community College.

Contest rules and entry blanks have been mailed to schools in the two counties. These items may also be obtained by calling the district office.



Many products found in your kitchen, bathroom, garage, or garden shed are potentially hazardous. Some, like car batteries and paint thinner, are obvious, but there are many that you might not ordinarily think of, such as polishes, bug sprays, cleansers, and glues.

Household hazardous waste products are usually safe when used according to the instructions on the label, but when these products are dumped in the trash or poured down the drain, their hazardous chemicals can injure other people or contaminate drinking water sources. Household hazardous wastes—used oil, antifreeze, paint, cleaners, bleach, batteries, bug spray, etc.—require special handling and disposal.

**ALWAYS**



**read the labels  
to determine how to  
properly dispose of  
harmful substances!**

## Hazardous Waste Clean-up... a great success!

The Eastern Shore Household Hazardous Waste Collection was held from 2:00 to 5:00 pm on August 18, 2004, at Eastern Shore's Own (ESO) Arts Center. Fifty-four vehicles dropped off over two tons of household hazardous waste. Care Environmental Corporation of Landing, New Jersey, collected the materials and safely processed them by recycling as fuel, by incineration, or by other treatment. The Food Bank of the Eastern Shore collected

usable paint, which was sold at its Thrift Shop in Tasley.

The Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission coordinated the cleanup event with funding from the Eastern Shore Groundwater Committee and from Eastern Shore SWCD through a grant for work on tributary strategies from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

## Resource Conservation & Development in action

The ES RC&D began 2005 by adopting a plan of work with a major watertrail development project for Saxis and Onancock Creeks, as well as a number of other partnered projects. The Water trail routes are being established and documented by a team from Eastern Shore Canoe and Kayak, owned by Pat and James Johnson. Each trail will be shown on a original map by Jeff Shield that gives paddlers a birds-eye view of the watersheds' landscape.

We are almost finished facilitating Northampton County Purchase of Development Rights Committee. The Committee proposed draft ordinance, program guidelines, and organizational structure will undergo internal County review and then be presented to the Board of Supervisors.

On February 15th, the full RC&D Council will meet to finalize strategies for achieving the objectives and goals of their 5-year plan. The key to achieving many of these is working

with other organizations, just as we've worked with the SWCD on the Watershed Festival. Two new community development projects were recently adopted, including scholarships for a Leadership Development program offered by Northampton County Extension Office, which begins the second week in February, and support for 3 to 4 workshops to help organizations improve their success in obtaining grants.

## Erosion from Winter winds... how to help

This time of year when crops have been harvested and little residue remains to break the strength of winter winds, we begin to see wind erosion. To reduce the effects of the wind, the soil needs to have a good cover crop or heavy crop residues such as corn stalks or some type of windbreak.

Windbreaks used to be a common practice, but with the switch to larger equipment and large irrigation systems, more and more hedgerows are plowed up each year.

Annual grasses such as rye can be planted in strips with any crop including tomatoes, potatoes, and cucumbers. These strips can be mowed in the spring to allow for a travel lane or allowed to mature. One bonus to grass strips is keeping the soil a few degrees warmer by reducing the wind. Plant injury from the wind is also reduced.

Trees, offer a more permanent windbreak and require careful planning to reduce the impact on the farming system. Normally, two or three rows of loblolly pine are planted with a row of either cedar or a low growing shrub. Six to eight feet spacing is recommended. Since pine trees will eventually lose their lower limbs, low growing shrubs or cedars are important. Windbreaks protect farm buildings, chicken houses and other livestock as well as the home.



Whenever it is plowed or disked, it is subject to erosion. Soil left bare over winter can experience severe erosion.



January field with crop residue.

## Test your knowledge and take the CONSERVATION QUIZ !

Test your knowledge of erosion and resource conservation. Score 10 points for each answer. A score of 90 or better entitles you to call yourself Senior Conservationist; 70 or better, Junior conservationist; 60, Conservation Trainee. A score of 40 or below... you might want to contact your conservation district to find out more about erosion problems –and solutions – in your area.

1. Who is the father of soil conservation?  
a. Thomas Jefferson      b. Gifford Pinchot  
c. Theodore Roosevelt      d. Hugh Hammond Bennett
2. The U.S. has had a national soil and water conservation program since  
a. 1890      b. 1912  
c. 1935      d. 1950
3. How long does it take Mother Nature to build up an inch of topsoil?  
a. 10 years      b. 50 years  
c. 100-600 years      d. 1,000 years
4. Soil erosion is caused by  
a. Wind      b. Rain  
c. Snowmelt      d. All of the above
5. If adequately protected from soil and water erosion, farmland can be productive for  
a. One generation      b. 50 years  
c. 100 years      d. Indefinitely

The fastest growing conservation practice in farming today is  
a. Conservation tillage      b. Mulching

- c. Fall tillage with a moldboard plow      d. The use of black plastic
7. Plowing up fragile grassland and converting it to cropland is called  
a. Range wrecking      b. Carpetbagging  
c. Sodbusting      d. Grasshopping
8. The average depth of topsoil in this country is  
a. 3 inches      b. 6 inches  
c. 12 inches      d. 3 feet
9. By volume, what is the largest pollutant of our streams and rivers?  
a. Sediment      b. Chemicals  
c. Algae      d. Feedlot runoff
10. Irrigation uses what percent of the nation's water?  
a. 10      b. 50  
c. 80      d. 95

Answer key is found on back page



## Calendar of Events

February 12.....Schoolyard habitat workshop  
 February 16.....Envirothon training day  
 March 1.....ESSWCD Spring Grant applications due  
 March 1.....VASWCD scholarship applications due  
 March 8.....Roundtable on Eastern Shore Tributary Strategies  
 March 15.....ESSWCD Poster Contest entries due  
 March 16.....Envirothon testing day  
 April 21.....Area VI Envirothon competition  
 May 2.....ESSWCD Scholarship applications due  
 May 2.....VASWCD Camp applications due

The public is welcome to attend Eastern Shore SWCD 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.



Answer Key:  
 1.d, 2.c, 3.c, 4.d, 5.d, 6.a, 7.c, 8.b, 9.a, 10.c

## District participates in Ag Conference

The Eastern Shore Ag Conference and Trade Show is always an exciting wintertime event with a focus on new technologies, improved practices, current issues, and latest products. In it's 16th year, the program was again held at the Moose Lodge in Belle Haven, Virginia.

For the District, the Ag Conference provides a great opportunity to promote our conservation efforts in the local agricultural community. This year's display highlighted the following state programs that are administered locally by the District:

- Agricultural BMP Cost-Share Program
- Agricultural BMP Tax Credit Program
- Conservation Equipment Tax Credit Program



District Manager speaking on eligibility and other requirements for state cost-share and tax credits.

The District thanks the organizers and sponsors the Ag Conference, the Association of Potato and Vegetable Growers, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Employment Commission, and area agribusinesses.

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.

*The Shore Conserver is published quarterly  
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 Please contact the district office to be added to the mailing list.*

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