



Shore Conserver

Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District

22545 Center Parkway, Accomac, VA 23301

ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013

DISTRICT STAFF

Carmie S. Duer, *District Manager*

Cole Charnock, *Conservation Specialist*

Latonya E. Justice, *Conservation Technician*

Bonnie Mahl, *Education Director*

ELECTED DISTRICT DIRECTORS

Robin Rich-Coates, *Chair*

Fred Holland, II, *Vice-Chair*

Davis Lovell

James A. Evans

W. Rawlings Scott, Jr.

Theresa J. Long

DISTRICT ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

Robbie Lewis

Richard F. Hall, III

John Chubb

Dave Vaughn

Edwin R. Long

Brian Broadwater

William Shockley, Jr.

Ursula Deitch

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

The Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District is pleased to offer the FY2013 Annual Report as 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, Chapter 5.

The District's service area covers the Eastern Shore of Virginia—a region on the Delmarva Peninsula comprised of Accomack and Northampton Counties and bounded by the Chesapeake Bay, the Atlantic Ocean and Maryland. The abundance of natural resources has produced an economy based on agriculture and seafood production.

Farming has long been a trademark industry and accounts for an estimated \$350 million in annual sales. The region produces over 80% of the State's vegetable crop. An estimated 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 within the area's watersheds, the impacts of farming on surface and ground water quality are a primary focus for the District's conservation programs and services. The District works closely with area growers through voluntary incentive programs and outreach to address resource concerns resulting from agriculture.

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 also serves as a valued partner and service provider to various agencies and organizations working together towards resource conservation on the Shore.

The work of the District is determined by directors, elected by the people of the District at general elections or appointed by the Virginia 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.

Funding for the District office and for special programs comes primarily through grants with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The District seeks outside grants to expand its work efforts and the two counties within the District's service area contribute supporting funds.

2013 Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share

Nutrient Management Planning

Accomack Bayside 19,732 /Seaside 17,499 acres
Northampton Bayside 10,217 /Seaside 6,873 acres

Nutrient Mgt. Plan Recordkeeping

Accomack Bayside 1,060 /Seaside 1,269 acres
Northampton Bayside 1,141 /Seaside 507 acres

Small Grain Cover for Nutrient Management

Accomack Bayside 2,721 /Seaside 2,520 acres
Northampton Bayside 1,758 /Seaside 669 acres

Harvestable Cover Crops

Accomack Bayside 1,769 /Seaside 1,852 acres
Northampton Bayside 765 /Seaside 1,194 acres

Small Grain Cover behind Vegetables

Accomack Bayside 933 /Seaside 495 acres
Northampton Bayside 822 /Seaside 400 acres

Vetch Cover Crop

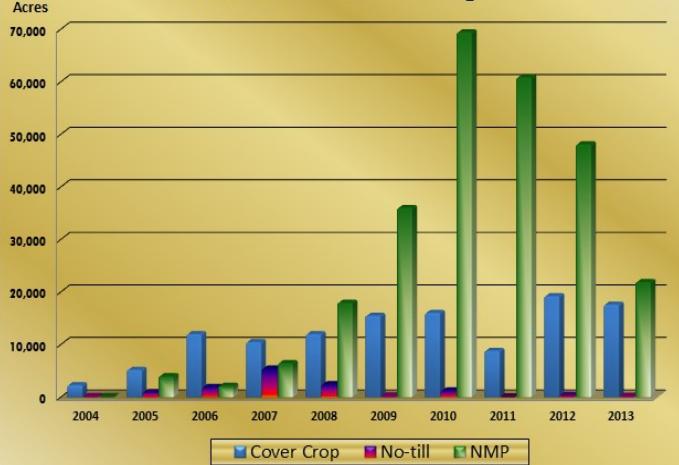
Accomack Bayside 613.3 /Seaside 1,113.7 acres

Continuous No-Till 5-Yr Program

Accomack Seaside 209 acres

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 FY2013, the District provided \$834,696.27 in cost-share assistance to landowners and producers.

Growth in Cost Share Programs



2013 Environmental Education Programs



Envirothon participants and coaches wearing the 2013 Envirothon T-shirt designed by Autumn Gabriele, a senior at Arcadia High School.

