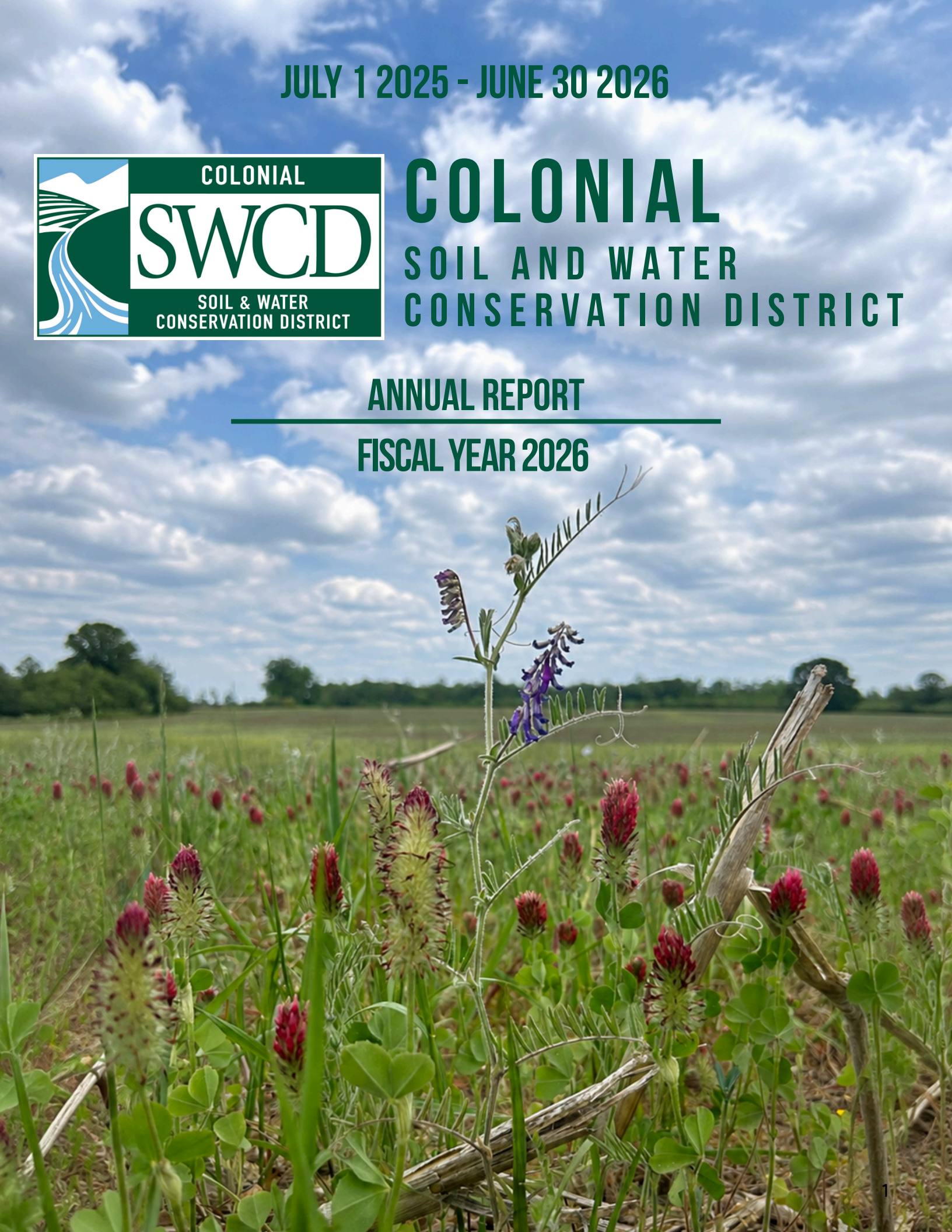
JULY 1 2025 - JUNE 30 2026

# COLONIAL SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

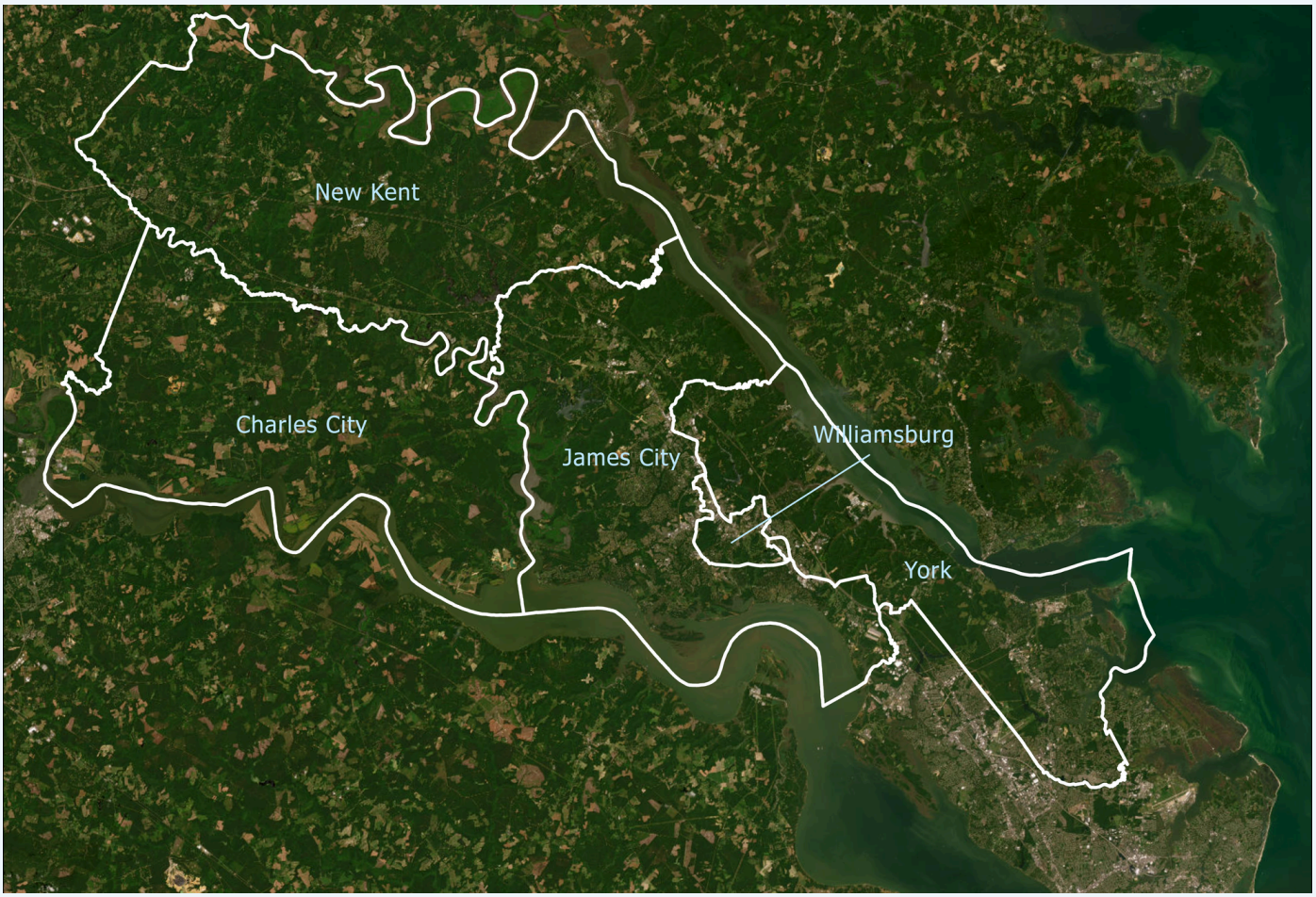
## ANNUAL REPORT

## FISCAL YEAR 2026



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# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

| | |
|---|---|
| Wayne Davis, Chair | New Kent County |
| Dave Beals, Vice Chair | City of Williamsburg |
| Pam Mason, Secretary/ Treasurer | York County |
| Tim Beale | York County, At Large |
| Luke Gladden | VCE Agent |
| Robert Lund Jr. | James City County |
| Larkin Scott | Charles City County |
| Luke Scott | Charles City County |
| Charles Stevenson | City of Williamsburg |
| Philip Thomson | New Kent County |
| David Westcott | York County |
| Stephen Zabinkski | James City County |

WWW.COLONIALSWCD.ORG



TOP FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: JIM WALLACE, ROBYN WOOLSEY, EMMA RICH, ROBERT WARING, AMY WALKER, SAMANTHA PEREIRA

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Samantha Pereira - Agriculture Conservation Specialist I

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# DISTRICT OVERVIEW

## Mission Statement:

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

## Vision Statement:

We envision communities served by the CSWCD 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.

