



COLONIAL
SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

STRATEGIC PLAN
2025–2028

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Vision Statement

We envision communities served by the Colonial SWCD improving awareness of their natural resources to become even better stewards of water quality and soil health. We believe in an inclusive and integrated approach to conservation working with partners to support and engage community members consistent with local conservation objectives.

Mission Statement

The Colonial SWCD supports improved and sustainable stewardship of natural resources through programs, technical guidance, outreach, education, and financial assistance.

State and Federal Partner Acknowledgement

The *Accelerating Living Shoreline Implementation on Agricultural Properties in Charles City County (VA)* project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement LI-00A00694 to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency, nor does the EPA endorse trade names or recommend the use of commercial products mentioned in this document.

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Colonial SWCD through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Who we are

The Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District (CSWCD, the District) is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia that includes Charles City County, James City County, New Kent County, York County, and the City of Williamsburg. Founded in 1947 the District initially included Charles City and New Kent Counties. In 1949 James City County was added to the District. In 1972 York County and the City of Williamsburg were added. CSWCD is one of forty-seven soil and water conservation districts within Virginia.

The District is funded by state and federal programs, as well as local governments within the service area; and operates on a July 1 to June 30 fiscal year. Federal funding is generally in the form of grants the District pursues and state funding is primarily through programmatic grant agreements. Local funding supports district operations and specific programs within their jurisdiction.

The District is governed by a twelve-member Board of Directors. Ten directors are elected in the general election every four years and two are appointed. Currently, the staff is composed of nine individuals: a programs manager, an operations manager, a senior agriculture conservation specialist, an urban conservation specialist, an office coordinator, an outreach specialist, and two agriculture conservation specialists.

The District focuses on a wide range of programs encouraging community participation in conserving and protecting soil, water, and related natural resources, with a particular focus on the following:

- Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Assistance Program
- Agricultural Conservation Planning and Technical Assistance
- The Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act
- Virginia's Agricultural Stewardship Act
- Environmental and agriculture education
- Urban Best Management Practices Cost-share and Technical Assistance
- Total Maximum Daily Loads and Local Implementation Plans
- Lend technical expertise for design and installation of agricultural conservation practices implemented voluntarily by Virginia farmers

All constituent citizens can have a voice in resource and conservation planning by attending monthly district meetings and committee meetings, communicating their concerns, and participating in district programs. Our purpose is to give local citizens the ability to work on

conservation problems at the local level. Our philosophy of natural resource management is to provide the necessary technical expertise that assists the community in identifying, discussing, and solving local conservation issues. Our community constituents are farmers, homeowners, teachers, youths, homeowner's associations, environmental groups, developers, elected officials, local businesses, and civic organizations. We recognize that our constituency base continues to evolve. As such, we strive to remain flexible in developing programs to meet its changing needs.

The public is invited to attend all board and committee meetings consistent with Virginia's open meeting law. Notices of District meetings are sent to local libraries and are posted at the following locations: the District office at 205 Bulifants Boulevard. in Williamsburg, Colonial SWCD's social media pages, and the Colonial SWCD website on the events tab (www.colonialswcd.org/events).

Meeting notices are also sent electronically to area libraries with a request to be posted. Area libraries which receive the District's request include: the Williamsburg Library and the James City County Library, both in Williamsburg.

The programs of the Colonial SWCD will be offered on a non-discriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, natural origin, religion, gender, age, marital status, handicap, or political affiliation.

The Strategic Planning Process

The Strategic Plan is a proactive document that is intended to guide the CSWCD through the next four years, from fiscal year 2025 to 2028. It assumes that the future of our organization will be based on changing circumstances and priorities. The purpose of this document is to direct the District toward more effective programs in soil and water conservation within its boundaries.

The Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District board and staff underwent a strategic planning process beginning in December 2023 and ending in December 2024. This is, in part, to accomplish the planning requirement for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation due December 2024.

The strategic planning elements reviewed from past plans include the vision and mission, goals, objectives, and strategies. Also discussed during the planning process was the role of the committee structure in the daily decision making of the District. The District Board of

Directors has established the present committee structure which consists of the Agricultural Committee, Operations Committee, Outreach Committee, and Urban Committee. The Board revisits the structure and members annually.

The Strategic Plan will be used by our Board of Directors, committees, and our staff to develop and manage District programs. The major goals are presented in this document to help the District develop its Annual Plans of Work and guide the District's day-to-day operations. It is our hope that this strategic plan will help the CSWCD meet the challenging future of natural resource conservation in our constituent localities.

The following goals have been established for the 2025–2028 CSWCD Strategic Plan:

- CSWCD becomes the trusted agent and prime source for knowledge, practical solutions, technical authority for conservation, agriculture, and environmental approaches throughout the CSWCD localities.
- Create a greater level of organizational stability.
- Foster a greater understanding and appreciation of local conservation issues and establish Colonial SWCD as a trusted resource and advocate.
- Create a sustainable urban program for the Colonial SWCD.

