

Loam on the Range

ACSP Highlight | Heavy Use Area and Stock Trail

The North Carolina Agricultural Cost Share Program (ACSP) helps address nonpoint source pollution by providing technical and financial resources through a voluntary, incentive-based program designed to improve water quality through the installation of various best management practices (BMPs) on agricultural lands directly involved with agriculture production.

A Heavy Use Area Protections BMP is area used frequently and intensively by animals which must be stabilized by surfacing with suitable materials to improve water quality. Sometimes this is combined with a stock trail as well. A stock trail or walkway is stable area used frequently and intensively for livestock movement by surfacing with suitable material to improve water quality. Benefits of these practices may include reduced soil erosion, sedimentation and pollution from dissolved, particulate, and sediment-attached substances.

Who is Eligible?

If you are a landowner or renter of an existing agricultural operation that has been operating for more than three years, you are eligible to apply for the North Carolina Agriculture Cost Share Program.

How does ACSP work?

The Chatham Soil & Water Conservation District is accepting applications! Applications are ranked based on resource concerns identified in Chatham County. Please contact Joe Trimnal by phone (919) 545-8353 to apply.

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Stock Trail Before (Left) and After (Right)

What is Soil Health?

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/soils/soil-health>

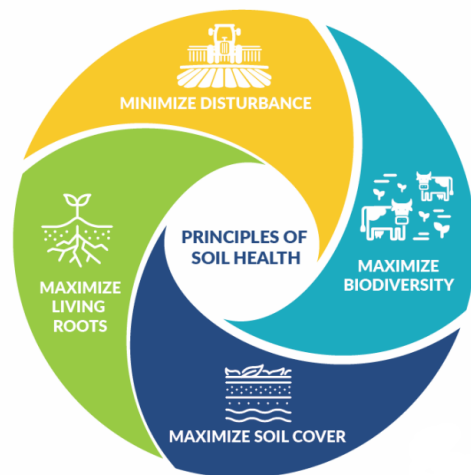
Soil health is defined as the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans. Healthy soil gives us clean air and water, bountiful crops and forests, productive grazing lands, diverse wildlife, and beautiful landscapes. Soil does all this by performing five essential functions:

- Regulating water—Soil helps control where rain, snowmelt, and irrigation water goes. Water flows over the land or into and through the soil.
- Sustaining plant and animal life—The diversity and productivity of living things depends on soil.
- Filtering and buffering potential pollutants—The minerals and microbes in soil are responsible for filtering, buffering, degrading, immobilizing, and detoxifying organic and inorganic materials, including industrial and municipal by-products and atmospheric deposits.
- Cycling nutrients—Carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, and many other nutrients are stored, transformed, and cycled in the soil.
- Providing physical stability and support—Soil structure provides a medium for plant roots. Soils also provide support for human structures and protection for archeological treasures.

Soil health research has determined how to manage soil in a way that improves soil function.

- **Maximize Presence of Living Roots**
- **Minimize Disturbance**
- **Maximize Soil Cover**
- **Maximize Biodiversity**

By farming using soil health principles and systems that include no-till, cover cropping, and diverse rotations, more and more farmers are increasing their soil's organic matter and improving microbial activity. As a result, farmers are sequestering more carbon, increasing water infiltration, improving wildlife and pollinator habitat—all while harvesting better profits and often better yields.



Chatham Soil & Water has two no-till drills available for rental to help with cover crop plantings. If you are interested in renting one of our no-till drills please reach out to Joe Trimnal at (919) 545-8353 or joe.trimnal@chathamcountync.gov Our calendar can fill up quickly during common planting seasons so reach out early if possible.

VAD Benefits

Landowners belonging to a VAD will not be required to connect to County water or sewer. Any assessment fees will be held in abeyance, without interest, unless and until the property is connected.

No governmental agency may condemn any interest in participating farmland without requesting a public hearing to ensure full consideration of the impact of that action upon agricultural, forestland or horticultural land.

