

STOKES SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT (SWCD)
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NCEA&CS OFFERS ORGANIC CERTIFICATION COST-SHARE ASSISTANCE

Organic growers in North Carolina can apply for partial reimbursement of the cost of becoming certified or for recertification through a program offered by the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Growers who are certified or recertified between October 1, 2015, and September 30, 2016, can apply for assistance through the program.

"This cost-share program will cover up to 75% of the cost of organic certification for a farm, up to a total of \$750," said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. "The program has been popular, and with funds available on a first-come, first-served basis, I would encourage growers to submit their applications early."

Under the grant, operations can be certified and reimbursed in four separate categories: crops, livestock, wild crop and handler/processor.

The program is for the 2015-2016 season and is funded through a \$168,000 grant from the US Department of Agriculture. Applications must be postmarked by December 1. To apply, growers must provide a completed application, along with detailed invoices/statements from the certifying agency listing all National Organic Program certified costs, proof of payment, and IRS W-9 form and a copy of your certificate or letter from your certifier if this is a new certification. All charges must be for USDA organic certification. The application can be downloaded at www.ncdaorganic.org. Growers should mail the application and required documents to: NCEA&CS Organic Certification Cost Share Program, Attn: Heather Barnes, 1020 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1020.

For questions contact Heather Barnes at 919-707-3127. ♦

ATTENTION FORESTLAND OWNERS

Do you own forestland that you are actively managing? Do you have a Forest Management Plan developed by the NC Forest Service or a private forestry consultant? If so, you may be eligible for cost share assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP is a voluntary conservation program for agricultural landowners who wish to install conservation practices.

The Forest Management Plan provides an inventory of existing forest resources and recommendations for improvement based on the landowners objectives. Many landowners wish to improve timber production and/or improve wildlife habitat improvement. The following practices are available through EQIP to address timber production and wildlife enhancement:

- Prescribed Burning (*pictured to the right*)
- Pre-Commercial Thinning
- Timber Stand Improvement
- Create Wildlife Openings
- Early Successional Habitat Improvement
- Tree Planting



To apply for EQIP, you must have your farm records established at the Farm Service Agency and you must have a Forest Management Plan. Applications must be received by November 18, 2016. All applications will be ranked according to the environmental benefits of the practices planned to be installed. Call Dede DeBruhl at 336-593-2846 ext. 3 for more information on EQIP.

FUNDING AVAILABLE TO INSTALL BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

If you have erosion problems or water quality issues on your farm, you may be eligible to receive cost share assistance through the NC Agriculture Cost Share Program or the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. These voluntary programs have proven successful in addressing agricultural non-point source pollution problems. Eligible participants may receive up to 75% cost assistance on practices such as riparian buffer restoration, excluding livestock from streams or ponds, installing alternative watering systems for livestock, heavy use area protection, converting cropland to grass or trees, and long term no-till planting to name a few. If you are interested in applying for any of these programs, please call the Stokes SWCD office at 336-593-2846 ext. 3 for an application and program information. Approval of applicants are based on highest need of water quality improvement. Contracts must receive final approval before practices are installed. ♦

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2016 CONSERVATION FARM FAMILY OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to Benny & Kelsie Martin of Triple M Farm in Sandy Ridge for being selected as our 2016 Conservation Farm Family of the Year. Triple M Farm was chosen due to the sound conservation measures implemented on the 43 acre cattle farm. The following are a few of the best management practices installed by the Martin's over the years: 25+ acres of cropland conversion to grass, 7,500+ feet of fencing to exclude cattle from all surface water to prevent erosion and protect water quality, 2 watering facilities that provide an alternate clean water source for cattle, and an agricultural well. The cattle graze areas separated in 3 different paddocks to maximize forage growth and encourage desirable plant rejuvenation. Besides their home farm the Martin's also own and manage additional acreage of hay and forestland located in surrounding communities and in Virginia. Their forestland has been enrolled in the Southern Pine Beetle Program and Forest Development Program in order to create a conducive environment for the trees to flourish. The Martin's were honored with a plaque at the Soil & Water Banquet held on May 19. Again, congratulations and thank you for being good stewards and protecting the land for future generations...keep up the good work! ♦



2016 CONSERVATION EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Judy Dearborn, a 5th grade teacher from Nancy Reynolds Elementary School, was recognized as the 2016 Conservation Educator of the Year by the Stokes SWCD at our banquet on May 19. Mrs. Dearborn is a conservation-minded teacher, who goes above and beyond to make sure environmental education is a priority in her classroom. Students in her class participate in recycling programs and litter clean-ups, as well as hands-on activities that involve the water cycle, plant ecosystems, and soil conservation to name a few. She also formed the Environmental Club at Nancy Reynolds Elementary for any student interested in preserving our natural resources. So congratulations Mrs. Dearborn and thank you for all your hard work and dedication! ♦



SOIL & WATER POSTER, ESSAY & SPEECH CONTESTS COMING IN NOVEMBER

The Stokes SWCD will be holding its annual Poster, Essay and Speech Contests on November 3rd & 4th, 2016. This year's contest theme is "Soil & Water...Yours for Life". The poster contest is open to students in grades 3-6, the Essay Contest is open to 6th graders, and the Speech Contest is open to 7th & 8th graders. More information will be forwarded to schools in the coming weeks. Please contact Janice Pack at 336-593-2846 ext. 3 if you have any questions or are interested in submitting entries. ♦

ENVIROTHON PROGRAM ACCEPTING MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL TEAM REGISTRATIONS

The Envirothon program is a competitive event for middle and high school students to compete in a natural resources knowledge and ecology field day against other middle and high school teams in the region. The Envirothon competition stimulates, reinforces and enhances students' interest in the environment and our state's natural resources. In order to prepare for the competition students are given resource material to study that covers the following subject areas: Soils/Land Use, Forestry, Wildlife, Aquatic Ecology, and Current Environmental Issues. Then in the spring all registered teams will come together to compete. Stokes County is in the northwest region of the state, therefore registered teams will compete at the Northwest Envirothon on Thursday, March 30, 2017 in Wilkes County. This event will be a one-day competition in which the morning session will consist of students rotating through stations taught by resource professionals on the above mentioned topics. After lunch students will be tested on their knowledge of these subject areas. Those placing in the top 7 will advance to the State Envirothon being held on April 28 & 29 in Alamance County. For more information or to register a team contact Janice Pack at the Stokes SWCD at 336-593-2846 ext. 3 or jpack@stokesswcd.net. (High School teams must consist of 5 students...Middle Schools teams can consist of 3-5 students). The registration deadline is February 24, 2017. ♦

Please join the Stokes SWCD in welcoming Taylor Furr, the new Cooperative Extension 4-H Agent for Stokes County. Taylor graduated from Western Carolina University where she earned a Bachelor's degree in Education. She has been involved in the NC 4-H program for the past 16 years attending events, completing projects of her own and for the past 3 years volunteering her time. Welcome Taylor, we look forward to working with you! ♦



Make plans to attend the Stokes County Fair being held September 12-17 in King. While there check out the Stokes SWCD exhibit that will be displayed in the American Legion building (upstairs). Brochures, education pamphlets and conservation program information will be available at our exhibit. ♦

"Visit our website at www.stokesswcd.org to view our 2015-2016 Annual Report"