

# DISTRICT TIMES

Rowan Soil and Water Conservation District



## This issue:

Cost Share Information	1
Featured Farm	2
Board and Staff	3
Conservation Education	4
Community and Partners	6

Rowan Soil and Water Conservation District  
2727-C Old Concord Rd.  
Salisbury, NC 28146

District Director: Chris Sloop  
chris.sloop@rowancountync.gov  
704-216-8999

Education Coordinator: Kelli Isenhour  
kelli.isenhour@rowancountync.gov  
704-216-8998



Rowansoilandwater

## Rowan Soil and Water Cost Share Programs

The Rowan Soil and Water Conservation District is one of the agencies that provides cost share funds to farmers and landowners. This funding is to help protect our water resources through scientifically sound conservation practices. Last year, Rowan Soil and Water encumbered \$7498 in AgWRAP (Agricultural Water Resources Assistance Program). We encumbered \$20,427 in ACSP (Agricultural Cost Share Program). These funds covered 75% of the farmers' cost to apply conservation practices on their property.

So, how does this work? Rowan County receives funding from the state of North Carolina to protect water resources, and control nonpoint source pollution from agricultural activities in an effort to protect nearby creeks, rivers, and lakes in the Yadkin-Pee Dee River Basin.

These funds are available to assist landowners and farmers by implementing conservation practices which help decrease the amount of sediment, nitrogen, phosphorus, chemicals, and other pollutants in the surface and ground waters. The Rowan Soil and Water Conservation District is tasked with reviewing the applications for these funds, visiting the farmers land to assess need, and discussing Best Management Practices (BMP's). If the farmer wishes to apply, the application is reviewed and ranked by a pre-determined ranking system.

The top ranking applications are brought to the Soil and Water Board of Supervisors to approve the applications. Once applications are approved, our district director, Chris Sloop, writes a contract with specific guidelines for the farmer to put into practice. The contract is then sent to the Division of Soil and Water for approval. The farmer is responsible for 25% of the costs associated with the project. Once the project is complete the Farmer will be reimbursed. Participants must stay in compliance for the duration of the contract, which is usually 10 years.

## Cost Share Funding Requirements and Deadline



Landowners and renters are eligible to receive up to 75% cost share if they have had an agricultural operation for at least one year, have an income of less the \$250,000, and have a water quantity need. Some BMP's that may be recommended are agricultural wells and watering systems. Agricultural ponds are also eligible, but require a regional application.



Farmers and renters are eligible to receive 75% cost share if they have had an agricultural operation for more than 3 years and there is a water quality need. Some BMP's that may be funded are grassed waterways, animal waste management, and agrichemical handling facilities.

**If you would like more information or wish to apply for cost share funds, contact Chris Sloop (704) 216-8999, or [chris.sloop@rowancountync.gov](mailto:chris.sloop@rowancountync.gov). Applications for the first ranking period must be received in the office by September 29, 2023 @ 5 pm.**

# Featured Farm: 4S Farms



Pictured L to R: Kim, Connie, Grayson, Robin and Jason Starnes



*"We have done conservation practices on the farm because it's the right thing to do."*  
Kim Starnes

## Conservation Practices utilized on the Starnes' Farm

- Grassed waterways help reduce erosion by slowing the flow of water through a field that has potential for eroding.
- The Starnes use GPS to implement prescription nutrient management. This practice puts fertilizer right where the plants need it, reducing wasted fertilizer which saves money and reduces run-off. Their GPS systems also allow for precision planting and chemical application by their sprayer to reduce costs and over-application of seed and chemicals.
- No-till farming helps maintain the soil structure which has numerous benefits. Leaving corn stubble on the ground instead of tilling it in shades the soil which helps maintain moisture. The decomposing vegetation adds nutrients to the soil. No-till is used on all of the Starnes' fields.
- Cover crops are planted on all acres of the farm. This practice helps prevent soil erosion, and adds nutrients to the soil.
- Livestock are fenced out of all water resources.



Kim and Connie Starnes started farming in the early 70's with hay and row crops. When their daughter, Jennifer, went to an angus cow show, she became interested in raising angus cattle, and so began the cattle side of farming. After obtaining a degree in agriculture from NC State, their son, Jason, returned to the farm to continue the tradition of growing row crops. During the drought of 2006 Jason and Kim decided they needed to diversify the farm so they would not have to be so dependent on weather to be sustainable. So, they started raising chickens. Today, the Starnes raise pullets for Pilgrim Farms. They also have a cow/calf operation and maintain about 40 head of cattle. Utilizing their own acreage and rented land, the Starnes' currently farm around 800 acres.

Over the years Rowan Soil and Water has worked with the Starnes on various conservation projects including a conservation easement on the farm. Being familiar with the farm and the family, it was not a difficult decision for our Board of Supervisors to nominate 4S Farms, LLC as Rowan Soil and Water Conservation District's 2023 Conservation Farm Family of the year. The district selects farms based on their excellent conservation practices and their community involvement. The Starnes' farm was judged against other farms in a 12 county area. They won the Area competition. Another round of judging placed them as the winners for the Mountain Region competition. On September 12th, a final round of judges from across the state came to tour the farm. This group of judges selected the Starnes family as the Outstanding Conservation Farm Family of the Year - for the state! This title was given by the NC Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The Association recognizes farm families who are actively taking the initiative to implement sound conservation techniques and who are involved in the community and conservation education. The Starnes exemplify an outstanding conservation farm family, and we are proud that they are representing Rowan County.

