



2024-2025

Annual Report

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025



OUR 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 District and these users.

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



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers

Robert E. Pickett.....Chair
Frank A. “Bert” Johnson, Jr.....Vice-Chair
J. Vince Garland.....Treasurer

Elected Directors

Robert E. Pickett.....Northumberland
Frank A. “Bert” Johnson, Jr.....Richmond
J. Vince Garland.....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

R. Trent Jones*Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent
Stephanie Romelczyk**Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent
Louis G. “Greg” Basye.....At Large Appointed Member

*through December 31, 2024

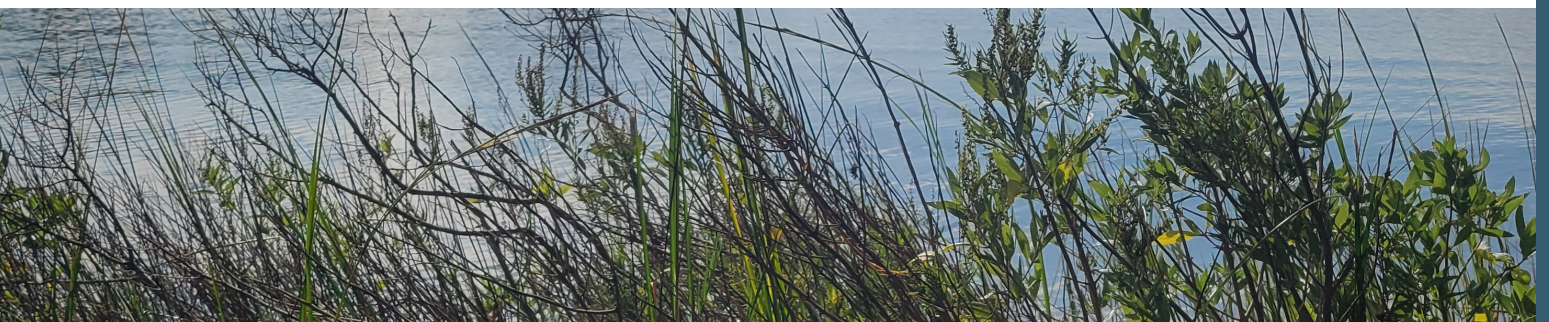
**effective January 1, 2025

Associate Directors

William D. Allensworth
E. Derwin Booker, Jr
Junius C. “J.C.” Berger
Richard F. Haynie
William A. “Billy” McCarty, III
Kenneth Savko
H. Shirley Powell

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



I am happy to report that the Northern Neck Soil and Water Conservation District has experienced another banner year. We have had record funding streams, engaged more producers, citizens, and students and put more conservation practices on the ground than ever before.

The Virginia Agricultural Cost Share Program (VACS) funded cover crops, no-till practices, and Nutrient Management Plans on over 200,000 acres throughout the Northern Neck. With the cooperation and participation of our farm producers \$7,294,138.68 in cost share funding was implemented to improve our soils and protect our Chesapeake Bay tributaries.

Our Northern Neck shoreline property owners continue to take a stewardship interest in protecting their shorelines from erosion and improving water quality. The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) assisted multiple landowners to adopt 1700 linear feet of living shorelines.

With cooperation from our localities & Virginia Cooperative Extension offices, Spring and Fall Household Hazardous Waste Collection events were held in each county. This program has grown to where, in two counties, we average 200 vehicle trips per each event. These events provide a proper disposal opportunity for waste paints, petroleum products, pesticides, herbicides, batteries, and electronics.

Conservation Education and Advocacy are primary to our mission. We continue to spend numerous instructional hours in the classroom educating our next generation students on a suite of environmental topics. Additionally, our other outreach activities continue to inform the greater public of the value of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in meeting conservation goals in the Commonwealth.

