



★
North Carolina Department of
Agriculture and Consumer Services

MARKETING & OUTREACH TO INCREASE VAD PARTICIPATION

- Greg Walker & Annette Adams, Johnston SWCD
- Blake Szilvay, Randolph SWCD

N ★ C
FOREVER
FARMS



A scenic farm landscape at sunset. A red barn with white trim stands in the background. In the foreground, a dirt road leads towards the barn, flanked by white fences. Several black and white cows are grazing in the field. The sky is filled with soft, golden clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow.

Marketing and Outreach to Increase VAD Participation



Johnston County VAD Success Story



Achievement

Record growth
in VAD
enrollment.



Key Statistic

29,412.16 total
acres enrolled
as of June 2026.



Recent Milestone

Added over
5,000 acres in a
single year.



Driver

Landowner
engagement and
community
visibility due to
Urban Sprawl

Key Strategies for Outreach



Grants

- Seek every opportunity to remove financial barriers



Signage

- Highway-Grade Double-Sided Signs
- Highly-Visible-Reflective
- Tri-Fold Brochures



Targeted Marketing

Social Media & Workshops

- Facebook
- Website
- Conduct presentations to broaden reach. Set up a table at the Extension meetings



Promote Ag Community

- For New VAD Members that want a sign and frame, give them opportunity to contribute to local FFA
- Community Projects for Engaging Local Youth
- GIS Visibility

Grant Funding

Objective: Remove financial barriers for participation

VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT APPLICATION FORM

Section 1: APPLICANT INFORMATION
Name of Farm/Business/Organization: _____
Primary Contact Person: _____
Phone Number & Email: _____
VAD Participation: ☐ Yes ☐ No (for details)

Section 2: PROJECT OVERVIEW
Project Title: _____
Project Timeline: _____
Total Grant Funding Requested: \$ _____
Executive Summary: _____

Section 3: PROJECT GOALS & OUTCOMES
(Description of project objectives and how they align with VAD goals (e.g., land preservation, farm modernization, market access): _____

Section 4: BUDGET PROPOSAL

Item/Activity	Quantity	Cost per Unit	Total Cost	Funding Source (Grant/Matching)

Section 5: PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION
(Description of activities, timeline, and key personnel: _____)

Apply Everywhere

Apply for every grant available to maximize support and remove financial barriers.



Ag Outreach

Reach out to agricultural businesses and organizations for key grant opportunities.



County Assistance

Talk with your Register of Deeds to request a waiver of filing fees for County VAD memberships.

High-Visibility Signage



STRATEGY

Awareness that Ag is important in your County



QUALITY

Highway-grade, reflective, double-sided metal signs (via NC Dept. Correction Enterprises)



PARTNERSHIP

Frames constructed by local FFA (engaging local youth)



SUSTAINABILITY

Landowner donation model (\$25 to FFA) fosters community contribution and signage alerts those passing by and on **GIS in bright yellow** this is a farm committed to agriculture

TARGETED MARKETING



WEBSITE

Information hub and pdf fillable VAD application.



FACEBOOK PAGE

Community updates, event announcements, and interactive outreach.



DIRECT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Annual Conservation Easement and VAD Workshop event. Be present at partnership events and meetings.
- VAD brochures in trucks for landowner outreach.



More on Community Engagement



Direct Mailings

Snail Mail or Email

Send pdf fillable applications directly to eligible producers.



Simplified Onboarding

SWCD Office Support

In addition to providing fillable forms and having an onsite Notary Public at the SWCD office.

Know the “Why”

Promoting Agriculture



1

Identity & Pride

Recognizing the commitment to the agricultural way of life.



2

Nuisance Mitigation

Informing non-farming neighbors to reduce the likelihood of legal disputes regarding farm operations (noise, dust, smells).



3

Public Hearings

On condemnation of farmland.



4

Preservation Priority

Enrollment acts as a priority factor for state/federal grants (ADFPTF and ALE).

