

# The Stalk



Accomack & Northampton County Cooperative Extension  
Eastern Shore Agricultural Research & Extension Center



## USDA Announces Disaster Designation for Accomack and Northampton Counties

Accomack, VA, November 18, 2024 – The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has officially designated Accomack and Northampton counties as primary natural disaster areas due to the severe drought and excessive heat experienced since April 16, 2024. This designation, approved by the Secretary of Agriculture on November 15, 2024, allows eligible farmers in these counties to apply for emergency loans and other assistance from the USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA).

### Key Details:

- Disaster Designation Number: S5877
- Incident Period: Beginning April 16, 2024, and continuing
- Application Deadline for Emergency Loans: July 15, 2025



Farmers in Accomack and Northampton counties who have suffered significant crop losses due to the ongoing drought and heat conditions are encouraged to apply for assistance. The USDA’s emergency loan program is designed to help producers recover from production and physical losses.

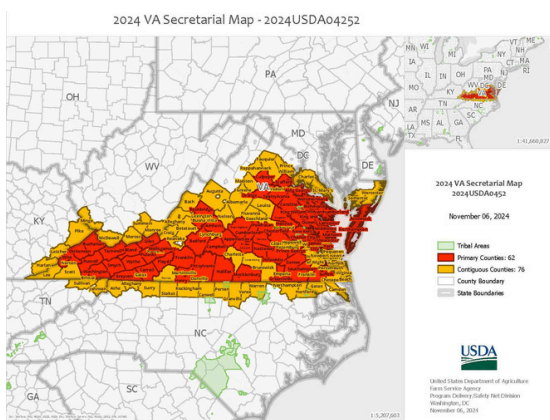
### Eligibility:

- Farmers must have suffered at least a 30% loss in crop production or a physical loss to livestock, livestock products, real estate, or chattel property.
- Loans can be used to restore or replace essential property, cover production costs for the next season, pay essential family living expenses, reorganize the farming operation, and refinance certain debts.

### How to Apply:

Farmers interested in applying for emergency loans or other disaster assistance should contact their local FSA office. The USDA is committed to providing support and resources to help farmers recover and rebuild their operations.

For more information, please visit the USDA’s website or contact the Accomack County FSA office at (202) 720-7641.



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## Capital Project Renovation Update: Finding an Architect

Dr. Mark Reiter, ESAREC Director & Soils & Nutrient Management Extension Specialist

Our Eastern Shore AREC capital project renovation process is underway. In November, we interviewed 5 architectural firms that hope to design, price, and facilitate our renovation and build project. Negotiations are underway to select the final firm that we will be working very closely with for the next 3 years. After the firm is selected and contract signed, faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders will all meet with the firm to facilitate upgrades and remodels that make the most sense to continue research and extension activities for the next century. We hope to start working closely with the architectural firm in February 2025.



Our capital project scope includes approximately 25,000 total gross square feet of new facilities, including an Educational Facility, Residential Facility, Smart Greenhouse, and AREC Support Services Complex, which will be constructed. Renovation of the existing Main Building is a part of the project and totals approximately 14,000 gross square feet of work to modernize, repair, update the building to meet current construction code and accessibility standards, and remove hazardous materials

A rough timeline for our project includes:

- August 29, 2024: Bids from architectural firms were due to VT.
- November 20-21, 2024: Interview select firms.
- February 2025: Project award to architectural firm.
- December 2025: Working drawings complete for our capital improvement project.
- March 2026: Begin construction on-site at Eastern Shore AREC.
- January 2028: Project complete.



## Tell Us About Your Soil Health Practices

Tell us about your soil health practices and you are entered to win great prizes!

Take the survey by scanning the QR code or by clicking on this link: [bit.ly/soilhealthacres](https://bit.ly/soilhealthacres)



### Acres of Soil Health Implementation

Please complete this survey if new practices are being implemented including cover crops, no-till, or rotational grazing.

Farmers, Specialists, Agencies, and Organizations are all welcome and encouraged to contribute.