Envirothon: 2013 marked the 21st year that the District has sponsored the Envirothon, a competition about the environment for high school students. The support and hospitality of our Envirothon hosts are essential to this great youth program. Team training is conducted by District staff, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Forestry along with other agencies who volunteer their time, facilities and transportation. The local teams compete and the District's winning team represents the Tidewater area in the State competition. This year Arcadia High School placed 1st in the local Envirothon competition. The Arcadia High School team traveled to Virginia State University in Petersburg, VA for the State competition in May 2013.



Participants make their own rain barrel at a rain barrel workshop

Rain Barrel Workshops: The Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District in partnership with the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation, Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the RC&D Council under the umbrella of the Eastern Shore Watersheds

Network hosted numerous rain barrel workshops throughout the year in Accomack and Northampton Counties. The workshops were also supported in part by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation. The rain barrel workshop is a hands-on workshop where each recipient makes his/her own rain barrel. Rain barrels are handy in capturing and utilizing rain water rather than allowing it to run off the land. Over 60 rain barrels were made through these workshops.

Publications: The District published four issues of the *Shore Conserver* in FY13 reaching over 850 households each time with updates on District activities and information on various resource concerns. It's a wealth of information. If you are not already on the mailing list, call the District at (757) 787-0918 x101.

Conservation Poster Contest: The District received approximately 275 student entries on the 2013 theme "Where Does Your Water Shed?". First place winning posters for the 2012 VASWCD "Soil to Spoon" were submitted for entry into the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) State Contest. The Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District (ESSWCD) had two State first place winners this year! **Victoria Spence** of Shore Christian Academy for grades category 2-3 and **Brittany Scott** of Northampton High School for grades category 10-12.



Brittany Scott's Winning Poster

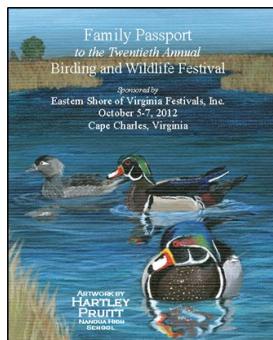
Conservation Teacher of the Year: At the Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts annual meeting held in December 2012, Sally Richardson was awarded and recognized as the Virginia Conservation Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Richardson taught for 29 years at Northampton and was instrumental in getting the Envirothon program started in Virginia in 1991.

Spring Conservation Grants: Each spring the Endowment Committee offers Billie Fitzgerald Memorial Spring Grants to educators, schools and community groups. In 2013, the grant budget was set at \$1,500. The committee was able to approve and fully fund three grants to help support many environmental education programs, equipment and activities. The District awarded grants to area educators for projects ranging from a Butterfly/ Bird

continued next page...

...Educational Programs—Spring Grants...Continued from page 3

Garden at Nandua High, a Bay Lab field trip for Shore Christian Academy and a Classroom Garden kit, root view farm and carnivorous plant set for Kiptopeke Elementary.



Cover of 2012 Family Passport booklet

Birding and Wildlife Festival:

The Birding and Wildlife Festival is an internationally recognized festival which celebrates the arrival of migratory birds to the Shore. To increase attendance of children, ESSWCD designed the passport system which guides the children to the different agencies that have environmental educational activities for children. ESSWCD provides a booth each year with hands-on activities.

Youth Conservation Camp: The Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts has sponsored the Youth Conservation Camp located on the campus of Virginia Tech annually for 37 years. This year the Ye Accawmacke Garden Club and the Eastern Shore SWCD sponsored two campers to attend the weeklong adventure—**Evan Lawrence** from Nandua High School and **Charlotte Olmsted** of Nandua High School.

Farm Tour Day: The District presented the “Story of Soil” to over 200 3rd grade students from Accomack County Public schools, Broadwater Academy and Shore Christian Academy at the Cooperative Extension’s annual event held at Duncan Farms in New Church, VA. The students received educational materials to take with them after their day on the farm.



The students pass around soil samples to feel and touch during the presentation given by the District.