## OUTSTANDING CONSERVATION FARM FAMILY OF THE YEAR



*"God blessed us with this land, and it's our job to take care of it."*  
Connie Starnes



# Board and Staff



Ben Knox on the farm



## Supervisor Spotlight: Ben Knox

The Knox family name is well known in the farming community of Rowan and surrounding counties. As well, it should be. The Knox Farm has been in operation since 1752 qualifying it as a Bicentennial Farm. Ben Knox is the 8th generation to work and live on the farm. With roots that run that deep it's no wonder he wanted to obtain a degree in agriculture. In 1981 Ben graduated from NC State University with a BS in agronomy.

With his parents and brother, Clark, actively involved in the day-to-day operations of the farm, Ben was able to pursue a career in agronomy. He worked for Lincoln County Cooperative Extension, and was the Field and Forage Crops Manager at the Piedmont Research Station. Ben spent most of his career as the Regional Agronomist for NCDA where he retired in 2012.

Ben has been on the Board of Supervisors for the Rowan Soil and Water Conservation District for 31 years. He has been Chairman and Treasurer on our board. He has served as the Area 8 Chairman and Area representative to the Executive Committee. Ben has also served the Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts as a member of the Finance Committee, as Chairman of the Legislative Committee, and in 2016 he was President of the Association. Locally, Ben is on the Ag Advisory Board and is active in his church as an Elder.

Rowan County is fortunate to have such an experienced supervisor on our board. We greatly appreciate his dedication to soil and water conservation and to the farmers who rely on cost share funds.



*The historic landmark commission nominated the Knox home place as a Rowan County Historic Landmark. The Board of Commissioners approved this nomination 6/19/2023. The house was built in circa 1854*

## We are very pleased to introduce our newest Board Member, William Wescott II.

William has an undergraduate degree in wildlife and a master's degree in soil science from NC State University. He is in his 29th year as an environmental scientist. For the last 8 years, he has been assisting farmers with NRCS wetland determinations.

William is married to Ginger Goodman Wescott. They have moved back to the family farm in Eastern Rowan County.





# Conservation Education

## R.O.C.K. 4 ROWAN • OUTDOOR • CLUB • KIDS

Introducing R.O.C.K., the Rowan Outdoor Club for Kids. This program originated to offer K-4th grade students and their families outdoor, hands-on learning opportunities. Students in 5th -12th grades are invited to be part of the Outdoor Environmental Club. ROCK typically meets Fridays at 10am  
OEC typically meets Thursdays at 4pm  
Contact Kelli Isenhour for specific dates and details.



## SUMMER CAMPS



Students at Salisbury Academy learned about arboreal animals in 'Tree House' Camp.



Evans Family Farm Camp is always fun! This year we taught campers about pollinators.



## GREAT SOUTHEAST Pollinator Census

ROCK kicks-off with a Citizen Science project called the Great Southeast Pollinator Census. After learning about pollinators and the role they play in our ecosystem, students in ROCK spread out in Hurley Park to collect data on the frequency insects visited flowers. We had a great time and the kids were excited to be contributing to scientific research.

We reached Over 2250 students in 2022/23 school year, including these students from Essie Academy Charter



We are looking forward to working with Salisbury Academy Upper School students this year. The year started out with a BioBlitz at Catawba College's Stanback Ecological Preserve.





# CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Each year the Rowan Soil and Water Conservation District participates in the NC Association of Soil and Water Conservation District's poster and public speaking contest.

## POSTER CONTEST 3RD-5TH GRADE

Posters are due Feb 12, 2024

## PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEST 6TH-12TH GRADE

Speech outlines are due February 20, 2024

This year's Soil and Water Contest theme is:

## THE LIVING SOIL



Scan the QR code for official rules and guidelines

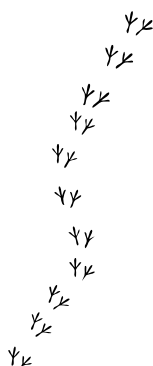
Contact Kelli Isenhour for more information about any of these programs.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Location: Rowan Wild  
October 21, 2023  
9am-4pm

Project WILD is a hands-on, multi-disciplinary workshop for educators that provides wildlife-based conservation and environmental education curriculum. Activities are backed by sound educational practices, and represent the work of many professionals within the fields of education and natural resource management. EE Certification hours are available. This is a free workshop, but registration is required.



Register at  
[ncprojectexplore.org](http://ncprojectexplore.org)

Project EXPLORE (Experiences Promoting Learning Outdoors for Research and Education) helps teachers utilize outdoor spaces at their school to engage preK-12th grade students in curriculum based learning activities. This program involves teachers and their students in 1 of 3 Citizen Science programs. Visit the website to register your class.

## STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES



### Careers in Conservation Scholarship

Each year the NC Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation offers a scholarship to students who are attending or planning to attend a North Carolina college or university with a declared major in agriculture, natural resources or related field. Applications are typically due in Oct. or Nov.

[ncsoilwater.org](http://ncsoilwater.org)



### Southern Piedmont Envirothon Dan Nicholas Park, Rowan County March 19 & 20, 2024

The Envirothon is a team competition for students in 5th-12th grades. Students learn about, and are tested on wildlife, aquatics, forestry, soils and land use, and current environmental issues. Individual students who do not have a team are encouraged to participate with the Outdoor Environmental Club.

[www.spenvirothon.org](http://www.spenvirothon.org)



## CLASSROOM PROGRAMS

Rowan County Soil and Water Conservation District offers a variety of FREE natural resources based programs that are correlated to the Essential Standards. Visit our website for a list of programs, or contact Kelli Isenhour to discuss your program ideas.

[www.rowancountync.gov/1133/Soil-Water-Conservation](http://www.rowancountync.gov/1133/Soil-Water-Conservation)





# Community and Partners



## ROWAN CREEK WEEK SEPTEMBER 16-23, 2024

Rowan Soil and Water began Rowan Creek Week as a way to encourage water conservation and build community and partnerships. This county-wide event brings awareness to our water resources through education, recreation, and volunteer opportunities. There are several sponsors and partners who work to make Rowan Creek Week an event for everyone.

### Saturday 16th

High Rock Lake Clean Sweep  
Creek Week Kick-Off in Spencer  
Medication Take Back  
Story Hour at South Main Book Co.  
Race to the River 5K  
Pedal Factory Ride to the River  
Sunset Paddle on the Yadkin  
Water color exhibit at Rail Walk  
Studios and Gallery

### Sunday 17th

Kids Fish Free at Lake Corriher  
Creek Crawl and Exploration  
Free Kayak Launch

### Monday 18th

Nature Hike at Stanback Nature Preserve

### Tuesday 19th

Wetland Walks  
Water and Whisky tasting  
Rain Barrel Workshop

### Wednesday 20th

Tour of Tuckertown Dam  
Water Wednesday: Free Fishing and kids activities  
Wood duck box building and program

### Thursday 21st

Hydroponic Garden Tour  
Brewery Tour  
Creek Week Trivia

### Friday 22nd

Water Treatment Plant Tour  
Town Creek litter clean-up

### Saturday 23rd

Heroes Branch Litter Clean up  
Creek Week Finale at Horizons



**MORE INFORMATION!**  
**ROWANCREEKWEEK.ORG**



## 42nd Annual China Grove Farmers Day

This year for our booth at Farmers' Day we borrowed the soils tent from the NC Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation. The tent has educational panels that provide information about the value of soils and soil health.

Each year several Rowan County departments come together to host a county-wide recycling day. This is a great opportunity to get rid of expired items, or items you no longer need. This includes pesticides, fertilizer, oil, paint, tires, medicine and more. The Long Street recycling center offers drive-through convenience. Staff and volunteers will unload items for you.

While it's good to know we have a convenient way to dispose of our waste, what are we doing to prevent so much from going in the landfill in the first place? It is estimated that 20% of landfill waste in NC is food waste. That's a lot of sweat equity from our farmers, that winds up wasted. To reduce some food from going in the landfill, try composting your vegetable scraps, grass clippings, dead leaves, sticks even newspapers. Composting not only reduces what we add to the landfill, it also adds nutrients to the soil.



## December 5th

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations declares December 5th of each year as World Soils Day.

It is estimated that up to 58% more food could be produced through sustainable soil management.



World  
Soil Day

TANKS: HELIUM, OXYGEN, PROPANE | RECHARGEABLE BATTERIES | AUTOMOTIVE FLUIDS | HEARING AIDS | ALL ELECTRONICS |

## Special Waste & Recycling Day

**When:** Wednesday, October 11, 2023  
8 AM - 5 PM

**Where:** Rowan County Recycling Processing Center  
1102 N Long Street Extension  
East Spencer, NC  
704-216-8589  
www.rowancountync.gov/EM

**Who:** All Rowan County residents

**Free household quantities only**

**Sponsored by:**

NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION | NORTH CAROLINA OPERATION MEDICAL CARE | ROWAN COUNTY

ITEMS ACCEPTED: REFRIGERATORS & A/C UNITS (RECYCLING MEDICAL WASTE) | Tires (MAX 5/8 TREAD) | FIRE EXTINGUISHERS | ALL ELECTRONICS |

CELL PHONES | WATCHES | CLOCKS & REMOTE CONTROLS | TOILET CLOSURES | CRYSTALS | HOUSEHOLD CLEANING PRODUCTS

DO NOT ACCEPT: REFRIGERATORS & A/C UNITS (RECYCLING MEDICAL WASTE) | Tires (MAX 5/8 TREAD) | FIRE EXTINGUISHERS | ALL ELECTRONICS |