



# ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

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# *Clay SWCD Board Chairman's Perspective*

Clay County Soil & Water Conservation District is  
pleased to present our 2025-2026  
Annual Report.

We are proud of these highlights and accomplishments  
as we delivered technical, financial, and environmental  
education programs.

The board and staff combined federal, state, local, and  
grant funds for maximum benefit for Clay County  
residents.

We hope, as you read our annual report, you will  
deepen your own convictions of the importance of  
conservation of natural resources.



# Mission Statement

*Clay SWCD began its conservation mission in 1953; although personnel have changed our mission continues. Two staff provide trusted technical, financial & educational assistance to address conservation needs. Improving water quality and encouraging healthy soils is our constant goal.*



Clay County Soil & Water Board of Supervisors  
( L to R) Jason Belcher, Salvador Moreno, Tammy Mull, Glen Cheeks, & Ronnie Smith



# Clay SWCD STAFF



*Leanna Staton*  
*District Director*

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*Tim Jones*  
*Ag-Cost Share*  
*Technician*



# Introduction

Clay County Conservation District is a natural resource agency, and we've assisted to improve soil health and water quality for over 70 years. The years of success are a result of our programs and strong connection with our residents and landowners.

We help develop conservation plans, cost share on best management practices, and help educate the public about the importance of stewardship of our environment.

**"Soil & Water Yours for Life"**

Our 2025-2026 annual report includes a glimpse of various programs and methods to address environmental issues such as water quality and non-point source pollution.

We will continue to bridge the gap between private landowners and the conservation of our natural resources with the help of those who contribute time and finances.



## District Highlights

### 2025-2026 Best Management Practices

| PRACTICES                    | QUANTITY     |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| HUAP                         | 12,925 Sq ft |
| EXCLUSION FENCE              | 1,015 Lin ft |
| WATER TANKS                  | 3            |
| ROOFTOP RUNOFF SYSTEM        | 2            |
| AG ROAD REPAIR/STABILIZATION | 1,000 sq yd  |
| LIVESTOCK FEEDING AREA       | 2            |
| PASTURE RENOVATION           | 7.26 acres   |
| STREAM CROSSING              | 1            |
| STRAP                        | 1,400 Lin ft |

| Program's | Allocations | Encumbered   |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| ACSP      | \$54,092    | \$51,134     |
| AgWRAP    | \$9,500     | \$0          |
| II        | \$14,683    | \$14,679     |
| StRAP     | \$101,180   | \$100,998.17 |

# 2025-2026 Best Management Practices



Stock Trails stabilize areas used frequently and intensively for livestock movement. They decrease erosion and improve water quality.



Livestock Exclusion Fencing reduces soil erosion, sedimentation, and water pathogen contamination.





# 2025-2026 Best Management Practices



Watering tanks are a popular and efficient way to provide clean and reliable drinking water for livestock.

Rooftop runoff practices help prevent excessive erosion from livestock traffic around structures.



Micro-irrigation systems are a great way to efficiently provide adequate water while minimizing waste.





## Projects

## Funds

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Tusquittee Creek

\$339,589.00

Webb Creek

\$730,516.00

The Clay SWCD partners with Resource Institute, Inc. (RI) on streambank restoration projects. These streambank projects restore large sections of streambank and would not be possible without Clay Soil & Water Conservation District, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the NC Division of Water Resources, and Clay County participating landowners.

Large projects such as the Webb Creek and Tusquittee Creek decrease erosion and sediment deposition, reduce flooding, and improve water quality in our streams. Total funding brought into Clay County for these projects, to date, was \$1,070,105.



*Tusquittee Creek after restoration*

## StRAP Projects



Hyatt Mill Creek flooding before repairs.

Hyatt Mill Creek after debris removal.



Brasstown Creek with severe blockages.

Brasstown Creek after blockages were removed.





# Community Outreach

Clay Soil and Water Conservation participates in many outreach programs. Our most popular are the Friends of Ag Breakfasts and the Annual Tractor Parade.



