

Dirt Box Chatter

In This Issue

Your District	Pg. 1
Events Highlights	Pg. 1
5th Grade Field Days	Pg. 2
Wilkes FFA Landjudging	Pg. 2
Farm Safety Day	Pg. 3
NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation	Pg. 3
Winter Education Programs	Pg. 4
Upcoming Events	Pg. 4

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
Mallory Vannoy – Farmland Protection Planner

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.

Events Highlights

Wilkes SWCD hosted the Area 2 SWCD Fall Meeting on Oct. 10. Mr. Phil Wilson, Director of NC Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services Plant Industry was the guest speaker. Mr. Wilson provided information regarding the technicalities of growing Hemp and its current standing in the state.

Wilkes Agricultural Hall of Fame held its Annual Induction Ceremony at the Wilkes Agricultural Center on Oct. 21 to inducted Mr. Howard Blackburn. He was an educator, farmer, encourager, innovator, scout leader, and veteran. He served honorably in the Navy, Army, and Air Force for 22-years. Mr. Blackburn was a graduate of ASU with BS and MA degrees, was a NASA team member who trained animals for space travel and served as administrator at WCC where he was director of the Veteran Farm Program. He taught beekeeping for decades in Wilkes, plus through the Peace Corps and VOCA in third world countries. He was a Master Craftsman Beekeeper, the highest level of achievement in NC Beekeeping, and helped establish Beekeepers of Wilkes. The Beekeepers of Wilkes awarded Mr. Blackburn the first Beekeepers of Wilkes County Lifetime Achievement Award.” If you would like to nominate someone for 2020 please visit [our website](#) or office for an application.

5th Grade Conservation Fall Field Days

Sept. 16 – 19, we held our annual 5th grade Conservation Fall Field Days. This year focused on the theme of “Wetlands are Wonderful”. Students were able to receive information from professionals in the fields of Soils, Forestry, Wildlife, and Wetlands regarding conservation practices and in correlation with their classroom curriculum. Students



and teachers enjoy this event each year. You can view short video of the student’s experience by visiting our [facebook page](#).



This event also gave student the information they need to compete in our 5th grade poster contest using the theme. Each school and homeschool group could submit their 3 best posters by Nov. 4th. The school winners will be notified by mail in Feb. and an Awards Banquet will be held in March.

Wilkes FFA Invitational Regional Landjudging

October 17th, we held our first annual FFA Regional Landjudging Career Development Event at the Edwin H McGee Center. The purpose of the Land Judging Career Development Event is to stimulate interest, encourage proficient development and excellence in land management as taught in agricultural education. Students evaluate soil characteristics including texture, slope and drainage and then classify the land in a capacity class. Recommendations for land treatments are made with consideration given to farm, residential and urban uses. We had a total of five teams participate. Thanks to our judges; Eugene Walker, Roger Sidden, and John Cothren, and others who made the event possible. Scores were as follow:

1st Place Team: Watauga High School FFA Chapter

2nd Place Team: Forbush High School FFA Chapter

3rd Place Team: East Wilkes High School FFA Chapter



Farm Safety Day

Women's Farm Bureau group in coordination with Farm Bureau, Young Farmers and Ranchers, Wilkes SWCD, and NC Extension held its 1st Farm Safety Day at the Edwin McGee Natural Resource Center and Brown Farm. Agriculture/FFA related High School classes attend the event in Oct. Students were able to see tractor roll-over and PTO demonstrations, livestock handling techniques, sun, 811, gun, fire, ATV, electric, chainsaw, hearing, and pesticides safeties, as well as fatal vision.



This was wonderful learning experience for students about farm and other safeties, as well Farm Bureau and Wilkes SWCD shared information with students on scholarship opportunities and career pathway information.

Wilkes Voluntary Agricultural District

The Wilkes Voluntary Ag District has some exciting news. We received a \$14,000 Grant from The North Carolina Department of Agriculture Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund Program. These monies are to develop a Farmland Protection Plan. This plan will aid farmers, foresters, and landowners in becoming more competitive when applying to have their properties considered for easements with the NCDA-ADFP Trust Fund. This grant will allow us to hire a part time research-writer, Mallory Vannoy, to assist us in writing the Wilkes County Farmland Protection Plan. Ms. Vannoy is a graduate student at Virginia Tech and has been working on constructing two rough drafts for an Enhanced Voluntary Ag District ordinance for the VAD and County Commission to consider.

In compliance with the grant, The Farmland Protection Plan must be written, approved, printed and disseminated by September 30, 2021. This will be a great opportunity for Wilkes County to protect its heritage in farming. We are excited and are looking forward to completing this plan and having the opportunity to offer this program in the near future.

In other news, the County Commissioners approved the nominations of Mr. Dennis McGrady, Mr. James Motsinger and Mr. Donald Parker to another 3-year term on the VAD Board, and Mrs. Brenda Blake was approved to fill the unexpired term of Mr. Gary Blake, this term will end June 30, 2022. We appreciate these commitments and look forward to a very busy schedule over the next two years.

Winter Education Program

Current opportunities for Middle and High schools to learn and get involved in conservation is through Envirothon. We have a Northwest Envirothon that includes Wilkes and 12 other surrounding counties. Students form a team of 5 students and 1 advisor. Students study Soils, Forestry, Wildlife, Aquatics and Current Environmental Issues. If you are interested in having a team please contact our office with any questions you have or you can also visit the state Envirothon site at ncenvirothon.org for more details and study materials. To register contact [Julia Hardy](#), 336-838-3622 x 3, by Jan. 24, 2020. The NW Envirothon competition will be held at the Edwin McGee Natural Resource Center in North Wilkesboro on March 25, 2020, (inclement weather make-up day will be April 2, 2020). State Envirothon competition will be on April 24-25, 2020 at Cedarock Park, Burlington, NC.

Soil and Water contests for 6-9th grades will be due in February, items from contest can be submitted from now till deadline (each school may submit the three best), this year's theme is "Wetlands are Wonderful". Our 5th grade Posters have been judged and winner's will be notified in Feb. once all contestant placements are concluded. Awards Banquet will be held March 5, 2020, 6pm at Edwin McGee Natural Resource Center. You can contact [Julia Hardy](#), 336-838-3622 x 3, for contest rules and details.

6th grade contests

- Essay – deadline to submit your paper is Feb. 3, 2020
- Slideshow (PowerPoint) – deadline to submit your design is Feb. 7, 2020

7th grade contest

- Speech – deadline to submit name is Feb. 7, 2020

8th grade contest

- Speech – deadline to submit name is Feb. 7, 2020

9th grade contest

- Computer-Generated Poster Contest – deadline to submit your design is Feb. 3, 2020.

Winter Upcoming Events

Dec. 12th Wilkes SWCD Board Mtg. 6:00pm Must RSVP

Dec. 24-26th Office Closed in Observance of Christmas

Jan. 1, 2020 Office Closed for New Year's Day

Jan. 5-8th Board and Staff attending 76th Annual Meeting of the NCASWCD

Jan. 13th Wilkes SWCD Board Mtg 12:30pm

Jan. 24th Envirothon Team Registration Deadline

Feb. 10th Wilkes SWCD

Feb. 11th 6-8th Grades Contest Night (Slideshows & Speeches) 6:00pm Edwin McGee Center

