3 In the Spotlight is Chair Barbara Bleiweis
Next Generation Leadership Institute (NGLI) cohort.

5 A Dazen Years of Digging Festival - May 14, 2022 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Celebrating Our History and Community.

7 Resource Conservation Workshop (RCW)
A workshop designed for high school students who express an interest in natural resources.
Contact Information
Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation District
Address: 2145 Suttle Avenue, Charlotte, NC 28208
Phone: 704.336.2455

Business Hours are 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday

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Our Chair, Barbara Bleiweis, was selected by our National Association of Conservation Districts, to be one of seven participants in the inaugural Next Generation Leadership Institute (NGLI). The NGLI cohort, which kicked off in 2020 had a two year experience because of Covid restrictions, and were able to meet virtually throughout 2020, then in 2021, several times in person. They shared conservation leadership stories and practices and learned about the future of conservation and NACD’s role in shaping that future. The cohort bonded, and that bonding was most evident in the gatherings at our NACD Annual Meeting Orlando in February. They shared memories of their experience, what was important to them. At one of the business sessions before the 45 states and 3 territories’ members, Barb read a poem she composed, telling of her appreciation of these two years. At this event, the seven participants revealed their donation of $8,200 to the Conservation Foundation to cover the expenses of their training.

A Past and the current President of NACD heard the members speak together and were greatly moved to hear their reactions. These individuals will be among the most informed, motivated leaders of our national efforts as well as in their home districts.
On Sunday, March 20th, Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD) provided on-site training and support as two Huntersville neighborhoods, Cambridge Grove and Hampton Heights, held their first Spring Stream Clean. The neighborhoods have jointly taken on two tributaries that flow through their communities into Caldwell Creek as part of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Stormwater Services’ Adopt-a-Stream program.

About 30 people, kids and adults, gathered to learn stream health basics and remove large debris and more than 25 bags of trash from the creeks.

-Jennifer Fear with Mecklenburg Soil & Water Conservation District
THE DOZEN YEARS OF DIGGING FESTIVAL

Celebrating the 12th Anniversary of
Winterfield Community Garden & Children’s Garden

Saturday May 14, 2022 from 10am - 2pm
Winterfield Elementary School, 3100 Winterfield Place, Charlotte, NC 28205
( Limited on site parking. Please walk or bike from overflow parking at Commonwealth School parking lot at 5112 Central Avenue)

Join us in celebrating the joys of gardening, the wonder of nature, & the diverse culture of Charlotte’s Eastside.

An opening ceremony will kick off the fun with awards, student performances, Dig It Poetry Contest winners, & a special appearance by Festival Poet Laureate, Honora Ankong.

Relax to the music of DJ Steel & enjoy local food trucks & the art gallery. Fill up your festival passport as you visit all the great exhibits & turn it in to collect a prize.

Meet the artists & play ball at the unveiling of DIRTBALL - an interactive art installation teaming up science, art, & basketball.

Schedule
10:00am
Opening Ceremony
- Winterfield Choir, Recognitions, Poet - Honora Ankong, & Dig It Poetry Contest winners

11:00am
- Unveiling of DIRTBALL. Meet the artists & shoot a hoop for the soil

11:30am - 2:00pm
Activities, Games, & Fun for all ages!
- Neighborhood Welcome Center
- Food Trucks
- Garden Tours
- Music & performances hosted by DJ - Steel Wheels
- Dig It Poetry Walk & WES Student Art Gallery
- Veggie transplants & fresh produce from student market
- Bike safety station. Free helmets & bike bells while supplies last
- Scooter Rodeo
- Mobile Soils Classroom
- Expert Gardening Advice
- Native Plant & Pollinator station
- Nature Activities
- Bird Lore and LIVE Raptors
- Story Time in Garden Gazebo at 12:30 & 1:30
- Fire Engine with Mascot Blaze
- Gus the Safety Bus
... AND MORE!!

A Special Thanks to Our Partners

Winterfield Neighborhood Association
Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation
Cultura Para Todos
Garring Education Foundation
Charlotte LIT
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Storm Water Services (CMSWS) just wrapped up their 4th annual Creek Week celebrations, which took place from March 19-26. This is a week of activities for residents to learn about, interact with, and care for the waterways throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg. This year’s events included: tree and live stake planting, storm drain marking, a stream walk and brewery tour, several stream cleanups, and a rain barrel workshop. The week concluded with The Big Spring Clean where over 300 residents gathered at seven stream locations and removed over five tons of litter. Next year’s events will take place March 18-25.

Until then, CMSWS will continue hosting their monthly volunteer events which occur the second Saturday and last Thursday of every month, as well as coordinating with companies, families, and other groups that want to host their own events. You can find out more about all of the volunteer opportunities that CMSWS has to offer by visiting StormWater.CharMeck.org and clicking on the “Volunteer” tab.

-Ashley Smith with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Storm Water Services
Resource Conservation Workshop (RCW)
June 26- July 1, 2022 at NC State University

The Resource Conservation Workshop is sponsored by the NC Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in conjunction with the Division of Soil and Water Conservation and the Soil Science Department of NC State University.

The Resource Conservation Workshop is a five-day training camp that brings together a diverse group of students from across North Carolina. The primary objective of the program is to learn about natural resources and their management in today’s environment (forest management, soil characteristics and soil conservation, non-agricultural uses for soils, water quality and watershed management, and wildlife and fisheries management). Students are housed in NCSU campus dormitories under the guidance of live-in counselors.

Who is eligible?
• Students who have demonstrated an interest in natural resource conservation
• Students that attend school in Mecklenburg County
• Priority is given to students who are rising juniors and seniors

How to apply:
• Start by visiting: http://ncagr.gov/SWC/educational/RCW.html
• Fill out an electronic application form
• Submit your application to Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation District. A Letter of Recommendation from a teacher, principal or guidance counselor is favorable; however it is not a requirement

MSWCD Application Deadline: May 15, 2022

Submit to: Anganette Byrd at Anganette.Byrd@mecklenburgcountync.gov

Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD) will sponsor one student delegate to attend the RCW. This workshop is a $550.00 value that includes a $450.00 registration fee and $100.00 for meal allowance (covers the cost of meals that are not included in the registration fee).
Rain Barrels for Sale

Purchase a new rain barrel today!

Rain Barrels provide an easy way for homeowners to help protect our streams and lakes in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Capturing the water that flows off your roof keeps rain water out of the storm drains and allows it to flow into the ground and replenish the ground water supply.

Not only are rain barrels ecologically friendly, they are pocket friendly as well. Rain barrels provide you with a FREE source of chemical-free water for your yard and garden and reduce your need for treated water.

A one inch rainfall over a 1,000 square foot roof provides over 620 gallons of water. With the overflow valve you can direct this water to your garden or any other area of your yard. The next time it rains be prepared to collect rain water in your new rain barrel. Rain Barrels are available for purchase year-round at the Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation District.

Models and Prices are as follows:
60 gallon rain barrel is (31 H x 28 W) is $110 (price includes tax).
80 gallon rain barrel is (37 H x 28 W) is $125 (price includes tax).

Business hours are 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Please call 704.336.2455 to confirm availability and schedule a time for pick up.

Note: Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation District has sold out of the 60 gallon rain barrel. We are currently working with the vendor to restock our supply of them.
Healthy Soil

Soil importance
We depend on soil for so many things. Soil helps clean water by filtering it. Soil helps make our climate moderate by absorbing and releasing heat. Soil even provides a place to build homes. Most importantly, soil helps us grow plants, for food, animal food and building materials.

Soil sample boxes
Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation District offers soil sample boxes to residents in Mecklenburg County. The NC Agronomic Services Division in Raleigh, NC analyzes soil for its nutrient content and for properties that affect plant growth.

Soil testing . . .
• fosters plant growth by providing optimal lime and fertilizer recommendations,
• diagnoses common nutrient deficiencies and toxicities and, promotes environmental quality.

Soil test fees
Routine Samples submitted April-November there is no fee; for Routine Samples submitted during the peak season, December-March there is a fee of $4.00 per sample. The fee helps offset costs to expedite processing.

NC Agronomic Services
Soil Section Testing Provides:

Detailed chemical soil analyses, such as
• levels of major plant nutrients, including phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium & sulfur:
• levels of plant micronutrients, including copper, manganese & zinc:
• levels of sodium:
• pH and acidity:
• soil class:
• percent base saturation:
• percent humic matter:
• cation exchange capacity and
• weight-to-volume ratio.

Consider having your soil tested. For a free soil sample box, please send requests to:
Anganette.Byrd@mecklenburgcountync.gov
The Urban Cost Share Program is an incentive-based program designed to help land users address existing erosion and other non-point source water pollution issues in approved watersheds.

The program offers financial and technical assistance to reduce runoff, stop erosion and address other non-point source pollution issues. Approved applicants are eligible to receive 75% of allowable costs, up to $7,500.00, associated with installing approved Best Management Practices at their location.

Urban Cost Share Availability: The full Urban Cost Share Program is open to citizens throughout the City of Charlotte and in unincorporated Mecklenburg County.

As of 2016, we are also expanded our program to include the six other municipalities in Mecklenburg County. Citizens in Matthews, Mint Hill, Pineville, Huntersville and Cornelius are now eligible to apply for assistance with stabilization of eroding streambanks. Due to restrictions by our grant funding source, citizens in these areas are NOT currently eligible for assistance with remaining practices, excepting riparian buffers associated with a streambank stabilization project.

Urban Cost Share Program Information: To be considered for assistance, please complete an interest form as a first step in being considered for assistance. District staff will review forms and property maps and schedule a site assessment and assist with application to the program when appropriate.

All applications to the program are ranked for their benefit to water quality. Qualified applications are funded in order of rank as funds allow. Approved applicants will receive a BMP design and installation guidance. Applicants may begin implementation of practices upon notice of board approval. Funds expended prior to board approval are not eligible for reimbursement. Per contract terms, participants are responsible for maintaining practices for a minimum of five years. Additional restrictions may apply.

### Best Management Practices (BMPs)

**Best Management Practices Offered (City of Charlotte and Unincorporated Mecklenburg County only):**

**Critical Area Planting:** Establishing permanent vegetation on sites that have steep slopes with high erosion rates, and on sites that have physical, chemical, or biological conditions that prevent the establishment of vegetation with normal practices.

**Grassed Waterway (Swale):** A natural or constructed channel that is shaped or graded to required dimensions and established in suitable vegetation for the stable conveyance of runoff.

**Pet Waste Receptacles:** Receptacles and supplies to better manage pet waste, usually in public areas.

**Rain Garden:** A landscaped area that collects storm water runoff.

**Best Management Practices (BMPs)**

**Best Management Practices Offered (throughout Mecklenburg County, including the seven municipalities):**

**Streambank Stabilization:** Vegetative stabilization (planting) and/or grading of erosive streambanks and shorelines to stabilize erosion and reduce soil loss.

**Riparian Buffers (restrictions apply):** An area dominated by trees and/or shrubs located adjacent to and up-gradient from water courses or water bodies.

For additional information or questions, please contact the Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation District at 704.336.2455 or Leslie.VandenHerik@mecklenburgcountync.gov
Agriculture Cost Share Program (ACSP)

The District is available to help farmers and other agricultural producers reduce erosion and prevent other water pollution. The Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation District received an allocation of approximately $20,000.00 this fiscal year. Funds are available to assist with the cost of installing conservation practices to protect water quality and agricultural interests. Practice examples include livestock exclusion systems, waste management systems, stream stabilization and more. For more information, please call 704.336.2455 or visit www.MecklenburgConservation.com

Agricultural Water Resources Assistance Program (AgWRAP)

The newest of our state cost share assistance programs; the Agricultural Water Resources Assistance Program (AgWRAP) is available to assist with increasing water availability for agricultural production. The Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation District received an allocation of $9,791.00 for the 2022 fiscal year. Funds are available to assist with the construction of new farm ponds (restrictions apply), the dredging or repair of existing farm ponds, wells for irrigation and/or livestock watering and other water quantity related conservation practices. For more information, please call 704.336.2455 or visit www.MecklenburgConservation.com

Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP)

The NC Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP) is a statewide program designed to help citizens to address urban/suburban non-point source pollution and erosion issues, much like our local Urban Cost Share Program. This program is especially valuable to citizens who live within the corporate limits of the towns of Davidson, Cornelius, Huntersville, Mint Hill, Matthews and Pineville (eligible for only limited practices through the UCSP). Available practices include: Cisterns, Rain Gardens, Backyard Wetlands, Riparian Buffers, Pet Waste Receptacles and more. CCAP is available county wide, however funding is limited. The FY22 CCAP regional funding cycle is complete, the District submitted one application for funding and was awarded $50,000.00 and will be submitting a second application in the coming weeks. If you wish to be considered for funding in FY23, please contact the District to discuss, funding cycle is anticipated to open during the fall of 2022. Incoming applications will be ranked and reviewed for maximum water quality benefit and submitted to the next regional funding pool. Approved applicant will receive technical assistance related to best management practices (BMPs) specific to their site, as well as reimbursement of up to 75% of allowable expenses. For more information, please call 704.336.2455 or visit www.MecklenburgConservation.com
Do you own or run a farm, natural resource or other conservation related business? Would you be interested in sponsoring our newsletter through a small ad? If so, we need your input! What size add would you be interested in – one eight page, quarter page, half page? How much would you consider a reasonable cost for sponsorship? How frequently would you be interested in sponsoring? Our newsletter is distributed via e-mail once a quarter to over 2,500 people in Charlotte/Mecklenburg County and the surrounding area in addition to posting it on our website. We need your feedback to help us move forward with development of a newsletter sponsorship program. If you or someone you know might be interested in newsletter sponsorship, please send us your feedback to Leslie.VandenHerik@mecklenburgcountync.gov

Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD) publishes a quarterly newsletter. It includes relevant and valuable information about the who we are and what we are doing in the community. We would like to encourage you to become a subscriber today.
Mecklenburg County SWCD held the first of a series of workshops for local producers in early March. The ‘Trends in Soil Health’ workshop was hosted by Hodges Family Farm and featured NRCS Regional Soil Health Specialist, Nathan Lowder as guest speaker. A hands-on demonstration using a rainfall simulator, followed by a presentation, gave area farmers an up close look at the capacity of soil to absorb and filter water, reduce runoff, and combat soil loss under different soil management strategies. Cost-share for soil health and conservation, such as No-till and Cover Crops, are available through the MSWCD. Photographs from the workshop are on the cover of this newsletter and they are courtesy of Jennifer Fear.

Nathan Lowder, photographed on the right, holds a BS in Agricultural Environmental Technology from NC State University. Nathan has 20 years of service with NRCS. MSWCD asked Nathan why is soil health important to you? Nathan replied, “In the many years of agriculture production across the world, we as producers have followed managements that have continued to degrade our resources. Producers that transition to Soil Health Management Systems follow conservation practices and management to enable the resource to be rebuilt and regain function as it was intended to do.”

Contact Information
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Serving: DE, MD, NC, PR, SC, VA, VI
NRCS Soil Health Website

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