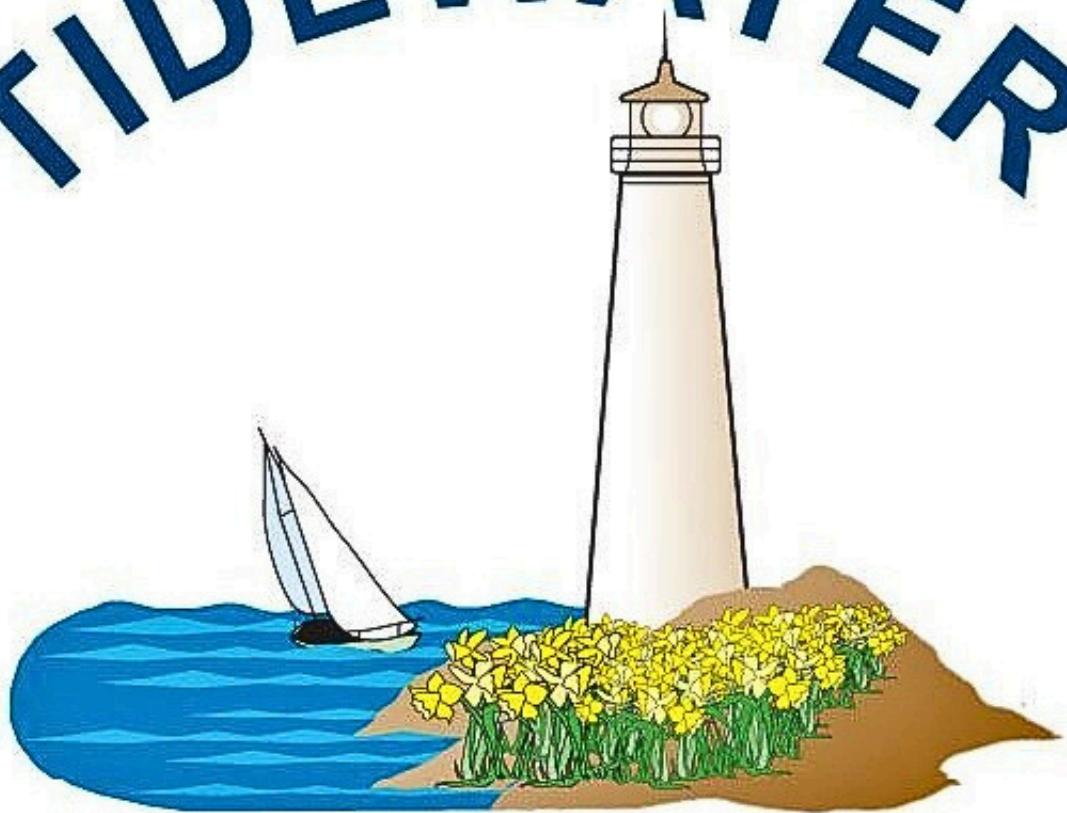


ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2023
TO
JUNE 2024

TIDEWATER



**SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**6969 FOX HUNT LANE | P.O. BOX 677 | GLOUCESTER, VA 23061
(804) 699-3482 | WWW.TIDEWATERSWCD.ORG**

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DISTRICT OVERVIEW

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

Jacob Kirby, Vice-Chairman - Middlesex
Keith Horsley, Treasurer - Gloucester
Amanda Armstrong - Gloucester
Richard Hicks - Mathews
Jean Howard - Mathews
Amy Maloney - Middlesex
Ronnie Lewis - Associate Director

STAFF

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

APPOINTED DIRECTORS

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

NRCS STAFF

Scott Hammond - District Conservationist

EDUCATION OUTREACH

MARTIN J. MENGES SCHOLARSHIP

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. It is with great honor, Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District awards **Jackson Pyles the 2024 Martin J. Menges College Scholarship**. Jackson is a resident of Middlesex County and a 2024 graduate of Christchurch School. He will be attending Virginia Tech in the fall of 2024 seeking a bachelors in natural resource management with a focus in fisheries management. Tidewater SWCD is overjoyed to support Mr. Pyles in becoming a steward of our natural resources and wish him the best in his future endeavors!



