

# THE WATERSHED

## LORD FAIRFAX SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT JULY 1, 2017 - JUNE 30, 2018



### August 2018

All programs and services of the District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, handicap, or political affiliation.

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### Chairman's Report

Having discussed District developments and accomplishments in the June "Watershed," let's turn to the future; specifically, Phase Three of the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP III), Virginia's grand design to help bring the Chesapeake Bay back to water quality standards by 2025, and all done in partnership with West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Delaware and the District of Columbia.

In finalizing its WIP III proposals for submission to the feds, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality asked the Chesapeake Bay-related conservation districts for their own best suggestions. Lord Fairfax submitted its recommendations on July 27, and I was never more proud of the staff and directors who crafted them.

Some recommendations were directed toward the dominant SL-6 livestock stream exclusion program. For example:

- 'flash grazing' to help manage riparian buffer vegetation;
- the promotion of forested riparian buffers;
- the resumption of 100% SL-6 cost share programs (as long as proposed projects would compete with one another for approval);
- the linkage of SL-6 projects to rotational grazing incentive payments.

AND, as tho' inspired by the distinguished Director from Clarke County, Wayne Webb, whose anti-pollution mantra has been to "keep the soil on the land and reduce the application of nutrients" (i.e. fertilizer), our team doubled down with proposals to curb nitrogen, phosphorus and E.coli bacteria runoff-- all while preserving the voluntary and cost share relationship between farmer and

district. For example:

- all 100% cost share SL-6 projects would require the application of a certified Nutrient Management Plan;
- reduce cover crop program restrictions to reflect specific area needs and conditions;
- apply 100% cost share to Tree planting;
- open livestock BMPs to equine boarding and pleasure operations;
- expansion of barnyard runoff control programs;
- include Shenandoah County in the Poultry Litter Transport Incentive Program as an eligible source;
- a summer cover crop cost share program to decrease soil erosion and nutrient runoff on fallow fields;
- tax credit program to cover the employment of solar, wind and other alternative energy systems;
- cost share programs for wildlife habitat plantings;
- incentivize the use of Virginia sourced poultry litter to replace commercial fertilizer.

The District's submission ended in a plea to make the Commonwealth's agricultural BMP cost share programs as regionally-specific and responsive as possible in order to better address local concerns.

NOTE: the full text of our recommendations may be requested from the District office at (540) 465-2424.

Good going Staff and Directors!

- Richard Hoover

## OUR CORNER OF VIRGINIA; LFSWCD JURISDICTION

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports Lord Fairfax Soil & Water Conservation District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Funding is also provided by Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah and Warren Counties.



### BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Joan Comanor, Shenandoah  
Mary Gessner, Shenandoah  
Kitty Hockman-Nicholas, Frederick  
Marietta Cather Walls, Frederick  
H.B. Simpson, Winchester  
Michael Neese, Winchester  
Richard Hoover, Warren  
Ira Richards III, Warren  
Wayne Webb, Clarke

Justin Mackay-Smith, Clarke  
James Fagan, Shenandoah At-Large  
C. Corey Childs, Warren At-Large  
Bernard Nagelvoort, Associate Director  
James Martin, Associate Director  
Rick Stanford, Associate Director  
Karen Gnegy, Associate Director  
Vincent Dibenedetto, Associate Director

### DISTRICT PERSONNEL:

Amanda Campbell, Administrative Assistant  
Sheryl Ferguson, Technical Support Contractor  
Dana Gochenour, Senior Conservation Specialist  
Sam Truban, Conservation Specialist  
Alison Sloop, Conservation Specialist  
Nick Livesay, Conservation Specialist  
Allyson Ponn, Education & Program Support Specialist

### FREDERICK

**# OF FARMS: 681**  
**FARM ACRES: 100,707**  
**STREAM MILES: 1,024**

### WINCHESTER

**STREAM MILES: 10.5**

### CLARKE

**# OF FARMS: 477**  
**FARM ACRES: 66,946**  
**STREAM MILES: 317**

### SHENANDOAH

**# OF FARMS: 980**  
**FARM ACRES: 133,519**  
**STREAM MILES: 1,338**

### WARREN

**# OF FARMS: 346**  
**FARM ACRES: 47,994**  
**STREAM MILES: 565**

Data provided by the following:

2015 Census Bureau, 2012 USDA Agriculture Census, and USGS

**Envirothon 2018:** The LFSWCD Envirothon was held on April 4th at the Northern VA 4-H Education Center in Front Royal, Virginia. We had 4 teams compete this year: Two teams from Massanutten Regional Governor's School, one from Mountain Vista Governor's School and one team from Sherando High School. Mountain Vista, the winner of last year's competition, as well as the two teams from Massanutten Regional went on to compete at the Area 1 Envirothon.

