

Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District

161 South Main Street/P.O. Box 247, Halifax, VA 24558

Telephone: 434-476-7923

Annual Report July 2020-June 2021

Mission Statement

To develop, to promote the proper use of, and to protect the natural resources of the district through programs of information, education and technical assistance in cooperation with other agencies.

Foreword

The Annual Report of the Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District contained herein is published for the benefit of those interested in the ongoing program of soil and water conservation for the County of Halifax and town of South Boston. This is an active program of conservation and development concerning the welfare and future of soil, water and related resources upon which our existence and welfare are dependent.

The board of directors of the Halifax SWCD takes this opportunity to express its appreciation to the Halifax County Board of Supervisors, county agricultural agencies, other organizations and individuals who have given time and energy in carrying out the activities contained in this report.

Board of Directors

Blair Hall, Vice-Chairman

Dr. Bobby Hall, Director/Treasurer

Bruce E. Pearce, Director

Scott Hudson, Director

Rebekah Slabach, Extension Appointed Director

J. Hudson Reese, Associate Director

Jason Fisher, Associate Director

District Staff

Justin Smith, Conservation Specialist & Office Manager

Luke Hudson, Conservation Specialist

Melissa Waller, Education and Outreach Specialist, Secretary

Vision Statement

To strive to remain flexible and open-minded to accept change and face the challenges of leadership in the wise use and conservation of natural resources

General Operations

Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District was formed in 1967, having originally been a part of the old Southside District. The District functions as a government subunit of the Commonwealth of Virginia and is responsible for developing and implementing a program to conserve soil, water, and related resources in the 822 square miles within the boundaries of Halifax County and the town of South Boston. The District is responsible for the administration of the Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost-Share Program, including the overseeing of compliance to practice specifications. The District is presently governed by a board of directors comprised of local, concerned citizens who serve on a voluntary basis, without compensation. District meetings are held the second Thursday of each month and are open to the public.

District Budget 2020-2021

Receipts:

State Government Funds	\$118,040.00
Local Government Funds	\$18,000.00
Donations/Interest/Grants	\$1,303.11
No-Till Drill Rent	\$20,318.78
Virginia BMP Cost-Share	\$296,101
Technical BMP	\$101,028
	\$554,790.89

Disbursements:

District Operations	\$211,352.66
Virginia BMP Cost-Share	\$132,585.37

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District through financial assistance and administrative assistance provided by the Virginia Soil and Water Board and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. An equal opportunity provider and employer.

Wildlife Food Plot Contest

The annual wildlife game food plot contest was conducted with area youth. Halifax SWCD made available seed from Abbotts Farm Supply and planting instructions to 20 area youth. The patches were judged in August. Patches are scored on location, proximity to cover and water, stand population, stand height, and plant species. The district is providing a game camera for the first place winner. Quality Deer Management Association - North-Central North Carolina Branch has donated minerals, this will be presented to our second-place contestant. Abbott Farm Supply donated a stocking cap and a \$20 gift card. Bobcat's Bait and Tackle out of Clarksville has donated a fishing rod and tackle box for the 4th place winner and a fishing rod for the 5th place winner. We have a day parking pass to a VA State Park and t-shirts for all of the contestants.

The winners of the 2020 contest were as follows: First Place –Kaylee Bomar, Second Place – Savannah Terrell, Third Place – Shannin Nestor, Fourth Place – Braden Slagle, Fifth Place – Jacob Gravitt



Jacob Gravis, Braeden Slagle, and Kaylee Bomar with Bobby Hall



Joseph Wilson

2021 Scholarships

The Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District awarded two \$2,000 educational scholarships to Halifax County High School students. Scholarships were awarded to individuals expressing a desire to major in a college course curriculum related to natural resource conservation and/or environmental studies. One J.T. Burton Natural Resources Educational Scholarship was awarded to Joseph Wilson. One Halifax SWCD Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Blake Barger. Additionally, Joseph's scholarship application was selected to be considered for one of four state-wide scholarships.