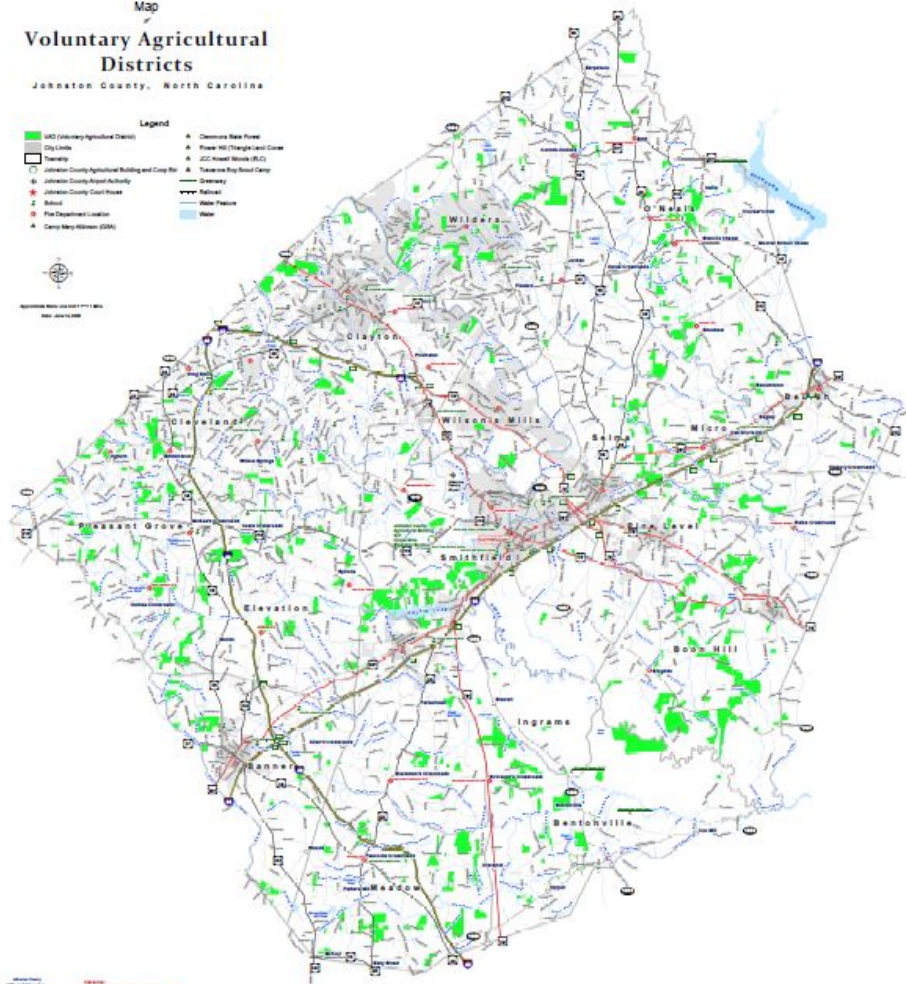


VAD is the first step in Farmland Preservation.



Map Voluntary Agricultural Districts Johnston County, North Carolina

- Legend**
- VAD (Voluntary Agricultural District)
 - City Limits
 - Therapy
 - Johnston County Agricultural Building and Camp Site
 - Johnston County Airport Authority
 - Johnston County Court House
 - Relief
 - Fire Department Location
 - Camp Miley Station (CMA)
 - Cherokee State Forest
 - Franklin Ridge (Triangle Land Corp)
 - JC Forest Woods (JFC)
 - Triangle Ridge Road Camp
 - Greenway
 - Railroad
 - Water Feature
 - Water



Thank You!

Questions?

