

JULY 1 2024 - JUNE 30 2025



# COLONIAL

SOIL AND WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

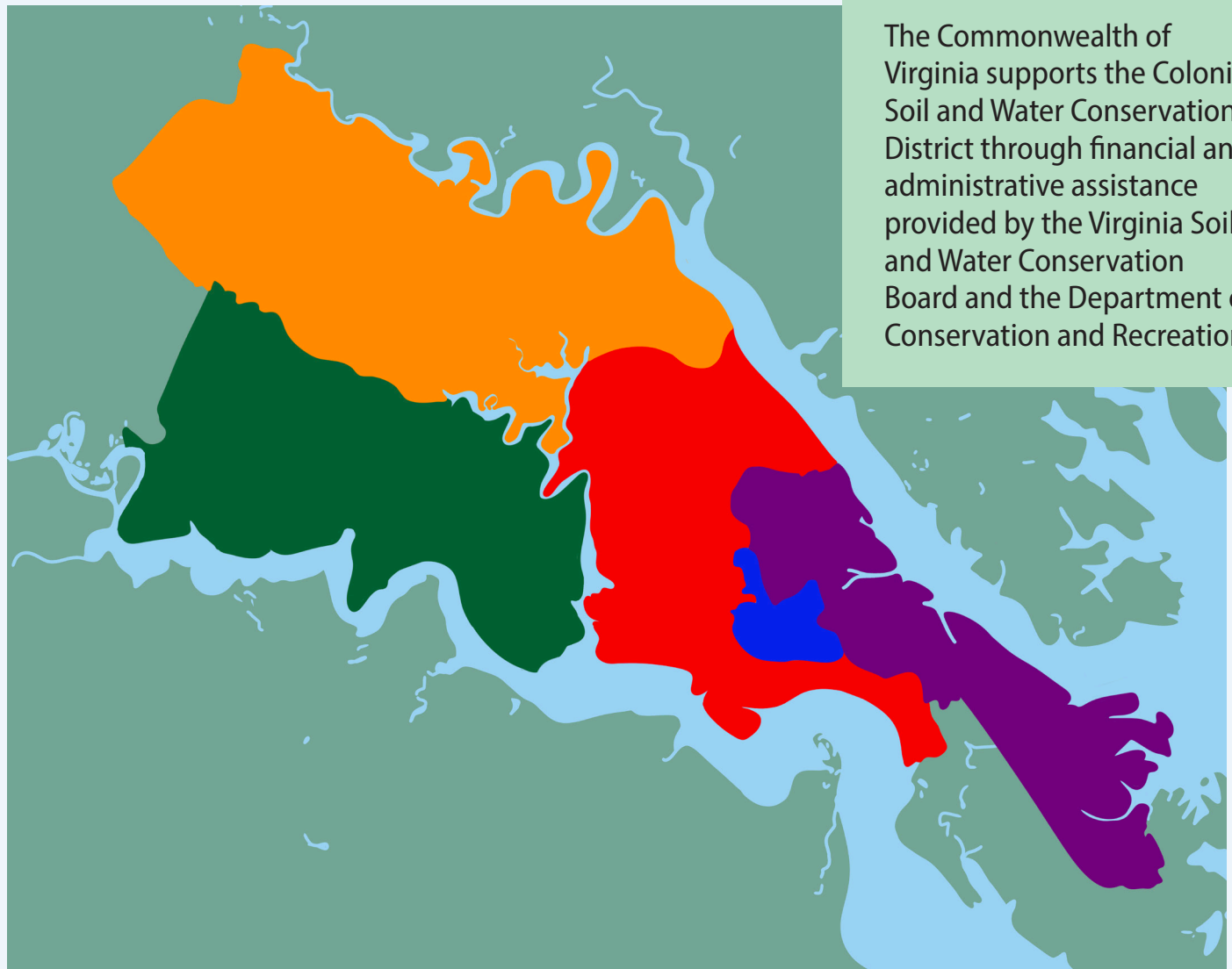
ANNUAL REPORT

---

FISCAL 2025







The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Colonial 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.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**WAYNE DAVIS, CHAIRMAN**  
**DAVE BEALS, VICE-CHAIR**  
**PAM MASON, SECRETARY/  
 TREASURER**

**TIM BEALE**  
**LUKE GLADDEN**  
**ROBERT LUND, JR.**  
**LARKIN SCOTT**  
**LUKE SCOTT**  
**CHARLES STEVENSON**  
**PHILIP THOMSON**  
**DAVID WESTCOTT**  
**STEPHEN ZABINISKI**

**NEW KENT COUNTY**  
**CITY OF WILLIAMSBURG**  
**YORK COUNTY**

**YORK COUNTY (AT LARGE)**  
**VCE AGENT**  
**JAMES CITY COUNTY**  
**CHARLES CITY COUNTY**  
**CHARLES CITY COUNTY**  
**CITY OF WILLIAMSBURG**  
**NEW KENT COUNTY**  
**YORK COUNTY**  
**JAMES CITY COUNTY**

## DISTRICT STAFF

**SAMANTHA PEREIRA**  
**EMMA RICH**  
**AMY WALKER**  
**JIM WALLACE**  
**ROBERT WARING**

**AMANDA WHISPELL**

**ROBYN WOOLSEY**

**CONSERVATION SPECIALIST I**  
**CONSERVATION SPECIALIST I**  
**OPERATIONS MANAGER**  
**PROGRAMS MANAGER**  
**SENIOR AGRICULTURAL**  
**CONSERVATION SPECIALIST**  
**OUTREACH & EDUCATION**  
**SPECIALIST**  
**SENIOR CONSERVATION**  
**SPECIALIST**

# CONTENTS

3 MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR  
WAYNE DAVIS

6 WHO IS COLONIAL SWCD?

## AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS

5 VACS YEAR IN REVIEW  
ROBERT WARING

7 VACS PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: STRUCTURAL BMPS  
JIM WALLACE

10 THE ALLIANCE TO ADVANCE CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE  
SAMANTHA PEREIRA

## URBAN PROGRAMS

12 VCAP YEAR IN REVIEW  
ROBYN WOOLSEY

15 VCAP PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: LOCAL HOUSES OF WORSHIP  
EMMA RICH

## OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

19 OUTREACH YEAR IN REVIEW  
AMANDA WHISPELL

23 OUTREACH SPOTLIGHT: THE COLONIAL WORLD NATURE  
CONSERVATION DAY BIOBLITZ  
AMANDA WHISPELL

27 DOMINION ENERGY ENVIROTHON  
AMANDA WHISPELL

29 COLONIAL SWCD FINANCE REPORT  
AMY WALKER



# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

## WAYNE DAVIS

---

It is an honor to serve as the chair of the Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors, as well as the president of the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Serving in these roles I am afforded the opportunity to work with District staff and directors across the state and witness the outstanding work carried out in the name of natural resource conservation. At the state level, the General Assembly has provided historic levels of financial assistance to Virginia's 47 districts to implement agricultural conservation practices in addition to funding provided to implement the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program's (VCAP) efforts to reduce the impacts of urban and suburban stormwater. The financial support offered by state legislators is essential for reaching the Chesapeake Bay restoration goals in 2028.