## AGRICULTURE

The **Virginia Agriculture Cost-Share (VACS)** program offers financial incentives for over 65 practices which include conversion of cropland to permanent grass, exclusion of livestock from streams, riparian buffer enhancements, and tidal shoreline stabilization.

## URBAN

The **Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP)** is an urban cost-share program that provides financial incentives and technical and educational assistance to property owners installing eligible Best Management Practices (BMP's). These practices can be installed in areas where problems like erosion, poor drainage, or poor vegetation occur. Eligible BMPs include rain gardens, permeable pavement, living shorelines, rainwater harvesting, and conservation landscaping with Virginia native plants, among others.

The **Turf Love** program helps homeowners grow and maintain healthy lawns while preventing environmental harm through over-application of fertilizers or pesticides and preventing soil erosion. Participants receive a site visit with a trained Master Gardener, a soil sample analysis, and a certified Nutrient Management Plan. Turf Love is offered in partnership with James City County Stormwater and Resource Protection Department, James City Service Authority, and the City of Williamsburg.

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

**Wayne Davis**



It It is an honor to serve as the chair of the Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors. In this role I continue to witness firsthand the outstanding work carried out by our staff and directors in the name of natural resource conservation, and I am proud to share some of that work with you here.

This past year, the Colonial District took meaningful steps to strengthen our reach and our technical capacity. The District entered into Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with partner districts and localities, expanding our ability to offer and administer conservation programs and services across a broader footprint. These agreements reflect the same spirit of regional collaboration that has long defined the Colonial District's approach to conservation.

On the ground, our technical assistance spanned both agronomic and structural conservation practices. This year saw a notable increase in structural practices throughout the District. Structural practices, often larger in scope; represent the increasing complexity of the conservation solutions landowners are turning to us for.

To assist with the increasing complexity of conservation practices, several staff members earned professional certificates this year. These credentials; translate directly into more reliable, higher-quality service for the citizens and producers who depend on the District.

None of this work would be possible without an active Board. Our Directors and Associate Directors remained highly engaged throughout the year, bringing energy, insight, and consistent participation to every meeting and initiative. That engagement continues to be one of the District's greatest assets, making it easier for staff to meet program goals and deliver services to our community efficiently.

The following fiscal year 2026 Annual Report highlights the work of the Colonial District. We recognize and appreciate the efforts of our many partners, as the work we do would not be possible without them.

Thank you.

# CHARLES CITY COUNTY

Farmers in Charles City County operate about 13,500 acres of cropland, the vast majority of which are enrolled in at least one conservation practice through the VACS program (see page 5). In addition to cropland, agricultural production occurs on another approximately 5,000 acres and includes hay, turfgrass, vegetables, tree nuts, and livestock for food and fiber.

In program year 2026, farmers operating land within Charles City were provided $1,155,285 in financial incentives to implement conservation practices offered through VACS, details of which can be found in the table below. In 2024, the Colonial SWCD was awarded a grant to enable the design and construction of living shorelines along the banks of the James River in Charles City County.

| Practice | Acres | $$$ |
|---|---|---|
| Cover Crops | 10,815 | $863,850 |
| No-Till | 4,925 | $123,113 |
| Nutrient Management | 21,708 | $168,323 |
| **Total** | **37,448** | **$1,155,285** |

**Note: More than one nutrient management practice can be implemented on a single acre.**

The $914,000 federal grant will leverage VACS funds to protect historically and culturally significant sites while reducing nutrient and sediment pollutants entering the waterway. When combining the state and federal contributions, the project is expected to provide $4,087,374, matching landowner contributions of $386,450.



**Above: One stretch of shoreline included in the grant project.**

In April, District staff joined 6th grade students at Charles City Elementary School for a hands-on water quality assessment activity. The students engaged in a dry lab simulation where they were tasked with identifying and quantifying the macroinvertebrates (made of shrunken plastic) in their aquatic habitats (trays with rocks, sticks, leaves and mock water).



