

# PARTNERSHIPS, A PIEDMONT PRIORITY

The Prince Edward County watershed protection & flood prevention project is an example of the Piedmont SWCDS's capacity to take available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user.

Under Federal Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Law, local citizens must provide watershed im-



Photo from Piedmont SWCD archives

provement project leadership before federal funding is made available. In 1955, when interest in controlling flooding in the Buffalo Creek watershed was mounting, the Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District demonstrated its capacity to develop leadership and support partnerships by sponsoring the formation of the Buffalo Creek Watershed Committee. This initial partnership grew to eventually include the Buffalo Watershed Association representing 490 watershed landowners, the Town of Farmville, Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors, and USDA Soil Conservation Service (now Natural Resources Conservation Service), and resulted in the implementation of a comprehensive watershed action plan for the watershed.

In 1955 there were 679 farms in the Buffalo Creek watershed

which lies in the western third of Prince Edward County and includes portions of the Towns of Farmville, Pamplin, Prospect and Hampden-Sydney. These towns and farms were experiencing flooding that resulted in soil erosion, loss of farmland productivity, and sedimentation of downstream rivers and lakes. Before any structural improvements could be made, a field examination report of the watershed was needed to document that the financial benefits to the community from a fifty-year watershed benefit program would exceed the \$1,370,000 project price tag, and 50 percent of the land in the area needed to be put under approved soil and water conservation plans. These steps took two years, and in 1958 the project was approved by Washington and a land survey began.

The late Lindy Hamlett was very involved in the work of surveying the 74,500 acre Buffalo Creek watershed, and was later employed with the Soil Conservation Service obtaining easements from the individual landowners. Easements gave the Piedmont SWCD the right to carry out the work in building flood control structures. Obtaining signatures for the easements was no easy task as each easement could require as many as 28 signatures, and between two to 13 easements were required for each of the nine dam sites. Lindy continued to work with the Piedmont SWCD as their Equipment Program Manager until 2012, and his memory will be honored through the Lindy Hamlett Conservation Education Scholarship Fund established in 2016.

The Buffalo Watershed project was completed in 1967. The District was also a sponsor of the Bush River watershed project which included partnerships on the



Lindy Lynn Hamlett

Sandy River Reservoir and Briery Creek projects. These were all multi-agency projects that included the partners listed above and the assistance of the U.S. Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Va. Department of Forestry, Va. Cooperative Extension, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. The Piedmont SWCD continues to be committed to working as part of a community to solve the complex environment issues we share.

## DISTRICT PROGRAMS

The Piedmont SWCD is a political subdivision established under state law to carry out natural resource stewardship programs at the local level in Amelia, Nottoway and Prince Edward Counties. The elected Board of Directors is the governing body of the Piedmont SWCD.

The Board meets monthly to conduct the business of conservation. Committee assignments are made annually by the Board Chair.



Back row, Haley Norton, Larkin Moyer (Chair), Juan Whittington, Derek Hancock, (NRCS) David Smith (NRCS), front row, left, Ricky Rash (Vice-Chair), Chuck Arnason (Secretary), Donna Kerr, Bill Powers, and Rose Wootton. Not pictured: Wilkie Chaffin, Gary Dillard and Don Maxey.

#### **District Programs**

- Virginia Agricultural Cost-share Program
- Agricultural Conservation Planning and Technical Assistance
- **Equipment Rental Program**
- **Conservation Awards**
- Residential Septic Program
- VA Conservation Assistance Program
- 14 Watershed Dams
- Youth & Adult Education
- Resource Management Planning
- VA Ag Stewardship Act

## FINANCIAL COMMITTEE

The Financial Committee meets annually with the treasurer and district manager to prepare budget recommendations, review audits, and provide oversite of the financial program.

