

2018-2019

Annual Report

Wake Soil & Water Conservation District
Wake County Soil & Water Conservation Department



Mission: *To protect the natural resources of Wake County through voluntary technical, educational and funding assistance to citizens, businesses, communities, municipalities and partners.*

Vision: *Wake County's watersheds provide clean abundant water for its citizens and environment.*



Wake County's Conservation Team Staff and Leaders

Wake County Soil and Water Conservation Department County Staff

Emily Bateman, Natural Resource Conservationist
John Beck, Natural Resource Conservationist
Teresa Furr, Natural Resource Conservationist
Sheila Jones, Environmental Educator
Abigail Haselton, Conservation Specialist
Dale Threatt-Taylor, District Director

NACD Technical Assistance Grant

Renee Ewing, Conservation Technician

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Raleigh Field Office Staff

Diana Irizarry, Supervisory Soil Conservationist

Elected and appointed officials

Wake Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors

Thomas Dean, Chair
Jennifer Wadsworth, Vice-Chair
Marshall Harvey, Treasurer
Nervahna Crew
Patrick Johnson

Associate Board of Supervisors

Quincy Adams, Marilyn Grolitzer, Robin Hammond,
Sam Laurie, Larry Perry, John Phelps,
Carlyle Teague, Matthew Whitfield, Donnie Woodlief

Voluntary Agricultural District Advisory Board

Patrick Johnson, Chair



The demand for technical assistance continues just as sediment continues to carry pollutants to our streams.

Our goal is to achieve our mission by delivering excellent customer service through science-based conservation practices to improve water quality.

CONSERVATION PLANNING AND INSTALLATION OF BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMPs) ON FARMS

Wake Soil and Water Conservation delivered excellent customer service to Wake County's farm community by writing USDA conservation plans for **1,774.25 acres** and implementing BMPs on **3,882.59 acres** which protected water quality and improved soil health.

The Natural Resource Conservationists assisted farmers and landowners by visiting **258 farm tracts**, wrote **31 contracts** for financial assistance and encumbered **\$220,405** in state and federal funding.

The Conservationists designed and installed **27** best management practices, providing **\$230,927** cost share funds



Request for the Department's technical and financial assistance continues to increase as farmers in Wake County have noticed new problems connected to intense weather-related events.

SPECIAL GRANT FUNDING

AWARDED AND IMPLEMENTED

Wake Soil and Water Conservation successfully **completed the 2018 \$63,000**

Technical Assistance Grant awarded by the National Association of Conservation Districts.

A temporary Natural Resource Conservationist worked with Wake County staff to provide technical assistance and outreach to Wake County residents. The Conservationist provided time and resources for additional conservation planning, special forestry services and GIS mapping initiatives which would not have been feasible without the grant.



Justin Hynicka, Natural Resource Conservationist (center with red shirt and shades) works with Natural Resource Conservationists Team Lead Teresa Furr (red shirt) Emily Bateman (blue shirt) and William Byrum (former USDA NRCS Soil Conservationist in Team 4, orange shirt).

This EXCELLENT soybean crop is due to years of no-till farming – where moisture and nutrients remain available, even during a drought, due to the abundance of cover and improved soil health that no-till practice provides.

In November 2018, Wake Soil and Water Conservation District applied for another NACD Technical Assistance national grant.

Of the 3,000 Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the nation only two SWCDs in North Carolina were awarded the grant. Wake Soil and Water Conservation District continues to be a leader in conservation! NACD awarded **\$63,500** in grant funds to increase enrollment in the USDA NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program, conservation planning and installation of BMPs by providing technical and financial assistance to Wake County's agricultural community.

The Wake Soil and Water Conservation District completed the Pasture Management grant. The **\$2,000** grant was awarded by the North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation.



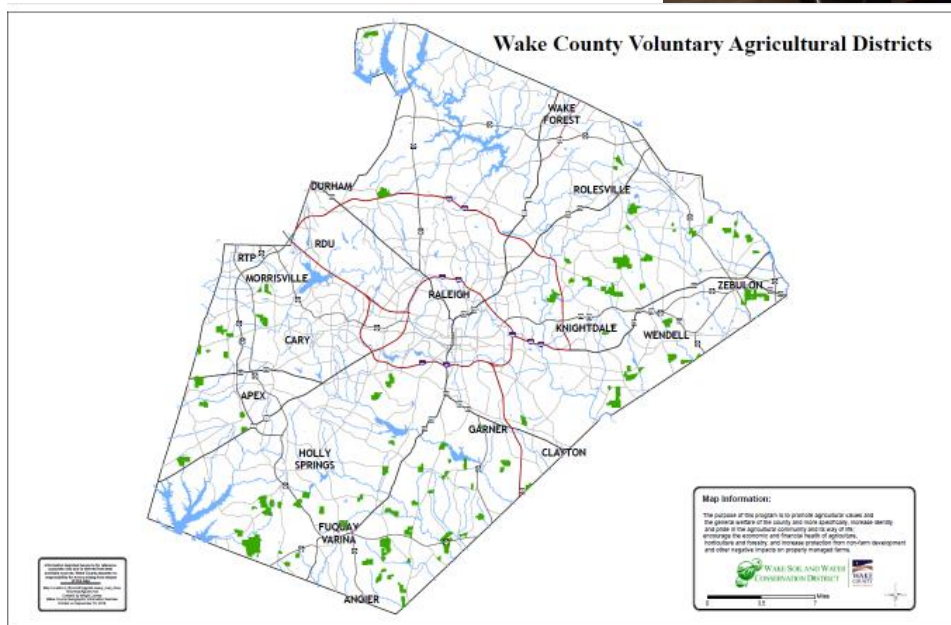
AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Wake Soil and Water Conservation provided support and connectivity to the agricultural community through partnerships and service on various committees, boards, and initiatives.

