

STOKES SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT (SWCD)

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### **STOKES SWCD RECEIVES 3<sup>RD</sup> CYCLE DAN RIVER 319 GRANT FUNDING**

The Stokes Soil and Water Conservation District received additional funding from the Environmental Protection Agency Section 319 Grant this summer to continue work started in 2008 to improve the water quality of the Dan River. The funds are utilized to provide Best Management Practices (BMP's) on agricultural lands in Stokes, Rockingham and Caswell Counties. The total amount of 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle grant funds for the three counties is \$295,000 with Stokes County receiving approximately \$79,334 for the installation of BMP's. The following are some of the practices that can be funded through the grant: agriculture wells, pressurized water tanks for livestock, fencing livestock from streams, cropland conversion to grass or trees, long term no-till, three year sod-based rotation, grass waterways, and field borders. For more information or to receive an application for the Dan River 319 Grant Program contact Rodney Wright at the Stokes Soil & Water Office, 336-593-2846 ext. 3 or by email at [rwright@stokesswcd.net](mailto:rwright@stokesswcd.net) ♦

### **STOKES COUNTY SCHOOLS RECEIVES USDA FARM TO SCHOOL GRANT**

In January of 2013 the Stokes County School System was awarded the USDA's (United State Dept. of Agriculture) Farm to School Grant, in the amount of \$42,242.00. The USDA awarded forty-eight grants and Stokes County was one of only 2 awarded in North Carolina. The grant is being used to educate Stokes County elementary school aged children on the importance of good nutrition and agriculture. With the help of North Stokes High School students, the Stokes County Child Nutrition Educator will help build interest in the Farm-to-School program and to increase the consumption of the healthy Farm-to-School products offered in the schools. The Farm-to-School education will reach all 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students in the school system. The funding of the grant will also provide the equipment and education for North Stokes High School to become GAP (Good Agriculture Practices) certified. Students in the agriculture department will not only be able to plant, raise and harvest a crop they will also learn the skills needed to grade and market their products. Students will learn the key methods of record keeping for food safety and tractability. Also, North Stokes High School in cooperation with Forsyth Technical Community College and the NC Cooperative Extension will become a learning lab for farmers in the region to have hands-on experience in the GAP certification process. GAP certification benefits farmers and the local economy by giving local producers the ability to sale their crops in commercial markets, such as the schools, grocery stores and restaurants.

As a part of the grant, Child Nutrition Director-Cindy Marion, North Stokes Horticulture Teacher-Ben Hall and Stokes County Extension Chair-Debbie Cox were invited to USDA in Washington to discuss their project ♦

### **NC BIG SWEEP – LITTER CLEANUP TO BE HELD IN OCTOBER**

Volunteers are needed to participate in the annual Big Sweep – Litter Cleanup on October 5th in Stokes County. Those who volunteer will be picking up litter on roadsides, streams and open spaces. Bags, gloves, pencils and data cards furnished. Please contact Sara Jo Durham at 336.427.4497 to volunteer ♦

### **CALL THE SOIL & WATER OFFICE TODAY TO RENT THE NO-TILL SOD DRILL THIS SPRING - 336.593.2846 ext. 3.**

**\*Drill rental fee is \$10/acre (with a \$50 minimum); \*Required - 40 HP tractor or greater with hydraulics;**

**\*Required - open hole pin hitch to tow machinery to farm ♦**

### **FARM IMPROVEMENTS THAT PROTECT WATER QUALITY**

The Stokes Soil and Water Conservation District is currently accepting applications for 75% cost assistance through the North Carolina Agricultural Cost Share Program. Landowners and tenants can be eligible to receive funding. You must be willing to install and maintain best management practice than reduce erosion and improve water quality according to program guidelines. Approvals of applicants are based on highest need of water quality improvement with the Soil and Water Board making final decisions. Contracts must receive final approval before the practices are installed. Contact our office for more information today at 593-2846 ext. 3. Non-point source pollution from farmland continues to be a major water quality concern throughout Stokes County and in many NC rivers. The following are some common farm improvements, or best management practices that improve water quality and reduce erosion: **agricultural wells, pressurized watering tanks for livestock, fencing, stream crossings, livestock trails, heavy use areas, long term no-till, cropland conversion to grass/tree/permanent wildlife plantings, vegetated field borders and grass waterways** ♦