OPERATING BUDGET	FISCAL YEAR 2016
VA Agriculture Best Management Practice Cost-Share Funds	\$660,637
Local funds (equipment rental, grants for special projects, locality appropriations and sponsorships)	\$69,629
State Funds (VA Dept. of Conservation & Recreation) Operations	\$169.880
Agricultural Technical Assistance	\$41,820
Flood control structure maintenance and repairs	\$42,000

Chair: Wilkie Chaffin. Members: Donna Kerr, Gary Dillard, Ricky Rash



Chair: Chuck Arnason

Members: Bill Powers, Don Maxey

District Manager Deanna Fehrer, president of the VA

Association of Conservation Districts Employee Association, presented awards at the Association's annual meeting.

## WATERSHED COMMITTEE

The Watershed Committee oversees the District's 14 watershed dams. This includes reviewing emergency action plans, oversite of dam operation and maintenance, and conducting annual inspections. They also represent the District at the Middle James River Roundtable.

#### Inspections

Annual inspections were performed by the Piedmont SWCD staff and Watershed Committee members. Additional site visits included storm event inspections and

repair inspections. The inspection reports were provided to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Prince Edward County Administrative partners. Department of Conservation and Recreation professional engineers performed inspections depending on hazard classification of the dams.

#### **Emergency Action Plans**

Emergency Action Plans for the Piedmont SWCD's 14 dams were updated in 2016. The plans provide compliance with the Department of Conservation and Recreation Dam Safety regulations. Prince Edward County Emergency Services Coordinator utilizes the Emergency Action Plans prepared by the Piedmont SWCD for their emergency planning.

#### Dam Repair and Maintenance

2015-2016 Dam repair projects included completion of culvert repair under access road at Bush #2; installation of drains at Buffalo #1; & replacement of riprap at several outfall pools.

Dam repairs were performed by a contractor hired thru Piedmont SWCD's bid procurement process.

Annual dam maintenance is performed by a contractor employed to bush hog, remove debris, and operate gates.

## CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

The Conservation Committee meets monthly with the technical staff to review the cost share applications and follow with recommendations to the board. The committee also provides oversite of the no-till equipment rental program.

### JULY 2015 TO JUNE 2016 ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Total cost-share funding allocated:

Amelia County cooperators—\$cost-share: \$118,400

16,306 feet of stream exclusion

1.94 acres CREP streamside buffer

3.177.3 acres of cover crops—tax credit only

Nottoway County cooperators—\$ cost-share: \$131,110

33,670 feet of stream exclusion fencing

96 acres CREP streamside buffer-

1,638.4 acres of cover crops- tax credit only

Prince Edward County cooperators—\$ cost-share: \$228,826

62.733 feet of stream exclusion fencing

43.07 acres of CREP streamside buffer

1,643.3 acres of cover crops—tax credit only

528 Farm visits to:

promote voluntary, incentive based best management practice implementation, provide conservation planning to land owners to

address natural resource concerns, and provide technical assistance to help producers implement best management practices.

- 59 Best management practice applications approved, including 14 producers new to the program.
- 36 Conservation Plans developed.
- 1,396 Acres sowed using district no-till rental equipment.
- 16 Best management practice spot checks conducted.
- Virginia Forage and Grasslands Council field day demonstrations for ag producers.
- Provided support to farmers in their effort to comply with regulatory requirements by assisting with the new Resource Management Plan Program.

#### CONSERVATION AWARDS:

**Conservation Farmer** 

Bill Black, Nottoway Co.

**Conservation Farmer** 

Robert Hutchinson, Sunnyside Farm, Amelia

Young Conservation Farmer

Jason Fleming, Amelia Co.

Wildlife Stewardship

Susi Wilson, Prince Edward Co.

Conservation Educator

Kathleen Register, Prince Edward Co.

DCR Clean Water Farm, James River Basin Award

Bobby Jones, Poor House Dairy, Prince Edward Co.

Chuck Arnason

Members: Juan Whittington, Gary Dillard,

Chairman: Ricky Rash



Board Chair Larkin Moyer introduced the awardees at the conservation award banquet in February 2016.



From left: Bill Black's daughter and son-in law, Kathleen Register, Robert and Smith Hutchinson, Bobby Jones and Jason Fleming.