Locally, the Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District has taken significant steps by leveraging local, state, and federal funds to advance conservation efforts in eastern Virginia. Partnering with Virginia Tech, DCR, and adjacent districts, Colonial is administering the Alliance to Advance Climate Smart Agriculture grant, a USDA Climate Smart Commodities initiative, which incentivizes the implementation of conservation practices tied to carbon capture and sequestration. A record funding allocation from the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share program allowed the district to fund an unprecedented level of winter cover crops on farm fields this past year. At the local level, the District entered into multiple agreements with adjacent districts and localities allowing the Colonial District to offer



Wayne Davis, the Chair of the Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District's Board of Directors and President of the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Districts.

---

and administer VCAP in those areas. Each of these examples illustrates the commitment and passion for improving the local environment possessed by the staff and directors of the Colonial District.

The following annual report highlights the work of the Colonial District, with assistance from our many partners, in the fiscal year 2025. We recognize and appreciate the efforts of our many partners, as the work we do would not be possible without them. Thank you. ✱



# WHO IS COLONIAL SWCD?



## Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District Staff:

Jim Wallace, Amanda Whispell, Robyn Woolsey, Emma Rich, Robert Waring, Amy Walker, and Samantha Pereira.



## Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors:

Charles Stevenson, Phillip Thomson, Bob Lund, Larkin Scott, Luke Scott, Pam Mason, Dave Beals, Steven Zabiniski, and Wayne Davis.

Not pictured: Tim Beale, Luke Gladden, and David Westcott.

## NEW CERTIFICATIONS



**Samantha Pereira** is a **Certified Conservation Planner** now that she has completed her training with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.



**Emma Rich** has completed her training with the 2024–2025 **Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute**.



**Amanda Whispell** is a **Certified Pollinator Steward**, now that she has completed her training with the Pollinator Partnership.



# VACS YEAR IN REVIEW

## ROBERT WARING

The Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) Program continues to be a cornerstone of conservation efforts across our region, providing essential financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers and landowners. Administered through all 47 Soil and Water Conservation Districts statewide, this program funds Best Management Practices (BMPs) designed to protect our natural resources while addressing critical soil erosion and nutrient leaching challenges.

For decades, the Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District has been proud to deliver VACS program benefits to our local farming

community. We've successfully distributed substantial cost-share funding to support proven conservation practices including cover cropping, shoreline stabilization, livestock stream exclusion, and precision nutrient application, among many others.

**VACS funding supported  
conservation efforts across  
~24,000 acres  
in the Colonial District.**



Rolling vetch cover crop and planting no-till corn.



Whole Farm Approach  
**cover crop  
implementation**

**\$1.5  
million+**

Whole Farm Approach  
**nutrient  
management**

**\$300,000+**

**Additional  
cost share  
practices**

**\$80,000+**

## **\$2.1 million program in FY2025**

Recent years have brought exciting developments, with VACS funding reaching record levels. This increased investment has opened new doors for Colonial SWCD, enabling us to support BMPs that were previously beyond our funding capacity. The numbers tell an impressive story of conservation impact: we've allocated over \$1.5 million specifically for whole farm approach cover crop implementation, over \$300,000 for whole farm approach nutrient management practices, and over \$80,000 for additional cost-share practices outside the whole farm approach framework. Combined, these investments have supported conservation efforts across approximately 24,000 acres within the Colonial District. Several large structural practices were also completed during the program year, including shoreline erosion control practices and practices excluding cattle from streams, resulting in a \$2.1 million dollar program for FY2025.

While our foundational practices remain strong—cover crops that protect soil while building organic matter, no-till methods that preserve soil integrity, and precision nutrient application techniques that prevent waterway

contamination—we're now able to expand our conservation toolkit significantly through comprehensive whole farm planning approaches.

This enhanced funding represents a tremendous opportunity for local producers to implement cutting-edge conservation practices while maintaining productive, profitable operations. We encourage all eligible farmers and landowners to connect with our team to explore how the VACS program can support their conservation goals.\*



**ROBERT WARING**

**Senior Agricultural  
Conservation Specialist**

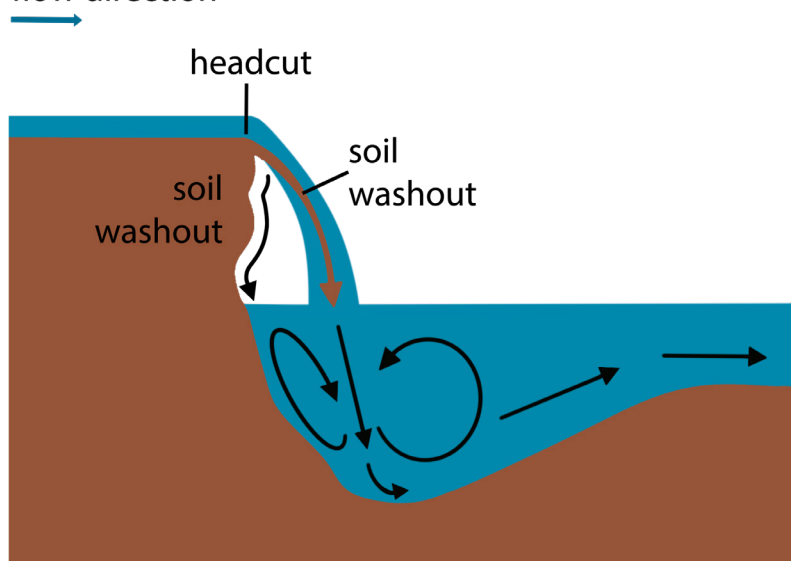
# VACS PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: STRUCTURAL BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

## JIM WALLACE

District staff, with the help of the DCR Engineering Team, worked with a James City County landowner to install a grade stabilization structure and lined waterway conveyance this past year. Structural BMPs such as grade stabilization structures require a significant workload including site surveys, engineering and design, cost estimates, and landowner discussions—all prior to construction—and then all of the follow up after construction is completed before payment is released to certify the practice was installed properly.

Structural BMPs generally are installed to address acute erosion issues. Erosion is a natural process and therefore occurs regularly, whether we observe the signs or not. However, starting in 2018, the landowner noticed significant erosion impacts following a series of storms that were stronger and more frequent than previously observed and contacted the District for help.