The NNSWCD appreciates the support and participation of all our federal, state, and local partners, legislators, producers, and staff that we have come to rely upon. Our work is important and contributes to the well-being of this wonderful place we call the Northern Neck. I trust this annual report will be of interest to you as we go forward to conserve and protect our natural resources.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Robert E. Pickett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

OPERATIONS

VASWCD'S ANNUAL MEETING



The VASWCD hosted their annual meeting at Hotel Roanoke December 8-10, 2024. NNSWCD Chairman, Robert Pickett, and Vice-Chairman, Frank Johnson, were in attendance along with 4 members of our staff, Kathy Clarke, Joanna Balderson, Kelly Brann & Lowery Becker.

Tuesday, December 9th was a big day for Northern Neck SWCD at Hotel Roanoke. The day started off with our Marketing & Outreach Specialist, Kelly Brann, partnering with Shernita Phillips, Friends of the Rappahannock, giving a presentation during the morning breakout sessions. Kelly & Shernita provided a presentation on Canva to share their tips and tricks with other soil & water conservation districts. This session was very engaging and provided a quick step-by-step tutorial on creating Facebook posts. Later in the evening, Joanna Balderson, our Administrative Assistant was recognized for her 5 years of dedicated service to Northern Neck SWCD. Joanna is a reliable and dedicated member of our staff. Her knowledge, experience, and great personality are continuously helping us achieve excellence every day.



NNSWCD's Holiday Dinner

On December 18th, we celebrated a successful year in holiday fashion by enjoying a delicious meal prepared by Old Rapp Taphouse, cheery conversations, and a special appearance by Santa Dan! As an organization, we cherish this time with our Directors and partners.



Area III Spring Meeting

On Wednesday, March 26, the Northern Neck SWCD hosted the 2025 Area III Spring Meeting. Virginia consists of 47 Soil & Water Conservation Districts that are divided into 6 areas. Area III consists of 8 districts – Colonial SWCD, Hanover-Caroline SWCD, Henricopolis SWCD, Monacan SWCD, Northern Neck SWCD, Three Rivers SWCD, Tidewater SWCD, and Tri-County/City SWCD. Every year, the host for the Area III Spring Meeting is rotated throughout the 8 districts. Rotating this meeting provides the host district with the opportunity to showcase specific conservation practices in their district. Conservation's Role in Local Farm to Table Efforts. For the 2025 Area III Spring Meeting, we chose a popular and well-known venue within the Northern Neck, Menokin Road Farm. This venue is surrounded by cover crop fields planted by producers who participate in the Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) program. To showcase Conservation's Role in Local Farm to Table Efforts, we invited two local businesses – Grapewood Farm and Healthy Harvest Food Bank & Fresh. To tie our theme of the meeting together, the amazing catering company, Denson's Grocery, owned and operated by Rocky & Blair Denson, utilized various ingredients from Grapewood Farm and Healthy Harvest to provide a delicious and heart-healthy meal. Grapewood Farm provided the flour to make the biscuits, cookies and breading for the fried tilapia bites and fried oysters. The tilapia and salad greens were provided by Healthy Harvest and the oysters were locally sourced from Captain Faunce Seafood. Fun Fact: Healthy Harvest Fresh is an aquaponics production facility that grows tilapia and filters the nutrients from their tanks to grow premium quality vegetables.



Grapewood Farm is a locally owned farm in Westmoreland County along the Potomac River, who has participated in the VACS program. Grapewood Farm is owned and operated by Fred & Cathy Sachs. They are well-known for the center of their operation, the flour mill. Grapewood Farm produces flour for cornbread, cookies, and so much more. "Grapewood Farm is dedicated to the good stewardship of the land and to managing its natural resources in a sustainable manner. We utilize practices such as no-till and reduced tillage, cover crops and crop rotation to help reduce damage and rebuild soil fertility" – Fred & Cathy Sachs.

Healthy Harvest Food Bank and Healthy Harvest Fresh offer educational opportunities and extensive solutions to fight hunger and promote the importance of a healthy diet within the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula. They offer a variety of programs available to the community. Cindy Balderson, President & CEO of Healthy Harvest, and Tammy Cole, Director of Operations at Healthy Harvest Fresh, gave a presentation on all the wonderful opportunities and benefits they provide to our local community. To conclude the meeting, Healthy Harvest provided attendees an opportunity to tour the facility.





