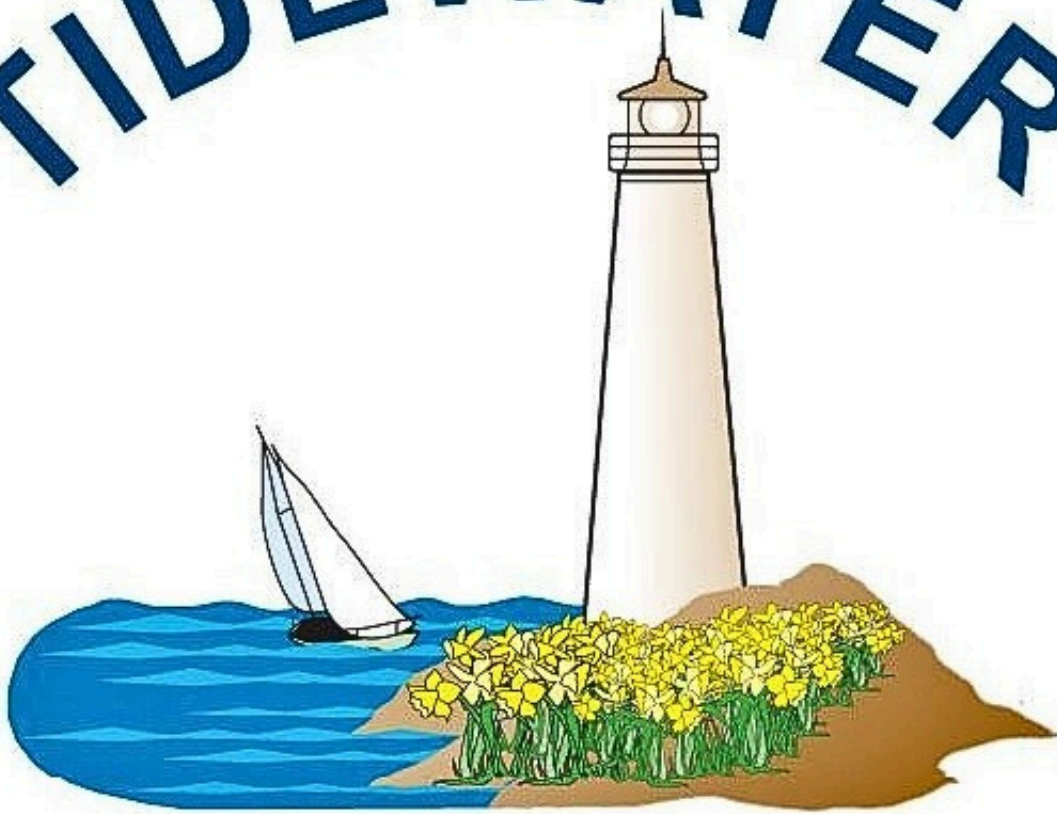


ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2024
TO
JUNE 2025

TIDEWATER



SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Mission

The mission of Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District is to promote the conservation of natural resources through stewardship, outreach, and education.

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

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

APPOINTED DIRECTORS

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

STAFF

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

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 **2025 Martin J. Menges College Scholarship**. Jackson is a resident of Middlesex County and a 2024 graduate of Christchurch School. He will continue his studies at Virginia Tech towards obtaining 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 & 2025 Scholarship Recipient

YOUTH CONSERVATION CAMP

Promoted the Youth Conservation Camp program by offering a scholarship to attend (\$550 value). 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. This year, we sponsored 2 attendees, Barbara and Addie Smith, from Gloucester, VA.



STATE FAIR OF VIRGINIA

Annually, the Association of Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Districts hosts a booth at the **Virginia State Fair** to bring awareness and educate the public about the work of the 47 Conservation Districts across the state. They depend on volunteers to provide manpower throughout the week-long event to share their knowledge on topics like Best Management Practices, benefits of native plants, and also linking people to resources in their area. This year, Tidewater SWCD had two staff and a director volunteer half-a-day each to support their efforts.