flow direction

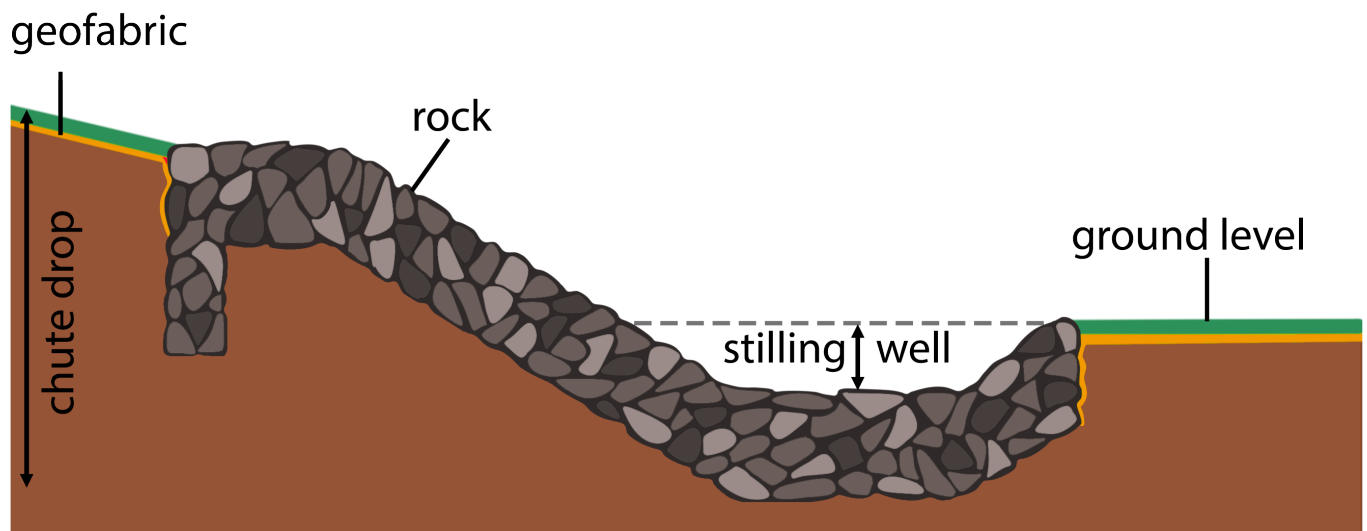


**Figure 1.** An example of how a head cut is formed.

District staff found that most of the erosional damage occurred in an area where stormwater had eroded the soil to create a small waterfall. As the water flowed over the edge, it eroded the base and caused the top to collapse, resulting in what is termed a “head cut”.

**The district has committed  
\$1,125,199  
or 22% of its total allocation to address these  
acute erosion issues over the last five years.**





**Figure 2.** Diagram of a lined chute.

**Head cuts** serve as the leading edge of stream channel incision and can lead to the deepening and widening of the channel upstream, potentially damaging surrounding ecosystems, infrastructure, or farmland (Fig. 1).

The severity of a head cut is often influenced by soil type, particularly by the amount of sand found in the soil, as sandy soils tend to be more

prone to head cuts due to lower cohesion, higher permeability, and lower shear strength.

District staff worked with the DCR Engineering Team to design a solution to the erosion problem that was tailored to both the site and landowner preferences. Ultimately the final design accounted for the sandy soils, the site topography, the size of the watershed, the land use, and historic rainfall values. The result is a lined chute, which integrates into the landscape without the loss of much



**Figure 3.** The significant erosion (left) prior to the installation of the lined chute (right).





**Figure 4.** The significant erosion (left) prior to the installation of the lined chute (right).

farmland, a primary goal of the landowner (Fig. 2). It is expected that this practice will prevent the loss of over 12,000 lbs. of sediment annually for the 10-year lifespan of the practice. The chute also prevented the loss of the nitrogen and phosphorus loads associated with that sediment, both of which are pollutants that otherwise would have entered the local waterway and negatively impacted the ecosystem (see before and after images in Figs. 3 & 4).

While the majority of conservation practices implemented within the Colonial SWCD are not structural practices, the district has committed \$1,125,199 or 22% of its total allocation to address these acute erosion issues over the last five years. ✱



**JIM WALLACE**  
Program Manager



Photograph by Kathleen Haines.



# ALLIANCE YEAR IN REVIEW 2025

## SAMANTHA PEREIRA

The Alliance to Advance Climate-Smart Agriculture is a pilot program funded by an \$80 million grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to Virginia Tech. To date, this is the largest grant awarded in Virginia Tech history!

This program is being piloted in four states: Virginia, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Arkansas. The goal is to provide funding opportunities to invest in America's climate-smart farmers, ranchers, and forest owners to strengthen rural and agricultural communities throughout the United States. The program aims to implement individual practices, each for a span of one year, during which producers will be paid \$100 per acre or animal unit. The qualifying practices are based on the Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Practice Standards and have been selected based on their ability to sequester

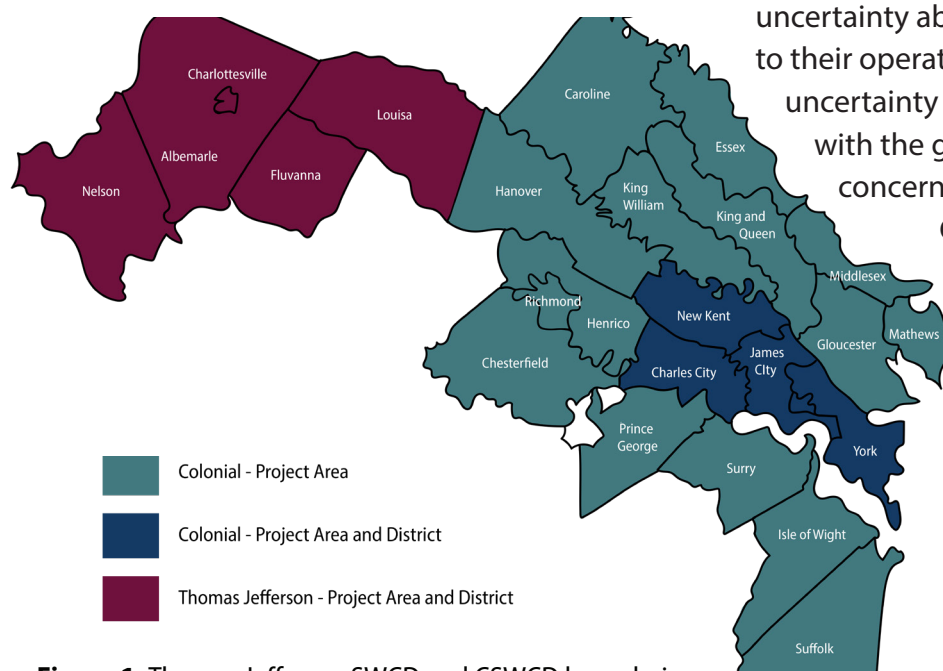
Number of Alliance Outreach Events in 2025: 12

carbon. They include conservation crop rotation, nutrient management, cover crops, no-till, reduced till, and prescribed grazing.

However, the program faced significant challenges during a federal funding freeze that occurred between January 21 and April 15. During this period, this grant was under review by the federal government and was one of only 19 out of 135 climate-smart grants nationwide that were ultimately selected to resume the pilot program. This freeze significantly affected the agriculture community, as many producers experienced delays in receiving allocated funds and faced uncertainty about what could potentially happen to their operations. The federal pause also created uncertainty around staffing positions associated with the grant, adding another layer of concern for program continuity.

Colonial SWCD has the pleasure of continuing to work in an expanded boundary to include the following Soil and Water Conservation Districts: Hanover/Caroline, Three Rivers, Tidewater, James River, Henricopolis, and Peanut Soil and Water Conservation Districts (Fig. 1).

During Virginia's initial 34-day application period from February



**Figure 1.** Thomas Jefferson SWCD and CSWCD boundaries.

---

**"Virginia Tech awarded funding...  
ultimately supporting more than  
**45,000 acres**  
and distributing more than  
**\$5,000,000**  
directly to agricultural producers."**

---

20 to March 24, 2024, Colonial SWCD partnered with Thomas Jefferson SWCD to process 515 applications covering more than 81,000 acres—including 296 applications from the Colonial District. Virginia Tech awarded funding at 75% for underserved and minority producers and at 50% for other eligible producers, ultimately supporting over 45,000 acres and distributing more than \$5,000,000 directly to agricultural producers.

The second application window—originally planned for February 2025—was postponed due to the federal freeze and subsequently took place over the summer months, with final applicant numbers and funding allocations still being determined.

