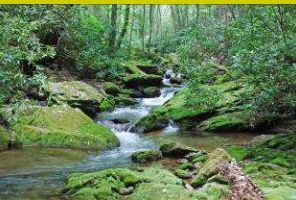
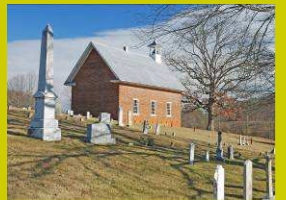
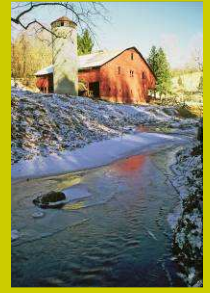
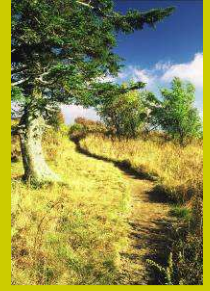


Buncombe County  
Soil & Water Conservation District

Annual Report  
2010 Fiscal Year





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*Newfound Creek Watershed*

MESSAGE FROM BUNCOMBE SWCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



The accomplishments in the Annual Report for the 2010 fiscal year are the result of decades of building relationships with the citizens and leaders of Buncombe County, regional and state governments, and private organizations. Successful conservation projects start with the commitment to a common goal and are achieved through teamwork and cooperation. The Board of Supervisors and staff of the Buncombe SWCD are grateful to all who have contributed to the success of our efforts during the 2010 fiscal year. Our local citizens and those who support our programs have remained committed to soil and water conservation in the face of the economic challenges of the past year. Soil and water conservation within the context of the urban and rural environment of Buncombe County is particularly challenging. With local, state, and federal support, the Buncombe SWCD has the tools necessary to get successful conservation projects on the ground, both in our cities and towns, and on the farm.

In the next fiscal year, the Buncombe SWCD is preparing to celebrate its 60<sup>th</sup> year as a leader in getting conservation on the ground in Buncombe County. The Board and staff of are proud of the progress we have made during that time. Our commitment to effective conservation programs will remain strong as we move forward and take on the challenges of providing leadership, technical assistance, and education for soil and water conservation.

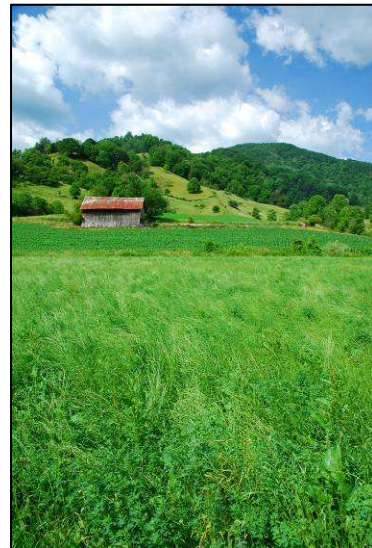
  
James Coman, Chairman

  
David Snelson, Vice Chair

  
Lynn Carland, Secretary

  
Elise Israel, Treasurer

  
Jeff Turner, Member





## Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District

Members – Board of Supervisors  
and  
Staff for FY 2010

### District Board Members:

Jim Coman	Chairman
David Snelson	Vice-Chairperson
Lynn Bonham	Secretary
Elise Israel	Treasurer
Jeff Turner	Member

### District Staff:

Gary Higgins	District Director
Sandra Murphy	Administrative Assistant
Anthony Dowdle	Soil Conservationist-NCACSP
Renee Ray	Soil Conservationist-NCACSP and Environmental Education Coordinator
Jennifer Beck	Watershed Resource Coordinator – Newfound Creek Project
Maria Wise	Soil Conservationist-Farmland Preservation

### USDA – NRCS Staff:

Loring McIntyre	District Conservationist
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## Special Thanks to all our CONSERVATION PARTNERS!



- ❖ Buncombe County Government  
County Commissioners  
County Manager – Wanda Greene  
Assistant County Manager – Jon Creighton  
Finance Department  
Planning Department  
Environmental Health  
County Attorney



- ❖ N. C. DENR – *Division of Soil and Water Conservation*



- ❖ *North Carolina Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts*



- ❖ *North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation*



- ❖ *USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service*



- ❖ *National Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts*

Our Conservation Partners provide essential financial, technical, and administrative services that enable the Buncombe SWCD to carry out its soil and water conservation programs successfully. The Board of Supervisors and staff of the Buncombe SWCD are grateful for their generous contributions to our programs, and their support of the conservation and preservation of the natural resources of Buncombe County.