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

The Legislative Committee serves as a liaison to the senators and delegates in the Virginia General Assembly that represent Amelia, Nottoway and Prince Edward Counties.

Committee chair Wilke Chaffin and committee member Ricky Rash met with legislators and pressed for continued and increased funding for Piedmont District programs at the Virginia Association of Conservation District's Legislative Day held January 2016. Legislative funding amounts voted on by the VA General Assembly can be found at this link: http://vaswcd.org/conservation-issues

Chair: Wilkie Chaffin Members: Juan Whittington, Ricky Rash

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Planning Committee annually nominates a slate of officers & assigns committee and officer responsibilities. The Committee also leads the review of the District's Strategic Plan, the Annual Plan of Work & Memorandums of Understanding with partner agencies.

The Piedmont SWCD's Strategic Plan was drafted in 2013 and will be updated yearly until June 2017, when a new four-year strategic plan will be implemented. Seven major goals are defined in the plan. Objectives and specific strategies to accomplish the goals are also defined in the plan.

Chair: Donna Kerr Members: Juan Whittington, Larkin Moyer, Bill Powers, Rose Wootton

The Strategic Plan's seven goals are:

Goal #1 The community is actively involved in soil and water conservation, resulting in reduced non-point source pollution and improved resource management.

Goal #2 Youth participate in formal conservation education programs and acquire an increased appreciation of and commitment to the wise use of natural resources.

Goal #3 Natural resource conservation is promoted to an everwider circle of people through a network of valued partnerships.

Goal #4 14 flood control dams are managed in compliance with Dam Safety Act.

**Goal #5** Soil and Water conservation is a priority in public policy decision-making.

Goal #6 Staff and Directors are supported as they carry out the District mission.

Goal #7 The public is aware of District mission and programs.



The District is committed to building capacity within the three counties by actively engaging the community in educational and outreach activities.

## PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Personnel Committee prepares and conducts staff evaluations and makes recommendations for employee hiring, termination, training and compensation. It also provides an annual review of the District's personnel policy.

# 50 Years of Combined Staff Service

Deanna Fehrer 14 years of service
Robin Buckalew 10 years of service
Charlie Wootton 9 years of service
Kevin Dunn 8 years of service
Amanda Hancock 4 years of service
Stephen Reames 4 years of service
Emily Gibbs 1 year of service



Chair: Gary Dillard Members: Wilkie Chaffin, Donna Kerr & Ricky Rash

Staff, from left, front row: District Manager Deanna Fehrer, Urban & Program Support Coordinator Emily Gibbs, Admin & Educ. Coordinator Amanda Hancock, Senior Conservation Specialist Charlie Wootton, Communications Coordinator Robin Buckalew, and BMP Conservation Technician Kevin Dunn. Not pictured, Equipment Program Coordinator Stephen Reames.

## COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

This committee serves as liaison to media, local government, landowners, producers, educators and the general public. It oversees the District's promotional marketing campaign and sponsorship drives, makes local and state conservation award nominations, reviews the need for workshops and other outreach programs, and makes recommendations for scholarship awards & other educational programs.

#### **YOUTH EDUCATON**

#### **Envirothon**

Students.

Fuqua and Nottoway High School competed at the District's Local Envirothon. The Fuqua team went on to represent the Piedmont District at the Area V and State Envirothon competitions.

**Classroom K-12 Presentations**Soil Tubes program conducted for 200 third grade Amelia Elementary

Water Cycle program presented to 47 Amelia Elementary Students.

Watersheds program presented to 10 Fuqua School students, and 25 Amelia fourth grade students.

Biological Water Monitoring program presented to 20 Fuqua School students.

Assisted with several Natural Resource Field Day programs at Holiday Lake 4H Educational Center for 450 students across the area.

Conservation Poster Contest 520 entries in the contest with the theme "We All Need Trees".

#### **Girl Scouts**

10 scouts participated in a soils workshop with all receiving a Soil Expert Patch.

### Ag Awareness Days

1,300 third and fifth grade students from Nottoway and Lunenburg Counties explored the soil tunnel and experienced the erosion boxes.

