

# THE DISTRICT CURRENT

VOLUME 42, ISSUE 3      FALL 2011

## DISTRICT TAKES PART IN 2011 FARM CITY DAY



**Farm City Day fun** — Laurie Brokaw prepares agriculture and horticulture-related pages for children to color at this year's Farm City Day on Oct. 1. At the rear, several children enjoy playing in our traditional corn box as their parents watch and other District staff make themselves available to answer any questions. Despite the windy and cold weather, the day was another successful community outreach for HCSWCD.

*Photo by Monica Booth*

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# SWCD SWITCHED FROM NC DENR TO NCDA&CS

By Laurie Brokaw

We've been moved!

While our local Hendersonville office is still in the same physical location, the NC Division of Soil and Water has recently changed departments. They have been moved from the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources to the NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services. The transition took place over several months, after NC General Assembly approved the change at the start of the new budget year in July. Individual county Soil & Water Conservation Districts are partially funded through the Division of Soil & Water, so this move

could potentially effect each county. The change seemed like a good idea because the Division is heavily agriculture and technical assistance-based, rather than regulatory. So far, it seems to be working very well. For detailed information about what programs we manage locally for the Division, visit [www.ncagr.gov/sw/](http://www.ncagr.gov/sw/)



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## DISTRICT PROJECT TRANSFORMS POND TO WETLANDS

By Dorothee Kellinghusen

The nicely-landscaped property with the pond has always drawn the attention of people passing the Van Wingerden greenhouse on Haywood Road. Right now many may be puzzled, because there is a lot of construction going on. The reason is that the little lake is undergoing a transformation into a stormwater-cleaning wetland and will soon be full of native plants. It is a project of the Henderson County Soil and Water Conservation District and Van Wingerden International, Inc. The environmental purpose of the new stormwater wetland is to combine deep pools, shallow land, thousands of native plants and its new flashboard riser outlet structure to work together to release the water slower, cleaner and more fish-friendlier than before.

The project started in 2008 when Bert Lemkes, president and co-owner of Van Wingerden, contacted Shaun Moore, Watershed Resources Coordinator with the District. Being concerned about the impact on the environment, he asked for advice to better manage the high volume of rain water, called stormwater, that runs off the greenhouse roofs. Lemkes has worked previously with the SWCD and the Mills River Partnership on projects to protect water quality in the Mills River watershed.

The Van Wingerden project is not only an example of a Best Management Practice but also has an educational value. Just a few days ago, Joe Taylor, teacher at West Henderson High School, brought his Horticulture class to the site. These students were particularly interested in learning which native plants the planners chose for this project, but also to see the construction of the natural filtration system.

Stormwater management is focused on reducing the volume and intensity of rain water runoff and removing pollutants before they reach our streams. Stormwater management enhances groundwater recharge, reduces flooding and stream bank erosion, moderates stream levels during droughts and floods and generally protects water quality.



**AFTER** — Thousands of native plants have been planted in the reshaped pond to help create a natural filter to clean the stormwater before its slow release into the stream.

Photo by Shaun Moore



**BEFORE** — This pond at Van Wingerden International, Inc. on Haywood Road receives stormwater runoff from 28 acres of rooftop and parking lot in the Mills River watershed.

Photo by Dorothee Kellinghusen

The new Van Wingerden stormwater wetland will do all these things by capturing and treating rain water that drains off of 28 acres of greenhouse rooftop and parking lots. This is more than twice the size of a Super Wal-Mart and its parking lot. One inch of rain on this amount of impervious area generates over 750,000 gallons of water. The wetland will treat this water by naturally filtering it through soil and native plants and releasing it slowly over a 60 to 72 hour period. Studies show this slow drawdown allows pollutants to be removed by the wetland rather than being released to the river. This also insures shallow water will not remain standing long enough for mosquitoes to reproduce.

In 2008, Lemkes and District staff conducted an assessment of Van Wingerden's needs, regulatory requirements, cost and benefits, potential funding methods and site constraints. They then developed a preliminary design. Because of the large scale of this project, a local engineering firm was hired to help

See "Pond" on Page 4

# SIGNUPS FOR EQIP 2012 NOW UNDER WAY IN HENDERSON COUNTY

By Bob Twomey

The current 2012 EQIP signup is underway for Henderson County. New rules now allow signup for the program year-round, and specific "batching periods" allow us to rank applications for cost-share consideration. EQIP is strictly for agricultural operations. Applicants must go by the Farm Services Agency (FSA) office to make sure all farm records are current before we can complete an application. Also, NRCS must have a complete conservation plan already prepared before we can rank an application. All of the final rules for EQIP 2012 are not complete yet, but will be soon. If anyone has questions, please feel free to come by the NRCS office and meet with Bob Twomey, or call the Henderson Soil & Water District office.

## EARTH DAY 2012 SET FOR SATURDAY, APRIL 28

By Laurie Brokaw

It's not too early to start planning to be a part of ECO's annual Earth Day Festival. It will be held on Saturday, April 28, 2012 on the large field at the campus of Blue Ridge Community College in Flat Rock. This will be a chance for local organizations, schools, businesses, citizen groups, musicians, and government agencies to showcase and promote various steps toward sustainability and eco-conscious living. Workshops will be held throughout the day, highlighting ways to invest in 'green' practices for your home or business. The annual Green Olympics competition will take place and ECO encourages middle and high school teams to participate. The Watershed Festival will also be

on-going during the event, providing festival-goers a chance to learn about water resources on a variety of scales, so they can gain a better understanding of how using water and protecting it affects their daily lives. Please join us for a terrific day filled with good food, live music, fun games, and great information and help us celebrate Earth Day 2012! For more information on joining this celebration, please contact: Rachel Hodge AmeriCorps Project Conserve, Water Quality Administrator ECO, Environmental and Conservation Organization 121 Third Ave West, Suite 4 Hendersonville, NC 28792 [www.eco-wnc.org](http://www.eco-wnc.org) (828) 692-0385.



## POND

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once the project was deemed feasible. Confluence Engineering prepared the design, grant application and permits and oversaw construction, with the understanding that the company would not get paid unless the grant was awarded. Moore submitted a grant application to the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund proposing to install stormwater Best Management Practices on all three of Van Wingerden's greenhouses in Mills River. After going unfunded for two years due to a tight State budget and after scaling the proposal down to the highest priority site of the three facilities, the grant was awarded in February of this year. It pays for two-thirds of the project and Van Wingerden is paying the remainder.

Many parties have been involved, Moore said. Just in the lead-up to construction, the District worked with the DOT, US Army Corp of Engineers, NC Division of Water Quality, utility companies, Mills River Fire Department, US Fish and Wildlife Service, NC Wildlife Resources Commission, NC Division of Land Quality, Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, Waggoner and Rhodes Surveying and neighboring landowners. The construction was done by local grading contractor Greg Albea of Hendersonville Equipment and Rental. One of the major materials used in the project was compost from Waste Stream Innovations in Mills River, a company that makes compost from raw materials primarily sourced from local farms. "Everyone has been helpful and excited to see the project happen," Moore said.

Van Wingerden has donated a permanent conservation easement on the wetland that will ensure its presence forever. District staff, who provide advice and help with soil and water conservation projects free of charge, are hoping to work on other water quality projects in the Mills River watershed, "because it is the source of our public drinking water", Moore said.

THE HENDERSON COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

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