

Piedmont Soil & Water Conservation District

Strategic Plan

2009-2013 (updated 2011)

INTRODUCTION

The Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District (PSWCD) is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia and is responsible under State Law for soil and water conservation work within the boundaries of Amelia, Nottoway and Prince Edward Counties. The District's purpose is to encourage and initiate land use practices that help improve water quality and reduce soil erosion as well as educating the community in protecting our natural resources.

Piedmont SWCD was the fifth district formed. Originally organized in 1939, it included Amelia, Dinwiddie, Nottoway, Powhatan and Prince Edward counties. In the 1950's it was reduced to the three counties we have today. The District covers an area of 663,680 acres and is located in the Southern Piedmont Region of Virginia. It is bounded on the North by the Appomattox River, which is part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and bounded on the South by the Nottoway River which is part of the Southern Rivers Watershed. The District is a rural, agricultural district with the majority of the area in woodland and small farms. The main industries are timber, cattle and poultry.

The District receives funding from the state through the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) as well as utilizing local funds. The Board of Directors is the governing body of the District, consisting of eight members: six Directors, two from each county, elected every four years in the general election; one appointed by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Board and one appointed as a representative of the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service within the District.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts focus on many issues and programs including:

- Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) Cost-Share Assistance Program
- Agricultural Conservation Planning and Technical Assistance
- USDA Farm Bill
- Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act
- Virginia's Agricultural Stewardship Act
- Environmental & Agriculture Education (Youth & Adult)
- Agriculture Rental Equipment Program
- Erosion & Sediment (E&S) Control Program
- Maintenance and Inspection of 14 Watershed Dams

The District office is located in the Prince Edward Agriculture and Natural Resources Building at 100 Dominion Drive, Farmville, Virginia and the Amelia satellite office is located in the USDA Service Center, Amelia, Virginia. Office hours are 8:00am to 4:30pm Monday through Friday. Monthly District Board of Director meetings are held every 4th Tuesday 11:00am at the District office in Farmville.

Mission

The Mission of the Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District is to identify and provide technical, educational and financial resources to the citizens of Prince Edward, Nottoway and Amelia Counties in order to promote the wise use and conservation of soil, water and related resources.

Vision

The Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District envisions a productive community committed to the stewardship of our natural resources.

Goal I - Non-point source pollution from agricultural lands is reduced resulting in improved water quality.

Objective 1 – Land users participate in incentive programs managed by the Piedmont SWCD and other agencies resulting in the wise use and conservation of soil and water resources.

- *Strategy 1* – Provide technical, financial and educational resources to implement Best Management Practices.
- *Strategy 2* – Provide conservation planning assistance to agricultural producers.
- *Strategy 3* – Provide and maintain rental equipment to encourage participation in conservation practices.
- *Strategy 4* – Encourage awareness by providing information about agricultural, open space and land preservation programs.
- *Strategy 5* – Partner with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Department of Forestry (DOF) to provide an optimal conservation program.

Objective 2 – Agricultural producers are aware of the best management practices necessary for the good stewardship of soil and water resources.

- *Strategy 1* – Provide farm tours, field days, and demonstrations of innovative technology to showcase model conservation practices and planning.
- *Strategy 2* – Partner with conservation agencies, agricultural organizations and other entities to - promote conservation.
- *Strategy 3* – Provide exhibits and information at District offices, related conservation/agricultural community events and other appropriate public venues.

Objective 3 – Conservation efforts of agricultural producers and the importance of agriculture are recognized in the community.

- *Strategy 1* – Recognize agricultural producers with annual Conservation Award Program and Department of Conservation & Recreation's Clean Water Farm Award Program.
- *Strategy 2* - Provide signage for participation in the Cost Share Program.
- *Strategy 3* – Submit press releases to local media.

Goal II - Citizens are aware of natural resource conservation issues.

Objective 1 – Youth understand the importance of conserving natural resources and the value of agriculture.

- *Strategy 1* – Continue to expand local Envirothon, Environmental Field School, Youth Conservation Camp, Classroom programs, Ag Awareness Days, and Poster Contest.
- *Strategy 2* – Provide Scholarships to promote continuing education in natural resource or agricultural fields of study.
- *Strategy 3* – Provide resources to teachers and other educators.
- *Strategy 4* – Partner with other organizations to co-sponsor teacher workshops for environmental education.

Objective 2 – Natural resource conservation education opportunities are available for adults.

- *Strategy 1* - Promote Backyard Conservation practices including Rain Barrel and Rain Garden workshops.
- *Strategy 2* – Partner with localities and conservation organizations to address citizen conservation education needs.

Objective 3 – Erosion & Sediment Control (ESC) education is available to citizens and Responsible Land Disturbers (RLD).