*“If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people together to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.”*

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND COST SHARE PROJECTS

### Conservation Planning

Natural Resource Management Plans are the foundation on which best management practices are planned and installed. The NRCS and District staff develop Natural Resource Management Plans for agricultural operations, urban landowners, and others. These plans are comprehensive of all the soil, water, and related natural resources on the land unit being planned. The purpose of the planning process is to work with the land users or managers to develop strategies for maintaining or improving the resource base. Plans consist of the management decisions that are made after a careful review of resource problems, the potential of the resource base, and the feasibility of installing best management practices.

In the 2010 fiscal year, NRCS and District staff developed plans for a total of 836 acres.

### North Carolina Agricultural Cost Share Program (NCACSP)

The North Carolina Agriculture Cost Share Program reimburses farmers for seventy-five percent of the cost of installing measures that improve off-site water quality. These cost-shared measures or “best management practices” (BMPs) must meet current USDA-NRCS standards and are designed by District and NRCS personnel. District and NRCS staffs also provide assistance with construction checks and final checks when the projects are complete. During the FY10 fiscal year, District cost-share personnel **Anthony Dowdle and Renee Ray developed 9 contracts totaling \$76,864.** When installed, with the landowner’s twenty-five percent contribution, a total of **\$ 102,485 worth of best management practices** will be “on the ground” and protecting water quality.

The District worked with **7 landowners** to complete BMPs from portions of their contracts. The total cost-share on these projects was **\$46,426.00.** Landowner contributions totaled **\$15,475.00, bringing the total value of BMPs installed \$ 61,901.00.** Installed BMPs are listed below.

Planned and completed BMPs for FY010:

<u>Best Management Practice</u>	<u>Planned</u>	<u>Installed</u>
Stream Bank Repair	60 l. ft.	0
Fencing to exclude livestock from streams	7660 l. ft.	6,434 l. ft.
Watering tanks to provide alternative water source	8	6
Wells & Pumps to provide water for watering tanks	1	2
Spring Developments to provide water for watering tanks	3	1
Heavy Use Area Protection for eroding areas	6,300 sq. ft.	8,100 sq. ft.

Stream Crossings to exclude livestock from streams	3	1
Vegetation for critically eroding areas	1.75ac	1.1ac
Concrete HUAP	0	1,200 sq ft.
Pasture Renovation	0 acres	3.6 acres



*Animal waste storage facility during construction phase in Leicester (cost shared by NCACSP)*

The District is required to conduct an annual spot check of 5% of all active NCACSP contracts. This task is done by staff and members of the Board of Supervisors. The goal of the spot check is to determine whether cost-shared BMPs are being maintained for their intended purpose. This year’s spot check was conducted in May of 2010 on six farms in the county. All spot-checked items were in good condition and functioning as they were intended.

### Newfound Creek Watershed Project

The Newfound Creek Watershed has continued to work with residents in the Newfound Creek watershed in efforts to improve water quality. The primary source for project funding has been EPA 319 Non-Point Source Pollution Grant.

#### EPA 319 Grant Summary

The main source of funding for the Newfound Creek Watershed Project is from EPA 319 grant. These grant funds provide salary for Watershed Resource Coordinator, financial assistance for agriculture BMP cost share projects, water quality monitoring, and outreach. The District planned 14 agricultural BMP and septic repair cost share projects. Nine cost share projects were installed with \$57,299 in expenditures. These projects included: 1600 feet of stream bank restoration, 0.3 acre field border, 1 stream crossing repair, and 8 septic repairs.



*Wayne Brown Stream Restoration project shortly after completion of construction.*



*Stream restoration project one year after completion, with concrete extensions to stream crossing*

A grant application to work in the Cane Creek Watershed was submitted to EPA 319 working for \$360,707. Cane Creek has been listed on the EPA 303d list since 2006 for biological impairment. The goals of the grant are to identify stressors and sources of impairment, develop Watershed Management Plan, and installation of agriculture BMPs.

### Outreach

The Newfound Watershed Coordinator hosted two Stakeholder meetings within the community. One workshop featured a presentation on designing, constructing, and maintaining access roads in the mountains. The second workshop featured benefits of stockpiling winter forage.

