



November 2017

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Shore Conserver

Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District • promoting locally led conservation
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Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience: What It Does for Local Schools

A Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) is an investigative, hands-on experience that immerses students in project-based learning focused on the Chesapeake Bay watershed. For years the Eastern Shore Environmental Education Council (EEC) under the umbrella of Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District (ESSWCD) has provided a MWEE for all 6th graders in Accomack and Northampton County. With each successful year the EEC has strived to improve upon the MWEE program to fit the needs of the local teachers and students. In 2017 the MWEE morphed to provide a richer learning experience for Accomack County 6th graders this past October.



Max Lonzanida of USFWS discusses wildlife in the area

The three day MWEE is integrated as part of the 6th grade curriculum, meets Virginia State Standards and has active teacher support. Students begin their experience in the classroom learning about the watershed they live in and are presented with a problem. The problem this year looks at human impact on the watershed, such as construction, farming, and recreation. The Watershed Festival is an in-field experience where students rotate through five informational booths—water quality, soils, wildlife, planning & zoning, and history, to collect data, gather information and experience their watershed with experts in each area. Students return to school to create a proposal as different buyer groups to purchase Makemie Monument Park. The proposals they create and how it will impact the watershed is presented to EEC members, their teachers and classmates.

The **2017 Watershed Festival** was held at Makemie Monument Park on October 18th. There were 226 sixth graders from Arcadia Middle School and Chincoteague Combined School who attended the event to learn how they impact the watershed they live in. Students visited booths manned by EEC organizations—Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission, Chincoteague Bay Field Station, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, The Francis Makemie Society, Northampton Cooperative Extension and The Nature Conservancy. This event would not be possible without funding from ESSWCD, the help of the Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, NASA staff, and Kiptopeke State Park staff who served as volunteers, and the constant support from EEC member organizations.



Approx 226 sixth grade students attended the Watershed Festival.



Using refractometers, students measure salinity of water from Holdens Creek adjacent to Makemie Monument Park.

Conservation Awards 2017

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ESSWCD awards members of the local community who have been remarkable stewards of the land or outstanding advocates of conservation.

Clean Water Farm Award

The Clean Water Farm Award, a State award sponsored by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, is given to VA farmers who



(From left to right) Lynn and Sands Gayle

are exemplary in their protection of the State's soil and water resources. This year's Clean Water Farm Award was presented to **Lynn and Sands Gayle of Mt. Nebo Farms**. Sands was born and raised in Onancock and has been involved in agriculture his whole life. He worked with his father in the tomato industry at Taylor & Fulton in high school as well as gaining horticulture experience working with Hortco Garden Center. Sands had also enrolled at an internship at the Warsaw Agricultural Research and Extension Center under the supervision of Carl Griffey-Head, wheat scientist. He completed the Agricultural Technology Program at Virginia Tech and upon graduation became heavily involved with the family farm.

The Gayles currently grow corn/wheat & soybeans as well as sorghum and canola over a 2,500 acre operation located in central Accomack County. Mr. Gayle is a regular participant in the District's State cost-share programs, annually enrolling in both rye and wheat cover crops. All 2,500 acres are managed using no-till methods in order to protect from wind and water erosion and to build soil organic matter.

Conservation Farmer Award

The District's 2017 Conservation Farmer Award was presented to **Bill Shockley of Woodside Farms, Inc.** Bill was



William Shockley

born and raised in Northampton County where he helped on his father's 250-acre vegetable farm as a child. Bill obtained an Associate's Degree in Agriculture from Ferrum College then furthered his education by completing his Bachelor's degree in Agronomy from N.C. State and his Master's of Vegetable Horticulture from Virginia Tech. In his early years of agriculture he worked in the fertilizer, seed and chemical industry for the Mid-Atlantic region and was the Regional Agronomy Supervisor for Southern States in the 1980s. He was the Northampton (NH) County Extension Agent from 2003-2013 where he also served as an agent for both NH and Accomack for a time.

Bill now farms full-time growing corn, wheat & soybeans over his 1,200 acre operation. Bill plants rye cover crops voluntarily and through cost-share programs. Almost every acre is managed using continuous no-till methods. He uses innovative precision sprayer technology of Accu-Booms which utilizes an automatic on/off program that allows Bill to conserve water, minimize fertilizer and herbicide. Bill enrolled in several NRCS programs in 2002 where he installed 7.5 acres of Conservation Cover for Wildlife. He also established 3.5 acres of filter strips, and received assistance enhancing his irrigation systems.

