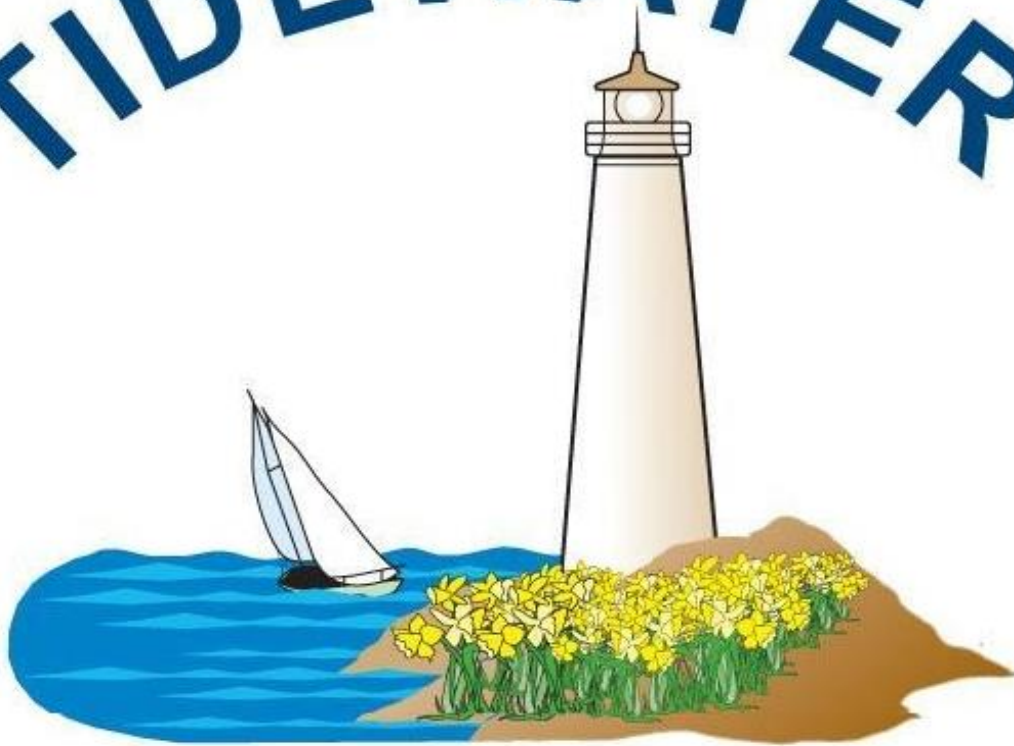


TIDEWATER



SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2021 - JUNE 2022

6969 Fox Hunt Lane | P.O. Box 677 | Gloucester, VA 23061

(804) 699-3482 | 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

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

APPOINTED DIRECTORS

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

STAFF

LaVerne Calhoun - District Manager
Sam Markwith - Conservation/Education Specialist
Meredith Rose - Conservation Office Assistant

NRCS STAFF

Scott Hammond - District Conservationist
Ariel Coleman - Soil Conservationist

EDUCATION

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 **Brenna Hendrix as the 2022 Martin J. Menges Scholarship \$1,000.00 scholarship recipient.** Brenna grew up in Gloucester County on the York River which instilled a love of the environment and a desire to protect our valuable natural resources. Brenna is a 2022 graduate of Gloucester High School and also attended the Chesapeake Bay Governor’s School for gifted students taking college level courses in marine and environmental science while maintaining a 4.581 GPA. She volunteers in her community while also being a member in several school clubs and honor societies. She will be attending the University of Virginia and majoring in environmental science. Wishing you all the best in your exciting new adventure!

Brenna Hendrix - Martin J. Menges Scholarship Recipient



Pictured left to right: Ronnie Lewis TSWCD Director and Brenna Hendrix

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.

Provided the **Enviroscape watershed model demonstration to 300 students during the 2021 Urbanna Oyster Festival Education Day** that was held on grounds of Middlesex Elementary School. This visual demonstration shows how stormwater runoff carries pollutants through a watershed to a pond, lake, river, bay, or ocean and the best management practices required to prevent the pollution. Students realize that what we do in our community makes a difference and has an effect on the environment.

The annual **conservation poster contest** provides K-12 grade students an opportunity to convey their thoughts about soil, water, and related natural resource issues through art. It also highlights the educational outreach efforts of conservation districts and their state conservation associates, auxiliaries and agencies. **Julianna Laign, Ivor Golden, and Scotty Chase** were recognized as the winners of Tidewater Soil & Water Conservation District's 2021 poster contest. The theme for 2021 was **"Healthy Forest, Healthy Communities."** They all received a \$25.00 gift certificate for winning within their age groups and their posters went on to be judged in the state competition. Scotty Chase was unavailable for a photo.

