



Welcome New Cost Share Technician Alec Yount

We would like to introduce you to our new Soil and Water Conservationist, Alec Yount from Asheville, NC. He is a graduate of Western Carolina University with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Natural Resource Conservation and Management with a concentration in Soil and Water Conservation. He is passionate about natural resource issues and helping find better solutions that will benefit landowners. Alec is an avid outdoorsman, as he enjoys hunting, fishing, hiking, etc. Alec and his wife Emily currently live in Morganton, NC.

A Message From New Office Assistant Amy Bucknum

My name is Amy Bucknum, and I've lived in Alexander County for nearly 10 years. My husband, Paul, and I have four children—two daughters and two sons. Hayley and Janah are both adults now and have graduated from college. Luke and Joel are still teenagers living at home. I also breed registered Nigerian Dwarf Dairy goats under the herd name Churn Dash Farm. I got my first four goats in 2013 with the intention of providing our family with some farm fresh milk, but things quickly escalated from there. I now keep a herd of around 15-20 goats at any given time, and I make a variety of cheeses as well as goat milk soaps. I am excited to be part of the ACSWCD team.

The Alexander SWCD Board of Supervisors and Staff welcome Alec and Amy 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 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.

EWP TRAINING / STREAM DEBRIS REMOVAL

Alexander Soil & Water hosted a training program about The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program on July 14th, 2021.

More information about EWP can be found at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov>.

“The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program allows communities to quickly address serious and long-lasting damages to infrastructure and to the land. The program’s timelines for assistance ensures NRCS must act quickly to help local communities cope with adverse impacts resulting from natural disasters. All projects must demonstrate that they reduce threats to life and property; be economically, environmentally and socially sound and must be designed to acceptable engineering standards. The EWP Program also allows NRCS to establish non-traditional partnerships with sponsors to complete projects. “



2021 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: "We All Live in a Watershed". As always, we had some great entries, and the judges had a hard time deciding on some of the winners. Although we were unable to hold an in person banquet as we usually do, the 2021 Annual Awards Banquet was shared virtually as a google slides presentation to honor the students who participated in this year's education contests. Each winning student was also able to receive some type of door prize from one of our sponsors. The students who received awards were still presented with ribbons and checks, which were delivered to each school. Our county winners for each contest were:

Fifth grade poster winner – Hannah Anderson, Ellendale Elementary

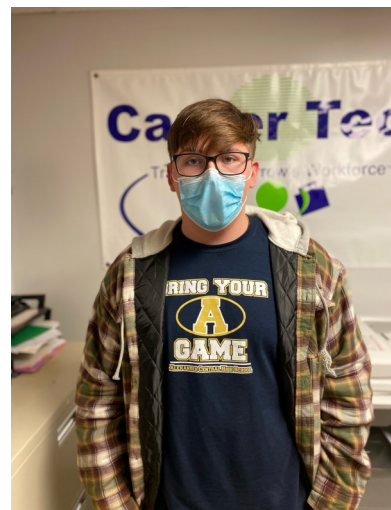
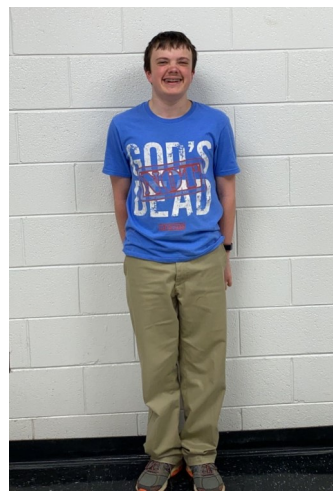
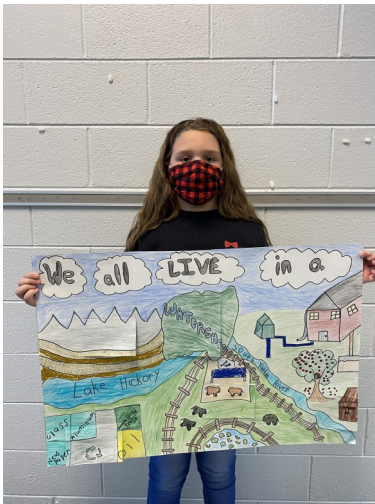
Sixth grade essay winner – Riley Oxentine, EAMS

Sixth grade slide show winner – Wyatt Helton, EAMS

Seventh grade speech winner – McCartney Harrington, WAMS

Eighth grade speech winner – Michael "Alex" Floyd, WAMS

Ninth grade poster winner – Tanner Specht, ACHS



2021 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 2021 Northwest Envirothon was held as a virtual event. The Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District was represented by three teams from East Alexander Middle School, as well as one team from Alexander Central High School in the area level NW Envirothon.

EAMS Teams:

Forces of Nature: Krista Wacob, Emery Miller, Izzy Ayers, and Max Clair.

The Master Minds: Aaron McLain, Kayleigh Stafford, Samantha Vick, Griffin Duncan, and Weston Brown.

Eco Warriors: James Clair, Jacie Sweet, Cade Hartis, Janeth Cruz, Alexandria Garcia.

Advisors: Valorie Chapman and Tina Walker

ACHS FFA Team:

Cougar FFA” members were Nolan Heath, Cheyenne Childers, Grace Taraban, Anna Taraban, Avery Cook.

Advisors: Tyler Mitchell and Scottie Cook

The top 7 scoring teams in both the middle and high school competition advance on to the State Envirothon. The “Master Minds” placed 1st out of 21 area Middle School teams at the NW Envirothon. The Cougar FFA team was the highest scoring FFA team. Both teams competed in the State Envirothon, which was held virtually on April 16th. The “Master Minds” placed 9th out of 36 middle school teams at the State Envirothon. The Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District would like to congratulate the four teams for their hard work and efforts this year!



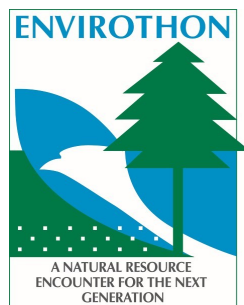
Forces of Nature



The Master Minds



Eco Warriors



Cougar FFA

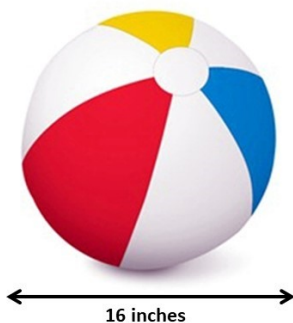


2021 SUMMER PROGRAMS

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. In July, Education Coordinator, Pamela Bowman and Office Assistant, Kellee Payne presented two summer school programs for East Alexander Middle School. The first program was focused on The Water Cycle. The lesson involved “The Incredible Journey” activity to get the students thinking about the movement of water. The students became water molecules moving through the water cycle within nine stations: clouds, plants/vegetation, animals, rivers, oceans, lakes, ground water, soil and glaciers. They moved through The Water Cycle by rolling dice to determine their next location. Lastly, the students got to make a bracelet representing everywhere they traveled as a water molecule.



The second program was “The Soil Café” focused on soil. The lesson involved engaging the students in exploring the rich topsoil recipe and the life below our feet. The students got to whip up the rich soil recipe, that contained 6 ingredients; air, water, rocks, animals, plants, and dead plants and animals. After a student volunteered to mix up the ingredients; Pamela told them it would be placed in an earthen oven. She asked them, “How long shall we set the kitchen timer for?” We got many great guesses and then explained that in nature, it takes 100-500 years to yield one inch of topsoil. Next, the students were served a plate with rich soil to explore. They had a fun time digging through the soil and discovering many living organisms. After the students finished exploring the soil and finding many interesting living creatures, Pamela explained what different types of organisms can live in the soil. The other part of the lesson was explaining the 3 different soil particles and their relative sizes: sand, silt, and clay.



Silt: 10 times smaller than sand

1.6 inches



Clay: 100 times smaller than sand

0.16 inches



THANK YOU FROM KELLEEE PAYNE

I would like to thank the Alexander SWCD staff and Board of Supervisors for allowing me this opportunity to learn more about Soil and Water Conservation. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time over the past year as the Office Assistant performing office duties and assisting with educational and technical work.

Sincerely,
Kellee Payne

Kellee Payne is now the Yadkin County Cooperative Extension Horticulture Agent. The Alexander SWCD staff and supervisors appreciate her hard work over the past year with our office and wish her well in this new endeavor.

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**

151 West Main Avenue Suite 3
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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

District Staff

Pamela Bowman– Education
Coordinator/Admin

Alec Yount– Soil & Water
Conservationist

Amy Bucknum - Office
Assistant

NRCS Staff

Jim Propst– Supervisory Soil
Conservationist

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

Eugene White– Member

Kathy Bunton- Member

Colby Herman– Member

Wendell Kirkham– Associate Supervisor

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.