In April 2015, Bill had 4 of his farms assessed Chesapeake Bay Act Compliance. All of Bill's farms served exceptional examples for water quality protection and conservation initiatives on the Shore.

Wildlife Conservationist Award

Nominated by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, this year's Wildlife Conservationist Award was presented to **Rob Leatherbury of Auwanakus Farms LLC** recognizing



Rob Leatherbury

his outstanding efforts in wildlife conservation and management. Rob and his son, Jake, own Auwanakus Farms in Accomack County. Rob and his family have been developing habitat for wildlife on roughly 200 acres of partially-wooded land in Cashville. Some of the planned practices include hedgerow planting of eastern red cedar and wax myrtle, pollinator planting and early successional habitat management. Rob has worked with a local forest management planner to implement a plan for extensive prescribed burns and firebreaks to manage timber stand for wildlife, clearing away built-up dead vegetation and unproductive understory vegetation. This keeps the forested area open and allows sunlight to reach the ground, stimulating the growth of native plants, which are great food and cover to wildlife such as deer, turkey and quail. Hedgerows were planted along the property's edges to provide habitat to wildlife. attract pollinators, Rob planted black locust.

He sees his efforts in improving wildlife habitat as a project that can last a lifetime, as a way to leave a legacy to his family and a way to tie his children and grandchildren to the Eastern Shore. The Wildlife Conservationist Award recognizes Rob for his contribution in establishing and maintaining valuable habitat to support our Eastern Shore wildlife.

Conservation Educator Award

The District awarded **Subrina Parker**, Principal at Kiptopeke Elementary, for the Conservation Educator, for her outstanding commitment to educating and inspiring the Kipper community to care for the environment around them. Subrina



Subrina Parker

received a BS in Elementary Education from Old Dominion University & a Master's in Administration and Supervision from Norfolk State University. Subrina works with many partner organizations to provide educational opportunities in the local environment for Kiptopeke Elementary (KES) students and their families. Subrina works yearly with Kiptopeke State Park, the Barrier Island Center, Brownsville Nature Conservancy, and US Fish & Wildlife Service to name a few to get her students and staff outside. She encourages staff to look for opportunities like grants from the District, Northampton Education Foundation & Chesapeake Bay Foundation. During the 2016-2017 school year, KES had 4 teachers receive grants that promoted environmental & conservation education. She hopes to help grow future conservation leaders.

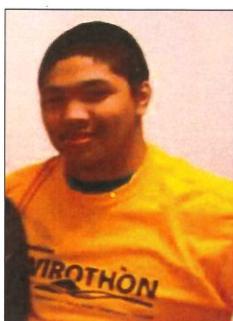
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Conservation Forester Award

The Virginia Department of Forestry, Eastern Shore Office nominated **Tom Mooney** (not pictured) for the District's 2017 Conservation Forester Award. Tom manages his family timberlands near South Chesconessex. The Department of Forestry has worked with Tom to write an in-depth forest stewardship plan to conduct the forest management practices necessary for hunting and wildlife habitat enhancement and timber production.

Tom has conducted woods road maintenance, wildlife food plot establishment, and understory and mid – story forest canopy management to maintain the early succession cover patches necessary for good deer and turkey habitat. Other practices planned for this property are timber harvesting, pre-commercial and commercial thinning, and prescribed burning.

Conservation Student Award



Julian Dedicatoria

The District awards the Conservation Student Award to an exceptional student who participates in environmental studies and conservation outreach. This year, **Julian Dedicatoria** (pictured left) was recognized. Julian is a senior at Arcadia High School with a 3.23 GPA last year as a junior. Julian plans on enlisting in the Air Force next year. Growing up on a farm in Assawoman fostered Julian's desire to protect the natural world. Julian

has been a team member on Arcadia High School's Envirothon team for the past 3 years. He has been a 4-H camp counselor at Wakefield for 3 years. Julian is also highly active participating in drama, soccer, wrestling, football, Model General Assembly and many more activities all while working part-time at Parksley Livestock Supply.

