

CONSERVATION AROUND THE NECK

Calendar Reminders

- ◆ April 20 - Northumberland Co. HHW
- ◆ May 3 - VCAP Applications Due
- ◆ May 18 - Westmoreland Co. HHW
- ◆ June 1 - Last day for Cover Crop Burndown
- ◆ June 7 - VCAP Applications Due

Introducing....

Last year, the Northern Neck SWCD staff met to discuss items that were in desperate need of updating. The logo NNSWCD has been using since 2008 has become increasingly difficult to use when trying to broaden our use of marketing materials. After extensive research, brainstorming and collaboration we have a new logo! Savannah Wimbush, a King George native who studied graphic communications in college, listened to the ideas of staff and Board members and created a logo that we all love. Once Savannah finalized our new logo, she created a portfolio for our office to utilize for different applications. This logo received Board approval at the April Board Meeting and we are ecstatic to introduce it to you. Keep an eye out on our website and Facebook page for upcoming marketing materials.



THIS ISSUE:

PAGE 01
ANNOUNCEMENTS

PAGE 02
NNSWCD PRODUCER
CONFERENCE

PAGE 03
USDA CORNER

PAGE 04
EDUCATION &
OUTREACH

PAGE 06
VACS

PAGE 07
VCAP

NNSWCD Producer Conference

On March 7th, the Northern Neck SWCD held our annual Producer Conference at the Westmoreland Fire House in Montross. All agricultural producers in the Northern Neck were invited to attend and enjoy a delicious breakfast catered by the Art of Coffee. Speakers included Aaron Saunders, NNSWCD's Agricultural Conservation Specialist, covering VACS updates, Leigh Hubbard with the Virginia Grains Producer Association, Derrick Gooden with VSU-Small Farm Outreach Program, Katelyn Jordan, Virginia Farm Bureau's Local & State Advocacy Specialist, Governmental Relations, with updates on the Farm Use Tags, and Dylan Pearson, Honeywell, who introduced Dominion energy's new program called Non-Residential Agricultural Energy Efficiency Program.

We also had partner agencies provide updates for the agricultural community. Partners included Abby Davis (Warsaw-FSA), Lucee Kossler (Warsaw-NRCS), Andrew Matteson (Department of Forestry) and Drew Gladwell (Northern Neck Land Conservancy-NNLC).

Door prizes were raffled off to conclude the conference. We want to thank our wonderful sponsors who donated some amazing giveaways - James River Equipment, Hooper Inc, Colonial Farm Credit, RiverLand Insurers, Virginia Grains Producer Association, Cattywampus Creations, Nutrien, Southern States, and Farm Bureau Crop Insurance.



Virginia Soil & Water Board Nominations

At the Area III Spring Meeting, hosted by Three Rivers SWCD, Northern Neck SWCD Chairman, Robert Pickett, and Hanover-Caroline SWCD Chairman, Leigh Pemberton, were both nominated to serve on the Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Board. The nominations will be placed on Governor Youngkin's desk for final appointment.

USDA CORNER

I hope everyone had a safe and happy winter. I know everyone is gearing up for a super busy spring planting season! I have a few reminders for those of you with active contracts, applications, or potential applications. As a state, we have moved up ALL of our deadlines pertaining to funding new contracts. We have already submitted all of our FY24 applications and are now working on the approval process for those already preapproved. Just a reminder, we are always taking applications. Even if we can't submit them right away for funding consideration, we will accept it and try to do some field visits (if needed) prior to planning and ranking. The whole point of this expedited process is to have more work done on applications prior to ranking submission. Please come see us if you think we may be able to help with anything on your farm, forest, or wildlife areas! Those of you who hold active contracts with us right now received practice reminder letters in the mail. If you have any questions about what the letters included, please give us a call. Reminder, we have many of you signed up for cover crop through various contracts, however, we are modifying those contracts to remove all or a portion of the tracts included so you can receive the higher price per acre through the NNSWCD. You cannot receive payment from both offices, so please be aware that we will have to modify several contracts before we can make payment if you have the same acreage under contract with both agencies. We will be conducting our LWG (local working group) meeting during the May NNSWCD regularly scheduled board meeting. This is the opportunity where we take feedback and responses from our customers and partners and try our best to integrate change into future programs (within reason, some policy is dictated by the farm bill). If you would like to be included in the invitation to the LWG meeting, please call or email me or my team and we'll make sure you are on the list! If you would like to submit feedback but don't have time to make it to the meeting, I can email you the questions that will be asked and you can answer and email back. I'm happy to collect ALL the responses I can get so we can better serve everyone! We have not been given a deadline for FY25 EQIP, CSP, RCPP, and IRA applications, but we anticipate an October 2024 deadline. If you need any assistance on your farm or property, please call or stop in so we can discuss how we can find a good fit for your needs! I hope everyone has a safe planting season!