Moving forward, this program is positioned to drive the meaningful adoption of climate-smart agriculture practices, strengthen support for underserved farming communities, and advance sustainability across American agriculture.\*



**SAMANTHA PEREIRA**  
Conservation Specialist I



**Alliance to Advance  
Climate-Smart Agriculture**



# VCAP YEAR IN REVIEW

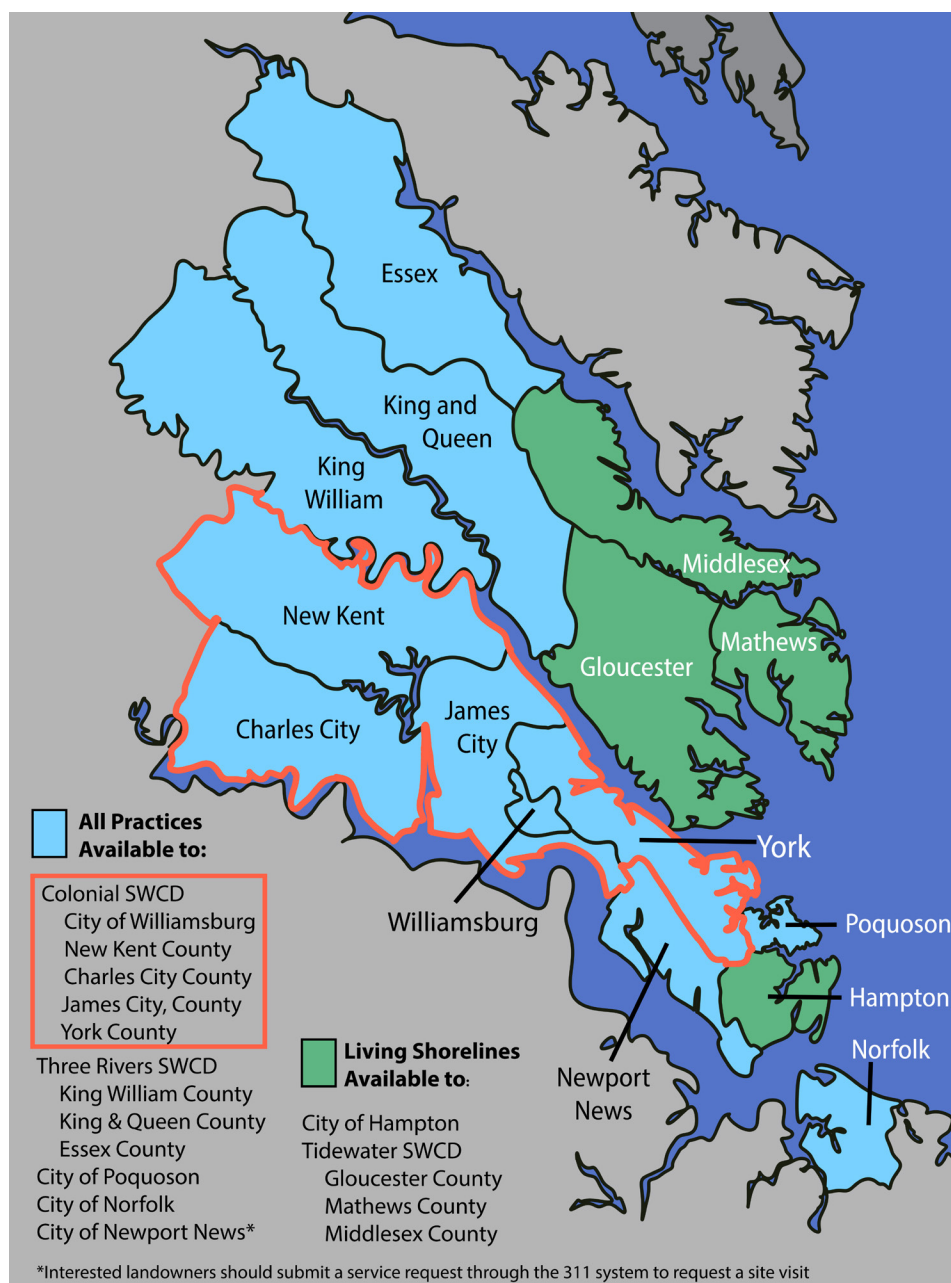
## ROBYN WOOLSEY

Fiscal year 2025 was another record year for Colonial SWCD's urban programs staff and their implementation of the Virginia Conservation

Assistance Program (VCAP). The goal of VCAP is to provide technical and financial assistance to landowners who are dealing with stormwater issues, such as excess runoff during and after rain events, active soil loss and erosion, and areas of bare soil with poor vegetative cover. VCAP provides financial assistance with the installation of twelve best management practices (BMPs) that can help to address and correct these issues. Urban programs staff Robyn Woolsey and Emma Rich assist landowners with practice selection, guide them through the application process, provide support during construction, and conduct mandatory maintenance inspections throughout the practice's 10-year lifespan (Table 1).

In Colonial SWCD's continued quest to increase accessibility to VCAP funding, a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was

executed to allow landowners within the City of Newport News to participate in the program (Fig. 1). This MOU was effective for a portion of fiscal year 2025 and remains effective for fiscal year 2026. In just the few months that the MOU has been in place, staff have already completed



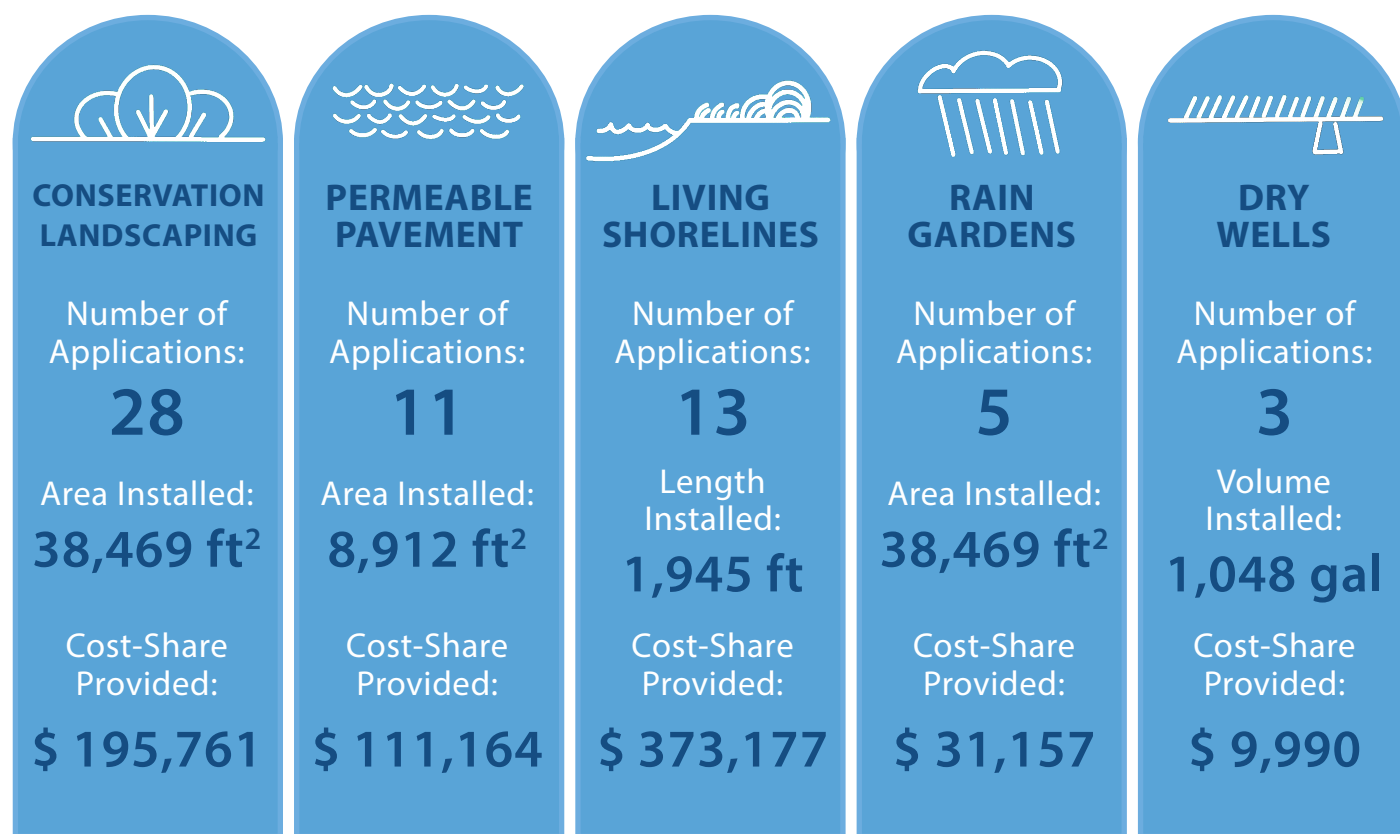
**Figure 1.** Map of the expanded accessibility to VCAP via MOUs. The Colonial District is outlined in red.