Fletcher/Beasley Conservation Scholarships

This year, the District's Endowment Committee awarded two scholarships in the amount of \$500 each. The first was the

William H. Beasley, Sr. Memorial Scholarship awarded to **Erica Head** who is a rising sophomore at James Madison University. Erica is an observant detail-oriented energetic student with a passion for agriculture. Erica's long time employers said, "Her love of nature and well-rounded background in both animals and vegetables is a strong platform from which to launch a career in any field related to conservation." Her academic record demonstrates strong leadership qualities and environmental consciousness.

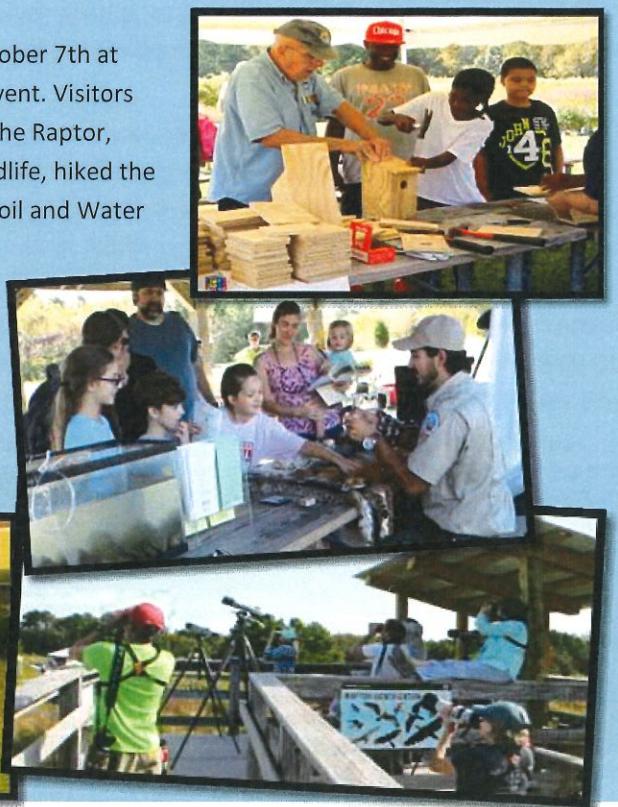
The second recipient, **Logan Godwin** (not pictured), received the W. Foster Fletcher Conservation Scholarship. Logan Godwin graduated Arcadia High School second in his class and is attending the Virginia Military Institute this fall majoring in Environmental Civil Engineering.

The District honors local students, teachers, farmers and community members for their efforts in the conservation of our natural resources. The District would like to thank the farmers, landowners, teachers, students and other partners whose contributions to conservation help assure clean water and productive soil for the future.

Outdoors Exploration Day at Kiptopeke State Park

The 2017 Outdoors Exploration Day was a hit on Saturday, October 7th at Kiptopeke State Park with over 600 adults and children attending the event. Visitors to Outdoors Exploration Day met falcons, hawks, & owls with Flight of the Raptor, made bird houses, tracked wildlife, learned about native plants and wildlife, hiked the many trails at Kiptopeke State Park and so much more! Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District and Kiptopeke State Park would like to extend a huge thank you to those who attended and the many organizations and volunteers that made Outdoors Exploration Day a huge success.

In addition to the 600+ attendees for Saturday's program, the District hosted several shoulder programs Thursday through Sunday including Hikes, Owl Prowls and Flight of the Raptor demonstrations for area public, private, and home school students, teachers and parents reaching a total of 1,373 people from the local area and around the world.



SAVE THE DATE— ES Ag Conference & Trade Show January 24-25, 2018

The Eastern Shore Agricultural Conference and Trade Show will be held at the Eastern Shore Community College, Workforce Development Center, 29300 Lankford Highway, Melfa, VA 23410 on Wednesday and Thursday, January 24-25, 2017. For more information contact: Theresa Pittman, Accomack County VCE at 757-709-2342 or tmjlong@vt.edu or Ursula Deitch, Northampton County VCE at 757-607-6133 or utankard@vt.edu.

Bob Smith, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician Retires

The National Resources Conservation Service would like to thank **Bob Smith**, Soil Conservation Technician for his 11 years of service and dedication. Bob's deep dedication to preserving natural resources on the Eastern Shore will be deeply missed. Bob is excited to start this new part of his life—Retirement. His plans are to relax, golf, travel and relax some more after 29 years of federal service. We hope you share in our excitement and wish him the best in his retirement, the next chapter....or adventure of his life!



(From left to right) Bob Smith and Keith Boyd, NRCS

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 x101.

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.

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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