There will be a prize drawing once a month.  
Estimated time to complete survey: 2 minute



For more information contact Dara Booher at [VFGCFarmerMentor@gmail.com](mailto:VFGCFarmerMentor@gmail.com)

## 2025 Annual Crops Summit - Richmond, VA - January 21-23, 2024

The 2025 Crop Summit program is included in this newsletter and you will see we will have many of the top names of the industry in Virginia as well other states with us this year. We hope you are able to join us for all three days. Please notice on the registration form we are offering once again a reduced rate if your paperwork is in the VACPA Office on or before Monday January 6 at 5:00 pm.

Please reach out for any additional information around the Crop Summit at any time. Email- [lucas.householder@sscoop.com](mailto:lucas.householder@sscoop.com)

**(CCA CEU following each session)**

- 8:00-9:15 Registration
- 9:15-9:30 Welcome & Meeting Logistics
- 9:30-10:20 Assessing Manure Products Dr. Steph Kulesza, North Carolina State University (NM)
- 10:20-11:10 Improving Soil Health in Forage Systems to Boost Productivity & Increase Drought Resilience Matt Booher, Virginia Tech – Integrated Conservation Agronomy (SW)
- 11:10-12:00 Virginia Ag Policy, News, & Outlook Joe Guthrie, VDACS (SW)
- 12:00-1:00 LUNCH
- 1:00-1:50 Virginia Agricultural Cost Share Program Update Sara Bottenfield, DCR (SW)
- 1:50-2:40 “NEW” Approaches for Nutrient Management: Utilizing Cover Crops & Biologicals in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Agroecosystems Dr. Hunter Frame, VA Tech (NM)
- 2:40-2:55 Break
- 2:55-3:45 NRCS Program Updates & Partnership Opportunities  
Lydia Fitzgerald Taylor, VA Tech/NRCS (NM)
- 3:45-4:35 Profitable Soil Health: Producer Perspectives on Building Thriving Soils & Businesses with Increasing Tighter Margins Lydia Fitzgerald, VA Tech/NRCS (SW)
- 4:35-5:25 Fertilizing with Cover Crops: Nitrogen is one of many Nutrients to Consider  
Dr. Mark Reiter, VA Tech (NM)
- 5:25-6:25 Social Hour

\*\*\*\*\*Wednesday January 22, 2025\*\*\*\*\*

**VA Nutrient Management Credits 3.0**

**Pesticide Recertification Day for Commercial & Private Applicators**

- 7:30-8:30 Registration
- 8:30-9:20 Managing Hidden Hunger in Soybeans Dr. Carrie Ortel, VA Tech (NM)
- 9:20-10:10 Integrating Cover Crops & PRE-Herbicides Dr. John Wallace, Penn State University (CM)
- 10:10-10:25 Break
- 10:25-11:15 Weed Control Updates for 2025 Dr. John Wallace, Penn State University (PM)
- 11:15-12:05 Using Drones & Imagery for Management of Crop Protection for Efficiency & Accuracy  
Pete Shanley, Osprey Drone Services (CM)
- 12:05-1:30 LUNCH - VACPA Annual Business Meeting
- 1:30- 2:20 Breaking Bad Habits: Pesticide Regulation You Can't Ignore  
Nicole Wilkins, VDACS (PM)
- 2:20-3:10 BT Resistance Status & Management in Corn & Cotton Dr. Tim Bryant, VA Tech (PM)
- 3:10-3:30 Break
- 3:30-4:00 What Should You Do? The Pesticide Safety Show  
Scott Reiter, VCE Prince George County (PM)
- 4:00-4:50 Virginia Grain Crops: Challenges & Opportunities Dr. Olga Walsh, VA Tech (CM)
- 4:50-5:40 Precision Application Technology Update & Outlook: A Look at See & Spray After the First Year in the Field Marcus McDonald, James River Equipment (CM)
- 5:40-6:40 Social Hour

## Unmanned Aerial Systems: Is Drift A Problem?

Fatemeh Esmailbeiki, PhD student in Dr. Vijay Singh's Weed Science research group, is on a search to determine optimum methodologies for spraying via uncrewed aerial systems (UAVs). Fatemeh is working closely with USDA-Agricultural Research Service (ARS) research scientist in College Station, TX, Dr. Daniel Martin, to evaluate the drift potential of UAVs and how to optimize spray parameters. Over 2 weeks the team collected data using various spray patterns, application rates, droplet size, speed, and other parameters to round out their dataset.

