



Welcome to Our Newsletter

The Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is excited to publish our first issue of "The Alexander SWCD Times." The purpose of the newsletter is to keep you informed of the programs that are offered and to provide beneficial information. Please contact us if we can assist you in any way.

Sincerely, Alexander SWCD



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.

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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, stocktrails 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.



We will be holding a sign-up period for the North Carolina Agriculture Cost Share Program (ACSP) through July 31st, 2020.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a federal cost share program administered through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that addresses natural resource concerns on agricultural lands. Financial and technical assistance may be available for the installation of best management practices (BMP's) through this program. EQIP BMP's are similar to ACSP BMP's and include: sediment & erosion control, litter storage structures, poultry composters, livestock exclusion from streams in conjunction with alternative watering systems, stocktrails and heavy-use areas for livestock in confined areas, and other practices that benefit water quality. Applications for EQIP are taken all year long, but decisions on funding are only made at set batching periods throughout the year. Contact the District office for more information.



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. The next meeting is scheduled for August. 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 required to reapply in order to stay in the program. If you are interested in enrolling your land in the Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program or want to make sure that your enrollment is current, please contact the office at 632-0638.

2020 ANNUAL CONTEST WINNERS

The Alexander Soil & Water Conservation District hosts six environmental contests for local schools every year. In order to encourage stewardship and instill good land ethic in today's youth, each SWCD contest season has an environmental education component addressing a statewide theme. 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. This year's theme was: "Wetlands are Wonderful". As always, we had some great entries, and the judges had a hard time deciding on some of the winners. Normally, we recognize all of the school and county winners at our soil & water conservation annual awards banquet. However, we were unable to hold the banquet this year due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, we mailed awards, ribbons, and checks directly to some students and dropped off others at the schools for pick-up. The Alexander SWCD Board of Supervisors and Staff would like to congratulate the 2020 Conservation Contest participants and winners on a job well done! We hope that these environmental contests will spark an interest in natural resource conservation in these students.

Our county winners for each contest were:

Fifth grade poster winner – Sophie Morris, Bethlehem Elementary

Sixth grade essay winner – Colton Laws, EAMS

Sixth grade slide show winner – Nathan Wallace, EAMS

Seventh grade speech winner – Lawson Setzer, EAMS

Eighth grade speech winner – Callie Iversen, WAMS

Ninth grade poster winner – Grayson Presnell, ACHS



Wetlands are Wonderful! - Freshwater Marsh

Reasons to conserve this resource...

- It helps filter and purify the surface water
- It holds back water from flooding like a sponge
- They have many plants and animal species



How can we conserve it?

- Pick up litter and dispose of all trash
- Plant local trees
- Report illegal actions toward the environment
- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Valuable Resources in this environment...

- Trees/plants
- Wetland soil
- Timber
- Fish
- etc.



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 Envirothons. 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

This year, 2020, East Alexander Middle School had two Envirothon teams, as well as one team from each Alexander Central High School and Alexander Early College. These teams would have competed in the Area “NW Envirothon” in March, but due to the current circumstances the event did not take place.

EAMS Teams:

Flying Falcons: Hadley Houser, Jacie Sweet, Emma Millsaps, Will White, and Aaron McClain

Organic Turtles: Griffin Duncan, Austin Marlowe, Jackson Puckette, Ella-Grace Hays, and Samantha Vick

Advisors: Valorie Chapman and Tina Walker

ACHS Team:

Screaming Hairy Armadillos: Amaryna Chapman, Cade Smithy, Macy Johnson, Michael Brown, and Lilli Stafford, with alternates Ana Gray and Ilyana Chapman

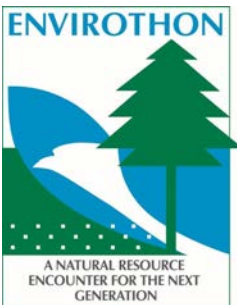
Advisor: Klara Higgins

AEC Team:

AEC Owls: Jacob Palmer, Emily Mull, Colin Coffey, Mason James, and Jacob White, with alternates Dante Sowards and Jocelyn Lonjinos.

Advisor: Shelly Cain.

The Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District would like to congratulate the four teams for their hard work and efforts this year!



In 2019, as a part of the EAMS teams 'practiced for the Area event, local and area resource professionals came to EAMS to offer their expertise on one of the five subject areas. These practices offered some new environmental experiences for the teams as well as helped them to learn the Envirothon material. One noteworthy experience was led by Kevin Hining with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission (NC WRC).

