

STOKES SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT (SWCD)

PO BOX 98 • DANBURY, NC 27016

PHONE 336.593.2490 • FAX 336.593.4010 • www.stokesswcd.org

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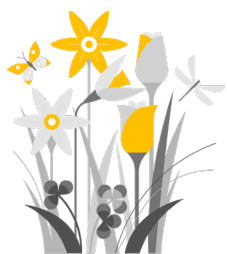
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✦ COME JOIN US FOR A FREE MEAL,
ENTERTAINMENT, AND MORE! ✦

25TH ANNUAL FARMER APPRECIATION DINNER

barbeque, chicken and all of the fixings
(serving 5:30pm - 7:30pm)

April 23, 2026
SOUTH STOKES HIGH SCHOOL
5:30PM- 8PM
AUCTION - 7:30PM



DISTRICT BOARD

James Booth, *Chairman*

Bob Lindsay, *Vice Chairman*

Johnny East, *Secretary/Treasurer*

Gary East, *Member*

Joe Bennett, *Member*

STAFF

Amelia Harold, *Soil & Water Conservation Director*

Drew Bray, *Natural Resource Conservationist*

McKayla Newsome, *NRCS Natural Resource Specialist*

Management of Unwanted Plant Species:

Understanding Weed Types and Their Treatment

Weeds, much like desirable grasses, cover crops, and vegetables, have various growing seasons and life cycles. Understanding these patterns is crucial for effective management. By definition, a weed is any plant growing in an undesired location. These plants often compete with more desirable species for essential resources such as water, light, nutrients, and space. Weeds can be found in pastures, crop fields, gardens, forests, and about any place that you can think of. With each location, there may be different types found that include broadleaf and grass weeds.

Reasons for Weed Control

Reasons to control or eliminate some weeds include toxicity, lower feed quality, lack of palatability, opportunity to reproduce and spread, and constricting the growth of desirable species. Uncontrolled weeds can lead to significant economic losses and environmental degradation. Effective weed control is essential not only for maintaining pasture quality, but also for ensuring the overall health of agricultural ecosystems. Toxicity is generally not an issue for herbaceous weeds unless there is little else for livestock to eat, which is an important reason to manage pastures appropriately and provide good quality hay. There are, however, species in our area that are extremely toxic to the point of death. One of the most prominent, and comes to mind first for most, is wilted or damaged Wild Cherry or Black Cherry tree parts.

Weed Life Cycles

In order to understand how to effectively control weeds, it is important to identify which specific weeds you have and learn about their life cycles. They can either be annuals, biennials, or perennials.

The purpose of the plants is to reproduce, so the goal is to disrupt this cycle to prevent propagation and spread.

- Annual: completes life cycle in 1 year, but seeds can produce and propagate. Examples: Winter annual Chickweed and the summer annual Lambsquarter.
- Biennial: complete life cycle in 2 years by growing vegetatively the first year and then produces flowers and seeds the following year. Example: Warm season Woolly mullein
- Perennial: live longer than 2 years and will flower and produce seeds each year. Examples: Warm season Dogfennel & Horsenettle

Seeds can be spread by wind, water, wildlife, equipment, livestock movements, hay bales, and human activity.

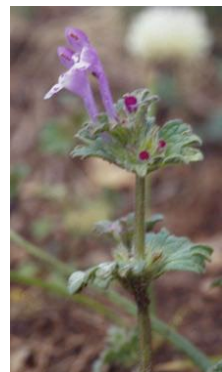


Figure 1 Henbit, cool season annual

Methods of Weed Control

Disruption of the lifecycle of weeds can be completed in multiple ways including mechanical, biological, and chemical methods.

- Mechanical control can be completed by cutting, trimming, or mowing the undesirable weeds.
- Biological control includes using animals to graze unwanted species. This can be encouraged by using intensive grazing techniques, but make sure that you are not forcing them to graze weeds, plants, or trees that may be harmful to them in large (or small) amounts! Make sure that there is a good amount of grass or hay present when intensive grazing is used to help dilute any plants that could cause harm when consumed in large concentrations.
- Chemical control is just as the name suggests; using herbicides and different chemicals to help control and hopefully eradicate weedy, unwanted species. Not all chemicals are created equal, so make sure that if you do choose to use an herbicide that you read which species that it controls and remember that the label is the law!

