



# *Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District*

2014

## *Annual Report*



*Preserving the natural and cultural heritage of Buncombe*

We at the Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District take pride in presenting our 2014 Annual Report. The SWCD works in partnership with local, state, and federal governments to provide soil and water conservation services to the citizens of Buncombe County. These services include environmental education, cost-sharing of conservation projects, and conservation technical assistance and are delivered to county citizens through various programs. The Board of Supervisors and staff of the Buncombe SWCD thank the N. C. Department of Agriculture, the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service; the N. C. Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts; the N. C. Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation; and the National Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts for their support of our conservation programs. The SWCD extends a special thanks to the Buncombe County Commissioners, the Buncombe County Manager and Assistant County Managers; and all County departments for their financial and administrative support during FY14.

Board of Supervisors, Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation

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*Soil and Water*

*—Yours for Life*

### **Buncombe SWCD Mission**

The Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation Districts' 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.

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## NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL COST SHARE PROGRAM

### District Supervisors

James Coman, *Chair*  
Chase Hubbard, *Vice-Chair*  
Jeff Foster, *Secretary*  
Elise Israel, *Treasurer*  
David Snelson, *Member*

### Associate Supervisors

Gary Roberts  
Lynn Bonham

### District Staff

Gary Higgins  
*District Director*  
Taira Lance  
*Administrative Assistant*  
Anthony Dowdle  
*Soil Conservationist/NCACSP*  
Renee Ray  
*Soil Conservationist/NCACSP & Education Coordinator*  
Maria Wise  
*Soil Conservationist & Farmland Preservation*

### NRCS Staff

Kara Cassels  
*District Conservationist*  
Ariel Dixon  
*ATAC Farm Bill Program Assistant*



The North Carolina Agriculture Cost Share Program reimburses farmers for seventy-five percent of the cost of installing measures that improve off-site water quality. These cost-shared measures or “best management practices” must meet current USDA-NRCS standards and are designed by District and NRCS personnel. District and NRCS staffs also provide assistance with construction checks, and final checks when the projects are complete. During the FY08 fiscal year, District staff **developed 9 contracts totaling \$77,960**. When installed, with the landowner’s twenty-five percent contribution, a total of **\$103,947 worth of best management practices** will be “on the ground” and protecting water quality.

The District worked with **9 landowners** to complete BMPs from **9 contracts**. The total cost-share on these projects was **\$ 72,912**. Landowner contributions totaled **\$24,304**, bringing the total value of BMPs installed **\$97,216**. Installed BMPs are listed below.



<u>Practice</u>		<u>Planned</u>	<u>In-stalled</u>
Cropland Conversion		37 ac.	0 ac.
Fencing for Livestock Exclusion		8748 l. ft.	7586 l.ft.
Livestock Watering Tanks		10	12
Livestock Stream Crossings		0	1
Spring Developments		1	0
Wells for Livestock Water		0	3

### 2014 ANNUAL SPOT CHECK

The District is required to conduct an annual spot check of 5% of all active NCASCP contracts which is done by staff and members of the Board of Supervisors. The goal of the spot check is to determine whether cost-shared BMPs are being maintained for their intended purpose. This year’s spot check was conducted in May of 2014 on six farms in the county. All spot-checked items were in good condition and functioning as they were intended.



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## **ECOSYSTEM ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM SUPPORT**

The Buncombe SWCD provides assistance to the N. C. Ecosystem Enhancement Program with the design and installation of agricultural best management practices where the EEP program is installing a stream protection system. These projects typically involve watering tanks, stock trails, heavy use area protection, and water pipeline.

The SWCD assisted with two EEP projects in the county in FY14, providing a cost share of \$50,033.



## **NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL WATER RESOURCES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

### **2014 AgWRAP Projects**

The Agricultural Water Resource Assistance Program was established in 2010 to:

- Identify opportunities to increase water use efficiency, availability and storage;
- Implement best management practices (BMPs) to conserve and protect water resources;
- Increase water use efficiency;
- Increase water storage and availability for agricultural purposes.

The District completed one project funded by the N. C. Agricultural Water Resources Assistance Program (AgWRAP) during FY14 and it was for a 445 foot well with a cost share of \$6,602. The District completed three contracts for pond repair and retrofit under the AgWRAP program that will be installed in the next three years. The available cost share for these contracts totals \$67,497 or \$22,499 per contract.





