Strategic Plan
July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2029

Mission

To promote the stewardship of natural resources through leadership, education, and technical assistance for all resource users, and to engender a trusted relationship between the NNSWCD and these users.

Introduction

The Northern Neck Soil & Water Conservation District (NNSWCD) is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia organized in 1940 as a result of the Soil & Water Conservation Law within the Code of Virginia Section 10.1-104.1 (B) which states:

"A soil and water conservation district…shall constitute a governmental subdivision of this State, and a public body corporate and politic. Exercising public powers…" **(§10.1-5.38)**

"They (a District and its Directors) shall have power to develop comprehensive programs and plans for the conservation of soil resources and for the control and prevention of soil erosion and for flood prevention or agricultural and nonagricultural phases of the conservation, development, utilization and disposal of water within District…" **(§10.1-546)**

The NNSWCD is responsible for assisting the agricultural community, landowners, and residential property owners of Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland Counties in the wise management and maintenance of the region's valuable natural resource base.

A Board comprised of locally elected and appointed directors oversee a staff responsible for accomplishing these goals in cooperation with local, state, and federal partners. The NNSWCD has ten Directors and several Associate Directors. Eight Directors are elected, two from each of the four Northern Neck counties; two Directors are appointed by the Board, one of which must be a local extension agent. The term of office for Directors is four years and they receive no payment for their services.

The NNSWCD Board meets monthly to conduct and oversee District business. These meetings are public, and the Board encourages attendance by sending meeting notices to local newspapers. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month.

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

Appointed Directors:
Louis Gregory Basye, At-Large (Northumberland)
Stephanie Romelczyk, Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent

Associate Directors:
William D. Allensworth (Westmoreland)
Junius "J.C." Berger (Richmond)

E. Derwin Booker, Jr. (Lancaster)
Richard Haynie (Northumberland)
H. Shirley Powell (Westmoreland)
Kenneth E. Savko (Lancaster)

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

Warsaw USDA Service Center Partners:

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
Lucee Kossler, District Conservationist
Karen Balentine, Soil Conservationist
Brody Ellis, Soil Conservationist
Brooke Jenkins, Farm Bill Program Assistant
Caroline Lancaster, Soil Conservationist
Dylan Lockwood, Natural Resource Specialist

Farm Service Agency (FSA)
Abigail Davis, County Executive Director
Tara Brann, Program Technician
Kelsey Bryant, Program Technician
Sarah Cole, Program Technician

Strategic Plan Process

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to assist the NNSWCD through the next four fiscal years in effectively fulfilling its goals and responsibilities.

On March 3, 2025, during a joint meeting of the NNSWCD Finance and Operations Committees, Directors and Staff drafted a Strategic Plan for the period of July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2029. The Draft Strategic Plan was posted on the NNSWCD web site: www.nnswcd.org for public review; written comments were accepted through April 4, 2025.

The written comments received during the public comment period were considered in developing the final Strategic Plan which was adopted by the NNSWCD Board of Directors at their meeting held on April 9, 2025.

Goal I: Leadership/Partnership

The NNSWCD will continue to work to be recognized by the citizenry of the Northern Neck as a public service organization providing technical assistance and education towards the conservation and protection of natural resources. The NNSWCD will endeavor to:

1) Improve public knowledge of the NNSWCD by:

    a) Increasing awareness through venues such as radio announcements, newspaper articles, private mailings, signage, social media, and NNSWCD's website.
    b) Partnering with local government and partner agencies and organizations on conservation-related programs.
    c) Supporting and participating in local conservation studies and plans.
    d) Continuing efforts with the local governments to strengthen their erosion and sediment control and stormwater management programs.

2) Acquire adequate funding and resources to carry out District operations and conservation programs by:

    a) Seeking stable and dedicated conservation funding from the General Assembly.
    b) Seeking local government support for increased local funding for conservation programs and general operations of the NNSWCD.
    c) Supporting efforts for maintaining data and financial management system.
    d) Supporting continuing efforts for the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs).
    e) Supporting efforts for technical assistance to landowners for shoreline erosion control.
    f) Pursuing grant funding for innovative conservation programs.
    g) Pursuing grant funding to provide leadership in addressing water quality and soil conservation issues on the Northern Neck.