## Family & Farm Day

600 adults and youth attended this agriculture showcase. Kids enjoyed crawling through the District's soil tunnel and meeting SPLASH.

#### **Conservation Carnival**

350 Buckingham students discovered microbial life while crawling through the soils tunnel.

#### SCHOLARSHIPS

#### **Conservation Education**

Piedmont's Educational Scholarships of \$1,000 each were awarded to Sarah Rash of Nottoway County, who is attending VA Tech and majoring in Environmental Science, and Kenny Townsend of Prince Edward County who is attending VA Tech and majoring in Forestry.





Youth Conservation Camp
The District sponsored 3 campers
to attend the 2016 VASWCD Youth
Conservation Camp at VA. Tech.



YCC campers from left, Alan Gough, Joshua Merritt and Erin Amiss.

#### **MEDIA**

Ed Displays
"SPLASH", an
interactive exhibit illustrating
the amount of
water used daily
by typical Americans, placed
first in the
VASWCD annual meeting ex-



Splash, composed of 100 one gallon water jugs.

hibit competition. The "Trees Make a Difference" exhibit took first place in the 5 County Fair. Chair: Bill Powers

Members: Rose Wootton, Don Maxey, Haley Norton

#### **ADULT OUTREACH**

## Fall Symposium

Partnered with Heart of Virginia Master Gardeners to host a Fall Symposium focused on soil health with over 40 participants.

#### **Farm Tours**

Piedmont hosted tours for VA Department of Planning and Budget and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with the help of local producers to facilitate conversations about funding needs, conservation challenges and achievements.

#### **District Awards Banquet**

Six outstanding cooperators were recognized for their conservation efforts at an awards banquet held in their honor.

## Virginia Forage and Grassland Council Tours

Va Forage and Grassland Council's annual summer and winter programs were sponsored, in part, by the District and attended by producers from across the state. Senior Conservation Specialist Charlie Wootton serves as Vice President of the Council.

### **Media Continued**

15 news articles published.

4 radio spots aired.

2 issues of newsletter <u>Conservation Matters</u> circulated.

2 issues of education newsletters circulated

1 annual report circulated. 5 videos highlighting conservation achievements produced and aired at the annual awards banquet.

# NONPOINT SOURCE PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

A 2.91 mile-long segment of Little Sandy Creek in Prince Edward County was removed from DEQ's 303(d) impaired waters list in 2012 due to the agricultural best management practices voluntarily installed by landowners with the technical and financial assistance of the Piedmont SWCD.

## **Local Watershed Improved**

From its headwaters to Sandy River Reservoir, Little Sandy Creek in Prince Edward County was found by the Department of Environmental Quality to be in violation of the state's water quality standards for recreation/swimming designated uses. Bacteria sources causing the trouble included livestock, failing septic systems, pets and wildlife.

With the cooperation of landowners and the assistance of the Piedmont SWCD a 2.91-mile-long segment of the initially listed 7.35 miles was removed from Virginia's Clean Water Act section 303 (d) list of impaired waters in 2012. The reduction of bacteria in Little Sandy Creek is directly related to the agricultural best management practices installed in the watershed.

Little Sandy Creek is a 7.649 acre watershed composed of forestland, pastureland, and a mix of wetlands, commercial, residential, and cropland. One of Prince Edward County's two remaining dairies is located in the watershed.



The District and their partners hosted meetings with landowners so that everyone could see first hand the benefits of the cost-share program.

As part of a 2007-2014 TMDL implementation project, visits were made to farms in the watershed by state and federal conservation specialists to promote the use of agricultural best management practices and to explain their economic and water quality benefits. Outreach efforts by the Piedmont



Senior TMDL Conservation Specialist Charlie Wootton marking off a recommended fence line.

SWCD involved personally contacting farmers, hosting group meetings, conducting watershed tours and making presentations to community residents.

The Piedmont SWCD provided much of the technical and financial assistance to landowners who volunteered to install the various best management practices necessary to reduce nonpoint source pollution in the watershed.