several site visits and have been working with landowners to refine their applications. Staff will continue to focus on landowner engagement and outreach throughout the city to raise awareness of this new opportunity for assistance. Previous MOUs with the Tidewater and Three Rivers SWCDs and the City of Hampton remain active, so the Colonial SWCD now provides VCAP services to thirteen localities throughout the Middle Peninsula and Hampton Roads (Fig. 1).

Of the twelve practices eligible for funding, conservation landscaping, permeable pavement, living shorelines, rain gardens, and dry wells remain the most popular within the District's service area (Fig. 2). Conservation landscaping includes the use of native plants to help hold soil in place and soak up excess runoff, while rain gardens also utilize native plants but provide a designated space for runoff capture and infiltration. Permeable pavement and dry

wells allow for underground runoff storage and infiltration, but permeable pavement also provides a hardscape surface. Living shorelines utilize a nearshore structure called a sill, with sand fill and marsh grass plantings, to mimic a native marsh and provide protection against shoreline erosion while creating a crucial habitat for aquatic and intertidal species.

New this year was an opportunity to provide supplemental funding through a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant administered by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts for projects that were public-facing and provided unique educational opportunities to visitors and passers by. This supplemental funding was utilized in several projects within the Colonial SWCD's service area, including one highlighted in the project spotlight within this report, and provided 100% funding for each.



**Figure 2.** Summary of the total number of applications, measure of practices installed, and amount of cost share provided for the most popular BMPs. Note that not all of these applications are complete, so the installation sizes and cost-share amounts may vary.



**Table 1.** Summary of the total number of applications and site visits that were completed for each locality (including MOUs) during the 2025 fiscal year.

| Locality                                                                     |                       | Number of Site Visits | Number of Applications |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Colonial<br>Soil and Water<br>Conservation District<br>Member Localities     | Charles City County   | 1                     | 0                      |
|                                                                              | New Kent County       | 6                     | 1                      |
|                                                                              | James City County     | 89                    | 37                     |
|                                                                              | York County           | 36                    | 8                      |
|                                                                              | City of Williamsburg  | 9                     | 3                      |
| City of Hampton                                                              |                       | 3                     | 0                      |
| Three Rivers<br>Soil and Water<br>Conservation District<br>Member Localities | King and Queen County | 2                     | 1                      |
|                                                                              | King William County   | 5                     | 0                      |
|                                                                              | Essex County          | 5                     | 0                      |
| Tidewater<br>Soil and Water<br>Conservation District<br>Member Localities    | Gloucester County     | 4                     | 5                      |
|                                                                              | Mathews County        | 16                    | 5                      |
|                                                                              | Middlesex County      | 7                     | 2                      |
| City of Newport News                                                         |                       | 2                     | 0                      |
| Total                                                                        |                       | 185                   | 62                     |

Looking ahead to fiscal year 2026, the urban programs staff are anticipating another year of growth and VCAP success. Two more localities, including the City of Poquoson and the City of Norfolk, will gain access to VCAP through two new MOUs (Fig. 1). Robyn and Emma are excited to work with partners and landowners within these localities, and welcome VCAP requests from all of the areas they serve. For more information, please visit the [Colonial SWCD](https://www.colonialswcd.org) website or reach out to either of them directly at [Robyn.Woolsey@ColonialSWCD.org](mailto:Robyn.Woolsey@ColonialSWCD.org) or [Emma.Rich@ColonialSWCD.org](mailto:Emma.Rich@ColonialSWCD.org).\*



**Virginia Conservation  
Assistance Program**



**ROBYN WOOLSEY**  
Senior Conservation Specialist

# VCAP PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: LOCAL HOUSES OF WORSHIP

## EMMA RICH

Over the past year, the Colonial SWCD has had the unique opportunity to provide cost-share assistance through the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) to three local houses of worship. All three projects are publicly accessible making them great examples of what native landscaping can look like.

### Williamsburg Baptist Church, Williamsburg

The first project completed at the Williamsburg Baptist Church located in downtown Williamsburg. During their initial site visit (Fig. 1), staff noticed that the greatest area of concern was the parking lot median, as it was home to several dying willow oak and Bradford pear trees and no vegetation. Over time, all that bare ground has caused significant erosion and deposition of sediment into the parking lot, and the trees



**Figure 1.** Photograph of the Williamsburg Baptist Church at the initial site visit.



became a hazard to all who use the parking lot. In conversation with the church's point of contact, it was agreed that the best course of action would be to install a VCAP practice called conservation landscaping in which native plants are used to cover bare ground and hold soil in place (Fig. 2). Local arborist Chris Phelps, of Paramount Tree services, and landscape designer Jennifer Myers, of Giving Gardens Designs, worked together to remove the hazardous trees and give fresh life to the parking lot. Now much brighter and more open, the median is home to Black Tupelo and Eastern Red Bud trees, as well as a colorful myriad of perennial species like Pink Muhly Grass, blue and yellow

**"Thanks to an incredible funding opportunity, we were able to provide full funding for the Williamsburg Baptist Church & the Christ Fellowship Church in the Colonial District."**



**Figure 2.** Photograph of the Williamsburg Baptist Church after installation of conservation landscaping.





**Figure 3.** Photographs of the Christ Fellowship Church at the initial site visit revealing large areas of bare ground (left) and after installation of conservation landscaping, where the plants are still quite small (right).

False Indigo, and Threadleaf Bluestar. Since its completion in October, staff have been out to see the site several times and are happy to report that the plants are in wonderful condition and continue to grow beautifully!

### Christ Fellowship Church, Williamsburg

The next project was at the Christ Fellowship Church on Ironbound Road in Williamsburg. An initial walk-through of the property revealed a large area of bare ground that slopes downward from the road towards the rear of the church, bringing stormwater with it (Fig. 3). After rain events, stormwater would pool in low points, leaving the ground soggy and it would sit against the building's HVAC system. Jennifer and Chris teamed up again to design and install a massive 4,860 square foot conservation landscaping mixed-planting bed to help capture excess stormwater and give it a chance to infiltrate. Inspired by Dutch garden designer Piet Oudolf's block and matrix plantings, the team installed nearly 3,000 plants to create a dense stand that should mitigate weed pressure over time. The

project wrapped up around mid-December so the plants are still quite small but staff are excited to watch the site fill in and develop throughout the seasons ahead (Fig. 3).

### Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, Yorktown

The final project was installed at the KirkWood Presbyterian Church in Yorktown off Hampton Highway. Another site that was home to large swaths of poor vegetation, specifically in front of the church and along the sidewalk that borders its property. Jennifer Myers' design transformed approximately 2,500 square feet of bare ground into conservation landscaping and KirkWood Presbyterian members came together to install nearly 900 plants during a community planting day with the help of local Boy and Cub Scouts and Master Gardeners. During the final inspection, it was obvious to staff that this project had been a communal labor of love and the plants were absolutely thriving. If you go to see this site in person, make sure to look for the tree-embossed stepping stones specially designed by the church to represent their community.





**Before**



**After**

Under normal circumstances, the VCAP program can reimburse conservation landscaping at a rate of 80% of the total project cost up to a \$7,000 maximum; as was the case for the KirkWood Presbyterian Church. However, when the Williamsburg Baptist and Christ Fellowship churches applied for VCAP, the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) had just been awarded grant funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation that allowed districts to cover the entire cost of projects in public facing spaces such as schools, parks, businesses, and houses of worship. Thanks to this incredible funding opportunity, we were able to provide full funding for both Williamsburg Baptist Church and Christ Fellowship Church. Each project provides an ecosystem benefit as well as visual interest and educational possibilities in their communities. We look forward to observing the evolution of each of the practices over time and encourage you to go out and do the same!\*



**EMMA RICH**

**Conservation Specialist I**

**Figure 4.** Photographs of the Kirkwood Presbyterian Church at the initial site visit revealing 2,500 square feet of bare ground (top) and after installation of conservation landscaping (bottom).



# OUTREACH YEAR IN REVIEW

## AMANDA WHISPELL

It has been a wonderful year for Colonial SWCD outreach and education. Staff attended numerous events, educational opportunities, field days, and invited lectures, just to name a few. Collectively, we attended/organized 18 outreach events, 7 field days, 17 conferences, and gave 14 invited lectures. On pages 21 and 22 you can see a timeline of some of the events in which we were participants/organizers and on pages 23–25 you can read about our biggest event of the year, the Colonial World Nature Conservation Day BioBlitz at New Quarter Park (not on the timeline).

Other events that are not included on the timeline include a Beneficial Insects Workshop that was organized by the Williamsburg Community Growers (WCG) on September 5, 2025. I spent two hours speaking about insects to a group of people who were keen to learn about all of the “good bugs” they have in their garden.

On May 14, I had another opportunity to talk about bugs when the Peninsular Master Naturalists invited me to teach the entomology unit of their Master Naturalist training. I lectured about insects for three hours and the feedback was unanimously positive (and I have been asked to do the training again in 2026).

There are several events listed on the timeline, that should get another mention, including **Bugfest 2024**, the **Colonial Conservation Breakfast**, our first annual **Spring into Conservation**, the **state Envirothon competition** (pages 27–28), and the **Pollinator Palooza**.

**Bugfest**, held at Grafton Middle School in York County on September 28, was just as fun as it was in 2023, with just under 650 people who attended the event. We brought as many live insects as we

could, but the big hits were the dragonfly larvae. People loved watching them swimming back and forth on the big screen that allowed us to magnify what the larvae were doing. Overall a really great day.

On February 10th, Colonial SWCD organized the **Colonial Conservation Breakfast** featuring partners including Virginia Cooperative Extension, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Virginia State University Small Farm Outreach Program, the Virginia Department of Forestry, Farm Service Agency, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Colonial staff presented current programs such as the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program, Virginia Agriculture Cost Share Program, and the Alliance to Advance Climate-Smart Agriculture grant. The event had excellent attendance from producers within our district and surrounding districts, as well as staff from other conservation districts.

**Spring into Conservation** is our newest recurring event, and the inaugural date was April 12th at the Freedom Park Interpretive Center in James City County. We invited numerous local conservation organizations from within our district to set up tables and speak to the public about all matters of conservation. The event was a success and we’re hopeful that it generated sufficient momentum for future occurrences.

The last event I wanted to specifically mention is the **Pollinator Palooza**. The Palooza was held on June 20 at Veteran’s Park in JCC and was organized by the Williamsburg and JCC Master Gardeners. The event is a celebration of National Pollinator Week and gives the public the opportunity learn about the pollinator diversity and what we can do to attract and protect them. It was a great event and we look forward to tabling again in 2026.



Outreach events  
CSWCD staff have  
attended and/or organized

18

Field days  
CSWCD staff have  
attended and/or organized

7

Invited lectures  
CSWCD staff have given

14

Conferences  
CSWCD staff have attended

17

In addition to these events, we also continued with two conservation initiatives we began last fiscal year, the photography contest and pollinator pledge.

#### Colonial Photography Contest

We held our second annual [Colonial Photography Contest](#) and were able to make a beautiful 2025 calendar with all of the winning photographs. There are twelve categories for which individuals can submit photographs, but all of those photos must be taken in the Colonial District (Charles City, New Kent, James City, or York Counties, or the city of Williamsburg). Anyone whose photograph was selected as a category winner was given a small desktop calendar



The Colonial District 2025 Calendar.

#### Colonial Pollinator Pledge

The other initiative we started last year is called the [Colonial Pollinator Pledge](#). When a person takes the pledge they are promising to do their best to help protect our native pollinators. We have versions of the pledge tailored for adults and children, so we can teach the importance of pollinator conservation to all age groups. To date, since the initiation of the pledge, we have had more [56 people](#) say that they will help to protect our pollinators.

You can learn more about the pledge by [visiting our website](#). If you take the pledge you can request one of our Colonial Pollinator Pledge stickers (below) whenever you see us at an event.



COLONIAL POLLINATOR PLEDGE



# SELECTED COLONIAL SWCD OUTREACH EVENTS FOR FY2025

AMANDA WHISPELL



### Dragonfly Field Day

Amanda Whispell joined the Historic Rivers Master Naturalists for a fun dragonfly field day at Freedom Park. The group learned how to catch and identify some of the dragonfly species in our area.

July 2



### Students Collecting Macroinvertebrate

Amanda Whispell spent the afternoon teaching a local home schooling group about aquatic insects and then taught them how to perform macroinvertebrate sampling.

Sept 20



### Field Day at Brandon Farms

The DCR hosted an field day on CSWCD staff member Robert Waring's farm and the hands-on event drew professionals from across the state to learn practical conservation techniques.

Oct 10



### Colonial Conservation Breakfast

All District staff attended the event where the agricultural staff shared VACS updates and CSWCD partners shared their own updates with the farmers in the District.

Feb 10



### Spring into Conservation

This is a new annual event that will be held each spring as an opportunity for people living in the Colonial District to speak to conservation specialist from a whole range of specialties.



April 12



### VACS Conservation Kickoff

Agricultural staff provided program updates and a guest speaker, Liza Blazure, spoke about soil health to a group of farmers from within the Colonial District.

June 4

2024

July 15

### Brownie Troop: Wonders of Water Walk

Emma Rich and Amanda Whispell spent an educational afternoon walking through the Greensprings Interpretive Trail while observing nature with the troop.



