

JULY 1 2022 - JUNE 30 2023



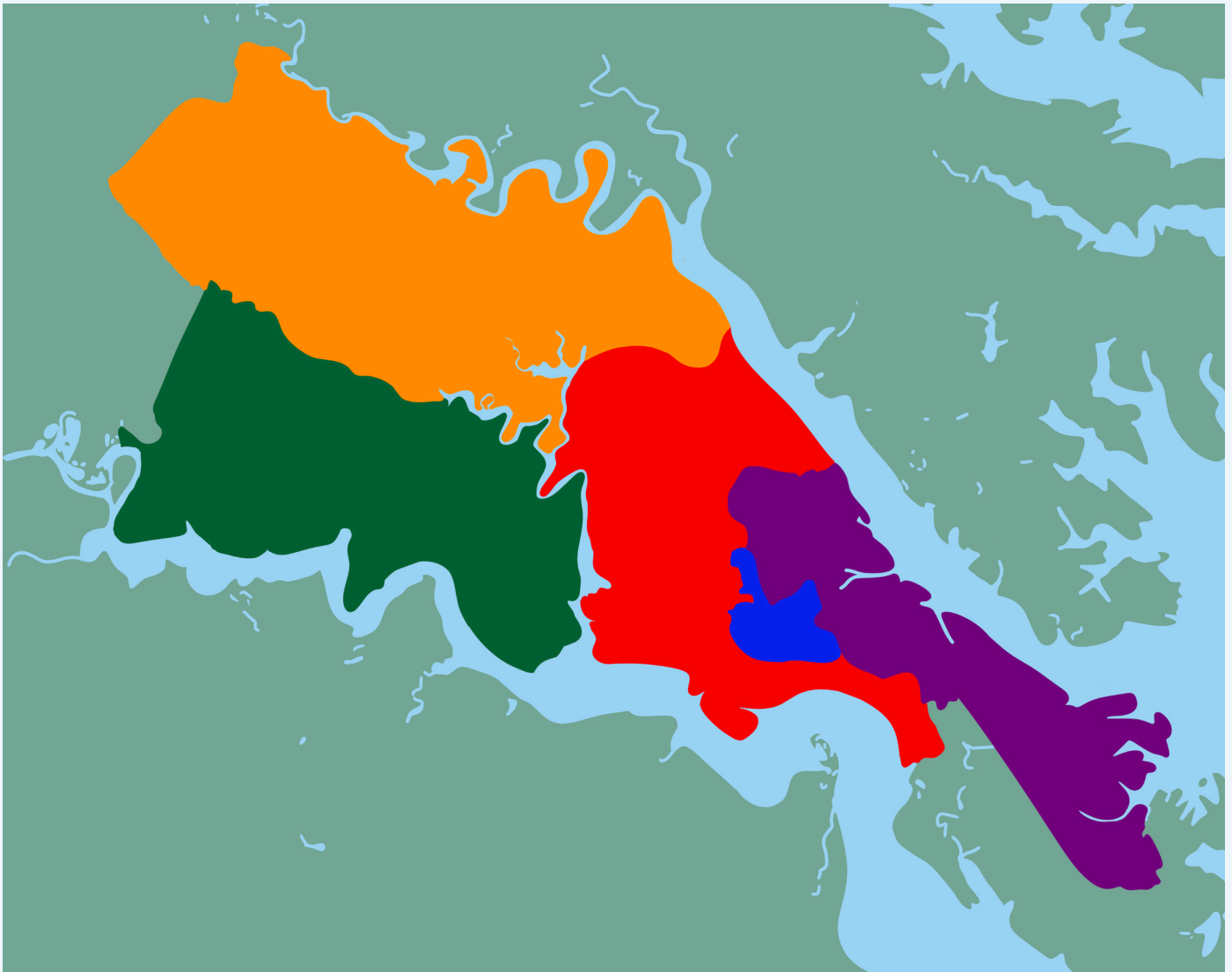
COLONIAL

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL 2023





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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

CHARLES CARTER

The record of increasing state funding for agricultural conservation is once again setting an all-time high in the Commonwealth's march toward the 2025 water quality targets to clean up the Chesapeake Bay. Rumbblings are that the next General Assembly session will see requests for further increases into 2025.

On a personal note, I will be retiring this year and looking back over the past quarter century of my involvement, I see amazing improvement and growth in the District and in its fulfillment of its twin missions of conservation and education. While I would like to take a sliver of the credit for this, it truly has been the hard and dedicated work of the District staff and directors, as well as help and coordination from our stakeholders, sister agencies, and our partners that have created the lion's share of the progress.

For years, the Colonial SWCD staff and directors have been—and I am confident will continue to be—providing increased levels of service under expanded conservation programs, grants,



Charles Carter

outreach, and new programs. I am thankful to have served and to have been a part of the District for over two decades.

We are pleased to provide this annual report of our accomplishments in FY 2023. We are grateful for the support of our local, state, federal, and private partners in conservation.

NEW STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

AMANDA WHISPELL

This year the Colonial SWCD team almost doubled in size when it hired three new staff members to join an original team of four. Logan Ellis and Emma Rich are Conservation

Specialists who were hired to focus on CSWCD's agriculture programming, while I, Amanda Whispell, am the Outreach and Education Specialist. Both Logan and Emma started at CSWCD in January of this year and I made my entrance in February, so we haven't been here for long. It is

quite a bit of upheaval to have three new employees starting at essentially the same time, but I think we are finding our footing a bit now.

