

STOKES SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT (SWCD)

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### COVID-19 OPERATIONS UPDATE

Currently the Stokes SWCD office is operating as normal with precautions such as social distancing and wearing facemasks. Our office has maintained normal business hours during COVID-19 to best serve landowners. We are available to discuss programs by meeting clients in the field or at the office, just call to schedule an appointment – 336.593.2490. ♦

### FOREIGN SEED ALERT – From NCDA&CS Plant Industry Division

North Carolina residents who have received seed shipments that they did not order from China or other foreign sources are advised not to plant these seeds because they could be a pathway for introduction of invasive species, insects and plant diseases. The NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has been contacted by numerous people who have received the seeds, which are likely the product of an international internet scam known as “brushing.” “According to the Better Business Bureau, foreign, third-party sellers use your address and Amazon information to generate a fake sale and positive review to boost their product ratings,” said Phil Wilson, director of the Plant Industry Division. “Seeds are just one of the items used in this scam, however, you could receive other inexpensive items such as rubber bands, plastic toys, or empty bags.” This type of international shipment of plant material is unlawful and NCDA&CS asks anyone who received one of these unsolicited foreign shipments to save the contents along with all shipping labels and contact the Plant Industry Division toll free at 800-206-9333 or email at [newpest@ncagr.gov](mailto:newpest@ncagr.gov). Plant Industry staff will contact you to gather information and pick up the package. You can also report the receipt of unsolicited seed from foreign countries using an online form found at <https://apps.ncagr.gov/AgRSysPortal/SeedReports/UnsolicitedSeed>. NC residents are not in violation of any regulations if they received these shipments, but they are the key to identifying and stopping future shipments.



### APPLY NOW FOR 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. Eligible participants may receive up to 50-75% cost assistance on practices such as critical area seeding, excluding livestock from streams or ponds, installing alternative watering systems for livestock, heavy use area protection, and converting cropland to grass or trees to name a few. Funding for these practices are allocated to our office each fall, so start planning now if you have a need for approved best management practices on your farm. If you are interested in applying for either of these programs, please call our office at 336-593-2490 for an application and program information. **Contracts must receive final approval before practices are installed.** ♦

### HOW TO QUALIFY FOR PROGRAMS

To apply for our programs, farms must have been in existence for three years (1 year for AgWrap Program). All applications are ranked, and applications that provide the most water-quality benefit receive funding. The Stokes SWCD encourages anyone interested to contact the office and inquire about our programs and complete an application. ♦

#### DISTRICT BOARD

James Booth, *Chairman*

Marvin Cavanaugh, *Vice Chairman*

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#### STAFF

Janice Pack, *Soil & Water Conservation Director*

Leigh Calloway, *District Soil/Watershed Conservationist*

James Boyett, *NRCS Supervisory Soil Conservationist*

**“Visit our website at [www.stokesswcd.org](http://www.stokesswcd.org) to view our 2019-20 Annual Report” ♦**

## **POSTER, ESSAY, SLIDESHOW, & COMPUTERIZED POSTER CONTESTS ON SCHEDULE FOR THIS FALL**

The Stokes SWCD will be offering our annual Poster, Essay, Slideshow and Computerized Poster contest to students again this fall. We will be moving the contest dates back to the end of November in order for students and teachers to adjust to their new remote learning schedules. The theme for this year’s contests will be “We All Live In A Watershed”. Contest information will be distributed to schools in October, so be on the lookout. The Poster Contest is open to students in grades 3-6. The Essay & Slideshow contests are open to 6<sup>th</sup> graders and the Computerized Poster Contest is open to 9<sup>th</sup> graders. Contact Janice Pack at the Soil & Water office, 336-593-2490, or check our website, [stokesswcd.org](http://stokesswcd.org), for updates ♦

## **NW ENVIROTHON WILL BE HELD VIRUTALLY THIS YEAR**

The Envirothon is an annual competition in which middle school and high school teams compete by demonstrating their knowledge of environmental science and natural resource management. The teams, each consisting of five students, exercise their training and problem-solving skills in a competition centered on five testing categories: **Soils, Aquatics, Forestry, Wildlife and Current Environmental Issues**.

Each spring a regional event is held allowing teams from across a 13 county area of northwest NC to come together to compete. The top 7 highest scoring middle and top 7 highest scoring high school teams advance to the state competition held at the end of April each year. This year the on-site regional competition will be a virtual event due to COVID-19. The NW Envirothon Committee chose to go virtual so that if travel or gathering restrictions are still in place come spring, students will still get the opportunity to participate in this great program. Study material will be available this fall, so if you have students who are interested in this great program, go to [www.ncenvirothon.org](http://www.ncenvirothon.org) for the 2021 material. The Stokes SWCD staff will be sending registration information to interested middle and high school teachers in October, so be on the lookout and contact our office if you have any questions. ♦

## **VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT PROGRAM MEMBERSHIP UPDATES**

As reported in our spring newsletter, the Stokes County Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) Advisory Board is in the process of updating their membership database. Enrolled members who’ve sold, split, or changed property boundaries will receive a letter verifying the change. Members can then decide if they’d like to continue in the program - if still eligible, or opt out. VAD eligibility requirements are as follows: property must consist of 5 acres for horticulture use, or 10 acres for general agriculture use, or 20 acres for forestry use.

Stokes County’s VAD Program is a free program that enhances the identity of the agricultural community by encouraging the voluntary preservation and protection of farmland from non-farm development.

Farmer benefits include the following:

- Informs new landowners of farm presence and potential of dust, noise and smells associated with agriculture possibly reducing conflicts between neighbors.
- Requires that farmland be used as a last resort if land is considered for a public project that may condemn land.
- Land enrolled in the program will not be assessed fees or required to connect to water and sewer service if they plan not to use the service.

Contact the Stokes Soil & Water office at 336-593-2490 for more information on the VAD program. ♦

## **PPE AVAILABLE TO AGRICULTURE WORKERS THROUGH COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

The Stokes County Cooperative Extension Service has COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) available for agricultural workers. Per each farm worker the following is available: 15 disposable masks, 10 cloth masks, 2 bottles of hand sanitizer. Contact the Cooperative Extension Service at 336-593-8179 for more information. ♦