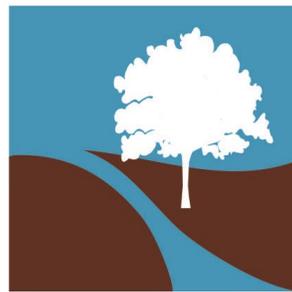


# Swain Soil and Water Conservation District

Long Range Plan 2020-2025



**SWAIN  
SOIL &  
WATER**



**CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

This Long Range Plan identifies conservation opportunities for developing soil, water and related resources in the Swain Soil and Water Conservation District. Henceforth referred to as the District. The purpose of the plan is to describe the District and serve as a guide for planning and accomplishing work by the District, its operators associated agencies and interested groups or individuals. It is an integral part of the overall state conservation program coordinated by the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

This Long Range Plan sets forth the objectives of the District. It will be reviewed annually by the Board of Supervisors and referenced by the board to develop the Annual District Plan of Work. The District Board of Supervisors gratefully acknowledges the help of community leaders and cooperating agencies in assisting us with our objectives and planned actions. Assistance in preparing and publishing the program was furnished by the Division of Soil and Water Conservation, Department of Natural Resources and Community Development and others.

The District exists to serve the public and to ensure a healthy and productive environment. To this end, the Districts primary objectives is to safeguard soil, water and related natural resources for the benefit of future generations.

Adopted by the Board of Supervisors on \_\_\_\_\_ as the official program of the Swain Soil and Water Conservation District.

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Mitchell Jenkins, Chairman

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Avery Taylor, Vice Chairman

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William Shuler, Treasurer

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Clint “Cam” Carson Jr.

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Phillip Carson





Swain County, North Carolina

**Swain SWCD Office**

**Address:**

100 Brendle Street  
Bryson City, NC 28713

**Phone:**

828-488-2684 ext. 3

**District Director:**

Creeden Kowal

**Education Coordinator:**

Shelby Cook

**Board of Supervisors:**

Mitchell Jenkins - Chairman  
Avery Taylor - Vice Chairman  
William Shuler - Treasurer  
Clint "Cam" Carson Jr.  
Phillip Carson

**Monthly Meetings**

Board Meetings are held every second Monday of the month at 9:00 a.m. at 100 Brendle Street, Bryson City, NC. Open to the public.



Swain SWCD Board of Supervisors from left to right:

Avery Taylor, William Shuler, Cam Carson,  
Phil Carson, Mitchell Jenkins





Colvard Farm, Alarka NC

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## Executive Summary

This five year Long Range Plan (2015-2020) was developed for the Swain Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Bryson City Field Office of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The plan details the Swain Soil and Water Conservation District services, activities, identifies key natural resources and priorities, and provides an overview of services, program, and assistance available to customers. The Long Range Plan also contains general information about the District and Swain County and guides the development of the District's annual work plans and budgets.

### ***Thoughts from the Board***

Identifying themselves with the general public, local government and educators through services provided by the District office.

### ***District Services***

Consulting Assistance - Available to anyone with natural resource problems where advice and recommendations are needed to deal with these resources.

Technical Assistance – Provided to land users who need more detailed help in solving resource problems. Examples are conservation planning, application and soil survey interpretations.

Education and Information Assistance - Programs and information materials are available to individuals, groups, schools and others concerning conservation of natural resources.

NC Division of Soil & Water Conservation Cost Share Programs - Provides assistance to landowners/operators to help install Best Management Practices on agricultural and urban land.

### ***Audience***

This plan is intended for Swain County residents, Swain County government officials, funding sources, legislators, and partner agencies.



Colvard Farm, Alarka NC

## Geography and Land Use

### ***A. General***

Swain County is located in southwestern North Carolina. It is bordered on the north by Tennessee, on the east by Haywood and Jackson County, on the south by Macon County, and on the west by Graham County. Bryson City is 65 miles from Asheville, North Carolina; 85 miles from Knoxville, Tennessee; and 192 miles from Atlanta, Georgia.

The climate of the county is temperate and is influenced by different elevations. The average annual rainfall is 57 inches with the average annual snowfall being 6.8 inches. The county's average temperature in January is 34 degrees F and the average July temperature is 71 degrees F.

Swain County is completely nestled within the Little Tennessee river basin, but is also home to three other major rivers: Tuckasegee, Oconaluftee, and Nantahala. All four flow into Fontana Lake and leave the county to the west as the Little Tennessee River.

The county is one of the most mountainous counties in North Carolina. Elevations range from 1,085 feet above sea level near Deals Gap to 6,642 feet on Clingman's Dome on the Tennessee line. The predominant mountain ranges consist of the Great Smoky Mountains on the north and the Nantahala Mountains on the south.

