

THE WATERSHED

LORD FAIRFAX SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2022



August 2022

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

In past reports I have signaled the possibility that the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement may not meet its 2025 clean-up goals. In fact, the EPA's latest computer model findings indicate that the 2025 target goals are fairly overwhelmed by the sharp escalation in farm operations and by the attendant increase of nutrient pollution. The Bay region has achieved only about a third of the 71 million pounds of nitrogen reductions needed to meet the 2025 goal. Bay state partners protest these federal findings, asserting that progress should be measured not by computer models, but by monitoring. Nevertheless, I believe that Ann Swanson, Executive Director of the Chesapeake Bay Commission comes closest to the reality of where we are and what we are facing: "Right now it is very clear that we will not reach our (2025 deadline).....We will hold our heads very, very high and we will get as close as we can, and we remain with our foot on that pedal."

My point is that Lord Fairfax is 'keeping his foot on that pedal.' The thanks for this go to an expert and tireless staff, to an involved Board whose members lead the District's Committees, and to the financial and moral support we receive from our five constituencies: The City of Winchester and the counties of Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah and Warren. All are aware that what benefits the Chesapeake Bay also benefits the well-being of our citizens in the form of cleaner water.

I invite you to examine in the following pages the statistical reports of District accomplishments in each of our county and city

jurisdictions. Included are the annual reports of our committees. How they have worked to:

- recruit the very best new staff members;
- obligate over 93% of the record breaking amount of cost share funds allocated to the District in FY 22;
- organize a successful Envirothon, and provide scholarships and agricultural outreach programs to benefit our youth;
- accomplish FY 23 staff salary adjustments in order to maintain the District's competitive edge in the conservation world;
- deepen the commitments our constituent governments have made to the District;
- organize feedback groups to review and update the District Strategic Plan, effective through 2026.

Please Note: the search is on to fill the District's new position of Conservation Specialist. Applicants must have a BS degree in an agricultural or natural resources related field, or a two-year degree with equivalent agricultural experience. They must have a knowledge of computers and Microsoft programs, be self-starters and team-work savvy.

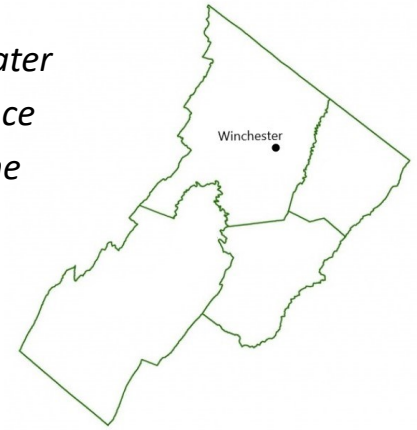
Questions? Call Administrative Specialist Sarah Fleming: (540) 465-2424, extension 5. If someone you know might be interested share this with them ASAP!

- Richard Hoover,
LFSWCD Board Chairman

LFSWCD Profile; Our Corner of Virginia

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Lord Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District through Financial and administrative assistance provided by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Funding is also provided by Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah and Warren Counties, and the City of Winchester.



	Clarke County	Frederick County	Shenandoah County	Warren County	City of Winchester
Population	14,363	83,199	43,190	39,083	27,543
%	7%	40%	21%	19%	13%
# High Schools	1	3	3	2	1
# Gov. Schools		1	1		
# Urban Ag Projects			1		
# VCAP Practices	1		1	4	
5-year Cost Share (2017-2022)	\$1,405,718.41	\$1,671,777.94	\$6,590,097.61	\$942,271.5	Not Applicable
% of Total District VACS Funds	13%	16%	62%	9%	
# Farms	427	782	965	321	0
%	17%	31%	39%	13%	
Farm Acres	66,641	109,907	130,659	38,697	
%	19%	32%	38%	11%	
Conservation Easements	5	1	8	1	
Stream Miles	317	1,024	1,338	565	10.5
%	9.7%	31.5%	41.1%	17.4%	.003%
Class 1 Dams			2		

Data provided by the following:
2015 Bureau of Census Estimate, 2017 USDA Agriculture Census, and USGS

Conservation Technical Committee:

The Conservation Technical Committee's (CTC) main actions for FY2022 were reviewing and approving Agriculture BMP practices throughout the District that were proposed by staff. A total of 64 practices were approved, totaling over \$4.6 million dollars. Staff were able to obligate over 90% of the funds allocated to LFSWCD for the VACS program, meeting state goals for technical assistance. In addition to obligating the funds, the CTC continues to work with the Education & Information committee and partner with organizations like the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley, and Virginia Cooperative Extension to increase awareness and provide information to increase participation in the VA Agricultural BMP Cost-Share program.