**Youth Conservation Leadership Summit:** The first annual Youth Conservation Leadership Summit was hosted at the Massanutten Regional Governor's School on October 26th, 2017. The theme for the event was "Building a Brighter Tomorrow", with three objectives: to identify current problems, recognize the steps being taken to address these problems, and to theorize future solutions. Representatives from local, state and federal conservation agencies served as discussion leaders at the tables where the approximate 80 students rotated through.

**The Weekly Harvest:** This weekly newsletter is sent out to the Strasburg Community Garden Plot holders and other interested community members. It contains helpful information about gardening, weather, pests, weeds and keeps everyone updated on our donation goal.

**Strasburg Community Garden Kids Programming:** Working with our partner organization, VCE Master Gardeners, we have been able to add a kids program in addition to every adult workshop given through the Strasburg Community Garden grant. The children have learned about pollinators by investigating bee hives, decomposition and compost by playing with worms, and learned to harvest by picking salsa ingredients.

**On the Farm at Hedgebrook:** The LFSWCD has partnered with Sustainability Matters to bring education to back on the farm! This is a workshop series focused on organic gardening, farm animals, native trees and Italian cheese making.

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## Annual Awards Recognition (November 2017):

### **SHENANDOAH COUNTY CLEAN WATER FARM AWARD**

John & Kim Hafner, September Farm

### **FREDERICK COUNTY CLEAN WATER FARM AWARD**

Timothy W. Kettlewell

### **CLARKE COUNTY CLEAN WATER FARM AWARD**

Ronald N. & Elizabeth A. Light, Morning Star Farm

### **OUTSTANDING CONSERVATION FARM AWARD**

Beverly B. McKay, Hazelwood Corporation (Clarke)

### **OUTSTANDING CONSERVATION FARM AWARD**

Marcus M. Adams, M.M. Adams & Son, Inc. (Frederick)

### **OUTSTANDING URBAN CONSERVATION AWARD**

Michael W. Dirting, D&M Farms, LLC (Shenandoah)

### **OUTSTANDING URBAN CONSERVATION AWARD**

Lonnie Eaton & Son (Shenandoah)

### **OUTSTANDING URBAN CONSERVATION AWARD**

Edwin M. Eastham III (Warren)

### **EDUCATION PARTNER OF THE YEAR**

Lord Fairfax Community College, Christopher Boies

### **CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP AWARD**

Guy M. Gochenour, Shenandoah County Farm Lessee

Bobby Clark, Virginia Cooperative Extension

### **URBAN AGRICULTURE AWARD**

Tammy Batcha, Opequon Presbyterian Church Community Garden

### **URBAN CONSERVATION PARTNER AWARD**

Mark Sutphin (VCE) & Sari Carp (Master Gardener)

### **URBAN FORESTRY AWARD**

Mark Buscaino, Casey Tree Farm (Clarke)

### **CONSERVATION EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR**

Stephen Nickolas Livesay, LFSWCD

### **LFSWCD DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR AWARD**

Richard W. Hoover, Warren County Chairman

# State Conservation Assistance Programs

The Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices (Ag-BMP) Cost-Share Program, which pays a certain percentage of the installation costs for approved conservation practices to eligible farmers, is administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR), and implemented by the SWCD (District).

The purpose of the program is to improve water quality in the state's streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay. The program encourages the voluntary installation of Ag-BMPs to meet Virginia's non-point source pollution water quality objectives.

Through these voluntary contracts, producers and landowners are given the funds to fence livestock out of streams and provide an alternative source of clean water for animals. We also help improve management and grazing of their farms by installing practices like cross-fences and stream crossings when needed. Ag BMPs benefit the Commonwealth by reducing stream sediment, aquatic nutrients, and bacteria. Benefits to the farmer include more efficient grazing patterns, healthier forage and healthier livestock, faster weight gains, and simplified management.

In FY2018 the District received an allocation of more than \$754 thousand, the entirety of which was used to fund the remainder of the 100% cost share stream exclusion projects that had been awaiting funding since FY2015. Since the cost-share was being used to clear our backlog, all new FY2018 contracts were approved for state tax-credit only. Tax credits are valued at 25% of the producer's out of pocket costs, so the \$91,951.09 worth of tax credits that were approved represent only a small portion of the dollars that the District's landowners put into new conservation practices in FY2018. Some of the practices completed, reflected in the table below, were originally approved for funding in FY2017 or prior. Not all practices approved in FY2018 were completed, and those will be completed in FY2019, along with new practices funded with FY2019 funds.

In FY2019 the District has been able to return to offering our full suite of conservation practices for cost share, and will be working with producers on installing a wide variety of conservation practices, including cover crops, stream fencing, tree plantings, hay seedings, and animal waste facilities.