**Image from: www.macroinvertebrates.org**

# CITY OF WILLIAMSBURG

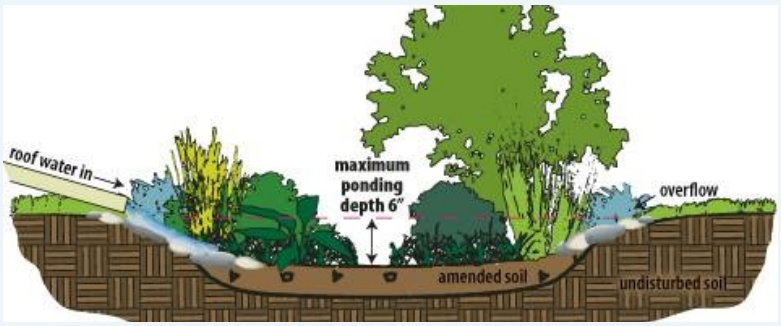
Residents within the City of Williamsburg continue to support conservation efforts both on their properties and in the surrounding community. While there are no agricultural operations within the City that participate in the VACS program, several residents took advantage of the District's Turf Love and VCAP programs. For more information about these programs, refer to page 5 of this report.

Throughout the fiscal year, seven site visits were completed with City landowners to help identify and solve the landowners' stormwater concerns. These concerns included excess runoff during and immediately after storms, erosion and soil loss, and poor vegetative cover. Of these seven site visits, two resulted in VCAP applications.

The first application included a permeable pavement patio and parking area. Permeable pavement is an alternative hardscape that allows runoff to filter through the surface material into an underlying reservoir layer. This helps water to seep into surrounding soil, effectively reducing excess runoff while still allowing a usable surface.

**Below: The completed permeable pavement patio.**






**Above: A typical rain garden cross section. Image courtesy of Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay.**

The second application features a rain garden that will capture runoff from a nearby roof, allowing for infiltration into the native soil and uptake by Virginia native plants. The rain garden is currently under construction.

Eight landowners also participated in the Turf Love program to learn how to manage their lawns while preventing environmental harm. These landowners received soil sample analyses and certified Nutrient Management Plans detailing recommendations for soil amendments, fertilizers, and general lawn maintenance.

# JAMES CITY COUNTY

Within the residential communities spread throughout the County, the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) continues to provide technical and financial assistance to landowners seeking to address a stormwater issue on their properties (see page 5). VCAP provides a unique opportunity to engage directly with private landowners and address common barriers these landowners face when dealing with stormwater concerns. District staff completed 69 site visits during the year where landowners received advice and recommendations on how to address these issues. Of those 69 site visits, 11 VCAP applications were subsequently submitted to offset the cost of the BMPs needed to better manage stormwater. These 11 applications included seven conservation landscaping projects and four rain gardens.

**Conservation Landscaping:**

**17,800 square feet of native plant habitat created**

**$47,892 in cost-share funds distributed**

**$38,048 in matching funds from participants**

**Rain Gardens:**

**903 square feet of rain gardens installed**

**$28,000 in cost-share funds distributed**

**$13,532 in matching funds from participants**

In late Spring, staff completed the final inspection for an exciting rain garden project in the heart of James City County (right). The 323 square foot rain garden captured over 4,000 square feet of previously untreated stormwater runoff. This project provided a unique opportunity for recently certified Chesapeake Bay Landscape Program professionals to have hands-on experience installing stormwater BMPs and learn more about VCAP.



**Above: A newly planted rain garden project in James City County**

# JAMES CITY COUNTY



District staff continue to provide lawn care guidance to County residents through the Turf Love program (see page 5 for more information). In fiscal year 2026, staff completed 90 certified nutrient management plans through the program, including seven plans for County-owned properties. These plans include fertilizer and lime recommendations when necessary, along with general management best practices and information about how to reduce water waste through irrigation.