Meet our new team members, who will introduce themselves and tell you a little bit about what brought them to CSWCD.



Logan Ellis

My name is Logan Ellis and I am one of the new Conservation Specialists with Colonial SWCD. I am originally from Tappahannock, Virginia, and I am a fifth generation grain farmer with my father and uncle. I earned both my Associate Degree in agricultural technologies and my Bachelor of Science in crop and soil science from Virginia Tech. I am passionate about conservation and I feel lucky to have been able to bring conservation Best Management Practices back to my own farm.

I am looking forward to serving the Colonial District and working directly with farmers toward a goal of cleaner waters and fertile soils.



Emma Rich

My name is Emma Rich and I am one of the new Conservation Specialists with Colonial SWCD. A New England native, I grew up in Massachusetts and originally attended the University of Maine for marine science. During the summer between my freshman and sophomore years I worked at a small vegetable farm and plant nursery run by a friend's family. After two incredible summers there, I knew studying agriculture and horticulture was the right path for me. I graduated in 2019 with a Bachelor's in sustainable agriculture and a minor in aquaculture.

I am so excited to bring my knowledge, experience, and passion to the Colonial District and look forward to connecting with our community!



Amanda Whispell

My name is Amanda Whispell and I am the new Outreach and Education Specialist. I learned my bachelor of science in marine biology from the University of Rhode Island and my doctorate in entomology from Rutgers University before going on to teach general biology, zoology, and invertebrate zoology to students at Kutztown University. My own research looks at the evolution of color in dragonflies, which is why I am also the editor-in-chief of a small journal for the Dragonfly Society of the Americas. I love insects (invertebrates in general), photography, and artwork and I use the latter two to help me educate the public about the first. I am working to teach people about the importance of pollinators, insects in general, and how vital insects are to a healthy ecosystem.

I have been sharing what I know about biology (and bugs) with the public for years — just for fun. I am so happy that it is now a part of my job.

VACS YEAR IN REVIEW

TABEA ZIMMERMANN

The Virginia Agricultural Cost Share (VACS) Program is a state-funded conservation initiative that provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers and landowners for installing and implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs). The VACS program has historically been our “bread and butter” program in terms of being the primary program through which the Colonial SWCD carries out its conservation-centered mission, where most of our agricultural programs’ staff time is allocated, and our biggest source of funding for both BMPs and staff costs.

Over the last several years, we have consistently seen increases in the amount of funding available for allocation via our VACS program. The 2023 year continued this trend, giving us the opportunity to work alongside producers to obligate \$1,932,861.52 in BMP funding to 41 participants. Fifty-five percent of the funding went towards practices that have been completed within the

“This marks a record high program year for Colonial SWCD, highlighting the hard work and success of both program participants and our Agriculture Program team.”

program year (PY), while the rest was obligated towards carry-over practices that are currently being implemented and are scheduled to be completed within the next year. This marks a record high program year for Colonial SWCD, highlighting the hard work and success of both program participants and our Agriculture Program team, which this year experienced a lot of change. In PY 2023, we said goodbye to Tom Dunlap and welcomed Logan Ellis and Emma Rich, who have brought incredible energy, initiative, and skills to our agricultural programs!



Cover crops that are drilled directly into the soil (left) have a much higher chance of germination and successful stand establishment than cover crops that are broadcast or spread (right) over the soil surface. The contrast becomes even more stark when cover crops are planted later in the season (mid-late November), especially after soybean harvest, such as in these two images.

The most popular BMPs continue to be cover crop practices, which serve as ground cover to reduce soil runoff, increase soil organic matter, and maintain nutrients in place over the typically fallow winter months. Combining all cover crop practices, producers in the Colonial SWCD service area planted a total of 12,460 acres, which continues the upward trend from previous years (over 1,000 acres more than last PY). Each year in December, we evaluate cover crop practices by their planting date and stand establishment to ensure that a robust cover crop is present during winter storms and heavy precipitation. During verification checks throughout the past year, we observed several variables that look to be influencing the likelihood that a robust cover crop will be established. We have been working hard to communicate these observations to producers and to provide guidance on ways they can help ensure the successful establishment of their cover crops (understanding that many factors, such as weather, are outside everyone's control!).

This year marked the first time structural practices outpaced agronomic practices in terms of proportion of BMP funding within the District. Thanks to policy changes within the VACS guidelines, increased funding availability, and the ongoing



Site preparation and earth moving/smoothing. Slope grades must be prepared before laying pipe or stone.



