

# The District Dirt

A bi-annual publication of the Swain SWCD



Spring, 2014

Vol. 1, Edition 1

## Hello Spring!

We would like to thank you for taking the time to check out the spring newsletter. We are excited about 2014 and the up and coming projects within the Ag. Cost Share, Community Conservation, and Environmental Quality Incentives programs and the District's very own conservation education program. It is with much anticipation that this newsletter will become a fresh method of further communicating with farmers, non-farmers, educators and other interested parties.

### State Funds allocated to Swain projects in 2013

NC Ag. Cost Share Program	\$ 92,148
CCAP	\$ 4,773
AgWrap	\$ 18,791
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	<b>\$ 115,712</b>



## News in ACSP

Amanda Buchanan,  
District Technician

Are you tired of working in the mud? Are your access roads and stock trails taking a beating from all the recent winter weather? Good news, there is help! The Swain

SWCD is now taking applications for assistance for the 2015 program year.

Now some of you may be saying, "How can the District help me?" Simple!

## Rental Equipment Now Available



The District has recently been awarded grant funding through TVA and Duke Energy for the purchase of various pieces of agricultural equipment. Call the office today to rent any of the following equipment.

- 10' 3 Pt Hitch/ Gravity Fed Weed Wiper
- 5' and 10' ATV Mount Weed Wiper
- 10' Front Bucket Mount Sprayer
- 15 & 25 gallon sprayer

Prices vary including delivery and pickup.

Additional equipment is available through the Jackson Co. Soil and Water Conservation District including:

- 2 ton Lime Spreader

Contact Barry Stevens at (828) 586-5459 for more information.

Each year our office assists farmers like you make improvements to their farm through cost share assistance. Persons who are engaged in livestock or agricultural production on eligible land may participate in the program. Improvements, or best management practices (BMPs), to your property may include the following:

- Watering tanks
- Stock trails
- Access roads
- Guttering
- Exclusion/Divisional Fencing
- Agricultural Wells

The District office encourages you to contact our office or come visit our office and learn more about the North Carolina Agriculture Cost Share Programs and additional programs provided by our office. We strive not to be the “best known secret.”

## News in the Farmland Preservation Program

Amanda Buchanan,  
District Director

On May 14, 2013 Swain County Commissioners approved the 2013-2016 Farmland Protection Plan for

Swain County. During January and March of 2013 over 100 Swain County farmers participated in the planning process of the plan. Once again, the District would like to say “thank you” to all those who came and participated.

As a result of the community participation eight key action items were identified as key concepts to improve farms within Swain County. Eight key strategies were identified through the process to help maintain and enhance agriculture in Swain County:

- Improve the local economics of farming
- Develop local markets for local farm products
- Cultivate local community support for farmers and farming
- Make the most of available forest lands
- Protect agricultural land from development
- Add value to basic farm products
- Encourage young and beginning farmers
- Diversify farm crops and income.

The District is happy to report over \$230,000 in grant funds have been solicited to address these

strategies. Beginning Spring 2014 the Swain SWCD office will address the importance of improving the local economic of farming through an equipment rental program. Funding for this program was made available through grants received from Duke Energy and WNC Communities TVA Agriculture Forestry Fund.

## News in Conservation Education

Zae Millsaps, Education Coordinator

Thanks to funding received through the Duke Energy-Nantahala Area Soil and Water Conservation Grant the District’s education program will be busy in the upcoming months as several new projects are launched.

The District will be constructing a large informational kiosk for the (CCAP) storm water wetland located next to the new Swain County History Museum. The kiosk will map the aquatic plants located there, provide information on the functionality of the man-made

## Lucky student to attend workshop at NC State

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Each year, the District sponsors one student from Swain County to attend a weeklong workshop at North Carolina State University. In 2013, sophomore **Laura Booth** of Swain High School was selected to attend.



The workshop is a unique, hands-on experience for students across the State interested in the field of natural resource conservation. Applications for the 2014 workshop are accepted through **April 25<sup>th</sup>**. The workshop will take place **June 22-27**. All expenses paid. Scholarships and other awards are up for grabs! Check out the NEW YouTube video by searching for NC Resource Conservation Workshop.

wetland and describe how it protects our local water resources.

