



Shore Conserver

Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District

22545 Center Parkway, Accomac, VA 23301, (757)787-0918

promoting locally-led conservation

March 2011

Eastern Shore SWCD

www.esswcd.org

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Before the Backhoe



Over the last 10 years or more, the laws and jurisdiction over wetlands and regulatory waters of the State have changed and expanded. In an effort to keep the agricultural community informed and out of trouble when doing any earth-moving activities, the "Before the Backhoe" panel discussion was developed. This first "Before the Backhoe" panel discussion on the Shore was held during the Annual Agricultural Conference in January. This panel was made up of federal, state and local government representatives who addressed the procedures, laws and agencies specific to the Eastern Shore of Virginia involving wetland work by agriculture producers.

Thankfully, there are guidelines you, the landowner, must follow before disturbing earth on your property. A permit may be required and it is your responsibility to know this information.

If you are not a USDA participant, you should contact the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) before any

land disturbance. Your local USACE representative Robert Cole can be reached at (757) 787-7567.

If you are a USDA Participant, you should contact H.L. Kellam at the Farm Service Agency (FSA) at (757) 787-0918 x2 to start the process. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will then contact you and visit the site in question to determine if you have wetlands in the proposed project area. If you are trying to dig or place fill in a wetland area, delineation (outlining the area on a map), is required to mark the wetland boundary. If the size of the area impacted is less than a tenth of an acre, a general permit can be issued with no mitigation and minimal red tape. Mitigation means to create wetlands the same size or larger than the wetlands area you would be destroying. This results in no net loss of wetlands.

If the area of impact is less than or equal to a quarter of an acre but larger than a tenth of an acre, a different general permit can be issued with mitigation.

However, if the impacted wetland is over a quarter of an acre, a Joint Permit Application (JPA), is required. That process can be time consuming involving the designs and specifications for the project. The completed JPA

should be sent to the VA Marine Resources Commission (Hank Badger, 757-414-0710). From this point, the application will be forwarded to the USACE, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the appropriate County Wetlands Board for review. All involved (federal, state and local authorities can approve or deny the JPA. If approved, a permit will be issued.

However, if NRCS determines that no wetlands are involved in the proposed project, and the USACE agrees, then the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District sends a letter to the appropriate County Planning Department (David Fluhart at (757)787-5726, Accomack, or Melissa Kellam at (757)678-0443, Northampton), verifying the planned agricultural practice and its location, impact and purpose. From there, the county may contact you, the landowner, with any additional requirements or concerns.

If you have any questions about the process, feel free to contact Tina Jerome, Derek Hancock or Bob Smith with NRCS at (757)787-0918 x3.

To view these guidelines in an easy to read flowchart
see page 4.

FSA Offers New Conservation Loan Program

The Conservation Loan (CL) Program provides farmers with the funding necessary to implement conservation measures on their land. The available limit for a direct CL is \$300,000, and the limit for a guaranteed CL is \$1,119,000.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will work with applicants to develop a conservation plan containing approved conservation practices. Examples of some conservation practices are: water conservation structures, forest cover, permanent pastures, manure digesters, and other installations.

For more information on a potential Conservation Loan, call your local FSA office at 22545 Center Parkway, Accomac, VA 23301, (757)787-0918 x107 and make an appointment with Dorine Ross, FSA Loan Officer.

FSA Announces Dates for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General Signup

Calvin Parrish, Acting Executive Director of USDA's Farm Service Agency in Virginia announced Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has set general signup for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) to begin on March 14, 2011 and continue through April 15, 2011. During the signup period, farmers and ranchers may offer eligible land for CRP's competitive general signup at their county Farm Service Agency (FSA) office.

"Over the past 25 years, CRP's benefits have grown thanks to many unexpected, but welcomed improvements to our natural resources – cleaner water, improved air quality, better habitat for wildlife, viewing opportunities of that wildlife and of course, a huge reduction in soil erosion," said (Parrish). "This announce-

ment will help this administration continue its strong conservation legacy."

Land currently not enrolled in CRP may be offered in this signup provided all eligibility requirements are met. Additionally, current CRP participants with contracts expiring this fall may make new contract offers. Contracts awarded under this signup are scheduled to become effective Oct 1, 2011.

To help ensure that interested farmers and ranchers are aware of the signup period, USDA has signed partnership agreements with several conservation and wildlife organizations that will all play an active role in USDA's 2011 CRP outreach efforts.

FSA, which administers the CRP, will evaluate and rank eligible CRP

offers using an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) that shows the environmental benefits to be gained from enrolling the land in CRP. The EBI consists of five environmental factors (wildlife, water, soil, air and enduring benefits) and cost. Decisions on the EBI cutoff will be made after the sign-up ends and after analyzing the EBI data of all the offers.

