

**Caldwell Soil and Water
Conservation District**

**Long Range Plan
2025-2030**

LONG RANGE PLAN
Caldwell Soil and Water Conservation District
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Introduction

Caldwell Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) provides a program to address the wise use and management of our natural resources: soil, water, air, plants, and animals.

As part of program development, this Long-Range Plan describes the concerns, objectives, and goals of the District that will provide for the conservation of our natural resources. The District provides quality technical assistance to communities and the public.

Programs are funded through a cooperative effort of local, state, and federal government.

The District Board of Supervisors gratefully acknowledges the help of community leaders and cooperating agencies in developing these concerns, objectives, and goals.

On behalf of the citizens of Caldwell County, some of whom work the land, but most of whom spend their time removed from the land, the Caldwell SWCD undertakes the challenge of safeguarding the land, water, and related natural resources for the benefit of future generations.

Mission Statement

Caldwell SWCD promotes wise use and management of our natural resources by providing educational information, dedicated and experienced leadership, and technical excellence to landowners, land users, local interest groups, and community schools. Caldwell SWCD is committed to providing equal services to all clients without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status.

History of the District



Fertilizing field at P.L. Moore farm in Granite Falls--1951

Caldwell County joined the multi-county Catawba Soil Conservation District in 1948 under provisions of Section 139-14 of the Soil and Water Conservation District Law of North Carolina, 1937, G.S. 139. The Catawba Soil Conservation District was organized on April 8, 1938, and would come to include Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, and McDowell counties.

By action of the Board of Supervisors of the Catawba Soil Conservation District, the district was dissolved into single county districts, and the Caldwell Soil and Water Conservation District was chartered on July 31, 1961. Boundaries of the district are the same as Caldwell County.

Authority / Organization

The Caldwell SWCD is a governmental subdivision of the State of North Carolina organized to exercise public power conferred under provisions of the Soil and Water Conservation District Law of North Carolina, Chapter 139, as amended. A five-member Board of Supervisors made up of three elected members and two appointed members governs the District.

General Statute 139 places the responsibility to the District to plan, coordinate, and carry out a conservation program within its legal boundaries.



Best Management Practices (BMP's) such as Heavy Use Area Protection are installed with water tanks using financial and technical assistance through North Carolina Agricultural Cost Share Program (NCACSP).

District Services

The District offers the following soil and water conservation services to it's citizens:

1. Consultative Assistance
2. Technical Assistance
3. Financial Assistance through State and Federal Cost Share programs and grants
4. Information and Educational Assistance

Caldwell County Statistics / District Description

Caldwell County is located in the Blue Ridge foothills of Western North Carolina. The land area covers approximately 301,819 acres and adjoining counties are Wilkes, Alexander, Catawba, Burke, Avery, and Watauga. As of 2023, the estimated population was 81,075 with 40,188 persons living in incorporated areas.

Agriculture, forest products, textiles, small industries, and other businesses all contribute to the economic stability of the county.



Manufacturing is the leading industry (outside of government) in the county, employing approximately 7,916 persons or nearly 21.5 percent of the labor force.

Ornamental trees and shrubs, livestock, and grain crops are the major agricultural enterprises. Approximately 35,964 acres of cropland and pastureland produce an agricultural income of \$56,705,000 as of 2022.

