

RC&D Presents Sustainable Development Awards

Seven businesses were recognized for the exemplary efforts at sustainable development at the Bi-Annual Awards Dinner hosted by Tidewater Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council. The awards, according to RC&D Chair Steve Pope are to provide recognition to some of the proven leaders that balance the economic needs with the environmental and social needs of the community. The Kauffman Aquaculture Center in Middlesex County provided an excellent site to recognize efforts of business leaders to work with natural resources. Tours of the new facility enlightened participants about advances in research that the Virginia Institute of Marine Science is working on to support the re-establishment of oysters in the Chesapeake Bay.

Lake Cowart and AJ Erskins accepted the Sustainable Development Award on behalf of Cowart Seafood Corporation and Bevans Oyster Company for their pioneering efforts in Oyster Aquaculture. A partnership between the two companies has resulted in a major investment in a commercial scale oyster nursery system including upwellers and grow-out cages. Not only does this pump new life into the local rural economy, but the oysters have the ability to make a significant environmental contribution by filtering the water in the Chesapeake Bay. In 2005 they planted one million seeds in the Yeocomico and Coan Rivers and in 2006 they increased this to planting 8.5 million seeds. A single oyster is credited with filtering 12 gallons of water a day so with the volume that is being planted there could be substantial water quality improvements. Both companies have contributed to their communities by participating in educational events such as Down on the Farm tours for the public and Ag Days for the third graders. They were nominated by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, the Northumberland County Economic Development Commission and the Northern Neck Soil and Water Conservation District.

The VaBiodiesel Refinery in West Point was presented with the Sustainable Development Award for creating an innovative, renewable resource industry that relies on soy bean products grown throughout the Tidewater RC&D area. Dennis Sulik accepted the award on behalf of the company. The business impact of this new business is tremendous. For every \$ 1,000,000 of VaBioDiesel consumed, \$2,000,000 to \$ 3,000,000 in economic activity is created in Virginia. Without biodiesel, 100% of Virginia's fuel dollars leaves the state with only 35% going to domestic producers and 65% to foreign producers. When VaBioDiesel is used, almost 100% of the fuel dollars stay in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Additionally, using VaBioDiesel is a cost-effective way of complying with EPA regulations which balances the concerns for business and the environment. The positive environmental impact is from a 100% organic and biodegradable product that is renewable. Using VaBioDiesel reduces the dependence on non-renewable fossil fuels plus it reduces the pollution caused by those products. The Dragon Run Steering Committee and the Special Area Management Committee, hosted by the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission, nominated the company in support of natural resource based industries which they feel will preserve the high quality of the Dragon Run Watershed.

Chris Lamb of Lamb Exterminating accepted the award for the 2007 Micro-Enterprise Award. According to Mr. Lamb, while operating a traditional exterminating business, he began learning more about some of the newer more environmentally friendly products that are being manufactured. During the last two years he added EcoSmart Botanical Products which use essential plant oils that are classified as “generally recognized as safe” by the US Food and Drug Administration. The Middle Peninsula Business Development Partnership nominated this new and emerging business in recognition of their efforts as to provide clients with a safer product and for their community contributions.

Three Rivers Soil and Water Conservation District nominated Todd and Kathy Henley of Hillsborough Farm for their successful conversion from a traditional farm to one that produces over 400 acres of certified organic grains and hay for local and national markets. Included in this are 60 acres of certified organic hay and pasture land that supports a herd of 50 brood cows, 15 steers and up to 30 calves. Most of the beef is marketed locally which provides a source of naturally raised beef to the surrounding community. Mr. Henley has also taken steps to ease environmental impacts by including no-tillage techniques in some of his other farm acreages. He adheres to a nutrient management plan and applies fertilizers using techniques that lead to better efficiencies in fertilizer use and there is less nutrient runoff and leaching. In addition, the Henleys are active in community events and have opened their farm for several educational events.