**Left: Robyn Woolsey collects a soil sample for a Turf Love client.**

## 2026 DOMINION ENERGY ENVIROTHON COMPETITION



Jamestown High School, of James City County Schools, placed first overall in Virginia's 2026 Dominion Energy Envirothon State Competition, held at Eastern Mennonite University on May 17th-18th, 2026. Jamestown competed with teams representing 15 different high schools throughout Virginia to earn the title of State Champions. The team travelled to Starksville Mississippi on July 19th-25th to represent Virginia in the Nation Conservation Foundation's International Envirothon; competing against teams from across the US, Canada, Singapore, and China. The team did extremely well and finished 12th overall out of 43 teams. This is also the 4th year in a row that Jamestown has represented Virginia at the International Competition.

# JAMES CITY COUNTY

The USDA says farmers in James City County operate about 1,900 acres of cropland, the vast majority of which are enrolled in at least one conservation practice through the VACS program (see page 5). In addition to cropland, which primarily produces corn, soybeans, and wheat, agricultural production occurs on approximately 750 additional acres and includes hay, vegetables, and livestock for food and fiber. Not included in this accounting is land used for horse pasture, which is estimated at 3,000 acres.

In program year 2026, farmers operating land within James City were provided over $128,244 in financial incentives to implement conservation practices offered through VACS, details of which can be found in the table below.

| Practice | Acres | $$$ |
|---|---|---|
| Cover Crops | 893 | $77,564 |
| No-Till | 1,295 | $32,384 |
| Nutrient Management | 2,049 | $18,296 |
| **Total** | **4,237** | **$128,244** |

**Note: More than one nutrient management practice can be implemented on a single acre.**

In addition to the financial incentives provided to farmers and landowners through the VACS program, Colonial District staff also provide technical assistance to land managers in the form of conservation planning. Planning services to James City County residents is typically offered in the form of either Chesapeake Bay Plans, for compliance with the County's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act ordinance, or conservation plans for compliance with easements held by the County.

In fiscal year 2026 Colonial District staff developed one Chesapeake Bay Conservation Plan, which addressed 169 acres, and 6 easemet compliance plans which addressed 298 acres.



District staff and directors also participated in discussions with the Policy Committee regarding equine stocking rates in the past year. Due to previous field work conducted in James City County by district staff, the Colonial SWCD has intimate knowledge of horse populations and the locations of high density horse areas within the county. As such, the district was able to offer a unique perspective to the Policy Committee and Planning Commission.

# NEW KENT COUNTY

The USDA says producers in New Kent County operate about 9,300 acres of cropland, the vast majority of which are enrolled in at least one conservation practice through the VACS program (see page 5).

The majority of agricultural acres in New Kent can be contributed to cropland, which primarily produces corn, soybeans, cotton, and wheat. However, agricultural production in the county also includes a variety of other agricultural products, on approximately 2,000 acres, production includes hay, vegetables, and livestock for food and fiber. In addition, there is an estimated 2,500 acres of land used for horse pasture.

In program year 2026, farmers operating land within New Kent were provided over $977,000 in financial incentives to implement conservation practices offered through VACS, details of which can be found in the table to the right.

| Practice | Acres | $$$ |
|---|---|---|
| Cover Crops | 7,708 | $681,292 |
| No-Till | 4,759 | $118,985 |
| Nutrient Management | 9,511* | $114,131 |
| Structural Practice | 1 project | $63,000 |
| **Total** | **21,979** | **$977,408** |

*** More than one nutrient management practice can be implemented on a single acre.**



In addition to offering financial incentives, the Colonial SWCD assists New Kent County with the implementation of the Agricultural Forestal District (AFD) program by providing applicants with soils reports for county tax parcels, required by the program. In fiscal year 2026, district staff developed soils reports on 22 individual parcels totaling 2,897 acres.



Along with this agricultural conservation work, residents and homeowners within New Kent County's rapidly growing neighborhoods have continued to seek out stormwater management assistance through VCAP. In fiscal year 2026, staff conducted three site visits within the County to help residents assess and address issues such as excess runoff and erosion. While these site visits have not yet resulted in applications to the program, staff remain engaged and enthusiastic about opportunities available through VCAP within the County.

# NEW KENT COUNTY




**Above: Stages of construction of the grade stabilization structural practice in New Kent County.**

Due to the nature of agricultural production in New Kent, most conservation practices implemented on farmland are agronomic style practices and influence management strategies on cropland.