### ***B. People***

#### Population Trends

	2018	2010	2002	1992	1982
Swain County	14,245	13,981	11,733	11,599	10,633
Bryson City	1,450	1,424	1,404	No data	No data

As a whole, Swain County's population density is low. There are 24.6 persons per square mile. If the publicly owned lands were excluded and private land considered only, then this would raise the population density to about 78 persons per square mile.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians has approximately 13,000 tribal members enrolled. The Qualla Boundary (Cherokee Indian reservation) is situated in Western North Carolina and includes land in Swain, Jackson, Cherokee, Graham, and Haywood counties among the Great Smoky Mountains.

There is a seasonal population in Swain County. The presence of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Cherokee Indian Reservation, Fontana Lake, and numerous other recreational facilities draw an influx of people at different times of the year, mostly during the summer months.

**C. Economic Conditions**

The economic base of Swain County is made up of agriculture, light industry, and tourism. The agriculture economy is characterized by several principal sources: forestry, cattle, burley tobacco, trout, truck crops, ornamental nurseries, corn, and hay. Most of the farmers and farm families must subsidize their income by working in factories or in tourist-related jobs.

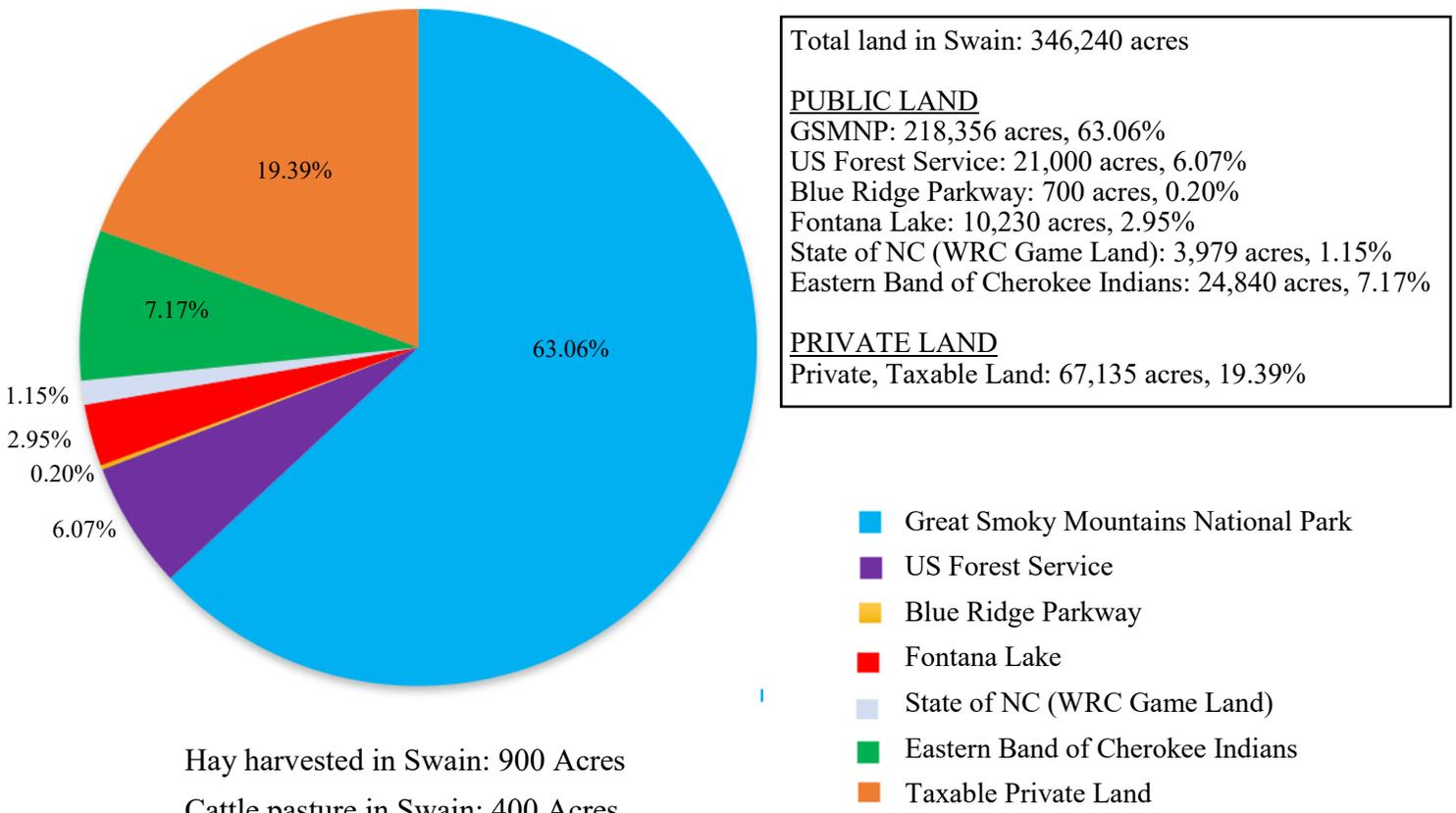
Tourism has become an important part of Swain County’s economy. Catering to the seasonal influx of people, tourism is as integral to the county’s economic base as the other segments. The success of tourism in the area is primarily due to its natural scenic and cultural resources such as the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Nantahala National Forest, and the Cherokee Indian Reservation.

