

**TIDEWATER**



**SOIL & WATER**

**CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

# ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2020 – JUNE 2021

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(804) 699-3482 | [www.tidewaterswcd.org](http://www.tidewaterswcd.org)

The Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia serving the counties of Gloucester, Mathews, and Middlesex. The District is empowered to develop comprehensive programs and plans that conserve and improve the quality of soil and water resources. The leadership of the District is committed to two basic concepts; local citizens can best identify and find solutions to local environmental and conservation issues and the District, or through assistance with its cooperating agencies, will assist individuals with their natural resources conservation planning and problem solving. The District is governed by an eight-member board of directors who serve a four-year term. Six directors, two from each county, are elected in a general election. Two directors are appointed by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board, one of these appointees must be a Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent. Non-voting associate directors may be selected by the Tidewater SWCD Board of Directors. The daily operations of the District are conducted by the staff which consists of a District Manager, Conservation/Education Specialist, and Conservation Office Assistant. Technical assistance is provided by the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The District maintains a close working relationship with the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Forestry, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency, and other federal, state, and local agencies. Operating funds are provided by grants and appropriations from state and local governments. The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. All programs, services, and employment opportunities of the Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, handicap, or political affiliation.

## DISTRICT DIRECTORY

### **DIRECTORS:**

Ronnie Lewis, Chairman - Mathews  
Jason Bray, Vice-Chairman - Middlesex  
Keith Horsley, Treasurer - Gloucester  
George Rogers - Mathews  
Alan Sutherlin - Middlesex  
Daniel Rilee - Gloucester

### **APPOINTED DIRECTORS:**

Frank Long, Secretary - VCE Agent  
William Richardson, Jr. - At Large

### **STAFF:**

LaVerne Calhoun - District Manager  
Sam Markwith - Conservation/Education Specialist  
Shirley Tinker - Conservation Office Assistant

### **NRCS STAFF:**

Scott Hammond - Acting District Conservationist

# HONORING 20 YEARS



Tidewater Soil & Water Conservation District in conjunction with the Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts would like to honor and recognize director, Keith Horsley for his devotion, passion, guidance, and 20 years of service to our district.

*Keith Horsley*



# EDUCATION



## "Where would we BEE without pollinators?"

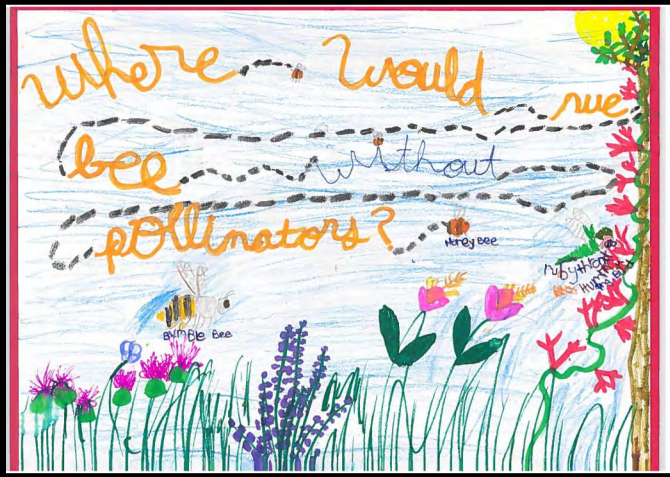
was the theme for the 2020 national youth poster contest sponsored by the National Association of Conservation Districts. Tidewater SWCD accepted entries from Gloucester, Mathews and Middlesex youth in grades K-12. The contest begins locally with the district winner advancing to the state level. The state winners then advance to the national contest. Two local winners were selected and awarded a \$25.00 Wal-Mart gift card compliments of Tidewater Soil & Water Conservation District.