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**FEDERAL PROGRAMS**  
**USDA—NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE**

<b><u>Program</u></b>	<b><u>Contracts</u></b>	<b><u>Amount</u></b>
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	26	\$ 522,344
Conservation Stewardship Program	10	\$ 22,977
Conservation Planning		1340 acres

**Conservation Applied**

Cropland	131 acres
Water Quality	842 acres
Grazing Land	650 acres
Wildlife Habitat	75 acres
Forestland	1,145 acres



**COMMUNITY CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CCAP)**

The total CCAP allocation for the 2014 fiscal year was **\$5,051** and the District planned and completed one contract for a stormwater wetland at Pisgah Elementary School. The wetland is also used as an outdoor education learning center (See Environmental Education for more information). Three other projects were installed from contracts written in previous years for a total of **\$2,578 in cost share.**





## **WASTE POND CLOSURE PROJECT**

With the help of a grant from the N. C. Foundation of Soil and Water Conservation, the SWCD provided engineering plans and construction oversight to close two waste storage ponds in the Sandy Mush area. The ponds were located adjacent to one another and held dairy slurry waste and dairy liquid waste. The dairy had ceased operation, but both ponds still held waste which was land applied according to a waste utilization plan developed to current Natural Resource Conservation Service standards. Division of Soil and Water Conservation engineer Jeff Young developed the plans with assistance from surveyor Shane Wyatt and soil scientist William Miller. District staff assisted with construction inspection.



## **87 RIDERS PARTICIPATE IN CYCLE TO FARM IN SANDY MUSH**



The Sandy Mush Cycle to Farm was held on September 22, 2013 with 87 riders participating. The event was held to raise awareness of farmland preservation and was coordinated by Velo Girl Rides and co-sponsored by the Buncombe SWCD.

The 56 mile ride began and ended at Addison Farms Vineyard with stops along the way at Gaining Ground Farm, Beulah Farm, Sandy Hollars Farm, and Reeves Home Place. An optional 10 mile extension took riders to the top of Doggett Mountain and back.

The riders wound their way along beautiful country roads through Turkey Creek, Newfound, across Early's Mountain, and into Big and Little Sandy Mush between stops at the four farms. At each farm, riders sampled locally grown food and made purchases that were delivered to the start/finish point.





## 2014 TREE SEEDLING SALE

The annual seedling sale was held on February 27 thru March 1, 2014 at Jesse Israel and Sons Nursery at the WNC Farmers Market. The District sold 4,850 hardwood seedlings and 2,175 white pine seedlings. Sales were lower than expected, so 350 hardwoods and 325 white pine seedlings were donated to local agencies. Profits from sale came to \$962.50.

Species	Purchased	Cost	Ordered Pre-sale	Sold At Sale	Donated	
Black Cherry	200	\$100.00	74	126		
Black Walnut	200	\$100.00	78	122		
Butternut	200	\$100.00	102	98		
Crabapple	300	\$150.00	135	165		
Crape Myrtle	400	\$200.00	225	175		
Eastern Redbud	1000	\$500.00	267	733	250	250
Flowering Dogwood	1000	\$500.00	443	557		
Northern Red Oak	300	\$150.00	17	283	75	75
Persimmon	600	\$300.00	238	362	25	25
River Birch	500	\$250.00	364	136		
Sycamore	200	\$100.00	100	100		
White Oak	300	\$150.00	103	197		
<b>Hardwood Subtotal</b>	<b>5200</b>	<b>\$2,600.00</b>	<b>2146</b>	<b>3054</b>	<b>5200</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>White Pine</b>	<b>2500</b>	<b>\$240.00</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>1673</b>	<b>2175</b>	<b>325</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7700</b>	<b>\$2,840.00</b>	<b>2648</b>	<b>4727</b>	<b>7375</b>	<b>675</b>



## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Most SWCD programs are targeted towards private landowners and managers and our programs are voluntary, so our education and outreach programs are essential to getting conservation on the ground. Below is a summary of some of the educational programs the Buncombe SWCD conducted in FY14:

<u>Activity</u>	<u># Completed</u>	<u># Reached</u>
Environmental Education	2	400
Field Days		
Poster and Essay Contest	25	300
Classroom lessons	25	625
Career Day	1	100
WNC Regional State Fair	1	19,580
Quarterly Newsletter (mailed)	4	3,760
Quarterly Newsletter (emailed)	4	1,600
Web site (estimated)	1	18,000
BCTV programs (estimated)	2	25,000
Sponsor Envirothon Teams	1	5
Sponsor Students - RCW	2	2
Assist With Area 1 Envirothon	1	220
Assist With NC Envirothon	1	400
Host Project Food Land and People	2	25
Host POW/WOW for Educators	2	70





## Outdoor Environmental Learning Center & CCAP Project at Pisgah Elementary



Buncombe SWCD recently completed a constructed wetland at Pisgah Elementary. Funds were combined from our Community Conservation Assistance Program and a grant from the NC Foundation for Soil & Water. The grant is provided to install outdoor environmental learning centers at schools or other places that have public access. With the help of several volunteers, PTO, students, Buncombe SWCD, and donations we were able to provide a great outdoor learning opportunity for Pisgah Elementary. The lead teacher for this project has been Leslie

Cox who has done an outstanding job keeping everything coordinated.

The project began when Renee Ray the Education Coordinator at BCSWCD was working with the school on poster contest presentations. The school had an area that stayed wet and several classes enjoyed catching tad poles from it. The school wanted to enhance this area and make it more usable. The CCAP program is designed to improve water quality in urban environments. This wetland is capturing and treating stormwater runoff. Sources of runoff come from the school's roof, parking lot, and the highway. This wetland is intercepting water from 27,200 square feet of impervious surfaces. This wetland treats an estimated 16,830 gallons of water from the first 1 inch of rainfall by slowing the water and allowing some of it to pool.