Jackson Pyles - 2024 Scholarship Recipient

ARBOR DAY & EARTH DAY

Tidewater SWCD partnered with the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) to celebrate **Arbor and Earth Day** by providing educational programs to **507 students at seven local elementary schools**. Each student planted an Eastern Redbud seedling to take home and participated in an interactive program on the environmental benefits of trees led by local VDOF Forester, Lisa Deaton.



Middlesex Elementary students show off their Eastern Redbud seedlings they planted.



Students act out the life-cycle of a tree, led by VDOF Forester, Lisa Deaton.

URBANNA OYSTER FESTIVAL EDUCATION DAY

Staff participated in the **Urbanna Oyster Festival Education Day** by providing a soil erosion box and the EnviroScape watershed model demonstrations to **over 300 students**. Students participated in a hands-on soil erosion box demonstration and discussion on how erosion reduces soil fertility, pollutes water bodies, and creates other problems. They theorized the results they expected after a simulated rainfall on the bare soil, grass, and crop residue boxes. While observing the runoff from the boxes, they were able to see the changes to water color, clarity, and amount of sediment that was deposited into the collection containers. Students were able to quickly see the importance of keeping soil covered and the benefit of the VACS Cover Crop practices to our community. Next, they were provided an EnviroScape watershed model demonstration. The three-dimensional watershed model includes residential, recreational, agricultural, and industrial landscapes. The students watched stormwater runoff carry pollutants through the watershed and into the river. They learned about the best management practices required to prevent the pollution and realized that what we do in our community makes a difference and impacts the environment.



Middlesex Elementary students simulate rainfall over the erosion boxes using watering cans to demonstrate the impact of water erosion.



Debbie Billings uses the EnviroScape watershed model to teach students about best management practices to prevent polluting our watershed.

YOUTH CONSERVATION CAMP SCHOLARSHIP

Promoted the Youth Conservation Camp scholarship (\$550.00 value) program. This week-long summer conservation camp is on the campus of Virginia Tech and is sponsored by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The program brings together approximately 70 Virginia high school 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.

POSTER CONTEST

Promoted the annual poster contest giving students in kindergarten through 12th grade the opportunity to convey their thoughts about soil, water, and related natural resource issues through art. Winning posters reflect the annual NACD Stewardship theme and they highlight the work of conservation districts and their associations in protecting and enhancing natural resources through education. The theme for 2023 was "One Water." Up to 5 contest winners are selected at the local level. The winning poster in each age group receives a gift certificate valued up to \$25 and also has their poster advance to compete at the state competition.



2024 AREA III ENVIROTHON

Staff volunteered at the 2024 Area III Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon at the Germanna Community College Campus in Fredericksburg, VA. The Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon is a team based natural resources competition for high school students. Students who participate learn stewardship and resource management concepts and work to solve real world environmental problems. Teams compete in five areas: soils, aquatics, forestry, wildlife, and a current environmental issue.



LIVING SHORELINES

In October 2023, the Tidewater Soil and Water Board of Directors voted unanimously to enter into a memorandum of understanding with Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District to administer the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program solely for living shoreline projects in Gloucester, Mathews, and Middlesex Counties.

**TOTAL COST SHARE APPROVED
FOR LIVING SHORELINES: \$159,123.20**

COUNTY	# OF PROJECTS	FEET OF SHORELINE INSTALLED	TOTAL COST- SHARE APPROVED
Mathews	2	294'	\$60,000.00
Middlesex	4	594'	\$99,123.20

VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL COST SHARE PROGRAM

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

TOTAL COST SHARE ALLOCATION: \$3,689,089

BMP's IMPLEMENTED	GLOUCESTER COUNTY	MATHEWS COUNTY	MIDDLESEX COUNTY	ALL TOTAL
Total Cost Share Paid	\$633,078.50	\$106,846.40	\$847,853.21	\$1,587,778.11
Core Nutrient Management Plan	9,982.28	2,111.31	13,220.27	25,313.86
In-Furrow/ Banded N	2,604.64	384.51	2,719.51	5,708.66
In-Furrow/ Banded P	2,604.64	384.51	2,868.36	5,857.51
1 st Sidedress N on C	3,676.29	623.81	5,113.24	9,413.34
2 nd Sidedress N on C	368.73	0	1,377.76	1,746.49
2 nd Topdress N on SG	76.1	0	1,387.49	1,463.59
3 rd Topdress N on SG	0	0	220.4	220.4
Variable Rate N	511.93	0	430.92	942.85
Variable Rate P	531.39	0	0	531.39
Early Rye Cover Crop	3,839.11	569.92	3,250.56	7,659.59
Standard Rye Cover Crop	421.68	24.61	29.2	475.49
Early Non-Rye Cover Crop	1,671.07	361.79	4,842.23	6,875.09
Standard Non-Rye Cover Crop	1.8	0	102.62	104.42
SL8 Specialty Crop	0	0	129.5	129.5
Harvestable Cover Crop	48.91	0	366.4	415.31

*All numbers indicate acres installed for each practice **N=Nitrogen P=Phosphorus C=Corn SG=Small Grain

23,775.34 total acres included on nutrient management plans written by DCR or by a certified plan writer through the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Nutrient Management Direct Pay Program.



Cover crops emerge on Corbin Hall Farm in Middlesex County

COST SHARE OUTREACH

COST SHARE BREAKFAST

The District hosted **57 attendees** for our annual **Cost Share Breakfast** at Damon & Company in Gloucester, VA. The event highlighted the VACS Program, partner agency updates, and included guest speakers Derrick Gooden and Fredrick Custis from VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program, Robert Harper from Virginia Farm Bureau's Grain Market Division, and Bob Waring from Colonial SWCD and Brandon Farms. Producers had the opportunity to sign up for the Climate Smart Grant program that was being offered through Colonial SWCD after the meeting.



Attendees enjoy an all-you-can-eat buffet breakfast.



Presenter Derrick Gooden explains the Small Farm Outreach Program.



Robert Harper discusses the grain market strategy for an operation.

MIDDLE PENINSULA CROPS CONFERENCE

The District provided sponsorship for the **2024 Middle Peninsula Crops Conference** hosted by Virginia Cooperative Extension that was held at the Cook's Corner Office Complex. District staff were among the presenters at the training and provided cost share program updates to **38 attendees**.

AWARDS & HOLIDAY DINNER

Hosted the annual awards and holiday dinner at Nick's Spaghetti and Steakhouse in Shakleford, VA. We said farewell and presented plaques to four amazing Directors in recognition of their service as they stepped away from the board effective January 1, 2024. **Jason Bray served 17 years for Middlesex County. Alan Sutherlin served 15 years for Middlesex County. Daniel Rilee served 13 years for Gloucester County. George Rogers served 3 years for Mathews County.** The guest of honor for our awards dinner was the **2023 Clean Water Farm Award recipient, Daniel Rilee** who was accompanied by his mother, Frances Rilee. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation annually sponsors the Clean Water Farm Award to recognize farmers utilizing their time, effort, and resources in implementing conservation practices that prevent nutrients 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 for being a role model to others.