The agricultural best management practices applied to the land include installing approximately 5.6 miles of livestock stream exclusion fencing, maintaining 2,200 linear feet of existing stream fencing, constructing a composter facility, planting 470 acres of small grain cover crops, planting 300 acres of harvestable cover crops, and planting 18 acres of riparian forested buffer.

Partners in this project include the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Department of Environmental Quality, and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Funding for the projects was provided through the state's Water Quality Improvement Fund, the USDA Farm Service Agency's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, and USDA's NRCS funding programs.

Funding for the TMDL program in the Piedmont SWCD ended in 2015, but the District continues to work with producers by offering financial and technical assistance to reduce non-point source pollution in Amelia, Nottoway and Prince Edward County's through the Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share Program.

# RESIDENTIAL SEPTIC SYSTEM PROGRAM

The Residential Septic System Program seeks to improve water quality in the Flat Creek and NIbbs Creek watersheds located in Amelia and Nottoway Counties by assisting residents with proper septic system maintenance and repair.

The Piedmont Residential Septic System program began in July 2015 when the Piedmont SWCD received a Department of Environmental Quality 319(h) grant providing financial incentives to educate homeowners and encourage them to properly maintain their septic systems. Proper septic system maintenance is important not only to water quality but to human health. A faulty septic system can leak bacteria-containing sewage into groundwater, a source of drinking water for residents outside municipal limits.

Since July 2015 the program has provided financial assistance for 16 tank pump-outs, one system repair, four system replacements, and two alternative system installations for residents in the Flat and Nibbs Creek watersheds in Amelia and Nottoway Counties. The District also held two workshops, one in Amelia and one in Nottoway, about proper septic system maintenance.

Piedmont SWCD Urban Program Specialist Emily Gibbs has worked closely in partnership with the Amelia and Nottoway County Health Departments to help spread the word about the program, and educate residents on ways to properly maintain a septic system.



Some septic system repairs or installations require that the area is surveyed before any other work can begin.

# VCAP- VIRGINIA CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE

The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program, or VCAP, offers homeowners and businesses the technical and financial assistance needed to install best management practices that reduce stormwater pollution.



A Town of Farmville resident invited the Piedmont SWCD to help with technical advice when heavy rains created concentrated flow through their backyard.

Virginia's Watershed Implementation Plan for the Chesapeake Bay identifies that runoff from lawns, golf courses and impervious surfaces is contributing significant amounts of nutrients and sediment to the Bay. VCAP is an effort to address the stormwater runoff coming from existing impervious surfaces like roads and roof tops, and nutrients coming from turf grass. The VCAP program does not cover new construction, as the state's stormwater regulations are designed to control nonpoint pollution from these sites.

Financial cost-share assistance is available through VCAP to assist with the installation of eligible stormwater practices that include: conservation landscaping, impervious surface removal, rain gardens, dry wells, rainwater harvesting, vegetated conveyance systems, constructed wetlands, bioretention, permeable pavement and green roofs.

This year the District approved two applications for cost-share assistance, one for a rain garden and one for a rainwater harvesting system. Piedmont SWCD staff also conducted nine site visits to give technical assistance. Members of the Piedmont SWCD staff participate on the VCAP Steering Committee which meets monthly to review VCAP project applications. Contact the district office at 434-392-3782 ext. 131 for VCAP application information.

VALUED PARTNERSHIPS
We thank our network of valued partners for helping the District promote natural resource conservation to an ever-wider circle of people.