Dam Safety Committee:

Operation and maintenance of the two District dams, Lake Laura and Bird Haven, was conducted throughout the year including testing the working conditions of all hydraulic valve operators and routine mowing. The dams' biannual inspections with the DCR dam safety engineer was completed in December 2021. The two dams were working well and passed inspection. In April 2022, the District conducted a Emergency Action Plan (EAP) exercise together with the Shenandoah County Emergency Response Team to review procedures and actions to be taken in the event of a potential dam failure. The District continues to participate with the statewide Dam Owners Workgroup, sponsored by Virginia DCR, including various virtual training sessions conducted through the year.

Easements Committee:

LFSWCD continues to co-hold 15 easements, 9 of which are with the Virginia Conservation Council. The easements were inspected by VCC staff in Spring 2022 using remote monitoring systems. No new easements were reviewed by the committee or District board.

Education & Information Committee:

Just as in the year prior, the Education and Information Committee continued to modify its activities due to the pandemic. Even though a few annual education opportunities were canceled, the District was still able to provide a variety of programs, workshops and projects for local students and adults.

The annual Envirothon competition for high school students was offered in-person at all competition levels. LFSWCD was well represented at each competition, with Central High School FFA qualifying and competing at the state competition. In June, LFSWCD was able to co-host summer camp activities in partnership with Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River, as well as provide programs for summer schools.

The District awarded two scholarships this year to graduating seniors: Emma Lapp of Central High School and John Festa of James Wood High School. Emma Lapp's scholarship application was also forwarded to the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) for state scholarship consideration.

The Education and Information committee published 4 District newsletters, reporting on the many positive accomplishments of the District (as described on page 5 in this newsletter). We are looking forward to this new fiscal year and returning to our full menu of programs and activities, such as promoting the District's Agriculture Best Management Program or the 2022 Annual Awards luncheon in November, which has been postponed for the last two years.

Finance Committee:

The Finance committee provided recommendations for the staff FY2023 salary adjustments to the Chairman for Board consideration. The treasurer prepared a proposed FY2023 budget and in conjunction with the district Administrative Specialist, prepared monthly budget reports and participated in the District audit. SWCD Desktop Procedures for District Fiscal Operations were reviewed by the Finance Committee & recorded in the minutes. The District Purchasing Policy was reviewed by the Finance Committee and submitted to the Board.

The Finance Committee welcomed Stephanie Shillingberg as the District's new Treasurer and Associate Director, and extended its gratitude to Bud Nagelvoort, who has served as District Treasurer for many years. Bud continues in his role as an associate director.

Legislative Committee:

The Legislative Committee activities for FY2022 were for the second year driven by the Covid-19 and surrounding issues. There were no legislative visits to Richmond nor travel of any kind due to the pandemic. Committee Chair Paul Burkholder, who represents Winchester, has been nominated to serve on our recently elected Governor's Soil and Water Conservation Board. At this time the Governor has not finalized his choices. Local government financial support remains at 100% commitment from all of our jurisdictions for FY2023. In program year 2023 the Chair will begin in person meetings and plan for legislative days. There has been an emphasis on our local government partners and that will continue.

Personnel Committee:

The Personnel Committee is happy to report the following new members of our Lord Fairfax Soil and Water District staff: Madison Coffey, Conservation Specialist I and Sabrina Vladu, Conservation Specialist I. We also have one vacant position to be filled. As the 2025 Chesapeake Bay cleanup approaches, we hope to have a full staff this year to continue to meet our cleanup goals.

The committee would like to thank the staff for their outstanding work during the Coronavirus pandemic and closing FY 2022 program year with approximately 90% funding obligated. The Personnel Committee conducted performance evaluations, updated the district's personnel policy, and developed core descriptions and pay bands for each of the District's staff positions.