Our Friends of Ag Breakfasts are held November through March. Farmers and other community members enjoy fellowship, locally sourced foods, while learning from presenters. Clay County

Farm Bureau and Resource Institute graciously provided funds for food supplies. Clay County Farm Bureau ladies have prepared these breakfasts for 10 years. Partnering agencies and farmers can share their agricultural knowledge and new technologies too.



The annual tractor parade is an outreach event where SWCD provides program information. The parade is enjoyed by participants of all ages. It is scheduled for September 26, 2026.



# Educational Outreach Programs



Top placed educational contest participants pose with their prizes.

Clay HHS students at RCW



Clay SWCD board & staff enjoying RCW slide show.



Students learning at Aquatic and Current Environmental Issues stations during the regional Envirothon. Clay SWCD sponsored Clay HHS Ag/FFA team.



# Educational Outreach Programs

We reach students, adults, and fellow farmers. Outreach programs included Ag Breakfasts, Career and Conservation Field Days, Ag Appreciation events, Mountain State Fair, and Farmland Preservation workshops are a few Educational Outreach opportunities.

Our hope is lessons of conservation will help everyone better manage the natural resources at their homes and in their communities.



Kim Terrell of the Cooperative Extension, talking to our farmers at our Friends of Ag Breakfast, about different programs available to them.

One of our local farmers, Bass Hyatt, talking about his assistance from Clay Soil & Water programs during the Friends of Ag Breakfast.



Mountain State Fair reaches out in WNC.

Farmland Preservation Workshop.

Clay SWCD received its first grant for a conservation easement, thanks to this workshop!





# Partners in Conservation



NCRS programs partner with SWCD programs to help farmers improve efficiency and productivity on their farms.

Introducing a new pilot program - Biochar. Incorporating Biochar into soils is improving water and nutrient retention in the soil health of test plots.

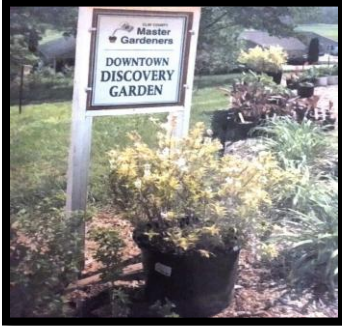


Partnering with NC Cooperative Extension helped provide a grant opportunity for one of our farmers to purchase a Mini Round Hay Baler. This small farm equipment demonstrated new technology and produced smaller and easier to handle hay bales for niche farmers.





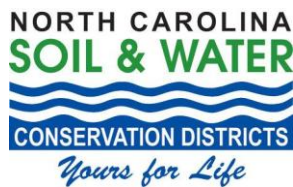
# Partners in Conservation



Clay SWCD, Bee City Hayesville is an affiliate of Bee City USA. We promote the importance and protection of pollinators.



North Carolina Department of  
Agriculture & Consumer Services



*Thanks to our local farming community and the many conservation partners, Clay SWCD has been successful in our mission to protect our natural resources for future generations.*

## Special Thanks

Clay SWCD is so thankful for Ronnie Smith for his continual dedication to conservation and for helping any time he was needed to further our program goals.



NCASWCD President  
Kathy Hughes, presents  
Ronnie Smith  
his 10-year service award.



Clay SWCD would also like to thank Glen Cheeks for his 15 years of service. He is an active farmer who always shares his expertise and time to help others.



Thanks to the Clay SWCD  
Board for their continued  
dedication.

# Clay Soil & Water Conservation District's Rental Equipment Program



Our Fertilizer/Lime Spreader gives farmers the ability to apply bulk quantities which helps to increase farmers' bottom line.

Additionally, our two-row corn planter allows for quick & accurate application of seed for better germination rates, and improved harvests.



The no-till drill provides one-pass applications, helps minimize ground disturbance, and saves farmers fuel costs and time.

For any questions about our rentals, please contact us at (828) 389-9764.