Farms enrolled in the VAD may benefit from higher ranking in Chatham Soil & Water Conservation District cost share programs.

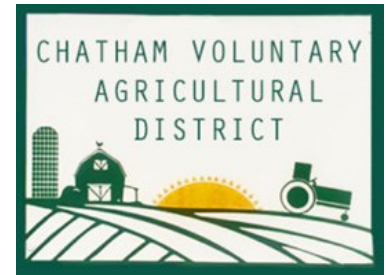
Signs identifying the VAD may be provided to qualifying farmland and placed on the property at the discretion of the owners (not within road right-of-ways).

VAD parcels and all property within one-half mile will be mapped by Chatham County GIS. This will inform the public and purchasers of real property that agricultural, horticultural, and forestry activities may occur in these areas. A notice will be posted at the Planning Department, Tax Office, and Agricultural Agencies in the county.

Voluntary Agricultural District Program

The purpose of the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) Program is to promote agricultural values and the general welfare of Chatham County by increasing the identity of, and pride in, the agricultural community and its way of life. To encourage the economic and financial health of agriculture, horticulture, and forestry through protection from non-farm development and other negative impacts on properly managed farms.

Qualifying farmland must be a bona fide farm, located in an unincorporated area, agree not to develop or use parcels for purposes outside of farm-use, and managed for highly erodible land (HEL) if necessary.



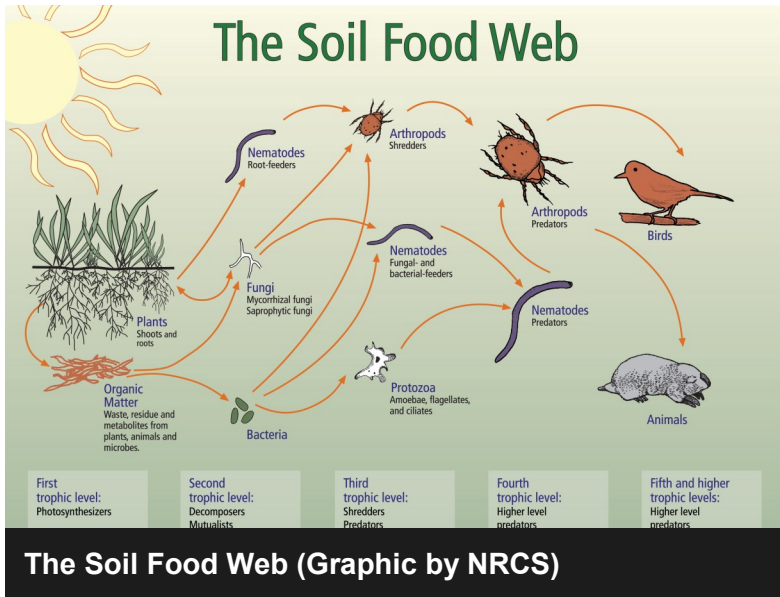
The Voluntary Agricultural District Program is a voluntary program. The term of the agreement is ten years, however, a landowner may revoke this agreement at any time by notifying the Agriculture Advisory Board in writing.

Residents interested in finding out more can visit our website or reach out to us by phone at (919) 545-8447. Residents may also [apply online](#).



Education News

2023-2024 Conservation Contests



Our theme this year is “The Living Soil.” We’re especially excited about this year’s theme because soil is often taken for granted or underestimated. How many times do you hear the word “dirt”? Probably fairly often! Well, soil is not dirt and some of you may know where I’m going with this... Soil is alive! In most cases, there are more living things in a lump of healthy soil the size of your big toe than there are people on Earth right now... over 7 billion of them!

Students are encouraged to learn more about soil and use their creativity to tell others with a hand-drawn poster, essay, or a short verbal presentation! This is your opportunity to get creative and explore what our theme means to you. Our poster contest is open to students in grades 3-5. Our essay and public speaking contests are open to grades 6-12 with grades 9-12 being judged together. More details can be found on our [Conservation Contests webpage](#) or reach out to Brandy Oldham, Education Coordinator (919) 545-8440 or brandy.oldham@chathamcountync.gov.