Kevin took the two teams “electrofishing” in the creek behind EAMS. This involved a backpack shocker that delivers a slight charge into the water which stuns fish and other aquatic organisms. Students were then able to catch these organisms in a net, observe, and identify them. This does not hurt the organisms. They wake up, in a sense, fairly quickly and can be released unharmed. Pamela Bowman, Education Coordinator with Alexander SWCD, also participated in the stream walk with the teams. She hopes to offer more of this type of experiential program and practices with the Envirothon teams in the future. Other resource professionals that helped with this year’s practices were: David Huffman (Alexander Co. Forester), DJ Salyer (Alexander CES 4H Agent), Amy Lucas (Alleghany CES Director), Michael Greene and Derek Arney (both Tuttle Educational State Forest Rangers).

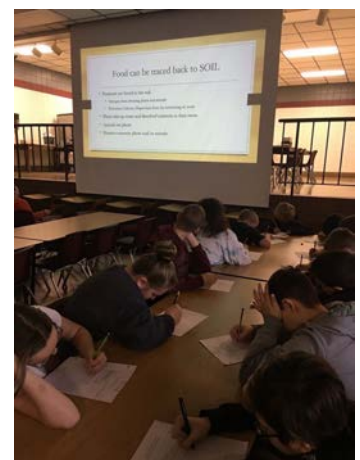
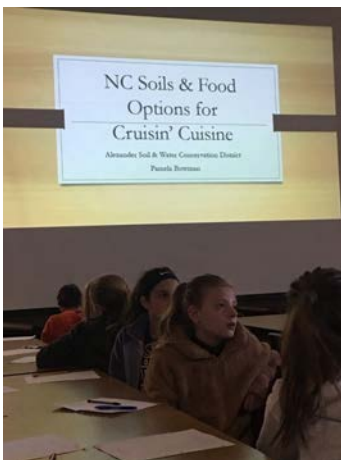


Hands-On Learning

The Alexander Soil & Water Conservation District is available to provide hands on education lessons tailored to your specific needs, such as NC Essential Standards correlations. Last October, Alexander SWCD Education Coordinator Pamela Bowman provided a program for Shelly Cain's 9th grade Environmental Science classes on water resources & water quality. As a part of the lesson, students were able to investigate the creek behind the school first hand by getting their feet wet to do a stream bio-assessment. This involved catching aquatic insects in dip nets, identifying them, and determining whether they are indicators of poor, good, or excellent water quality. The students also tested the water for nitrogen, phosphate, and pH with scientific instruments and water quality test strips. Cooperative Extension 4H agent DJ Salyer assisted Pamela Bowman with this particular lesson.



In January 2020, East Alexander Middle School requested a 6th grade soils presentation to introduce their semester long STEAM Project Cruisin' Cuisine. The project required students to create a proposal for a Food Truck that increases the local economy. They were to research different foods grown and produced locally in NC and analyze the local soil types to determine what foods are sustainable for their business. Pamela adapted her normal 6th grade presentation on soil properties, uses, and conservation practices to include NC soil regions, tracing food back to the soil, local foods, and NC Commodities. This gave the students the same conservation of soils message that we have provided in the past, but it also helped tie in what types of food could be grown locally in our soils to assist the students in deciding what type of food truck they wanted to design for their project. The presentation involved a till versus no-till demonstration where students could visualize the effects of long term turning the soil over (tilling) on soil structure. During this demo, the tilled soil clod breaks apart quickly when placed in water, while the "no tilled" soil does not break apart much at all. This reveals how no till (not turning the soil over) farming protects soil structure which allows the soil to hold more water and nutrients for the plants growing in them and prevents soil erosion or the washing away of soil particles. For more information on these topics or to request an education program, please contact the Soil & Water Conservation District Office.



**ALEXANDER
SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT OFFICE**

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Office Hours:

8am-5pm

Monday-Friday

**For more infor-
mation**

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



@AlexanderSWCD

District Staff

Pamela Bowman– Education
Coordinator/Admin

John Mayberry– Soil & Water
Conservationist

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Jim Propst– Supervisory Soil
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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 SUPERVISORS

Bill Chapman– Chairman

Myles Payne– Vice-Chairman/Secretary/Treasurer

Kent Herman– Member

Eugene White– Member

Kathy Bunton– Member

Wendell Kirkham– Associate Supervisor

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