Future Conservationists

We completed the 2024-2025 school year with 4 field experiences, 6 classroom lessons and 4 additional MEU lessons. Every year we are fortunate to partner with Richmond County Middle School (RCMS) and Montross Middle School (MMS) to provide in-class lessons as well as field experiences. This year, we had the opportunity to speak with Northumberland High School's Geography Club, courtesy of NNSWCD's Vice-Chairman Frank Johnson, and completed a lesson on living shorelines and their importance. Millwood Produce also invited the Mobile Education Trailer to be a part of their educational field trips for local preschools and elementary schools in the area. We read "Dirt" by Nancy Woodman that discussed the importance of soil health.



We examined dandelions up close with our new microscopes in the Mobile Education Trailer at Millwood Produce. The students enjoyed exploring the world underneath our feet.





The 2025 J.C. Berger Conservation Advancement Scholarship was awarded to Light of the World Senior and Westmoreland County native, Chloe Garner. Chloe will be studying Agricultural Education at Oklahoma State University. Chloe is very involved with the Essex County 4H Livestock Club and currently serves as the President. She is also a member of the Light of the World FFA chapter and Event Coordinator for the Student Council Association. She is also a Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society member at Rappahannock Community College where she is a Dual Enrollment student. Her love for agriculture, education and conservation made her the standout recipient of this scholarship.



The 2025 James Edward Minor Ag Stewardship Award was awarded to Anne Kathryn Martz of Northumberland County. Anne Kathryn is currently enrolled at Virginia Tech, double majoring in Agricultural Education and Agricultural Sciences. Anne Kathryn had an active role in FFA, serving in many roles at Rappahannock High School and then as Virginia FFA Vice President. She is active with the Virginia Tech Agronomy Club, serving as Vice President, Virginia Tech Collegiate Young Farmers and Block and Bridle. Her continued pursuit of conservation in agriculture meets the District's vision. We can't wait to see what you accomplish Anne Kathryn!

2025 Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon



For the 2025 Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon competition, Northern Neck SWCD is proud to announce the accomplishments of the Rappahannock High School (RHS) Envirothon team. Julie Rivenbark, RHS's Biology Teacher, coached a team of 7 students for the second year in a row. The Area III competition was held at the Dorey Park and Recreation Center on April 15th in Henrico. RHS's Envirothon team placed 2nd in Soils, 3rd in Oral Presentation and 3rd overall in the Area III competition. This advanced the team to the Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon competition at the University of Mary Washington. The team competed against 19 teams from various schools, clubs, and organizations across Virginia.

OUTREACH

Household Hazardous & Electronic Waste (HHW)

During the Fiscal Year 2024-2025, we successfully completed 7 Household Hazardous and Electronic Waste Collection Events within the Northern Neck. These events are steadily growing and NNSWCD is proud to partner with the 4 localities and Virginia Cooperative Extension offices to plan and execute these events. The Fall 2024 event for Westmoreland County reached the second highest number of vehicles serviced for that locality. In the past, Westmoreland County residents were charged a fee if they brought in over a 100 pounds of household hazardous waste. We are happy to announce that in May of 2024, the Westmoreland County Board of Supervisors waived that fee. At the May and September event we saw an increase in participation and gratitude from the residents and property owners of Westmoreland County. While the Lancaster and Northumberland HHWs remain our biggest and busiest events, Richmond County has also seen an increase in participation.



Mark your calendars for the 2026 events:

- Lancaster:**
 - March 21, 2026
 - September 12, 2026
- Northumberland:**
 - April 25, 2026
 - October 24, 2026

- Richmond:**
 - October 17, 2026
- Westmoreland:**
 - May 16, 2026
 - September 26, 2026

Total household hazardous waste collected

Total electronic waste collected

105,768

29,764



	Total Household Hazardous Waste	Total Electronic Waste	Total Vehicles
Lancaster	39,220 lbs.	15,163 lbs.	444
Northumberland	35,380 lbs.	11,930 lbs.	417
Richmond	9,727 lbs.	2,671 lbs.	65
Westmoreland	21,441 lbs.	n/a	162



2025 PRODUCER CONFERENCE

On March 6, 2025, Northern Neck SWCD held our annual Producer Conference at the Upper Lancaster Volunteer Fire Department in Lively. This event is open to all agricultural producers in the Northern Neck area. Producers were invited to enjoy a delicious breakfast, catered by the Art of Coffee, and receive updates from various speakers on ag-related topics.