CLEAN WATER FARM AWARD

Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District has chosen to present **Daniel Rilee** with the **2023 Clean Water Farm Award**. Mr. Rilee is a third-generation farmer raised on his family's grain farm in Gloucester County. Being raised on a farm, Daniel was taught early in childhood to value and respect the land. Those values lead him to accept an appointment as a director for Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District in 2010. He has continued to serve as a member of our board for 13 years. He has provided our District with strong leadership serving as a slated officer in the positions of chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary. While Daniel's profession was not always farming, he took over full time management of the farm in 2015. Daniel primarily raises corn and soybeans in continuous no-till rotations. He is an avid participant in the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share program both in Tidewater SWCD and Three Rivers SWCD. Daniel participates in conservation tillage practices enrolling his acreage in continuous no-till. He plants rye, barley, and mixed species cover crops that include a mix of clover, radishes, and turnips. The farm is equipped with tile drainage and sod waterways to mitigate soil erosion and nutrient loss due to runoff. Mr. Rilee uses precision and variable rate technology for the application of nutrients which increases crop productivity and reduces nutrient runoff. In addition, he utilizes split applications, in-furrow/ banded applications and nitrogen stabilizers to reduce nutrient losses. When asked about his operation Daniel shared, his father Ray Rilee can be found running equipment, planting, keeping records or acting as an advisor to his son, but "my mom is really the one that keeps things running." Frances Rilee can be found running the drying equipment, helping to move equipment, keeping records, advising and many other tasks that have allowed her son and husband to remain productive all of these years. It is our pleasure to award Mr. Daniel Rilee the 2023 Clean Water Farm Award for his years of dedication to agricultural and conservation practices serving Tidewater SWCD and his implementation of best management practices throughout his grain farming operation to prevent soil loss and reduce excess nutrients from entering the Bay.



Daniel Rilee and his mother, Frances, are presented his clean water farm award from Chairman, Buck Richardson.



The harvest is unloaded into the grain elevator at the farm.



Ray & Frances Rilee



Daniel Rilee as Vice-chairman presenting a scholarship recipient with her award.

ADMINISTRATION

ANNUAL MEETING

Directors and staff attended the **Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation District's Annual Meeting** at Norfolk Waterfront Marriott. The event included training sessions, business meetings, partner agency updates, and guest speakers. **Director, Alan Sutherlin, from Middlesex County, was recognized for 15 years of dedicated service.**

AREA III SPRING MEETING

Directors and staff attended the **Area III Spring Meeting** of the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts hosted by Three Rivers SWCD in Tappahannock, VA. The meeting included a business session, partner agency updates, and guest speaker Delegate Hillary Pugh Kent. Newly elected Directors were given the opportunity to complete Phase II New Director Orientation, a required training to fulfill their duties of office, after the meeting concluded.



Guest Speaker Delegate Kent

TRAININGS WITH PARTNER AGENCIES

Attended trainings with partner agencies: Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Virginia Association of Conservation District Employees, Department of Conservation & Recreation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Virginia Cooperative Extension.

BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MONTHLY MEETINGS

The Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors conducted monthly business meetings with local partners, such as, the Department of Conservation & Recreation, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Forestry, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Farm Service Agency.



District Staff at the holiday and awards dinner.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ELECTED DIRECTORS

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.

In November of 2023, Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District had 5 new Directors elected. They took their oath of office and began their 4 year term on January 1st, 2024. The newly elected directors are as follows: Amanda Armstrong of Gloucester, Richard Hicks of Mathews, Jean Howard of Mathews, Jacob Kirby of Middlesex, and Amy Maloney of Middlesex. The directors that continue to serve are: Keith Horsley of Gloucester, William Richardson, Jr. appointed at-large director, and Frank Long appointed VCE Agent. Ronnie Lewis of Mathews continues to serve the board in a new capacity as an associate director.

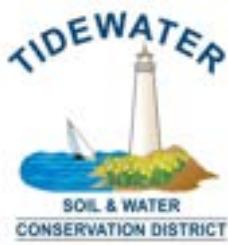


Back Row: Ronnie Lewis & Buck Richardson

Middle Row: Richard Hicks, Jacob Kirby, & Frank Long

Front Row: Jean Howard & Amanda Armstrong

Not Available for Group Photo: Amy Maloney & Keith Horsley



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DISTRICT DIRECTORS

William Richardson, Jr, Chairman - At Large
Jacob Kirby, Vice Chairman - Middlesex
Keith Horsley, Treasurer - Gloucester
Frank Long, Secretary - VCE Agent
Amanda Armstrong - Gloucester
Richard Hicks - Mathews
Jean Howard - Mathews
Amy Maloney - Middlesex
Ronnie Lewis - Associate Director

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

**Tidewater SWCD
(804) 699 - 3482**