

# Conservation Conversations

Published By

**Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District**  
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November 2017



**Tuesday, November 14, 2017 at 7 am**

**Topic: *Planning for the Future of your Farm***

**Speakers: Trent & Associates and N. C. Farm Bureau**

**Location: WNC Ag Center Virginia Boone Building (Gate 5)**

Join us at the Friends of Ag Breakfast for a complimentary local food breakfast featuring foods from Buncombe County Farms. We will have an informative program on Estate Planning for farmers. Estate plans, wealth investment, land transfers, wills - many of us know these tools are critically important yet we do not always have the information we need to

best utilize them. Learn the basics of organizing estate plans, important terms and tools, and how to protect your assets and heirs.

If you want more information about the event please contact Ariel Zijp at: [ariel.zijp@buncombecounty.org](mailto:ariel.zijp@buncombecounty.org) or at 828-250-4794.

## **CHRISTMAS TREE SALE!!**

The Buncombe SWCD will be conducting its annual Christmas Tree sale the week after

Thanksgiving this year. **OUR TREES ARE 6 TO 7 FOOT #1 FRASER FIR**, cut fresh a day before the sale and brought straight from the tree farm to our office so they are very fresh and will hold their needles well. Fraser Firs have been judged the Nation's best over a dozen times (more than any other species) and are the most popular Christmas trees in America.



We will be reserving trees starting immediately and will be taking reservations up until November 28th. The process is very simple and hassle free. Just call us and order your tree, send us your

### **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.

payment and pick up your tree on the days of the sale. We will have staff on hand to load your tree on as well.

The sale dates and times:

**Wednesday, November 29th** 12 to 6 p.m.

**Thursday, November 30th** 10 to 6 p.m.

**Friday, December 1st** 10 to 6 p.m.

In addition to pre-ordered trees, we will have some extra trees for sale on a first-come-first-served basis. As an extra bonus, if you are a Buncombe County department and order more than 5 trees, we will deliver them to your office and supply twine to tie it on your car if you need it! Profits from the Christmas Tree sale go to support environmental education programs in Buncombe County.

## DISTRICT HOSTS THREE FALL FIELD DAYS

The Buncombe SWCD held two Environmental Education Field Days at Valley Springs Middle School on September 26th and 28th, 2017. Approximately 600 students visited nine stations at Valley Springs where they learned about elk, the smoky mountains, wildlife, stream ecology, reptile ecology, forestry, waste reduction, the water cycle, soils, and the stream table. The District conducted one field day at Cane Creek Middle School on September 27th for approximately 300 students with the same nine stations and presenters.



The District changed its field day format in 2016, and started doing their spring and fall field days on site at the schools. This format has worked very well, and eliminated many of the logistic challenges of getting students to an off-site location.

**Special thanks to our presenters!:** Alice Ahlfield and Lindsay Holton, Great Smoky Mountains National Park; Susan Fay, Holmes State Park; Amy Kinsella, Holmes State Park; Robert Brown, Riverlink; Candace Thomson, Friends of WNC Nature Center; Christine Brown, Asheville GreenWorks; Keisha Lipe, City



of Asheville Water Resources; Creeden Kowal, Swain SWCD, and Dalton Buchanan, NC Division of Soil and Water Conservation. Great Job!!!

## STORMWATER PROJECT AT RAINBOW COMMUNITY SCHOOL

The Buncombe SWCD worked closely with Rainbow Community School to install a storm water wetland/ rain garden at their school on Haywood Road. A portion of the project was funded through the Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP). Additional funding was provided the N. C. Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation.



Runoff from parking lots and roofs of adjacent properties was causing erosion and flooding problems at the school, so SWCD staff worked with school Principal Renee Owen and her staff to plan the system which consists of a rip-rap inlet, three deep pools, shallow water areas, and shallow land areas.



The structure captures excess storm water runoff and the plants help absorb pollutants in the runoff.

Overflow from the wetland was routed in such a manner that runoff no longer flows

across the recreation field and adjacent areas. Division of Soil and Water Conservation engineer Jeff Young was the project designer, and Soil Scientist Dalton Buchanan assisted with soil analysis on the project. Lillian Lovingood, Clean Communities Coordinator with Asheville GreenWorks brought in a team of volunteers to help with the planting and spreading of the mulch. Phase II construction of a new roofed study area with benches and storage is currently underway at the site and is being done by Max Mraz with Rainbow Community School.



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## **BC FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM UPDATE:**

The farmland preservation program encourages the voluntary preservation and protection of farmland from non-farm development. This is in recognition of the importance of agriculture to the economic and social life of North Carolina. The Voluntary Ag District (VAD) and Enhanced Voluntary Ag District (EVAD) are two important voluntary programs that Buncombe County Farmland Preservation offers.



### **Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD)**

Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VADs) recognize the importance of agriculture to the wellbeing of North Carolina by encouraging voluntary preservation and protection of farmland from non-farm development. Enhanced Voluntary Ag District (EVAD) has a stricter development agreement. To be eligible, farmland, forestland and horticultural lands must meet the follow requirements: the Land is subject to a conservation agreement that prohibits non-farm use from development for 10 years. The agreement can be revoked by the landowner at any time with a short period of 30 day notice.

#### **VAD Eligibility:**

- Land must be part of PUV tax program or be determined as agricultural use.
- Land must be managed according to USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service guidelines with respect to highly erodible land.

#### **VAD Benefits:**

- Increased protection from nuisance suits

- Water and sewer assessments may be waiver/suspended.
- Signage to publicize land's enrollment in program

### **Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD)**

The requirements to be a part of EVAD are the same as the VAD requirements, but the land is subject to conservation agreement that prohibits non-farm use for development for 10 years (this agreement cannot be revoked during the time of the agreement).

#### **EVAD Eligibility:**

- EVAD has the same eligibility requirements as VAD.

#### **EVAD Benefits:**

- Landowners are eligible to receive higher percentage of cost share under Ag-cost share program (as high as 90 percent)
- Utility assessments may be suspended or waived if land is in EVAD.

**If you are interested in joining some of these programs, please contact Ariel Zijp at 828-250-4794 or by email [ariel.zijp@buncombecounty.org](mailto:ariel.zijp@buncombecounty.org)**

## **LAND JUDGING**

Owen High School FFA Land Judging Team competed in the Swain County Land Judging competition on September 20 at Darnell Farms in Bryson City, NC.



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#### **District Board Members**

|                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
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| ELISE ISRAEL     | Vice-Chair |
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| WILLIAM HAMILTON | Treasurer  |
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#### **District and NRCS Staff**

|  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| GARY HIGGINS                             | District Director                   |
| TAIRA LANCE                              | Environmental Educator              |
| ANTHONY DOWDLE                           | NCACSP Soil Conservationist         |
| ARIEL ZIJP                               | Soil Conservationist/Farmland Pres. |
| JESSICA HUGHES                           | Office Assistant                    |
| JOHN OTTINGER, EMILY POLMAN, JOHN GEORGE | NRCS Soil Conservationists          |

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49 Mount Carmel Road, Suite 101  
Asheville, NC 28806

Land judging consists of evaluating certain properties of a soil to determine the land classification and translating these evaluations into recommendations for land use.



Owen High FFA placed 2nd in the Senior Division. Wishing them luck as they travel to Waynesville to compete in the NC Regional Land Judging Competition.

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## ENVIROTHON 2017/2018



Envirothon Practice has begun. Buncombe County has 21 teams gearing up for the Area Envirothon which is scheduled for March 23, 2018 at the Mountain Research Station in Waynesville, NC. For more information or interest in starting a Team call Taira Lance @ (828) 250-4787.



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