

SUMMER 2026 NEWSLETTER

CONSERVATION AROUND THE NECK

Northern Neck Partners of the Year

"It is with great pleasure that we award the Community Partner of the Year Award for 2026 to Lowery Becker and Kelly Brann of the Northern Neck Soil and Water Conservation District (NNSWCD). Lowery and Kelly have partnered with Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR) to offer high-quality Professional Learning Workshops for teachers and community educators over the past 3 summers. Last summer, we hosted the first Project WET workshop in Virginia in over 8 years. NNSWCD generously contributes time and resources to support these important workshops. We also value their middle school MWEE program, Think Outside the Sink (TOTS). This program brings together community partners to provide students with hands-on classroom lessons and place-based field experiences. We look forward to our current and future partnership opportunities with Lowery and Kelly."

- Robin Didlake, Lower Rappahannock Education Manager

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Education & Outreach

Household Hazardous & Electronic Waste Collection

The 2026 Spring Household Hazardous & Electronic Waste Collection season is officially complete. This spring season included two exciting new adventures - Richmond County hosted their very first spring HHW collection event and Westmoreland County accepted electronic waste for the first time. Introducing these two new additions prompted successful events and grateful county residents.

Partnerships between Northern Neck SWCD, the four Northern Neck localities and the Virginia Cooperative Extension offices are what engender continuous successful HHW events. Be sure to check out our website and mark your calendars for the Fall 2027 HHW events!

Richmond Co. 04.11.2026

- 9,540 lbs. of HHW
- 2,921 lbs. of E-Waste
- 68 HHW vehicles
- 24 vehicles for Shred-It
- 15 vehicles for Rx drop off

Northumberland Co. 04.25.2026

- 17,291 lbs. of HHW
- 2,513 lbs. of E-Waste
- 225 HHW vehicles

Westmoreland Co. 05.16.2026

- 12,730 lbs. of HHW
- 1,846 lbs. of E-Waste
- 148 HHW vehicles
- 18 vehicles for Rx drop off

Think Outside The Sink (T.O.T.S.)

A Think Outside The Sink (T.O.T.S.) event is a educational, hands-on environmental program designed to teach students about watersheds, water conservation, human impact on natural resources. Throughout the school year, several partner organizations visit sixth graders at Richmond County & Montross Middle Schools (RCMS/MMS) to provide various interactive classroom lessons. Following these classroom lessons, a field experience is planned in September and April and students have the opportunity apply their knowledge through outdoor activity stations.

For Mr. Nanny's RCMS sixth grade science class, their field experience was held at Belle Isle State Park on April 8th. Students rotated through 6 stations, each station focusing on a different topic. These stations ranged from identifying various trees and wildlife on a tractor ride to learning an oyster's life cycle and their importance to the marine ecosystem. Thank you to Belle Isle State Park (BISP), Department of Forestry (DOF), Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA), and Virginia Cooperative Extension.

The very next week, Mrs. Beale's MMS's second semester sixth grade science class held their field experience at the Menokin Foundation. Students rotated through 4 stations that ranged from a nature hike to kayaking on Cat Point Creek. Thank you to Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR), the Menokin Foundation and Virginia Cooperative Extension. We are grateful for these amazing partnerships that make these educational events possible.





PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

This summer, NNSWCD partnered with Friends of the Rappahannock to facilitate trainings on popular curriculum guides including Project WET, Project Learning Tree and Project WILD. Included in this summer's professional developments, was the first-ever Project Learning Tree Forest, Water & People and Project WET Climate, Water & Resilience training for the state. Both curricula are geared for upper middle and high school students, focusing on how our daily actions impact the environment through forests, watersheds and climate. FOR and NNSWCD have worked for years with other partner agencies to bring similar concepts to sixth graders throughout the Northern Neck and were excited to take this next step. From this experience, teachers were able to learn more hands-on ways to incorporate climate into the classroom. "As a result of this training, I will be giving students more of a voice in decision-making for lessons and giving them more control.

You guys are wonderful at what you do!" We have enjoyed working with teachers and non-formal educators this summer and look forward to more this year!



Join Us!



Keep your eyes on future professional development workshops!





USDA CORNER

I hope all of you have had a great summer so far and are staying as cool as possible. For as mild as the first part of the summer has been, this most recent heat wave is no joke!