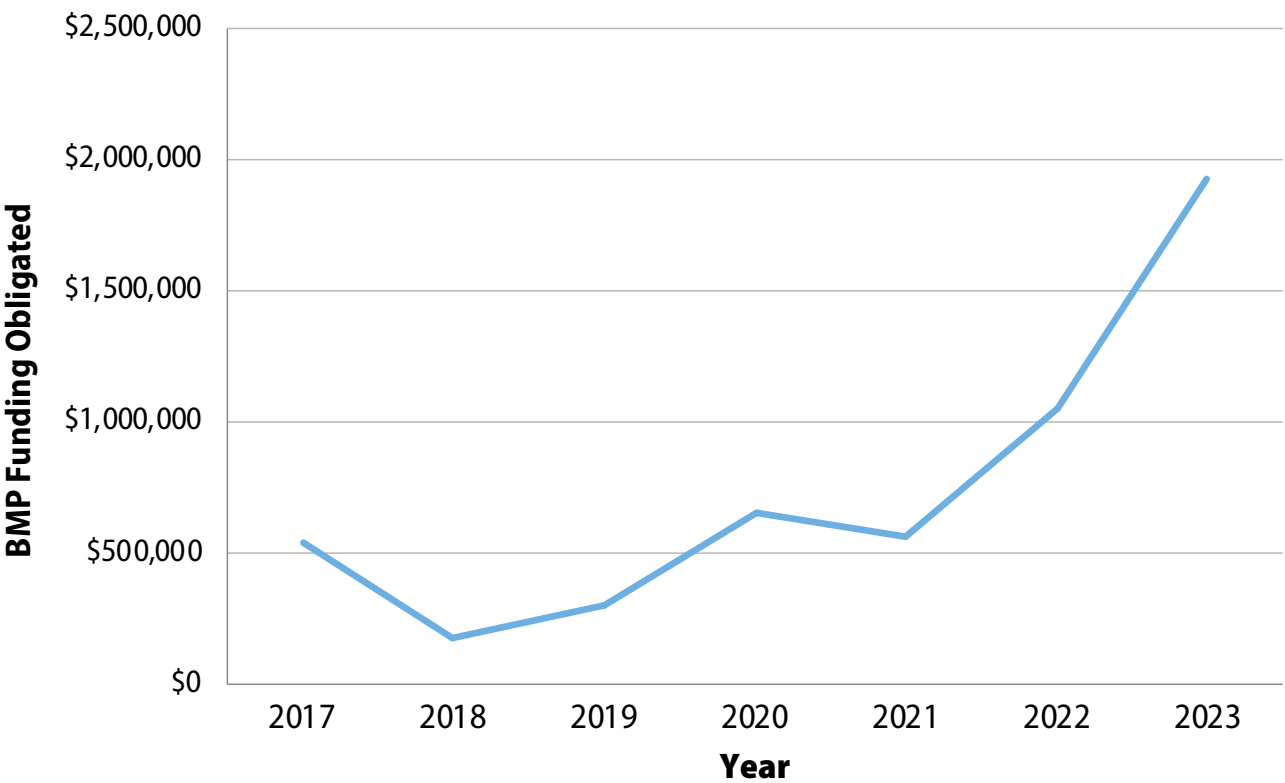
Colonial SWCD staff meet with the landowner and contractor on site to inspect project status, discuss current conditions, and ensure the project is advancing on schedule and in alignment with DCR engineered plans.

work of staff who have worked to connect with farmers and landowners to identify larger soil erosion concerns, we were able to successfully complete several structural practices in PY2023, while others are continuing implementation using PY23 funding. Successful implementation of these practices allows us to address site-specific erosion problems that are becoming more acute with increased severity and frequency of large precipitation events. We anticipate continuing to identify and address these types of conservation issues in the coming years.



The landowner surveys the completed project after slopes have been stabilized with EC-3 matting and seeded.

Historic BMP obligated funding. Our VACS program has grown incredibly in the past seven years, with annual BMP obligated funding more than tripling in the past two years alone!



STBA PILOT PROJECT

LOGAN ELLIS

This past program year, we had the pleasure of being one of the SWCD's to implement the "Precision Nutrient Management on Cropland – Soil Health Adjustment for Nitrogen Application" pilot program. This program is funded by the Department of Conservation and Recreation and is based on research conducted by North Carolina State University. This pilot explores the association found between soil-test

biological activity (STBA) and net nitrogen (N) mineralization. NC State carried out a three-day STBA laboratory test to assess the relationship between corn yield and added nitrogen. The results indicate that the amount of the STBA is correlated to the amount of carbon dioxide

that is released in response to added nitrogen. Using the methodology developed by this research, it is now possible to adjust N fertilizer recommendations to field-specific conditions, and not rely solely on regional or state-wide averages.

"We were all very excited about the pilot grant and, upon seeing the results of this study, we are optimistic about its future application."



District staff member Emma, taking biomass samples to send off to the lab.

As Colonial SWCD staff, we had the opportunity to assist in collecting soil and biomass samples before the cover crop was killed down in the spring of 2023. Samples were analyzed by the NC State laboratory and STBA values were calculated based on the biomass of the previous cover crop and soil organic matter. Subsequently, DCR nutrient management staff used STBA results to create N prescriptions for the field(s) signed up in the pilot

program. Test strip(s) were then created in each field, usually a sprayer's-width (60 or 90 feet) wide, in which the producer applied their normal N rate. The rest of the field outside the test strip was applied with the N rate recommended by the STBA results. Once these rates are applied, the test plots are delineated, and the yield is measured either by the producer or SWCD staff. This yield data will then be provided to the SWCD as well as DCR and

NC State for analysis.