However, in FY 2026, district staff oversaw the construction of a structural practice, known as a grade stabilization structure, which addressed a significant erosion feature along the edge of a farm field. Structural practices require professionally designed engineering plans to comply with cost share program specifications. As a result, structural practices tend to be expensive to design and build. The VACS program provides a reimbursement rate of 90%, meaning the landowner is responsible for only 10% of the cost to install the practice.

# YORK COUNTY

There are an estimated 90 acres of row crop agricultural production in York County. All of these acres are enrolled in the VACS program and host at least one nutrient management conservation practice. In fiscal year 2026, farmers operating land within York County were provided over $1,000 in financial incentives to implement conservation practices offered through VACS. In addition to the financial incentives provided through the VACS program, Colonial District staff also provide technical assistance to land managers in the form of conservation and nutrient management planning. In fiscal year 2026 Colonial District staff developed one Nutrient Management Plan for a horse boarding facility which addressed 1.5 acres.

Landowners in York County continued to support and participate in VCAP throughout fiscal year 2026. During the year, 21 site visits were completed. Of these site visits, 11 applications were approved. These included 5 conservation landscaping projects **(on right)**, 1 impervious surface removal project, 2 rain gardens, 2 living shorelines, and 1 permeable pavement installation. These projects resulted in a total of $112,096 in cost-share funding awarded to the applicants, who provided an additional $154,710 in matching funds for the construction of these practices. Staff look forward to more conservation opportunities in York County in the coming year.





The Board of Directors extends a heartfelt thank you to Tim Beale, who served as an elected and appointed director representing York County for 12 years. Through his years of service, Tim continually demonstrated an understanding of the natural resource issues facing the York County community, coupled with a genuine desire to improve the lives of all citizens. Serving as a key contact and maintaining strong partnerships within York County, Tim's influence resulted in a significant increase in the awareness of District programs. The Colonial SWCD Board of Directors wishes Tim and Melanie all the best in the future.

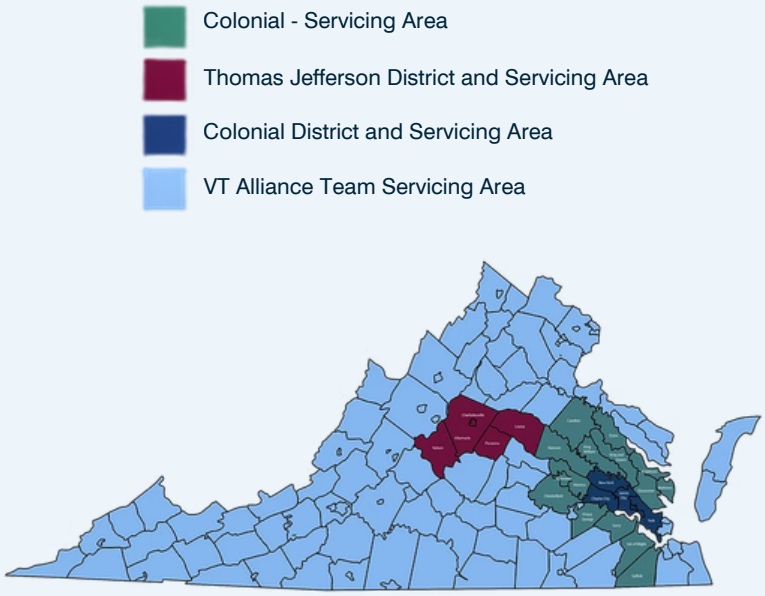
# Alliance to Advance Climate-Smart Agriculture

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 - the largest grant awarded in Virginia Tech history! Part of the USDA's Advancing Markets for Producers intiative, the program is being piloted in Virginia, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Arkansas investing in climate-smart farmers, ranchers and forest owners to strengthen rural and agricultural communities nationwide. Qualifying practices follow NRCS Conservation Practice Standards and include conservation crop rotation, nutrient management, cover crops, no-till, reduced till, and grazing management. Since launching in 2023, the Alliance has completed three application rounds, including a Pasture Renovation Sub-Pilot. Round 1 was completed (and reported) in 2025, Rounds 2 and 3 were completed in 2026.