In 2017, 6,613 residents of Swain County were employed and 299 were unemployed. Of the 6,613 employed residents, 424 of them worked in manufacturing.

According to Farm Service Agency’s Data Marts, there are 1,445 customers associated (ie., owner, operator, and/or tenant) with farms in Swain County. Also, according to the 2012 profile of Swain from the Census of Agriculture, 94 farms mentioned on the profile sheet would be considered full time farms.

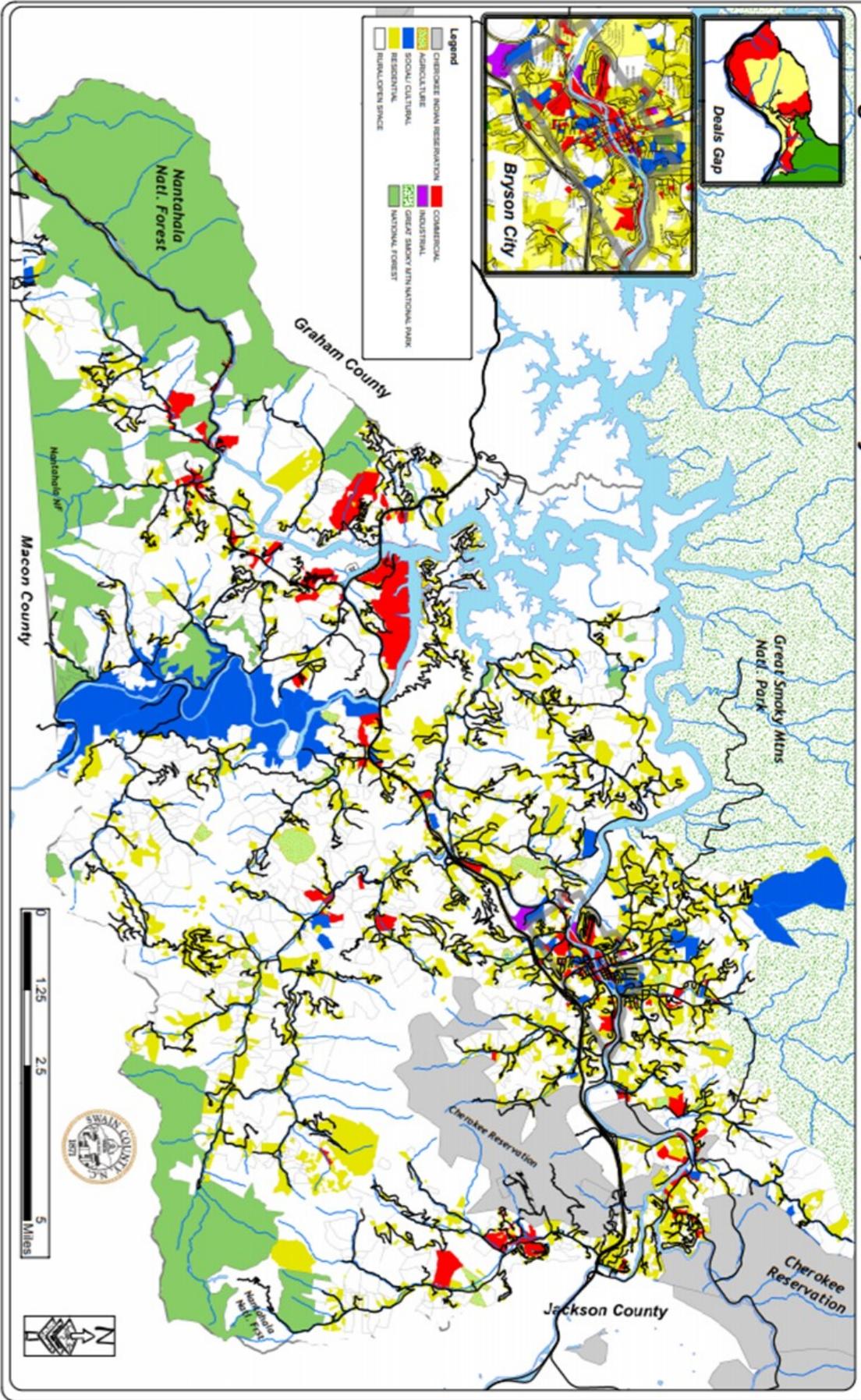
**D. Major Land Uses**

**Swain County Land by Acreage/Percentage**



Hay harvested in Swain: 900 Acres  
 Cattle pasture in Swain: 400 Acres

# Existing Land Use, Swain County 2010



## Structure and Governance

### ***Organization and History of the Swain Soil & Water Conservation District***

Conservation Districts were created in 1937 by North Carolina General Statute §139 for the primary purpose of providing local direction to voluntary, incentive based conservation programs to assist landowners protect and conserve the state's natural resources, including soil, water, wildlife, unique plant and animal habitats, and others. Districts are defined in North Carolina law as political subdivisions of state government; administered partially by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Division of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Each Soil and Water Conservation District, or SWCD, is administered by a five (5) person board of supervisors. Three of these supervisors are elected at the same time as the regular election of county officers. Two (2) supervisors are appointed by the North Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Commission upon recommendation of the local District board of supervisors. All five supervisors serve terms of office that are four years in length.