Fatemeh will utilize machine learning techniques and models to predict drift under different wind conditions and nozzles to make sure inputs are deposited at rates and locations where needed.



**Fatemeh Esmailbeiki and Dr. Daniel Martin's research group collecting UAV data.**

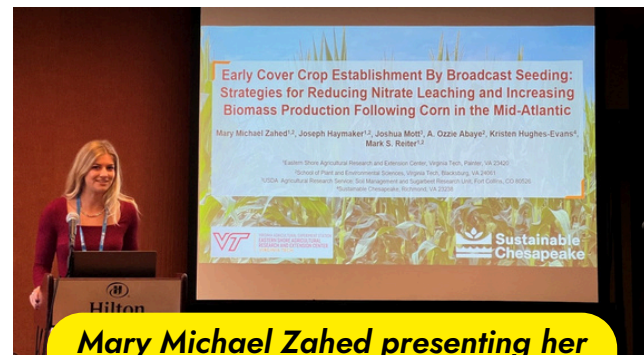
**Fatemeh Esmailbeiki setting up study sensors.**



## ESAREC Graduate Students Win Awards

Graduate students are on a roll and representing the Eastern Shore AREC well. From November 10-13, 2024, Mary Michael Lipford and Akash Brar attended the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of American International meetings in San Antonio, TX. Akash Brar, PhD student in Dr. Vijay Singh's Weed Science research group, won 3rd place in the weed science poster contest titled, "Evaluating the Effectiveness of Unmanned Aerial Systems for Herbicide Evaluation in Broccoli (*Brassica oleracea* var. *italica*)."

Mary Michael Zahed, MS student in Dr. Mark Reiter's Soils and Nutrient Management research group, won twice! Her oral presentation titled, "Early cover crop establishment by broadcast seeding: Strategies for reducing nitrate leaching and increasing biomass production following corn in the mid-Atlantic" received 1st place. Finishing out a stellar day, she received 3rd place for her poster presentation that featured her on-farm trial titled, "Farm Designed Innovative Technology: The Combine Mounted Cover Crop Seeder." Congratulations to Akash and Mary Michael for a job well done!



**Mary Michael Zahed presenting her work via oral presentation at the ASA-CSSA-SSSA International meetings in San Antonio, TX.**



**Akash Brar highlighting his work via poster presentation at the ASA-CSSA-SSSA International meetings in San Antonio, TX.**



## Eastern Shore Agricultural Conference Program update

Planning for the Eastern Shore Agricultural Conference continues with the Association of Eastern Virginia Agricultural Producers, Inc. A distinctive theme is being established around the notion of sustainability and economic viability in light of the difficult market conditions for many of our row crop producers.

Aside from the typical sessions (Soybean, Potato, Vegetable, Agronomy), the committee is adding a session focused on agricultural financial sustainability. The Keynote speaker, Chris Cosby of Old Dominion Electric Cooperative. Cosby is currently ODEC's chief operating officer. Since joining ODEC in 2018, he has served as senior vice president of power supply, vice president of regulatory affairs and director of asset management.

Accompanied by Butch Williamson, of ANEC, they will address how the agriculture industry can mitigate the rising cost of electricity and the impact on their operations.

