

# Colonial Soil & Water Conservation District



## STRATEGIC PLAN

**FY 2021 – 2023**

**Colonial Soil & Water Conservation District  
20 Bulifants Boulevard Suite 205  
Williamsburg, VA 23188**

**Final 2021 Review in Red**

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## Directors and Staff

### **Directors:**

Charles Hill Carter III, Charles City County - Chair  
Robert E. Lund, James City County - Vice Chair  
Pamela Mason, York County – Secretary  
Robert Jeremiah, At Large Director – Treasurer  
Fred Browning, Charles City County  
George Clark, York County  
E. Wayne Davis, New Kent County  
Douglas Hall, James City County  
~~Richard Phillips, City of Williamsburg~~  
David Beals, City of Williamsburg  
Philip Thomson, New Kent County  
James Zilius, City of Williamsburg  
Meagan Tierney, Virginia Cooperative Extension

### **Staff:**

James Wallace, District Manager  
Thomas Dunlap, Conservation Specialist II  
Sheila Jaruseski, Office Coordinator  
Robyn Woolsey, Urban Conservationist  
Tabea Zimmermann, Conservation Specialist I  
Liz Callan, Urban Agriculture Tech  
Bob Winters, Turf Love Program Tech

### **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)  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Farm Service Agency (FSA)  
Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF)  
Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)

# Acronyms and Their Definitions

**AFD**—Agricultural Forestal District

**APW**—Annual Plan of Work

**ASA**—Agriculture Stewardship Act

**BMP**—Best Management Practices. 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.

**CBPA**—Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. 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.

**CDC**—Conservation District Coordinator

**CREP** —Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

**CSWCD**—Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District, also referred to as The District. 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.

**DCR**—Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. 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.

**DEQ**—Department of Environmental Quality

**FSA**—Farm Service Agency

**JRA**—James River Association

**NRCF**—Natural Resource Commitment Fund

**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

**WQIF**—Water Quality Improvement Fund

## Who We Are

The Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District (CSWCD) is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia that includes Charles City County, City of Williamsburg, James City County, New Kent County and York County. 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 conservation districts within Virginia.

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 seven individuals: a District Manager, a Conservation Specialist II, a Office Coordinator, a Urban Conservationist, a Conservationist Specialist I, a Urban Agriculture Tech and a Turf Love Program Tech. The District operates on the fiscal year July 1 to June 30.

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 (BMP) Cost-Share Assistance
- ◆ Agricultural Conservation Planning and Technical Assistance
- ◆ Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act
- ◆ Virginia's Agricultural Stewardship Act
- ◆ Environmental & Agriculture Education
- ◆ Urban BMP Cost-share and Technical Assistance
- ◆ Total Maximum Daily Loads
- ◆ 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, youth, 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 open meeting law. Notices of District meetings are posted at the following locations:

- ◆ District office, 205 Bulifants Boulevard, Suite. 205, Williamsburg VA 23188
- ◆ Colonial SWCD Facebook page–Colonial SWCD
- ◆ Colonial SWCD website on the Events tab (<http://www.colonialswcd.net/#/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:

- ◆ Heritage Public Library, 7791 Invicta Lane, New Kent, VA 23124
- ◆ James City County Library, 7770 Croaker Road, Williamsburg, VA 23188
- ◆ Williamsburg Regional Library, 515 Scotland Street, Williamsburg, VA 23185
- ◆ York County Library, 100 Long Green Boulevard, Yorktown, VA 23693

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.

## **Introduction: 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 2021 to 2023. 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.

### **Overview**

The Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District Board and staff underwent a strategic planning process beginning in September 2020 and ending in January 2021. This is, in part, to accomplish the planning requirement from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation due June 2021.

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. There was a difference of opinion on the utility of a strong Board committee structure due to the time requirements for the many committee meetings. An ad hoc board group was formed to further discuss the issue. This group agreed and recommended that the present committee structure is fine for the foreseeable future. The Board will revisit the structure once more in the near future.

The Strategic Plan will be used by our Board of Directors, committees, and our staff to develop and manage District programs. The major goal areas, 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.

## **Vision**

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.