Operations Committee:

The Operations Committee initiated and completed the two required reviews of the Annual Plan of Work and updated the plan for Program Year 2023. The committee also revised and renewed the District Strategic Plan, effective through 2026. To do so, the committee hosted an internal review with the Board and staff, and initiated an external review through four focus groups via electronic survey, including: Agriculture, Education, Public/Partners, and Urban Initiatives. The feedback received from these groups was instrumental in the revised plan.

Urban BMP Committee:

Urban BMPs and the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) continue to grow interest in our District. LFSWCD continues to provide technical assistance to a variety of interested landowners on popular Urban BMP practices, like Conservation Landscaping, Rain Gardens and Vegetated Conveyance Systems. . In FY23, VCAP has more funding for practices, totaling \$2 million for the state, which LFSWCD plans to take advantage of within our District.

Education and Outreach Accomplishments

During fiscal year 2022, many schools began re-opening their doors to outside educators, which led to an increase in District education and outreach numbers. The Lord Fairfax District was fortunate enough to participate in various outreach programs, both virtual and in-person, totaling 806 participants and over 290 contact hours. Our jurisdiction is uniquely located, with both the North and the South Fork of the Shenandoah, and the main stem running through it. We also experience both agricultural and urban non-point source pollution issues. This is why many of our programs focus on connecting students with their watershed through soil and water health. Any watershed related program is called a MWEE, or a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience. In the table below you will see the number of programs and students reached last year, but also how many of those worked to connect students to their watershed.

County	# of Programs	# of MWEEs	Direct Contact Hours	# of Participants
Clarke	2	1	5	22
Frederick	4	1	14	132
Shenandoah	13	4	125	463
Warren	6	2	124	74
Winchester	1	0	2	10
Other	2	2	21	105
District Totals	28	10	291	806

Central High School FFA Competes at State Envirothon

Central High School, located in Shenandoah County, represented the Lord Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District at the Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon on May 15th-16th at Eastern Mennonite University. After placing second at the local competition and third at the Area contest, the team was invited to compete against 13 other teams from all across the state.

Similar to the other competitions, the students were tested on their knowledge of natural resources in five topics: soils, wildlife, aquatics, forestry and current environmental issue. They were also required to give an oral presentation on a problem based on the current environmental issue.

Central High School FFA placed 8th overall in the competition, with impressive scores across the board. For many of the test topics, Central scored in the top half of teams, creating an intense competition for some of the “powerhouse” schools in our state. Most notably, they placed first in Forestry, citing the work and learning opportunities completed with the local Virginia Department of Forestry office. The Central High School FFA Team is coached by Amanda Curry, Agriculture Teacher and FFA Advisor.

LFSWCD staff look forward to continuing to work with these students and this program for next year’s Envirothon competition!



Central High School FFA Envirothon team pictured with Dominion Energy Representative and Maura Christian, VASWCD Envirothon Coordinator.

State Conservation Assistance Programs Accomplishments

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 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. It is especially important as we near the Chesapeake Bay cleanup deadline in 2025.

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 pastures 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 FY2022 the District received an allocation of \$4.845 million, the entirety of which was used to fund a wide variety of conservation practices across our District’s jurisdictions. Despite the ongoing challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic caused, including supply chain issues and contractor backlogs, interest in the VACS program remains high among producers. Some of the practices completed, reflected in the table below, were originally approved for funding in FY2021 or prior. Not all practices approved in FY2022 were completed. Those carry-over practices, worth an estimated \$9 million, will be completed in future program years, along with new practices approved for FY2023 funding.

In FY2023 the District has received a new record-high allocation of \$8.36 million and is currently taking applications from producers to install a wide variety of conservation practices, including cover crops, stream fencing, tree plantings, hay seedings, and animal waste facilities.