BCTV featured a successful Newfound Watershed cost share project in a video clip that played on public television.

### Water Quality

Water samples are collected twice a month and analyzed for fecal coliform and nutrient levels by UNCA's Environmental Quality Institute. Sampling temporarily halted in the fall to administrative changes at EQI.

## Education

The Watershed Coordinator assisted with the Canon International Envirothon, NC Mountain State Fair, and Buncombe County Field Days.

## Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP)

The total CCAP allocation for the 2010 fiscal year was **\$11,886**. These funds came from two sources. **\$3,723** was from State Appropriations and **\$8,163** was from a Clean Water Management Trust Fund Grant the Division received. Two contracts were written and one was completed.



*Buncombe County Sports Complex*

*Before and after CCAP seeding project*



## Consultations

Citizens of Buncombe County often access the technical expertise of the District and NRCS staff through various types of consultations. Consultations provide staff with an opportunity to provide assistance to clients in several ways. A consultation can be initiated when a client visits the office to access various types of information such as brochures, soils data, soils

maps, flood plain maps, topographic maps, archived aerial photographs, or other information. These same types of information can be transmitted by mail or in some cases electronically as well. Clients can also obtain the information they need from meetings with staff, via e-mail, or telephone conversations. In many cases, a site visit may be necessary to properly assess a resource problem and arrive at solutions. All these types of client assistance are grouped in a category called “consultations”. In the 2010 fiscal year, the District and NRCS staffs estimate they assisted clients through **400 consultations**. Staff time spent on a consultation can range from a five-minute phone conversation to several hours spent on a trip to a client’s site and follow-up assistance.

### Erosion Control Plan Reviews

The Erosion Control Ordinances of both Buncombe County and the City of Asheville require that erosion control plans submitted to them be reviewed by the Soil and Water Conservation District. The District staff makes a site visit to each project, and does assessments of the soil conditions and reviews the seeding specifications. A written reply is sent to the either the city or the County for each plan received by the District office. The review process by the District averages about two and one-half hours for each plan.

During the 2010 fiscal year the District reviewed **19 erosion control plans and 16 stormwater plans** for the County and **8 erosion control plans** for the City of Asheville.

### Operation Reviews/Waste Management System Assistance

The Soil and Water Conservation District, pursuant to the requirements of the State’s non-discharge rules relating to confined animal operations, conducts annual operation reviews of 8 such operations in the county. These operations are required to have an animal waste management system in place, and manage the system and animal waste in accordance with a plan developed by the District and the NRCS. Districts do operation reviews to help operators meet the requirements of the state’s Compliance Reviews. Personnel from the N. C. DENR, Division of Water Quality conduct compliance reviews. The eight operations with these systems and plans in Buncombe County are dairy operations. The annual operation review consists of a visit to the operation to assess the physical condition of the components of the waste management system and crop application fields, the record keeping by the operator, and any possible instances of discharge to surface waters from the operation.



During the 2010 fiscal year, the **District conducted 8 operation reviews**. The District staff was unable to establish access to one of the operations needing a review. District staff provides follow-up assistance to help operators in maintaining compliance with state laws, and may visit an operation several times during the year.



## Buncombe SWCD Outreach / Environmental Awareness for 2009/10



This past year District outreach and education programs directly reached thousands of students and adults through a number of strategies.

<u>Activity</u>	<u># Completed</u>	<u># Reached</u>
Environmental Education Field Days	2	400
Asheville Middle School FLOW	1	60
Classroom lessons	25	625
Career Day	2	100
WNC Regional State Fair	1	15,000
Quarterly Newsletter (mailed)	4	3,760
Quarterly Newsletter (emailed)	4	1,600
Web site (estimated)	1	15,000
BCTV programs (estimated)	2	20,000
Sponsor Envirothon Teams	2	10
Sponsor Students - Resource Conservation Workshop	3	3
Assist With Area 1 Envirothon	1	210
Assist With NC Envirothon	1	250
Assist with and sponsor 2009 Canon Envirothon	1	n/a
Participate in Earth Day Celebration	1	50

## FARMLAND PRESERVATION – VAD Program



The District assists the Agricultural Advisory Board with the administration of the Buncombe County Voluntary Farmland Preservation Ordinance. The staff assists with meeting agendas, minutes, newsletters, processing applications, writing conservation plans, ranking applicants for conservation easements, and other duties. The Buncombe County Planning Department assists the Board with some of these duties as well.

During the 2010 fiscal year, four new farms were added to the program, and new applications approved totaled **587.33** acres. However, four separate farms were withdrawn from the program for various reasons for a total of **186.03** acres. As of June 30, 2010 there were **353** farms in the program totaling **29,913.87** acres.

The following activities were associated with the Buncombe SWCD's farmland preservation program in the past year:

1. Worked with AB TECH "Project Skill-Up" to help match prospective clients to programs.
2. Applied for over \$300,000 in grants from ADFP Trust Fund for permanent easements
3. Coordinated a Rural Lands and Agribusiness Update for legal professionals and others who work with farmers on Estate Planning issues.
4. Signed up 5 additional landowners for the Conservation Easement Program totaling 756 acres.
5. Received \$40,000 in transaction cost funding from Buncombe County for a conservation easement on 273 acres in Broad River, Ray Kirstein.
6. Co-Hosted a "Keeping Your Farm" Landowners Meeting with Cooperative Extension.
7. Coordinated a visit from the Commissioner of Agriculture, Steve Troxler, to the Snelson farm to see the progress of the conservation easement
8. Co-Hosted and Presented at a Conservation Easement Workshop for Soil and Water Conservation District Employees. Other participating groups were Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, N. C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and Conservation Trust for North Carolina.
9. Coordinated with local media to promote the Farmland Preservation Program
10. Passing of EVAD for Buncombe County at the Ag Board Level.



11. Attended the regional VAD workshop in Morganton
12. Attended an Ag Symposium in Statesville
13. Presented to Soil and Water Employees, Conservation Trusts and others at the NC A & T University Western Grassroots Conference at Warren Wilson.
14. Performed yearly monitoring on two Permanent Conservation Easements
15. Contributed to the Regional GIS project, Linking Lands.

### BCSWCD Grant Recipient

Buncombe County Soil & Water Conservation District (BCSWCD) was recently awarded grant funding to sponsor 2 Envirothon teams. The grant was awarded by the Pigeon River Fund. The Pigeon River Fund exists to improve the streams and rivers of Haywood, Buncombe, and Madison Counties. Madison, Haywood, and Buncombe SWCD all received funding to assist with Envirothon. The Envirothon is a fun, hands-on, natural science academic event that challenges and engages students to think critically about the natural world and their role in it. The Envirothon combines an in-class curriculum with outdoor training to help students learn and to experience more about Aquatic Ecology, Forestry, Soils & Land Use, Wildlife and Current Environmental Issues. Also students will be volunteering in an event that helps their local environment such as a litter sweep, river clean up, recycling project, etc... as part of receiving the grant. The grant will assist with buying materials, making study guides, books, CD's, flash cards and any other educational materials. The grant will also pay for registration fees and possibly hotels at the state competition. BCSWCD would like to say thank you to the Pigeon River Fund for helping make it possible to have Envirothon Teams. We would also like to thank the staff at Madison and Haywood SWCD for working together to receive this grant.



### DISTRICT HIRES NEW EDUCATION COORDINATOR



Renee Ray began work as the Education Coordinator and Agriculture Cost Share Technician at the District in August, 2009. Renee grew up in neighboring Yancey County and graduated from Mountain Heritage High School. She attended Mayland Community College, earning an A.A.S. in Horticulture Technology and attended A. B. Tech Community College. Renee also attended Clemson University where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Education, graduating in the spring of 2009. Honors at Clemson included Dean's List; President's List; and

Outstanding Senior.

Renee has worked previously with the N. C. Forest Service, Reems Creek Valley Nursery, and Carolina Native Nursery. She and her husband Jamie currently live in the Windom Community of Yancey County. The staff and SWCD Board of Supervisors look forward to working with Renee.

## SEEDLING SALE REPORT

The BCSWCD annual Tree Seedling Sale was held the last weekend in February, 2010. Due to some cold weather the sale was slower than last year. BCSWCD staff was at Jesse Israel & Sons Nursery Thursday through Saturday selling trees. By Saturday we only had a limited number of species available. A total of 5,800 hardwoods were sold and about 5,000 white pines. The remainder of the white pines were donated to Asheville GreenWorks and Warren Wilson College. A portion of the remaining hardwoods were donated to Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program for a stream restoration project.



The BCSWCD would like to say thanks to Jesse Israel & Sons Nursery for all their help in putting together a successful sale.