Weeds are opportunistic plants, so making sure that the soil is in the best condition for the desirable plants can provide them with the opportunity to be strong or thick enough on the ground to help prevent weed pressure. Some weeds prefer more acidic soils, so those weeds can be discouraged by implementing proper soil management. Proper soil management begins by taking soil samples and applying amendments, both lime and nutrients, based on recommendations.



Figure 2 Dogfennel, warm season perennial

Regardless of the treatment method that is used, it will most likely take several occurrences of treatment that can take several years to complete. Areas need to be continuously monitored even after the treatment seems to be complete since there is always the opportunity for the spread of unwanted species again.

Available cost share practices through the Natural Resource Conservation Service that will help to control weedy, unwanted species on either forest or crop/pasture lands include:

- Herbaceous Weed Control (315)
- Brush Management (314)
- Forest Stand Improvement (666)
- Grazing Management (528)

If these are practices you think you might be interested in, you can contact NRCS Natural Resource Specialist McKayla Newsome at 336-593-2846, ext. 3.

Soil Testing, Organic Matter, and Pasture Management

Agriculture continues to shift as global markets change, and while producers can't control commodity prices, they *can* influence input costs. Soil testing remains one of the most reliable tools for making informed fertility decisions. Instead of relying on a standard 10-10-10 application each spring, annual soil samples show exactly which nutrients are lacking or already sufficient. This prevents unnecessary fertilizer purchases and helps ensure that every dollar spent is improving soil health.

For many years, it was common practice to fertilize as soon as the grass greened up, often without knowing what the soil truly needed. While there are times when a general fertilizer blend is appropriate, many fields end up overfed in one nutrient and underfed in another. Custom fertilizer blends may appear more expensive at first, but they reduce waste, improve nutrient balance, and support long-term productivity. Over time, this approach lowers total fertilizer use and strengthens soil health.

Organic matter is another major factor in long-term soil fertility. Formed from decomposed plant and animal material, organic matter improves water retention, nutrient availability, and soil structure. Practices such as reducing tillage, leaving crop residue, applying manure, planting cover crops, and choosing deep-rooted species like legumes or corn all help build organic matter over time. Soils with higher organic matter are more resilient and require fewer amendments to stay productive.

Pasture management also plays a key role in both soil health and farm profitability. Rotational systems—whether strip grazing, cell grazing, or simple multi-pasture rotations—give forage time to rest and recover. This rest period increases root growth, boosts organic matter, and leads to more total forage production. Compared to continuous 365 grazing, rotational grazing consistently produces more feed at a lower cost and improves long-term pasture vigor.

Together, these practices create a system that supports healthier soils and stronger bottom lines. Soil testing ensures nutrients are applied wisely, organic matter builds long-term fertility, and intentional grazing practices turn livestock into partners in soil improvement. By focusing on what's happening beneath the surface and how livestock interact with the land, producers can reduce inputs, improve yields, and build resilience into their operations for seasons to come.



You can pick up soil sample boxes, submission forms, and soil probes at our office anytime, and our staff is happy to help interpret your results and offer recommendations based on your goals.



STUDENTS WIN LOCAL POSTER, ESSAY, & SLIDESHOW CONTESTS

On February 17th the Stokes SWCD held its annual county-wide poster contest (for students in grades 3-5), essay contest (for students in grades 6-8) and the slideshow contest (for students in grades 6-8). The contest theme was "We All Live in a Watershed". Congratulations to the students listed below! These students will be recognized and given awards at the Stokes Soil & Water Banquet in May.

3rd, 4th, & 5th GRADE POSTER CONTESTS

- 3rd Grade 1st Place – Lily Jones (Mt. Olive Elem.)
- 3rd Grade 2nd Place – Anna Lynch (Mt. Olive Elem.)
- 4th Grade 1st Place – Isa Noethlich (Nancy Reynolds Elem.)
- 4th Grade 2nd Place – Faith Mecimore (Nancy Reynolds Elem.)
- 5th Grade 1st Place – Finley Davis (Nancy Reynolds Elem.)
- 5th Grade 2nd Place – Paislee Boyer (London Elem.)