FY2022 Completed Ag-BMP Practices

County	# Practices	Acres Benefitted	Linear Feet of Stream Protected	Animal Waste Facilities	Funds Spent	Tax Credits Issued
Clarke	9	1,264.22	5623	0	\$212,003.53	\$0
Frederick	6	270.99	7488	0	\$119,274.59	\$627.10
Shenandoah	38	2,358.03	11,720	3	\$800,741.26	\$11,808.93
Warren	4	401.65	22,333	0	\$361,749.50	\$0
District Totals	57	4,295.89	47,164	3	\$1,493,768.88	\$12,436.03

Federal Financial Assistance Programs Accomplishments

The table below represents acres enrolled in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for the 2021 Fiscal year and acres enrolled in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and 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.

EQIP and CSP are voluntary conservation program that help agricultural producers improve agricultural production and improve natural resources. Through EQIP and CSP, 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—FY-2021	CSP	GRP	WRP	FRPP and ALE	Total Acres
Clarke	2/12	2/579.7	2/301	1/2.5	17/1,840	2,735.2
Frederick	0/0	2/3,883.5	1/58	2/6.0	3/308	4,255.5
Shenandoah	5/116.6	4/1,323.5	1/82	1/29	5/766	2,317.1
Warren	1/1	-	-	-	-	1
Total	8/129.6	8/5,786.7	3/441	4/37.5	25/2,914	9,308.8

Urban Conservation Initiatives

Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP)

The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) is a state-funded urban cost-share program that provides financial incentives and technical assistance to property owners installing eligible Best Management Practices (BMPs) in Virginia's participating Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). Final approval decisions are made at the State level. These practices can be installed in yards where stormwater problems like erosion, poor drainage, or poor vegetation occur. Some of the popular practices in our district are the following BMPs: conservation landscaping, impervious surface removal, permeable pavement installation, rain gardens, rainwater harvesting systems, bioretention ponds and green roofs.

Last year, the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program was allocated \$1 million in the Virginia state budget. These funds, which are used for projects state-wide, became very competitive as the VCAP program continues to grow. For the current program year, the VCAP program was allocated \$2 million for projects across the state.

As LFSWCD continues into the current program year with more VCAP funding, the District board and staff are exploring options to grow this program in our jurisdiction. We have had a steady inflow of interested landowners, however have few completed practices so far. We are looking to connect with more landowners through education and outreach, meeting with city and county development planners, and providing training for local contractors.



Strasburg Community Garden

The Strasburg Community Garden has entered its fifth year of programming, including providing fresh and healthy food for the surrounding community. The garden started as a grant-funded project for LFSWCD and community partners, and has continued with LFSWCD acting as a resource for plot holders. Each year, the 12 raised garden plots and the 4 accessible beds are rented out by local families or organizations—the only rental fee required is that a portion of your harvest must be donated to someone in need, including neighbors, assisted-living facilities, community dinners or food banks. The Strasburg Community Garden has reached donations of over 600 pounds per season.

In addition to food production, the garden space is a living education display for kids and adults. The Children's Garden, designed by Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardeners, provide kids workshops twice a month throughout the growing season. For adults, the garden showcases various garden sustainability initiatives, including a bioswale for controlling stormwater, a rainwater harvesting system, solar pumps, rotation composting system, no-till practices and pollinator habitats. This project has enhanced LFSWCD exposure and district staff are often contacted for advice regarding new community or urban agriculture projects in the area.

Board of Directors



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Justin Mackay-Smith | Clarke | Operations Committee Chair

Kitty Hockman-Nicholas | Frederick

Kermit Gaither | Frederick | Urban Ag Committee Chair

Joan Comanor | Shenandoah | Board Vice-Chair | Education & Information Committee Chair | Personnel Co-Chair

Mary Gessner | Shenandoah | Conservation Technical Committee Vice-Chair

Richard Hoover | Warren | Board Chair

Ira Richards III | Warren | Easement Committee Chair

H.B. Simpson | Winchester | Personnel Committee Chair

Paul Burkholder | Winchester | Legislative Committee Chair

James Fagan | Shenandoah At-Large | Dam Safety Committee Chair

C. Corey Childs | Warren At-Large | Conservation Technical Committee Chair

Bernard Nagelvoort | Clarke | Associate Director

Jason Bushong | Shenandoah | Associate Director

Marietta Walls | Frederick | Associate Director

Stephanie Shillingburg | Shenandoah | Associate Director | Treasurer

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