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 2024 was **“May The Forest Be With You Always.”** We had an exceptional turn out for the 2024 contest with 32 applicants. First place winners received a gift certificate valued at \$50 and their posters were advanced to compete in the state competition. Second place winners received a gift certificate valued at \$25.



James Givens



Emma Wiant



Elliott Lanigan



Mae Zang



Kilia Beavers



2025 VIRGINIA DOMINION ENERGY ENVIROTHON

The **Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon** is a team based natural resources competition for students in grades 9th-12th. Students who participate learn stewardship, resource management concepts and work to solve real world environmental problems. Teams are tested in groups of 5 in five areas: wildlife, forestry, soils, aquatics, and a current environmental issue. In addition, teams statewide are presented with an oral presentation scenario. Each team has to create a PowerPoint presentation to present to a panel of judges that addresses all of the required criteria. The 2025 theme was, “**Roots and Resiliency: Fostering Forest Stewardship in a Canopy of Change.**” The top 3 teams at each testing station are recognized at the end of the competition, in addition to the top 3 teams overall.

This year Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District supported a team from Gloucester High School, coached by Renee Hypes, the FFA Teacher at GHS. On Tuesday, April 15th, 2025, the team competed in their first Envirothon competition against 7 other teams from Area III at Dorey Park in Henrico, VA. The Gloucester High School competitors placed second overall, qualifying them to compete at the state competition.

On May 18th & 19th, the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts hosted the 2025 Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon State Competition at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, VA. After two-days of competition, the **Gloucester High School Team was recognized for placing third at the aquatics station. Gloucester High School’s Envirothon Team placed 11th in the state!**



MIDDLESEX FARM DAY

Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District participated in the first annual **Middlesex Farm Day** hosted by Virginia Cooperative Extension at Corbin Hall Farm. The event hosted 92 Middlesex County third graders and homeschool students. There were 9 stations presented by various partner agencies covering different topics such as oyster husbandry, livestock care, forestry, farm equipment, watersheds, growing your own food and herbs, and pollinators.



URBANNA OYSTER FESTIVAL EDUCATION DAY

Staff participated in the **Urbanna Oyster Festival Education Day** by providing the EnviroScape watershed model demonstrations to **over 200 students**. 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.

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 **491 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.



Debbie Billings, Conservation Office Assistant, aids an Achilles Elementary School Student planting her Eastern Redbud Seedling to take home.



Meredith Rose, District Conservation/Education Specialist, and Eric White, VDOF Forester, lead Middlesex Elementary students in the tree dance.

LIVING SHORELINES

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The Tidewater Soil and Water Board of Directors voted unanimously to continue the memorandum of understanding (MOU) 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. Through that MOU, the following was accomplished:

TOTAL COST SHARE APPROVED FOR LIVING SHORELINES: \$345,401.60

COUNTY	# OF PROJECTS	FEET OF SHORELINE INSTALLED	TOTAL COST- SHARE APPROVED
Gloucester	5	826'	\$149,976
Mathews	5	651'	\$135,432
Middlesex	2	184'	\$59,993.60

VERIFICATIONS

For many years Tidewater SWCD Staff implemented the **Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP)** for living shoreline projects, prior to the MOU with Colonial SWCD. Our staff continues to conduct spot check verifications annually on the projects that are chosen by the State Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts to ensure living shorelines that were installed through the VCAP program are being maintained and remain impactful. Below, we have pictured some of the projects that were inspected in 2025.



