

Dirt Box Chatter

In This Issue

Your District	Pg. 1
Soil Sampling	Pg. 1-2
No-Till Drill and Fall Planting	Pg. 2
Newest Employee	Pg. 3
Resource Conservation Workshop	Pg. 3
NCF-Envirothon	Pg. 4-5
Education Program	Pg. 5-6
Upcoming Events	Pg. 6

District Board of Supervisors

Gwen T. Minton – Chair
Dr. Bill H. Davis, Jr. – Vice-Chair
Claude Shew, Jr. – Sec./Treas.
Brian Parker – Member
Charlie Sink – Member

District Staff

Rob C. Baldwin – Director
Barry Greer – Conservationist
Julia Hardy – Education Specialist
Kayla Mounce – Conservationist/Grants Admin.
BJ Cook – Watershed Coordinator
Daron Brown – Forestry Coordinator

Contact Us

Wilkes Soil & Water Conservation District
416 Executive Dr., Ste. A
Wilkesboro, NC 28697
(336) 838-3622 ext. 3

Your District

Your district board of supervisors holds a public board meeting on the 2nd Monday of each month in office at 12:30pm, this meeting is open to the public.

Soil Sampling

Soil sampling and testing can show you the plant available nutrients and other soil chemical factors important for production. Nutrient levels in soil vary from year to year, so it is important to perform soil sampling and testing prior to planting any new crop. Below are the steps to taking a soil sample.

Step 1: Obtain soil sample boxes and information sheet from Wilkes Soil and Water Conservation District office. Choose a day when the soil is not frozen or too wet, since under these conditions, soil will not mix thoroughly. The soil should be in a loose condition and break apart easily.

Step 2: Clean up the area to be sampled. Remove roots, rocks, pieces of wood, glass, wire, excess organic matter, and other foreign material. Avoid taking soil from wet spots, washed out areas, ditches, tree stump holes, fertilizer bands, or other abnormal spots within the sampling area.

Step 3: Obtain a clean plastic bucket with a clean spade, shovel, or probe for collecting the individual soil cores that will make up the sample. DO NOT expose the soil sample to galvanized containers, dirty tools, fertilizer, or chemicals that may contaminate it.

Soil Sampling Continued...

Step 4: Use the spade or sampling tool to get a soil core or slice (about a handful) from each of 8 to 10 different places scattered over the sampling area. (For lawns and gardens approximately an acre in size, 15 to 20 cores would be better). Sample established lawns to a depth of about 4 inches; otherwise, sample to about 6 inches or plow depth. Be sure that each soil core uniformly represents (top, middle and bottom to the specified depth) the spot where it is taken.

Step 5: Put each soil core into a clean, plastic bucket. After sampling, stir up the cores and mix them thoroughly to obtain a good soil sample, representative of the sampling area. Fill Soil sample box with the mixed soil and discard extra soil.

Step 6: Write your name, address, and sample number on the box. An information sheet that comes with the boxes must also be filled out and mailed to the Soil Testing Lab. Send to: Agronomic Division, NC Department of Agriculture, 4300 Reedy Creek Road, Raleigh, NC 27607-6465

Step 7: You should receive your test report within three to four weeks. If you need assistance with interpretation of the results, you may call (336) 838-3622 ext. 3, or come visit our office located at 416 Executive Drive, Wilkesboro, NC 28697

April to Thanksgiving Soil Sample processing is Free! December-March \$4/sample. Visit our office to pick-up your boxes and forms for sampling.

No-Till Drill Benefits and Fall Planting

The Wilkes Soil & Water Conservation District now has a Truax FlexII-88 and a Haybuster 77c no-till drill! These drills have three seed boxes to allow planting of cool season grasses and small grains, fluffier seed such as warm season grasses, or even smaller seed such as legumes (works great with clover).

No-till drills are an essential tool for anyone looking to improve their soils, save money, and operate their farm in an environmentally friendly manner. Reduced compaction, reduced soil erosion, increased organic matter, improved soil structure and better infiltration are just a few of the positive attributes associated with no-till. No-till drills also increase efficiency and reduce fuel quantity, labor and machinery costs. It is that time of year to be start planting fescue and orchard grass as well as cool season annuals for pasture systems.

The Truax FlexII-88 has a seeding width of 5.3 feet and can be pulled with a 40hp tractor, so it is ideal for those smaller areas! The Haybuster 77c has a seeding width of 7 feet and only need a 35hp tractor, which is great for your larger areas! Both no-till drills are a great tool for managing forages such as fescue, orchard grasses, and grass-clover mixes.