In addition to the general sign-up, CRP's continuous sign-up program will be ongoing. Continuous acres represent the most environmentally desirable and sensitive land. For more information, visit www.fasa.usda.gov/crp or contact your local FSA representative, H.L. Kellam, at 22545 Center Parkway, Accomac, VA 23301, (757)787-0918 x108.

Legislative Alert—Urge Congress to Restore RC&D Councils

The Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District is a sponsor of our local Resource Conservation and Development Council. We urge our readership to support our partner as they face immediate elimination of federal support for their program. Without assistance from USDA to staff the office, this small 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization would not be able to address local resource issues.

Many of you may remember Jack Selby, who was the first NRCS Coordinator for the Council in 1976. He was invaluable in several harbor projects. Since then the RC&D has

provided exceptional support to our community. Currently the Council is installing a *Healing Garden* at the new Onley Community Health Center, bringing innovative variable-application-rate equipment to Shore farmers to reduce fertilizer use, and helping Camp Occohannock control shoreline erosion, among many other initiatives.

You can help keep our RC&D Council fully staffed and active in our community by urging your U.S. Senators and House Members to support the RC&D Program. Tell them how critical the program is to the Eastern Shore. Several projects that are un-

derway could not be finished.

The quickest way to reach your congressmen is through phone call, fax or email. Time is of the essence.

Representative Scott Rigell:
ph (757)787-5172/fax (757)787-5175

Senator Jim Webb:
ph (202)224-4024/fax (202)228-6363

Senator Mark Warner:
ph (202)224-2023/fax (202)224-6295

Conservation Youth Camp



Megan McElroy enjoying 2010 Conservation Youth Camp

The Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) is sponsoring a week-long summer conservation camp, July 10 -16, 2011 on the Virginia Tech campus for high school students. Most of the instruction consists of outdoors hands-on activities. Exciting field trips are planned including a hike to the Cascades Waterfall, canoeing, and a tour of a mussel aquaculture center. Studies include cave geology, lake ecology, forestry, and agricultural plus many other fun-filled activities. Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District and Ye Accawmacke Garden Club will be covering expenses for the campers. If you know a student with a keen interest in the environment, please encourage them to apply by April 27, 2011 to ESSWCD. For a more complete description of camp and this year's schedule, check out the VASWCD's Conservation Camp website at www.vaswcd.org/youthcamp or contact Tamsey Ellis at (757)787-0918 x129 at the District office.

2011 Conservation Poster Contest



K-1st grade First Place Winner of 2010 Conservation Poster Contest by Caleb Pruitt

complete rules and tips on how to make an effective poster, contact your art teacher or Tamsey Ellis at (757)787-0918 x129 or Tamsey.ellis@esswcd.org.

EE Council Adopts the Skillathon

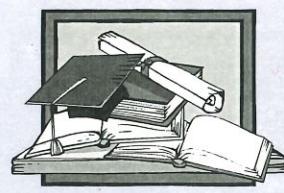
The Skillathon is a program that Rikki Sterrett developed before retiring from the position of Northampton County 4H Extension Agent. To prevent the Skillathon from being abandoned Rikki requested that the District's Environmental Education Council (EE Council) adopt it as one of their programs. Rikki, a member of the EE Council, will continue to organize this event. The Skillathon provides a hands-on review of the Virginia Science Standards of Learning (SOL's) for third graders just prior to the mandatory text. It will be held from 10:00 AM until 3:05 PM at Kiptopeke Elementary April 26th and at Occohannock Elementary May 5th. Numerous stations are set up with activities requiring students' to use their knowledge of specific SOL's. The Master Gardeners, our local forester (Robbie Lewis), The Master Naturalists and the District have participated in this review for several years. Teachers and administrators have stated that they believe the Skillathon is an effective way to reinforce students' understanding of the SOL's. The District is excited about the opportunity to support the continuation of this program.