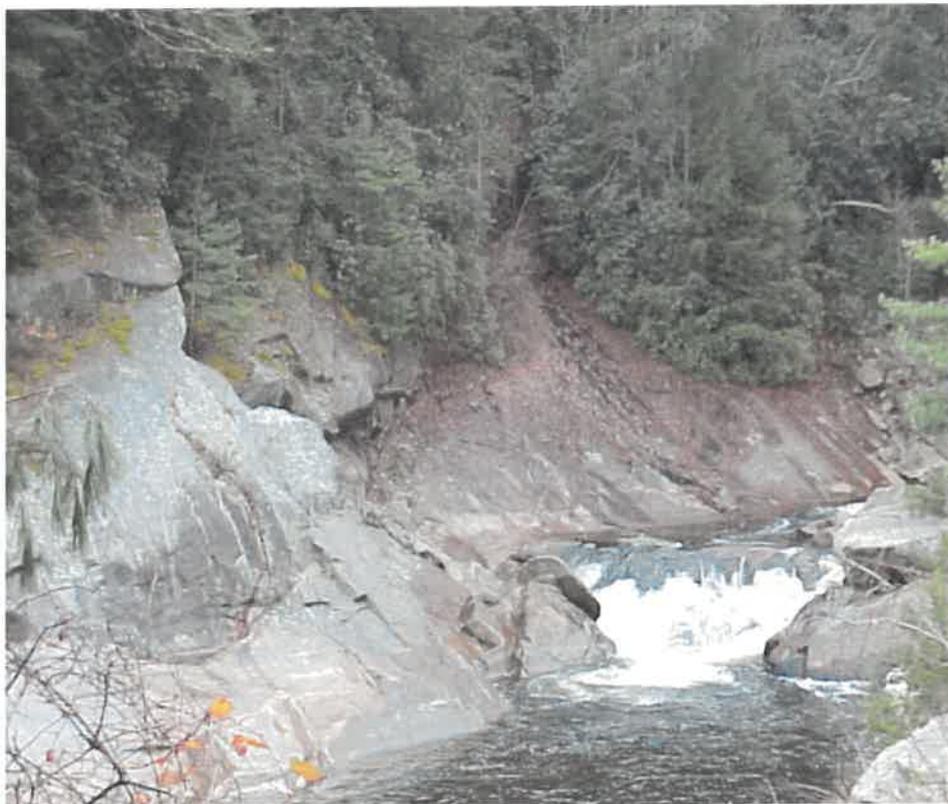
Caldwell County ranks 9th out of 100 North Carolina counties for Nursery/Ornamentals.

Woodland covers approximately 67% of Caldwell County, including 49,335 acres in the Pisgah National Forest. Forest products, including lumber and pulpwood, are a vital part of the county's economic structure.

Outdoor recreational opportunities are abundant in this area. Pisgah National Forest, the Blue Ridge Parkway, Lakes Rhodhiss and Hickory, Tuttle Educational State Forest, several golf courses, and Wilson's Creek Wild and Scenic River offer many opportunities for local citizens and visitors alike.

As of 2020, approximately 19,840 acres, or 6.6%, of the land area in the county was considered urban. This figure shows the vast majority of the county is rural.

With land suitable for agriculture, housing, business, and industry becoming scarce, competition for each acre will continue to increase. The resulting conservation problems are the concern of the Caldwell SWCD Supervisors, and the resolution of those problems is their responsibility.



Majestic Wilson Creek was designated in August 2000 by Congress as a Wild & Scenic River. The free-flowing creek rises on the slopes of Grandfather Mountain and 20 miles later, makes a frantic dash through a 200-foot-deep gorge before joining Johns River.

MAJOR RESOURCES

1. Soil Resources
2. Water Resources
3. Air Resources
4. Plant Resources
5. Animal Resources
6. Human Resources
7. Energy Resources

MAJOR RESOURCE CONCERNS

Soil Resources

- Erosion during urban / suburban development
- Non-point source pollution from Agriculture and Forestry
 - Farmland Preservation
 - Streambank erosion

Water Resources

- Sedimentation of streams and lakes
 - Stream stability
- Floodplain / shoreline development
- Residential waste water disposal - straight piping
 - Stormwater runoff
 - Livestock access to streams
- Point Source / Non-point source pollution

Air Resources

Best Management Practices (BMP) implementation for air, odor, and pest management

Plant Resources

- Forest acreage decline including hardwood forests
 - Loss of riparian areas
 - Loss of early successional habitat

Animal Resources

- Loss of early successional habitat
- Loss of riparian buffers (stream shade) & habitat
 - Stream sedimentation – loss of fish habitat

Human Resources

- Need for public education
- Public Outreach, including underserved citizens
- Broaden conservation coalitions to accomplish district goals

Energy Resources

- Need for public education
- Improve on farm efficiency of equipment and facilities

MAJOR RESOURCE OBJECTIVES

1. Protect soil quality and reduce soil erosion
2. Protect water quality from sediments and storm water run-off
3. Improve quality of life placing emphasis on air, plant and animal resources
4. Increase conservation awareness through a sound conservation education program

