



## Welcome New Cost Share Technician Tyler Cornett

We would like to introduce you to our new Soil and Water Conservationist, Tyler Cornett. Tyler graduated from Western Carolina University with a degree in Natural Resource Conservation Management with a concentration in Soil and Water Conservation. In his free time Tyler is an avid fly fisherman and musician. Tyler and his wife Hope also love traveling. They recently welcomed their first baby boy, Ellis. Tyler is excited to begin his career at Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District.

## Welcome our new Office Assistant, Hannah Benge. Here is a message from her.

My name is Hannah Benge, I am a new resident of Alexander County. I grew up in Charlotte, NC. I moved to Alexander County to be with my partner Brandon. Together we run Foothills Farm and Apiaries. We sell and manage flowers, vegetables, honey, and honeybees. On top of helping with the farm I also enjoy anything outdoors, gardening, antiquing, and baking. I have always been passionate about the outdoors and helping the environment in any way I can. I am excited to be part of the ACSWCD Team.

**The Alexander SWCD Board of Supervisors and Staff welcome Tyler and Hannah to the Soil & Water family and look forward to working with you both.**

### VISION STATEMENT:

The Alexander Soil & Water Conservation District along with the NRCS is a dynamic partnership committed to quality leadership and customer service for the conservation of our natural resources.

### QUALITY POLICY:

The Conservation partnership pledges to provide quality and timely service to our customers through technical excellence, positive attitudes and teamwork.

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## AGRICULTURE COST SHARE PROGRAM

Each year, the Alexander Soil & Water District is appropriated funds for this program from the N.C. Soil and Water Conservation Commission. These program dollars are allocated from the state to address non-point source pollution from agricultural activities. They are available to assist farmers in the installation of conservation practices which help decrease the amount of sediment, animal waste, nutrients, chemicals and other potential pollutants from entering the surface and ground waters of the state. Landowners and operators that are in agricultural production for at least three years may apply for cost share assistance to install Best Management Practices (BMP's) on their farm. These BMP's include: sediment & erosion control, litter storage structures, poultry composters, livestock exclusion from streams in conjunction with alternative watering systems, stock trails and heavy-use areas for livestock in confined areas, and other practices that benefit water quality. Alexander Soil & Water District's program year begins each year on July 1st and runs through June 30th. Typically, the Alexander Soil & Water District will have a one month sign-up period to accept new program year applications. All applications will be prioritized according to a locally adopted ranking process based on water quality parameters. The applications providing the most water quality benefits will be approved for funding in priority order. Any applications that are not funded in the first batching period will be considered for funding if additional program dollars become available later in the year.

If you are interested in the cost share program please call or stop by our office. The contact information is listed on the last page of the newsletter.



## AGRICULTURAL WATER RESOURCES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The NC Soil and Water Conservation Commission administers this water quantity program across the state. The Alexander Soil & Water Conservation District can apply for funds under this program to address water quantity issues on farmlands. Best management practices (BMP's) that may be offered include: new pond construction, pond repair/retrofit, pond sediment removal, new wells, conservation irrigation, and other practices that address water availability on agricultural lands. Projects must be able to show that they have an agricultural need for more water in order to be eligible for this program (for example: no water or limited water resources onsite). If applying for a pond practice, the pond water must be needed for some agricultural use to be eligible. In addition, the particular property must have been in agricultural production for at least one year prior to applying to be eligible. Applications are accepted throughout the year.



## FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

The Alexander Soil & Water Conservation District administers the Alexander County Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program to protect and preserve farm and forest land in the county. The Farmland Preservation Program is one means to notify incoming neighbors that the land is in production as a farm and will be for at least the next 10 years. Members of the program receive a Voluntary Farmland Preservation sign, and their property is labeled as being enrolled in the program as a layer on the Alexander County GIS. These current efforts should notify prospective developers or other land purchasers in general that the land they are considering buying is close to a working farm, and it lets them know upfront that they may experience certain noises, smells, and other activities related to traditional farming.