Educational Presentations: This year the District gave educational hands-on presentations for the first time to Occohannock Camp, Vacation Bible Schools, Cape Charles Library, Summer Migrant Program, New Roots Youth Program and many other special local groups.

Environmental Education Council

The District coordinates this group of agencies that works

collaboratively to increase environmental awareness in the community. The Environmental Education Council’s (EE Council) major projects are listed next.

Skill-a-thon: This program was started in 2005 by Rikki Sterrett in Northampton County through the 4-H Extension Office. Its purpose is to review the 3rd & 5th grade SOL science requirements through hands-on activities a few days before the test in hope of improving these scores. The District supports this program by reviewing SOLs.



Food Bank Raised Beds:

The Eastern Shore Environmental Education Council (EE Council) took on a new project this year. They decided to take care of two demonstration beds at the

Food Bank of Southeast Virginia and the Eastern Shore, located in Tasley. With donations from Hortco, Perennial Roots, Maplewood Gardens and EE Council members, the beds were established and growing for the Summer Harvest Season. Each Tuesday & Thursday morning, the beds are harvested and given to the Food Bank for distribution to their clients. Thus far, over 50lbs of produce including dill, tomatoes, peppers, kale and beans, have been harvested.



There are over 20 exhibitors at the Watershed Walk who have booths and hands-on activities for students as well as adults.

Watershed Walk: The Watershed Festival was revitalized as the Watershed Walk in September 2009 held in conjunction with the Onancock Harborfest. This year the Watershed Walk will be held in conjunction with Ride the Tide: Godspeed on Saturday, October 19, 2013 at the Onancock Historic School from 10am–3pm. Live animals, hands-on instruction, prizes, musicians and much more will be at this annual event. This year’s theme will be “Treasures of Your Watershed”.

By the numbers: From July of 2012– June of 2013 over 1500 students and over 200 Adults from both Accomack and Northampton County received a hands-on environmental education experience through ESSWCD’s education outreach programs.

Conservation Awards 2013

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.



Clean Water Farm Award

The DCR 2013 Clean Water Farm Award awarded to VA farmers who are exemplary in their protection of soil and water resources was awarded to **Sue and John Sanns**. After a 2012 energy audit, the Sanns' chicken houses were equipped with upgraded insulation, topnotch fanning mechanics as well as replacement dimmable LED light bulbs. Cost-share with NRCS

also enabled concrete pads to be laid on the ends of each structure to protect surface and groundwater from contamination of chicken manure. They have cost-shared through both NRCS and the District in manure sheds and an animal mortality composter. The structures are outlined by waterproof covering in order to slow soil erosion at the base of the houses.

In addition to structural advances in environmental preservation, the Sanns have taken several steps in buffer systems that protect groundwater quality, capture ammonia and particulate matter and reduce odors by planting switchgrass around the houses, a 6 acre wildflower meadow, a 2,700' windbreak, a 1,500' mixed shrubs hedgerow and a 8,300' hedgerow of hardwoods throughout the farm in order to leave as small of an environmental footprint as possible.

Conservation Teacher Award

The Conservation Teacher Award was presented to **Marianne Simko** who has incorporated natural resources and conservation practices to help prepare today's student as tomorrow's leader. Marianne graduated from Pennsylvania State University with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. On top of working full time as an Environmental Manager from URS Corporation at NASA Wallops Flight Facility, she finds time to volunteer as Arcadia High School's Envirothon Coach for seven years now. She believes environmental education should be a focus in schools. Under Marianne's leadership Arcadia High School Envirothon Team has traveled to the State Competition three times.



Conservation Student

The District presented **Jessica Flory** with the Conservation Student Award. She has been a volunteer at the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge for the past 4 years. This summer she is a Sea STAR (Students Teaching And Researching Coastal Education) intern at the Marine Science Consortium. Homeschooled by her mother, Jessica is also the President of her 4-H Club, leader of her AWANA club, involved in Girl Scouts and enjoys horseback riding.

In 2011 Jessica created the balloon dress from 87 balloons that were collected on the Parramore Island in one day. She wears the dress during her presentations to local schools and events to educate people about the dangers of balloon pollution.

