



## PIEDMONT SWCD

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This newsletter is published from the office of the Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District. Its purpose is to keep conservation partners informed of district-wide initiatives.  
Editor-Robin Buckalew

## Good water on demand

Many producers are installing managed grazing systems to improve their bottom line and protect and enhance the environment. A managed grazing system breaks larger fields into smaller units called paddocks. Animals are moved frequently at high stocking rates. Each paddock is grazed, then rested before animals are allowed to graze again.

Good water is an essential part of a managed grazing system. Cows and horses require approximately 10-15 gallons a day, while dairy cattle require 20-30 gallons.

Paddocks excluded from traditional watering sources like ponds and streams need alternative watering systems. Many producers in the Piedmont District install frost-free water troughs, commonly called ball waterers, in their paddocks.

Ball waterers were developed in the Midwest and so are fully insulated to withstand cold weather. The heat from the earth is channeled through an earth tube that goes through the concrete anchor pad on



The anchor pad is installed to provide a level mounting surface for the trough. Earth tube is shown here being measured.

which the trough sits. The troughs are totally enclosed with a ball that floats up into an opening that cattle soon learn to press with their nose to get a drink of fresh water.

Watering troughs are fed by either a drilled well or developed spring system. Spring development involves collecting surface water in a cistern or septic system type tank. Both systems pump the water to the troughs through buried pipe.

Due to the terrain, or remoteness of some locations, it is sometimes not feasible to install a well and trough. In those situations, water can be provided using a stream crossing or hardened access. These structures al-

low cattle to drink while limiting their access to the stream.

The initial cost of installing a managed grazing system may be higher due to fencing materials and water, but there are many advantages. Producers can see the highest forage production and use per acre, weeds and brush are controlled naturally, and there is a more even distribution of manure.

By restricting animals from streams and ponds, producers are not only maximizing their time & money but are protecting drinking water quality for all Virginians.

## BMP cost-share dollars reduced by 50%

The Piedmont SWCD will have 50 percent less money available this year than last year for the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practice Cost-share Program (VACS). VACS applications are approved by the Piedmont SWCD Board, and the board uses clearly outlined priorities when approving practices to insure fairness and to minimize possible misunderstandings.

VACS is administered by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) through local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to improve water quality in the state's streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay. The basis of VACS program is to encourage the voluntary installation of agricultural best management practices (BMPs) to meet Virginia's non-point source pollution water quality objectives.

VACS program participants are recruited based on those factors which most influence their land use impact upon water quality. Priority Considerations are mandated by DCR and must be implemented by all districts.

VACS gives districts significant responsibilities in the determination of the recipients of cost-share funds. This begins with the establishment of local district criteria for conducting recruitment. These local criteria are called Secondary Considerations.

Fewer dollars, along with the increased popularity of the VACS program, mean that recruitment guidelines used to distribute the money are more important than ever. This year's Secondary Considerations include the following:

- **Sign-up period from June 1, 2010 to July 31st**
- Application ranking based on water quality criteria and availability of funds
- Cost-share cap of \$8,000 for each applicant
- If funding allows, a second sign-up period will be opened after July 31st

Recruitment guidelines insure that the water quality benefits from this program are maximized. For more information contact Kevin Dunn in Farmville 434.392-3782 ext. 116, or Amelia 804.561-2947 ext 110.

## Grassroots advocacy

During General Assembly legislative sessions, the Piedmont SWCD Legislative Committee informs the board when legislation or policy related to conservation begins to move. Directors are often called upon to communicate with state legislators or county officials to ensure natural resource conservation policy is written in a way that works and that conservation programs have adequate funding.

The Piedmont SWCD is a member of the Virginia Association of Conservation Districts (VASWCD). VASWCD staff, executive board members and legislative committee members work hard to maintain and develop personal relationships with elected officials. Dr. Wilkie Chaffin, a Piedmont SWCD director and current president of the VASWCD, met several times with the newly appointed Secretary of Natural Resources to express district needs and concerns during the 2010 Virginia legislative session. At VASWCD's annual Legislative Day January 15, directors from over thirty conservation districts across the state met with legislators to discuss soil and water conservation.



County officials participated in the Piedmont District's Open House last fall giving the Piedmont SWCD Directors the opportunity to get better acquainted with their elected officials and showcase District activities.



## Poster contest winner

Ben Carr is the Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District's 2010 Conservation Poster Contest winner. Ben is a 4th grade student at Blackstone Primary School. His art teacher is Ms. Debbie Quinn. This year's poster theme was "Conservation Habits = Healthy Habitats." Over 550 students from three schools participated in the contest. Ben won a \$25.00 gift certificate and his winning poster will be on display for the month of June at the Longwood Center for the Visual Arts located on 129 North Main Street in Farmville, Virginia.



## Envirothon competition

Congratulations to Nottoway High School's FFA Envirothon team who represented the Piedmont District in the State Envirothon on May 16 at Smith Mountain Lake. At the Area V competition on April 28th the team won first place in the Special Topics Oral Presentation category. This year's special topic was "Protection of Groundwater through Urban, Agricultural and Environmental Planning." Jamestown High School of Colonial SWCD won the state competition and will represent Virginia at the national competition August 1-6 in Fresno, California.

## Respondez, s'il vous plait:)

Do you use email? Can you open an attached pdf with Adobe Reader? If yes, please consider receiving the seasonal Piedmont District Newsletter electronically. Sending the newsletter electronically will help the Piedmont SWCD reduce paper use and lower mailing costs.

To receive the newsletter electronically, please post an email to: [piedmont@moonstar.com](mailto:piedmont@moonstar.com). Please use *newsletter* as the subject of the email. Your contribution to using less paper will be appreciated. Your email address will not be shared with other agencies.

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## Mission

*The mission of the Piedmont SWCD is to provide technical, educational and financial resources to citizens of the Piedmont SWCD in order to promote the conservation of soil, water and related resources.*

## Meetings

*The Piedmont SWCD Board of Directors meets on the fourth Tuesday of every month except in December. The meetings are held in the Prince Edward County Agricultural and Natural Resources Building conference room in Farmville, Virginia, located on 100 Dominion Drive. The public is invited to attend these meetings.*

## Safe Burning Tips

The burning of debris and trash is the No. 1 cause of wildfires in Virginia. Alternatives to burning include taking the debris to a facility or building a brush pile that will help support wildlife on your property.

If someone must burn, be aware of state and local laws that are in place for your protection and the safety of your family and neighbors.

Tips for Burning Safely:

- Contact your local fire department before starting the fire.
- Do not burn when winds are up. (If you flags are flapping or your wind chimes are playing their tune, it's probably not a good time to burn.)
- Keep your pile small – less than 10 feet in diameter and 3 feet in height. Add material to your fire as the pile burns down. Don't add any material to your fire after midnight.
- Clear the area around the pile down to bare soil.
- Keep water, rakes and shovels handy.
- Stay with your fire until it's completely out and you have doused the hot ashes with water.
- Have a fully charged cell phone with you and call 911 as soon as the fire gets out of your control. (Let the trained firefighters suppress the blaze.)