

Loam on the Range

Chatham Soil & Water Conservation District's Quarterly Newsletter

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Wetlands are Wonderful!

Our annual poster and essay conservation contest theme for 2024-2025 is "Wetlands are Wonderful!" This is your chance to learn more about nature's sponge, the wetland. Wetlands are teeming with life and are incredibly important to our environment. From serving as habitat to many amazing and unique wildlife species to a filter for rain water and runoff. Take time to learn more and then create your poster or write an essay based on what you've learned. Resources can be found on our [Conservation Contest](#) webpage.

Who is eligible to submit a poster entry?

Any public, private, charter or home-schooled Chatham County student in grades 3rd - 5th may participate in the poster contest.

Who is eligible to submit an essay entry?

Any public, private, charter or home-schooled Chatham County student in grades 6-12 may participate in the essay contest. Grades 9-12 will be judged together.

Deadlines:

Entries for the poster and essay contest are due to the District office no later than 5:00 pm on February 24, 2025. We are offering no-contact drop off in our lobby. Our lobby entrance is located on the west side of the Chatham County Agriculture and Conference Center at 1192 US 64 W Business, Suite 200, Pittsboro, NC 27312.

Prizes:

Not only will this contest provide a great way for students to explore an issue on their own, but there are monetary prizes for the winning students! 1st, 2nd & 3rd place winners from each grade level entry will receive a certificate and prize.

The 1st place winner from each grade level in the county contest will be eligible for the Area 3 contest.

Please reach out to Brandy Oldham at (919) 545-8440 or via email at brandy.oldham@chathamcountync.gov for more information.



Chatham Farms Forever Day

The Chatham County Farmland Preservation Program is excited to announce that registration is now open for the first annual “Chatham Farms Forever Day” landowner resource workshop on Thursday, December 5th, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Chatham County Agricultural and Conference Center, 1192 US Hwy 64 W Business, Pittsboro, NC 27312. This day-long, landowner workshop will focus on connecting Chatham County landowners with programs and resources for farmland preservation, conservation management practices, and farmland estate planning.

This event is free and open to all members of the the public. However, space is limited so please register early. Register online: <https://forms.office.com/r/DQu2KX087A> Those unable to register online may contact Andrew Waters at andrew.waters@chathamcountync.gov or 919-545-8447. Free coffee and lunch for all registered attendees is graciously provided by our sponsor, AgSouth Farm Credit.

Speakers will include representatives from the North Carolina State Cooperative Extension, Triangle Land Conservancy, the Chatham County Farmland Preservation Program, The Land-Loss Prevention Project (farmland estate and transition planning), and more. Please join us for this exciting farmland preservation workshop!

Chatham County Farmland Preservation Program Receives Grants from NC Department of Agriculture

The Chatham County Farmland Preservation Program recently received two grants totaling \$303,818 from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation (ADFP) Trust Fund. The grants will be used to support the acquisition of farmland preservation conservation easements and support farmland preservation programming in Chatham County.

“Only counties that provide local funding for farmland preservation were eligible to apply for the Agricultural Growth Zone grants,” noted Andrew Waters, farmland preservation coordinator with Chatham County. “This award is a great example of how local farmland preservation funding helps Chatham County access farmland preservation funding at other levels of government.”

Farmland owners with questions about the Chatham County Farmland Preservation Program may contact Waters at andrew.waters@chathamcountync.gov or 919-545-8447.

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

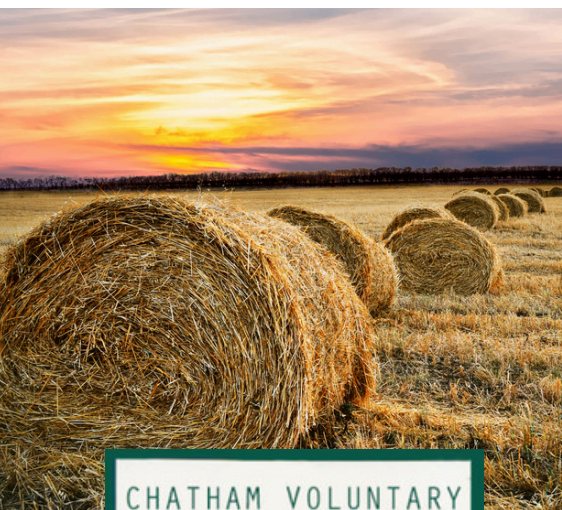
The purpose of the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) Program is to promote agricultural values and the general welfare of Chatham County by increasing the identity of, and pride in, the agricultural community and its way of life. To encourage the economic and financial health of agriculture, horticulture, 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 manage 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 may also apply online: <https://arcg.is/OTGCTv>

Residents interested in finding out more are encouraged to contact Andrew Waters, Farmland Preservation Coordinator, by phone at (919) 545-8447 or by email andrew.waters@chathamcountync.gov.