Fall is a good time to seed for vigor and stand improvement. The drill provides a means for better seeding precision and reduces volume of seed needed.

Fall is a good time to seed for vigor and stand improvement, as well as food plots for wildlife and deer. The drill provides a means for better seeding precision and reduces volume of seed needed.

The drills are available for rent at a rate of \$10 per acre, with a \$75 minimum. If you would like more information, or to schedule a rental, please contact our office.

Our Newest Employee

Exciting news at the Wilkes Soil and Water Conservation District. Kayla Mounce joined our team as of July 1st, 2019. Kayla is a Wilkes County native. She participated in Envirothon, Land Judging, FFA, Speech Contest, Poster Contest and many other conservation activities. She recently graduated from ASU with a degree in Sustainable Agriculture and NC State with a Certificate in Soil Science. She will soon have her Master's Degree in Geographic Information Systems from ASU, and is well on her way to procuring her Environmental Educators Certification. She worked three summers with NRCS in Wilkes, Watauga, and Wayne Districts. She will be taking the position of Resource Conservationist-Grants Administrator. She will have a myriad of duties with the district including Mapping, BMP Construction Certification, Contracting, Waste Management Certification, Drone Surveying. Kayla will also be assisting with our environmental education programs as well as finding and applying for grant monies for conservation projects within the district. We are fortunate to have her, and we know you will enjoy making her acquaintance.



Resource Conservation Workshop

NC high school students participated in the 56th annual Resource Conservation Workshop June 23-28, 2019 at North Carolina State University in Wake County. Soil and Water Conservation District boards across the state chose students to participate in the workshop based on demonstrated conservation interests.

Four days of resource topics were taught by an innumerable number of resource professionals and NC State University staff. Students also received information and insight into careers in natural resource management throughout the week. The fifth day culminated the classroom and field sessions where a written exam was conducted, and an Awards Luncheon was held before students departed for home.

Wilkes Soil and Water Conservation District selected and sponsored local student Katie Beard (pictured at right) to attend the workshop. Katie, the daughter of Jeff and Lisa Beard, and is a rising sophomore at Wilkes Central High School.



The Resource Conservation Workshop is hosted by the NC Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in conjunction with the NC Division of Soil and Water Conservation, NC State University Soil Science Department, and the Soil and Water Conservation Society Hugh Hammond Bennett Chapter.

Current freshmen, sophomores or juniors who are interested in attending the 2020 Resource Conservation Workshop may contact the Wilkes Soil and Water Conservation District.

2019 National Conservation Envirothon



On July 28-August 2, 2019, the North Carolina Association of Soil and Water Conservation District's Envirothon Committee played host to the 2019 National Conservation Envirothon (NCF)-Envirothon on the campus of North Carolina State University. The event is an international competition challenging students to showcase their knowledge of environmental and natural resources management and draws the top high school teams from throughout the United States, Canada, and China. Teams are challenged with written tests and also provided a natural resources related problem in which they have to formulate a solution based on the competition's theme. The 2019 theme representative of North Carolina's agricultural diversity was "Agriculture and the Environment: Knowledge and Technology to Feed the World."

The 2019 competition consisted of 53 teams, with the team from Jamestown High School of Williamsburg, Virginia taking top honors. North Carolina's team consisting of High Rock Home School students from Davidson County placed second.

The top eight teams in this year's competition were awarded with both monetary scholarships and prizes supported by multiple sponsors. Smithfield Foods, Inc. provided \$30,000 that was awarded among the first, second, and third place teams, in addition to providing additional generous donations to support not only the NCF-Envirothon event, but also additional local and statewide events where teams must qualify in order to reach this high level of competition.

The top teams from the 2019 NCF-Envirothon were:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 st : Jamestown High School – Williamsburg, VA | 5 th : Oxford High School – Oxford, MS |
| 2 nd : High Rock Home School – Davidson County, NC | 6 th : Spartanburg High School – Spartanburg, SC |
| 3 rd : Carmichaels Area High School – Carmichaels, PA | 7 th : Shanghai High School International Division (China Team #1) – Shanghai, China |
| 4 th : The Mount Academy – Esopus, NY | 8 th : Paul Laurence Dunbar High School – Lexington, KY |

2019 National Conservation Envirothon Continued...

In addition to the overall top eight teams, the Don and Mary Spickler Oral Presentation Award was presented to Paul Laurence Dunbar High School from Lexington, Kentucky for receiving the highest score on their oral presentation. Greater than 600 students, advisors and volunteers were in attendance during this weeklong event.