The deadline for all FY27 financial assistance applications has been set for October 9, 2026. We DO accept applications year round, however, this deadline applies to all applications specifically seeking financial assistance for agronomic, livestock, forestry, wildlife, and easement needs in our EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program) and CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program) fund pools for FY27. We'll have quite a bit of time to make farm and field visits afterward, but if the application is not received by that deadline, it will likely not be a priority until FY28 or until all FY27 visits have been completed. If you have any questions about assistance, please give us a call at any of the numbers below.

FY26 has proven to be a very rewarding funding year for the Northern Neck through NRCS financial assistance programs. As of 6/30/26, we've had close to \$3,365,000 preapproved in fy26 EQIP and CSP applications and expect more to come. If you submitted an application and have not heard from us, it's most likely because we are expecting additional funding from headquarters and awaiting additional preapproved applications. Once all funding is secured and all rolling preapprovals have been made (most likely in August or early September), IF your application was not funded, we'll call you to confirm you want to defer to next year. If you have an application in with us and have not heard anything from us yet, you are also more than welcome to call us for an update.

We are busy obligating our FY26 preapproved applications right now, but will also be doing field checks for payments on active contracts soon. We usually try to call folks to let you know we'll be making rounds, but sometimes, we slip in some field checks if we're in your area. If you see our white trucks on the side of the road by one of your fields, please feel free to stop and say hi or ask about any help you think we may be able to assist with on the farm. If you are expecting a payment later this summer or fall and not sure what paperwork you may need to submit for payment (if any), please call us so we can make sure everyone is on the same page. We'll also be making calls to all producers with active CSP contracts in October or November to determine if you want your payment in CY26 or CY27 for tax purposes. If you don't know, you may want to check your books or call your accountant, so you have plenty of time to figure out when you prefer your payment.

With the loss of over 25% of employees in VA NRCS and a hiring freeze in place, we are scrambling to assist multiple offices to ensure service is not disrupted to customers. My staff and I will continue to cover the Warsaw and the Tappahannock field offices for the foreseeable future. Please be patient as we try our best to assist all customers in this 7-county coverage area. If you need to visit with or speak to a specific team member, please call before you come see us, as we may be in another office or the field.

I hope everyone has a great remainder of your summer and a safe harvest season!

Lucee Kossler

USDA-FSA Dates to Remember:

- June 15th - August 3rd: Northumberland County Committee Election nomination period
- July 15th: Acreage Reporting Deadline
- August 7th: Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers Program Deadline
- August 12th: Supplemental Disaster Assistance Program Stage 1 & 2 Signup Deadline
- August 31st: Deadline for ARCPLC landowner base acre increase on farms review

Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share Program (VACS)



**VIRGINIA AG
COST-SHARE
SIGN-UPS**

**MONDAY, JULY 6, 2026 -
FRIDAY, AUGUST 14, 2026**

CALL TO MAKE YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY!

804-313-9102 x101
brandon.dillistin@nnsacd.org
aaron.saunders@nnsacd.org
www.nnsacd.org

 Cover Crops
 Nutrient Management
 Preserving Wetlands

**Appointments are required*

Attention farmers, it's that time of year again! Our annual VACS program sign-ups period is between on Monday, July 6th and Friday, August 14th. Let us help you protect the land with available cost-share funding. Appointments are required so if you have not made yours, call Tina at (804) 313-9102 x101 and get on the schedule today!

Nutrient management plans play a vital role in protecting the land we cherish. Although the crops need nutrients to grow and feed our families, they can also have some harsh side effects when used in excess. Excess nutrients in runoff are a major threat to water quality. When it rains, the rain can cause erosion, pick up nutrients and chemicals and run off into our waterway.

Northern Neck SWCD works closely with farmers, landowners, and the Department of Conservation (DCR) to control runoff pollution and protect our natural resources. Our office values the dedication and hard work producers put into protecting farmland for future generations.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

NNSWCD invites you to join us on Wednesday, August 12th for our 3rd annual Conservation Appreciation Day! This free event is our way of showing appreciation to those who participate in best management practices and are passionate about conserving the Northern Neck's natural resources. This event will be located in our parking lot at 5585 Richmond Road in Warsaw. Lunch will be served from 11:00am - 1:00pm while the ice cream truck will be serving soft serve from 11:30am - 2:00pm. We hope to see you there!



