

# CONSERVATION AROUND THE NECK

## 2024 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS:

Calling all high school seniors and college students interested in natural resource conservation and/or environmental studies! Every year, the Northern Neck SWCD awards two recipients with \$1,000 scholarships. The first scholarship award we offer is the **The J.C. Berger Conservation Advancement Scholarship**. This is open to students with permanent residency within Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, or Westmoreland Counties, who will begin a full-time, first-year college curriculum in natural resource conservation and/or environmental studies. The second scholarship is the **The James Edward Minor Ag Stewardship Award**. This award is open to full-time undergraduate college students with permanent residency within Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, or Westmoreland Counties. Applicants must be enrolled in a college-level curriculum in natural resource conservation and/or environmental studies. The applications are available on our website, [www.nnswcd.org](http://www.nnswcd.org), or you can email Lowery Becker at [lowery.becker@nnswcd.org](mailto:lowery.becker@nnswcd.org). All applications must be submitted by **Friday, March 1, 2024** by 4:00pm.

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 **Northern Neck SWCD**  
Scholarship Award

### REACH YOUR DREAMS FOR A COLLEGE DEGREE

Application Period Ends: March 3, 2024

[Apply Now](#)

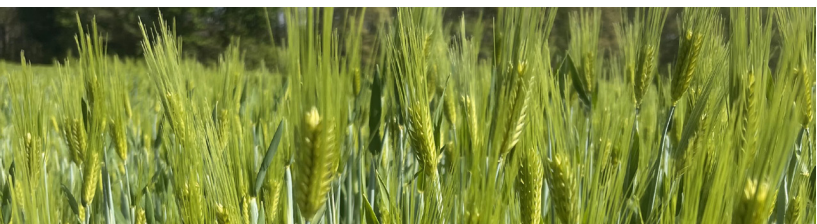
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# VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL COST-SHARE PROGRAM (VACS)

With the new year upon us, everyone is prepping for the upcoming busy season. In the midst of preparing, we ask our farmers to keep these important dates in mind:

- **March 15, 2024** - begin killing or destroying cover crop
- **March 15, 2024** - all nutrient management plans are due to the office
- **June 1, 2024** - last day to kill or destroy cover crop

If you have not reported your planted cover crop acres to Brandon or Aaron, please do so as soon as possible. In October, our office sent out a mass text to producers participating in the VACS program regarding required signatures for Part II paperwork. If you have not signed or are unsure if you have signed or not, give our office a call and we will let you know if you need to come by the office or not. We are trying our best to get all paperwork and office visits completed before planting season begins.



With the planting season in mind, don't forget that we have two No-Till drills available to rent - 2016 Esch Drill and 2018 Great Plains Drill. These drills are perfect for planting or reseeding pastures, hay land, field buffers, wildlife plots, and small acreage fields. There is a minimal charge of \$100.00 due at

rental for the first ten acres planted. After the first ten acres there is a charge of \$10.00 per acre. The amount charged is determined by the acreage meter on the drill. For more details on the drills, visit our website at [www.nnswcd.org](http://www.nnswcd.org). If you would like to get on the rental schedule, give Aaron a call at (804)313-9102 x106.