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## **Mission**

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

## **Goals**

**Strengthen the District's Internal Organization**

**Implement a robust education and outreach program**

**Implement, and where appropriate, expand agricultural programming relative to the District's constituency while improving community engagement**

**Increase District opportunities in urban programming**

## **Goal 1: Strengthen the District's Internal Organization**

**Objective: Increase interaction and build relationships with local government staff and their public bodies (such as, wetlands boards, CBPA boards, BZA, AFD boards) to advance District programs**

**Strategy: Directors communicate with elected officials in their localities.**

**Strategy: Staff communicates with local government staff and officials.**

**Strategy: Seek opportunities for grant projects that support District goals.**

**Strategy: Determine the role of the District to address non-District localities in District programming**

**Objective: Revise Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) with localities related to their specific agricultural needs and ordinances**

**Strategy: Better define the District's role with localities including the CBPA**

**Objective: Enhance the District's capabilities**

**Strategy: Replace current District vehicle and consider purchase of second District vehicle.**

**Strategy: Evaluate the current office space needs and consider the District's Office needs for the upcoming lease renewal-**Planning Committee will work with the staff, the Finance Committee and the Personnel Committee to evaluate.****

**Strategy: Improve staff recruitment, retention, and training opportunities to build skills and knowledge-**Planning Committee will participate with staff, the Finance Committee and the Personnel Committee as needed.****

**Strategy: Increase the use of volunteers, **Associate Directors** and interns to meet District Goals-**"Associate Directors" added by****

**Planning Committee since we could use expertise not present on the Board from other resources that could be Associate Directors.**

**Strategy: Develop a 5-year financial planning document to help guide a sustainable future for the District.-Planning Committee suggests that this might need to be moved to a later date under metrics**

**Objective: Develop succession plans and charters for the Board, staff, and committees**

**Strategy: Implement a process to develop plans and charters for each Committee by December 2021-not going to happen by December 2021; moved to completion by December 2022**

**Metrics:**

- *Develop a 5-year financial plan by January 1, 2022*
- *Complete the Committee charters and succession plans by December 2021-To be completed by December 2022*

## **Goal 2: Implement a robust education and outreach program**

**Objective: Increase District outreach efforts using online platforms**

**Strategy: Regularly update and refine the District's website and social media presence and assess effectiveness**

**Strategy: Use online platforms for District announcements and information**

**Strategy: Develop online application processes for certain District programming**

**Objective: Support urban agriculture education efforts**

**Strategy: Provide conservation and agricultural education opportunities during events led by WCG**

**Strategy: Implement educational conservation demonstrations onsite at WCG**

**Objective: Expand promotion of conservation educational programming**

**Strategy:**

**Strategy: Continue to sponsor an Envirothon team for the Colonial District and seek expansion to other schools throughout the district**

**Strategy: Increase public advertising for programming and direct connections with teachers and administrators within locality school systems.**

**Objective: Increase community accessibility to District programming**

**Strategy: Increase District participation in community events**

**Strategy: Explore opportunities for more widely accessible conservation programs that do not require financial input or land ownership**

**Strategy: Adapt existing and develop new educational and outreach resources appropriate for diverse audiences within the District**

**Objective: Continually assess and better define the role of the education and outreach committee**

**Strategy: Develop an assessment report with recommendations by August 1, 2021**

**Strategy: Execute assessment report by June 30, 2022**

**Objective: Continually seek grant funding to support education and outreach**

**Strategy: Research opportunities to learn about funding programs and maintain awareness of funding availability**

**Metrics:**

- ***Develop process for the Outreach and Education assessment report by August 1, 2021***
- ***Develop and present outreach materials to three targeted audiences by June 30, 2022***
- ***Participate in three educational efforts with WCG by January 2022***
- ***Develop and implement an online outreach plan to increase community awareness of District programming by December 2021***

**Goal 3: Implement, and where appropriate, expand agricultural programming relative to the District's constituency while improving community engagement.**

**Primary Objective: Maintain high quality execution of continuing agricultural programming**

**Strategy: Seek efficiencies to streamline program execution  
Agriculture Committee-Have standardized reporting for locality  
CBPA assessments.**

**Strategy: Maintain and build effective working relationships with  
agricultural program partners Agriculture Committee- Continued  
collaboration with partners at locality Environmental  
Departments, NRCS, DCR. Strengthening collaboration with  
JRA and DCR-SEAS to implement SE-2 shoreline stabilization  
practices through VACS program. Successful implementation of  
DAPA project in collaboration with SWCD's south of the James  
River.**

**Secondary Objective: Explore new programming opportunities within the  
agricultural arena through dedication of staff time and resources**

