



Friends of Wake Soil and Water Conservation District

Supporting Natural Resource Conservation in Wake County

November 20, 2024

Dear Friend,

Please accept our most heartfelt thanks for your participation and support this year of the Wake Soil and Water Conservation District's¹ Big Sweep and Environmental Education programs. These programs help conserve and protect our soil, water, and natural resources, and engage Wake County residents of all ages in learning and volunteering in activities to preserve our water quality.

Thanks to your dedication, these programs are making a difference, with unparalleled success for **Big Sweep** and national acclaim for the District's **Environmental Education** program. The Friends of the District are proud to support these programs – with your help.

New in 2024! Thanks to generous donations, the Friends launched the [Sheila B. Jones Environmental Education Scholarship](#), open to high school seniors who have been accepted into college, as well as current college students residing in Wake County. Up to two outstanding individuals will receive a \$1,000 scholarship to support their journey toward a career in environmental education.

Last year, with your help and support, the District achieved outstanding results in engaging, coaching, and educating youth in Environmental Education programs:

- **The annual Conservation Poster Contest engaged 98 students from 10 elementary schools across Wake County.** The theme, "The Living Soil," allowed students to research and demonstrate their knowledge of soil as a living ecosystem and how it can be protected. Wake County's students won 1st place at the Area IV regional poster contest!
- **20 middle and high school teams from 11 schools in Wake County** participated in the 2024 Area 4 Envirothon. **Enloe High School's team, "Subchronic Exposure,"** won 1st place at the Area IV competition, and went on to **win 1st place at the NC Envirothon** and advanced to the International Envirothon competition in Geneva, New York. **The team placed 4th overall, competing against the best high school teams from across the United States, Canada, Singapore, and China.**
- **The Friends sponsored 3 high school students** (two with full scholarships and one with half scholarship) to attend the Resource Conservation Workshop (RCW) at NC State University. **Wake SWCD also sponsored an additional 3 students with full scholarships to the program.** This weeklong summer camp provides invaluable experiences for students to learn about careers in conservation and meet resource professionals in diverse fields.

Last year Wake County Big Sweep volunteers:

- **Removed over 48,000 lbs. of trash from** Wake County parks, neighborhoods, open spaces, preserves, and waterways
- Cleaned over 3,700 acres– **a 64% increase from last year**
- **Participated in 40 events throughout Wake County including 5 watercraft events**
- Worked on cleanup events for 7 months throughout the year including **8 new clean-up locations with 38 groups/organizations**
- Donated more than 3,600 hours of their time (**1300+ dedicated and hard-working people**)

None of these milestones could have been reached without your support. We thank you for your commitment and your continued support to help protect Wake County's natural resources.

With sincere gratitude,

Jeff Essic

Chairman, Board of Directors

¹Funding for these programs is provided in part by Wake County, Wake Soil & Water Conservation District, Friends of the District (a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization) and donors and supporters like you.