

Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District
Strategic Plan 2013-2017 (revised June 2016)
Introduction

The Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District (the District) is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia and is responsible under state law to carry out natural resource stewardship. Organized in 1939, the District has delivered voluntary, locally led conservation solutions to natural resource concerns for over 75 years. The District originally included Amelia, Dinwiddie, Nottoway, Powhattan and Prince Edward Counties, but in the early 1950s it was reorganized to include the three counties it serves today - Amelia, Nottoway and Prince Edward.

The District includes 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, part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, and bounded on the South by the Nottoway River, part of the Southern Rivers Watershed. The District is rural and historically agricultural with a majority of the land in woodland and small farms. The main industries are timber, cattle and poultry, with a growing “local foods” cottage industry.

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. The Board meets every fourth Tuesday at 11:00 am in the Prince Edward Agriculture and Natural Resources Building located on 100 Dominion Drive, in Farmville, Virginia. The District office is located in the same building with normal business hours of Monday thru Friday 8:00-4:30.

The District administers the majority of its programs with funding through the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Soil and Water, and from funding from the three locality governments. The rental equipment program is self-supporting. Other funds are generated through the sale of rain barrels, donations by supportive individuals and businesses, and through grants.

District programs include:

- Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share Program (VACS)
- TMDL – Chesapeake Bay Watershed Improvement Program (WIP)
- Agricultural conservation planning and technical assistance
- Resource Management Plan Program
- Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP)
- DEQ 319 Residential Septic Grants
- Compliance with DCR Dam Safety Regulations for 14 watershed dams
- Virginia’s Agricultural Stewardship Act
- Youth and adult conservation education program
- No-till equipment rental
- Conservation awards
- Website, newsletter, radio spot and other media outreach

The District operates as a gateway to local and national conservation resources by working in close partnership with many governmental and non-governmental agencies and individuals. This network of partnerships makes it possible to streamline the process of accessing available resources for the program participant. Working with the Piedmont SWCD results in healthier soils, better water quality and more effective farming operations.

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

The community is actively involved in soil and water conservation, resulting in reduced non-point source pollution and improved resource management.

Objective 1 - Agricultural Producers participate in incentive and related programs managed by the District that protect soil health, water quality and quantity, and wildlife habitat.

Strategy A – Promote voluntary, incentive based (cost-share) best management practice implementation.

Strategy B – Provide conservation planning to land owners to address natural resource concerns.

Strategy C – Provide technical assistance to help producers implement best management practices.

Strategy D – Promote and host farm tours and field days that demonstrate best management practices.

Strategy E – Advocate that conservation practices should be economically viable in order to encourage maximum participation by agricultural producers.

Strategy F – Provide and maintain no-till rental equipment to encourage participation in conservation practices. Consider and research other conservation related equipment to include in the equipment program.

Strategy G – Provide support to farmers in their effort to comply with regulatory requirements.

Objective 2 - Operate as a gateway to partner agency resources.

Strategy A – Network with conservation partners including Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Department of Forestry, Virginia Cooperative Extension and others to provide optimal conservation program services for producers.

Objective 3 – Ensure agricultural producers are aware of the available best management practices (BMPs), their benefits and program assistance.

Strategy A – Raise producers' awareness of BMP benefits and increase their willingness to adopt the use of BMPs by focusing on: understanding producer attitudes toward farming, understanding their perceptions of BMPs, and understanding what incentives are needed to bring about voluntary changes in farming practices.

Strategy B – Conduct outreach efforts that would result in an increased commitment to BMPs by a wider community.

Strategy C – Create an area on the website that includes video clips of fellow producers discussing the importance of BMPs to their farm operation.

Objective 4 - Conservation efforts are recognized in the community.

Strategy A – Recognize outstanding conservation efforts through the District's conservation awards program.

Strategy B – Provide signage to recognize participation in the cost-share program.

Strategy C – Submit press releases to local media highlighting cooperator accomplishments and their relationship to cleaner water and healthier soils.

Strategy D – Recognize cooperators in District newsletter- Conservation Matters- and on District website.

Objective 5 - Communities and homeowners participate in non-agricultural incentive program and general non-point source pollution reduction strategies.

Strategy A – Promote voluntary, incentive based solutions to non-agricultural natural resource concerns. (Residential Septic Grant program & VCAP)

Strategy B – Provide stormwater management education and outreach opportunities in collaboration with local communities and other partners.

Strategy C – Report to locality any Chesapeake Bay TMDL target pollution load reductions created by practice installation.

Strategy D – Develop a training plan for staff to prepare them to assist with non-agricultural practice planning and implementation.

Strategy E – Investigate, initiate and maintain partnerships with organizations or local citizens capable of assisting communities and homeowners manage storm water.

Goal II

Youth participate in formal conservation education programs and acquire an increased appreciation of and commitment to the wise use of natural resources.

Objective 1 - Participation in established conservation education programs is expanded in the community.

Strategy A – Work cooperatively with educators to expand Envirothon, Youth Conservation Camp, Ag Awareness Day, Forestry Camp, and other programs.