Agricultural Programs Goal

CSWCD becomes the trusted agent and prime source for knowledge, practical solutions, technical authority for conservation, agriculture, and environmental approaches throughout the CSWCD localities.

Problem Statement

Resources, both financial and technical, are scarce for small, non-traditional, and innovative agricultural producers within the Colonial SWCD footprint. The District will investigate and initiate opportunities to provide producers with financial and technical assistance to implement traditional and novel approaches to conservation.

Strategies

- CSWCD pilots and then grows an agricultural grant program that provides services to portions of the community that currently do not qualify for state grants.
- Implement land use conservation projects to promote water and soil conservation regardless of BMPs identified in the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP). Refocus the mission of the District to overall conservation and not just water quality focused VACS.
- Successfully implement the NFWF *Accelerating Living Shoreline Implementation on Agricultural Properties in Charles City County (VA)* project
- CSWCD helps pilot and then grow the number of producers using practices that prioritize soil health, biodiversity, and ecosystem resilience while producing food and fiber. Integrate practices and programs with remote sensing and advanced technologies to further minimize the use of fertilizer, pesticides, and fungicides, while increasing soil carbon. Develop a grant program specifically for improving degraded soils and water quality, as well as sequestering carbon from the atmosphere.

Annual Milestones

2025

- Publish at least one video focused on soil health
- Conduct at least one producer field day to showcase soil health conservation practices
- Seek grant funding for a “pay for performance” project
- Initiate the NFWF *Accelerating Living Shoreline Implementation on Agricultural Properties in Charles City County (VA)* project on up to four sites

2026

- Publish at least one video targeting innovative conservation on a small farm

- Conduct at least one producer field day to showcase soil health conservation practices
- Partner with a group (NGO, private firm, etc.) to implement conservation practice without ties to USDA, EPA, or DCR practice specifications or models.
- Implement the NFWF *Accelerating Living Shoreline Implementation on Agricultural Properties in Charles City County (VA)* project

2027– 2028

- TBD based upon adaptative response to outcomes in 2025 and 2026

Expected Results

Be the central and trusted organization in our community for conservation and the environment

Operational Programs Goal

Create a greater level of organizational stability.

Problem Statement

The organization has faced difficulties addressing the succession of directors as well as attaining quorum at meetings and wants to address the replacement of staff institutional knowledge due to attrition and retirement.

Strategies

- Have a full slate of candidate directors for the 2028 board elections.
- Continue streamlining committees and duties per the Work Breakdown Structure.
- Have trained, experienced staff in place to take over when senior staff retires or leaves.
- Establish procedures to ensure district operations are efficient and effective.
- Ensure district programs meet various grant deliverables set forth in state and federal grant agreements.
- Continue working with the District's Office of the Attorney General representative and HR Professionals to update policies to correspond accurately and legally with federal/ state laws.

Annual Milestones

2025

- Ensure compliance with state and federal Fair Labor Standards Act
- Strongly encourage staff trainings and professional certifications
- Add an additional associate director to the board
- Ensure policies and procedures reflect current DCR Desktop Procedures for District Fiscal Operations
- Ensure all state and federal grant agreement deliverables are met
- Begin review of stored district files for proper retention per applicable records retention schedules

2026

- Add an additional associate director to the board
- Update policies and procedures to ensure compliance with DCR grant agreements
- Ensure all state and federal grant agreement deliverables are met
- Complete review of stored district files for retention per applicable records retention schedules

2027

- Ensure all state and federal grant agreement deliverables are met

- Update policies and procedures to ensure compliance with DCR grant agreements
- Ensure compliance with state and federal Fair Labor Standards Act

2028

- Ensure all state and federal grant agreement deliverables are met
- Update policies and procedures to ensure compliance with DCR grant agreements
- Ensure compliance with state and federal Fair Labor Standards Act

Expected Results

The District will have up-to-date, compliant policies and meet all state and federal deliverables.

Outreach, Education, and Marketing Goal

Foster a greater understanding and appreciation of local conservation issues and establish Colonial SWCD as a trusted resource and advocate.

Problem Statement

Few people know about CSWCD and even fewer know about the services we offer – including those related to the agricultural program, the urban program, and educational outreach.

Strategies

- Promote conservation education through classroom presentations, outreach events, educational workshops, and asynchronous educational initiatives.
- Develop educational and outreach materials that cover a range of conservation issues.
- Create the graphics needed to generate information sheets, infographics, webpages, presentations, etc. that cover additional, relevant conservation issues.
- Update and maintain website to reflect district programs, initiatives, services, and meetings.