The Voluntary Farmland Preservation Board meets once a quarter and reviews any applications for the program that have been received since the last meeting. In order to be considered for the Program, a farm must: Be participating in (or be eligible to participate in) the present-use value taxation program, include a minimum of 10 acres, and be properly managed. Participants will sign an agreement that they plan to continue farming the land for at least 10 years. After 10 years, landowners are not required to reapply in order to stay in the program. Staff will check back with you to see if the land is still in agriculture and want to stay in the program. If you are interested in enrolling your land in the Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program or need to make changes to your enrollment, please contact the office at 632-0638.

# STREAM DEBRIS REMOVAL PROJECTS

Alexander Soil & Water has applied for and received 3 different “pots” of funding for stream debris removal projects in Alexander County since Tropical Storm Eta in November of 2020. These funding sources included federal disaster funds (EWP – Emergency Watershed Protection), state disaster funds (Watershed Rehabilitation State Emergency Disaster Funds), and a new state funded program that does not require a disaster (StRAP – Stream Rehabilitation Assistance Program). Over the past 3 years, the District has brought in \$654,492 through these sources to be used for stream debris removal. To date (November 2023), only 2 stream stretches are left to be completed out of 12 total able to be cleaned out with these funds. It is expected that the last 2 segments will be completed by early 2024. Once those segments are finished, over 26,300 linear feet of streams in Alexander County will have been cleared of stream debris. Although these projects have gone well, and we’ve seen a lot of progress, we know that there are a lot of stream debris issues still present in the county. The Soil & Water Office will continue to seek additional funding to remove debris from streams to help prevent flooding and loss of land. Here are a few of our before and after pictures from recent sites.

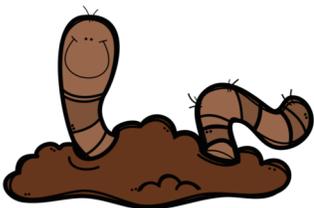


# Alexander SWCD Worm Compost

Alexander Soil & Water Conservation has started a compost bin in our office, and we are sharing our experience with composting worms with several after school groups. Students shown here have just added food scraps for the worms to break down into compost. Even though lots of students start out thinking worms are yucky and don't want to touch them, many of them change their minds and actually enjoy viewing and holding the worms. Like with most of our environmental education programs, this program is not just to teach about composting but also to get students and adults to appreciate our natural resources like soil, water, and worms.



Earthworms help to increase the amount of air and water that gets into the soil. They break down organic matter, like leaves and grass into things that plants can use. When they eat, they leave behind castings that are a very valuable type of fertilizer.



# 2023 ENVIROTHON COMPETITION

The Envirothon is a five-member team, hands on, environmental science education program. It is a fun filled, back to nature, competitive event where the team members learn about their environment and associated environmental problems. This academic competition focuses on 5 different categories: Aquatics, Current Environmental Issues, Forestry, Soils, & Wildlife. Students put a lot of extra time into studying to prepare for trivia, identification, and skills in each category, and the advisors dedicate a lot of time in getting the teams ready for the competition. Local Soil & Water Conservation Districts administer the Area Event and sponsor teams at the Area, State, and National Envirothon. Every school year, the Alexander Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) seeks out Envirothon teams from the local middle and high schools. Resource station subject areas included:

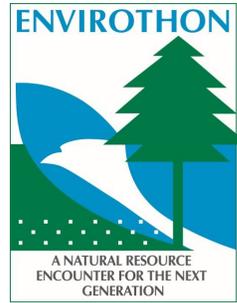
**Aquatics** – covers ecology of water, stream improvement, water chemistry, plants and animals living in or around water, pollution and conservation

**Current Environmental Issues** – covers any current or newsworthy environmental issue

**Forestry** – covers tree identification, improvement of timber stands, forest ecology, insects and diseases, use of Biltmore Stick, best management practices, forest management, and forest measurements

**Soils** – covers classification, erosion, soil surveys, site suitability, profiles, soil texture, characteristics, and conservation practices

**Wildlife** – covers habitat, identification, foods, rules & regulations, bird calls, diseases, and management.



The Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District would like to congratulate to the EAMS “Gardens of the Galaxy” team for competing at the State Envirothon in Burlington and placing 14th out of 46 middle School teams. Great job guys!