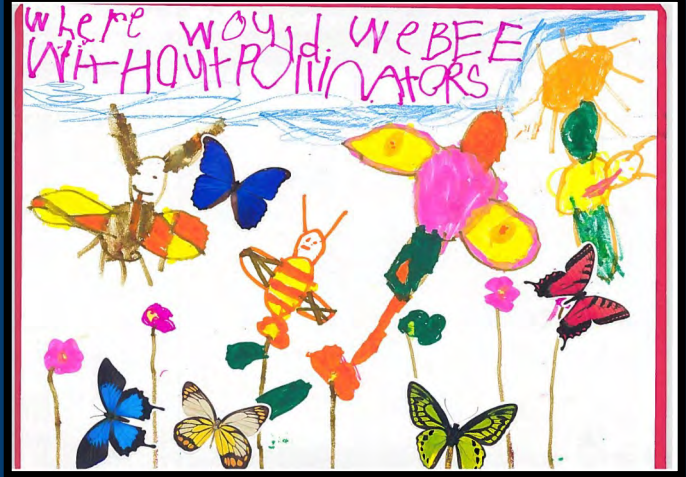
## 2020 Poster Contest Winners



Louisa Goodrich & August Goodrich (pictured right) hold their winning posters for the Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District's annual poster contest.



Louisa Goodrich, Age 8.5



Austin Goodrich, Age 6

Distributed **natural resource conservation materials**, including *Scoop the Poop*, *Conserving Water at Home*, *Backyard Conservation* in addition to others.

Maintained and updated the district website, [www.tidewaterswcd.org](http://www.tidewaterswcd.org), with relevant and timely content.

Participated in the **2020 Urbanna Oyster Festival Education Virtual Event** providing the crumpled paper watershed activity for a hands-on demonstration how human activities on land connect and impact waterways.

Promoted the **Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts Educational Foundation scholarship program** which awards **four \$1,000.00 college scholarships**. The VASWCD Educational Foundation scholarship program promotes the education of Virginia citizens in technical fields with a natural resource conservation and environmental protection emphasis. The program provides financial support to students majoring in or showing a strong desire to major in a course curriculum related to natural resource conservation and/or environmental studies.

The **Martin J. Menges Scholarship** was established in memory of Mathews County resident and former District Director, Martin J. Menges. Mr. Menges was co-founder of the watershed group "*Save the Ole Piankatank.*" Recipients of this scholarship must plan to major in natural resource conservation or environmental studies and have a grade point average of 3.0 or greater. With great honor, Tidewater Soil & Water Conservation District is proud to recognize...



## *Mahlon Chase Horsley*



The 2021 Martin J. Menges \$1,000 scholarship recipient has lived on a farm his whole life and has always felt drawn to the agriculture industry. His lifelong experiences with farming have led him to cultivate an interest in conservation, more specifically, soil erosion and runoff. He is a 2021 graduate from Gloucester High School, and is attending Virginia Tech in the fall with a focus on Agriculture Technology. He hopes to have a farm of his own one day. Please join us in wishing Chase the best of luck in his future endeavors!



# ADMINISTRATION

## Virginia Agricultural Cost Share Best Management Practices (BMP) Program

Tidewater SWCD Board of Directors conducted **business meetings with local partners:**

- ◆ Department of Conservation and Recreation
- ◆ Virginia Cooperative Extension
- ◆ Virginia Department of Forestry
- ◆ Natural Resources Conservation Service
- ◆ Farm Service Agency

Directors and employees attended the virtual **annual meeting** of the **Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts**. The meeting included training sessions, business meetings, partner agency updates, and guest speakers.



The **Area III Spring Meeting** was held virtually on April 20th, 2021 both directors and employees were in attendance. Our District Manager, LaVerne Calhoun, took the minutes of the meeting which consisted of partner agency updates, a business meeting, and guest speaker, Ms. Barbara Hamm Lee. As president/CEO of Sharing Info, LLC, producer and host of “Another View” radio show, and as a DEIJ Consultant/Facilitator, Ms. Hamm Lee delivered a motivational and interactive session on diversity, equality, and inclusion. She also facilitated a Q&A session providing anonymity for the participants, to provide more specific implementation practices and guidance for justice.