Strategy B – Provide Scholarships to students committed to studying natural resource conservation or agriculture.

Strategy C – Continue to provide programs for district schools, including Classroom Presentations, Poster Contest and Special Events.

Objective 2 - New programs, resources and partnerships are developed to provide additional environmental education opportunities.

Strategy A – Establish a long-range youth education plan that reflects existing and new programs, and create a budget to reflect the implementation, training and funding needs to achieve the plan.

Strategy B – Investigate new partnerships and expand existing partnerships.

Goal III

Natural resource conservation is promoted to an ever-wider circle of people through a network of valued partnerships.

Objective 1 - District, localities and local planning departments work together to promote natural resource conservation.

Strategy A – Provide localities and local planning commissions with educational resources, meeting minutes, newsletters, annual reports and other relevant conservation related information.

Strategy B – Provide local Boards of Supervisors with a quarterly or semi-annual summary of District services performed in each locality.

Objective 2 - Partnerships with other natural resource and education related entities are maintained and expanded.

Strategy A – Keep partners updated on District activities and offer support of partner goals.

Strategy B – Link to all partnering agencies and organizations on web page.

Strategy C – Participate on VASWCD & VACDE boards & committees.

Objective 3 - New alliances are identified and pursued.

Strategy A – Contact organizations that share the natural resource conservation mission to advance and practice teamwork (Cattlemen's Association, Master Gardeners, Friends of the Appomattox River, Center for Watershed Protection, James River Association, Clean VA Waterways, Farm Bureau etc.).

Strategy B – Communicate training opportunities with new and potential partners.

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 A—Annually review Emergency Action Plans

Strategy B – Inform landowners of upcoming maintenance and site inspections.

Strategy C – Inform USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service and Prince Edward County about inspections, maintenance and other dam related issues.

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

Strategy A – Provide inspection reports, EAP updates, and maintenance needs to co-sponsor Prince Edward County.

Strategy B – Continue to support Prince Edward County as they prepare to use information from dam inundation studies as part of their comprehensive plan.

Strategy C – Coordinate with Prince Edward County Emergency Services Coordinator to generate an Emergency Action Plan Table Top Exercise. Required every 6 years.

Strategy D – Conduct an annual emergency drill with the Emergency Services Coordinator for significant and high hazard dams.

Strategy E – Utilize DCR Dam Safety Engineer and NRCS Engineering staff to provide technical guidance and assistance in addressing small maintenance projects such as gate replacement, filter drains and other items identified thru inspections.

Objective 3 - Landowners, realtors and developers involved with land surrounding dams understand the ramifications of the Dam Safety Act.

Strategy A – Persons and businesses involved with the land surrounding dams are encouraged to understand the importance of dam maintenance.

Strategy B – Sound land use practices that protect water quality of lake and downstream watershed are communicated to persons and businesses involved with the land surrounding dams.

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 A – Contact and cooperate with local officials and staff regarding the importance of conservation issues with respect to watershed planning.

Strategy B – Legislative Committee actively participates in the Virginia Association of Conservation Districts.

Strategy C – Provide leadership to the community on conservation issues by continuing to work together with the planning commissions, board of supervisors and media.

Strategy D – Participate in outreach initiatives to promote SWCDs value statewide as well as locally.

Goal VI

Staff and directors are supported as they carry out the District mission.

Objective 1 - Resources are made available and are adequate to carryout programs.

Strategy A - Evaluate current and future needs for staff and/or resources for program delivery.

Strategy B - Continue to provide professional development opportunities for both staff and directors.

Objective 2 - Administrative Operations are professionally conducted.

Strategy A - Coordinate and convene monthly Board meetings, utilizing committees as much as possible to expedite business.

Strategy B - Reference Strategic Plan and Annual Plan of Work for planning and program guidance. Review and make adjustments where appropriate.

Strategy C – Sound financial and personnel management policies guide District programs.

Goal VII

The public is aware of District mission & programs.

Objective 1 – The District utilizes media and other marketing venues to effectively promote conservation goals.

Strategy A - Maintain a good working relationship with newspaper, radio, and television media reporters and editors.

Strategy B - Evaluate media program to make sure it is in tune with overall organizational goals.

Strategy C - Maintain a media archive to serve as a historical record for the District.

Strategy D - Expand mailing list and begin assembling an electronic mailing list.

Strategy E - Use social media as appropriate and train staff to operate new technology.

Strategy F - Develop and maintain professional traveling exhibits and office displays.

Objective 2 - Directors and staff are prepared to advance the District mission via formal presentations and by practicing good stewardship.

Strategy A - Directors are provided talking points and/or power point presentations to present to civic groups, local government or other groups.

Strategy B - District staff will model good stewardship by practicing recycling, composting, energy conservation, and backyard conservation practices at the district office.

Strategy C - Directors and staff will report District information, gain cooperator support, advance the District program and report District progress by communicating their conservation journey with others, by listening and responding to customers' needs, and by maintaining a network of alliances to help spread the word about important conservation initiatives.