SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Healthy Land Clean Water For Life

VIRGINIA CHAPTER

Working Lands, Healthy Waters: Sustaining Virginia's Agricultural and Natural Resource Heritage (Past, Present, Future)

Virginia Chapter SWCS Annual Meeting

Tuesday, November 17, 2026; 9:30 am to 2:30 pm

Pocahontas State Park
10301 State Park Rd
Chesterfield, VA

9:30 – 9:45	**Registration**
9:45 – 10:00	**Welcome and Introduction to Pocahontas State Park** Melissa Allen, President of Virginia Chapter SWCS Staff TBD, Pocahontas State Park
10:00 – 10:30	**DCR 100 Year Anniversary** Nona Henderson, General Administration Coordinator, DCR
10:30 – 11:00	**The Past & The Present** Paul Davis, Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent (Ret.) Bob Waring, Senior Conservation Specialist, Colonial Soil & Water Conservation District
11:00 – 11:15	**Break**
11:15 – 11:45	**The Future** James B. Black and Aaron L. Black, Owners and Operators of NS Farms and CLR Systems
11:45 – 12:15	**VA Chapter SWCS Business Meeting** Melissa Allen, President of Virginia Chapter SWCS
12:15 – 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 1:30	**Presentation Title TBD** Mary Sketch Bryant, Director, Virginia Soil Health Coalition
1:30 – 2:00	**Pocahontas State Park Presentation** Staff TBD, Pocahontas State Park
2:00 – 2:30	**Discussion and Adjourn Meeting (Drive to Museum)**
2:30 – 2:45	Museum Tour (Optional)

Registration is $25 ($15 students) and includes lunch (**Registered by November 10, 2026 for lunch**).
NRCS and DCR Certified Conservation Planner Contact Hours TBD.
For more information on the meeting and registration instructions, Click **HERE** or https://forms.gle/BbztSP4prvxVtsd38.

Speaker Bios

Melissa Allen

Melissa has served with the John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District (John Marshall SWCD) for several years, transitioning from Conservation Specialist to District Manager in June 2021. Her professional background includes multiple years as a Conservation Specialist with John Marshall SWCD and eight years as a Soil Conservationist with NRCS in several field offices. She earned her M.S. in wildlife science as a Graduate Research and Teaching Assistant in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences at Virginia Tech. Her research focused on assessing North Carolina hunters' opinions about Sunday hunting. During this time, she also served as the lead researcher on a National Park Service project evaluating the impacts of hunting at New River Gorge National River in West Virginia. Melissa enjoys exploring Fauquier County with her husband, Joe, and their three children - Sarah, Mattie, and Will. In the rare moments she finds free time (she laughs at the very idea), she enjoys spending time with her family, raising chickens, and knitting.

Nona Henderson

Nona Henderson has been working in the Admin & Finance Division at the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation since July 2024. She is researching and compiling the 100-year history of the agency, including DCR's Division of Soil and Water Conservation. She completed her Bachelor of Spanish and History degree at Indiana University-Southeast and Master of Library Science degree at Indiana University. She lives in Williamsburg, Virginia, with her husband, two kids, dog, cat, and gecko.

Paul Davis

Paul Davis is the owner/manager of a 900-acre research and demonstration farm in New Kent, VA. The majority of his work is conducted on corn, wheat, soybeans, and pumpkins for different fertilizer, chemical and seed companies.

Davis retired after 28 years with Virginia Cooperative Extension as an Agricultural Agent in Fluvanna County (1981-1984) and New Kent/Charles City Counties (1989-2009). Davis specialized in crop and soil science with expertise in soil quality, continues no-till cropping systems, intensive small grain management, cover crops and no-till pumpkin production.

Paul was reared on a 1200-acre family grain and vegetable farm in New Kent County on the Pamunkey River. He graduated from New Kent High School in 1974, then served 2 years in the U.S. Army as a heavy equipment operator. He graduated from Ferrum Jr. College with a A.S. degree in Agriculture (1979), B.S. in IPM from Virginia Tech (1981), M.S. in Weed Science from Virginia Tech (1986).

Farming partners are his wife, Marian. Paul also played defensive back for both Ferrum and Virginia Tech football teams. He continues to be active in the Senior Olympics track and field events, and runs several 5K and 10K races per year. Paul and Marian have been married for 49 years and have two daughters and two grandchildren. Contact information: padavis@vt.edu (804-840-1751).

Bob Waring

Robert 'Bob' Waring is co-owner of Brandon Farms, a third-generation family farm located in Dunnsville, Virgina, where diverse cover cropping systems are integrated into the operation as a means of increasing soil health. The farm was selected as a case study with the American Farmland Trust, a national organization that highlights US conservation and farm sustainability. Brandon Farms is currently participating as a farm cooperator for Virginia Tech on compost and biochar experimentation, testing the NRCS 336 standard on soil health and productivity. In 2025, Brandon Farms was awarded a "Regenerate Virgina Healthy Soils" grant from the American Farmland Trust and Va Soil Health Coalition, focusing on intense cover cropping systems for economic and climate sustainability.

Bob worked for the Commonwealth of Virginia for 19 years in the area of precision nutrient management, soil health and cover crops. His role as an Environmental Specialist for the Commonwealth allowed for increased focus on the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share (VACS) Program while supporting Virginia's 2025 Watershed Implementation Plan goals, such as co-lead on the creation of the Whole Farm Approach Agronomic BMP. At present he is a member of the National Association of Conservation Districts Soil Health Champions Network, former member of the Southern Cover Crops Council (SCCC) executive board, as well as past Chair of Virginia's Cover Crop and Nutrient Management Technical Advisory Subcommittee (TAC).