This wetland also creates a new aquatic habitat on the school grounds providing an outdoor environmental learning center for students to participate in aquatic research. Benches, signage, handicap access, wildlife track pad, bird houses & feeders, and some plants were all provided through grant from NC Foundation for Soil & Water with its partnership in Wal-Mart.





## Local Students Attend Resource Conservation Workshop (RCW) at NC State University

Each year Buncombe Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) sponsors 2 students to spend a week learning about conservation at NC State University. This workshop offers lectures along with hands-on and outdoor activities related to soil, aquatics, forestry, wildlife, and current environmental issues. Buncombe SWCD received many applications and students were interviewed before being selected to attend RCW.

The students chosen are both rising seniors at Buncombe County High Schools. Conner White was selected from North Buncombe High School. Conner participates in FFA, Venture Crew, and has interest in becoming a Field Biologist or a Conservation Biologist. Conner did a great job representing Buncombe County at RCW. John Nix was also selected to attend RCW. John is a rising senior at Owen High School. He participates in FFA and was on the National Land Judging Team. John aspires to have a career in agriculture. John did a great job representing Buncombe County and winning the highest award offered at RCW. He was chosen to receive the Grady Lane Scholarship and receive \$100 cash. The Grady Lane award is the grand prize of the RCW with a \$500 scholarship. Each counselor selects a student who is then interviewed by a panel and a winner is selected. Selected criteria include academic scores, counselor evaluations, financial need, attitude and interview results. Thank you to Conner White and John Nix for doing such a great job representing Buncombe County.



## **Friends of Agriculture Breakfast 2014**

This past year the District, in cooperation with the N. C. Cooperative Extension Service, coordinated quarterly “Friends of Agriculture” breakfasts at the WNC Agricultural Center. Sponsors of the breakfasts included N. C. Farm Bureau, Buncombe County, the American Farmland Trust, and Carolina Farm Credit. Many food items were donated by local farms and food suppliers. The events were well attended and guests enjoyed a freshly cooked country breakfast as they heard from speakers from the agricultural community.



## 2014 Farm Conservation Family of the Year



Lynn Brown

*Thanks  
to our  
Sponsors!*





## CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Maria Wise worked with several conservation easements during the year, one of which was a 133 acre easement donation on the Kirstein farm in Black Mountain which closed in August 2013. This was accomplished with \$50,000 in transaction costs covered by Buncombe County. The easement is valued at \$266,000.

### EVAD/VAD

The Buncombe SWCD assists the Agricultural Advisory Board with administration of the county's Voluntary Agricultural Districts program and the Enhanced C program.

The Ag Advisory Board voted to include the **Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD)** as a Farmland Preservation tool that landowners can use. This program offers all the same incentives that the Voluntary Ag District does, but with the more restrictive 10 year non-revocable agreement not to develop, the landowners qualify for 90% cost-share for Soil and Water Conservation District programs. There are **8 farms** in the program totaling **758 acres**.

During the FY2014 there were **361 farms** in the **Voluntary Agricultural Districts** program totaling **26,676.61 acres**.

## FARMLAND PRESERVATION





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## Non-Project Client Services

Citizens of Buncombe County often access the technical expertise of the District and NRCS staff through various types of assistance that do not reach project status. In the 2014 fiscal year, the District and NRCS staffs estimate they provided non-project client services to **425 Buncombe County Citizens**. Staff time spent on these services can range from a five-minute phone conversation to several hours spent on a trip to a client's site and follow-up assistance.

### Erosion Control and Stormwater Plan Reviews

The Erosion Control Ordinances of both Buncombe County and the City of Asheville require that erosion control plans submitted to them be reviewed by the Soil and Water Conservation District. The District staff makes a site visit to each project, and does assessments of the soil conditions and reviews the seeding specifications. A written reply is sent to the either the city or the County for each plan received by the District office. The review process by the District averages about two and one-half hours for each plan. The District also reviews stormwater plans submitted by Buncombe county.

Last year the District reviewed **27 erosion control plans** and **32 stormwater plans** for the County and **22 erosion control plans** for the City of Asheville.

### FY14 Equipment Rentals

The Buncombe SWCD has three pieces of agricultural equipment that is available to rent to local farmers. The Truax Flex II seed drill was given to the District by the N. C. Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation in 2008 and the GrassWorks weed wiper and Shaver post driver were acquired through a grant from the TVA Agriculture and Forestry Funds, administered by WNC Communities.



During FY14 the seed drill rented **19 times** and was used to seed **258 acres** and the weed wiper rented **4 times** and was used to wipe **31 acres**. No rentals of the post driver occurred in this fiscal year.





# Acknowledgements

## Special Thanks to all our CONSERVATION PARTNERS!



### Buncombe County Government

County Commissioners  
County Manager  
Assistant County Managers  
Finance Department  
Planning Department  
Environmental Health  
County Attorney



N. C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
Division of Soil and Water Conservation



North Carolina Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts



North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation



USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service



National Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts