

FALL NEWSLETTER 2021

DISTRICT TIMES

Rowan Soil and Water Conservation District



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News from the Combine

BY CHRIS SLOOP, DIRECTOR

As we embark on a new adventure of a quarterly newsletter for the Rowan Soil and Water Conservation District, I felt it was fitting to give some background on myself and the District programs as a whole. My name is Chris Sloop, and I am the Director for the Rowan County Soil and Water Department. I am a lifelong Rowan County resident, born in Salisbury and raised near the Millbridge community in the southwestern portion of the county. I attended North Carolina State University where I secured my BS in General Horticulture and a minor in Animal Science.

Shortly out of college, I went to work for Rowan County in the Maintenance Department as their Horticulturist. I stayed there for around 7 1/2 years, and went to be a grower for a large, well-known greenhouse company for about 2-1/2 years, until my wife and I were ready to start a family. At that point, my current position with Soil and Water became available, and I returned to be a Rowan County employee again with the S&W District.

Today, I have a wife and two children: a 12-year-old son, and an 8-year-old daughter. I have been in my current position as the Soil and Water Director for just over 12 years, and have over 20 years in with Rowan County. I also farm on the side with my father, raising beef cattle, corn, barley, and soybeans. ~Continued on next page~



Board & Staff



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From the Combine continued

My duties with the Soil and Water Department are quite varied. My position's contract with NC Department of Agriculture Division of S&W requires that the majority of my time be used administering cost-share programs funded by NCDA, and much of the remainder being devoted to administrative duties and technical assistance. These programs are the North Carolina Agriculture Cost-Share Program (NCACSP) and the Agricultural Water Resources Assistance Program (AgWRAP). The NCACSP is funded to assist agricultural producers (farmers) and landowners to address water quality issues on their land, such as soil erosion, animal waste runoff, fertilizer runoff, or chemical runoff. AgWRAP is funded by NCDA to address water quantity issues on ag lands, to deal with lack of water on farms. AgWRAP funds can be used to install irrigation wells, build irrigation ponds, and increase efficiency of water resources. Each year, Rowan County is allocated limited funds to cost-share with farmers to implement scientifically sound practices (Best Management Practices), and it is my primary duty to administer these funds through established protocol to our farm producers and landowners, along with running the day-to-day operations of the Rowan County Soil and Water Department. In the 2019/2020 fiscal year, Rowan SWCD contracted \$40,762 in NCACSP funds and \$8615 in AgWRAP funds with local farmers. These funds would not be available to our county residents without an employee to administer them. This year's fund encumbrance is slightly low due to COVID-19 challenges by producers.



Supervisor Bruce Miller, congratulating Chris Sloop for completing Leadership Rowan, a nine-month program that provides participants an in-depth view of community issues, develop skills necessary to assume leadership roles, and ensure they are exposed to community involvement opportunities.

Supervisors



Pictured L to R: Ben Knox, Bruce Rider, Max West,
Jim Summers, Bruce Miller

The Board of Supervisors is composed of 3
elected and 2 appointed board members. Board
meetings are typically held the third Thursday of
the month at 7pm at 2727 Old Concord Rd.

Meetings are open to the public.

Supervisor Spotlight: Max West

Max West was raised in Rowan County, and after a lengthy military career which included serving as a paratrooper in Grenada, he returned home. Acquiring some land of his own he recognized the value of our natural resources. In 2018 he ran for the Soil and Water Board of Supervisors and was elected to the board. Since then Max has been a reliable and involved board member, often accompanying our Director on spot check visits, attending supervisor trainings, monthly district meetings, and area and state-wide meetings. He has done everything a board member is required to do and has offered to do more. He is very committed to soil and water conservation, and as he noted, soil takes generations to form and we need to take care of it.

Unfortunately, Max and his wife will be moving out of Rowan County and he will no longer serve on the board. His resignation was effective in September. Max stated, "I enjoyed working with the Soil and Water Board. I know I'm leaving it in good hands." We appreciate Max's service and dedication to our Board and will miss him. We appreciate his service to our country. We wish him all the best in this next chapter of his life.