Lucee Kossler

Did You Know?

In March of 1935, the sky went dark over Washington, D.C. as a dust storm from the midwest blanketed the city. Hugh Hammond Bennett took this as an opportunity to testify in front of Congress about the urgent need for money and programs to combat the Dust Bowl. In April of 1935, Congress voted to pass permanent funding for an independent Soil Conservation Service (SCS). In 1994, Congress changed SCS name to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Here are a few reminders and updates from the Warsaw-FSA office:

- 2024 ARC/PLC signup ended March 15th. Over 21,00 contracts have been approved
- General CRP signup ended March 29th however Continuous CRP Signup is open until July 31, 2024
- Please remember to update our office with land changes PRIOR to crop reporting so producer maps and records can be updated timely

Abigail Davis

Household Hazardous & Electronic Waste



Rain, wind and more rain! We certainly had our fair share of wind and rain at the Lancaster County Spring HHW/E-Waste collection event in March. Thanks to the awesome crew, pictured on the left, we kept smiles on our faces all day long. Despite the weather, over 140 vehicles came through with electronics, pesticides and so much more. Be sure to check out our website for the next event in your county.

In other good news, the fee charge that is normally associated with the Westmoreland County HHW events has now been removed! Residents and property owners in Westmoreland County will not be charged for their household hazardous waste at the upcoming event on May 18, 2024.

VAEE Conference

In February, Lowery and Kelly attended Day 1 of the Virginia Association for Environmental Education 2024 Conference in Manassas. We networked with various organizations throughout Virginia who share the same passion about growing environmental education programs. We learned different ways to create fun and interactive games for students to play while using the resources that can be found outside.



Fun Fact: Lowery serves as the Secretary on the VAAEE Board.

6th Grade Watershed Lesson



Erosion boxes are excellent tools when teaching watershed lessons. Lowery created three new erosion boxes to present to Mr. Nanny's 6th grade class this past January. Students learned the different effects runoff has on cover crop plants, impervious surfaces and compacted dirt sites such as construction sites. Lowery also presented different types of pollutants to each box and explained how they are also affected by runoff. This lesson is very engaging and interactive with students to create a visual understanding on what effects our watershed.

Career Days

We could not be more ecstatic about the various career days we attended this past month. We started off by partnering with our local USDA-FSA and USDA-NRCS offices for the Westmoreland High School Career Fair. The following week, Lowery and Kelly were invited to visit four 2nd grade classrooms at Lancaster Elementary School during a morning Career Day session followed by a Career Fair that afternoon for Lancaster Middle School. We finished the week with our final Career Fair at the Northern Neck Technical Center. Lowery, Kelly, Abby and Caroline enjoyed speaking to all the high school students about their interests, agriculture and natural resource conservation.



Boys & Girls Club of the Northern Neck

At the beginning of the year, the Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Neck reached out to NRCS-Warsaw office regarding a lesson on soil degradation for their teens. This provided



an wonderful opportunity for our two offices to partner together and create a lesson. Lowery and Kelly (NNSWCD) partnered with Brody and Caroline (NRCS) and utilized Lowery's lesson "We All Live Downstream". This lesson includes each student creating their own property and learning how various structures and projects play a role in affecting our watershed. At the end of the lesson, the teens created their own vegetable pots with soil. Garner's Produce graciously donated green bell pepper plugs and green bean seeds for the students to plant.

VASWCD Photo Contest

The 2024 VASWCD Photo Contest is now open! This year's theme is "Conservation Across the Commonwealth". Each participant can submit up to 10 digital images but all images must be captured within Virginia. The contest runs from now until August 1, 2024. Last year, an image taken in the Northern Neck was selected as the overall winner. We hope to see more images captured in the Northern Neck submitted in this year's contest. Rules can be viewed at www.vaswcd.org.