## FY2018 Ag-BMP Practices Completed

County	# Practices	Acres Benefitted	Linear Feet of Stream Protected	Animal Waste Facilities	Funds Spent	Tax Credit Issued
Clarke	6	1,163.38	13,076	0	\$261,091.31	\$23,095.14
Frederick	5	516.95	10,728	0	\$169,631.81	\$5,584.39
Shenandoah	32	2,500.27	32,908	0	\$487,061.65	\$63,271.56
Warren	0	0	0	0	0	-
<b>District Totals</b>	43	4,180.60	56,712	0	\$917,784.77	\$91,951.09

# Federal Financial Assistance Programs

The table below represents acres enrolled in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for the 2017 Fiscal year and acres enrolled in easement programs. All programs are applied on private lands and provide incentive payments for implementing conservation practices. The Wetland Reserve and Agriculture Land Easement Programs are monitored annually and the table below depicts the number of ongoing contracts in each county.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program that helps agricultural producers improve agricultural production and improve natural resources. Through EQIP, agricultural producers receive financial and

technical assistance to implement structural and management conservation practices that optimize environmental benefits on working agricultural land.

The Farm and Ranch Protection Program (FRPP) provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep farmland in agricultural uses. NRCS partners with state or local governments or non-governmental organizations to assist with the voluntary acquisition of conservation easements from landowners. To qualify, farmland must be part of a pending offer from a state or local farmland protection program, be privately owned, and contain significant prime soils or historic resources.

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) offers landowners the opportunity to protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their property. Eligible areas have been drained or otherwise altered so as to no longer provide benefits characteristic of wetlands. Technical and financial assistance is available to complete needed restoration activities.

The 2014 Farm Bill consolidated several programs. The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program now includes the Agricultural Land Easements Program which replaces the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) & FRPP, and Wetland Reserve Easements (replaces WRP). As land is enrolled in the easement programs, the protected acres will be represented in the table below.

**Federal Conservation Programs—Number of Contracts/Acres Enrolled**

County	EQIP	GRP	WRP	FRPP and ALE	Total Acres
Clarke	10/166	1/301	1/2.5	15/1,491	1,960.5
Frederick	2/50.2	1/58	2/6.0	3/308	422.2
Shenandoah	2/28	1/82	-	5/766	876
Warren	5/109.7	-	-	-	109.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>19/353.9</b>	<b>3/441</b>	<b>3/8.5</b>	<b>23/2,565</b>	<b>3,368.4</b>

# Virginia Conservation Assistance Program

The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) is an urban cost-share program that provides financial and technical assistance to residential, commercial and recreational property owners. This program continues to draw applications from our district. Most recently, an application in our district was approved for Conservation Landscaping on a residential property in Shenandoah County. This project will replace 5,234 square feet of turf grass with native plants to create a meadow, mulched beds and tree plantings. The project will decrease stormwater runoff from the property and create wildlife habitat. The district has three other VCAP applications waiting funding. Currently, there is an almost \$500,000 backlog of VCAP applications from across the Virginia Chesapeake Bay watershed districts. The Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) who runs the program through a state coordinator and a steering committee are actively searching for and applying for grants in order to address the high demand for the program. The district continues to provide technical assistance to homeowners interested in reducing stormwater runoff on their properties.

## Strasburg Community Garden

The Strasburg Community Garden continues to grow with the help of LFSWCD, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Master Gardeners and the active community members. Since our last update, there has been tremendous progress in the garden. The Eagle Scouts have finished all of their projects, making the initial garden construction complete. All of the plots are overflowing with summer crops and produce, with enough to harvest for personal use and donation. So far this growing season, the plot holders have donated 183 pounds of produce to local food pantries!

Educational workshops continue at a local garden store, Pot Town Organics, as well as in the community garden. From June to the end of the fiscal year, the community garden initiative has hosted six educational opportunities for the community, five of which included a concurrent kids program. The organizational partners are very happy with the turn out for these workshops, as there are consistently new people joining in with the group of workshop regulars.

District staff created an education and demonstration plot within the community garden that has and will be used during garden workshops. The demonstration plot showcases square foot gardening, potato towers, companion planting, trellising, watering with rainwater and farmscaping. The district's plot has been used for gardening workshops to teach about beneficial insects, farmscaping techniques, pests, crop diseases, companion planting, waterwise gardening and pruning and harvesting tips and tricks.

Interest from the gardening workshops has created a group of individuals located in the nearby town of Front Royal who are now taking steps to create a community garden or farm on a church with 10 acres of usable land. The district is providing technical assistance to help get them started and share our experiences with the Strasburg Community Garden.

The garden and its partnership with Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners were recently highlighted in a blog. The article is posted here: <http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/mastergardener/strasburg-community-garden/>.

The Strasburg Community Garden's Facebook Page continues to be managed to inform the public online of events, post pictures, and get feedback from the community. You can find the page at: <https://www.facebook.com/strasburgcommunitygarden/>.

A newsletter called "The Weekly Harvest" is sent out weekly to the community plot holders with seasonal gardening tips, reminders and weather information. If you would like to be included in this electronic mailing list, contact Allyson at the following: [allyson.ponn@lfswcd.org](mailto:allyson.ponn@lfswcd.org)