Sept 28

### Bugfest 2024

More than 645 people attended the festival where Emma Rich and Amanda Whispell spoke with many people about pollinators, aquatic insects, beneficial insects, and conservation.



Oct 17

### Trick or Treat Hike

Robyn Woolsey, Emma Rich, and Amanda Whispell set up a table during the James City County Trick-or-Treat hike and spoke to parents and kids about scary invasive species here in Virginia.



2025

March 22

### FidoFest

Robyn Woolsey, Emma Rich, and Amanda Whispell attended FidoFest and spoke to local landowners and homeowners about stormwater issues and the TurfLove program in JCC.



April 15

### Area III Dominion Energy Envirothon Competition

The Jamestown Team won the Area III Competition and advanced to the states level competition on May 18th and then the international one in July 2025.



June 20

### Pollinator Palooza

Robyn Woolsey and Amanda Whispell attended the second annual Palooza and had a great time teaching people about pollinators, native plants, and protecting both here in Virginia.





# SPOTLIGHT: COLONIAL WORLD NATURE CONSERVATION DAY



## AMANDA WHISPELL

Despite the rainy weather on the morning of Saturday, July 20, 2024, the first annual Colonial World Nature Conservation Day BioBlitz at [New Quarter Park](#) in York County, was a tremendous success! We were thrilled with the strong turnout of dedicated volunteers and partners who made the event possible.

Representatives joined us from the [Virginia Department of Forestry](#), [Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists](#), [James City County–Williamsburg Master Gardeners](#), [Virginia Institute of Marine Science](#), [Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory](#), [Williamsburg Botanical Garden](#) and [Freedom Park Arboretum](#), [Plant Virginia Natives](#)

[Campaign](#), [Williamsburg Birding Club](#), and [Bartlett Tree Experts–Williamsburg](#) (see photos on pages 25–26).

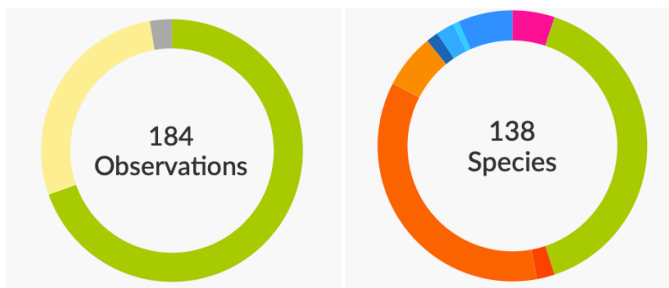
Even though it rained intermittently, many people still showed up and enjoyed learning from all the knowledgeable individuals who were there to educate them, taking informative walks through the park, and the kids enjoyed the scavenger hunt and the booth passport.

We saw some fantastic wildlife, including this box turtle I found crossing one of their hiking paths (Fig. 1). A great big thank you goes out to all the citizen scientist volunteers and attendees who took the time to make observations and then [upload them to the project](#). Once BioBlitz participants had finished entering their observations, we could see the final tallies.



**Figure 1.** An Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*).

A total of at least 184<sup>1</sup> observations were made in the park during the BioBlitz. Of those 184 observations, we found a total of at least 138<sup>1</sup> species at the park (Fig. 2).



**Figure 2.** Graphics from [iNaturalist.com](https://www.inaturalist.com).

The majority of those organisms were plants and insects, but other taxa appeared in smaller quantities (Fig. 3). This data will be saved and available on iNaturalist, so that we can compare it against the data that we obtain during this event in subsequent years. By collecting annual data like this, we will be better able to assist the park with their conservation initiatives.

Overall, it was such an enjoyable morning full of collaboration, education, and fun!✱

<sup>1</sup>I say “at least” because of one of iNaturalist’s standard procedures — taxon geoprivacy:

*“Taxon geoprivacy is a process through which the iNaturalist platform automatically restricts geographic information associated with observations of taxa threatened by location disclosure. They will automatically apply a geoprivacy setting of ‘obscured’ or ‘private’ to all observations of a taxon in locations (locally or globally) where it has a conservation status.”*

For example, at least one Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*; Fig. 1) was observed during the BioBlitz, but this species is [listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List](#) as a result of collecting / poaching, thus the location is automatically obscured and the identification is not being pulled into the project, which could be the case for observations of other threatened species,



**Figure 3.** Visual list of the different animal taxa that were found during the BioBlitz.





New Quarter Park employee Dan and past CSWCD director, Megan Tierney, spent some time at the main CSWCD table<sup>1</sup>.



A few of the happy customers enjoying the opportunity to be creative.



Michele Garrard gave gardening advice at the Master Gardener table.



The VIMS tables were manned by Tori Nutt and Kristen Sharpe. Here Kristen is showing one of the children who attended how runoff impacts a watershed.



There were two tables—the Bartlett Tree Services table, manned by Kyle Foster, and the Virginia Department of Forestry, where folks were offered prizes in return for correctly answering trivia questions asked by the either Dalton Maddox or Daniel Brooks.



Here is Daniel Brooks (center) of the VA DOF leading a tree walk with Adrienne Frank, Rachel Brady, Matt Horner, and Adam Kraynak.





This is Adrienne Frank showing some insects to children after leading an insect walk.



Down by the docks we had a macroinvertebrate / intertidal tent, which was curated by Claire White and Lisa Cummings, both master naturalists.



We also had a fishing station set up on the docks, which was manned by master naturalist Robert Ambrose.



A group of master naturalists: Linda Cole, Kim Owens, Claire White, Jennifer Smith, Jeanette Navia, and (in front) Michele Garrard



This is the last photograph before clean up began, with master naturalist/gardener, Kim Owens and CSWCD outreach and education specialist, Amanda Whispell.



**AMANDA WHISPELL**  
Education & Outreach Specialist



# JAMESTOWN HIGH SCHOOL WINS STATEWIDE ENVIROTHON

## AMANDA WHISPELL

The Envirothon® is a hands-on environmental education program and academic competition that engages high school students across the United States, Canada, China, and Singapore. Designed to promote problem-solving and critical thinking, the program integrates STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) with real-world, outdoor learning experiences. Students explore key environmental topics such as aquatic ecology, forestry, soils and land use, wildlife, and current environmental issues—often working with natural resource professionals. Each year,

When asked why they participate in the Envirothon, team member Beth Oman said: **“It is to learn about the natural world and join in the process to help protect it.”**

over 25,000 students prepare for months to compete for scholarships, prizes, and recognition, culminating in the National Conservation Foundation (NCF) Envirothon International Competition.

This year’s Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon State Competition took place May 18–19, 2025, at Mary Washington University in Fredericksburg, Virginia, where Jamestown High School emerged



**Pictured:** Eleanor Rossi, Teagan Ketterman, Frances Smith (alternate), Sara Iverson (alternate), Mia Bakker, Diego Cordero Muniz, Beth Oman, and Byron Minson (VASWCD Education and Outreach Program Coordinator).



as the overall state champion. Competing against 16 other high schools, the Jamestown team claimed first place in soils and forestry, second in aquatics and the special topic, and third in wildlife. The 2025 presentation topic—chosen by the international Envirothon host and NCS—was “Roots and Resiliency: Fostering Forest Stewardship in a Canopy of Change”. The topic challenged teams to develop and present sustainable solution to safeguard forests in an era of environmental change. It required them to explore current forestry practices, identify vulnerabilities, and propose adaptive solutions in the face of climate change. In Virginia, teams had to present solutions to explain how climate change is affecting forest health in the context of the Laurel Cliff property and Piedmont region in Amherst County, Virginia; they had to pretend they work for a consulting firm that has been

enlisted to help the Monacan Indian Nation create a comprehensive management plan for Laurel Cliff.