We were all very excited about the pilot grant and, upon seeing the results of this study, we are optimistic about its future application. If this study continues to support the use of STBA in nutrient management planning, it could help change the way we make N recommendations and could be a huge development for both the industry of agriculture and conservation.



This wheat/hairy vetch mix is a great example of the biomass we would like to see for the farms that participated in the pilot STBA grant.

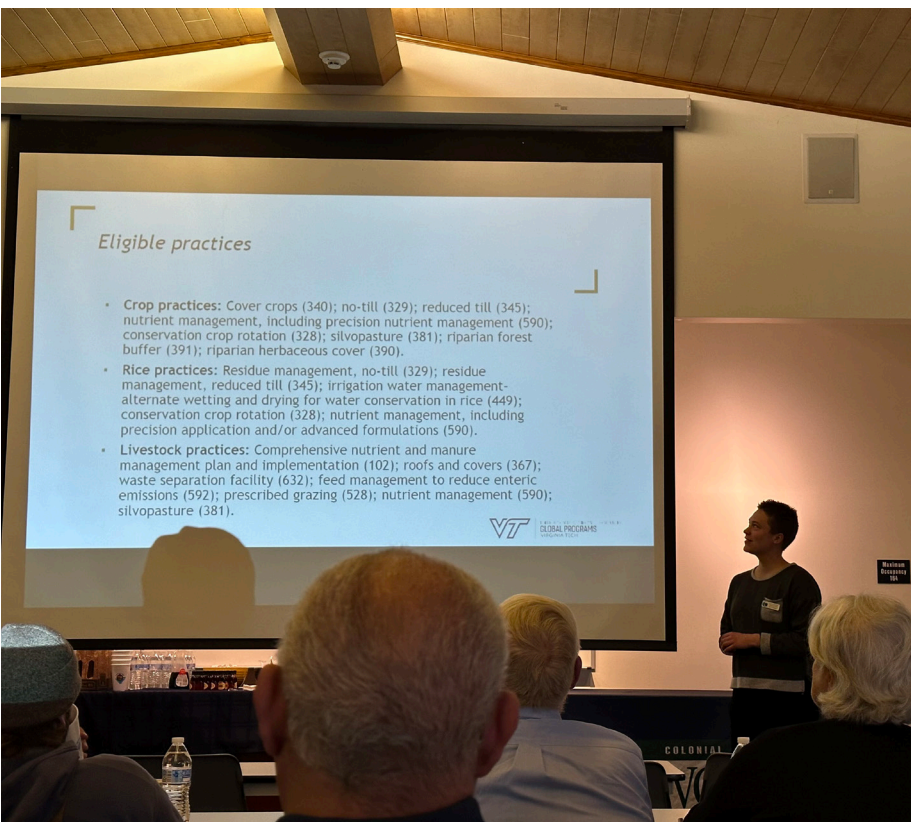
VACS OUTREACH EVENT

EMMA RICH

On Monday March 13th, we held an informational pancake breakfast for producers at the New Kent Forestry Center to cover Virginia Agricultural Cost Share (VACS) updates for the 2023 program year. The presentation content included introductions to new staff members, updates on VACS budget allocations and practices (such as cover crops and living shorelines), and recommendations for the fall growing season. We were joined by partners from the Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia State University's Small Farm Outreach Program, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Farm Service Agency, and Virginia Cooperative Extension. These partners also shared updates from their agencies and provided information on the many services that can be utilized by our VACS program participants. The event was well-attended by 31 participants and we gained valuable feedback for future outreach events.



Logan Ellis (left) and Emma Rich (right) speaking to the producers who attended the event.



Tabea Zimmermann speaking to the producers who attended the event.

VCAP YEAR IN REVIEW



Virginia Conservation
Assistance Program

ROBYN WOOLSEY

We have completed another year of successfully implementing the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) while navigating several significant changes. As the lead Urban Programs staff member, I am responsible for managing VCAP, however, I was out of the office for several months of parental leave during the spring. For this reason, the total number of site visits completed throughout



An actively eroding shoreline in York County. Although shrubs are present along the shoreline, fluctuating tides and boat wakes are undercutting the roots and eroding soil beneath them.



This image shows the same shoreline as above after a living shoreline has been installed. During installation, a sill was built out of large stone, sand was added to build up the new marsh area, and marsh grass plugs were planted to help stabilize the sand. Over time, these marsh grasses will fill in the length of the shoreline and provide water quality and habitat benefits.

the year remained lower than anticipated and was consistent with the total completed in fiscal year 2022.

In fiscal year 2023, ten landowners successfully applied for VCAP assistance with stormwater best management practice (BMP) installations, which was a significant increase from three landowners in the previous year. Of the ten BMPs approved in 2023, four were living shorelines, three were conservation landscaping practices, two were permeable pavement installations, and one was a rainwater harvesting system. All of these BMPs, along with rain gardens, remain the most popular practices amongst the majority of landowners who show interest in the program.

The biggest change in VCAP in 2023 was the execution and implementation of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the City of Hampton to allow access to VCAP funding for living shorelines to Hampton residents. As Hampton is not included in a soil and water



Top: One of the barns that was included in a rainwater harvesting project in James City County. As part of this project, the landowner planned to install gutters on the building which would capture the stormwater flowing off of the roof and deposit it into nearby cisterns for storage and later use.