Speakers provided updates on the Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) program, VSU's Small Farm Outreach program and local partner agencies also provided updates and deadlines. Jayson Gill provided producers on grain market updates while explaining how to prepare for the 2025 planting and harvesting seasons. Calvin Balderson presented on the importance of Grain Bin safety and how to stay prepared when working on the farm.



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

On behalf of NNSWCD, we want to thank all of the wonderful speakers, producers, and partners that attended and participated in this conference. We also want to thank all of our sponsors for donating door prizes that were raffled off to conclude the meeting.



2024 VA Ag Expo

The 2024 Virginia Ag Expo was held at Level Green Farm in Champlain. Although the temperature was in the upper 90s, over 1,000 visitors attended this event. Northern Neck SWCD was a proud sponsor and exhibitor. We took this opportunity to showcase the Mobile Education Unit (MEU) to those outside of the Northern Neck area. The VA Ag Expo is hosted by a different farm every year and always held on the first Thursday of August. We hope to see this expo in Northern Neck in the future.

Community Outreach Events



Friends of the Rappahannock's Marine Career Day



Mobile Education Unit made its debut at Millwood Produce for educational field trips



Warsaw-Richmond County Main Street Program's annual Trunk-or-Treat



Living Shoreline presentation to the Northern Neck Master Gardeners & Rappahannock River Basin Commission



Story Time at Northumberland County Public Library - *Meet Chadwick and His Chesapeake Bay Friends*



Summer Professional Development Trainings

Northern Neck SWCD is proud to partner with Friends of the Rappahannock again on 3 professional development trainings for environmental educators in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula. We started year 2 of these trainings with Captain David Rowe of Bay Quest Charters LLC. He shared his knowledge of marine life and it's ecosystem. The next 2 trainings focused on Aquatic WILD and Project WET certifications. We hope to continue these beneficial trainings for all formal and non-formal environmental educators.





Conservation Appreciation

We held our very first Conservation Appreciation Day on Wednesday, August 28, 2024. We had an amazing turnout that included producers, partners and members of the community. We faced 95-degree heat with delicious soft serve ice cream and BBQ sandwiches. Mooch's BBQ set up a tent and served over 100 customers with various sandwiches and sides. Due to a majority of the sandwiches and sides prepared as homemade, the line remained steady but long. However, Stan & Dotty were there to keep our customers cool with their savory soft serve ice cream. We appreciate all the time, effort and support that our producers give towards the agricultural cost-share programs.

Cheers to 50 & 20 Years!



During Fiscal Year 2024-2025, two members of Northern Neck SWCD reached incredible milestones. NNSWCD is proud to recognize Chairman Robert E. Pickett in achieving 50 consecutive years of public service to the Commonwealth of Virginia. Mr. Pickett's career began with the Virginia Department of Highways in 1974. Overlapping with the final years of his paid career, Mr. Pickett began the volunteer era of his service as an elected Director representing Northumberland County on NNSWCD's Board of Directors effective January 1, 2016.

We are equally as proud to recognize NNSWCD's District of Operations Manager, Kathy Clarke, on 20 years of service to Northern Neck SWCD. Kathy began her career with NNSWCD as an Administrative Assistant in April in 2005 and a few years later was promoted to her current position. During this time, Kathy has received the Chaffin Soil & Water Conservation District Employee of the Year Award twice. Please join us in congratulating both Kathy Clarke & Robert Pickett on their hard work and dedication.