## Agents' Calendar: "Working for the Wellbeing of Our Communities!" December 2024

- Dec 2: Monthly VCE/ESAREC faculty meeting / Zoom meeting with Ag Economics Specialist
- Dec 3: Disaster Preparedness for Wells Zoom Meeting
- Dec 4: Agent Training: "Working with Local Government Agencies"
- Dec 5: Eastern Shore SWCD Meeting
- Dec 9: VCE planning for the Small Food & Farm Business Initiative, VA Potato Board Meeting
- Dec. 10: "Whole Farm Planning" Webinar
- Dec 12: VDEM Radiological Ingestion TTX
- Dec 16: ESAREC/HRAREC Advisory Board Meeting
- Dec 24 - 31: VCE Offices closed for Christmas/New Years

### Ongoing:

- 2025 Eastern Shore producers' sustainability series
- 2025 Gardening series
- 2025 Ag Conference program planning
- 2025 Small Farm Workshop Planning
- 2025 Accomack/Northampton VCE Program Planning
- Regional Shared-use kitchen Needs Assessment and Comprehensive Study
- Research grants contribution for slug management

### Weekly

- WESR VCE AG Radio recordings - daily @8:30am/12:30pm
- WESR Master Gardener Radio recordings - daily @12:20 pm



**SAVE THE DATE**

## EASTERN SHORE AGRICULTURAL CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW

**Wednesday January 29, 2025**  
**Thursday, January 30, 2025**



## ANR Agents Attend the Virginia Tech Pesticide Services 2024 IPM Conference



ANR agents attended the first Virginia Tech Pesticide Services 2024 Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Workshop, held at the Hotel Roanoke on November 6th and 7th. IPM is using science-based tools and strategies for pest management to reduce human health, environmental risks with focus on economic sustainability. The conference covered a variety of pest management topics providing the latest information for VCE agents and specialists. The agenda was very comprehensive including: insecticide resistance, digital IPM tools, disease management in brassica vegetables, managing weed seeds at harvest, IPM in greenhouses, the effects of climate change on pest management, cover crops for weed management, managing insect pests in nursery crops, updates on invasive species, IPM principles for plant diseases in ornamental nurseries, urban IPM strategies for cockroaches and bed bugs, vegetable crop disease management, nematode behavior and soil health, structural fumigation, and rodent management.

Overall, the conference provided a comprehensive overview of current challenges and advancements in pest management to keep Extension agents abreast of latest Integrated Pest Management strategies to take back to their farming communities.

## Extension Agents Attend the Mid-Atlantic Farmers' Market Conference



Accomack and Northampton ANR Extension agents attended the Mid-Atlantic Farmers' Market Conference on November 18-20 in Richmond, VA. This 3-day conference provided valuable information on regulatory requirements to sell from small farm production, managing farmers' markets, including marketing strategies, food safety, certification and overall management techniques.



The interactive Food Safety Exposition (above left) provided hands-on learning of essential safety practices with demo market tents allowing participants to dive into topics like labeling, temperature control, packaging, and the difference between cottage law and inspected products



# THE AGENT'S CORNER

Theresa Pittman - Accomack County ANR Agent

Hélène Doughty - Northampton County ANR Agent



The Master Gardeners' Eastern Shore Chapter held their annual holiday party meeting at the Eastern Shore AREC on December 3rd, 2024. We are thankful for our volunteers who provide so much knowledge, time and effort to Eastern Shore communities

## AGENT QUESTION OF THE MONTH

“Should I leave the “prominent soils in field” area blank on my soil sample form?”

While most soils on the Eastern Shore of Virginia are Bojac sandy loam, some land may vary in soil composition. Dragston and Munden soils are still very similar to Bojac sandy loam but the more information you can provide through the form, the more customized the recommendation will be for your fields.

Soil information can be found at: <https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/> or contact your extension agent for assistance. Instructions on how to use this tool can be found at: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/data-and-reports/web-soil-survey>



### WHAT'S THAT BUG?

Hélène Doughty, Northampton ANR agent, invites you to test your entomology knowledge.