What has now grown to become the NCF-Envirothon reaching more than 500,000 students nationwide started in 1979 as a project of Pennsylvania Soil and Water Conservation Districts. In 1990 North Carolina joined the Envirothon effort as a resource to expand students' knowledge in the areas of soils, forestry, aquatics, wildlife, and current environmental issues. The competition serves as a powerful tool for students to exercise knowledge of natural resources management while forming connections with professionals in areas with promising future careers. While Envirothon teams are coached by dedicated teachers, Soil and Water Conservation District staff statewide along with partnering sponsors work to organize and facilitate competitions from the local to state and now international levels.

The 2019 NCF-Envirothon was made possible by sponsors such as USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service, Smithfield Foods, Wrangler, North Carolina Farm Bureau, Weyerhaeuser, the Resource Institute and Partners, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, NCSU's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and the Hugh Hammond Bennett Chapter of the Water and Water Conservation Society. For a complete listing of sponsors visit: <https://sites.google.com/site/envirothonnc/2019-na-envirothon/partners-sponsorships>.

The 2020 NCF-Envirothon will be held July 26-August 1 in Lincoln, Nebraska at the University of Nebraska where the world's top natural resources students will be tested on the 2020 theme of "Water Resources Management: Local Control and Local Solutions."

Fall '19 Education Program

While school has been out for Summer break, our education specialist has been working very diligently to prepare for activities during the 2019-2020 school year by attending educational trainings and planning events.

In September, we will hold our annual 5th Grade Conservation Fall Field Days at the Edwin H. McGee Center in North Wilkesboro, Sept. 16-20th. We expect to host approximately 800 fifth grade students from throughout the county including public, charter, Christian, and home school students. This event will introduce students to conservation in relation to our contest theme this year of "Wetlands are Wonderful". We will have experts in the field to share with the students and give some hands-on experiences in Forestry, Soils, Wildlife, and Wonders of Wetlands.

On October 9th, Wilkes SWCD will be opening the Edwin McGee Center to High Schoolers for Farm Safety Day coordinated by the Women's Farm Bureau group.

Fall '19 Education Program Continued...

Also, on October 17th, we are pleased to announce that we will be hosting an Invitational Regional Land judging event. The event will be held at the Edwin H McGee Center located at 928 Fairplains Road, North Wilkesboro, North Carolina. The event will begin at 9 am and conclude at 1:15 pm. FFA advisors, please register your teams by Friday, September 27th. Please send student names with registration to wilkesswcd@gmail.com. Advisors and teams will be expected to supply their own clipboards, hand towels, and pencils. Lunch will be provided. We look forward to hosting this event, and feel that it is a great opportunity, especially since it is so close to where the state level event will be held (Ashe County). All high school FFA teams are welcome to attend.

We are currently scheduling classroom activities and working to put together teacher workshop(s) for throughout the school year. If you would like to know more or schedule something for your students, school, or teachers please contact our office or email jhardy.wilkes@gmail.com.

Fall Upcoming Events

- Sept. 2 Labor Day-Office Closed
- Sept. 9 Public Board of Supervisors Meeting @ Wilkes SWCD 12:30pm
- Sept. 10-14 Wilkes Agriculture Fair
- Sept. 16-20 Wilkes SWCD 5th grade Conservation Fall Field Days
- Sept. 27 FFA Regional Land Judging Team Registration Deadline

- Oct. 9 Farm Safety Day for High Schools @ Edwin McGee Center by Women's Farm Bureau Group-Wilkes
- Oct. 10 Area 2 Soil & Water Conservation Districts Fall Meeting
- Oct. 14 Public Board of Supervisors Meeting @ Wilkes SWCD 12:30pm
- Oct. 17 FFA Regional Land Judging Competition @ Edwin McGee Center
- Oct. 28-31 Conservation Employee Training

- Nov. 4 Wilkes 5th grade Soil & Water Poster Contest Deadline
- Nov. 7 Wilkes Extension Ag Awareness Day
- Nov. 11 Veteran's Day-Office Closed – Public Board of Supervisors Meeting to be rescheduled
- Nov. 15-16 FFA State Land Judging Competition in Ashe County
- Nov. 28-29 Thanksgiving-Office Closed

