

## **Hyde County Board of Commissioners Special Recognition of Hiatt Cahoon and Billy William**

Written by: Debbie Cahoon and Teresa Adams

A reception and recognition of Hiatt Cahoon and Billy Williams was held on Tuesday, September 6, 2016 at the Hyde Co. Board of Commissioners meeting in honor of their outstanding work on the Swan Quarter Watershed Steering Committee.

The original Swan Quarter Watershed Work Plan was signed on February 2, 1965 by J.C. Morris, Chairman and H.W. Cahoon, of the Pamlico Soil and Water Conservation District (now Beaufort, Hyde, Washington, Tyrrell and Dare Districts). The project was authorized by Congress a few years earlier as a result of five hurricanes that caused severe damage to the area between 1954 to 1960. The original project was ambitious in scope with 17.7 miles of dike, 3 pumping plants, 16 tidegate structures, and 19.1 miles of channel improvement. The watershed included 11,440 acres with 7,293 of that in cropland.

The West, Quarter, Double and Bay Supplement to the Swan Quarter Watershed Project was published in 1984 with a smaller and less grand scope. This part of the original project would protect cropland east of Swan Quarter. Funding for the West Quarter and Double Bay Project was approximately \$6,000,000.00 and encompassed Phase I through VII. A Corps of Engineers permit was issued in February 1986. Work would finally begin on the project in 1987 with salt water intrusion on cropland as the main motivation for its need. By 1995, after a total of seven contracts (phases), six miles of dike and six major tidegate structures installed this portion of the project was complete.

After suffering from flooding as the result of six hurricanes in the mid to late 1990's local citizens redoubled their efforts to see the project completed. A CAMA permit was issued in December 2002 and a Corps permit in January 2003. Phase VIII began in June 2003 which took up construction of the dike where it was stopped in the mid 90's with the purpose of moving towards Swan Quarter. With additional funding and all needed land rights and permits in hand two additional phases are "on the drawing board" and work is well on its way to complete this much needed project. The total funding amount for Phase VIII through Phase XI has been \$4,681,938.00. The final phases XII –XIII of the Swan Quarter Watershed that extends to the intersection of Hwy 45 and Hwy 264 was completed in June of 2011.

### **Community Perspective:**

It is such an honor and a privilege to stand here today and recognize two gentlemen who have been instrumental in making Swan Quarter one of eastern North Carolina's best kept secrets.

These gentlemen have been the epitome of what you would see in a community leader and volunteer and they have spent countless hours striving to make a positive difference in their community. Mr. Billy and Mr. Hiatt were two of the founding members of the Swan Quarter Watershed Steering Committee that was appointed by the Hyde Board Commissioners and remain active members today. Their input has and continues to be invaluable to the operation and maintenance of the Swan Quarter Watershed and their commitment to the citizens has improved the quality of life for many. We thank you for all you've done in seeing this project to fruition and your continued service in overseeing that the watershed operates and functions as designed. You both have given of yourselves for the betterment of Hyde County and with this small token we recognize you today and say Thank You for making this project and community a priority in your lives. We all have a lesson to learn from you both, that we would all strive to be as involved and committed to the citizens of Hyde as you both have been and continue to be.

Joy Sherrod Area Engineer for NRCS Comments:

Mr. Billy served as Contracting Officer and was very involved. He met with NRCS inspection staff several times a week providing support and recommendations. He gave countless hours to the Swan Quarter Project which led to the successful completion of the project. It was a real pleasure working with Mr. Billy.

Mr. Hyatt was very helpful working with individual landowners. He had a "heart" for the community, working hard to make sure landowner's concerns were taken care of. Mr. Hyatt was not just involved during the construction phases of work but also spent many hours of his time maintaining the tide gates.

Rodney Woolard, District Conservationist NRCS Comments:

From my perspective the hours that Billy put in as a volunteer were extraordinary. To serve as Contracting Officer is mind boggling. Not only did Billy do it, but he did very well. I just called Joy and she said it worked better when he served as CO than when other folks did.

Mr. Hiatt had a real concern for the community and saw the project as something that had to be completed. Local involvement is always the key to getting these type of projects finished. Anytime he had something in his store that we needed, he told us to take it.

Rufus Croom, Area 3 ARC for NRCS Comments:

Mr. Hiatt always wanted to work things out. He always wanted to make sure everyone was treated as fairly and right as they could be. If there was a road block he wanted to see how to go around and still get to the end. He never lost sight of that.

Mr. Billy was always there. He would try to think how we could get it completed and would try to keep all on task. From his prior life he knew the ins and outs of government and never lost sight that being consistent would get the task complete.



Pictured from left to right: Billy Williams, J.W. Spencer, Hiatt Cahoon. Photo by Jessica Sadler Woodard.