1,703 linear feet of living shoreline installed

Our Impact in PY 2025

County	Practice	Cost-Share	Practice Area
Lancaster	Living Shoreline	\$22,6685.60	100 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$7,731.20	60 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$29,965.60	108 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$30,000.00	196 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$24,473.29	115 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$22,280.00	196 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$30,000.00	420 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$25,894.31	92 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$20,152.94	81 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$19,156.00	72 LF
Northumberland	Living Shoreline	\$19,561.91	67 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$30,000.00	150 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$30,000.00	126 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$30,000.00	130 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$30,000.00	195 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$30,000.00	263 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$30,000.00	164 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$30,000.00	238 LF
	Living Shoreline	\$22,169.28	81 LF
Westmoreland	Living Shoreline	\$30,000.00	200 LF



The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) is an urban cost-share program for homeowners, property owners and businesses. This program is administrated through of the Virginia Association of Soil & Water Districts (VASWCD). VCAP provides financial reimbursement to property owners who install specific conservation practices such as living shorelines, rain gardens, impervious surface removal and much more.

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, and improvement of water quality and so much more. The NNSWCD works closely Shoreline Erosion Advisory Service (SEAS).



During fiscal year 2024-2025, Lowery completed a total of 25 VCAP site visits, not including the various stage inspections, within the Northern Neck. She had 68 inquiries, 14 approved projects and 20 completed living shorelines. A total of \$514,070.13 of VCAP cost share funds were allocated to conserve local natural resources.

2024 Employee of the Year Award

At the Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) Annual Banquet on Tuesday, December 10, 2024, our very own Education Conservation Specialist, Lowery Becker, received the 2024 Chaffin Soil and Water Conservation District Employee of the Year award. Within fiscal year 2023-2024, Lowery has implemented 9 Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) projects with over 1,300 linear feet of living shoreline, while also planning and executing various 6th grade classroom visits and field days. She is armed with certifications as an Erosion & Sediment Control Plan reviewer, Stormwater Plan reviewer, Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional, Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience instructor, and much more. Lowery has a strong, working relationship with DCR's Shoreline Erosion Advisory Service (SEAS) and is positioned as a leader on living shorelines with implementation through VCAP. She serves as a member of the VCAP Steering Committee, NNSWCD's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) NNSWCD's Education Committee, and actively contributes to the Rappahannock Roundtable. Lowery is reliable, dedicated, concise, and always delivers on her promises.



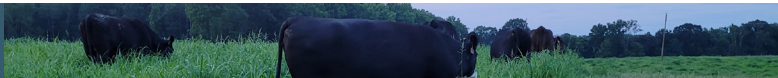


VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL

The Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost-Share (VACS) program is a state-funded conservation initiative that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers and landowners for installing Best Management Practices (BMPs). For fiscal year 2024-2025, Northern Neck SWCD participated in the Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) latest VACS program called Whole Farm Approach (WFA). The WFA program allows for a farmer to submit only one cost-share application for participation in the nutrient management and cover crop practices.

Over
\$7,200,000
of cost-share funds
were allocated to
NNSWCD through
the VACS program

Completed & Paid Projects FY25



Payment by County	Lancaster	Northumberland	Richmond	Westmoreland
Cover Crop	\$815,862.61	\$1,520,574.50	\$1,818,368.22	\$1,870,723.30
No-Till	-	-	-	\$25,613.00
Nutrient Management	\$183,882.90	\$372,910.15	\$285,771.90	\$397,032.10
Exclusion Fencing	3,400.00	-	-	-



Acres by County	Lancaster	Northumberland	Richmond	Westmoreland
Cover Crop	9,082	17,827.50	19,236.40	22,807.80
No-Till	-	-	-	446.00
Nutrient Management	21,597.20	40,076.30	27,697.40	42,564.10

In March, NNSWCD's technical staff, Brandon & Aaron, spent several days with DCR Engineer, Raleigh Coleman, completing erosion surveys. They surveyed several different erosion issues within 4 different sites.



COST-SHARE PROGRAM

Our Impact in **PY 2025**

Total cost-share
payments

\$7,294,138.68

Total producers

162

Total acres enrolled

200,614.70

No-Till Drill Equipment Rental

No-till farming has numerous benefits when it comes to planting. Such benefits include soil and nutrient loss reduction, increase of organic matter, and water quality improvement. Our office has two no-till drills available for rent. We hope that by having these drills available to rent, the citizens of the Northern Neck are provided with affordable means of incorporating conservation on their land so that we may all enjoy these natural resources for generations to come.