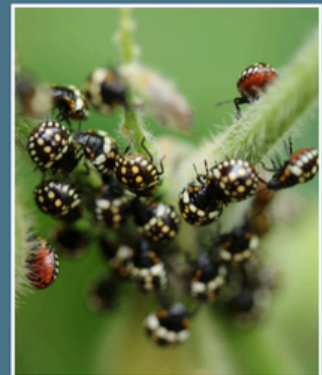


Take a guess on the pest and email or text your answer to 757-999-0780 / [hdoughty@vt.edu](mailto:hdoughty@vt.edu)

#### November Answer:

#### Southern Green Stink Bug Nymphs

The previous “What’s That Bug” were Southern green stink bug nymphs (*Nezara viridula*). This stink bug has been increasingly present on the Eastern Shore, migrating from Southern states around 2018. It is now one of the most prominent stink bugs in our crops and gardens. As other stink bugs, it overwinters as an adult and emerges in the spring to lay egg masses on a variety of crops including soybeans, tomatoes, snap beans, etc... It has piercing-sucking mouthparts and prefers to feed on fruit and pods. Both adult and nymphs are considered pests. Populations tend to increase in late summer, early fall



# ANNOUNCEMENTS



VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION  
EASTERN SHORE AGRICULTURAL  
RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER  
VIRGINIA TECH.



## IF YOUR PRIVATE PESTICIDE LICENSE EXPIRES IN 2024...

**Recertify with one of the following methods:**

1. Attend the Eastern Shore Agricultural Conference on January 29th and 30th, 2025
2. Call your County Agent to arrange to take the Private Pesticide License Test for recertification credits
3. Take the Online Private Pesticide Applicator Recertification Course  
a. VISIT THIS LINK:  
<https://register.ext.vt.edu/search/publicCourseSearchDetails.do?method=load&courseId=1495024>



**Eastern Shore AREC and Hampton Roads AREC**

## Advisory Board MEETING

Eastern Shore AREC  
33446 Research Dr, Painter, VA

Monday, December 16, 2024  
10:00 am



### Plastic Pesticide Jug Recycling

- If you would like to participate in the annual plastic recycling program, please take a look around the farm, triple rinse any pesticide containers and remove the caps and labels.
- You can take any jugs for recycling to Nutrien's Keller office or to the Northampton County Landfill.
- As a reminder, only properly triple rinsed pesticide containers will be accepted.
- Ag Plastic Solutions will gladly take fully and properly triple-rinse containers but can NOT take dirty containers.
- Please see the pesticide container inspection checklist for more information on how clean these jugs need to be in order to be recycled.



## VCE & ESAREC Contact Information

	Faculty/Staff	Title	Email	Work/Cell Phone
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	Amanda Hurley	Unit Support Staff	amandalh@vt.edu	757/678-7946
	Faculty/Staff	Title	Email	Work/Cell Phone
<b>Accomack County Cooperative Extension</b> 23185 Front St. PO Box 60 Accomac, VA 23301	Theresa Pittman	ANR Agent	tpittman@vt.edu	757/787-1361
	VACANT	4-H Agent		
	Rachel Barnes	Unit Support Staff	mrbarnes@vt.edu	757/787-1361
	Faculty/Staff	Title	Email	Work/Cell Phone
<b>Eastern Shore Agricultural Research &amp; Extension Center</b> 33446 Research Dr. Painter, VA 23420 <a href="https://www.ares.vaes.vt.edu/ares/eastern-shore.html">https://www.ares.vaes.vt.edu/ares/eastern-shore.html</a>	Mark Reiter	Director/Professor, Soils & Nutrient Management	mreiter@vt.edu	W 757/807-6576 C 757/693-2556
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VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION  
**EASTERN SHORE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER**  
 VIRGINIA TECH.

Virginia Cooperative Extension brings the resources of Virginia's land-grant universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, to the people of the commonwealth. VCE provides education through programs in Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, 4-H Youth Development and Community Viability.

The Virginia Tech, Eastern Shore AREC is committed to supporting commercial vegetable, grain, oilseed, and fiber production throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. Centrally located on Virginia's Eastern Shore, the center conducts basic and applied research on more than 25 agricultural crops.

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments. Its programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, sex (including pregnancy), gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, military status, or any other basis protected by law.

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in any activity, please contact Rachel Barnes at 757-787-1361\* (\*TDD number is (800) 828-1120) during business hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to discuss accommodations.