

Conservation Conversations

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Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District
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May 2015

Buncombe County



Friends of Ag Breakfast

Tuesday, May 12, 2015

At 7:00 a.m.

WNC Ag Center, Virginia Boone Building
1301 Fanning Bridge Road

Come join us for the Buncombe County Friends of Ag Breakfast. Enjoy a complimentary country breakfast. Chat with farm friends old and new.

Guest Speaker: Ila Hatter, Teacher & Lecturer on Wildcrafting

Topic: "The woods and fields are a table always spread" for picnics and profit

**RSVP: MARIA.WISE@BUNCOMBECOUNTY.ORG
OR CALL (828)250-4794
MEGHAN_BAKER@NCSU.EDU OR CALL (828)250-4883**

BUNCOMBE ENVIROTHON TEAMS QUALIFY FOR NC ENVIROTHON



Buncombe County SWCD sponsored five teams that competed in the Area 1 Envirothon. The Envirothon is an annual competition in which teams compete for recognition and scholarships by demonstrating their

knowledge of environmental science and natural resource management. The teams, each consisting of five students from participating schools, home study groups and environmental clubs, exercise their training and problem-solving skills in a competition centered on five testing categories: soils/land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife and current environmental issues. The Area 1 Envirothon was held in Waynesville, NC on March 13th. Buncombe County had 1 Home School High School Team, 1 Home School Middle School Team, and TC Roberson High School had 3 Teams. Buncombe had 2 Teams qualify for the State Envirothon at Cedar Park on April 24 – 25, 2015. The Green Mountain Boys Middle School Team qualified with a 6th place finish out of 35. The Green Mountain Boys High School Team qualified with a 3rd place finish out of 35.

Congratulations Green Mountain Boys and Good Luck at the State Envirothon.



DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

The Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District's mission is to conserve the soil, water, and related natural resources of Buncombe County by providing education, information, technical assistance, and economic incentives to county citizens and by establishing new programs in concert with other appropriate agencies and organizations to meet changing needs.

District Equipment For Rent

Seed Drill- The Truax FlexII seed drill features double disc furrow openers and depth bands to optimize seed placement and seed to soil contact. It has multiple seed boxes allowing it to seed native fluffy seeds, cool season species, small grains, legumes, and wildflowers. Planting can be accomplished as no-till and inter-seeding in most conditions. Seed drill provided through a grant from the N. C. Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation.



Weed Wiper- The weed wiper can be used to control invasive weeds and small brushy growth in hay and pasture fields, resulting in better stands of grass and higher

productivity. The wiper can be towed to the farm using a pickup or SUV then attached to a tractor or ATV for use in the field. The wiper is 12 feet wide.

Post Driver- The post driver can be used to improve existing fencing, expand pastures, and add cross fencing for rotations and will reduce labor costs and improve profitability. The unit is capable of driving up to eight inch diameter posts and will have a pilot auger to use in adverse ground conditions.



The weed wiper and post driver were provided through a TVA Ag. & Forestry Fund grant.

Contact the District office for more information.

GOOD LUCK KARA CASSELS

Congratulations to Kara Cassels on her selection as the new Area Resource Conservationist in the Waynesville Area Office. Kara will begin her duties in Waynesville on May 18, 2015. Kara has most recently served as the District Conservationist serving the Buncombe and



McDowell SWCD's from the Asheville Service Center and prior to that she spent several years serving as the District Conservationist serving Haywood and Madison SWCD's.

SPRING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FIELD DAYS

Despite the rainy April days Buncombe SWCD successfully hosted Environmental Education Field Days. On April 29th and 30th over 250 students came out on each day to learn more about the environment.



Buncombe SWCD sponsors Environmental Education Field Days in the spring and the fall. Students travel to eight different environmental stations where there is a resource specialist there to teach them about an environmental aspect. The groups are at each station for about twenty minutes where presenters talk to them and include an activity.

Buncombe SWCD coordinates the topics of each station



to meet the NC standard course of study for fifth graders. We would like to thank all those that presented and assisted to help make this another great experience for

kids to learn. A special thanks to the **WNC Ag Center** for providing us with a location and helping with the preparation of the field days.