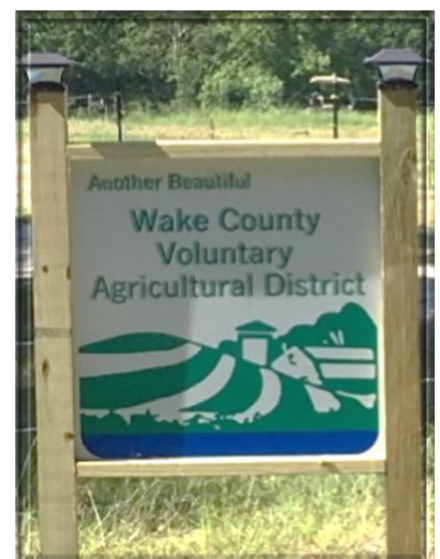
The District provided representation and leadership by serving on the **Wake County Agribusiness Council**, Wake County Water Partnership, City of Oaks Foundation, Walnut Hill Advisory Committee, Wake Nature Preserve, Land Protection Committee, Conservation Strategies Committee, **Piedmont Conservation Council** and many others.

Staff spoke at national conferences, participated in environmental discussion panels, contributed to regional and statewide planning for collaborative events, including the North American Envirothon. Staff continue to serve on local, state and national boards, bringing attention to **Wake County** as a destination for future conservation conferences and environmental networking events.

*Wake Soil and Water Conservation and local agency partners hosted the 14th Annual **Keeping the Farm Workshop**. Over **140** Wake County farm and forest landowners attended.*



The staff worked with the **Voluntary Agricultural District** Advisory Board to manage Wake County's VAD Program. There are over 8,100 acres enrolled in this free farmland preservation program in FY2019.

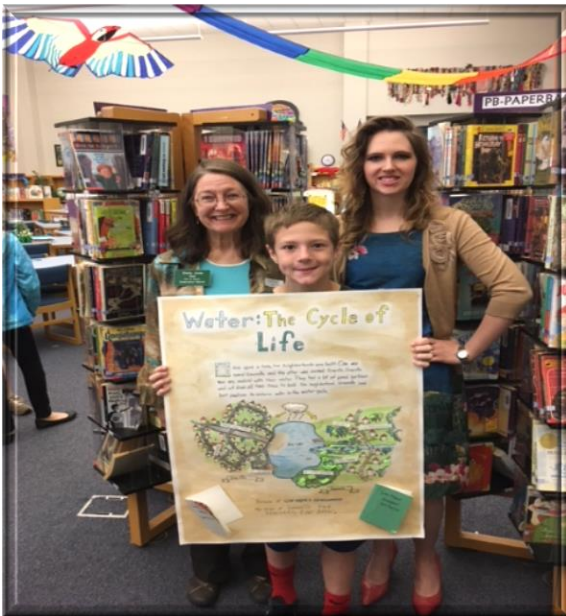


ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

YOUTH LEARNING AND ADULT TRAINING



High School students learn about conservation and best management practices at the annual Resource Conservation Workshop.



Over 3,380 people participated in educational activities with Wake Soil and Water Conservation staff.

Wake County engages citizens of all ages in learning about the importance of natural resources and how to protect them. Wake Soil and Water Conservation conducts adult workshops and trainings as well as experiential youth programs.

Five of Wake County's six high school Envirothon teams placed in the Top Ten at the 2019 Area IV Envirothon. At the state level, Wake County teams placed 3rd and 6th in the high school division; and 7th in the middle school division with top scores in several topic areas. Enloe High School's team advisors were inducted into the NC Envirothon Hall of Fame for 20 years of competition excellence. The Wake District Board awarded full scholarships to five Wake County high school students to attend the 2019 Resource Conservation Workshop at NCSU. At a special workshop, Wake District staff worked with Wake County Public Schools curriculum specialists to correlate conservation contests with science, social studies & visual arts objectives for grades 3-8.



Environmental Educator Sheila Jones conducts hands-on activities for adults and youth in Wake County.

OUTREACH AND VOLUNTEER SERVICES

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

Wake District's Environmental Educator also coordinated the **Wake County Big Sweep** program, engaging **1,179 volunteers** who removed over **24,001 pounds** of trash from streams, creeks and other waterways in the Fall and Spring Big Sweep cleanups.



Big Sweep volunteers help clean up local waterways



Combined Totals **Fall Big Sweep 2018** **Spring Big Sweep 2019**

1,222 Volunteers
3,423 Hours Donated
\$85,527* Value of Volunteer Time
31 Zone Captains
27+ Watershed sites
9 Participating Wake County municipalities:
Apex, Cary, Garner, Morrisville, Raleigh, Wake Forest, Wake County South – New Hill
180 Miles of Shoreline/
Parkland/Roadway
411 Acres of Park/Land Area
16,742.1 Pounds of Trash[^] collected and sent to landfill
7,259 Pounds Recyclables* collected and diverted from landfill

**based on national estimate by Independent Sector +although Cary has numerous sites, it is recorded as "1" site.*

^Estimated results by Wake County Big Sweep Zone Captains (20 lbs. per full bag)

CONSERVATION INNOVATION

Wake Soil and Water Conservation and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service work together to deliver a menu of conservation practices that Wake County farm and forest landowners can choose what works best for their conservation goals.



Wake Soil and Water Conservation and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provide technical and financial assistance that promotes innovation in crop production and improvements in soil health. High Tunnels lengthen the growing season allowing farmers to increase production for Wake County's local food market.



2019 saw a significant increase in industrial hemp operations in Wake County. Wake Soil and Water Conservation staff worked with innovative farmers to protect water quality.