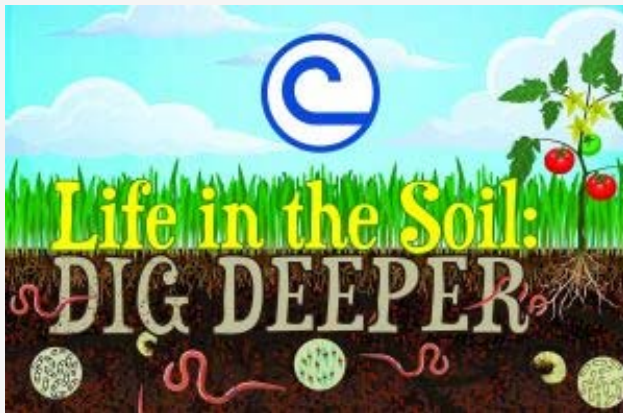


Subject: September 2019 Conservation Education Newsletter

Peter Francisco SWCD Conservation Education Newsletter



In this Newsletter...

WELCOME BACK
TEACHERS! Let
the 2019-20
Conservation
Education
Programs
Begin.

2019 Poster Contest

The 2019 Poster Contest, "Life in the Soil, Dig Deeper" is also underway. This contest is open to students in grades K-12. Posters are due October 1. Click on this link to view rules, past winning posters, learn about prizes and download an entry form:

<https://www.peterfranciscoswcd.org/poster-contest>

Conservation Educator of the Year



The Conservation Education Award for Primary School Teacher went to Mrs. Lindsay Absher Brown. Mrs. Brown has been teaching at Buckingham County Primary School for the last 10 years. Mrs. Brown grew up on a farm in Buckingham County. As a result, she has a passion for incorporating conservation education in her classroom. She has a Circle of Life picture in her classroom, produced by her very artistic mother. She uses this picture to teach life cycles of frogs, and butterflies, along with the water cycle. Over the years, she has used her classroom as a way to expose her students to many living creatures; she recently hatched chickens in an incubator provided by the local 4-H office. Mrs. Brown also incorporates “from the farm to the table into her curriculum”. Her classroom reading library is loaded with books related to the environment and the critters who live there. Each year Mrs. Brown coordinates with the Peter Francisco SWCD to offer an array of conservation education programs for second grade students at Buckingham Public Schools. Programs include Wildlife Scat, Tracks and Skulls; Soil Babies; the Soil Tunnel; Incredible Journey; Pollinators; Erosion Experiments; and Recycling Relay. Mrs. Brown also ensures that K-2 summer school students are exposed to environmental education by inviting the District to provide conservation programs.



Mr. Andrew J. Schmitt, Welding Instructor at the Buckingham County High School Career and Technical Center, received the Conservation Education Award for Secondary School Teacher. Mr. Schmitt began coaching an Envirothon Team for Buckingham County High School (BCHS) four years ago. For the past 4 years, the BCHS Envirothon team has qualified and competed at the Area and State level. The areas of study for Mr. Schmitt’s conservation education program are aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife and whatever special topic is assigned each year for the competition. Additionally, Mr. Schmitt serves as a Future Farmers of America (FFA) Advisor assisting with the Environmental and Natural Resources contest at the Virginia FFA State Convention. He is also the Agricultural Mechanics Coach for High School and Middle School Teams, as well as providing coaching assisting with the team topics of Small Animal Care, Job Interview; Middle School Crops; and Middle School Plant Science. Mr. Schmitt works with an array of students, whether they are bound for the work force or college. He heavily encourages environmental studies for college-bound students after introducing them to the field through Future Farmers of America and the Envirothon Team. He is very instrumental in promoting the District’s scholarship program to these students as well. Mr. Schmitt also serves on the ECMC Nominating Committee, which is a scholarship program for Buckingham County Seniors. He even offers guidance on which school to attend in order to best meet a student’s goals. He trains those students who are headed directly to the work force and then helps them find jobs—whether it be in welding, forestry, farming, or military service.

Pre-school and Primary School

Kindergarten and First Grade Field Days



Kindergarten and first grade students at Cumberland County Elementary School participated in field days at Bear Creek Lake State Park in May. Students learned all about frogs, read a funny story about a frog on a log in a bog, and then played leap frog relay. The weather was lovely and we had a hopping good time.

Water and Our Bodies



First and second graders who attended Buckingham County Primary Summer School learned how important water is for their bodies. They learned that their bodies are made up of approximately 72% water.

Elementary School

Third Grade Science Field Day



Third grade students at Cumberland County Elementary School participated in a science field day last spring. It was held indoors this year due to inclement weather. Students made their own soil profiles, crawled through a soil tunnel, played a buried treasure game, dumped pollutants into a bowl of water during Who Polluted the River? program, made a bracelet with the Incredible Journey Water Cycle Game, performed erosion experiments, competed in a recycling relay, and learned about wildlife. The District teamed up with Cooperate Extension, Virginia Master Naturalists, Forestry, and Bear Creek Lake State Park for the field day. (SOL: Science 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8)

21st Century Grant

The District has been pleased to partner with Cumberland Elementary and Middle Schools to provide after school programs funded by this grant for the past two spring semesters.

Congratulations to Buckingham County Elementary School for receiving a 3-year 21st Century Grant for Beyond the Bell before and after school programming. The District is pleased to partner with you for after school programs and Fun Friday events beginning fall semester.