- *Strategy 1* – Citizen Erosion Awareness workshops & ESC Workshops for RLD.
- *Strategy 2* – Partner with localities to address ESC educational needs.
- *Strategy 3* – Provide citizens with ESC contact information.

Goal III – District Partnerships are relevant and current.

Objective 1 – Localities and local planning departments work with the District to promote natural resource conservation.

- *Strategy 1* – Provide localities and local planning commissions with educational resources, meeting minutes, newsletters, annual reports and other relevant conservation related information.
- *Strategy 2* – Provide local Boards of Supervisors with a quarterly or semi-annual summary of District activities including expenditures provided by locality funding.

Objective 2 – Existing partnerships with Natural Resource Conservation Services, Farm Service Agency, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Department of Forestry, Department of Game & Inland Fisheries, Middle James Roundtable, and Old Dominion Resource Conservation & Development are strengthened.

- *Strategy 1* – Keep partners updated on District activities and offer support of partner goals.
- *Strategy 2* – Have links on web page to all partnering agencies and organizations.

Objective 3 – New partnerships identified and pursued.

- *Strategy 1* – Research and make contacts with organizations who can help further promote natural resource conservation and agriculture such as Cattlemen’s Association, Master Gardeners, Educational groups, Friends of the Appomattox River, Trails Advisory Committee, etc.
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Goal IV – 14 Flood Control Dams are managed in compliance with the Dam Safety Act.

Objective 1 – Annual inspections, maintenance and record keeping of dams conducted in a timely manner.

- *Strategy 1* - Coordinate with NRCS annual inspections.
- *Strategy 2* - Keep Emergency Action Plans current.
- *Strategy 3* – Inform landowners of upcoming maintenance and site inspections.
- *Strategy 4* – Develop technical assistance guidance upon the expiration of NRCS and SWCD Operation and Maintenance Agreements.

Objective 2 – Dams are maintained and meet hazard classification Emergency Action Plans (EAP) exercise requirements through effective communication between partners.

- *Strategy 1* - Provide inspection reports, EAP updates, dam inundation studies and maintenance needs to Prince Edward County (co-sponsor).
- *Strategy 2* – Encourage Prince Edward County to use information from dam inundation studies as part of their comprehensive plan.
- *Strategy 3* – Coordinate with Prince Edward County Emergency Services Coordinator to generate an Emergency Action Plan Table Top Exercise for landowners, dam owners and all emergency response services.

Objective 3 – Landowners, realtors and developers on land surrounding dams understand the purpose of dam maintenance. Sound land use practices are implemented to protect water quality of lake and downstream watershed.

- *Strategy 1* – Develop publications and fact sheets to distribute to new landowners.

Goal V – Soil and water conservation is a priority in public policy decision making.

Objective 1 – Public policy makers at the local, state and federal levels work together with District staff and board members on natural resource issues.

- *Strategy 1* – Contact and cooperate with local officials and staffs regarding the importance of conservation issues with respect to watershed planning.
- *Strategy 2* – Legislative Committee will actively participate in the VASWCD.
- *Strategy 3* – Educate the planning commissions, board of supervisors and media so that they recognize Directors as elected public officials.

Goal VI – District Staff and Directors are fully supported, enabling them to carry out the District’s Mission.

Objective 1 – Staff, financial and technical resources are made available and are adequate to carryout programs.

- *Strategy 1* – Evaluate current and future staffing needs and resources for delivery of programs.
- *Strategy 2* - Recommend actions for securing new funding if existing resources are inadequate.
- *Strategy 3* – Continue professional development opportunities for both staff and directors.

Objective 2 - Administrative Operations are professionally conducted.

- *Strategy 1* – Coordinate and convene monthly Board meetings, utilizing committees as much as possible to expedite business.
- *Strategy 2* – Reference Strategic Plan and Annual Plan of Work for planning and program guidance.

Goal VII – The public is aware of Piedmont SWCD mission & programs.

Objective 1 – Opportunities to promote Piedmont SWCD programs and mission are utilized.

- *Strategy 1* – Finalize and implement web site.
- *Strategy 2* – Ensure publications, brochures and other resource materials are available and distributed to the public.
- *Strategy 3* – Continue to expand mailing list for Annual Report and newsletters.
- *Strategy 4* – Update exhibits and other display materials.
- *Strategy 5* – Utilize press releases, radio spots and mailings as appropriate.
- *Strategy 6* – Provide Directors with talking points and/or power point presentations on District programs to share with civic groups, local government or other groups.

Objective 2 – Outreach opportunities to promote smaller markets (horse operations, organics, etc) and underserved clients are utilized.

- *Strategy 1* – Compile landowner list of target markets and distribute relevant information.
- *Strategy 2* – Partner with Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), NRCS or appropriate agency to provide education workshops.