



The Alexander SWCD Times

The Bill Chapman Memorial Award

The Alexander Soil & Water Conservation District takes great pride in recognizing local citizens, teachers, and businesses that have gone above and beyond to do their part in practicing and teaching conservation. A couple years ago, we recognized our previous Board Chairman, Bill Chapman, for 30 years of service to the Soil & Water Board of Supervisors. Over those years, he was often called upon to assist with the 5th grade Environmental Field Days as a Dairy presenter or a tractor driver for the hay ride. Bill never met a stranger, and he talked to several farm tour groups over the years, telling about different conservation practices utilized on the farm. Sadly, Bill passed away in 2022. We are proud to start a new tradition at our Awards Banquet and honor Bill's legacy each year with the Bill Chapman Memorial Award. This award was created by the current Board of Supervisors and staff to recognize an educator or a community member that has contributed to the success of the Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District and their endeavors while honoring Bill's memory. This is one way that we can keep Bill's conservation legacy alive for years to come. The first Bill Chapman Memorial award went to one of Bill's best friends and a true conservationist, Mr. Donald Payne. He has sacrificed farmland, time, and farm help. For many years he offered his farm up for the 5th grade environmental field days that the Soil & Water office sponsors every year. From 1992 to 2018, the Payne family hosted all of the Alexander County 5th graders on their farm for 2 days every October for 27 years. This involved more than just the 2 days though. There was a lot of preparation that went into hosting, including bush hogging fields, setting up 2 tractors pulling hay wagons and often providing the manpower to drive the tractors, and mowing down 1-2 acres in his soybean field to allow for bus and presenter parking. The family was always willing to help and were usually volunteering on the event days which meant other work around the farm had to be put on hold. However, that did not stop the family from helping. Because of the family's willingness to host this field day for 27 years, thousands of students in Alexander County learned about conservation, agriculture, and the environment first hand on a farm. There's no way to know how big of an impact that may have been on so many lives. Congratulations Donald Payne! Pictured below are the current Board of Supervisor with Donald Payne, from left to right : Colby Herman, Eugene White, Kathy Bunton, Donald Payne , Myles Payne, and Bryant Chapman.



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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.



VOLUNTARY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

The Alexander County Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program, administered by the Soil & Water Office, has been around since the original ordinance was approved by the Board of Commissioners in March of 2002. Since that time, the program has grown to include 77 farms and total over 11,800 acres. The purpose of the program is to promote health, safety, & rural agricultural values; while increasing awareness & pride in the agricultural community's way of life. Voluntary protection of farmland safeguards from residential and/or commercial development & increases protection against nuisance lawsuits. Once your land is enrolled in the program, the county GIS site will signify to potential real estate purchasers that they are moving into a Voluntary Agricultural District of working farmland, and lets them know upfront that they may experience certain noises, smells, and other activities related to traditional farming. In order to be considered for the Program, a farm must: 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. The ordinance was updated in 2023 to comply with revisions to State statutes. Under the revised ordinance, farmlands are automatically renewed in the program after 10 years as long as the owner doesn't request removal or the land use changes to non-ag. Even when land is transferred due to selling property, death, etc., the land will remain in the farmland preservation program as long as it remains in agriculture use. However, we would like to be notified of the landowner change for our records. There are several benefits for landowners to join the program. Other benefits for farmers include recognition through Agricultural District signs, the right for the Advisory board to hold public meetings on condemnation in the districts and eligibility for possible Farmland Preservation Funds. This program will be a wonderful tool that we can use to protect the rapidly vanishing farmland and to help preserve our rural way of life in Alexander County. The Alexander Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program VAD Advisory Board meets quarterly and consists of Chairman Coy Reese, Vice Chair Eugene White, Scott Sink, Traci Fox, Kent Herman, Dustin Queen, and Bryant Chapman.



LONG RANGE PLAN 2023-2026

The Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District provides leadership and direction for the management/use of our natural resources of soil, water, air, plants, and animals. The District's current Long Range Plan (for 2023 - 2026) documents and describes the actions necessary to implement the conservation program for Alexander County. Within the plan is a detailed layout of the district's objectives and goals, as well as the key partners involved in the effort. It is through the cooperative effort of these partnerships that the goals will become progressive accomplishments. Active partners include, but are not limited to, cooperating agencies of the local, state, and federal government, as well as community leaders and concerned citizens of the county. Program delivery is carried out through technical assistance, education, technology, research, and financial funding for all qualifying citizens of Alexander County. On behalf of the citizens of Alexander County, the Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District accepts the challenge of wisely managing the natural resources for today's citizens as well as future generations.

*A link to the entire plan can be found on our county website.