## Youth Conservation Camp at Virginia Tech:

"For over 40 years the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts has held a Youth Conservation Camp to get high school aged children interested in agriculture and natural resource conservation. In 2012 I was lucky enough to attend YCC as a camper, and this past summer I was allowed the opportunity to attend camp again, but as a counselor. During the camp we had a wide variety of agricultural education-based activities for the campers to partake in at Virginia Tech and in the surrounding areas. Some of the activities included visiting Claytor Lake State Park to learn about tree identification, Ag BMP's, and electrofishing with DWR; visiting Virginia Tech's Kentland Farm and learning about drones, dairy cow production, livestock operation BMP's, and freshwater invertebrates; visiting Lane Stadium/Worsham Field and learning about turfgrass management; taking a tour of the College of Natural Resources and identifying fish specimens, practicing mindful recycling, and learning how to use GIS/GPS; kayaking on the New River; visiting Virginia Tech's Vet School and learning how to do sutures, give IV's, and pull calves; and hiking the Cascades Falls Trail. For me, the best thing about being a counselor was trying to spark the passion and interest for agriculture and conservation in the campers like I had introduced to me when I attended. Attending camp as a counselor really opened my eyes to how much thought and effort goes into this opportunity for children across Virginia. If you know of anyone in grades 9th-12th who are remotely interested in agriculture, conservation, the environment, I cannot recommend this camp enough. It's a fantastic opportunity to spend a week during the summer learning about VA agriculture and natural resources while participating in some once in a lifetime opportunities!" -Caroline Lancaster, NRCS Soil Conservationist-Warsaw Field Office





# VIRGINIA CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (VCAP)

In October, Education Conservation Specialist, Lowery Becker, nominated Mr. and Mrs. Stilmar of Northumberland County for the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) Participant Award. In 2019, Lowery started working with Ben and Jane Stilmar on their living shoreline project. They installed 150 linear feet of living shoreline at their home on Barnes Creek, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. They went to great lengths to study the tidal ranges, mark unexpected changes and question the makings of a living shoreline. Mr. Stilmar still regularly sends Lowery emails with updates on the living shoreline along with data analysis of how the alterniflora and patens are migrating, their success and how the tides are changing. They have also shared their experience with others. They are always open for a visit and have allowed us to use their shoreline as a training tool for VCAP and SEAS staff. Ben and Jane are welcoming, kind and good stewards of the environment. At the VASWCD annual meeting, Mr. and Mrs. Stilmar were presented with the VCAP Participant Award and their efforts were recognized in front of all 47 Soil & Water Conservation Districts. We couldn't be more thrilled for the Stilmars in this amazing accomplishment.



If you are interested in participating in this program or have more questions about it, reach out to Lowery Becker at (804)313-9102 x104. If you wish to submit an application, check out these deadlines:

- **February 2, 2024**
- **March 1, 2024**
- **April 5, 2024**

Applications can be submitted via email to [lowery.becker@nnswcd.org](mailto:lowery.becker@nnswcd.org).



## Virginia Conservation Assistance Program

Presented by Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

# OUTREACH

## Household Hazardous & Electronic Waste Collection Events:

Richmond County & Northumberland County had their 2023 Fall HHW events this past October. On October 22nd, Richmond County had 51 vehicles come through that brought in 6,148 pounds of household hazardous waste and 1,574 pounds of electronic waste. Out of the 51 vehicles, 13 also brought documents for the Shred-It truck for onsite document shredding and 8 vehicles brought in prescription drugs for proper disposal. On October 28th, Northumberland County had their second HHW event of the year. 178 vehicles came through and brought 14,772 pounds of household hazardous waste and 3,403 pounds of electronic waste. In hopes of growing this event, we partnered with Northumberland County Sheriff's office and provided an option for residents to bring prescription drugs for proper disposal. 18 of the 178 vehicles brought in prescription drugs by the bags! According to Northumberland County Sheriff's Department, 129.3 pounds of prescription drugs was collected between the HHW event and their onsite drop off box. Both events were successful and we look forward to growing each event in 2024. Mark your calendars for the 2024 Household Hazardous & Electronic Waste Collections and keep an eye out for upcoming advertisements. Each event is held from 9:00am to 2:00pm.

### Lancaster County:

- March 23, 2024
- September 21, 2024

### Northumberland County:

- April 20, 2024
- October 26, 2024

### Richmond County:

- October 19, 2024

### Westmoreland County:

- May 18, 2024
- September 28, 2024



## Trunk-or-Treat

On Halloween, we partnered with USDA-FSA to participate in the Warsaw Richmond County Main Street Program's Annual Trunk-or-Treat. We enjoyed passing out candy & seeing all the amazing costumes. This is an outreach event we look forward to every year that not only benefits the children but the community as a whole. Thank you WRCMSP for putting on such an amazing community event and letting us be apart of it!