# 2022/2023 ANNUAL CONTEST WINNERS

The Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) held all six of our yearly environmental education contests for the 2022/2023 school year. The school winners from each category were honored at our Soil & Water Awards Banquet held on April 18th at the Emerald Hill in Hiddenite. All of the education contests shared the theme “Water—the Cycle of Life.” Contests include a 5th grade poster contest, a 6th grade essay contest, a 6th grade computer designed slide show, or PowerPoint, contest, a 7th & 8th grade speech contest, and a 9th grade computer generated poster contest. As always, we had some great entries, and the judges had a hard time deciding on some of the winners. The Alexander SWCD Board of Supervisors and Staff would like to again congratulate all of the 2023 Conservation Contest participants and winners on a job well done! The students who received awards were still presented with ribbons and checks, Our county winners for each contest were:

**Fifth grade poster winner – Kallie Chapman, Wittenburg Elementary**

**Sixth grade essay winner – Riley Hull, EAMS**

**Sixth grade slide show winner – Tucker Robertson, Millersville Christian**

**Seventh grade speech winner – Samuel James, Millersville Christian**

**Eighth grade speech winner – Kendall Latchford, WAMS**

**Ninth—Twelfth grade slide show winner – Micah Chapman, ACHS**



## What Does The Alexander Soil & Water Conservation District Do?

- Soil & Water Conservation Districts are political subdivisions of state government.
- There are 96 of them in NC, covering the state's 100 counties.
- The Alexander SWCD develops farm conservation plans, identifies and plans local resource conservation work and coordinates the conservation efforts of federal and state agencies within the district.
- The district works closely with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation service (NRCS) and the Division of Soil and Water Conservation in the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
- The division provides financial, technical and administrative support to the districts.
- Technical assistance can be provided to the landowner in varying capacities based on his/her needs.
- The district also provides educational services for schools, civic groups, and any organization.

**ALEXANDER  
SOIL & WATER  
CONSERVATION  
DISTRICT OFFICE**

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**For More  
Information**

Visit: [https:// alex-  
andercountync.gov/  
departments/soil-  
water/](https://alexandercountync.gov/departments/soil-water/)



@AlexanderSWCD



## Our History

Alexander County is a rural county nestled in the foothills of the Brushy & the Blue Ridge Mountains in western North Carolina. The county seat is Taylorsville, established in 1847. Approximately 2/3 of the county is farmland. Major commodities include poultry, dairy, tobacco, apples, forestry products, grain crops and beef cattle with income at approximately \$6.5 million yearly. The Alexander Soil & Water Conservation District was formed on July 21, 1961. Prior to that, Alexander County was a part of the Catawba Soil Conservation District which was organized on April 8, 1938.



## Mission Statement

The Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District is a local organization working to plan and direct programs for the conservation and development of our natural resources. We are charged with the responsibility of promoting soil and water conservation and establishing conservation education programs throughout the District/County.

### District Staff

Pamela Bowman– Director

Tyler Cornett– Soil & Water  
Conservationist

Hannah Bengé - Office  
Assistant

### NRCS Staff

Jim Propst– Supervisory Soil  
Conservationist

## DISTRICT SUPERVISORS

Myles Payne– Chairman

Eugene White– Vice-Chairman

Colby Herman– Secretary/Treasurer

Bryant Chapman– Member

Kathy Bunton- Member

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The Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District Board