**Strategy: Assess program blind spots and wherever possible  
collaborate with agency partners Agriculture Committee- Staff  
participation in preliminary meetings with DCR and VSU-SFOP  
for pilot project targeting outreach and technical assistance to  
African American and Latino farmers. Staff connecting with local  
SFOP agent to explore possible collaborations.**

**Strategy: Pursue funding opportunities to support new  
programming opportunities**

***Metrics:***

- ***Fulfill annual grant obligations and Memorandums of Understanding  
Agriculture Committee- All projects on track for completion of annual  
MOU obligations by end of PY2021***
- ***Collaborate with partners to provide one educational event/field tour by  
June 30, 2022 Agriculture Committee- To be organized and provided in  
PY2022***

## **Goal 4: Increase District opportunities in urban programming**

**Objective: Improve the VCAP application process** **Urban Committee- Options for application process improvements considered.**  
**Result: Pre site visit questionnaire developed and implemented, found here: <https://www.colonialswcd.net/virginia-conservation-assistance-pr>**

**Strategy: Assess the viability of VCAP programming, by an internal review, if support from localities or other entities is not secured** **Urban Committee- A Committee/Urban Conservations high level internal review of VCAP programming Result: Concluded that even with all conceivable efficiency improvements the program would continue to cost the District more than state provided technical assistance funding. Which in turn would require either supplemental support from localities or limiting degree of District commitment to program.**

**Strategy: Review the application criteria and process with improvements by December 31, 2021**

**Objective: Explore the expansion of the Turf Love program to other localities**

**Strategy: Contact District member localities to ascertain the interest level and host meetings as appropriate**

**Strategy: Consult other Districts to acquire program information and resources**

**Objective: Develop a pilot shoreline management and coastal resiliency program for shorefront property owners**

**Strategy: Work with and provide training for local volunteer groups to develop a Shoreline Evaluation Program (SEP) to assess shoreline issues and provide opportunities for improved property management** **Urban Committee- Worked with and provided training for local volunteer groups to develop a Shoreline**

**Evaluation Program (SEP) to assess shoreline issues and provide opportunities for improved property management**

Training & Date	Training Offered By	Volunteers in attendance
9/22/20 – Intro to Shorelines	Karen Duhring, VIMS	9
3/23/21 – JCC CBPA	JCC Stormwater Staff	7
3/30/21 – Shoreline Erosion	Karen Duhring, VIMS	12
4/26/21 – Field Visit	Pam Mason, VIMS	7

**Strategy: Seek grant funding and/or locality support for SEP and potential living shoreline assistance programs** **Urban Committee- Both grant funding and locality support for SEP and potential living shoreline assistance programs sought** **Result: Submitted grant to National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Small Watershed Grant program on April 22<sup>nd</sup> to support the development and implementation of the SEP. The request totaled to \$46,996.31. The District submitted a request for \$4,250 to support the SEP during annual budget preparations for James City County, York County, Charles City County, and New Kent County. A request for \$1,000 was made to the City of Williamsburg for SEP support.**

**Urban Committee**

**Objective: Continually assess and improve equitability of offering processes for programs and recruitment**

**Continued training and begin networking with member(s) of populations not seen in our programs or organization started**

**Result: Attended training on 4/20 during the Area III Spring Meeting to learn more about DEIJ efforts the District can begin to work on**

**Strategy: Review communication channels used and seek effective additions to reach underserved or overlooked audiences**

**Strategy: Develop and implement a process to network with groups/members of diverse populations or organization**

**Strategy: Investigate opportunities to engage rental environments**

**Objective: Consider opportunities beyond District boundaries & three above listed programs**

**Strategy: Explore partnering opportunities with adjacent and perhaps nearby Districts**

**Strategy: Resume exploratory discussions with localities unserved by a District adjacent to us and perhaps nearby**

**Strategy: Investigate & consider adoptability of programs currently offered by other Districts**

***Metrics:***

- *Review the VCAP application process and determine any program process changes by December 2021*
- *Apply for project funding for a living shorelines program by December 2022*
- *Host two training sessions for SEP volunteers by June 2021*

# Approval Page

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Charles Hill Carter III, Chair

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Date

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Robert E. Lund Jr, Vice Chair

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Date

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Robert J. Jeremiah, Treasurer

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Date

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Pamela Mason, Secretary

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Date

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James Wallace, District Manager

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Meghan Tierney, Virginia Cooperative Extension

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Approved:  
Conservation District Coordinator  
Department of Conservation and Recreation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date