Bottom: The same building with the gutters installed.

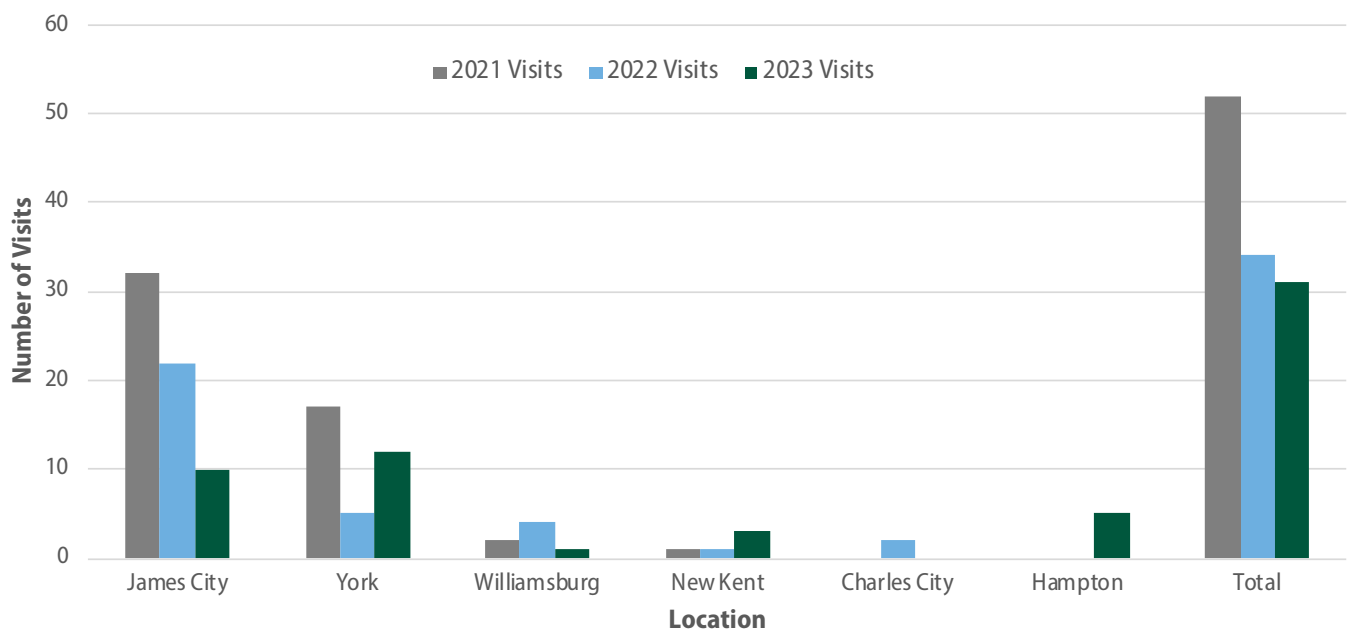
“The biggest change in VCAP in 2023 was the execution and implementation of a memorandum of understanding with the City of Hampton to allow access to VCAP funding for living shorelines to Hampton residents.”

conservation district service area, Hampton residents have previously been unable to participate in VCAP. The Colonial SWCD staff and the Hampton SWCD staff have since developed a strong partnership while preparing the MOU and are excited to begin working with Hampton residents to address their shoreline issues while improving water quality with living shorelines.



Right: A portion of the finished rainwater harvesting system. The building in the previous images is shown in the background, and a second building included in the system is in the foreground. The cisterns storing all of the captured water are buried between the two buildings. Pumps are used to pump water out of the cisterns when needed.

VCAP site visits, by locality.



SHORELINE EVALUATION

ROBYN WOOLSEY

Although Shoreline Evaluation Program (SEP) volunteers and our staff have continued to attend training opportunities relevant to shoreline management and living shorelines, interest in the program has not been quite as high as we anticipated. Regardless, we were very pleased to receive the first application for the program from a James City County resident with property along College Creek. This landowner had significant slopes on their property that faced severe erosion threats from both upland stormwater runoff and tidal fluctuations. During the initial site visit,

we and our volunteers recommended that the landowners employ upland best management practices, such as conservation landscaping and permeable pavement, to mitigate the erosion effects of stormwater runoff and we discussed places along the shoreline where a living shoreline may be suitable. After the initial visit, we continued to collaborate with our volunteers to prepare a final report detailing the observations made and ideas discussed onsite, as well as any further recommendations that we developed when reviewing site visit notes. Many of the recommendations included the use of best management practices that could be eligible for financial assistance through the



Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) Marine Scientist Karen Duhring teaches Shoreline Evaluation Program volunteers about common shoreline plant communities.

“One of our top priorities this year continues to be the cultivation of both staff and volunteer confidence to conduct SEP site visits, which has led to a series of online and in-person training opportunities.”

Virginia Conservation Assistance Program, so we included information about that program in the report as well.