On the Calendar:

Oct. 10-16 Earth Science Week
Oct. 12 National Farmers Day
Oct. 14-24 NC State Fair
Oct. 16 International World Rivers Day
Oct. 21 District Board mtg.
Nov. 11 Veterans Day - office closed
Nov 15 America Recycles Day
Nov. 18 District Board mtg.
Nov. 25 & 26 Thanksgiving - office closed
Dec. 5 World Soil Day
Dec. 16 District Board mtg.
Dec. 24 - 27 Christmas - office closed
Dec. 30 New Years - office closed



December 5, 2021

MISSION STATEMENT

Working in partnership with other agencies and organizations, the Rowan Soil and Water Conservation District's mission is to provide its citizens with the technical assistance and financial resources to carry out scientifically sound, sustainable practices that conserve the soil, water, and related resources of Rowan County. The education of our citizens in the wise use of natural resources will be a priority of this district.

History of Soil Conservation

Hugh Hammond Bennett is considered the Father of Soil Conservation. His legacy began in Anson County where he was born and raised on a farm. After graduating from UNC in 1903 he worked for USDA visiting farms across the country. During his work he noticed a correlation between eroded soil and reduced agricultural productivity. He began experimenting and recognized that soil erosion was "a national menace." He recognized that there were better, more sustainable, and scientifically proven farming practices that could be implemented. He began educating farmers and politicians alike about the importance of soil conservation. He wrote scientific papers, and spoke on many occasions about the value of conserving our soil and other natural resources not just for farmers, but for the betterment of all Americans.

In the 1930s the Southern Plains were going through a severe drought. To compound the problem, the Great Depression put economic hardships on farmers who, in an effort to increase crop yields, were over-tilling the soil and removing soil-stabilizing native grasses. Political and cultural changes also impacted the farming practices that led to the Dust Bowl.

As Chief of the Soil Erosion Service, a temporary agency within the Dept. of the Interior, Bennett spoke to many politicians to increase awareness of the loss of productive agricultural lands in the Great Plains. In 1934 he was testifying to a Congressional Committee in favor of the Soil Conservation Act. Knowing what was to come, he paced his presentation for dramatic effect. The room darkened, he drew the attention of the congressmen to a window, where just as he had predicted, a dust cloud from the Great Plains had come to Washington. The alarmed politicians unanimously approved the Soil Conservation Act which ultimately formed the Soil Conservation Service, a permanent branch of USDA.

Dr. Bennett understood that if the Soil Conservation Service was to be effective it needed support on the local level. This became the catalyst for the establishment of the local soil conservation districts. In 1937 Brown Creek Soil and Water Conservation District in Anson County, NC, became the first in America.



"Take care of the land
and the land will take
care of you..."

Hugh Hammond Bennett

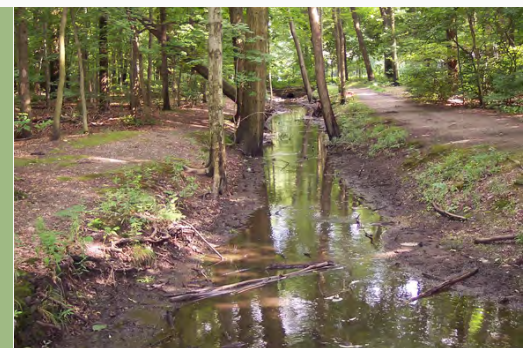
No-till Drill Rental

To help conserve your soil, consider no-till planting. This agricultural practice allows you to plant without disturbing as much soil as conventional tillage. It helps reduce erosion, adds nutrients to the soil, and helps keep moisture in the soil. Rowan Soil and Water Conservation District has a drill you can rent.

Contact Chris Sloop for prices and availability.



Sediment from erosion is the # 1 water pollutant by volume in NC. Planting trees, shrubs, and other plants along streams can help stabilize the soil and reduce erosion.



Featured Farm: Conservation Farm Family



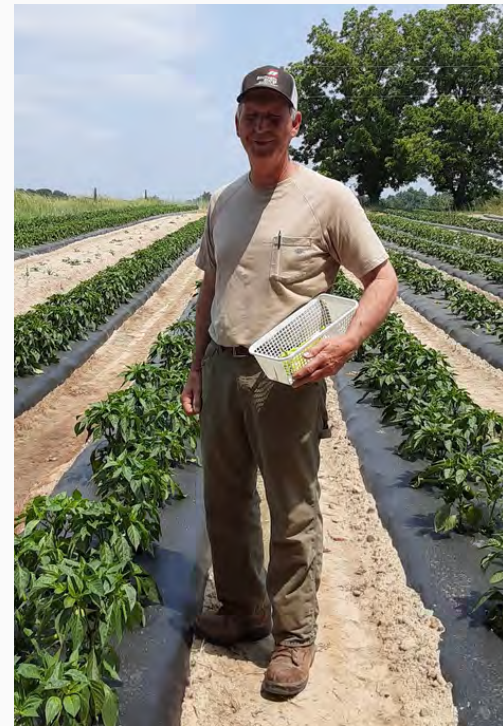
Each year the Board of Supervisors for the Rowan Soil and Water Conservation District selects a Rowan County farm as its Conservation Farm Family of the Year. The farms are selected based on the conservation practices the farm uses, educational opportunities provided by the farm, and the family's community involvement. The selected farm is judged against other farms in a 12-county region. Winners of the first round of judging compete at the state level.