Established March 28, 1951 as a political subdivision of the State of North Carolina the Swain District is one of ninety-six Conservation Districts in North Carolina. Today, the Swain District addresses conservation issues in the county by offering technical assistance, educational programs, resources, and by locating and administering cost share programs and grants to assist local landowners with conservation practices on their land.

### ***Function of the Swain Soil & Water Conservation District***

To take available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user for conservation of soil, water, and related resources.

### ***Board Positions***

ORS 568.560 requires all SWCDs to select a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Treasurer among the Board of Supervisors. Districts may elect other officers as desired.

The Chair is granted the responsibility to represent Swain SWCD with other Districts, agencies, associations, partners, organizations, legislators, and property owners consistent with the policies, plans, and interests of Swain SWCD. The chair will also conduct regular and special meetings of the Board.

A Vice-Chair has been given the authority to act as the Chair in case of the absence or unavailability of the Chair.

The Treasurer is the custodian of all Swain SWCD records, minutes, contracts, and other official documents.

## Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles

### ***Mission for the District***

The mission of the Swain Soil and Water Conservation District is to provide educational, technical and financial assistance to our community for the protection, conservation and restoration of natural resources.

### ***Vision Statement for the District***

The vision of the Swain Soil and Water Conservation District is to be an organization that:

- Is regionally recognized and respected for demonstrated leadership in the safeguarding and mindful utilization of soil, water, and related resources
- Is a critical partner in educating the public, individuals and groups concerning natural resource issues and solutions
- Has personnel whom are approachable, knowledgeable and respected; a sought-after consultant to individuals and groups on implementing conservation practices
- Has sufficient personnel equipped to handle the workload
- Provides a strong agricultural component to citizens and community leaders
- Accesses various funding sources
- Assists in economic development
- Is a sensible local voice for federal and state programs
- Works cooperatively with landowners, stakeholders, and other agencies to get results

### ***Guiding Principles for the District***

- Providing education to our community
- Preserving farmland
- Conservation as an investment in the future
- Productive agriculture being environmentally compatible
- Opportunities to provide assistance
- Full respect for partnership with other organizations



## FFA Land Judging Career Development Event

## Roles and Responsibilities

The Swain SWCD works with agencies and individuals as partners in our efforts to achieve our vision. Various memorandums of agreement and/or understanding, working agreements, intergovernmental agreements and informal arrangements, formalize the partnerships. The agreements outline the responsibilities of each partner and identify the types of assistance, resources, and support each will provide to accomplish common conservation goals.

### **Local Level:**

#### ***Landowners, Producers, and General Public***

The General Public utilizes the Swain SWCD as its primary point of contact for all District programs as well as those of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service. Landowners and agricultural producers can benefit from technical assistance with natural resource concerns and assistance in securing grant or loan funding for an array of natural resource conservation projects.

#### ***Swain Soil and Water Conservation District***

The District assists the general public with conservation planning, technical and financial assistance, farm bill program opportunities, and answers to conservation-related questions.

The District provides:

- Consulting Assistance - Available to anyone with natural resource problems where advice and recommendations are needed to deal with these resources.
- Technical Assistance – Provided to land users who need more detailed help in solving resource problems. Examples are conservation planning, application and soil survey interpretations.
- Education and Information Assistance - Programs and information materials are available to individuals, groups, schools and others concerning conservation of natural resources.
- NC Division of Soil & Water Cost Share Programs - Provides assistance to landowners/operators to help install Best Management Practices on agricultural and urban land.

#### ***NCSU Extension Service***

The District maintains a working relationship with the North Carolina State University Extension office to have assistance with outreach, educational events, and assisting farmers. Some examples include but are not limited to: hosting a pasture management demonstration with NCSU Amazing Grazing, providing technical assistance on-site simultaneously, and working together to establish and uphold the annual Swain County Agricultural Fair.



The Swain Agricultural Fair Grounds on Hyatt Creek Road.  
Photo by Dee Decker, Swain Cooperative Extension

## ***County Government***

Swain SWCD serves as a department of county government working in conjunction with the Environmental Health and Sediment and Erosion Control office to improve soil and water quality and quantity.



## **Regional Level:**

### ***USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)***

The District maintains a Cooperative Working Agreement with the NRCS to provide office space, equipment, and assistance with conservation planning and conservation practice implementation activities in Swain County. The District also occasionally enters into Contribution Agreements with NRCS to produce complete conservation plans. NRCS provides technical assistance to the District and directly to county landowners and producers. The District is served through the USDA Service Center – Bryson City Field Office.