2024-2025 Careers in Conservation Scholarship

This exciting opportunity is available to students that are currently studying or plan to seek a degree in natural resource management (or closely related field of study) at a North Carolina college, university, or community college. Applicants must be North Carolina residents.

Photo Right: 2023-2024 scholarship recipient from Chatham County. Samantha Andrews is majoring in Science and Sustainable Agriculture.

Scholarship funds will be awarded for the 2024-2025 school year. Application period closes at 11:59 PM on February 2, 2024 More information can be found online along with the application link: <https://ncsoilwater.org/programs/careers-in-conservation-scholarship-program/>



Farmland Preservation

Chatham Agricultural Preservation and Development Trust Fund Completes Successful First Round

The Chatham Agricultural Preservation and Development (CAPD) Trust Fund successfully completed its first round of grant applications in early December. The CAPD was unanimously approved by the Chatham County Board of Commissioners on October 17, 2022, to support agricultural preservation and development within Chatham County. Funding for the CAPD was designated in the Article 46 tax referendum that was approved by Chatham County voters in the March 2020 voter referendum. In the CAPD's initial funding round, \$600,000 was available for perpetual working-lands conservation easements and \$75,000 was available for organizational and programming support grants. CAPD funds are typically awarded in conjunction with matching funds from other working lands preservation programs, such as those administered by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service. "We have received grant applications for several exciting farmland preservation projects and anticipate awarding all of our available funding for this year," says Andrew Waters, Chatham County's farmland preservation coordinator. The CAPD plans to announce grant awards in early 2024.

Chatham County landowners who are interested in receiving CAPD funding for preserving their working lands must partner with a qualified nonprofit organization, such as a local or regional land trust, says Waters. "Our land trust partners get busy, and these applications can take several months to assemble," says Waters. "Based on the demand we saw this year, it's not too early to start working on applications for next year." Waters says he can help working-lands owners connect with an appropriate conservation organization. For more information about the CAPD, or for a consultation on working with land trusts, contact Andrew Waters at 919-542-8267 or andrew.waters@chathamcountync.gov.

Farmland Preservation Consultations Available

Since starting work with Chatham County in August, Farmland Preservation Coordinator Andrew Waters has already met with several landowners who are interested in conserving their farms and working landscapes. "I've been very impressed with the amount of Chatham County landowners who are taking a serious look at permanent preservation options for their working landscapes," says Waters. However, permanent farmland preservation requires a lot of education and planning. Waters says one of his most important jobs is to help educate landowners about conservation options and guide them through the process. "I'm here to be a resource for farmers and working-land owners who are interested in this option and want to learn more," says Waters.

Contact Andrew Waters for a consultation on preservation options for your farm. There is no cost for this consultation, nor will there be any obligation or expectations for participation. He can be reached at 919-542-8267 or andrew.waters@chathamcountync.gov.

District News

Chatham Soil & Water Conservation District Supervisors and Staff Attend Area 3 Fall Meeting

Supervisors and staff with the Chatham Soil & Water Conservation District attended the Area 3 Fall Meeting on October 25th. This meeting was hosted by Rockingham Soil & Water Conservation District at Oakhaven in Pelham, NC. This beautiful working farm also hosts weddings and other events. District Director Susannah Goldston was awarded for 10 years of service with the Chatham SWCD. Congratulations Susannah!

This meeting occurs twice each year, allowing for staff and Board Supervisors to discuss successes, struggles, and get updates from partner agencies.



Susannah Goldston (R), District Director, with 2024 NCASWCD President George Teague (L). Congratulations on 10 years of service!