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: \$3,825,548

BMP's IMPLEMENTED	GLOUCESTER COUNTY	MATHEWS COUNTY	MIDDLESEX COUNTY	ALL TOTAL
Total Cost Share Paid	\$856,318.29	\$119,550.74	\$848,514.05	\$1,824,383.08
Core Nutrient Management Plan	10,554.3	2,118.76	13,113.59	25,786.65
In-Furrow/ Banded N	2,977.06	456.43	3,933.71	7,367.2
In-Furrow/ Banded P	2,929.66	456.43	3,933.71	7,319.8
1 st Side-dress N on C	3,361.25	660.58	6,470.37	10,492.2
2 nd Side-dress N on C	0	12.84	584.82	597.66
2 nd Top-dress N on SG	56	0	726.6	782.6
3 rd Top-dress N on SG	0	0	520.93	520.93
Variable Rate N	0	0	0	0
Variable Rate P	638.22	0	815.57	1,453.79
Early Rye Cover Crop	5,442.65	577.77	4,526.37	10,546.79
Standard Rye Cover Crop	100.83	106.66	67.79	275.28
Early Non-Rye Cover Crop	2,048.58	435.79	2,647.81	5,132.18
Standard Non-Rye Cover Crop	940.8	0	601.64	1,542.44
SL8 Specialty Crop	0	0	66.39	66.39
Harvestable Cover Crop	254.75	50	782.23	1,086.98

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

25,817.80 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.



COST-SHARE OUTREACH

AWARDS & HOLIDAY DINNER

Directors and Staff hosted the annual awards and holiday dinner at Something Different in Urbanna, VA. The guests of honor were **Owen and Chris Pointer from Pointer Bros, Inc.** and their families as our **2024 Clean Water Farm Award Winners**. 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.

SPRING INTO CONSERVATION BREAKFAST

Tidewater hosted 40 attendees for our annual **Cost Share Breakfast** at Nick's Spaghetti & Steak House in Shacklefords, VA. The event highlighted the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share Program, partner agency updates and included guest speakers Robyn Woolsey from Colonial SWCD, Hunter Quinones a Nutrient Management Specialist with DCR, Robert Harper from Virginia Farm Bureau's Grain Market Division, and William Thomas of Colonial Farm Credit.



MIDDLE PENINSULA AG CONFERENCE

The District provided sponsorship for the **2025 Middle Peninsula Ag Conference** hosted by Virginia Cooperative Extension at Freeshade Community Center in Topping, VA. The district staff were among the presenters at the event and provided cost-share program updates to 46 attendees.

CLEAN WATER FARM AWARD



POINTER BROS INC.

Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District chose to present **Owen and Chris Pointer of Pointer Bros Inc. with the 2024 Clean Water Farm Award**. Owen and Chris Pointer are 4th and 5th generation farmers who both grew up on the farm. Owen took over fulltime management of the incorporation in 2018, about the same time his son, Chris, joined him fulltime to assist with farm operations. Before they took over, Owen's Dad, William Joseph, and his uncle, James "Jimmy" had co-owned Pointer Bros Inc. and they had incorporated it in 1997. Hence the name, Pointer Brothers.

Riverview Farm, as the home farm is known, sits on the banks of the York River in Gloucester County. Owen recalled his Granddaddy, Michael Harvey Pointer (2nd Generation), growing potatoes there. After several years of just breaking even, he realized being a potato farmer was not for him. The farm was then turned into a flower farm that grew daffodils. The daffodils were harvested, bunched, placed in crates, and loaded onto a steamship at the Clay Bank dock to be taken to Baltimore to sell. Michael Harvey had purchased the first tractor that was ever used on the farm on January 3rd, 1940. That old John Deere has since been fully restored by Chris, as his senior project (with a little help from his family), and remains operable to this day. Michael William Pointer was the patriarch of their family farming legacy. When asked "What is the most satisfying part of farming for you?" Owen replied, "Seeing the next generation taking it over!" as he beamed, glancing over at his son.

Riverview Farm has undergone a lot of changes over the years with the help of research and modern technology. The farm at one point was all conventional tillage with animals helping cultivate the land and pulling a cart to load the harvest while workers picked by hand. Pointer Bros Inc. is currently a grain farming operation. They grow a 2-year rotation of corn and soybeans and will sometimes grow a wheat commodity crop in the winter too. When planting any crop, the Pointers use a no-till drill for the benefit of minimal soil disturbance and uniform placement, ensuring their plants get enough sunlight and nutrients to grow, and also giving the seed protection from pests and the elements as it is covered by soil when planted.



Pointer Bros Inc. began the use of cover crops on their farm prior to the cost share program that pays an incentive to help alleviate the cost. Annually, they plant as many acres as they can with or without cost share assistance. They firmly believe in drilling the seed to continuously establish a good stand. They also try to plant early to fully reap the benefit of having living roots in the soil, try nitrogen fixating species, and are trying to increase soil organic matter. They have tried many different species of cover crops to include clover, rye, wheat, barley, and radishes. Owen and Chris believe the use of cover crops has contributed to positive changes in their soil and, in turn, their farming operation. Their nutrient management planner even noted the vast increase of organic matter shown on their soil test results. The increase in soil organic matter can also be attributed to their conservation tillage practice of no-till farming.

When planting corn, Pointer Bros places in-furrow applications of nitrogen, phosphorus, and micro-nutrients that contain zinc, boron, and sulfur to nourish the seed as it germinates. They also side-dress their nitrogen on corn to reduce nitrogen loss and increase their crop yield by making sure the crop gets the nutrients it needs when the plant needs it most. They also split apply nitrogen on commodity small grains through the winter for the same added benefits. Owen and Chris, implement a nutrient management plan on all of their crop acres and execute a NRCS conservation plan to guide all of their conservation practices.

In addition to the practices listed above, Pointer Bros Inc. has approximately 98 acres of timber they manage. Their farms that border waterbodies utilize grass buffers, a minimum of 50 feet wide, that help reduce soil erosion and filter sediment and nutrients out of runoff. It additionally provides habitat for pollinators and other beneficial insects as well as wildlife. Owen and Chris Pointer recognize the vital component that pollinators play to our food system, economy and our ecosystem's health. Pollinators' ecological service is valued at \$200 billion dollars each year. Pointer Bros Inc. plants buckwheat as a natural bee forage, as it provides a rich source of nectar and pollen for honey bees. The honey made from buckwheat is rich in vitamins and minerals, which bees use for winter food storage. Chris Pointer currently houses and manages 2 active colonies on their farm, which he says takes a lot of work because they are such a temperamental species.

On top of his contributions of conservation on their farm, Chris Pointer has been an active member of the Gloucester/Mathews Chapter of Virginia Farm Bureau since 2020 and has served as the Chapter's President since 2021. He has demonstrated leadership among his peers to ensure they have educational opportunities and technical resources to remain competitive in the agriculture industry. It is this selfless dedication to agricultural producers in our area that sets Chris apart.

Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District is honored to **present the father son duo, Owen and Chris Pointer of Pointer Bros Inc., with the 2024 Clean Water Farm Award** for their contributions implementing conservation practices on their farm and for the commitment to bettering the agricultural industry in the community where they live and grow.



ADMINISTRATION

ANNUAL MEETING

Directors and staff attended the **Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation District's Annual Meeting** at the Hotel Roanoke. The event included training sessions, business meetings, partner agency updates, and guest speakers including Senator, Mark Warner, sharing his new book *Walk, Ride, Paddle*.



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.



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 Northern Neck SWCD at Menokin Road Farm in Warsaw, VA. The meeting included a business session, partner agency updates, and guest speakers.

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.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Tidewater SWCD is proud to announce that our Conservation/Education Specialist, Meredith Rose, has received her Conservation Planner Certification from the Department of Conservation and Recreation.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

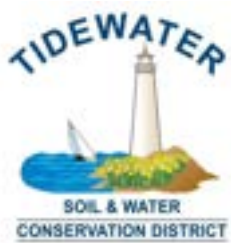
ELECTED DIRECTORS

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.



From left to right: Keith Horsley, Ronnie Lewis, Richard Hicks, Amy Maloney,
Buck Richardson, Amanda Armstrong, Jean Howard, & Frank Long
Not Available for Photo: Jacob Kirby



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DISTRICT DIRECTORS

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