With this victory, Jamestown High will represent Virginia at the NCF-Envirothon International Competition, held July 20–26, 2025 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Supported by the Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District, the team has a strong track record at the international level—placing 13th in 2023 and 1st overall in 2019, when they also earned scholarships and a share of \$30,000 in prizes.

The Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to support the Envirothon education program in advancing conservation and sustainability education.

For more information visit [www.ColonialSWCD.org/envirothon](http://www.ColonialSWCD.org/envirothon), or contact Amanda Whispell at [Amanda.Whispell@ColonialSWCD.org](mailto:Amanda.Whispell@ColonialSWCD.org).✱



**Pictured:** Teagan Kettermann, Diego Cordero Muniz, Mia Bakker, Eleanor Rossi, and Beth Oman at one of the Area III Envirothon stations during the competition.

# CSWCD FINANCE REPORT

## AMY WALKER

### Overview

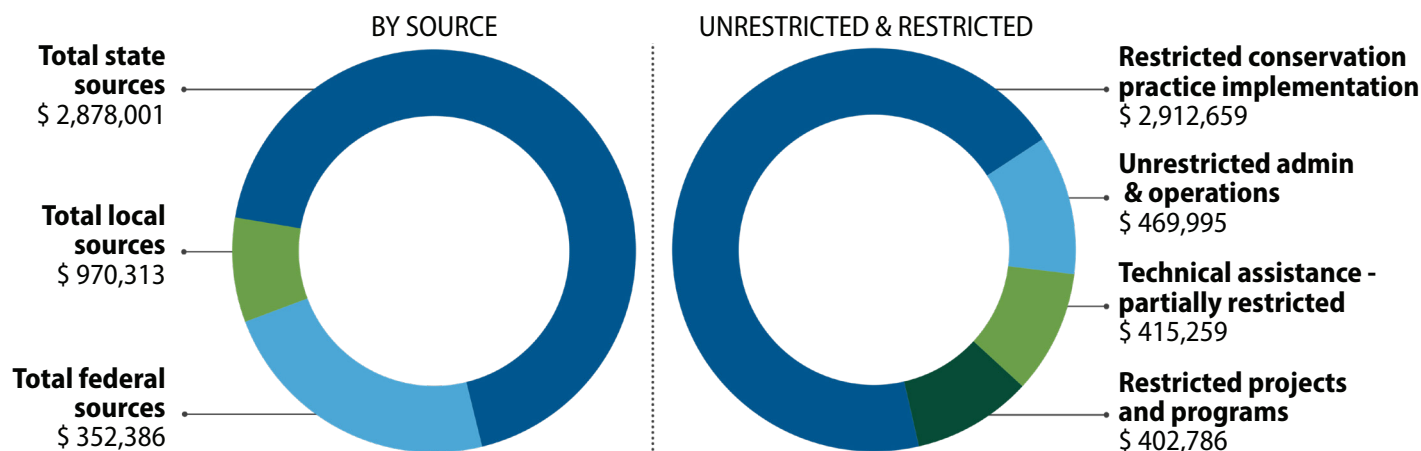
The Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District continued to show its capabilities for providing technical and financial assistance in FY2025, another record funding year. The District committed record funding through the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share (VACS) program, assisted farmers with the Alliance to Advance Climate Smart Agriculture (Alliance) grant, and continued to administer the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) within the District service area and neighboring localities. In addition, through the VACS program, the District participated in the Whole Farm Approach program, coordinating nutrient management and cover crops to improve

water quality and soil health. Through FY2025, the District continued to provide record levels of financial and technical assistance to the agricultural and urban communities.

### Income

The CSWCD annually receives funding from local and state sources to provide technical assistance and program administration. Funding from local and state sources is often targeted for specific activities, such as the administration and implementation of the [Turf Love](#) (local), [VCAP](#) (funds provided by the VASWCD supplemented with local support), and [VACS](#) (state) programs. These funds are restricted to the targeted use outlined by the locality, VASWCD, and/or the state. Local funds are sought and provided through local governments' budget processes, and frequently identifies specific tasks, programs, and initiatives in which the district will be involved within that

### FISCAL YEAR 2025 INCOME



Agricultural cost share: over

**\$3 million**

for nutrient management, soil erosion control, and water quality improvements.



Urban cost share: nearly

**\$300,000**

for stormwater management, and erosion prevention.





locality. State funds are awarded through the Soil and Water Conservation Board funding allocation process based on state budget appropriations.

Grant funding was also received in FY2025 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Alliance grant (USDA and VT). These funds allow the district to build partnerships with like-minded organizations and to pursue conservation objectives identified through the strategic plan process. These federal grants were subject to the temporary freeze in early 2025, but all awarded grants are moving forward. In FY2025, federal grant reimbursement funds totaled \$352,386 despite the funding freeze.

The total District income for FY2025 totaled \$4,200,702, however, 88% of the available funding is fully or partially restricted to specific programs, BMP implementation, or program specific technical assistance.

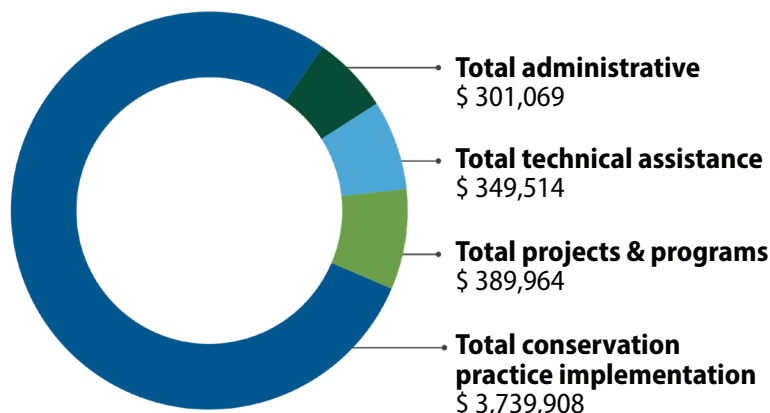
### Expenses

For the fourth consecutive year, funding levels for conservation practice implementation remained high, with over \$3.7 million in cost share assistance provided to producers and landowners in FY2025. The District allocated over \$3 million in cost share for agricultural producers to implement nutrient management, soil erosion, and water quality improvement practices. Several large conservation construction projects were completed and the administration of the Whole Farm Approach comprised the majority of the funding. In addition, the District provided nearly \$700,000 in cost share for urban landowners to improve stormwater management and prevent soil erosion.

Although cost share has seen record levels of funding, the funds available for the administration and operations of the District has remained

Record high cost share assistance: over  
**\$3.7 million**  
 provided to producers and landowners.

### FISCAL YEAR 2025 EXPENSES



relatively constant. In FY2025, approximately 12% of funding was utilized for operations and administration of the District.

The District demonstrates strong financial stewardship with the vast majority of funds going directly to conservation practices rather than administrative overhead, while maintaining record levels of assistance to both agricultural and urban communities. The District looks forward to providing continued support to our localities and communities through FY2026.\*



**AMY WALKER**

Operations Manager

**\$4,200,702\*** in total income

\*88% restricted to specific programs, BMP implementation, or program specific technical assistance.