Blake Barger

Education Series

Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District and Halifax County 4-H are collaborated to do an Outdoor Education Series. This series was held at Edmunds Park on Thursdays from 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm. Sessions were also available through Zoom. The lessons included pollinators taught by Barbara Martin, Hunter Martin did a lesson on the wildlife food chain, Mike Roberts with Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation came out and did a nature hike with the students, Melissa Waller and Justin Smith did lessons on watersheds and soils. We were happy with the series and were able to safely distance in an outdoor setting.

Departure of Larry Layman

Halifax SWCD bids farewell to board member and chairman Mr. Larry Layman. Larry is retired from the Virginia Department of Forestry. He served on the Halifax SWCD as an associate director from May of 2001 to September of 2009. He came on the board as an elected director in October of 2009. Larry has worked as a Forester for 45+ years working with landowners with forest management projects. He has a wealth of knowledge of forestry as well as the importance of soil and water conservation. Mr. Layman and his wife, Joan have decided to move to be closer to Family. He will surely be missed in Halifax County!

“I appreciate this opportunity to express my gratitude to have served on the Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors. I am resigning from the Board as I will soon be leaving the District. I have been fortunate to have been influenced by and served alongside true conservationists like Hudson Reese, Baxter Wilson, Bruce Pearce and others. The District has been fortunate to have had an excellent staff in the past, as it now has with Justin, Melissa, and Luke. It has been an honor.”

-Larry Layman



TMDL Grant

DEQ has allocated funding to Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District to administer technical assistance and on-farm project funding to help farmers voluntarily exclude livestock from creeks and ponds in these impaired watersheds. These projects include stream exclusion, cross fencing and installing or developing clean reliable water alternatives such as wells. Our goal is to improve water quality while helping farmers improve their livestock operations and implement working rotational grazing systems. One grant covers property in the Lower Banister River and Terrible Creek watersheds, this grant runs through June of 2022. The other grant covers Birch Creek and Dan River watersheds, this grant runs through September of 2023. For more information and to know if you qualify for this cost share contact our office.

2020 Awards

Halifax SWCD held the 2020 banquet on November 12th at Earnie’s Restaurant. Approximately 35 guests, directors and staff attended. Awards were given for the Wildlife Food Plot Contest, Wildlife Conservation, Educator of the Year, Forestry Management, Clean Water Farm and Outstanding Cooperator.



Cooperator of the Year, J.P. Smith and Conservation Specialist, Luke Hudson



Forestry Management winners Crowder and Walter Robertson



Clean Water Farm Award recipients Charlotte and Don Davis



Educator of the year, Krista Skelton and Education Specialist, Melissa Waller



Trey Reese received the Wildlife Conservationist award for his late father, Julius “Jay” Reese and Jason Fisher, Assoc. Director, VCE.

District Activities

- August 13, 2020, the District held its annual picnic at Edmunds Park.
- August 19, 2020 the District held a rain barrel workshop.
- The District held its annual Awards Banquet on November 12, 2020, at Earnie’s, in South Boston, Virginia. Approximately 35 area residents attended.
- The Annual SWCD meeting was held virtually December 6-8, 2021
- The Halifax SWCD supported the endeavors of the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) through payment of annual dues.
- Halifax SWCD participated in the annual Halifax Earth Day Extravaganza April 24, 2021
- The Annual Plan of Work was completed by the District staff and directors and was approved at the April board meeting.

No –Till Seeding

To encourage and promote conservation practices within the county, the district owns and maintains two no-till seeders that are available to local producers at a nominal fee. One was sold in June, a new one has been ordered and should be ready to rent later this fall. In 2020-21, approximately 718 acres were seeded, thereby reducing soil loss and improving water quality.

2020-2021 Best Management Practices Installed		
BMP Practice	Amount Installed	Total Cost-Share
Stream Exclusion Fencing	14,616.86’	\$90,681.60
Cover Crops	527.14 acres	\$3,376.00
Long Term Vegetative Cover on Crop Land	31.95 acres	\$11,324.04
Total Cost-Share		\$119,557.85
Total Tax Credits Issued		\$3,978.70

Due to wet weather, availability of supplies and contractors there were 6 stream exclusions (1 from PY 20 and 6 from PY 21) carried over to PY 22 totaling \$333,225.70 in cost share that will be disbursed this year.

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