MAJOR RESOURCE GOALS

1. Identify non-point sources of pollution and prescribe solutions to alleviate sources of contaminants
2. Reduce sediment and nutrient loading to surface waters of Caldwell County, including both the Catawba and Yadkin River watersheds
3. Prevent groundwater pollution
4. Use existing cost share programs and develop additional funding sources to assist landowners with establishment and implementation of BMPs
5. Establish a working partnership that includes representatives from Natural Resources agencies: local, state and federal governing officials; Agri-business environmental groups; and urban and rural community leaders to address local resource concerns
6. Support Voluntary Agricultural District and open space retention in Caldwell County
7. Provide conservation education and information opportunities to the people of Caldwell County, including underserved citizens
8. Actively seek grants for projects that do not fall under State or Federal Cost Share programs



Caldwell SWCD annually sponsors a Poster, Essay, Slideshow, Computer Generated Poster, and Speech Contest for area schools. School winners pose for a picture after receiving awards at the Annual Awards Banquet.

GOAL 1

- Identify non-point sources of pollution and prescribe solutions to alleviate sources of contaminants

Action

1. Install Conservation Management Systems on 5,000 acres of Agricultural and Forest lands
2. Exclude livestock from 10,000 feet of streambank



Before

Poor water quality from animal waste and streambank erosion



After

Water quality improved by fencing and seeding critically eroded streambanks

GOAL 2

- Reduce sediment and nutrient loading to surface waters of Caldwell County, including the Catawba and Yadkin River watersheds

Action

1. Plan, install, and maintain nutrient and waste management plans on 1,000 acres of agricultural lands
2. Plan and install 10,000 feet of filter strips, field borders, and buffers along Caldwell County streams
3. Reduce streambank erosion through installation of 12,000 feet of stream restoration / streambank and shoreline protection



Sediment is the number one pollutant of our county's streams.

GOAL 3

- Prevent groundwater pollution

Action

1. Plan and install 6 composting facilities and litter sheds for poultry mortality management
2. Plan, install, and maintain nutrient and waste management plans on 1,000 acres of agricultural lands



Caldwell County has confined livestock of poultry, beef, and swine.

GOAL 4

- Use existing cost share programs and develop additional funding sources to assist landowners with establishment and implementation of BMPs

Action

1. Identify natural resource priorities
2. Provide public education and awareness of targeted priorities
3. Develop and implement conservation plans and contracts
4. Follow up implementation with maintenance reviews

Grassed Waterways installed in crop fields help reduce erosion and sediment runoff. Many conservation practices can be installed with financial assistance from the District, including North Carolina Agricultural Cost Share Program.



GOAL 5

- Establish a working partnership that includes representatives from natural resources agencies: local, state and federal governing officials: Agri-business environmental groups; and urban and rural community leaders to address local resource concerns

Action

1. Identify and address non-point source concerns for Lower Creek, Caldwell County's only partially supporting stream
2. Expand the educational opportunities with various groups within the county



Erosion and the resulting stream sedimentation originate from many sources.

GOAL 6

- Support Voluntary Agricultural District and open space retention in Caldwell County

Action

1. Preserve 5,000 acres of farmland / open space
2. Promote participation in "present-use-value" program
3. Participate in multi-agency effort to accept voluntary land preservation easements
4. Provide staff assistance for county Voluntary Agricultural District Administration



GOAL 7

- Provide conservation education and information opportunities to the people of Caldwell County, including underserved citizens

Actions for the Public

1. Promote conservation district website
2. Provide rain barrels for sale
3. Provide conservation maps/materials to consultants and the general public
4. Provide 1940-present aerial photographs of Caldwell County for easier access to public and preservation
5. Annually coordinate Big Sweep Program for litter free waters
6. Recognize Annual Farm Family
7. Provide No-Till Drill for rent

Actions for School Age Children

1. Provide curriculum materials to public, private and home schools
2. Offer program assistance to all schools
3. Sponsor student scholarships to summer workshops
4. Sponsor poster, essay, slideshow, computer generated poster, and speech contests
5. Sponsor Envirothon teams
6. Recognize program participants at annual awards banquet
7. Host Environmental Field Days for every 5th grader in the county



Each year over 12,000 area school children receive soil and water conservation education programs while visiting Tuttle Educational State Forest and over 6,000 students receive programming from the District