2024 PHOTO CONTEST 

Presented by the Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

Enter up to 10 digital images that represent:
"Conservation Across the Commonwealth"

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
WWW.VASWCD.ORG/PHOTOCONTEST

- Images must be taken in Virginia
- One Overall Winner, People's Choice, & Young Photographer will be selected
- Full list of rules can be found online

ENTRIES DUE
8.1.2024



Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share Program (VACS)

This past March, the central part of the Northern Neck received over 6 inches of rain. While the rain benefited fields with cover crop and small grain, it unfortunately caused for a slow start to the Spring planting seasoning. However, the sunny and windy days are slowly but surely drying up all the rain so farmers can begin preparing those fields for corn and soybean planting. While Spring planting is upon us, there are some important things to keep in mind. You will be sharing the road with large, slow-moving farming equipment. Two main tips to remember this season - stay alert and be patient. Here are some safety tips when you come across a slow-moving vehicle:

- Reduce your speed immediately
- Never cross a double line to pass another vehicle
- Never pass around a blind corner
- Use your turn signals

While you may be on your way to work, keep in mind that the farmer in the large equipment is also on his or her way to work. Do not be in such a hurry to your destination that you risk your life or someone else.

Have you reported to our office?

Don't forget - once you complete your cover crop burndown to give Aaron or Brandon a call.

- Aaron: 804-313-9102 x106
- Brandon: 804-313-9102 x102

Cover Crop burndown began on March 1st. Producers have until June 1, 2024 to complete all cover crop burndown. Producers who wait until May 1st to begin burndown are eligible for an additional \$10 per acre. If you choose to wait until the May 1 deadline, be sure to keep those tract numbers separate. Once you have completed the burndown process, give Aaron or Brandon a call. It is also important to report where you plan to plant corn and soybeans. On the next rainy day, come by the office or give us a call so we can get those reports taken care of. Now that all Nutrient Management plans have been submitted, our office is checking through them. If you have a received a call about signing your Nutrient Management plan, swing by our office the next time you are in town so we can get your plan writers paid.

VACS Program Year (PY) 2025 is quickly approaching. At the Producer Conference in March, Aaron covered what to expect with upcoming year. Here are few items to highlight

- More money will be given for cost-share allocations
- Start planning your rotations and cover crop acres now
- Whole Farm Approach - practices are bundled which increases cost-share rates

The sign-up period for PY25 will be July 8 - August 9, 2024. These will be by appointment only as we have done in the past



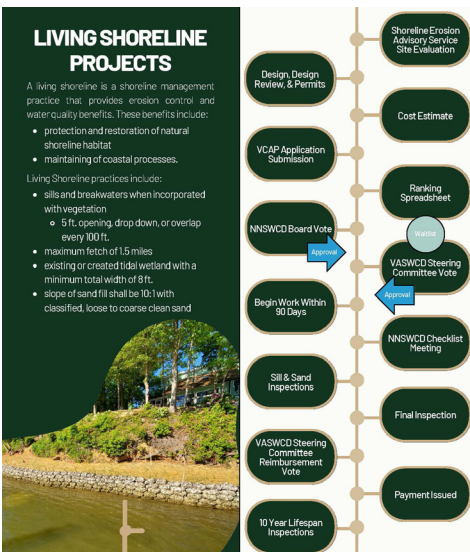
The Benefits of a Living Shoreline

Lowery Becker, Education Conservation Specialist

A living shoreline is a shoreline management practice that provides erosion control and water quality benefits. Such benefits include protection and restoration of natural shoreline habitat, maintaining coastal processes, improvement of water quality and so much more! We currently have eight shoreline projects in various stages of approval and construction. I have been working closely with Mike Vanlandingham and Aaron Wendt at the Shoreline Erosion Advisory Service (SEAS) to review new project sites as well as inspect construction. If you are interested in a living shoreline or any other storm water practices through VCAP, please contact our office - 804.313.9102x104, lowery.becker@nnsxcd.org.



As a member of the Steering and Technical Advisory Committees (TAC), my new year has been filled with many meetings to reassess and edit aspects of the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) manual. The TAC reviews the specifications and makes technical suggestions to the Steering Committee who then makes final edits and votes changes into place. Stay tuned for a manual update coming in July! The District will not be accepting new applications in July for this reason. All changes will be made and open in August.



STAY TUNED!

Kelly and Lowery are finalizing a Northern Neck SWCD VCAP brochure. This brochure will include information regarding the VCAP program specific to the Northern Neck, financial assistance and the steps leading up to an application. Check out a sneak peak!



5585 Richmond Rd.
P.O. Box 220
Warsaw, VA 22572
www.nnswcd.org
Phone: (804)313-9102

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Warsaw, VA 22572
Permit No. 85

Staff:

Kathy Clarke, District Operations Manager
Brandon Dillistin, District Technical Manager
Joanna Balderson, Administrative Assistant
Lowery Becker, Education Conservation Specialist
Kelly Brann, Marketing & Outreach Specialist
Aaron Saunders, Agricultural Conservation Specialist

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