Middle School

Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEE)

Sixth graders in Buckingham and Cumberland received Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences throughout the year. Sixth grade science teachers taught about the James River and Chesapeake Bay watershed during the school year. The District teamed up with Buckingham and Cumberland Cooperative Extension and James River/Bear Creek Lake State Parks to provide hands-on activities and learning experiences which include macroinvertebrate studies from leaf litter collected at each park, water quality monitoring from the James River and Bear Creek Lake, erosion experiments, mapping out our watershed, an Enviroscape demonstration, a forestry hike, playing watershed bingo and a reflective essay. To see photos and learn more about MWEE's, click on the following link: <https://www.peterfranciscoswcd.org/mwee>



Eight reflective essays were selected from each county and their authors were awarded a 3-day, 2-night, all-expense paid trip to explore the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Check out our website for information and photos from 2019 Watershed Exploration Camp

<https://www.peterfranciscoswcd.org/environmental-camp>

High School

Macroinvertebrate Lab



Ecology students at Buckingham County High School participated in a macroinvertebrate lab last spring. Leaf bags and seine nets were used to collect bottom dwelling critters from Greasy Creek. Students sorted the macroinvertebrates into 3 categories: Pollution Intolerant, Somewhat Pollution Intolerant and Pollution Tolerant. Good news! Based on this biological water test, Greasy Creek has good to excellent water quality.

Envirothon

Envirothon, sponsored by Dominion Energy, is a hands-on environmental problem-solving competition for high school students. Teams are tested in 5 areas:

- A current environmental issue with an in-field test and oral presentation
- Aquatics
- Forestry
- Soils
- Wildlife

Teams consist of at least 5 members in grades 9-12. They compete at local and regional competitions. Winners compete at the state level, and winners at the state level compete nationally/internationally.

A Virginia team won first place at the 2019 National/International Envirothon Competition. Congratulations Jamestown High School!

Both Buckingham and Cumberland High Schools have participated for the last several years.

*Members of the Buckingham team for 2019 were: Caleb Walter, Enoch Matthews, Connor Bohannon. Foster Smith, Cole Bohanon
Alternates: Resa Smith and Sean Bowen
Coach: Andrew J. Schmitt*

Congratulations to the Buckingham Team for placing 3rd at the Area V Competition and advancing to the state competition.

*Members of the Cumberland team for 2019 were:
Anaya McClinton, Julie Westbrook, Dawn Helton, Geneva Curtain, Matthew Dunlop
Alternates: Caitlin Hartley and Bryan Mancilla
Coach: Trae Shidell*

We are currently forming teams for the Envirothon . Mr. Andy Schmitt serves as coach for Buckingham County High School. Mr. Trae Shidell serves as coach for Cumberland County High School. Please encourage students to see the appropriate coach to participate in this year's team.

Want to get involved?

An Envirothon Training is scheduled for Saturday, November 23, at Graves Mountain Lodge. Students will comb the creek in search of macroinvertebrates, learn about wildlife, study soils, take a hike in the woods to learn about forestry and learn more about this year's special topic on conservation.

An Envirothon/Science field trip to the Brock Environmental Center in Virginia Beach is scheduled for Buckingham County High School students on September 18 and Cumberland County High School students on September 19 . Students will tour the Center, board a 40-foot boat and explore the Lynnhaven River and Chesapeake Bay including water quality testing, map activities encompassing the Bay Watershed and local area, pulling crab pots, trawling for fish, investigating oyster reefs, investigating a salt marsh and seining from the beach.

High School teachers and students from Buckingham and Cumberland who are interested in participating on an Envirothon Team are welcome to attend both trips.

For additional information, contact Elise Corbin at elise.corbin@vaswcd.org or call 434-983-7923.

Free SOL-based Environmental Programs



*The District would like to thank you for investing in our youth and support your educational efforts by offering **free** SOL-based environmental programs in Buckingham and Cumberland Counties. Our programs always have a hands-on component to make learning fun for the students. During the month of August, we distributed booklets by grade to all lead teachers and science teachers in Buckingham and Cumberland*

Counties. If you would like your own copy, let me know and I'll be happy to prepare one for you. Remember, we can tailor a program to meet your needs. Also, if you want a field day with several stations for an entire grade level, we will be happy to coordinate with Buckingham and Cumberland Cooperative Extension Offices, Virginia Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia State Parks and Virginia Department of Forestry to make it happen in the school yard or at a local State Park. The District also has a wealth of conservation education resources available for teachers to check out and use for their classrooms. For more information on the programs and resources we offer, visit our website at

www.peterfranciscoswcd.org

Next Month

Pumpkins and Pollinators will be the program theme for the programs we are conducting for all Buckingham County Pre-School classes. Leaf packs will be dropped in the James River above and below James River State Park in early October to collect macroinvertebrates. In November, 6th graders at Buckingham County Middle School will be doing a "critter count" to assess the impact that the State Park has on the water quality of that section of the James. Ninth graders at Buckingham County will participate in a Math and Science Field Day on October 18.

Questions & Comments

Want a program, have an idea, suggestion, or comment? We're always looking for feedback on how we can better support you.

Email Peter Francisco SWCD Conservation Education Coordinator, Elise Corbin, at elise.corbin@vaswcd.org or call 434-983-7923.

Virginia's Envirothon program and Peter Francisco's educational programs are also supported through the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund.

Proceeds from the sale of the Bay license plates help citizens keep the bay healthy by restoring wetlands, planting buffers around waterways, promoting marine life restoration, decreasing pollution and providing educational programs like Envirothon. To purchase a Bay license plate visit: <http://www.dmv.state.va.us/vehicles/#splates/info.asp?idnm=CB>

The Peter Francisco Soil and Water Conservation District prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs or marital status.

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