## Safety First

In early 2023, the NNSWCD Board approved the purchase of an automated external defibrillator (AED) to be placed in the office accompanied with a CPR/AED certified training. After months of various obstacles, the AED finally arrived. In November, a CPR training was led by Calvin Balderson, Chief of Emergency Services Northumberland County. Staff were trained on how to safely administer CPR and properly use an AED if required. We also received a REVIVE training from Alexis Burrell with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). This training provided the skillset on how to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose emergency with Naloxone. This is a free training for all Virginians by the VDH. As members of the community and an office that consists of field work, it is important and beneficial for our staff to be trained with life-saving skills.



# USDA CORNER

Happy New Year from the Warsaw USDA office! The Warsaw FSA office has two upcoming dates for producers to keep in mind:

- The small grain acreage reporting deadline is **Monday, January 15, 2024**
- The 2024 ARCPLC election revision and enrollment period began on December 18th and continues through **March 15, 2024**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these dates, please reach out to our office.

*Abigail Davis*

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and holiday season and that you all enjoyed some time with family and friends! For anyone who was in the office before the new year, you already know we were running full speed to beat deadlines, but we're now finalizing payments for the 2023 growing season and preparing for our new FY24 contract application rankings. We've got a new face on the NRCS side of the office. Karen Balentine joined our team in December as a soil conservationist. Please stop in, say hi, and introduce yourselves! We also have an administrative assistant joining the team in February or March as well. As soon as this is finalized, I'll send a bio for him as well!



Hi, I'm Karen Balentine. I spent the last nine years as a hydrologist at Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, before that I was at Everglades National Park for eight years. I enjoy working outdoors and spending time outside in nature. Running is my favorite form of outdoor exercise. I have been known to run many miles and register for a lot of races. When I'm not running, I can be found reading a book. I am a big reader and can go through many books a year. I am looking forward to my new career with NRCS.

There WILL be a second EQIP and CSP application deadline for FY24. That deadline is February 9, 2024. NHQ has changed how we submit some of our applications this year, so this won't apply to ALL fund pools, but it does cover many. If you have any questions about this, please give one of us a call at the office to see if you should submit an application prior to this date. We are still making payments on CSP contracts through mid February. If you have a CSP contract and did not receive your payment in December of 2023, we will be calling you in the next month to come in to sign your paperwork. IF you lost land in your contract, we will have to modify the contract prior to certifying for payment. This takes a week or so to do, so if you know you lost land that was in your contract, please call us soon so we will have time to accomplish both tasks in order to meet the payment deadline of February 17, 2024. If any producer is receiving a nutrient management or precision agriculture payment through any program, we will need a copy of your nutrient management plan (which we can often get from Brandon or Aaron with your approval), your fertilizer records, and potentially yield maps or yield monitor data out of your combines. If you have questions about what we will need, please feel free to call us so we can let you know what to bring before you make a trip to the office. Lastly, NRCS has moved within the USDA office. Because we're running the largest staff we've ever had in Warsaw, we had to get clever with our workspace. Lucee's old office is now the conference room and we've pretty much taken over the north side of the USDA office. When you walk in, you can't miss us, but if you need help finding one of us, just ask FSA and they'll direct you. There will probably not be another newsletter until late spring, so I hope everyone has a productive AND SAFE planting season!

*Lucee Kossler*

# NNSWCD'S ANNUAL HOLIDAY DINNER

On December 13th, we held our annual holiday dinner at the Old Rapp Taphouse in Warsaw. This is our second year hosting the dinner at the Taphouse and it was excellent. The night was full of great food, fun and laughter. As the dinner concluded, we said goodbye to three amazing directors as they are stepping away from the Board - Shirley Powell (Westmoreland), Faye Andrashko (Lancaster), and Billy McCarty (Lancaster). We appreciate everything these individuals have contributed to Northern Neck SWCD during their time. Although Shirley Powell is stepping down as an elected director, he was voted in by the Board to become an associate director.