Secondly, we're looking forward to advancements being made on our mobile soil exhibit project. Although, we are still in the early stages of construction we hope this will become an innovative and engaging teaching tool for our local teachers and non-formal educators who may find it difficult to present soil science as a fun, relevant topic to our students. The exhibit will be retrofitted from a large cargo trailer and will contain various working exhibits designed to emphasize soil formation, texture, biology, usage and most importantly management. As of March 2013, we have successfully secured \$ 21,544 in grant funding for the project. Although, we still have a long way to go before the exhibit is officially ready for use, we continue to seek grants to gradually cover the expenses of the project. As ambitious as it may sound we hope to have much, if not all, of the exhibit funded through environmental education and conservation based grants. Stay tuned for more information on the exhibit!

What's more is, the District will host its very first youth summer camp starting the summer 2015. Campers will can expect guided day hikes filled with swimming, geocaching and various activities based on local wildlife, botany, soil, water, alternative energy, recycling, and food resources. Registration is open to all rising seventh and eighth graders of Swain Co. starting October, 2014. Fees for the 5-day camp are \$ 20 per student, including one night of camping (optional).

Lastly, the District will be hosting its 40<sup>th</sup> annual Conservation Field Day for the fifth grade students across the county. This day has historically been a special day for the District Board and staff. We have a fun day planned with presentations provided by the N.C. Forest Service, N.C. Cooperative Extension, U.S. Parks Service, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, N.C. Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources and others!

*Conservation Field Day*  
**Swain Public Schools**  
*April 23rd at Deep Creek*  
**Cherokee Central Schools**  
*April 24th at Island Park*



## Updates from NRCS

Kayla Hudson, District Conservationist

### Conservation Plans Needed for Program Participation

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial assistance to farmers and other agricultural producers who install conservation practices on their land. This USDA program is available for local farmers and agricultural producers in Swain County, including Reservation holdings. Interested applicants must have an active conservation plan developed for their farm to be eligible for EQIP; if you are interested in the EQIP, get your plan developed as soon as possible.

While the EQIP has a continuous sign up, interested producers are encouraged to sign up early to avoid later deadlines.

EQIP funding may be used on livestock or row crop operations, Christmas tree/ornamental operations, as

well as, forestland. EQIP assistance may be used for: livestock watering tanks, chemical handling facilities, heavy use area protection, fencing, stream bank protection, and wildlife enhancement, as well as, other erosion control practices.

Woodland practices, including invasive species management, timber stand improvement, and erosion control, are available for timber producers who have a current timber management plan; assistance is also available to offset the cost of forest management plan development.

If you are interested in participating or learning more about the EQIP program, please contact the USDA Service Center in Bryson City, or the Swain Soil and Water Conservation District (828) 488-3785, ext. 3. Make plans for the future by putting conservation to work on your farmland today!

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



## A message from our Chairman Clint Carson, 2014 Chair

If you have any questions about the District and programs you may qualify for, please contact the office at 488-8803 ext. 3. If no one answers it's likely because we're out doing fieldwork so be sure to either call back or leave a voicemail message and we'll be sure to get back to you as soon as possible.

If you have an email address and would like to start receiving our newsletter and program information electronically contact Zae at [zmillsaps@swaincountync.gov](mailto:zmillsaps@swaincountync.gov)



*Pictured from left to right. Back Row: Amanda Buchanan, Kayla Hudson, Zae Millsaps, Michael Wiggins. Front Row: Clint "Cam" Carson Jr., William Shuler, Thurman "Jack" Walls Jr., Avery Taylor, Mitchell Jenkins.*

## Our Mission Statement

*"To provide for a quality environment and higher standard of living while protecting the county's natural resources"*

### Board of Supervisors

**CLINT "CAM" CARSON, JR. – CHAIR**

**MITCHELL JENKINS – VICE CHAIR**

**THURMAN "JACK" WALLS – TREASURER/SECRETARY**

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### District Staff

**AMANDA BUCHANAN – DISTRICT DIRECTOR / ACSP TECHNICIAN**

**ZAE MILLSAPS – EDUCATION COORDINATOR / ADMIN. ASST.**

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**KAYLA HUDSON – DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST**

**MICHAEL WIGGINS – TECHNICIAN**