Staff from Clifton Larson Allen LLP (CLA), under contract with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), completed a **virtual audit** for Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District for fiscal years 2019 and 2020. Tidewater SWCD was **commended for their sound fiscal management of public funds.**

# Clean Water

Annually, the Department of Conservation and Recreation sponsors the **Clean Water Farm Award** and the **Bay Friendly Farm Award** to recognize farmers utilizing their time, effort, and resources implementing conservation practices that keep nutrients, pesticides, and chemicals from further polluting our waters. These farmers deserve recognition and thanks for adopting innovative tools, technologies, and practices that exemplify protecting and enhancing water quality and inspiring others to do the same.

The *2020 Clean Water Farm Award* from Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District was presented to...



Mr. Benton has always been a proponent of implementing agricultural Best Management Practices to protect the soil and waterways, and participates in several conservation programs offered by the district. He takes soil tests, and follows a custom Nutrient Management Plan to ensure he does not add excess fertilizers to his cropland.



# Farm Award



Mr. Benton also practices no-till farming to help prevent runoff and to maintain soil health. He also has many of his acres under a Resource Management Plan, guaranteeing his land will be maintained with conservation in mind for years to come. For the last 12 years, he has participated in our Cover Crop Cost Share program. Jason understands the importance of maintaining vegetative cover on cropland through the winter, when food crops are not typically grown. Cover crops hold the soil in place with their roots and improve soil health by adding additional organic matter.

Despite the global COVID-19 pandemic the Tidewater Soil & Water Conservation District remained resilient, positively impacting state and national conservation efforts in a socially responsible manner.

Employees attended virtual trainings provided by the Association of Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Districts and the Department of Conservation & Recreation on topics such as erosion fundamentals, personnel management, and the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share Program among various other administrative and technical trainings.

Gloucester, Mathews, and Middlesex County Board of Supervisors were given a presentation highlighting the valuable services provided by Tidewater SWCD.

Tidewater SWCD has begun preparations to host the 2022 Area III Spring Meeting.

## Tidewater Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Directors



Front Row (L to R): George Rogers, Frank Long, Daniel Rilee, Ronnie Lewis

Back Row (L to R): Alan Sutherlin, Keith Horsley, William "Buck" Richardson, Jr, Jason Bray



# WELCOME

**Frank Long** joined Tidewater SWCD as the Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent appointed to the Board of Directors and is currently acting as the board's secretary. Frank began his term on January 2021. Frank graduated from Virginia Tech in 2018 with a major in Agribusiness Management and Applied Business Economics minoring in General Political Science. He hails from the Eastern Shore of Virginia where he worked on his family's farm in addition to running a 100 acre vegetable and herb farm in Virginia for C&B Farms of Clewiston, FL.



**Meredith Rose** was welcomed to Tidewater SWCD staff in June 2021 as the District Conservation Office Assistant. Having experience providing customer-facing support for Apple, a global-leader in providing an exceptional customer experience, and certified by Google, as an IT Support Professional, the district looks to utilize her proficiencies and technical expertise. In addition, she has a diverse background in roles creating and administering engaging enrichment activities to all ages, benefiting future educational outreach initiatives for TSWCD. Meredith is from Middlesex County, where she currently resides on a farm with her family and son, Tucker.



# NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District administers the **Virginia Agriculture Cost Share Best Management Practices Program** which offers Cost Share assistance as an incentive to install or implement voluntary BMPs. BMPs improve water quality in the state's streams, rivers, and Chesapeake Bay.

Provided **\$493,653.00 of Cost Share funding** for the following completed voluntary BMPs:

<b>7,491 acres</b>	<b>Cover Crop for Nutrient Management &amp; Sediment Retention</b>
<b>12,694 acres</b>	<b>Split Nitrogen Application on Corn</b>
<b>3,776 acres</b>	<b>Split Nitrogen Application on Small Grains</b>
<b>2,272 acres</b>	<b>Continuous No-till</b>
<b>1,489 acres</b>	<b>Resource Management Plan Development (additional funding)</b>
<b>25,000 acres</b>	<b>Nutrient Management Plans DCR Direct Pay</b>

**THE MAJORITY OF FARMERS CONTINUE TO IMPLEMENT VOLUNTARY BMPs EVEN WITHOUT RECEIVING COST SHARE ASSISTANCE!**