

STOKES SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT (SWCD)

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FARMER APPRECIATION – THURSDAY, APRIL 18 – SOUTH STOKES HIGH SCHOOL

Mark your calendars – The 2013 FARMER APPRECIATION EVENT will be held at South Stokes High School on Thursday, April 18 from 6-9 PM; FREE FOOD (BBQ or Chicken and all the fixins'), ENTERTAINMENT & DOOR PRIZES. Please call 593-8179 or 593-2846 ext. 3 by April 16 if you plan to attend...we need a count for food preparation ♦

OVERBY & BOOTH TO SERVE ANOTHER 4 YEAR TERM ON SOIL & WATER BOARD

On Tuesday, December 4, 2012, Willis Overby & James Booth were both sworn in to serve another 4 year term on the Stokes Soil & Water Conservation District Board. Mr. Overby who was elected to office on November 6, 2012 has served on the local Soil & Water Board for 27 years beginning in 1985. Mr. Booth has served on the local Soil & Water Board for 12 years obtaining the vacant seat in the 2000 general election and now serving as an appointed member as approved by the NC Soil & Water Conservation Commission. Congratulations to you both ♦ *Pictured - L to R: James Booth, Willis Overby*



IMPORTANT INFORMATION for FARMERS – Conservation Compliance Still In Effect

Conservation compliance began with the 1985 Farm Bill and continues today. To be eligible for USDA programs and benefits, you must be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland regulations. USDA benefits may include payments from the FSA office, disaster payments, farm direct and operating loans, SURE payments, and others.

Due to an increase in commodity prices, many farmers across the state are clearing woodland for crop production or breaking up pastureland for crop production. BEWARE. Before you bring new land into production, you will need a highly erodible land (HEL) and wetland determination. Land clearing, leveling, excavation and stump removal are activities that could put you at risk of losing certain payments. Go to the Farm Service Agency to start the determination process BEFORE you plant a crop. If the land is determined HEL, you will need to develop a conservation plan with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Most of the land in Stokes County is considered "highly erodible". If the land is determined to be wetland, you may not be able to plant a crop and still receive USDA benefits.

If you are a farmer who is considering leasing new farms that you have not tended before, you will need to follow a conservation plan developed by NRCS. The farm may or may not have a conservation plan. You will need to contact NRCS at 336-593-2846 ext. 3 for assistance. Some of the tobacco companies and insurance companies are requiring producers to provide conservation plans to them. So, know your conservation plan and follow it ♦

COST SHARE FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR LANDOWNERS

The Stokes Soil & Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are now accepting applications for cost share assistance for the installation of best management practices that reduce erosion and protect the water quality on your farm. Approval of applications is based upon the highest need of water quality improvement with the Stokes Soil and Water District Board making final decisions. Applications must be approved prior to work beginning so please contact our office at 336.593.2846 ext. 3 for more information today ♦

CORN ACREAGE COULD GO UP THIS YEAR

Article contributed by Robin Garrison, Southern Farm Network

North Carolina farmers harvested 820,000 acres of corn last year, with an average yield of 117 bushels per acre. Good prices, good yields and a continuing demand for the crop are creating talk that the state could see an increase in corn acreage this year.

While national stockpiles of corn are falling and the Midwest is still recovering from the 2012 drought, the worldwide demand for corn continues to be high. North Carolina farmers could be looking to benefit from this scenario.

The state isn't a major national player when it comes to growing corn, NC Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler says, but we've got a homegrown market for it. The state ranks second nationally in hog production and typically is in the top three in poultry production. So demand for grain here is very high. This demand could entice more farmers to grow corn. There's also speculation that more farmers will be looking to corn as a second crop to follow up their wheat harvest.

Two other crops used for livestock feed – soybeans and sorghum – also had good years in 2012. When the USDA's Prospective Plantings Report is released in late March, it will be interesting to see what the projected acreage of these three crops will be ♦



DISTRICT BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

James Booth, *Chairman*

Marvin Cavanaugh, *Vice Chairman*

Willis Overby, *Secretary/Treasurer*

John East, *Member*

Willard Nelson, *Member*

STAFF

Dede DeBruhl, *District Conservationist*

Tom Smith, *District Soil/Watershed Conservationist*

Rodney Wright, *Watershed Coordinator*

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

STUDENTS WIN LOCAL CONTESTS, ADVANCE TO REGIONALS

On November 1 & 2, 2012 the Stokes SWCD held its annual poster, essay & speech contests. This year's contest theme was "Water...the Cycle of Life". Congratulations to the following students who placed in the recent contests:

4th GRADE POSTER CONTEST – Sonia Borgen – 1st Place (Germanton Elem.) & Savannah Nunn – 2nd Place (Francisco Elem.); 5th GRADE POSTER CONTEST –Skyler Hege – 1st Place (Lawsonville Elem.) & Maliya Wright – 2nd Place (Francisco Elem.); 6th GRADE POSTER – Brianna Phipps – 1st Place (SEMS) & Emma Edwards – 2nd Place (CGMS); 6th GRADE ESSAY – Franklin Baughn – 1st Place (SEMS) & Faith Nelson – 2nd Place (SEMS); 7th GRADE SPEECH CONTEST – Hannah McKnight – 1st Place (CGMS); 8th GRADE SPEECH CONTEST – Carmen Bollman – 1st Place (CGMS) & Alexandra Nawaz – 2nd Place (CGMS). First place winners will compete at the regional level on March 21 in Burke County ♦



7th & 8th Grade Speech Contestants & their teachers: (l to r) Lucinda Smith, Caitlin Buckler, Carmen Bollman, Amber Fleshman, Breonna Hassler, Alexandra Nawaz, Hannah McKnight, Brian Sikarskie

NATIONAL WILDLIFE WEEK--Branching Out for Wildlife!

This year National Wildlife Week is celebrating trees and their value for wildlife and people. Join the fun "Branching Out for Wildlife" and learn about the parts of a tree and the importance of trees to wildlife and people. During National Wildlife Week, **March 18-24**, the National Wildlife Federation will feature 45 species of wildlife in the U.S., including trees and wildlife that depend on trees. **There are all kinds of free resources--posters, wildlife trading cards, activities and games--on the National Wildlife Week website** at http://www.nwf.org/National-Wildlife-Week.aspx?s_email_id=20130130_EDU_Winter-SpringEvents|STedu ♦

Cooperative Extension Service is hosting a "free" Small Farms Tour Day on April 5, 2013 from 8a.m.-12:30p.m. Those participating will be visiting 4-5 small innovative farms engaging in high tunnel & commercial greenhouse production. Call Randy Fulk at 336-593-8179 to register ♦

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 ♦

HOW-TO GUIDE FOR COMPOSTING IN YOUR BACKYARD

From UNC Charlotte – Environmental Assistance Office

Step 1: Prepare a Composting Bin

-Buy a composter, or create your own bin using stakes and a mesh wire.

Follow these guidelines by Rutgers Coop. Research & Extension:

- **Size matters.** Your leaf pile should be 4-10 feet around and 36 inches tall. A correct pile size ensures proper temperature and air flow needed for composting. Also, using a 12.5 linear feet of gauge wire will ensure the best volume for optimum heat production.
- **Keep your pile moist.** You will know your pile contains enough moisture if you can squeeze a few drops of water from a handful of leaves. Do not add too much water.
- **Do not compress your pile.**
- **Shred the leaves prior to adding them to your pile.** This helps speed up the composting process. You can shred them by raking dry leaves into a pile and then mowing them with a lawn mower.
- **Rotate the leaves in your pile.** Try to move the outer layer to the center. Rotate the leaves each month in warm weather. Do not rotate the leaves as often in cool weather or the pile temperature may be disturbed. Do rotate the leaves if you smell an ammonia or other bad odor coming from the pile.

Step 2: Gather Composting Materials

-Be sure to include both green and brown materials for your compost pile. **Acceptable materials include:** Cardboard Rolls, Clean Paper, Coffee Grounds, Cotton Rags, Vacuum Cleaner Lint, Eggshells, Fireplace Ashes, Fruits and Vegetables, Grass Clippings, Hair and Fur, Hay and Straw, Houseplants, Nut Shells, Saw Dust, Wool Rags, Yard Trimmings, Wood Chips. **DO NOT compost ANY of these materials!** Insect-ridden Plants, Fats, Oils, or Grease Meat, or Fish Bones, Scraps Yard trimming treated with chemical pesticides Pet Wastes Black Walnut trees leaves or twigs Coal or Charcoal ash Dairy Products.

Step 3: Mix and Let Sit

-Turn your pile as often as you can. Each time you turn it will speed up the process.

All anaerobic processes such as your compost pile will need a lot of oxygen. It is vital to mix up your pile to ensure that oxygen is being fed where needed. *Too much material to Compost? Do not over-fill your current pile. Instead, create a new one. This way your pile will keep an equal ratio of green / brown materials, as well as aerate much more easily the smaller the heap.*

Step 4: Aeration

-Keep your compost damp, but not wet. As you add material to your pile make sure that each layer is moist as it is added. During the summer your pile will dry out and the composting process will slow down. It is also important to disturb your pile as little as possible during colder months to ensure the temperature stays warm.

Step 5: Spread Over Wanted Area

-Lay around your grass, garden, natural areas, shrubs or even the backyard. Compost is thick and will hold nutrients longer than ordinary soil, without quickly drying and blowing in the wind ♦