Scholarships

This year, the District's Endowment Committee awarded two \$500 **W. Foster Fletcher Scholarships** to **Kelsey Bisker** (pictured left) of Northampton H.S. who will be attending Clemson University in the fall majoring in Wildlife & Fisheries Biology;



Wildlife Conservationist Award

Nominated by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, this year's 2013 Wildlife Conservationist Award is presented to **Ralph Dodd**. Ralph Dodd farms in Eastville, VA on the Bayside near Cherrystone Creek. Through NRCS' Conservation Stewardship Program, Ralph has planted over 6 acres of wildflower meadows at the edges of his fields extending his existing riparian herbaceous/forested buffers by over 100 feet and improving water quality while providing wildlife habitat for native ground nesting birds and pollinating species of insects, birds and mammals.

He plants a corn, soybean and wheat rotation using continuous no-till planting methods over 75% of his land. Ralph maintains records of all nutrients applied to his land according to his nutrient management plan recommendations through the VA Best Management Practice cost-share program where he also participated in the Harvestable Wheat Cover Crop program.

Conservation Farmer Award

The District's 2013 Conservation Farmer Award was presented to **Richard F. Hall, III**. Rick attended the University of Florida's College of Agriculture receiving a degree in Food and Resource Economics. He has been farming for 37 years and currently owns and operates Loblolly Farms in Accomac, VA on the seaside. These days he farms 3200 acres in a corn/wheat/beans crop rotation with various cover crops.

Through the VA Best Management Program administered by the District, he has participated in all available cover crop programs since 1996 as well as kept current nutrient management plans since 1995. The last two years Rick has enhanced his nutrient management by using the GreenSeeker to precisely apply nitrogen at variable rates totaling over 2,000 acres of his cropland. Through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Rick worked with NRCS and FSA in 2001 to install riparian buffers. Rick took 17+ acres of his cropland out of production to create this riparian buffer of hardwood trees and herbaceous cover around his fields to filter sediment and nutrients from the coastal waters for at least fifteen years. He has expanded irrigation storage and improved irrigation efficiency to reduce dependency on the Shore's limited groundwater resources. His buffers of warm season grasses and forbs capture nutrients and sediment runoff as well as provide habitat and food for wildlife such as quail. He grows all of his soybeans and almost 100% of his corn in continuous no-till.

Forestry Conservationist Award

Robbie Lewis, Area Forester for the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF), nominated **Larry Rantz** (not pictured) for the 2013 Forestry Conservationist Award. For years, VDOF has worked with Mr. Rantz on his wooded properties in Accomack County conducting traditional forest management practices for timber production, wildlife habitat enhancement, and soil and water conservation. Mr. Rantz's tracts have a mix of planted and natural loblolly pine stands which enhances habitat needed by quail, turkeys and deer. Larry leaves mature oaks standing in harvested areas and wildlife travel corridors and food patches for wildlife along the edges of timber harvests when bordering marshes or wetlands. Buffer strips and patches of early succession forest cover serve as storm water and shallow ground water filters, prevent sediment movement, and act as wind breaks. Mr. Rantz holds the largest number of NRCS wetland easements on the Eastern Shore protecting forested wetlands in Accomack.

C E L E B R A T I N G C O N S E R V A T I O N L E A D E R S H I P

and **Jeffrey Logan Holland** of Broadwater who will be attending Virginia Tech in the fall majoring in Crop & Soil Environmental Science.

Preserving Farmland by Co-holding Easements

Conservation easements conserve rural lands which best preserve the farms, forests, fisheries and heritage of Virginia's Eastern Shore for the benefit of future generations. They protect specific natural, scenic, or 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 totaling almost 8,200 acres with the Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust (VESLT) and Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) and monitors 19 easements in partnership with VOF.

- Co-holds 31 perpetual conservation easements with the VESLT on 5,178.25 acres
- Co-holds 1 easement with VOF totaling 156 acres and partners with VOF to monitor 19 perpetual conservation easements on Eastern Shore properties totaling 2,983.1 acres.
- Partners with Northampton County to provide technical assistance and monitoring services for their Purchase of Development Rights Program.

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. Please contact the District office to be added to the mailing list at 757-787-0918.

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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