We are pleased to announce that the Watson family from Wetmore Farms, LLC is this year's winner. They were not only selected by our board, but went on to win the area competition, the regional competition, and placed second in the state!



Jacob and Alison Watson, Artie and Libby Watson,
Laura Watson and Bob Wetmore

Wetmore Farms



Artie Watson



This competition is part of the NC Association of Soil and Water Conservation District's Outstanding Farm Family competition.

Pictured: Vernon Cox, Chris Sloop, Bruce Miller, Keith Larick, Amanda Sands, Blount Knowles, Jimmy Gentry, Tim Beard, Bryan Evans, Artie Watson, Jacob Watson

Conservation Education

Did you know that the Rowan Soil and Water Conservation District offers FREE environmental education programs to residents of Rowan County? School groups, scout groups, homeschool families, nature clubs, park staff, or anyone interested in learning more about our natural resources are encouraged to call Kelli Isenhour to discuss your program ideas or schedule a program.

Poster Contest

Soil and Water...Yours for Life

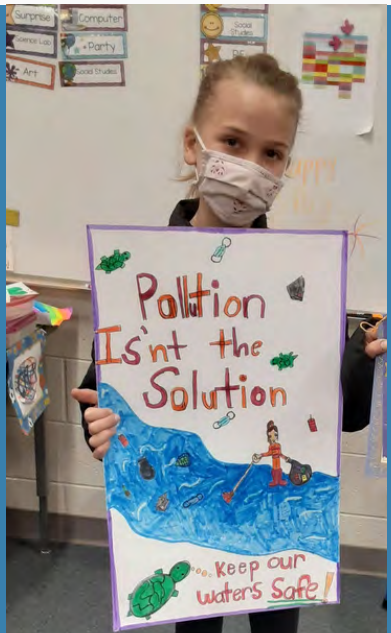
Attention 3rd-6th grade students!

Put your drawing skills and conservation knowledge into practice by designing a poster with a focus on the value of our soil and water. The conservation message is 50% of the score.

To enter your poster and for official rules contact Kelli Isenhour.

Entries are due February 11th.

Pictured is 2021 poster winner Emmaline Meyers from Salisbury Academy



Envirothon

The Envirothon is a team competition for 5th-12th grade students. Each team consists of 3-5 students.

Students are tested on forestry, wildlife, soils, aquatics, and current environmental issues. If you are interested in being on a team or forming your own contact Kelli Isenhour.



Rowan SWCD was the recipient of an Outdoor Environmental Learning Center Grant



Before



After



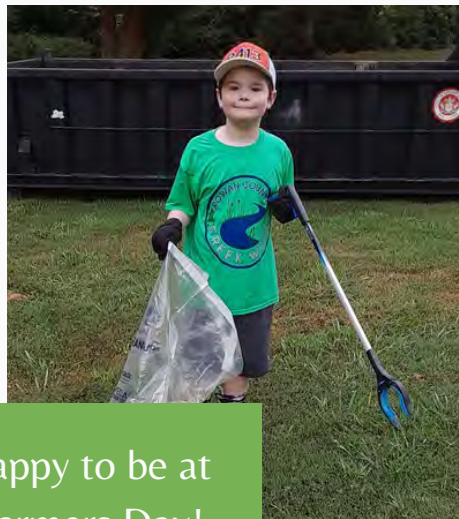
The Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation awarded Rowan SWCD a \$2,500 matching grant. We chose West Rowan Elementary as the recipient of this funding. With the help of the students and community volunteers we installed a rain garden with native plants. The plants will attract pollinators. A vine teepee and digging garden were also installed.



Community Events



Rowan SWCD is one of the sponsors and organizers of Rowan Creek Week. Creek Week brings awareness to our water resources through education, recreation, and volunteer opportunities. With over 35 partner groups and over 400 participants this year, Rowan Creek Week keeps getting bigger and better. www.rowancreekweek.org



We're always happy to be at China Grove Farmers Day! The hottest event in Rowan County

