

# CONSERVATION AROUND THE NECK

## PROGRAM YEAR 2024 VACS SIGN-UPS

Wednesday, July 5 through Friday, August 11

Our technical team has been hard at work in preparation for the busy season coming up. Program Year 2024 is right around the corner. We have mailed postcards to the producers, placed ads in the local newspapers and radio stations. NNSWCD partnered with Three Rivers SWCD for a joint radio ad sponsored by Friends of the Rappahannock. This year, NNSWCD will be participating in the Whole Farm Approach.

Be sure to call the office at (804) 313-9102 to schedule your appointment with Brandon or Aaron!



The 2023/2024 Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost-Share (VACS) Program year begins July 1st and demand for assistance can be great, so timely applications are highly encouraged.

**Practices that may be funded:  
(partial list)**

- Planting cover crops
- Nutrient application practices
- Controlling erosion
- Stream exclusion fencing
- Establishing rotational grazing
- Preserving wetlands
- Stabilizing eroding stream banks

**NEW** practice this year: **Whole Farm Approach** will offer increased cost-share rates for practices you may already be doing!

**Tax Credits**

State income tax credits are available for the purchase and use of certain conservation equipment and for specific best management practices.



APPOINTMENT REQUIRED • WALK-INS NOT ACCEPTED  
CALL TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT: (804) 313-9102, X106

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# OUTREACH

We have been busy with community outreach events this last quarter! Staff have participated in Career Days, Household Hazardous Waste Events, Earth Day Festivals and so much more! For the first time since COVID-19 hit, the NNSWCD's Mobile Education Unit (MEU) made a debut. We love interacting with our community through these events and look forward to upcoming events during the 2023/2024 fiscal year. Do you have some ideas on how to increase our outreach? Contact Kelly at [kelly.brann@nnswwcd.org](mailto:kelly.brann@nnswwcd.org) and she will be happy to work with you!

April was a very busy month for us in regards to outreach and educational programs! We kicked off the month with a booth at the Heathsville Farmer's Market/Earth Day Festival. Kelly, Joanna and Chairman Pickett met with many Northern Neck residents and discussed who we are and the benefits of the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP). The "Save Water Seed Paper" packets were a huge hit with adults and children!



## Household Hazardous & Electronic Waste Collection

As the month of May wrapped up, we completed all Spring Household Hazardous and Electronic Waste (HHW) Collection events. We spent Earth Day working the Northumberland County HHW event and it was a huge success! Over 170 vehicles came through from 9am to 2pm bringing in unwanted paint cans, used motor oil, old gas, electronics, and so much more. We collected 12,451 pounds of household waste and 4,502 pounds of electronic waste. The Westmoreland County event almost doubled the amount of vehicles that came through from the previous years events with a little over 5,000 pounds of household waste collected. These events would not be possible without help from our partners at Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), all Northern Neck localities, and MXI Environmental Services.







## **Westmoreland High School Career Day**

Northern Neck SWCD was asked to attend a Career Fair at Westmoreland High School in April. Joanna and Kelly met with ninth through twelfth graders and discussed the different job positions that soil and water conservation districts have to offer. We loved sharing information about our office and the importance of everyone's position. Career Fairs are a wonderful opportunity for students to see what jobs, internships, and even volunteer options are offered within our community and what steps need to be taken in order to get those jobs.



## **Mobile Education Unit Debut**

Northern Neck SWCD Director Richard Wilkins, asked us to wipe the dust off the Mobile Education Unit and bring it to a Customer Appreciation Day at the VA Farm Bureau office in Montross. Our staff spent a few days checking the trailer over, updating signage inside, and making sure everything was in working order. Kelly & Lowery enjoyed a beautiful day out showing everyone the awesome features the MEU has to offer! We are excited for upcoming community events involving our education trailer.



## **Makers Day at Menokin**

The Menokin Foundation hosted Makers Day on June 24th. This fun-filled day celebrated building the arts and the makers movement. There were basket weavers, blue birdhouse builders, glass blowers and more. The District helped participants create pollinators that could be hung to catch the sun. This was a wonderful, free event enjoyed by all ages! Keep your eyes out for future Makers Days.



## **"Check Me Out" Program**

The Lancaster Community Library invited NNSWCD to attend their Summer "Check Me Out" program. This program consisted of various local businesses speaking with children in the community about their occupations. The idea behind this program is to engage the children in one on one conversations without the distraction of cell phones or other electronic devices. Our staff had a blast at this event and enjoyed the opportunity to network with other local businesses.