While we say goodbye to three directors, we also welcomed three new and excited directors to the NNSWCD Board - Benson Braxton (Westmoreland), Lewis Walker III (Lancaster), and J. Aaron Rowland (Lancaster). We look forward to working with the new directors in 2024!



*Pictured left to right. Back row: Robert Pickett, Trent Jones, Vince Garland, Frank Johnson, Aaron Rowland. Front row: Benson Braxton, Richard Wilkins, Shirley Powell, Lewis Walker, Derwin Booker, Jr., Faye Andrasko.*

This year, two Northern Neck farms were nominated for the Virginia Clean Farm Water Award. These awards are eligible to Virginia farmers who implement conservation plans and are doing their part to preserve water quality. Producers spend time, energy and hard-earned money implementing conservation practices. When nutrients and chemicals are kept out of local waterways, quality of life is maintained and improved for many. In the Northern Neck we have two river basins - the Rappahannock River and the Potomac River.



For the Rappahannock River Basin, the Virginia Clean Farm Water Award was presented to Lee and Garnet Sanders of Sanders Farm in Richmond County. The Sanders Family has continuously implemented a no-till planting system, rye cover crops, split side-dress applications, and recently installed a stream exclusion and a large water control structure practice. They are in the process of converting a highly erodible piece of cropland to grass & clover to use for hay under. For the Potomac River Basin, the Virginia Clean Farm Water Award was presented to Robert “Bobby” Vanlandingham of Northumberland County. Bobby has been a steward of conservation for his many years as a Northumberland County farmer, realtor, and NNSWCD Director. He has continuously maintained a no-tillage planting system along with planting rye cover crops on all of his cropland yearly. This summer, he decided to turn his farming operation over to his son-in-law. However, Bobby still plans to remain active in operating equipment and assisting in any way he can. Aaron Saunders, Agricultural Conservation Specialist, recognized both recipients. Unfortunately, Bobby could not join us at the holiday dinner so Chairman, Robert Pickett, accepted the award on Bobby’s behalf. Congratulations to both recipients on their efforts to keep our local waterways clean and protected.



## VASWCD Annual Meeting in Norfolk:

This year the Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) held their annual meeting at the Norfolk Marriott. Northern Neck SWCD was invited by VASWCD’s Education & Training Coordinator, Maura Christian, to bring our Mobile Education Unit (MEU) trailer for the “Mobile & Interactive Education” session. In addition to our MEU, Headwaters SWCD and Eastern Shore SWCD also brought their mobile education trailers. This session provided a wonderful opportunity for districts to network with each other on various types on educational lessons. Staff members Brandon Dillistin, Kelly Brann and Aaron Saunders were in attendance to this meeting as well as Chairman, Robert Pickett, and Vice-Chair, Frank Johnson, Jr. We look forward to the 2024 annual meeting at the Hotel Roanoke with informative sessions that will help us better serve our community.





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**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

**Elected Directors:**

Robert E. Pickett, Chairman (Northumberland)  
Frank A. "Bert" Johnson, Jr., Vice-Chair (Richmond)  
J. Vince Garland, Treasurer (Richmond)  
Benson C. Braxton (Westmoreland)  
James A. "Aaron" Rowland (Lancaster)  
Robert G. "Bobby" Vanlandingham (Northumberland)  
Lewis K. Walker III (Lancaster)  
Richard E. Wilkins (Westmoreland)

**Appointed Directors:**

Louis Gregory "Greg" Basye, At Large Appointed Member (Northumberland)  
R. Trent Jones, Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent



*The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Northern Neck Soil & Water Conservation District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Northern Neck Soil & Water Conservation District programs, activities, and employment opportunities are available to all people regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, military status, or any other bases protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.*