Crown Point Marina, owned by Joe Heyman and Martha Heric, was nominated for the award by the Marine Advisory Program at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science for the extensive and comprehensive renovation that was completed to capture the opportunities and charm of the facility as a Gateway to the Chesapeake Bay from the York River. Ralph Beckman, the general manager of the marina, accepted the award on behalf of the owners. The marina was recently recognized as a Virginia Clean Marina for some of the accomplishments which included removing major amounts of trash and abandoned boats from the property, repairing the pump-out station, installing new fuel pumps, establishing a recycling program for HAZMAT including oil, fuel and antifreeze, purchasing vacuum sanders and tarps to reduce environmental waste, eliminating non-point source runoff by providing a wash down area for trailered boats, naturalizing the landscaping to use less water and fertilizers, and constructing a fish cleaning station with appropriate waste disposal. In addition, Crown Point Marina has sponsored several Bay Clean-Up Days to encourage slip renters to participate in some of the community’s efforts to clean up the region.

Ball Lumber Company, a century old, King and Queen County business was recognized as an exemplary model of a company that operates with sustainability foremost in its operation plan. It has provided a strong economic base in the Dragon Run Watershed while protecting the natural resource values that are essential to continued silviculture production as well as watershed ecology. The Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission’s Dragon Run Steering Committee nominated the company based on the premise that traditional industries such as silviculture enhance the sustainability of the

natural qualities of the Dragon Run. Ball Lumber Company operates with the natural resources as a partner in business -- the better the condition of the resource, the better the long-term sustainability of the company. Hardy Ball and his son contributed to the creation of the DVD, *The Dragon Run: A Step into the Past, A Strategy for the Future* by conducting a tour of the plant and a logging site. They have also participated in many other community events. Geoff Lamm accepted the award on behalf of the Ball family.

Luther and Margaret Welch and Luttrell Tadlock from the Board of Directors accepted the RC&D Project of the Year Award for the accomplishments of the Northern Neck Farm Museum. Since late 2005, when Luther Welch engaged the RC&D and the Northern Neck Travel Council in supporting the development of the new organization, it has been on the fast track. The board was organized and incorporated, non-profit status was acquired, a traveling exhibit has been on the move at more than 10 different festivals and events, a membership brochure was developed and over \$100,000 has been raised. The first of several buildings is planned for construction over the summer months. According to Mr. Welch, fund raising is just now getting started to raise the funds to construct the main building.

Other awards went to Jennifer Gagnon, Virginia Tech Forestry Extension, for her exemplary assistance to the RC&D Council in developing the new Forestry Short Course on Conservation Strategies, Anna Cahoon, RC&D Forester, for her outstanding staff assistance to the RC&D and to Margaret Kennedy for excellence in service to the Council for five years.

Margaret "Prue" Davis, Essex County Board of Supervisors, was thanked for the excellent leadership she provided to the RC&D Council while serving as the Chairperson for 2005 and 2006. She was recognized for all the time and inspiration that she contributed. Jerry W. Davis, Executive Director of the Northern Neck Planning District Commission was recognized as the Outstanding Councilmember for the valuable contributions he has made to RC&D by serving as the treasurer and for providing leadership to numerous RC&D projects.

Tidewater RC&D Council is an Equal Opportunity Provider. For additional information please contact the Council at 804-443-1118.

Caption for photo:

Award recipients from left to right front row: Ralph Beckman, Crown Point General Manager; AJ Erskine, Bevans Oysters; Margaret Kennedy, Tidewater RC&D, Jennifer Gagnon, Virginia Tech Forestry Extension; Luther Welch, Northern Neck Farm Museum; Steve Pope, Chairperson Tidewater RC&D Council; Second row from left to right: Dennis Soulik, VaBioDiesal; Anna Cahoon, RC&D Forester; Lake Cowart, Cowart Seafood; Geoff Lamm, Ball Lumber and Chris Lamb, Lamb Exterminating. Missing from the photo was Prue Davis, Essex County and Todd and Kathy Henley, Hillsboro Farm.