3) Support efforts within the Northern Neck to maintain farms, farmland, and forest lands that are the bases of our rural heritage and economy by:

    a) Acting as co-holder of conservation easements, where appropriate.
    b) Supporting forestry BMP implementation through state and federal programs.
    c) Supporting programs that enhance the profitability and viability of farming and forestry.
    d) Supporting planned development that does not fragment larger parcels of farm and forest land and leave it impractical and unprofitable to manage.

4) Support a Virginia urban BMP cost-share program to address the non-point source pollution from non-agricultural land by:

    a) Participating on local and statewide advisory committees.
    b) Supporting efforts for obtaining funding for education programming, tax credits, and cost-share assistance for implementation of low impact development (LID) programs and shoreline protection.

5) Support the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation Plan by:

   a) Participating on local and statewide advisory committees.
   b) Supporting efforts for obtaining funding for local implementation.

Goal II: Education/Outreach

The NNSWCD, in partnership with other agencies and organizations, will provide education on natural resource issues and management to the citizenry of the Northern Neck to improve their understanding and decision making while maintaining competent staff.

1) Continue educational programming that has been effective in promoting natural resource education to the youth of the Northern Neck by:

   a) Sponsoring Envirothon for local teams and participating in Area III Envirothon.
   b) Promoting and supporting efforts of conservation-related scholarships and camps.
   c) Providing the schools of the Northern Neck with educational programs.
   d) Promoting community building among local educators.

2) Update and educate producers and landowners on non-point and point source pollution issues for continued improvement in erosion control, stormwater management, nutrient management, and protection of the land and water resources by:

   a) Conducting events to keep producers and landowners informed of changes and the availability of conservation practices within the Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) Program.
   b) Promoting and supporting all state and federal conservation programs.
   c) Participating in local extension field days and crop conferences to keep farmers informed on conservation issues and programs.
   d) Providing conservation equipment for rental that demonstrates and helps to implement innovative conservation practices with producers and landowners.
   e) Preparing and publishing seasonal newsletters and articles on conservation programs and issues for education of producers, landowners and the public.

3) Educate the general public on agricultural and forestry issues and practices particularly related to conservation and the application of good science to land and water management by:

   a) Conducting seminars and programs for non-agricultural public on farm and forestry practices.
   b) Making progress reports to local government on NNSWCD programs and conservation needs of the Northern Neck.
   c) Supporting forestry education.
   d) Promoting Ag BMP implementation through signage.

4) Educate the general public and contractors on residential issues related to management of fertilizers and pesticides in the residential landscape, LID, recycling opportunities and storm water issues and innovations by:

a) Promoting and conducting workshops on water management practices.
b) Promoting lawn care practices as related to conservation and environmental protection.
c) Promoting shoreline management to landowners on alternatives for controlling shoreline erosion problems.

5) Educate the general public on practices which lower coliform bacteria levels in waterways by:

a) Promoting septic system maintenance.
b) Promoting proper disposal of boat sewage.
c) Promoting proper removal and disposal of pet waste.

6) Educate the general public on prevention of other types of pollution and the relationship of these to soil and water health and conservation by conducting forums and outreach programs for pollution prevention, such as litter, recycling, hazardous waste and energy consumption.

7) Pursuing educational/training opportunities for the Staff and Directors that would enable them to achieve and maintain professionalism and certifications.

Goal III: Technical Assistance/Implementation

The NNSWCD will work with partner agencies and local government to enhance water quality and quantity through improved management of soil and water resources. The District will:

1) Implement BMPs for agriculture through available Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) Program by:

a) Assessing a producer/landowner's individual needs and making recommendations for improvement based on those needs.
b) Promoting and conducting a cost-share sign-up period in which applications will be taken.
c) Ranking and approving Cost-Share applications in accordance with the VACS BMP Manual.
d) Providing technical assistance for BMP implementation.
e) Directing producers/landowners to the most appropriate state or federal program for water quality improvement.
f) Implementing other state conservation programs which support the Chesapeake Bay TMDL Watershed Implementation Plan (e.g. voluntary data collection, Resource Management Plans, etc.)