URBAN CONSERVATION

While Buncombe County is predominantly rural with considerable acreages of agricultural and forested land,



over seventy-five percent of the people in the county live in an urban environment. And this percentage will continue to increase as the population of

the county grows in the future. Intermingled with residential sites are all the land uses necessary to an urban area such as shops, streets, factories, schools, and others. These areas can present conservation challenges and have a definite impact on area streams, lakes and rivers. Stormwater runoff is greater in urban areas due to the large amounts of impervious surfaces, and this runoff can be difficult to control as it enters watercourses. This runoff can contain harmful pollutants that degrade water quality, and the increased runoff can cause erosion and sedimentation problems as stream channels that previously carried less runoff now have to adjust to great volumes and velocities.

The Buncombe SWCD has a program designed to provide both technical and financial assistance for issues related to stormwater runoff and other urban conservation issues.

The Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP) pays seventy-five percent of the costs of installing 14 best management practices that address soil erosion, detain/convey stormwater runoff, and repair damage to watercourses. Design assistance is provided at no charge for those participating in the program. The program is available to individual landowners, government entities, schools, and other private and public land owners. Sign up for the program anytime between July 1 and July 31, 2015. For more information, call the Buncombe SWCD office.

BUNCOMBE COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Are you interested in conserving your natural resources and the improving management of your farm?

If you are interested, please contact District Conservationist Kara Cassels about working with NRCS. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has a mission of "Helping People Help the Land;" through this mission NRCS offers free technical service, conservation planning and advice to landowners. Therefore, through working with NRCS you have the opportunity to help your land for the future generations.

Within the 2015 fiscal year, so far Buncombe County has been allocated \$497,473 dollars for various projects. These projects include rebuilding stream banks and stream beds through the WNC stream initiative, various pasture projects like fencing cattle out of streams and installing watering tanks, prescribed grazing systems, and projects funding cover crop and crop rotation. All of the funding for 2015 has not been allocated yet, therefore there may be more funding to come for other projects coming soon. Through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) we can help you apply for cost-share funding for a variety of conservation projects. Some of the conservation projects include seasonal high tunnels, cover crop, crop rotation, waste storage facility, agrichemical mixing facility, livestock fencing, prescribed grazing, and pollinator buffers. We also work with forestry practices including but not limited to brush management, forest stand improvement, prescribed burning, and restoration and management of rare and declining habitats. This is just a sampling of what we work with, so please contact us if any of these strike your interest.

If you are interested in applying or requesting information to get started with conservation planning, please contact Kara Cassels, District Conservationist at 828-250-4785 or at kara.cassels@nc.usda.gov.



District Board Members

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MARIA WISE	Soil Conservationist/Farmland Pres.
KARA CASSELS	NRCS District Conservationist
ARIEL DIXON	Farm Bill Program Assistant, NRCS

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SPECIAL THANKS!

Buncombe SWCD would like to recognize **BOJANGLES, DUNKIN DONUTS, and McDONALD'S** for their generous donations and support of the 2015 NC Area 1 Envirothon.

NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURE COST SHARE FUNDS ANNUAL SIGN-UP!

Buncombe Soil and Water Conservation District will be receiving its annual cost share allocation in August of this year. These funds are available to help farmers install conservation practices that decrease the amount of sediment, nitrogen, phosphorus, chemicals and other pollutants in the surface and ground waters of the state.

The District expects to receive approximately \$70,000.00 for program year 2016, which this time begins in August 2015. **To be eligible for fund, you must sign up between July 1 and July 31, 2015.** Conservation practices that can be cost-shared include: animal waste management systems, cropland conversion to grass, livestock watering tanks (with stream protection measures), conservation tillage, filter strips, stream bank stabilization, critical area treatment or establishment of vegetation on bare areas, sod-based rotations, riparian buffers, agrichemical handling facilities, and several others.

If you want more information or wish to apply for funds, call the District office at **250-4785. Please call before the deadline.** It only takes a few minutes to complete the application form. Forms can be mailed to you and accepted for consideration if they are received back in our office by **July 31, 2015.**