# EDUCATION

In April, NNSWCD partnered with Friends of the Rappahannock, Menokin Foundation, Belle Isle State Park, Tidewater Oyster Gardener Association, Department of Forestry, and Virginia Cooperative Extension to successfully host two separate "Thinking Outside The Sink" (T.O.T.S.) events for sixth graders from Richmond County Middle School and Montross Middle School. Lowery coordinated with the schools and partners to ensure the students had a meaningful experience learning about the Northern Neck's watersheds.

Richmond County sixth graders T.O.T.S. event was held at the Belle Isle State Park. Students were broken into 5 groups and rotated throughout the stations. These stations included seining for river aquatic organisms, how water flows through a watershed during storms, the life cycle and importance of oysters, wetlands and how to hike a trail, the role of a riparian buffer on water quality, and food webs.

Montross Middle sixth graders T.O.T.S. event was held at the Menokin Foundation. Students were broken into 4 smaller groups and rotated throughout the stations. These stations included kayaking, nature Bingo walk, the importance of water quality and the history of Menokin. For both events, each station was led by a different organization that provided different watershed experiences for the students.



*Richmond County  
T.O.T.S.*



*Montross Middle  
T.O.T.S.*



## USDA CORNER

The Warsaw FSA office is ready for producers to report planted acreage on their spring crops. Abby Davis, County Executive Director, has a few reminders for producers:

- Producers who did not report their acreage by July 15th can late-file with the applicable fee. Any crops planted after July 15th have 15 days from the day they were planted to report.
- The County Committee is holding an election in Northumberland County for a COC member. Nomination forms are available at the FSA office. The deadline to submit nominations is August 1st, 2023.

I hope everyone had a great planting season and are enjoying these growing degree days that have taken hold of the Neck. I want to take a few minutes to introduce our newest employee that I mentioned in the last newsletter, go over some changes happening in the office, and add just a few reminders for those of you with active contracts, applications, or potential applications...

First, I'd like to introduce Dylan Lockwood. Dylan is the first ever Natural Resource Specialist we've had here in Warsaw. He has proven himself to be a super fast learner of all of our convoluted data systems and will be focusing on many (but not all) of our growing number of wildlife and forestry contracts. Please see his introduction below, and stop in to introduce yourselves to Dylan (if you haven't already) next time you're in the office:



*Hey there, I'm Dylan! I'm the new Natural Resource Specialist in Warsaw. I am originally from Florida, but went to High School and the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, VA. I then spent some time in Texas, before moving to Ashland, VA, where I returned for another undergraduate degree in Biology at Randolph-Macon College. I've also spent some time working with the American Conservation Experience as an Invasive Plant Tech in the National Park Service system, which was a blast and really defined my love for conservation. I now live in Ashland with my wife and four dogs. Looking forward to working with everyone!*

*You can reach me by email at [Dylan.lockwood@USDA.gov](mailto:Dylan.lockwood@USDA.gov) – or by phone at (804) 250-4481*

We are conducting our LWG (local working group) where we take feedback and responses from our customers and partners and try our best to integrate changes into future programs (within reason, some policy is dictated by the farm bill). You can submit your ideas and recommendations via our online questionnaire at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LB685BS>. We will be taking feedback from the online poll until 7/31/23.

The expected Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding has already started trickling down into the states. This means that we will have more funding over the next several years than we have ever had in the past. If you are in need of technical and/or financial assistance with cropland (especially with gully erosion), pastureland, forestland, or wildlife conservation, please don't hesitate to call the general office number at 804-333-3525 ext 3. We are busy obligating FY23 preapproved contracts right now, but we can get some field visits scheduled for FY24 applications.

We're planning to beef up our staffing again soon to account for the additional funding coming down the pike. We anticipate another soil conservationist to be joining us soon, as well as advertising for a full time administrative assistant soon. If anyone is interested in applying for the administrative assistant position, it will be full time with Federal benefits. Please call me at the office or keep your eyes open on [www.USAJobs.gov](http://www.USAJobs.gov) for the listing. I haven't been given news of when it will be advertised, but I know it should be coming soon. Because we're staffing up, we're also planning to do a reconfiguration of the office. Soon enough, all the NRCS technical staff will be moving to the area of the office that Caroline and Brody currently reside in. It's going to be a tight fit, but I want all of my technical staff together and with the layout of our office, this is the best we could do. My current office will become the new conference room, so if you look for me and I'm not there, just holler for me and we'll direct you where you can find us. We haven't been given a deadline for FY24 EQIP, CSP, RCPP, and IRA applications, but we anticipate a September or October 2023 deadline. If you need any assistance on your farm or property, please call or stop in so we can discuss what program may be a good fit for your needs! I hope everyone has a great remainder of your summer!