Julianna Laign with Conservation Specialist Sam Markwith



Ivor Golden



For over 40 years, the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts has sponsored a week-long **summer conservation camp** for Virginia high school students (currently enrolled in grades 9th-12th) on the campus of Virginia Tech. The program brings together about 70 interested students for a week of learning about Virginia's natural resources from conservation professionals and faculty from Virginia Tech. Most of the instruction is hands-on and outdoors. Due to COVID-19, the 2021 youth conservation camp was unable to be held in person this year. The Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts partnered to offer the **Virginia Academy of Natural Resources Camp**. The camp was held virtually and included live presentations and exploration assignments.

NATURAL RESOURCES 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 \$621,953.00 of Cost Share funding for the following completed voluntary BMPs:

10,129 acres of Cover Crop for Nutrient Management and Sediment Retention

274 acres of Nutrient Management Plan

8,784 acres of Split Nitrogen Application on Corn

3,919 acres of Split Nitrogen Application on Small Grains

497 acres of Precision Nutrient Management on Cropland- Phosphorus Application

410 acres of Continuous No-till

9 acres Afforestation of crop, hay, and pasture land

25,931 acres of Nutrient Management Plans were either written or paid directly by DCR

The majority of farmers continue to implement voluntary BMPs even without receiving Cost Share assistance.

Hosted the **Virginia Agricultural Best Management Cost Share (VACS) breakfast meeting** at Nick's Spaghetti & Steakhouse in Shackelfords on July 12, 2021. Attendees enjoyed a delicious complimentary breakfast buffet and overview of the PY 22 Virginia Agricultural Best Management Cost Share program. Partner agency reports were provided by Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Forestry, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Farm Service Agency.

Multi-species cover crop



Exhibitor at the **2021 Virginia Ag Expo at Corbin Hall Farm** in Middlesex County.

Sponsored and provided Cost Share update at the **2022 Middle Peninsula Ag Conference** that was hosted by Virginia Cooperative Extension and held at the Freeshade Community Center in Middlesex County. Approximately **32 attendees** participated in the training session.

Accepted the invitation to administer the **Whole Farm Approach (WFA) pilot project**. The WFA pilot project was created to capture all of the practices producers put on the ground even if they were not funded through Virginia Agriculture Cost Share Best Management Practices Program (VACS). The WFA increases the acreages provided to the Bay Model towards agricultural nutrient reductions, showing the true effort of ag producers towards improving water quality.

Hosted Awards Ceremony Dinner at Nick's Spaghetti & Steakhouse in Shackelfords. **Honorees included: 2021 Clean Water Farm Award-Charles Rich, 2021 Best Management**

Forestry Award- John Elkin, Jr. and 15 years of dedicated service- Director Jason Bray.

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation annually sponsors the **Clean Water Farm Award** and the Bay Friendly Farm Award to recognize farmers utilizing their time, effort, and resources in implementing conservation practices that prevent nutrients, pesticides, and chemicals from entering our local waterways. These farmers deserve recognition and thanks for adopting innovative tools, technologies, and practices that are protecting and enhancing water quality and being a role model for others.

2021 Clean Water Farm Award – Charles Rich



Pictured left to right: Chairman Jason Bray and Charles Rich of Richland Farms

Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to honor Mr. Charles Rich of Richland Farms with the 2021 Clean Water Farm Award. Charles grew up on a farm in Gloucester, Virginia and began farming on his own after graduating high school in 1967. Throughout the years, he has entered into many different agricultural ventures including raising cattle, hogs, grains, and timber. No matter the avenue, he always recognized the importance of conservation practices and the benefit they have on his land. Charles adopted conservation practices into his operation very early into his career. He realized the advantages of controlling erosion and installed grass/sod waterways and drop structures on his farm. Mr. Rich has also been practicing no-till farming for over 40 years and grows cover crops through the winter. No-till farming and cover crops prevent soil erosion and helps to maintain a beneficial soil structure and biological life. He implements these best managements practices on all of his cropland acres.

Charles has done a lot of work to ensure those who are interested in learning more about conservation practices have had the opportunity to do so. He played a critical role in the Gloucester Agronomy Tour, an educational event for Gloucester farmers that highlighted different farmers' fields and crops as a way for farmers to learn from one another. He has also partnered

with Virginia Cooperative Extension to host a Gloucester Area Field Day for middle peninsula farmers and agribusiness representatives. This educational event showcased field plots looking at hybrid seed varieties, tillage, and yield enhancers. Charles' farm has been used many times over the years for research endeavors by Extension Agents and Specialists. He has truly had an exceptional career and was on the forefront of advancements in conservation practices. Through these and other efforts, Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to recognize Charles Rich of Richland Farms as the Chesapeake Bay Coastal Clean Water Farm Award winner for 2021!