Actions for Forestry Education

1. Assist with and maintain soil and water study sites and exhibits at Tuttle Educational State Forest
2. Maintain existing District sponsored displays at Tuttle Educational State Forest

Actions for Civil Rights

1. Provide District services to all citizens without regard to race, religion, creed, natural origin, color, sex, age, disability, political beliefs, or marital / familial status
2. Provide leadership in the Earth Team Volunteer program for 500 hours of volunteer services annually
3. Meet with 10 underserved client groups to provide technical / educational services
4. Annually update District Supervisors and staff of their Civil Rights responsibilities

GOAL 8

- Actively seek grants for projects that do not fall under State or Federal Cost Share Assistance
 1. North Carolina Foundation for Soil & Water Conservation
 2. Clean Water Act Section 319
 3. Clean Water Management Trust Fund
 4. Other funding sources

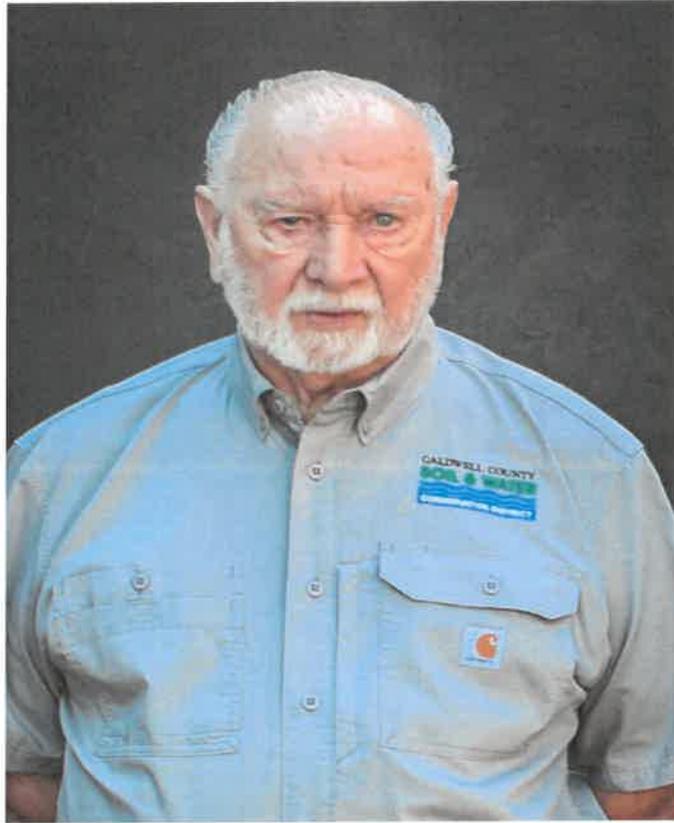
Caldwell Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors

Michael D. Willis



Michael Willis has served on the Board of Supervisors since December 2007. He has served the Area 2 Soil & Water Conservation Districts as Vice Chairman as well as Chairman. Mr. Willis serves on the North Carolina Soil & Water Commission as the Western Region Representative. He owns and operates Mountain Crest LLC and is a part-time farmer of over 300 acres. Mr. Willis is a 1988 graduate of Hibriten High School and a 1992 graduate of NC State School of Agronomy with a degree in Turf Science. Mr. Willis is a member of the Caldwell Cattleman's Association. Mr. Willis is an active member in his church, Kings Creek Baptist. Mike and his wife Denise have two children Morgan and Maggie and reside in Lenoir.

Jack S. Adams



Jack Adams has served on the Board of Supervisors two different times from March 1987 to December 1990 and from March 1998 until the present. Mr. Adams is a part-time cattle farmer and is retired from the furniture industry. He is a 1957 graduate of Happy Valley High School. Mr. Adams is a member of Crest View Baptist Church where he serves as Deacon, Sunday School Teacher, and Choir Member. Mr. Adams has also served as chaplain of Gideons International, member of Hereford Association, and president of the Cattleman's Association. Jack is married to Sherry Jackson Adams, and they have two children, Jackie (Seth) Nagy and Melony (John) Martinelli and two grandchildren Andrew and McKinnon. Jack and Sherry reside in Lenoir.