### ***Food and Agriculture Council Committee***

The Swain SWCD partners with the USDA-NRCS, USDA-FSA, USFS, Jackson SWCD, and Cooperative Extension Service of EBCI, Jackson, and Swain to form the Food and Agriculture Council Committee (FAC). The FACs are the Secretary of Agriculture's primary vehicles for administering programs to our customers to address agricultural and rural development concerns at the local level. FACs were instituted to provide a policy-level, cross-agency, decision-making and communication forum to achieve the USDA's goals and objectives.

## **State Level:**

### ***North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services – Division of Soil & Water Conservation (NCDA & CS – DSWC)***

NCDA & CS - DSWC provides administrative oversight and partial administrative and technical assistance funding. DSWC also serves as the technical support liaison between the local Districts and the NC Soil & Water Conservation Commission to implement the cost-share programs.

### ***North Carolina Association of Conservation Districts (NCACD)***

NCACD provides technical and administrative support to the District. It is also the main conservation District advocacy organization with the North Carolina State administration and legislature.

## **National Level:**

### ***USDA NRCS***

The national NRCS offices provide the funding of the work agreements with the District.

## Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: Expand participation in conservation education programs

**Objectives:**

1. Increase awareness of the programs offered
2. Diversify programs offered and tailor them to community needs

Goal #2: Enroll more farms in the Farmland Preservation Program (Voluntary Agricultural District)

**Objectives:**

1. Market the Voluntary Agricultural District program and its benefits
2. Provide conservation planning and technical assistance to eligible farms

Goal #3: Best assist eligible landowners technically and financially to meet their conservation needs

**Objectives:**

1. Increase awareness of best management practices available for cost share through the NC Agriculture Cost Share Program, the Agriculture Water resource Assistance Program, and the Community Conservation Assistance Program

Goal #4: Identify agriculture or environmental education needs within the community and finding compatible grant sources

**Objectives:**

1. Networking through various outreach events with the community and specific landowners, educators, and partners
2. Awareness of funding resources available to meet these needs (federal, state, local grants)

## Natural Resource Concerns and Outcomes

A natural resource concern is a condition that does not meet agreed-to or established criteria for a quality, sustainable resource. The resource concerns described below are intended to give a picture of the natural resource problems in Swain County and why they are important.

The top two resource concerns in Swain County are:

- Water Quality
- Water Quantity

### ***Water Quality:***

The primary agricultural stressors to local streams within Swain County and much of Western North Carolina include lack of streamside vegetation, channel modification/straightening, excess sediment inputs, excess nutrient inputs, bacterial contamination, pesticides, and barriers to fish passages. The lower reaches of the Little Tennessee River are farmed resulting in the increased potential for nonpoint source problems.

Localized areas of concern include existing operational trout farms, and high levels of fecal coliform bacteria.

The primary non-agricultural stressors to local streams within Swain County and much of Western North Carolina include lack of streamside vegetation, excess sediment inputs, bacterial contamination, storm water runoff, pesticides, and barriers to fish passages. Mountain home development on steep slopes is an increasing environmental concern. The lower reaches of the Little Tennessee River are developed resulting in the increased potential for nonpoint source problems.

Localized areas of concern include the increasing amount of impervious surfaces, and the discharge of untreated or partially treated sewage. With the increase in outdoor focused tourism within Swain County, there is also an increase in the need for pet waste stations.

The District works hard to identify ways to best address these concerns with available resources.

### ***Water Quantity:***

According to the 2012 Basinwide Plan for the Little Tennessee watershed, one stream located within Swain County was classified as a 303(d) stream. However, water quantity issues of concern with the sub-basins located in Swain County include impacts from developments on steep slopes, agricultural runoff, trout farm waste, stream bank erosion, limited riparian buffers, failing culverts and individual onsite water failures. Also, a fish advisory was issued in 2008 for Lake Fontana, located in Swain County, due to the potential mercury content in walleye. Fontana Lake has also been under a statewide consumption advisory for largemouth bass due to its mercury contamination.



Special studies and data collected have documented incidences of high turbidity levels, high nutrient levels, and high fecal coliform bacteria levels. Within the 2012 Basinwide Plan, a 2.1 mile stretch of the Little Tennessee River just north of the Town of Bryson City was added to the impaired waterbodies list. The listed assessment unit, 2-(1) a, was listed as an impaired waterbody due to the ecological biological integrity fish community threat.

Within Swain County, there are a few agricultural ponds that were installed decades ago. With the large fluctuation in the water table level and age of these components, there is an increase in pond exit pipe failures. The District is working closely with the NCDA & CS Technical Services (Engineering) to provide landowners with technical assistance and potential cost-share funding through the Agricultural Water Resources Assistance Program, or AgWRAP, to remedy these issues.

The District realizes the importance to increase water use efficiency, availability and storage methods on agricultural lands within Swain County. The District is working closely with cooperators in discussing measures, practice methods, and possible alternatives in an effort to increase water use efficiency and increase water storage and availability for agricultural purposes in Swain County and the Little Tennessee River Basin.