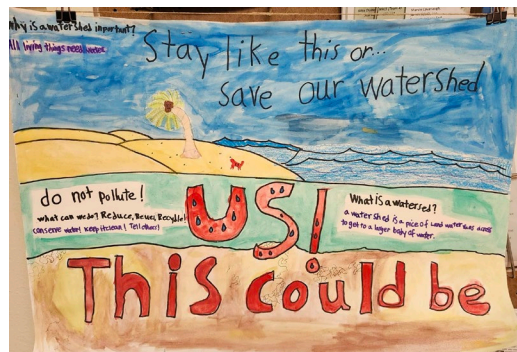
6th, 7th, & 8th GRADE ESSAY CONTESTS

- 6th Grade 1st Place – Jolie Moore (PGMS)
- 6th Grade 2nd Place – Jonathan Moore (PGMS)
- 7th Grade 1st Place – Emily Barlow (PGMS)
- 8th Grade 1st Place – Noriah France (PGMS)
- 8th Grade 2nd Place – Caleb Callahan (CGMS)

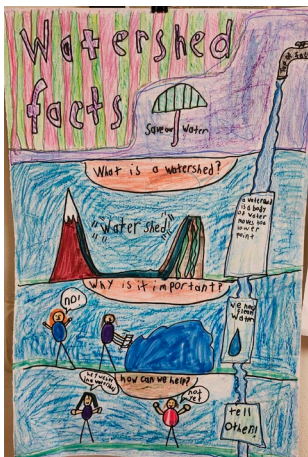
6th & 8th GRADE SLIDESHOW CONTESTS

- 6th Grade 1st Place – Oliver Leftwich (CGMS)
- 6th Grade 2nd Place – Morgan Lawson (PGMS)
- 8th Grade 1st Place – Clair Burnett (PGMS)
- 8th Grade 2nd Place – Adalyn Davis (PGMS)

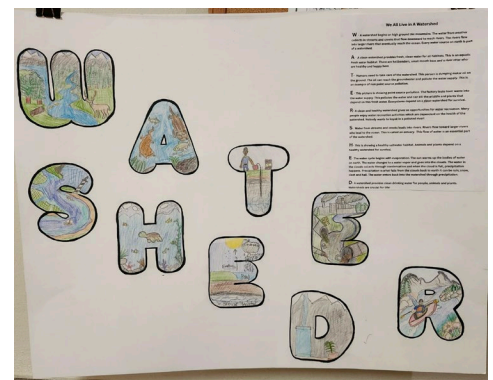
Pictured are 1st place posters for each grade level. ♦



1st Place 4th Grade Poster



1st Place 3rd Grade Poster



1st Place 5th Grade Poster

NOW ACCEPTING RESOURCE CONSERVATION WORKSHOP APPLICATIONS

Get Your Hands Dirty at the Resource Conservation Workshop!

Ready to swap screen time for stream time? The **Resource Conservation Workshop** is a weeklong deep dive into the world of conservation, where you'll explore natural resources, tackle real-world environmental challenges, and get hands-on with soil, water, forestry, and wildlife. This isn't just sitting in a classroom—think field studies, outdoor adventures, and behind-the-scenes tours of conservation hotspots. Plus, evening sessions help you navigate college and career choices.

You'll be **living the college life** at NC State, staying in dorms, meeting awesome people, and learning at places like Williams Hall, Lake Wheeler Soils Field Lab, Falls Lake State Recreation Area, and Clemmons State Educational Forest. It's the perfect mix of hands-on science, outdoor exploration, and future-planning.

Bonus: It's free to attend (the Stokes Soil & Water Conservation District will sponsor one student to attend the workshop by paying all fees). **If you're in the 9th, 10th, or 11th grade** and are curious about how to protect the planet—and want to level up your skills for the future—this is the workshop for you. To apply contact the Stokes Soil & Water Conservation District office at 336-593-2490 or email Amelia Harold at aharold@co.stokes.nc.us. **The application deadline is March 31st, 2026.**

The **2026 Resource Conservation Workshop will be held June 14th -19th** at NC State University in Raleigh. Again, **students must be in 9th, 10th, or 11th grades to be eligible**, so contact Stokes Soil & Water today to get started on the application process. All applications will be reviewed by the Stokes Soil & Water Board and a student will be selected to attend the workshop on April 8th. ♦