#### **CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

NRCS-

Horace Adams, Rachel Loveday, David Smith, Derek Hancock & Robbie Hazlegrove

VA Dept. of Forestry-

Kirby Woolfolk, Patrick Murphy and Doug Audley

Department of Conservation & Recreation Department of Environmental Quality Farm Service Agency VA Cooperative Extension

Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries

#### YOUTH EDUCATION

Billy & Barbara Thompson Amelia Ruritans Nottoway High School Amelia Elementary School Fugua School Holiday Lake 4 H Center

#### **ENVIROTHON**

NRCS-Derek Hancock & Rachel Loveday Piedmont SWCD - Director Rose Wootton DGIF -Katie Martin Robert E. Lee SWCD- David Sandman & Jonathan Wooldridge

Peter Francisco SWCD-Kelly Snoddy & Elise Corbin

VASWCD-Beth Behran

HoV Master Gardeners—Tina Wells & Sandy Willcox

Betsy Lookofsky-Volunteer

Longwood U. Envir. Ed. Center- Host

## LANDSCAPE OUTREACH

Heart of VA Master Gardeners Virginia Cooperative Extension-Katy Overby, Haley Norton & Caitlin Miller

#### **POSTER CONTEST**

Joy Utzinger-PECES Carol Edmundson—PECES Emily Grabiec - LCVA Patty Jones-Girl Scout Troop 64

#### **MEDIA SUPPORT**

Amelia Bulletin-Monitor Farmville Herald Southside Messenger **Blackstone Courier Record** Crewe-Burkeville Journal WFLO

#### **LOCAL PARTNERS**

Amelia, Nottoway and **Prince Edward County** Supervisors & Administrative Staff

Amelia, Nottoway and Prince Ed. County Farm Bureaus

Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Heart of VA Master Gardeners Amelia & Nottoway Health Departments.

Middle James Roundtable VA Forage & Grasslands Council

## STAFF PARTNERSHIPS

- VA Forage & Grazing Council Vice-Chair-Charlie Wootton
- VA Assoc. of Conservation District Employees President—Deanna Fehrer
- VA Assoc. of Conservation Districts Marketing Committee—Wilkie Chaffin & Amanda Hancock Education—Deanna Fehrer, Amanda Hancock Planning—Deanna Fehrer
- **BMP Technical Advisory Committee** VACDE representative—Charlie Wootton
- Department of Conservation & Recreation Engineering Workgroup—Charlie Wootton
- DCR Dam Work Group Watershed Committee
- DCR Budget Template Workgroup Deanna Fehrer
- **VA Conservation Assistance Program** Deanna Fehrer & Robin Buckalew

## NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Thank you to our federal technical assistance & cost share program partners





PIEDMONT SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
100 B DOMINION DRIVE
FARMVILLE, VA 23901

BULK RATE U.S. Postage Paid Farmville, VA 23901 Permit No. 71

## Address Service Requested

#### DIRECTORS

LARKIN MOYER Chairman - Amelia County RICKY RASH Vice Chair - Nottoway County WILKIE CHAFFIN Treasurer - Prince Edward Co. CHUCK ARNASON Secretary - Nottoway County DONNA KERR Amelia County **BILL POWERS Prince Edward County** JUAN WHITTINGTON Amelia County- Appointed HALEY NORTON VCE Appointed ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

GARY DILLARD
Amelia County
Rose Wootton
Nottoway County
Don Maxey
Prince Edward County

DISTRICT STAFF

DEANNA FEHRER extension 108
District Manager

AMANDA HANCOCK ext. 132
Admin & Ed Program Coordinator

CHARLIE WOOTTON ext. 128
Senior Conservation Specialist
KEVIN DUNN ext. 116

**BMP Conservation Technician** 

STEPHEN REAMES
Equipment Program

ROBIN BUCKALEW ext. 131

Communications
EMILY GIBBS ex

IILY GIBBS ext. 131
Urban & Program Support Coordinator



The above Poster Contest grand winning poster was created by Kazu Dinmore, a first grade student in Joy Utzinger's art class, Prince Edward County Elementary School.

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Piedmont SWCD through financial and administrative assistance provided by VA Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

All programs and services of the Piedmont SWCD are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, handicap or political affiliation.

#### Sa

#### Save the date

#### Turning Grass into CA\$H

The American Forage and Grasslands Council annual meeting in Roanoke VA January 22-24, 2017.

Virginia is the host state for this year's meeting. A farm tour featuring a stockpile grazing system, and opening session "Grass, Soil, Hope: Regenerative Solutions for Changing Times" are scheduled to name just a few of the exciting and informative sessions on the agenda.