***Strategies:***

1. A local environmental educational program is essential to encourage environmental stewardship. Education is the key element in achieving many of these strategies. Continued research and assessment are needed to better understand watershed stressors, protect and restore aquatic resources, and to target conservation activities. Particularly, continued investment into understanding the ecology of mussels in general and the cause of the Appalachian Elktoe decline in the Little Tennessee River are important to mussel and aquatic habitat conservation in the Western North Carolina region at large.
2. Recommendations to reduce nonpoint source pollution within Swain County will include:
  - Sediment/Nutrient Delivery Reduction from Fields/Pastures
  - Erosion Reduction/Nutrient Loss Reduction in Fields/Pastures
  - Stream Protection from livestock
  - Proper Animal Waste Management
  - Agrichemical Pollution Prevention
3. A number of policy and institutional measures related to state and local government are needed to address both existing and future stream health. Measures that would be effective include steep slope ordinances as well as a storm water management ordinance. Existing sedimentation and erosion control programs and ordinances can be modified to increase their efficiency in streamside vegetation protection and provide adequate training and rules across Western North Carolina.
4. Cost share programs and grant funding can also be used where applicable.



Colvard Farm, Alarka NC

## District Programs

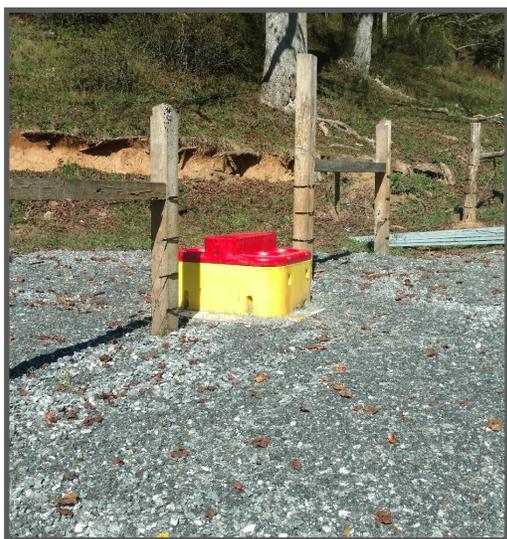
### **North Carolina Agricultural Cost Share Program (NCACSP)**

A major cause of water quality problems in North Carolina and in the U.S. is "nonpoint source" pollution. In many places across our state, damage to our water resources come from soil erosion, excessive fertilizer use, animal waste contamination, and improper use of agricultural chemicals.

NCACSP is a financial assistance program designed to protect water quality. NCACSP was established in 1984 to help reduce the sources of agricultural nonpoint source pollution to North Carolina's waters. The program helps landowners and operators of established agricultural operations improve their on-farm management by using best management practices, or BMPs. These BMPs or management systems can make farmers more productive while reducing the potential for polluting surface and groundwater. Financial assistance is offered to farmers to share the cost of installation of the BMPs, up to 75% of the average cost of each BMP installed. If enrolled in the Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Program, landowners are eligible for up to 90% cost-share on the average cost of each BMP.

The following BMPs are examples of approved management systems through NCACSP:

- Facilities to handle agricultural chemicals
- Planting of critical areas
- Grassed waterways
- Stream exclusion fencing
- Divisional fencing
- Stream crossings
- Stabilizing stream banks
- Stock trails & heavy use protection areas
- Nutrient management
- Watering facilities
- Prescribed grazing
- Agricultural wells
- Pasture renovation



Cattle Watering Facility



Divisional Fencing

### Childers' Farm, Whittier NC

## **Agricultural Water Resources Assistance Program (AgWRAP)**

AgWRAP was established by the NC General Assembly in 2011 to help farmers and landowners identify opportunities to increase water use efficiency, availability, and storage; Implement best management practices to conserve and protect water resources; increase water use efficiency; and increase water storage and availability for agricultural purposes. In short, AgWRAP is a financial assistance program designed to address water quantity. It is administered by the NC Division of Soil and Water Conservation. The Division gives final approval and processes requests for payment to cooperators participating in the program.

Landowners or renters of existing agricultural operations that have been operating for more than one year are eligible to participate in AgWRAP. Landowners must not have an adjusted gross income of greater than \$250,000 for the previous two calendar years and 75% of the adjusted gross income must be derived from farming, ranching, or forestry operations.

AgWRAP is successful because of the grassroots efforts of local Soil & Water Conservation Districts. Swain SWCD works with agricultural landowners and producers to develop and approve individual conservation plans; identify the BMPs best suited to the particular operation; design BMPs and help ensure their longevity, acquire preliminary approval of a Cost Share contract through the Swain Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors.

The following BMPs are examples of approved management systems through AgWRAP:

- Agricultural water supply/reuse pond
- Agricultural pond repair/retrofit
- Agricultural pond sediment removal
- Agricultural water collection and reuse system
- Baseflow interceptor
- Conservation irrigation conversion
- Micro-irrigation system
- Water supply well



Childers' Farm, Whittier NC

## **Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP)**

The Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP) is a voluntary, incentive-based program designed to improve water quality through the installation of various best management practices (BMPs) on urban, suburban and rural lands not directly involved with agriculture production. Eligible landowners may include homeowners, businesses, schools, parks and publicly owned lands.