Currently Bob serves as the Senior Conservation Specialist with the Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District, and most recently, appointed to the Agricultural Advisory Committee for the Chesapeake Bay Program as one of two farmers representing the State of Virginia. Within the Agricultural Advisory Committee role, Bob serves as Vice-Chair on the leadership team. In addition, Bob recently participated in the Va Secretary of Natural Resources Chesapeake Bay Advisory Panel focusing on Virginia's Priorities for restoration implementation.

James B. Black and Aaron L. Black

James B. Black is a resident and 5th generation farmer in Charles City County, VA. In partnership with his brother Aaron L. Black, they co-own and operate NS Farms LLC and CLR Systems LLC. The farm owns and operates a combination of crop and forest land, with crop land production approaching 1,000 acres. James and Aaron have been producing corn, wheat, soybeans, sorghum, barley, hay, hogs, and cover crops for 21 years, with a significant emphasis on improving soil quality using cover crops. Today, the farm focuses on wildlife and natural resource conservation, row crop production, cover crop uses, and the invention of a combine mounted cover crop seeder to enhance efficiency in establishment of cover crops for soil health and to reduce the amount of manufactured/synthetic crop inputs. James and Aaron created CLR Systems as a business dedicated to the design and manufacture of combine mounted cover crop seeders to help farmers save time, fuel, labor, and opportunity loss while establishing cover crops at the time of harvest with one pass and one machine. Both operations work in unison with the other, allowing for expansion and exploration into the next frontier of farming.

Mary Sketch Bryant

Mary is the Director of the Virginia Soil Health Coalition and is based in Salem, Virginia. With the Coalition she leads a network of over 50 partner organizations working to advance soil health across the commonwealth. She has experience working with collaboratives and coalitions across the country at the intersection of economic and environmental wellbeing with a focus on working lands and rural communities. Prior to working with the Virginia Soil Health Coalition, she worked at the Center for Rural Strategies where she helped coordinate the Rural Assembly, a coalition of rural stakeholders across the US. She received her Master's degree in Fish and Wildlife Conservation from Virginia Tech and her Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies from Brown University. Through her graduate research she worked directly with agricultural producers and conservation practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of how farmers and ranchers approach conservation and land management decisions.

SWCS Membership (join online at: https://www.swcs.org/get-involved/join/)

The Soil and Water Conservation Society is the premier international organization for professionals who practice and advance the science and art of natural resource conservation. When you join SWCS, you join a community of conservationists who care about the future of natural resources. Our members include SWCD employees, researchers, administrators, extension workers, students, producers, policymakers, USDA employees, educators, consultants, retirees, and more.

Member Benefits

As an SWCS member, you will

- Grow your professional network
- Increase your visibility within the conservation profession
- Unlock access to high-quality educational opportunities, training, and technical resources, including continuing education credits
- Connect with members of your local chapter

All members also receive

- Subscription to the ***Journal of Soil and Water Conservation***
- Weekly ***Conservation NewsBriefs*** and monthly ***Conservogram*** e-newsletters
- Discounted registration to the SWCS International Annual Conference
- Opportunity to nominate or be recognized by peers for work to advance conservation through the **SWCS Awards and Scholarships Program**
- A 20% discount on SWCS publications (contact memberservices@swcs.org for more information)
- Reduced rates for journal publication charges
- Conservation slogan notebook (US residents only)
- Free book: *Soil and Water Conservation: A Celebration of 75 Years* (US residents only)
- Automatic membership to your **local state chapter**

Membership levels

The Presidents Club and Leader levels offer members the opportunity to further support the Society and recognition in the Society's annual report. We appreciate our members at all levels and invite you to become a member at the level that is right for you.

Member - $115 annually
Member Plus - $225 annually
Early Career Member - $75 annually
Student - $40 annually
Retired Member - $75 annually
Not-for-Profit Organizational Member - $275 annually
Developing Country Member - $36 annually

Looking to highlight your business or organization as a leader in conservation? View our **Corporate Partnership** page and contact **memberservices@swcs.org** for information.

Last updated September 2025

SWCS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please complete the form and return with payment to SWCS, 945 SW Ankeny Road, Ankeny, IA 50023
Or join online at www.swcs.org/join or contact memberservices@swcs.org

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Company/Organization

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INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

- ○ $115 Member
- ○ $225 Member Plus
- ○ $75 Retired
- ○ $75 Early Career
- ○ $40 Student*
- ○ $36 Developing Country

*Please provide anticipated graduation month and year

NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP

○ $275 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, university extension offices, local governments, and not-for-profits that serve a geographic area of a state or smaller are eligible.

You may add up to five individuals under your organization's membership.

All SWCS memberships include online access to the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* for 12 months from date of payment. Print subscriptions to the journal may be purchased for $50/year; see add-on options below.

ADD-ON OPTIONS

- ○ $50 Print Journal Subscription
- ○ Support SWCS and Donate Today

GRAND TOTAL

METHOD OF PAYMENT

- ○ I want to pay by check. I will include a check for the above amount, payable to SWCS, in US funds on a US Bank
- ○ I would like to participate in the USDA payroll deductions program
  ($115 level = $4.42/pay period, $225 level = $8.65/pay period)
- ○ Please charge the above total amount to the credit card below

○ Visa ○ MasterCard ○ American Express ○ Discover

Card Number Exp. Date CSV Code

Name on Card

Billing Address

City State/Province Zip/Postal

Signature