Annual Milestones

2025

- Identify groups, schools, and organizations to which we can offer conservation education opportunities and begin to develop relationships.
- Research grants to support conservation education programming.
- Update the District volunteer program.
- Create the graphics needed to generate information sheets, infographics, webpages, presentations, etc. for all core CSWCD services.

2026

- Apply for grant funds to support conservation education programming.
- Begin to develop asynchronous educational initiatives that provide a sense of community and that offer opportunities to teach conservation education basics to the public.
- Expand the District volunteer program.
- Create infographics, information sheets, rack cards, and brochures for all core CSWCD services, as needed.
- Create presentations that cover all core CSWCD services.

2027

- Collaborate with other natural resource agencies and partners to provide conservation education opportunities and promote our conservation message.
- Start participating in conservation education opportunities offered in area schools.

- Begin to organize conservation presentations, events, and workshops.
- Create infographics, information sheets, rack cards, and brochures for all core CSWCD services, as needed.

2028

- Increase partnerships with local and federal organizations so that we can collaborate and provide new opportunities for conservation education.
- Begin to develop standardized conservation education programming packages and curricula.
- Develop additional conservation presentations, events, and workshops.
- Create webpages that cover additional, relevant conservation issues.

Expected Results

Enhance community knowledge of CSWCD and promote volunteer and educational opportunities.

Urban Programs Goal

Create a sustainable urban program for the Colonial SWCD through multiple phased strategies.

Problem Statement

While current urban programs do provide income to the District, this income is insufficient to sustainably fund the staff positions needed to operate the programs.

Strategy

Enhance community conservation initiatives to engage more landowners, increase participation, and improve operational efficiency

- Double the number of qualified VCAP applications annually submitted to the VCAP steering committee.
- Reduce by 25% (50% if possible) staff time required (in FY 2023) per installed VCAP application by the end of the strategic period.
- Engage Newport News on anything relevant we can connect with them about.
- At least double (from FY 2023) urban locality/MOU funding by the end of the strategic period.

Annual Milestones

2024

- Submit at least 12 VCAP applications
- Establish connection with appropriate Newport News staff to engage in partnership discussions
- Assess current urban programs funding, including locality funding and MOUs, determine funding needs for current staff
- Assess current staff time required on average per VCAP application

2025

- Submit at least 15 VCAP applications
- Assess programmatic needs with Newport News staff
- Determine how funding requests can be increased in current programming and identify sources of funding for new initiatives and associated staff time
- Identify opportunities to reduce staff time required per VCAP application

2026

- Submit at least 18 VCAP applications
- Develop MOU to offer programming in Newport News
- Discuss and negotiate proposed funding requests with partners

- Implement strategies to reduce staff time required per VCAP application

2027:

- Submit at least 20 VCAP applications
- Implement partnership with Newport News
- Implement any programmatic changes associated with increased funding requests from partners
- Implement strategies to reduce staff time required per VCAP application; assess effectiveness of strategies

Strategy

Develop and implement a more robust nutrient management program

- Host a regional Healthy VA Lawn/Turf Love training for the industry professionals (collaboration VCE/SWCD)
- Develop and implement annual Turf Love volunteer training program
- Improve nutrient management reports and educational materials given to participants

Annual Milestones

2024

- Work with VCE and other interested partners to plan pilot industry training
- Gather input from current and prospective volunteers and other HVL programs for training needs and ideas; host pilot training for 2024 Master Gardener intern class
- Outline and draft new Turf Love NMP templates

2025

- Host pilot training; gather feedback to incorporate into future offerings
- Host volunteer training
- Implement new NMP templates; draft new educational material packets

2026

- Host industry training
- Host volunteer training
- Implement new NMP templates and educational material packets

2027

- Host industry training
- Host volunteer training
- Continue implementing new materials and adjust as necessary

Strategy

Develop and implement a new urban program to address a real conservation issue by the end of the strategic period

- Establish the Colonial SWCD as a lead advocate and resource for the encouragement of use of native plants to include the creation of new programs and partnerships as well as continued enhancement of current programs.
- Address lack of native plant accessibility by working with local schools to grow native species in their greenhouses
- Work with the VCAP Steering Committee to further efforts to make VCAP and native plantings more accessible to those who require financial and community assistance the most
- Identify local native plant professionals to partner with and support in retail native plant production
- Identify available growing spaces for potential high volume commercial production

Annual Milestones

2024

- Investigate opportunities to collaborate with any local schools that have greenhouses and research similar programs offered elsewhere
- Develop relationships with interested teachers and/or after school club sponsors
- Create curriculum outline for native plant education and production for student participants
- Develop a comprehensive native plant resource guide that is accessible to the public

2025

- Use native plant resource guide to develop rack cards, pamphlets, and other outreach materials for dissemination at events and programs
- Host a presentation about the value of native plants in a changing climate, stormwater management, and overall ecosystem value
- Explore software options for District native plant database creation
- Implement created curriculum and standard operating procedures with one pilot school
- Investigate future funding sources for a native plant nursery program

2026

- Host a native plant presentation in each locality
- Host a table at each local native plant sale to share information about District programs and offerings that support native plant use
- Create a District native plant database
- Refine native plant curriculum as needed and expand nursery program to more interested schools

2027

- Meet with localities to identify potential public facing areas that could benefit from conservation landscaping with CSWCD signage and educational information
- Refine native plant curriculum as needed and expand nursery program to more interested schools

Expected Result

A financially sustainable urban program that provides enough income to support the required number of staff to operate those programs.