How rapid urbanization affects water quality becomes important as North Carolina's land use continues to change. CCAP can help educate landowners on water quality, storm water management and retrofit practices to treat storm water runoff.

The following BMPs are examples of approved management systems through CCAP:

- Riparian buffers
- Backyard rain gardens
- Backyard wetlands
- Streambank and shoreline protection
- Cisterns
- Pet waste receptacles
- Impervious surface conversion
- Vegetation establishment
- Permeable pavement



## **Agricultural Equipment Rental Program**

Swain SWCD received grant funding through the TVA Ag and Forestry Fund and Duke Energy Foundation for the purchase of agricultural equipment. This equipment is available to rent through the District, and is a cost effective way for Swain County farmers to improve yields from hay and pasture lands, install fences, and improve water quality through reduced run-off of nutrients, chemicals, and sediment. All proceeds from this program fund Swain SWCD sponsored educational events and scholarships.

Equipment available for rental:

- Frontier CS1360 Conservation Seeder
- Rotational Grazing Kit
- Rhino Ranch Pro T-Post Driver
- Great Plains Seed Drill (Jackson SWCD)
- 2-ton Lime Spreader (Jackson SWCD)



T-Post Driver



Frontier Conservation Seeder

## Technical and Educational Assistance

### *Technical Assistance*

One of the most important services of the Swain Soil & Water Conservation District is resource conservation planning. The District will work, through agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service trained conservationist, to assist the landowners in considering the best management alternatives to protect the resource base. The District will provide information and technical assistance for planning, design, application and maintenance of the following listed measures to any landowner, group or agency. As other measures are developed, information and assistance will be provided.

- Access Road
- Brush Management
- Conservation Cropping Systems and Tillage Systems
- Contour Farming
- Contour Orchard
- Cover Crops
- Critical Area Planting
- Crop Residue Use
- Debris Basin
- Waste Disposal Systems
- Diversions
- Fencing
- Field Borders
- Filter Strips
- Fish Raceways
- Fish ponds and fish pond management
- Plain Information
- Land Smoothing
- Mulching
- Pasture-Hay-Land Management
- Planned Grazing Systems
- Nature Trail Design
- Recreation Area Development
- Spring Development
- Stream Bank Stabilization
- Strip Cropping
- Subsurface and Surface Drainage
- Terraces
- Tree Planting and Other Woodland Management
- Wildlife Habitat Management

### *Education Assistance*

An active information program is a must to keep conservation before the public. The District expects to continue the following activities and to add more as time and finances permit:

- Provide Environmental Education information to schools when requested
- Purchase and distribute various educational materials
- Write and distribute education newsletters
- Hold a conservation field day for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students
- Offer NC Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts administered contests to schools
- Provide slide presentations on conservation to schools, civic clubs, and other organizations
- Display educational materials at the District office
- Promote Swain SWCD's education programs with exhibits at local festivals and children's fairs
- Write education-related news articles for local paper
- Hold a Future Farmers of America Land Judging Career Development Event
- Participate in summer programs at the library, Family Resource Center, and other local educational agencies
- Sponsor a student or students in the Resource Conservation Workshop annually

- Sponsor teams at Area Envirothon competition for middle and high school students
- Help partnering agencies by teaching at events such as Kids in the Creek, summer camps, and neighboring SWCD field days
- Make available the Mobile Soil Exhibit and Em-River Stream Table for lessons at local schools or other educational organizations
- Provide students with information about scholarships available, such as the Area 1 Soil & Water Conservation District scholarship and the Careers in Conservation scholarship
- Work with local Boy Scouts of America troops to earn Soil & Water Conservation Merit Badge



Students learn about stream dynamics with stream table at the 2018 Kids in the Creek



Swain High's "Biotic Bois" compete at 2019 NC Area 1 Envirothon



Mobile Soil Exhibit



Em-River Stream Table

## District Capacity, Needs, and Strategies

### *Staff*

The current staff consists of two full time employees and zero part time employees.

- **District Director:**

This position performs technical and professional work providing solutions to resource concerns as well as supervising and coordinating operations of the District. Employee is responsible for the development of conservation plans addressing resource concerns, development of Cost Share Program contracts and implementing other District programs. Knowledge of the theory, principles, practices and techniques of soil and water conservation in rural and urban areas. Employee is familiar with various guidelines, codes, ordinances and regulations pertaining to soil and water conservation. Ability to plan, organize and carry out projects effectively. Present District outreach programs and recommendations effectively in oral, written or graphic form. Establish and maintain effective working relationships with land owners, land users, associates, governmental officials and the general public. Ability to write, manage, and maintain grants. Skilled in the basic use of engineering surveying equipment, GIS and GPS systems.