One of our top priorities this year continues to be the cultivation of both staff and volunteer confidence to conduct SEP site visits, which has led to a series of online and in-person training opportunities that we have often hosted in partnership with staff from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS). Early in 2023, our SEP volunteers took a field trip to the VIMS campus in Gloucester, Virginia, to learn about shoreline management and common shoreline plants. These kinds of training sessions offer valuable opportunities to observe various types of shorelines and shoreline habitats. During fiscal year 2024, we will continue to provide training opportunities for volunteers but will also focus heavily on advertising and marketing efforts to try and increase interest and participation in the program.



Evidence of shoreline erosion found during a Shoreline Evaluation Program site visit in James City County along College Creek.

TURF LOVE

ROBYN WOOLSEY

District staff and Turf Love volunteers, also known as Lawn Rangers, completed another successful year educating James City County residents about the importance of environmentally-sensitive lawn care. We provide these educational opportunities by performing individual site visits with program participants that are focused on their specific lawn care needs as well as by organizing public seminars with regional turfgrass experts. In 2023, we completed 91 nutrient management plans for properties throughout James City County and we held five educational events.

Super Turf Saturday, an annual educational seminar we hold each autumn, took place on August 6, 2022. Speakers from the Virginia Tech Turfgrass Team and Turf Love Program Technician Bob Winters gave presentations about general lawn care, weed control, and the importance of soil health. Over eighty individuals registered for the event, and sixty of those attended. Many attendees continued their lawn care education by subsequently participating in Turf Love. Lawn Ranger Dave Kleppinger gave a presentation at the



This image shows the District's table set up at the Virginia Turfgrass Foundation's Run the Fairway 5k.

Williamsburg Botanical Garden about Turf Love during their "Learn and Grow" lecture series, which also resulted in new Turf Love participants. We have also continued to strengthen our partnership with the Virginia Turfgrass Foundation by participating in the Foundation's

Run the Fairway 5k at the Kingsmill Resort. We helped the foundation with event promotion and we set up an informational table to discuss lawn care and hand out Turf Love materials to Williamsburg, Virginia, residents.

Although typically held in the

"In 2023, we completed 91 nutrient management plans for properties throughout James City County and we held five educational events."

spring, we were unable to offer Turf University this year, as I am the staff member responsible for the Turf Love program and I was out of the office for several months in the spring. Instead, we were able to host informational tables at both the Ford's Colony Earth Day Festival and the Williamsburg Regional Library Spring Festival where we distributed information and materials relevant to Turf Love.



Dr. Jeffrey Derr, member of the Virginia Tech Turfgrass Team, spoke about weed control at Super Turf Saturday.



Turf Love Program Technician Bob Winters gave a presentation about general lawn care at Super Turf Saturday.

OUTREACH YEAR IN REVIEW

AMANDA WHISPELL

As I started with CSWCD this past February, all of the outreach and education events that I organized commenced during the second half of our fiscal year. Before organizing any in-person events, I set up an array of social media accounts for CSWCD and we now have [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [TikTok](#), [iNaturalist](#), and [Reddit](#) accounts, which we can use to quickly share educational information or information about our programs with the people living in the CSWCD District and beyond. Our followers are slowly increasing in number, but I anticipate we will keep gaining more as we do more good work and continue to organize more public outreach events.

This is a general election year—when SWCD Directors will be on the ballot—so one of my first projects was to find a way to inform the public about the role of, and expectations for, a director in the District. The goal was to encourage a broad range of individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences to run for seats on the CSWCD Board of Directors. We decided that it would be beneficial to try to have some of the District's current directors talk about their own experiences on CSWCD's board in a series of short videos that we could post to our social media accounts and our website. Several directors did volunteer for this project and we were able to complete four videos prior to the deadline for submitting the documentation

necessary to be on the ballot this November. In the first video, [Bob Lund](#), one of the directors from James City County, explains the process by which you could get on the ballot to become a representative. In all three subsequent videos, which feature [Wayne Davis](#), a representative from New Kent County, [Dave Beals](#), a representative from the City of Williamsburg, and [Pam Mason](#), a representative from York County, the directors



Our table at the Williamsburg Regional Library Spring Festival.

“Emma Rich and I took the opportunity to introduce the Ford’s Colony residents to some of the aquatic macroinvertebrates (mostly immature insects) that live in the ponds on the property.”



discussed why a person might want to consider running for a position on the CSWCD Board and what they would be able to expect if they were elected in the general election this November.

Our first event in 2023 was the Williamsburg Regional Library Spring Festival, which was a small event that focused on gardening and pollinators. Tabea Zimmermann and I set up a table and spent the morning talking to people about pollinators

and insect conservation and gave individuals the opportunity to look at some preserved pollinator specimens up close. We also had a small digital microscope set up and were able to show the attendees what butterfly scales look like when magnified and to give them a “bee’s-eye” view of the “tongue” of a bumble bee. It was a really wonderful and we had so much fun.

Our second event was the Ford’s Colony’s Earth



Bob Winters (top left and bottom left), Emma Rich (bottom left), and me (top right and bottom right) at our table at the Ford’s Colony Earth Day event. In both the top right and bottom left you can also see the digital image of the dragonfly nymph that people very much enjoyed seeing.