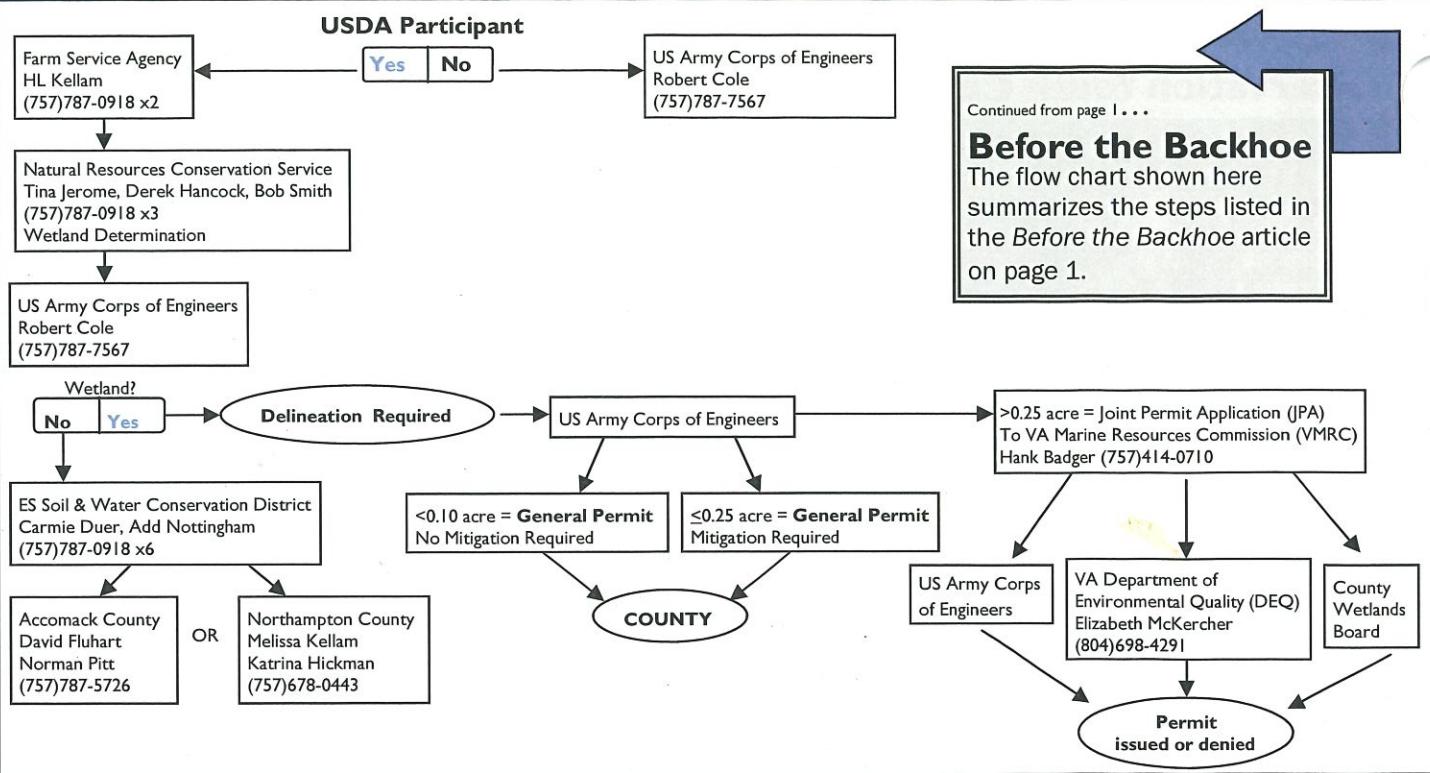
Scholarships Available

The District is sponsoring a \$500 scholarship towards the college tuition of an Eastern Shore of VA student seeking a degree in environmental or conservation studies. The W. Foster Fletcher Conservation Scholarship is for a graduating high school student while the William H. Beasley Sr. Memorial Scholarship is for a student who is returning to college. The application deadline is 4:30 PM Wednesday - April 27, 2011. Contact the Education Director at tamsey.ellis@esswcd.org, (757-787-0918. X 129) for more information. Applications may be downloaded at www.esswcd.org/scholarship

These scholarships honor two men who worked closely with the District and NRCS. Foster Fletcher was the first District employee and later served as Chair of the ESSWCD Board. Since there was no heavy equipment available, he convinced the federal government to donate surplus machinery to the District for farmer use.

William H. Beasley Sr. was a technician for NRCS developing conservation farm plans and implementing Best Management Practices. Both of these men wanted to help preserve the Shore's natural resources and saw the need for an education in environmental studies. When ESSWCD's equipment program ended, the machinery was sold and the proceeds placed in an endowment fund. After the death of William Beasley Sr. his wife donated money for a scholarship in his honor to help provide tuition for first year college students. These funds were also placed in the District's endowment fund. Interest from this fund supports our college scholarships, spring grants for educators and Youth Conservation Camp.





The Shore Conserver is published quarterly by the Eastern Shore SWCD to provide information to land users. The District customarily meets monthly on the second Wednesday of the month at 5:00pm at the USDA Service Center in Accomac, VA. The public is welcome to attend. To be added to the mailing list, please contact the District office at 757-787-0918 x119.

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.

Change Service Requested

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