Save the Date—Spring Ag Fest 2024

Chatham County will host the 4th annual Spring Ag Fest at the Chatham County Agriculture & Conference Center (CCACC) 1192 US 64 W Business, Pittsboro, NC on Saturday, March 23rd, from 10 am to 3 pm. The 2024 Spring Ag Fest is a celebration of Chatham County's agriculture, forestry, and natural resources. Read more: <http://tinyurl.com/2bxskurd>

If you would like to be considered to participate in this annual event as a vendor/exhibitor, please complete the exhibitor/vendor application by clicking the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/4k65sx9a>



Allison Sturgill's oxen team at the 2023 Ag Fest. Photo by Debbie Roos

Cost Share Programs

The Chatham Soil & Water Conservation District is always accepting applications for our cost share programs. We can provide financial and technical assistance to Chatham County land users. Please contact us for more details at (919) 545-8353.

The **North Carolina Agriculture Cost Share Program (ACSP)** is designed to address water quality issues on agricultural lands throughout the state. Common "Best Management Practices," or BMPs for short, include Livestock Exclusion Systems, Nutrient Management Practices, and Sediment Management.



The **Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP)** is set up based on the same procedures and outlines of the ACSP and offers similar water quality improving practices, but on non-agricultural lands. Typical BMPs include: Backyard Rain Gardens, Riparian Buffer for nutrient reduction, and Critical Area Planting.

The **Agriculture Water Resources Assistance Program (AgWRAP)** is designed to identify opportunities to increase water use efficiency, availability and storage and in some cases help fund BMP to conserve and protect water resources. BMPs in this program include irrigation ponds and irrigation wells.



Chatham SWCD Mission

To ensure the wise use of our natural resources, soil, water, air, plants and animals by providing technical and educational services to land users.

Important Dates

- December: 25-27: Christmas (Office Closed)
- January 1, 2024: New Year's Day (Office Closed)
- January 7-9, 2024: Staff Out of Office - Training
- January 15, 2024: MLK Jr. Birthday (Office Closed)
- March 29, 2024: Good Friday (Office Closed)
- May 27, 2024: Memorial Day (Office Closed)



Staff Updates

Natural Resources Conservation Service Welcomes New Soil Conservation Technician

Chad Locklear recently joined the NRCS team here in Chatham. Chad is a Randolph County native and graduated from NCSU with a Bachelor of Science degree in Forest Management. After graduating, Chad worked as a seasonal employee for the USFS in Bartow WV and worked with some private contractors and forestry consultants. In 2019 Chad began working with the North Carolina Forest Service as an Assistant County Ranger for Warren County and as a Service Forester in June 2020 to October 2023 for several counties in the eastern piedmont area and the coast.

Away from work, Chad enjoys traveling, hiking, being outdoors, and spending time with friends and family. Chad is excited to be here in Chatham county and to start his career with NRCS. Welcome Chad!

If you are interested in learning more about NRCS programs, you may reach Chad Locklear at (919) 533-3374 or chad.locklear@usda.gov



Chad Locklear, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician

District Supervisors:

J. Lynn Mann, Chair, Elected
Johnny Glosson, Vice Chair, Elected
Rich Hayes, Secretary, Elected
Keith Stanley, Treasurer, Appointed
Mike Sturdivant, Board Member, Appointed
Henry Outz, Associate Supervisor

District Staff:

Susannah Goldston, District Director & Environmental Specialist
Joe Trimnal, Soil Conservation Specialist
Andrew Waters, Farmland Preservation Coordinator
Brandy Oldham, District Administrator & Education Coordinator

NRCS Staff:

Chad Locklear, NRCS Soil Conservationist Technician
Olivia Plant, NRCS Supervisory Soil Conservationist

Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our programs and services.

Chatham Soil & Water Conservation District
1192 US 64 W Business
Suite 200
Pittsboro, NC 27312

(919) 542-8240

Visit us on the web at
www.chathamcountync.gov/swcd

Chatham Soil & Water Conservation District

In accordance with Federal Civil Rights law U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Civil Rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior credible activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs).