

# The District Current

Volume 47, Issue 4 Winter 2017

## Farewell, Rachel!

With mixed emotions the Henderson Soil and Water Conservation District bids farewell to one of its own. Rachel Smith, the previous Conservation Engineer, has accepted a new position with the Division of Soil and Water Conservation at their Fletcher office. Her new role as Environmental Engineer began on December 11, 2017. As Environmental Engineer, Rachel will assist 18 counties with their designs and plans for best management practices.



Although Henderson County will greatly miss Rachel and the expertise she brings to the field, we are happy for her and wish her the most success.

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\*Check out our Annual Report online:

[www.hendersoncountync.org/soil](http://www.hendersoncountync.org/soil)



#### District Supervisors:

Andrew Brannon, Chairman  
Dr. Greg Hoyt, Vice Chairman  
Wayne Carland, Treasurer  
Daniel McConnell, Secretary  
Jerred Nix, Member

#### District Staff:

Jonathan Wallin, District Director  
April Hoyt, Soil Conservationist/Edu. Coord.  
Caroline Wicker, Administrative Assistant  
Emily Pohlman, NRCS District Conservationist

## Rainfall Simulator Training

The NC Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation recently purchased three rainfall simulator units to demonstrate soil health concepts. Three Henderson Soil and Water Conservation District employees recently attended a training for utilizing the unit housed in Western North Carolina.

The Rainfall Simulator, designed and sold by Conservation Demonstrations of Kansas, clearly portrays the effects that soil texture, organic matter, and root mass have on soil. These characteristics determine the infiltration and runoff after rainfall and thereby the overall health of the soil.

To operate the simulator, five trays of soil were placed on the



unit. Three trays were from the same sam-

ple site (a poor quality, tilled soil), one was high in organic matter, and the last was cut from a field and still contained the living vegetation and root mat from the site. The three samples from the same site were varied by covering one with plant residue, wetting one briefly with a simulated rain shower, and leaving the last unchanged. As "rain" fell on the samples, one quickly observed the difference in both runoff and infiltration due to

catch basins both at the front and below the samples. After the rainfall, the samples were overturned to show the amount of water absorbed by each sample (photo: bottom right).

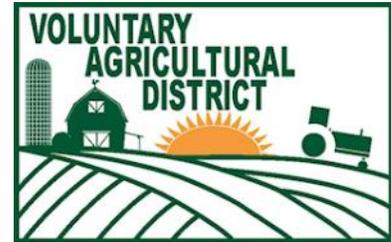
The rainfall simulator demonstration will be useful for Districts to show the importance of Best Management Practices such as cover crops and no-till practices. Cover Crops are grown for seasonal protection, erosion control, and soil improvement. No-till practices require coverage of soil by plant residue from preceding crops and help prevent erosion, sedimentation, and pollution from dissolved and sediment-attached substances.

To learn more about improving your soil's health using these practices, contact the Henderson County Soil and Water Conservation District at (828) 697-4949.



## Voluntary Agricultural Districts

We are working on updating our Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) records and need your help! If you are currently in, or would like to be in, the VAD program, please give us a call! This program notifies the public that agriculture is the primary use of the land now and for the foreseeable future, preserving and protecting our rural heritage.



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## Southeast Conservation Districts Employees Association Annual Meeting

What do you get when you mix 100+ Conservation District employees, two full days, and a variety of seeds? The Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conservation District Employees Association (SECDEA)!

April Hoyt and Caroline Wicker recently attended the Annual Meeting in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. The conference held true to its theme, "Discovering our Southeast Treasures", by highlighting programs and practices of conservation occurring in various states. The SECDEA represents Conservation District employees in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and the Virgin Islands. Conservation programs in other states such as educational resources to use in the schools, grant opportunities, and best management practices that have been implemented were shared with attendees. Additionally, Mary Courtney of Kentucky, named the 2016 "Farm Mom of the Year", shared her story of fulfilling a life-long dream of full-time farming. Representatives from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Division of Forestry were also guest speakers.

April was awarded first place for her "Ag Art" during one of the sessions (photo at right). What a fun idea to implement with school-aged youth!

April and Caroline left the meeting with new ideas and enthusiasm for their conservation work in Henderson County.



## Pilot Supervisor Training Program

Henderson County was selected as one of eight counties in the state to serve as a Pilot County for the Division of Soil and Water Conservation’s Supervisor Training Program. The Program was established to assist Supervisors in meeting the training requirements set forth by the NC General Assembly under Session Law 2016-113. The law requires training for Supervisors to enhance their overall capacity to deliver Soil and Water Conservation services.



As members of the Pilot Program, Henderson County Supervisors will participate in six hours of approved credit in 2018 and record their training in a database managed by the Division. The training may be in the form of classroom lessons, field days, meetings, or other approved formats. In general, educational topics dealing with overall operations of soil and water conservation districts will qualify for credit.

Henderson County is pleased to serve as a pilot county for the development of a statewide Supervisor Training Program set to launch in January 2019.

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Our mission:

To provide educational, technical and financial assistance to conserve soil, improve water quality and enhance the natural resources of Henderson County.