Russell Dellinger



Rusty Dellinger has served on the Caldwell Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors since April of 2021. He was appointed by the North Carolina Soil and Water Commission to fill a vacant seat on the Board. In 2024 he was elected to fill the position and currently serves as the Chairman of the Caldwell Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors. He retired from the N.C. Forest Service in February 2019 after serving Caldwell County and the State of North Carolina for 33 years. Currently, he is employed with Casey and Company Forestry, PLLC as a forestry technician. Mr. Dellinger also serves on the Board of Directors for Gamewell Volunteer Fire Department as President of the Board and is also a Board Member for the Tuttle State Forest Foundation. In his spare time, he enjoys gardening, hunting, and fishing. Rusty and his wife Paula reside in the Gamewell community and have two sons, Ethan and Luke, two granddaughters and one grandson.

Ed L. Spivey



Ed Spivey is the current Vice-President of the Caldwell County Board of Supervisors and has served on the Board since December 2010. He was elected as a write-in candidate and replaced the seat vacated by Jeff Rash. Mr. Spivey is a high school graduate and is a Licensed General Contractor. Mr. Spivey owns Spivey Construction and is a custom home builder. Spivey is a member of the Collettsville Ruritan, Foothills Outdoorsman Association, Blue Ridge Horseman's Association, Friends of Wilson Creek, Caldwell County Home Builders Association, Caldwell County Chamber of Commerce, and Past Chairman of the Wilson Creek Study Group. Spivey was a founding Board member of Foothills Outdoorsman Association and served as the President for two years. He is also a founding Board member of the Blue Ridge Horseman's Association where he served as President for 3 years. Mr. Spivey is a member of Mulvale Baptist Church. He enjoys hunting, fishing, horseback riding, and motorcycle riding. Ed and his wife Donna, live in Collettsville, and have two daughters, Hannah and Samantha, two sons Lucas and Joe, and four granddaughters Spensor, Blakely, Isla, and Mila.

John Clark



John Clark is the current Treasurer of the Caldwell County Board of Supervisors and has served on the Board since December 2024. John grew up in the Mulberry/Collettsville area and lived in Caldwell County most of his life. John has been farming Sod and Nursery Stock since he was 15 years old. John has been married to his wife, Camela, for 33 years. John and Camela have three sons. John enjoys bear hunting amongst other types of hunting with his three sons. John has been in the Green Industry for his entire life. John serves as the Vice President of the Turfgrass Council of North Carolina. John is also the President of the Caldwell County Nurserymen's Association. He is also a member of Turfgrass Producers International, a founding member of the North Carolina Sod Producers International, and the North Carolina Nursery & Landscape Association. John along with his three sons own and operate a Sod Farm and Container Nursery Operation called Pro Green Inc. located in Burke County.

Caldwell Soil & Water Conservation District Staff

County Employees

Jessica Wilson, Education Coordinator/Program Support Specialist, facilitates all Conservation/Natural Resources Educational Programs to school age children in Caldwell County as well as the Caldwell County Voluntary Agricultural Program along with daily office administration.

jwilson@caldwellcountync.org

Aaron Franks, Conservationist, administers the NC Agricultural Cost Share Program, Agricultural Water Resources Assistance Program, Streamflow Rehabilitation Assistance Program, and the Community Conservation Assistance Program offered through the NC Department of Agriculture Division of Soil & Water Conservation.

afranks@caldwellcountync.org

USDA/NRCS Employees

Jason Crosby, District Conservationist, administers the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Services Environmental Quality Incentives Programs.

jason.crosby@usda.gov

Will Faulkner, acting Team 5 Supervisor USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Services Environmental Quality Incentives Programs.

william.faulkner@usda.gov

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PLEDGE AND ADOPTION OF LONG-RANGE PLAN

We, the Caldwell Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors, pledge to carry out this long-range plan to the best of our abilities. It is our intent to speak for the land and fulfill all obligations as set forth in GS139 Soil and Water District Law. Our focus will be directed by this document during the next five years and will set the precedence for the following five years.

The Caldwell Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors adopt this long-range plan on this the 4th. day of December 2025.


Russel Dellinger
Chairman


Ed L. Spivey
Vice-Chairman


John Clark
Secretary/Treasurer


Michael D. Willis
Member


Jack S. Adams
Member