Education News



Painting with Soils

Education Coordinator Brandy Oldham led a painting with soils lesson at the NCSU Cooperative Extension Chatham County Center's 4-H Summer Camp on June 13, 2024. Ten campers used multiple soils to create a wide variety of paintings. Soil is full of life, one tablespoon of soil contains billions of beneficial bacteria and other important organisms. Campers were able to learn fun facts about soil and talk about their experiences with soil. If your group is interested in painting with soils, please reach out to Brandy Oldham, (919) 545-8440.

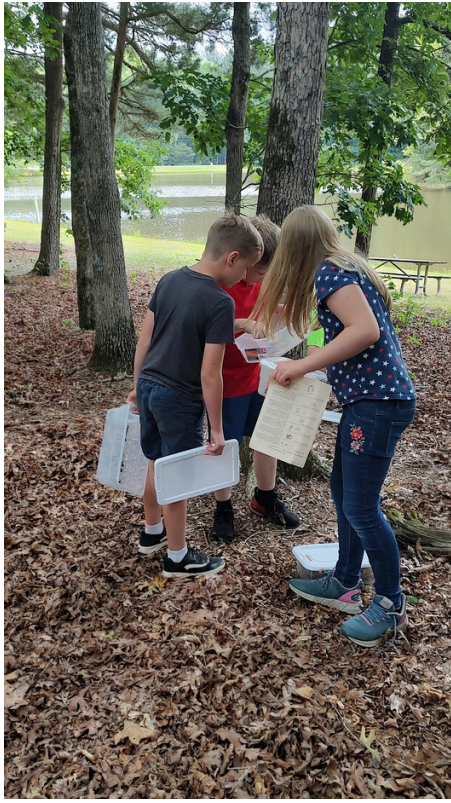


2024 Resource Conservation Workshop

The Resource Conservation Workshop (RCW) is a weeklong workshop for high school students hosted by the Association, the Division, NCSU and the Soil & Water Conservation Society – Hugh Hammond Bennett Chapter. Chatham SWCD was able to sponsor two Chatham County high school students to attend this year.

Here's what Olivia M. said about her experience at the RCW - "RCW was a great learning experience that I enjoyed. I loved getting a taste of what college life might be like. Getting to meet other teens from around the state has made me confident that our environmental resources are in good hands. Learning from actual professionals and networking with them helped me realize that me and others can make a difference in resource conservation."

Interested rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors in 2025 will be eligible to apply. The 2025 RCW application window opens in January 2025. Please contact Brandy Oldham at (919) 545-8440 or brandy.oldham@chathamcountync.gov.



2024 Area 3 Envirothon Winners - Chapel Hill Homeschoolers

Education News (Continued)

2025 Area 3 Envirothon

The Area 3 Envirothon is scheduled for March 4, 2025. Teams will compete at Alamance Community College in Burlington, NC.

The Envirothon program is a hands-on environmental science and natural resources competition for middle school and high school students. Teams consisting of five students complete training and testing in five subject areas: Aquatics, Soils, Wildlife, Forestry and Current Environmental Issues. Having five students allows for each to "specialize" in one particular area of study.

Any public or private school, homeschool group, scout group or 4-H club can participate. The middle school level includes grades 5-8 and high school level includes grades 9-12. Future Farmers of America (FFA) can have 3 teams per school to participate in the Area contest. Each team must have an adult advisor

If you are interested in starting an Envirothon team, please reach out to Brandy Oldham at (919) 545-8440 or via email at brandy.oldham@chathamcountync.gov.



2024-2025 NC Foundation Careers in Conservation Scholarship

Chatham County student Samantha Andrews was awarded the 2024-2025 NC Foundation Careers in Conservation Scholarship. Congratulations Samantha!

The NC Foundation plans to offer the Careers in Conservation Scholarships again for the next school year, 2025-2026. Application period opens in late November.





Agriculture Cost Share Programs



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.

If you are interested in learning more about our cost share programs or if you would like to apply, you may contact Joe Trimnal at joe.trimnal@chathamcountync.gov or (919) 545-8353.

No-till Drill Rentals

Chatham Soil & Water Conservation District has two no-till seed drills available for rental. Please reach out to us for information on rentals and to make a reservation. As the planting season approaches, the calendars will fill up quickly. More information about our no-till drills can be found on our website, www.chathamcountync.gov/swcd

If you are interested in renting one of our no-till drills or learning more about cover crops and how to manage your soil you may contact Joe Trimnal at joe.trimnal@chathamcountync.gov or (919) 545-8353.





District Supervisors:

J. Lynn Mann, Chair
Johnny Glosson, Vice Chair
Rich Hayes, Secretary
Keith Stanley, Treasurer
Mike Sturdivant, Member
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:

Jonathan Hardee, NRCS Soil Conservationist
Olivia Plant, NRCS Supervisory Soil Conservationist

Chatham Soil & Water Conservation District Mission Statement

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

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



Important Dates

October 17 - Area 3 Fall Meeting (Staff Out of Office)
November 11 - Veteran's Day (Office Closed)
November 28-29 - Thanksgiving (Office Closed)
December 5 - Chatham Farms Forever Day
December 24-26 - Christmas (Office Closed)

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).