Lucee





# Program Updates

## Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP)

VCAP continues to grow at the District. This quarter, six projects were completed, two have begun and one is approved for construction. Living shorelines have continued to be the main practice applied for within the Northern Neck. Lowery Becker, NNSWCD's Education Conservation Specialist, works closely with the Shoreline Erosion Advisory Service's (SEAS) Shoreline Engineer, Mike Vanlandingham, to review designs and perform inspections during and after construction.

Lowery was voted onto the VCAP Steering Committee at the June meeting. The role of the VCAP Steering Committee is to provide programmatic guidance to ensure VCAP continues to accomplish the overall goal of enabling participants to install BMPs that reduce the flow of nonpoint source pollution. The Steering Committee is also responsible for providing guidance on continued funding and legislative issues related to VCAP that may arise. We are proud of Lowery for joining the VCAP Steering Committee and everything she does for the Northern Neck SWCDs VCAP program.

In the meantime, Lowery and Kelly are working together to create a VCAP brochure that is focused on the Northern Neck. The brochure is expected to be completed by the end of July. Be sure to swing by the office to grab a flyer or a brochure to learn more about our VCAP program!

### Upcoming Application Deadlines:

- August 4
- Sept. 1

The brochure features a green background with a white hexagon containing the text 'CALL TODAY!'. To the right is a photograph of a shoreline with a rocky bank and a sandy area. The text 'VIRGINIA CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM' is prominently displayed in white. Below it, 'WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM' is written in smaller white text. At the bottom, contact information for Lowery Becker is provided.

**NNSWCD NORTHERN NECK SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

# VIRGINIA CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

**CALL TODAY!**

Do you have a resource concern? We can help!

Scan the code below to learn more.

Lowery Becker, Education Conservation Specialist  
lowery.becker@nnswwcd.org | 804.313.9102 x104  
5585 Richmond Rd. Warsaw, VA | nnswwcd.org







# Program Updates

## Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share Program (VACS)

Program Year 2024 VACS Sign-Ups is upon us! As stated on the first page, our technical team is hard at work to ensure our producers and their crops are taken care of for the 2024 planting year. Brandon & Aaron are seeing producers by appointment only so be sure to call the office to schedule yours.

This year, Northern Neck SWCD is participating in the Whole Farm Approach (WFA) program. The WFA allows for a farmer to submit only one cost-share application for participation in the nutrient management and cover crop practices. This approach not only helps to protect and preserve the nutrients in the soil but it also provides financial assistance to producers.

This quarter, eight WP-1 projects were completed. WP-1 includes practices for sediment, retention, erosion, or water control structures. The pictures to the right show a rock structure put in place to improve water quality by reducing the amount of sediment from the land into the stream. The fence was put in place to keep the cattle away from the newly planted grass and rock structure.



## Life in the Northern Neck

As we all know, it has been a very wet planting and harvesting season. While the rain is great for the growing corn and early soybeans already in the field, it causes for delay in the harvesting of wheat. Some farmers have enough help and equipment to quickly get the wheat up and get that double crop soybean planted in the ground while others are trying their best on their own. When Michael and Mark Downing, owners of Bleak House Farm, finished harvesting wheat and planting soybeans they noticed some of their neighboring farmers were still harvesting wheat. After making the call, the guys took their equipment and helped finish the harvest and get the soybeans planted.

This beautiful picture perfectly describes the community we live in and are fortunate enough to call home. Thank you to Larry Jenkins Jr. for sharing your photo with us to share in the summer newsletter.



*"We finished up and noticed some famers around us were not finished. We have the equipment so we decided to give them a call to help out." -M. Downing*



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Permit No. 85

**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

**Elected Directors:**

Robert E. Pickett, Chairman (Northumberland)  
Frank A. "Bert" Johnson, Vice-Chair (Richmond)  
J. Vince Garland, Treasurer (Richmond)  
Faye A. Andrashko (Lancaster)  
William A. "Billy" McCarty (Lancaster)  
Robert G. "Bobby" Vanlandingham (Northumberland)  
H. Shirley Powell (Westmoreland)  
Richard E. Wilkins (Westmoreland)

**Appointed Directors:**

R. Trent Jones, Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent  
Louis Gregory "Greg" Basye-At Large Appointed Member (Northumberland)



*The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Northern Neck Soil & Water Conservation District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Virginia Soil & 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 disability, race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, color, age, religion/religious creed, veteran status, or genetics. An equal opportunity affirmative action employer.*