Directors and Staff

Directors:

E. Wayne Davis, New Kent County - Chair
Robert E. Lund, James City County - Vice Chair
Pamela Mason, York County – Secretary/Treasurer
David Beals, City of Williamsburg
Philip Thomson, New Kent County
Charles Stevenson, City of Williamsburg
Luke Scott, Charles City County
Larkin Scott, Charles City County
Stephen Zabinski, James City County
David Westcott, York County
Tim Beale, At Large Director
Megan Tierney, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Staff:

James Wallace, Programs Manager
Amy Walker, Operations Manager
Robert Waring, Senior Ag Conservation Specialist
Robyn Woolsey, Urban Conservation Specialist II
Sheila Jaruseski, Office Coordinator
Amanda Whispell, Outreach Specialist
Emma Rich, Urban Conservation Specialist
Logan Ellis, Ag Conservation Specialist
Samantha Pereira, Ag Conservation Specialist

Local Government:

Charles City County
City of Williamsburg
James City County
New Kent County
York County

Cooperating Agencies:

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF)
Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Frequently Used Acronyms and Definitions

AFD:	Agricultural Forestal District
APW:	Annual Plan of Work
ASA:	Agriculture Stewardship Act
BMP:	<p>Best Management Practices.</p> <p>Best Management Practices (BMPs) are effective, practical, structural, or nonstructural methods which prevent or reduce the movement of sediment, nutrients, pesticides and other pollutants from the land to surface or ground water, or which otherwise protect water quality from potential adverse effects of landward activities. For the purpose of this plan, these practices are developed to achieve a balance between water quality protection and the production of agricultural crops within natural and economic limitations.</p>
CBPA:	<p>Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act.</p> <p>The Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, commonly known as "The Bay Act" in Virginia, was adopted by the Virginia General Assembly in 1988. The Bay Act created a cooperative program between the Commonwealth of Virginia and Tidewater local governments to protect and enhance water quality through environmentally responsible land use management.</p>
CDC:	Conservation District Coordinator
CREP:	Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
CSWCD:	<p>Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District, also referred to as The District.</p> <p>The District is a political subdivision of the State covering Charles City, James City, New Kent and York Counties and the City of Williamsburg. As a result of the Dust Bowl era of the 1930's legislation was passed that would allow local landowners to form soil conservation districts. The first district was established in 1937. Today, the country is blanketed with nearly 3,000 conservation districts.</p>
DCR:	<p>Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.</p> <p>DCR conservation district coordinators (CDCs) serve as liaisons between the commonwealth and districts. These coordinators interact daily with district directors and employees, participate at district functions, assist with personnel management matters, oversee fiscal management, and guide NPS programs and activities.</p>
DEQ:	Department of Environmental Quality
FSA:	Farm Service Agency
JRA:	James River Association

- NFWF:** National Fish and Wildlife Service
- RMP:** Resource Management Plan
- TMDLs:** Total Maximum Daily Loads.
Under section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act, states, territories, and authorized tribes are required to develop lists of impaired waters. These are waters that are too polluted or otherwise degraded to meet the water quality standards set by states, territories, or authorized tribes. The law requires that these jurisdictions establish priority rankings for waters on the lists and develop TMDLs for these waters. A Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL, is a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant that a water body can receive and still safely meet water quality standards.
- TRC:** Technical Review Committee
- USDA NRCS:** United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- VACS:** Virginia Agricultural Cost Share
- VASWCB:** Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board
- VCAP:** Virginia Conservation Assistance Program.
An urban cost share program provides incentive funding to private owners installing conservation landscaping practices.
- VCE:** Virginia Cooperative Extension
- VDoF:** Virginia Department of Forestry
- WQI:** Water Quality Improvement Fund

Approval Page

E. Wayne Davis, Chair

Date

Robert E. Lund Jr, Vice Chair

Date

Pamela Mason, Secretary/Treasurer

Date

Jim Wallace, District Programs Manager

Date

Amy Walker, District Operations Manager

Date

Megan Tierney, Appointed Extension Director
Virginia Cooperative Extension

Date

Marissa Roland, Conservation District Coordinator
Department of Conservation and Recreation

Date