- **Education Coordinator:**

This position creates and implements conservation education within the local school system in grades Pre-K-12, promotes additional programs such as poster and essay contests, sponsors local Envirothon teams and Resource Conservation Workshop attendees, plans local conservation field days and land judging events, and works with local education agencies to facilitate environmental education in a variety of settings. Employee also manages the administrative affairs of the District, including filing, reporting, budgets, and grant writing. Employee serves as a clerk to the Board of Supervisors which are the governing body for the District. Has strong oral, written, and graphic communication skills. Ability to plan, organize and carry out projects effectively. Ability to write, manage, and maintain grants. Skilled in use of Microsoft Excel, Publisher, Word, and PowerPoint.

### *Internship*

In 2019, Swain SWCD developed a comprehensive internship position for the summer. This position was designed to provide insight into careers in conservation at the District and partner agencies. At the end of the summer, the intern was awarded a scholarship of \$1,500 for completing at least 150 hours of work.



Swain SWCD's first intern, Mary Helmer, helps teach a lesson at the library  
Summer 2019

## ***Partnerships***

The District relies on partnerships with other local agencies and non-profit institutions to further its natural resource conservation goals. They include:

- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Farm Service Agency
- NCSU Extension
- US and NC Forest Service
- EBCI Department of Environment and Natural Resources



## ***Facilities and Equipment***

Swain SWCD is housed within the USDA Service Center – Bryson City Field Office located at 100 Brendle Street, Bryson City North Carolina, with partner agencies NRCS and FSA. The space provides offices for each employee serving Swain County. The District owns a grant funded metal storage shed which houses the rental equipment, the mobile soil exhibit and filter cloth. The District also has a small storage shed containing education and outreach equipment as well as some field tools. The District currently has a 2011 Ford F150 crew cab.

The District has a Frontier CS1360 Conservation Seeder, Rotational Grazing Kit, Rhino Ranch Pro T-Post Driver, and High-Tensile Spoiler available through the Agricultural Equipment Rental Program.

## ***Funding***

The District office receives its funding from the following sources:

- Swain County Government
- The Division of Soil and Water Conservation  
North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
- Various Grant funders including:
  - TVA and Agriculture Forestry Grant
  - Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund Grant
  - Duke Energy Foundation
  - North Carolina Foundation of Soil and Water Conservation

## ***Needs***

- To expand our education program revenue through other equipment rentals or sales.
- To obtain all available technical training to be the best knowledgeable resource for the community

## Common Acronyms

<b>AWQMP</b>	Agriculture Water Quality Management Program
<b>BLM</b>	Bureau of Land Management
<b>BMP</b>	Best Management Practices
<b>CAFO</b>	Confined Animal Feeding Operation
<b>CRP</b>	Conservation Reserve Program
<b>CWMA</b>	Cooperative Weed Management Area
<b>DEQ</b>	Department of Environmental Quality
<b>DSL</b>	Department of State Lands
<b>EQIP</b>	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
<b>ESA</b>	Endangered Species Act (Federal)
<b>EWP</b>	Emergency Watershed Protection Program
<b>FSA</b>	Farm Service Agency (formerly ASCS)
<b>FTE</b>	Full Time Equivalent Employee (2080 hrs/yr)
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information Systems
<b>HEL</b>	Highly Erodible Land
<b>LAC</b>	Local Advisory Committee
<b>LMA</b>	Local Management Agency
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NACD</b>	National Association of Conservation Districts
<b>NCSU</b>	North Carolina State University
<b>NOAA</b>	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
<b>NMFS</b>	National Marine and Fisheries Service
<b>NWMP</b>	Northwest Weed Management Partnership
<b>NRCS</b>	Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly SCS)
<b>RC&amp;D</b>	Resource Conservation and Development
<b>RD</b>	Rural Development (formerly Farmers Home Administration)
<b>SCS</b>	Soil Conservation Service (currently NRCS)

<b>SB1010</b>	Agricultural Water Quality Management Act of 1993
<b>SWCC</b>	Soil and Water Conservation Commission
<b>SWCD</b>	Soil and Water Conservation District
<b>USDA</b>	United States Department of Agriculture
<b>USFS</b>	United States Forest Service
<b>WHIP</b>	Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
<b>WRP</b>	Wetland Reserve Program

*This 2020-2025 Long Range Plan developed by Mary Helmer, Intern for Swain Soil & Water Conservation District, summer 2019. Edited by Shelby Cook, Education Coordinator, and Creeden Kowal, District Director. Adopted August 2019, by Swain SWCD Board of Supervisors to serve as a guiding document for the following five years.*

# *Conservation Pledge*

I GIVE MY PLEDGE  
AS AN AMERICAN  
TO SAVE AND FAITHFULLY TO  
DEFEND FROM WASTE THE  
NATURAL REOURCES OF  
MY COUNTY -  
ITS AIR, SOIL AND MINERALS,  
ITS FORESTS, WATERS,  
AND WILDLIFE