***“Visit our website at [www.stokesswcd.org](http://www.stokesswcd.org) to view our 2012-13 Annual Report”***

#### **DISTRICT BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

James Booth, *Chairman*

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#### **STAFF**

Dede DeBruhl, *District Conservationist*

Tom Smith, *District Soil/Watershed Conservationist*

Rodney Wright, *Watershed Coordinator*

Janice Pack, *Adm. Asst./Education Coordinator*

## SOIL & WATER HOLDS ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET

The following people were recognized at the 2013 Soil & Water Awards Banquet in May for their outstanding efforts in conservation: the **Conservation Farm Family of the Year** award was given to **Stanley, Sandra, Alice & Will Smith of Smith & Son Farms in King**; the **Conservation Teacher of the Year** award was given to **Alison Zdan from Piney Grove Middle School**; and **Julie Fulk** of Pinnacle was recognized for representing Stokes County in the annual **Resource Conservation Workshop** at NCSU in Raleigh on June 23-28. Congratulations to you all ♦



Pictured to the left: James Booth, Stanley, Sandra, Will & Alice Smith



Pictured to the left: Marvin Cavanaugh, Alison Zdan



Pictured to the left: Julie Fulk, Willard Nelson

## NC FOREST SERVICE IS TAKING ORDERS FOR TREE SEEDLINGS

The annual window of opportunity for ordering seedlings from the NC Forest Service (NCFS) is now open. Hardwoods and conifers are available in small & large quantities at great prices. Information about tree species and quantities available as well as costs can be found on the forest service website at <http://ncforestservice.gov>. Click on the "Tree Seedling & Nursery Program" link or you can call 1-888-NC-TREES. The Stokes Soil & Water office also has copies of the 2013-14 NC Forest Service Seedling Catalog ♦

## ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS

Pictured here is Bobwhite Quail in native grass stand. Establishing native grasses is an approved EQIP practice.



The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a federal program that provides technical and financial assistance to help agricultural producers solve environmental resource concerns. If you have cattle drinking from the creeks, EQIP can help with fencing out the creek and installing an alternative watering system. EQIP has practices to assist with erosion control, soil quality improvement, wildlife habitat development, and organic farming. Please contact Dede DeBruhl at 593-2846 ext. 3 for details ♦

## SOIL NUTRIENTS DEPLETED BY HEAVY RAINS – CROP SPECIALIST URGE SOIL TESTING

-- Article from NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (NCD&CS)

Rainfall in most of North Carolina has been at record high levels from early spring through summer, with some areas receiving more than 30 inches. As a result, most crops have struggled due to poorly developed root systems. Agronomists warn that the growth of upcoming crops is also likely to be affected unless soil-nutrient reserves are monitored and replenished.

Dr. David Hardy, Chief of Soil Testing Section with the NCD&CS, and Dr. Carl Crozier, Soil Scientist & Extension Specialist at NCSU, urge growers to be particularly vigilant about soil sampling this summer and fall.

"Sandy, light-colored soils have limited ability to hold nutrients to begin with," Hardy said. "And some of our nutrients are what we call 'mobile soils,' simply meaning they move with excessive water through the soil. Farmers are more familiar with the term 'leaching'.

"Potassium, nitrogen and sulfur are the most mobile nutrients," Hardy said, "but even nutrients such as magnesium, which is held more tightly than potassium, can be depleted due to excessive rainfall. This year growers across the state really need to check the nutrient status of soils by soil testing."

Crozier agrees with this recommendation but points out another effect of wet soils on nutrient availability. "Poorly drained soils may have been flooded for long periods," he said. "The problem in areas where water has been standing is more likely to be denitrification than leaching. In that case, nitrogen is lost as a gas to the air."

"Growers need to remember that routine soil testing does not measure soil nitrogen levels," Crozier said. "The nitrogen recommendations given on a soil-test report represent the typical needs of the crop and do not take into account that residual nitrogen levels might be even lower than expected given the weather this past season."

Another fertility issue to consider is soil acidity. In NC, factors such as weather and the leaching of nutrients make soils naturally acidic. Soil pH and lime recommendations are two of the most important items of information provided on a soil-test report.

Growers planning to plant small grains this fall are especially urged to sample ahead of that crop. The sooner samples are submitted to the department's soil-testing lab, the sooner recommendations can be implemented to get the crop started off with the best fertility possible. For samples received until mid-November, soil test results are free and the turnaround time is generally two weeks.

**Beginning this fall, a peak-season fee of \$4 per sample will be charged for all soil samples processed from November 28 through March 31. From April until the Thanksgiving holidays, no fee will be imposed.** The NC General Assembly approved the peak-season fee in its most recent appropriations bill.

Imposition of the peak season fee will trigger some changes in the way soil samples are handled, submitted and paid for. Information on these changes will be available online at [www.ncagr.gov/agronomi](http://www.ncagr.gov/agronomi) as they are implemented. Growers are urged to avoid the fee by submitting samples early.

NCD&CS regional agronomists provide advise on how to collect and submit agronomic samples to alleviate nutrient problems. For contact information, visit [www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/rahome.htm](http://www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/rahome.htm) ♦