Day Festival. Emma Rich and I took the opportunity to introduce the Ford's Colony residents to some of the aquatic macroinvertebrates (mostly immature insects) that live in the ponds on the property. The kids were especially excited about the dragonfly nymph ("baby") and the giant water bug (Belostomatidae) I collected. We also brought a large collection of native preserved pollinators and other beneficial insect species and all attendees enjoyed looking at them and asking questions about their life histories. Helping the next generation develop a more favorable opinion of insects is going to be vital to the maintenance of a healthy ecosystem in the future, as we have been experiencing unprecedented declines in insect biodiversity in recent years.

Concurrent with our participation in the Ford's Colony Earth Day Festival, I organized the first of three virtual BioBlitz events held in the CSWCD District — the [Colonial Community Critters Earth Day BioBlitz](#). This (and each subsequent) BioBlitz was created as an iNaturalist project. This blitz pooled all of the flora and fauna observations across the entire CSWCD District that were entered on iNaturalist during the week in which we celebrate Earth Day. This blitz did show that the individuals living in the CSWCD District preferentially photograph and enter observations of plants and insects, which is useful to know when organizing future outreach events. This event, and the daily observation challenges, also gave us the opportunity to interact with people interested in biodiversity in our District, especially with those who won daily challenges, and I have since had several sign up to be volunteers at future in-person BioBlitz events.

The other two virtual BioBlitz events that I organized were the [Colonial Pollinator Week BioBlitz](#) and the [Colonial Butterfly Scavenger Hunt](#). Both of these events were initiated during the first week of June, which is National Pollinator Week. The Pollinator Week BioBlitz ran for only this one week, while the Butterfly Scavenger Hunt BioBlitz



Jeanette Navia, a local Master Naturalist, showing off some of the swag that she won participating in our Colonial Community Critters Earth Day BioBlitz.

is ongoing through the end of September, giving participants the opportunity to find 16 of the most common butterfly species the CSWCD District for the opportunity to win pollinator stickers and packets of our Native Pollinator Wildflower Mix seeds as prizes. During Pollinator Week I also took the opportunity to post information about pollinators and information on what people can do to protect them across our website and social media. We plan to continue hosting virtual BioBlitz events and are in the process of organizing in-person events in the District.



Dragonfly nymph shared at Ford's Colony on Earth Day.

WILLIAMSBURG COMMUNITY GARDENS



ROBYN WOOLSEY

This year we continued our successful partnership with Williamsburg Community Growers (WCG), a local nonprofit that operates a teaching farm and community garden in James City County. Having been partners for over six years, both organizations have shared missions surrounding conservation education.

Since July 2021, we have been managing a USDA Farm to School grant that focuses on increasing capacity for WCG by funding a part-time Farm

Manager, increasing student engagement in the teaching farm, and increasing the availability of locally grown produce in the three Williamsburg-James City County high schools' cafeterias. Although we have faced unexpected obstacles during the implementation of this grant, we have experienced great successes as well. After the initial Farm Manager—who was hired at the beginning of the grant period—left for another position, we hired a new Farm Manager who has since flourished in her role. Five high school students were hired as Urban Agriculture Interns in the summer of 2022,



The five Urban Agriculture Interns hired with USDA Farm to School grant fund.

Left to right: Cadence Rhine, Allison Trogdon, Mia Tutone, Mary Katherine Deas, and Lula Zere.



Farm Manager Sam Pereira relocates a small rain barrel used to collect stormwater runoff. The runoff collected in this barrel will be recycled to water crops being grown in the teaching farm!

“... we will continue to work together with the WCG leadership to find new opportunities for collaboration towards our shared conservation missions.”

and many other students volunteered at WCG as student service-learners. Educational efforts for these students focused on “Seed to Stand” learning, meaning that they were involved in the early production stages of planting seeds and seedlings, they were responsible for maintaining and harvesting from those seedlings, and they aided in the sale of those harvests at a small weekly farm stand. As this grant project comes to a close at the end of the 2023 calendar year, we will continue to work together with the WCG leadership to find new opportunities for collaboration towards our shared conservation missions.



Farm Manager Sam Pereira poses with several bags of produce waiting to be picked up by WCG Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) members.

DOMINION ENERGY ENVIROTHON

SHEILA JARUSESKI

Envirothon is an environmental and natural resource conservation, problem-solving, teambuilding and leadership experience, and competition for high school students. Virginia's 2023 Dominion Energy Envirothon State Competition was held at Virginia State University on May 21st and 22nd. The Colonial District was proud to sponsor an exemplary team from Jamestown High School, which went on to compete against teams representing 17 different high schools from across the state, before finally winning the title of State Champions. The team then advanced to the National Conservation Foundation's national Envirothon competition, where they will compete against teams from across the United States, Canada, China, and Singapore.



The Jamestown High School team presenting their oral presentation at the state competition.



Front row (left to right): Diego Cordero-Muniz and Sebastin Cordero-Muniz Back Row (left to right): Carolina Bakker, Eleanor Rossi, Alternate: Teagan Ketterman, and Landon Kennon. Thank you to coaches, Rebecca Elton, Amanda Mullane, and Charlie Dubay.



The Jamestown team at the forestry station.



Sheila Jaruski, CSWCD Office Coordinator, serving on the scoring committee for the Envirothon state competition.

AREA III 2023 DOMINION ENVIROTHON



SHEILA JARUSKI

"The district is proud to support the Envirothon program and to promote education and conservation. "

The Colonial District hosted the Area III regional Envirothon competition this past spring. Area III localities include New Kent, Charles City, James City, York, City of Williamsburg, Hanover, Caroline, Henrico, Powhatan, Goochland, Westmoreland, Richmond, Northumberland, Lancaster, Middlesex, Gloucester, Matthews, Essex, King William, King and Queen, Stafford, Spotsylvania, King George, and the City of Fredericksburg.

The competition was held in late April at the VCU Rice Rivers Center located in Charles City. Four teams competed, with an additional team made up of alternates from other teams. Three teams advanced to the state competition, two teams from Henricopolis SWCD, Highland Springs High School and Glen Allen High School, and one team from the Colonial district, Jamestown High School.

The district is proud to support the Envirothon program and to promote education and

conservation, with ever changing environmental issues. This program helps promote a lifelong commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainability.



The Jamestown team at the wildlife station with DWR District Biologist, David Garst.

2023 YOUTH CONSERVATION CAMP

SHEILA JARUSESKI

Youth Conservation Camp is a week-long conservation camp providing a hands-on outdoor learning experience for high school aged students conducted on and around the Virginia Tech campus. We are proud to support this important educational program, as it provides an opportunity for students to be exposed to a variety of conservation and natural resource learning opportunities.

The program brings together about 70 students for a week of learning about Virginia's natural resources from state-wide district conservation professionals and faculty from Virginia Tech.

The District provided scholarships for three applicants who attended camp this year. The campers represented the District localities of New Kent and York Counties



Right to Left: Sarah Miller, New Kent County, and Riley Brooks and Michael Herath, York County.

CSWCD FINANCE REPORT

JIM WALLACE

Overview

Historic levels of funding continued to flow through Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 as the commonwealth increased efforts to meet the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) by targeting the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share (VACS) Program.

Income

The CSWCD annually receives funding from local and state sources. Funding from the state provides resources for targeted activities, namely administrative function and implementation of the VACS program. Local funds are sought and provided through local governments’ budget process, and frequently identifies specific tasks, programs, and initiatives in which the district will be involved.

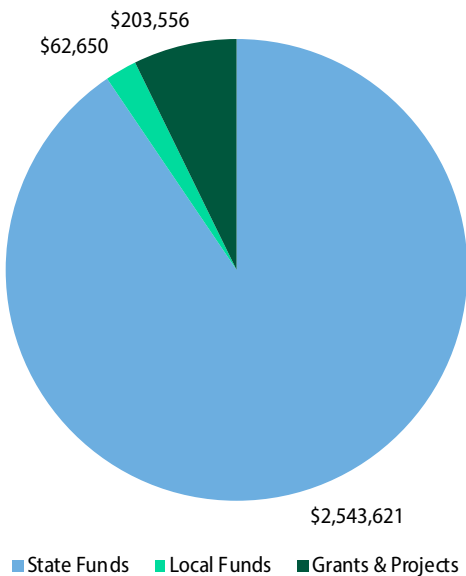
Grant funding and income from other programs are much less reliable, but they allow the district to

build partnerships with like-minded organizations and to pursue conservation objectives identified through the strategic plan process.

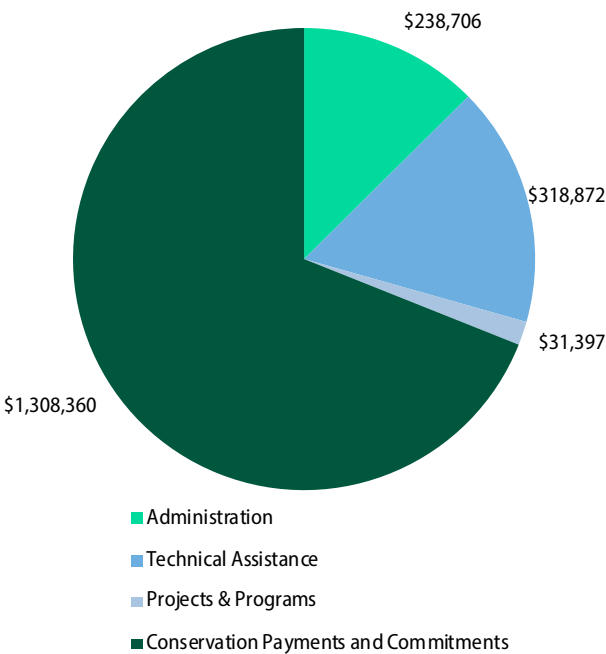
Expenses

For the second consecutive year, the district paid out over \$1 million in conservation payments to local farmers and landowners. In addition to payments, the district committed financial resources to another six conservation projects, totalling another \$858,806. When combined, actual conservation payments and commitments of financial assistance to complete, the conservation projects approached \$2 million in FY 2023 — nearly a 100% increase year-over-year. To help sustain this level of output into the future, the district hired three new full-time staff members in early 2023. New staff will add capacity to the district’s agriculture and urban programs, increase awareness of the district’s work, and help tell the story of conservation in eastern Virginia.

CSWCD FY 2023 Income by Category



CSWCD FY 2023 Expenses by Category





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**WE ARE CLOSING THIS REPORT JUST AS WE
ARE CLOSING THE CHAPTER ON TILLAGE.**