2021 Forestry Best Management Award- John Elkin, Jr.



Pictured from left to right: Chairman Jason Bray, Mr. & Mrs. John Elkin, Jr. & Lisa Deaton Virginia Department of Forestry

Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to present Mr. John Elkin, Jr. of Hunters LLC and Bigfoot LLC with the 2021 Forestry Best Management Practice Award. Mr. Elkin has managed farm and forest land in Gloucester County since 2005, and nearly a quarter of his land serves to protect water quality as streamside management zones. Mr. Elkin approached both of his land purchases from a stewardship perspective at the onset. He has carried out some of the work on his own, such as precommercial thinning with a brush-saw, tractor spraying areas for site preparation and weed control, and burning for site preparation. He maintains the hunting roads on both properties to prevent erosion through proper grading techniques and by establishing wildflower mixes on loose soil. Mr. Elkin has taken time to attend woodland owner education events, including a longleaf pine program and he became a Virginia Certified Prescribed Burn

Manager. By working with the Virginia Department of Forestry, Mr. Elkin received funds to offset the cost of some of his forest management activities. Pine Bark Beetle Prevention Program funding covered 60% of the cost of the longleaf pine establishment and precommercial thinning of loblolly pine. Reforestation of Timberlands funds assisted with site preparation and planting costs for some of the loblolly pine stands. In addition, the forested buffers alongside timber harvest boundaries provided Riparian Buffer Tax Credits for Virginia income tax.

The number of acres Mr. Elkin has set aside to serve as forested buffers between timber harvests and ephemeral, intermittent and perennial waterways, is well beyond what is required by federal, state, and local laws and policies. John has worked to increase species diversity by establishing longleaf pine and a small sugar maple grove. He has assisted with forest health monitoring by allowing the Virginia Department of Forestry to hang traps and scrape his ash trees for emerald ash borer, an invasive pest. John Elkin, Jr. has been described as “innovative,” which was demonstrated when he made his own wicking brush-bar for his tractor to target blackberries, a problem species, in his longleaf pine plantation. Additionally, he is not afraid to try anything new, illustrated by being a beekeeper, establishing longleaf pine and sugar maple, collecting acorns and hand planting them in his hardwood management areas, and installing a solar-powered well. His enthusiasm and curiosity for trying new management ideas and dedication to conservation, make it an honor to present John Elkin, Jr. the 2021 Tidewater Soil & Water Conservation District’s Forestry Best Management Practice Award!

ADMINISTRATION

Employees attended virtually the annual Virginia Association of Conservation District Employees Graves Mountain Training on various topics.

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

Tidewater SWCD and the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts honored and recognized **Director Jason Bray** for his faithful **15 years of dedicated service to our district.**

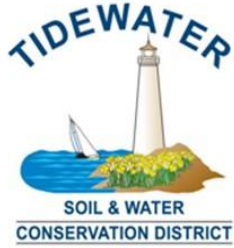
Tidewater SWCD Board of Directors conducted monthly business meetings with our local partners: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Farm Service Agency, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and Virginia Department of Forestry.

Tidewater Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Directors



Front Row (L to R): George Rogers, Mathews; Frank Long, VCE Agent; Daniel Rilee, Gloucester; Ronnie Lewis, Mathews

Back Row (L to R): Alan Sutherlin, Middlesex; Keith Horsley, Gloucester; William Richardson, Jr., At Large, Jason Bray, Middlesex



P.O. Box 677
Gloucester, VA 23061
(804) 699- 3482

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage Paid
Gloucester, VA
Non-Profit
Permit No. 53

District Directors

Jason Bray, Chairman - Middlesex
Daniel Rilee, Vice Chairman - Gloucester
Keith Horsley, Treasurer - Gloucester
Frank Long, Secretary - VCE Agent
William Richardson, Jr - At Large
Alan Sutherlin - Middlesex
George Rogers - Mathews
Ronnie Lewis- Mathews

Return Service Requested

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 Personnel:

LaVerne Calhoun - District Manager
Meredith Rose - Conservation/Education Specialist
Debbie Billings - Conservation Office Assistant

NRCS Personnel:

Scott Hammond - District Conservationist
Ariel Coleman - Soil Conservationist