2) Implement urban BMPs available through the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) by:
a) Assessing a property owner's individual needs and making recommendations for improvement based on those needs.
b) Promoting and conducting sign-ups in which applications will be taken.
c) Forwarding applications to the VCAP Steering Committee for ranking and approval.
d) Providing technical assistance for BMP implementation.

e) Directing property owners to the most appropriate state or federal program for water quality improvement.

3) Provide local government with technical support on soil and water management where appropriate by:

a) Investigating information and data availability on conservation-related issues.
b) Acting as a conduit by referring, when appropriate, to other resources.
c) Assisting with Chesapeake Bay TMDL implementation as staff and funding availability allows.
d) Assisting with erosion, sediment, and water quality improvement, where appropriate.

4) Provide technical assistance to the non-agricultural and non-conventional agricultural community by:

a) Using existing partner information to identify land that is not being managed properly.
b) Using local resources as a conduit of providing educational conservation materials.

Our Partners

Partnering Agencies listed are vital to accomplishing the goals outlined in this Strategic Plan.

Belle Isle State Park
Chesapeake Bay Commission
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Clean Virginia Waterways
Dominion Virginia Power
Ducks Unlimited
Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR)
Healthy Harvest Food Bank
Healthy Harvest Fresh
Hope for Family & Business Prosperity
Hull Springs Farm of Longwood College
Lancaster County, VA
Menokin Foundation
National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)
National Park Service (NPS)
Northern Neck Consortium for Environmental Stewardship
Northern Neck Electric Cooperative (NNEC)
Northern Neck Land Conservancy (NNLC)
Northern Neck Farm Museum (NNFM)
Northern Neck Master Gardeners (NNMG)
Northern Neck Master Naturalists (NNMN)
Northern Neck Planning District Commission (NNPDC)
Northern Neck Tourism Council (NNTC)
Northumberland County, VA
Richmond County, VA
Richmond County Department of Emergency Services
Richmond County Sheriff's Office
Richmond County Volunteer Fire Department
The Wetlands Project
Three Rivers Environmental Educators (TREE)
Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA)
Town of Colonial Beach, VA
Town of Irvington, VA
Town of Kilmarnock, VA
Town of Montross, VA
Town of Warsaw, VA
Town of White Stone, VA
Twin Rivers Waterman's Association
United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, Flotilla 3-10
United States Department of Agriculture-Farm Service Agency (FSA)
United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
United States Department of Agriculture-Rural Development (RD)
United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
United States National Park Service (NPS)
Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD)
Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation: Shoreline Erosion Advisory Service (SEAS)
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF)
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF)
Virginia Department of Health (VDH)
Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)
Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS)
Virginia Farm Bureau
Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC)
Virginia Native Plant Society
Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF)
Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Board (SWCB)
Virginia State Parks
Virginia State University
Virginia Tech
Water Stewardship, Inc.
Westmoreland County, VA
Westmoreland State Park

Fellow Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Districts

State & Federal Legislators:
Delegate Hillary Pugh Kent – 67th House District
Senator Richard H. Stuart - 25th Senate District
Representative Robert J. “Rob” Wittman -1st Congressional District
Senator Tim Kaine
Senator Mark R. Warner

Closing

In conclusion, the NNSWCD extends appreciation to all who supported and participated with us in this important planning process. The concern and sincerity of the citizens of the Northern Neck for protecting their natural resources are reflected in this plan. The NNSWCD will do its utmost to fully implement the plan, both in letter and in spirit.

The NNSWCD takes full responsibility for this document and any errors contained therein. Additional information should be submitted to the address below.

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

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, ethnic or national origin, sex, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, disability, military status, or any other bases protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.