2024 ANNUAL CONTEST WINNERS



The Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) held our yearly environmental education contests for the 2023/2024 school year. The school winners from each category were honored at our Soil & Water Awards Banquet held on April 16th at the Emerald Hill in Hiddenite. All of the education contests shared the theme “The Living Soil.” Contests include a 5th grade poster contest, a 6th grade essay contest, a 9th-12th grade essay, a 6th grade computer designed slide show, or PowerPoint, a 9th– 12th Slide show, or PowerPoint, a 7th- 8th grade speech contest and a 9th-12th grade speech 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 2024 Conservation Contest participants and winners on a job well done! The students who received awards were presented with ribbons and checks. Our county winners for each contest were:

Fifth Grade poster winner- Ava Barnes,
Bethlehem Elementary

Sixth Grade essay winner- Paisley Waugh,
Millersville Christian Academy

Sixth Grade slide show winner- Madison Herman,
Millersville Christian Academy

Eighth Grade speech winner- Samuel James, Mil-
lersville Christian Academy

Ninth-Twelve grade speech & essay winner-
Laurel Mitchell, Alexander Central High School

Ninth-Twelve grade slide show winner- Emery
Miller, Alexander Early College



***Congratulations
to Emery Miller
for winning 1st
place in the State
High School Soil
and Water Slide
Show contest!***

2024 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

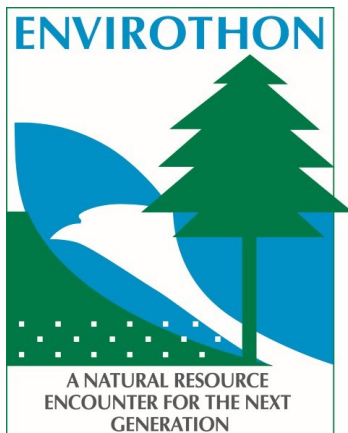
Soils – covers classification, erosion, soil surveys, site suitability, profiles, soil texture, characteristics, and conservation practices

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

The NW Envirothon was held on March 18th & 19th in Wilkes County. Alexander County had 2 high school teams compete from Alexander Early College. Alexander SWCD was fortunate enough to be able to visit a few classes to share information about the Envirothon. We greatly enjoy seeing students get excited about this experience, and of course, we enjoy it as well. We hope to do more experiential programs and practices with the Envirothon teams in the future. The top seven teams from the Area Competition move on to the State-level Envirothon event, and Alexander County had one High School team qualify: From Alexander Early College, Emery Miller, Paige Kiser, Katie Garnto, Elizabeth Ramirez, and Angelique Carico competed as “Barbie & Friends.” Barbie & Friends came in 7th place in the high school competition. They traveled to Burlington, NC for the State Envirothon on April 26th & 27th.

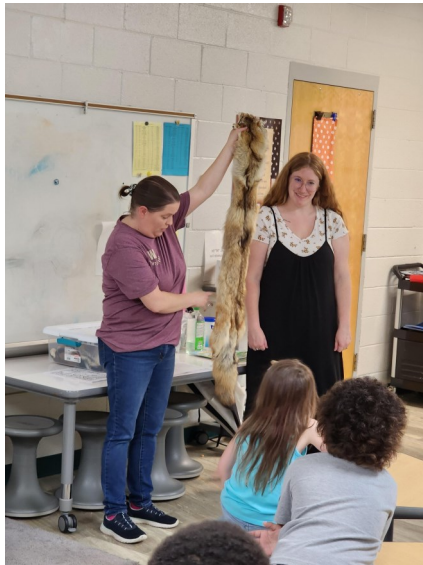


The Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District would like to congratulate to the AEC “Barbie & friends” team for competing at the State Envirothon in Burlington. Great job guys!



NEW EDUCATION MATERIALS

Exciting news from the Alexander Soil and Water! Thanks to the NC Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation grant we've acquired new education materials to enhance our programs. Our office now has an impressive collection including coyote, red fox, muskrat, mink, beaver, and Finn raccoon skulls. Plus, we've added pelts from various animals like red fox, muskrat, beaver, coyote, wild mink, opossum, raccoon, and skunk. Additionally, we've got some handy tools for water quality lessons, including pocket microscopes, a water testing kit, nets, identification keys for freshwater macroinvertebrates, and boots. We're looking forward to exploring these resources with our students!



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.

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.

**ALEXANDER
SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT OFFICE**

151 West Main Avenue Suite 3
Taylorsville, NC 28681

Phone: (828) 632-0638

Fax: (828) 632-5253

Office Hours:

8am-5pm
Monday-Friday

**For More
Information**

Visit: [https://
alexandercountync.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.

Our Mission

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 Benge - Office
Assistant

NRCS Staff

Jim Propst - Supervisory Soil
Conservationist

DISTRICT SUPERVISORS

Myles Payne - Chairman

Eugene White - Vice-Chairman

Colby Herman - Secretary/Treasurer

Kathy Bunton - Member

Bryant Chapman - Member

The Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors meets at 8:30am on the Third Thursday of every month in the District Office.