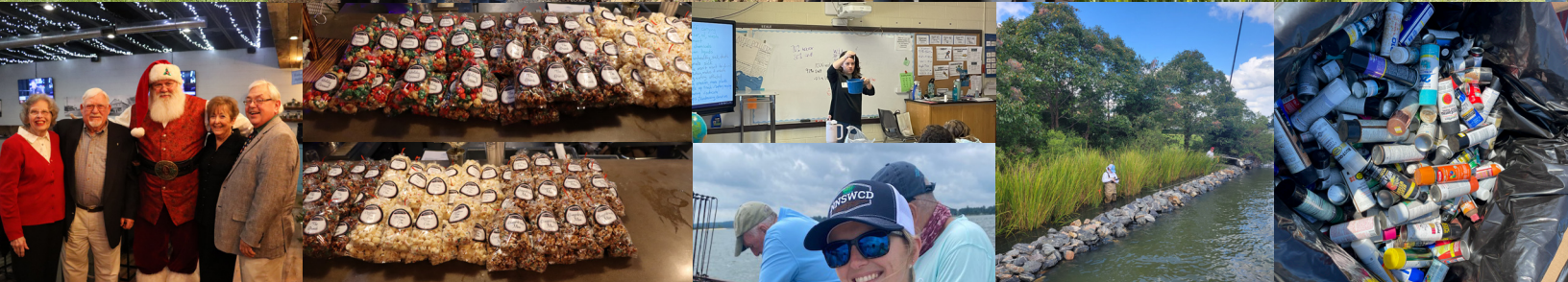
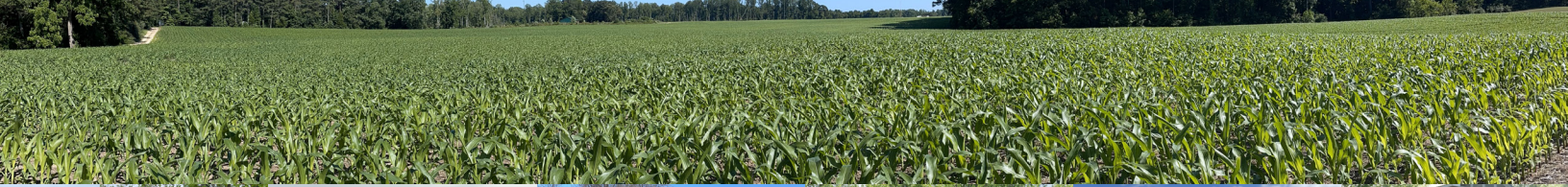


These drills are perfect for planting or reseeding pasture, hay land, field buffers, wildlife plots, and small acreage fields.



- 292.7 total acres planted
- \$3,317.00 total income
- 21 total rentals
- 19 different renters

- 182.2 total acres planted
- \$2,116.00 total income
- 14 total rentals
- 10 different renters



We wish to thank our partnering agencies and organizations that assist with the Northern Neck SWCD's conservation efforts and make them possible:

Belle Isle State Park
Chesapeake Bay Commission
Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR)
Longwood University's Baliles Center
Lancaster County
Menokin Foundation
National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)
National Park Service (NPS)
Northern Neck Land Conservancy (NNLC)
Northern Neck Master Gardeners (NNMG)
Northern Neck Master Naturalists (NNMN)
Northern Neck Planning District Commission (NNPDC)
Northern Neck Tourism Council (NNTC)
Northumberland County
Richmond County
Rappahannock Community College
Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA)
Town of Colonial Beach
Town of Irvington
Town of Kilmarnock
Town of Montross
Town of Warsaw
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)
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 Recreations (DCR)
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF)
Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR)
Virginia Department of Health (VDH)
Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)
Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS)
Virginia Farm Bureau
Virginia Native Plant Society
Virginia Outdoors Foundation
Virginia Tech
Water Stewardship, Inc.
Westmoreland County
Westmoreland State Park

Fellow Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Districts

Delegate Hillary Pugh Kent—67th House District
Senator Richard H. Stuart—25th Senate District
Representative Robert J. "Rob" Wittman—1st Congressional District
Senator Mark R. Warner
Senator Tim Kaine

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.



www.nnswcd.org

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