**Round 2** was limited to Nutrient Management, Reduced Till, No-Till, and Grazing Management after NRCS guideline changes required an Environmental Evaluation for all practices. It enrolled 253 producers statewide ($3,249,518), including 155 producers in Colonial's service area ($2,107,840.75).

**Round 3** offered a general program (one practice per year at $100/acre, up to 120 acres) or the Pasture Renovation Sub-Pilot ($300/acre, up to 50 acres) covering Nutrient Management, Grazing Management, and Pasture and Hay Planting. Statewide, 333 producers enrolled in the general program and 38 in the sub-pilot. In our service area, 90 producers were selected ($925,281) along with 6 for the sub-pilot (just under $70,000).

Colonial SWCD worked in an expanded boundary alongside Hanover/Caroline, Three Rivers, Tidewater, James River, Henricopolis, and Peanut SWCDs. With the grant expected to conclude in September 2027, we are grateful to have brought this level of investment to local farms and landowners and look forward to building on it through future conservation initiatives.



# VCAP PARTNERSHIPS

Colonial SWCD has executed several Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with neighboring localities and SWCDs to offer VCAP services to their residents. Our locality MOU partners include the City of Hampton, the City of Newport News, the City of Poquoson, and the City of Norfolk, all of which are not part of an SWCD service area and unable to access VCAP funds without an agreement with a SWCD. Our SWCD partners include the Tidewater and Three Rivers SWCDs, which cover the entirety of the Middle Peninsula. The MOUs with the City of Hampton and the Tidewater SWCD include services for living shorelines only, while the others include the entire suite of practices.

**$691,310**
**Cost Share Awarded to Residents**

**$1,170,093**
**Landowner Matching Funds**

**30**
**Projects Funded**

---

3,178 Linear Feet of Living Shoreline with over 25,000 square feet of wetland created

15,955 Square Feet of Conservation Landscaping

400 Square Feet of Rain Gardens

2,400 Square Feet of Permeable Pavement





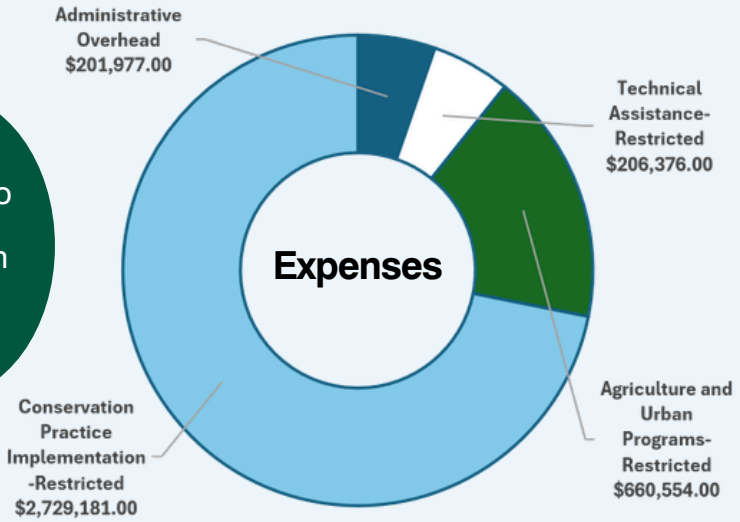
**Pictured above: 172 linear feet of hybrid living shoreline installed to address shoreline erosion in Mathews County. The shoreline features a riprap sill, sand fill, and Spartina marsh plugs.**