**CONSERVATION
APPRECIATION
DAY - AUGUST 12**

2026 VA Ag Expo

NNSWCD is a proud sponsor of the 2026 Virginia Ag Expo. This year, the event will be held on Thursday, July 30th at the Meadow Event Park in Doswell. Gates will open at 7:30am and the event will conclude at 2:00pm. Enjoy over 100 vendors showcasing all that agriculture has to offer.

2026 Pesticide Collection

The 2026 Pesticide Collection will take place on Tuesday, August 25th from 9:00am to 1:00pm at Helena Chemical in Warsaw. This collection is open to agricultural producers, pesticide dealers, pest control firms, golf courses and homeowners. Contact VDACS or your local Extension Agent for more information.

Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP)

VASWCD

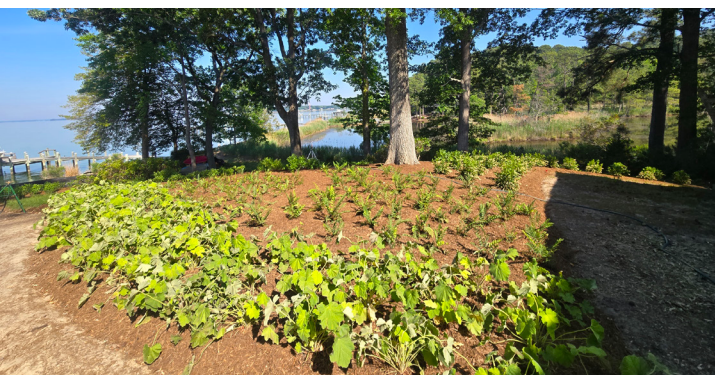
SPECIAL

REPORT

Budget update from the Association: **The final budget signed restores \$4 million for VCAP through general funds, maintaining the program's current funding level.** While this falls short of the Association's request for additional funding to meet increasing demand, preserving the program at its existing level represents a significant improvement from where the budget process began and ensures VCAP can continue serving communities across

Virginia. In the interim, the VASWCD is seeking additional grants to support the growing program and we will continue to educate legislators on program momentum and increased funding needs.

Goodbye PY26, Hello PY27



Now that Program Year 2026 is officially complete, NNSWCD can now start accepting applications for Program Year 2027. Applications must be submitted by the following dates to be considered:

- July 10, 2026
- August 7, 2026
- September 4, 2026
- October 9, 2026
- November 6, 2026

As we wrapped up the end of Fiscal Year 2026, Lowery had several VCAP projects come to completion. Since May 1st, 11 Living Shoreline projects, totaling in 1,447 linear feet, and 1 Conservation Landscaping project with 2,870 square feet planted were completed. Currently, we have 1 Living Shoreline project in construction and 7 more applications that have been approved.



VCAP Training at Randolph-Macon College

On June 9th, the Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) held an in-person VCAP training at Randolph-Macon College. This training was open to everyone interested learning more about the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program while also celebrating VCAP's first 10-years of service. NNSWCD's Senior Conservation Education Specialist, Lowery Becker, was invited to participate as a speaker and share her knowledge on living shorelines.





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Lowery Becker, Senior Education Conservation Specialist
Aaron Saunders, Agricultural Conservation Specialist
Tina Withers, Administrative Assistant

Elected Directors:

Robert E. Pickett, Chairman (Northumberland)
Frank A. "Bert" Johnson, Jr., Vice-Chair (Richmond)
J. Vince Garland, Treasurer (Richmond)
Benson C. Braxton (Westmoreland)
James A. "Aaron" Rowland (Lancaster)
Robert G. "Bobby" Vanlandingham (Northumberland)
Lewis K. Walker III (Lancaster)
Richard E. Wilkins (Westmoreland)

Appointed Directors:

Louis Gregory "Greg" Basye, At Large Appointed Member (Northumberland)
Stephanie Romelczyk, Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent

USDA-NRCS:

Lucee F. Kossler, District Conservationist
Caroline Lancaster, Soil Conservationist
Brody Ellis, Soil Conservationist
Karen Balentine, Soil Conservationist
Brooke Jenkins, Farm Bill Program Assistant

USDA-FSA:

Abigail Davis, County Executive Director
Kelsey Keyser, Program Technician
Tara Brann, Program Technician
Sarah Cole, Program Technician

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Northern Neck Soil & Water Conservation District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Virginia Soil and 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 race, color, religion, ethnic or national origin, sex, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, disability, military status, or any other bases protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.