Greg Walker

Director

EMAIL

gregory.walker@johnstonnc.gov

Annette Adams

Easement Specialist

EMAIL

annette.adams@johnstonnc.gov



Randolph County VAD Program

Blake Szilvay

Randolph County Cooperative Extension



County Overview

13% of all Ag acres are in VAD

20,190 acres currently

1,238 farms

Average size farm is 109 acres

County is a suburban-rural mix



Board Engagement



New Business – Item G



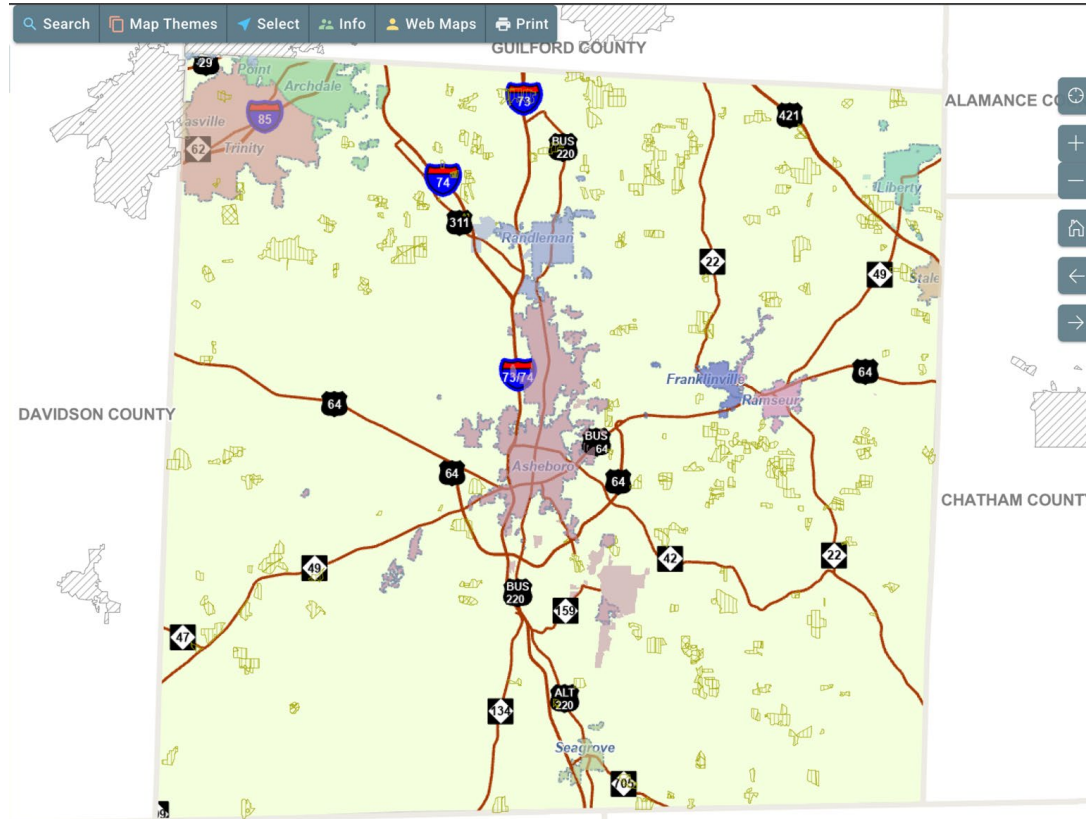
**Consider Farmland Preservation Fund
from PUV Rollback Proceeds**

-Zeb Holden, County Manager





Tracking Parcel Changes





Tracking Parcel Changes





Dear _____,

Your parcel that was previously in the Voluntary Agricultural District program has recently been removed from the program because it has been split or given a new parcel number. To ensure you wish to remain in the program, and to ensure that your property still qualifies, you must re-apply using the enclosed application. If you have any questions regarding the re-application or about why your parcel was removed from the program, please feel free to contact us M-F 8am - 5pm.

Parcel #(s):

Acres:

Randolph County Cooperative Extension

1880 US Hwy 64 East,

Asheboro, NC 27203

336-318-6000



Thank You!

Blake Szilvay

Ag Agent: Randolph County Cooperative Extension

336-318-6004

blszilva@ncsu.edu