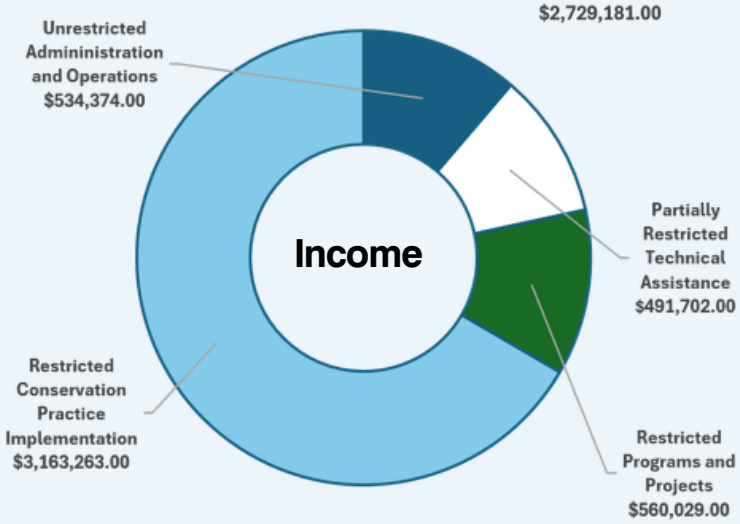
# FISCAL YEAR 2026 FINANCIALS

**Strategic Investment in Conservation**

CSWCD continued to demonstrate strong financial stewardship throughout FY2026. While 88% of total income was restricted or partially restricted to specific programs, conservation practices, or technical assistance; the District effectively leveraged these resources to maximize direct investment in conservation. The result was a year of record financial and technical assistance, with the overwhelming majority of conservation funding directed toward implementation in the field rather than administrative overhead. This approach reflects the District's commitment to ensuring that available resources produce meaningful benefits for producers, landowners, local communities, and the natural resources they depend upon.

Over $2.7 million provided to agricultural producers and landowners for conservation practice implementation.




$4.79M in total income

*88% restricted or partially restricted to specific programs and conservation activities

*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.

*The federal grant supporting the shoreline work in Charles City County was funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement 4H – 95337001 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.

# FISCAL YEAR 2026 FINANCIALS

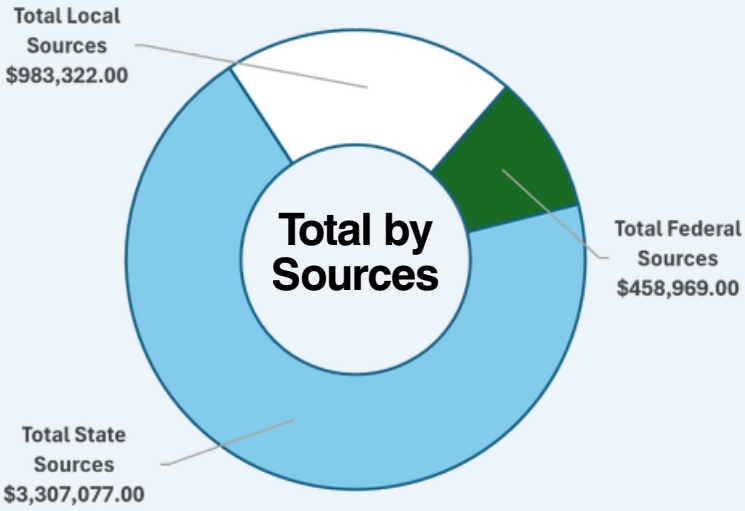
**Building Partnerships and Expanding Conservation Opportunities**

CSWCD's success in FY2026 was strengthened by diverse funding and partnerships at the local, state, federal, and nonprofit levels. Local government funding supported programs like Turf Love and VCAP, plus technical assistance and program administration. State funding through the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board supported VACS implementation and other conservation priorities. The District also leveraged Alliance to Advance Climate Smart Agriculture grant funding, supported by USDA and Virginia Tech, expanding partner collaboration and advancing strategic planning priorities. Additional support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Friends of the Rappahannock helped expand VCAP practices and further the District's water quality objectives.

*Over $450,000 supporting VCAP, Shoreline and Alliance-related programs.

*Over $2 million supporting nutrient management, soil erosion control, soil health, and water quality improvement practices.

*Nearly $625,000 supporting stormwater management and erosion prevention practices for urban landowners.




**Looking Ahead**

FY2026 demonstrated the strength of CSWCD's partnerships, programs, and commitment to conservation. As the District moves into FY2027, it will build on this momentum by continuing to:

- Deliver high-quality technical and financial assistance to agricultural and urban communities;
- Expand implementation of practices that improve **water quality and soil health**;
- Support producers through VACS, the Whole Farm Approach, and climate-smart agriculture initiatives;
- Strengthen partnerships with local governments, state and federal agencies, and conservation organizations; and
- Leverage available funding to maximize **on-the-ground conservation outcomes**.

**FY2026 was a record year for investment—and, more importantly, a record year for putting conservation resources to work.**

# TECHNICAL STAFF IN ACTION











