

Views From The Foothills

A Publication of the Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District
Serving Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange & Rappahannock Counties
www.culpeperswcd.org

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M. Johnson

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Welcome Corey Bray!

Welcome!

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Conservation District Completes Record Year

The 2019 Session of the Virginia General Assembly resulted in record high levels of funding for agriculture conservation incentive program available to District ag producers and across Virginia. This resulted due to a significant state budget surplus the previous year, a portion of which must be spent on water quality. Concurrent with those funding decisions by the General Assembly, significant changes were occurring to some of the ag programs to increase program flexibility and options for producers. All this to help move Virginia forward with meeting its Chesapeake Bay goals. Ag producers in the District responded loud and clear to the improved program offerings and flexible program options. Culpeper District staff allocated a record high \$4.3 million across the 5 member counties; essentially all of the funding allocated to the District. Previous to this a "high" cost share year was in the neighborhood of \$1.5 million. Producers in the District are to be applauded for moving forward with many of their projects and engaging the staff in what they do well; conservation planning and design. Program funding still remains strong and now is an excellent time to consider additional projects while funding is available.

Midway through the program year, the District Board took the opportunity to recognize staff for their hard work and excellent customer service; taking on nearly three times the normal workload. The Board engaged ex Delegate Butch Davies to present the staff with the recognition on their behalf. According to Davies, "This plaque represents what the District is well known for ... excellent customer service and a strong work ethic. The District's reputation is no secret, if you want to get something accomplished on your land, these are the people to get in contact with."

In addition to all the ag work, staff also completed a \$750,000 four year septic cost share grant, published a gravel driveway BMP guide and completed Year 1 of a three year NOAA education grant.



Photo: District staff accept plaque in recognition of their hard work

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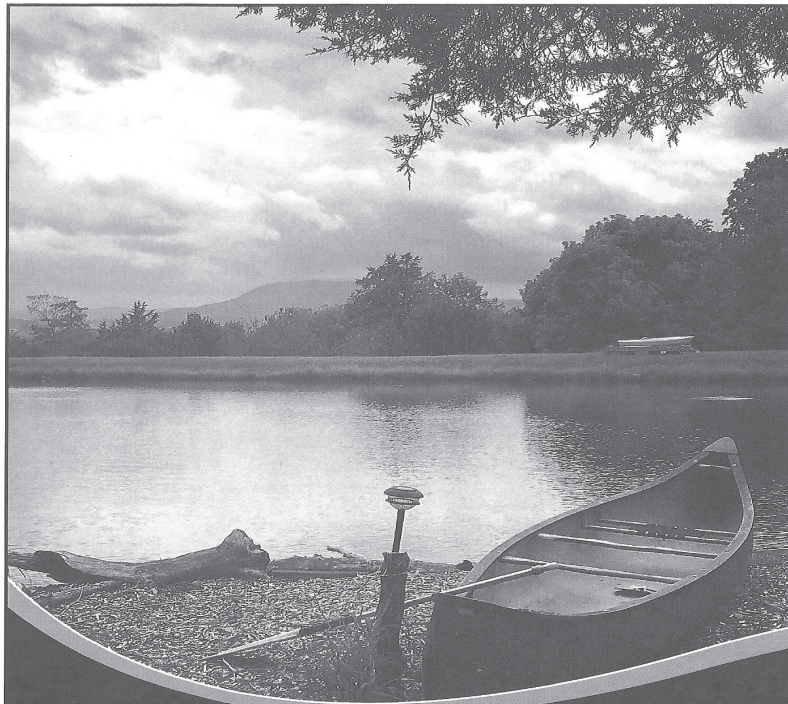
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Using a soil test to inform your lawn management can yield results as seen above

Save Money with Soil Testing to Improve Your Lawn

Caring for the environment also means caring for your lawn. By using proper mowing and maintenance practices, you can enjoy a healthy, beautiful lawn while protecting local streams, rivers and lakes.

Our homes contain impervious surfaces (rooftop, patio, and driveway) that can't absorb and filter rainfall. The underlying soil characteristics of the lawn can affect how the lawn absorbs and filters the impervious runoff. Soil compaction, low pH (e.g. acid soils) and low nutrients can impact how you grow vegetation in your lawn. Improperly applied or excess fertilizer and other chemicals are not retained in the landscape, and can contribute to harmful algal blooms and other water quality problems.

What is lawn care? It's not just seeding, watering and mowing. We must amend the soil not only to feed the grass but to improve soil structure. Managing clippings and leaves are all part of lawn care too. Returning these byproducts improve the soil and vegetation. How we care for our lawn determines the degree of the environmental benefits and impacts we achieve.

Healthy lawns can help prevent erosion, reduce runoff, and filter rainwater. A healthy lawn has uniform and mature vegetation that inhibits erosion and retains nutrients. A healthy lawn can capture over an inch of rain; traps dust and dirt; convert carbon dioxide to oxygen; and reduces the heat island effect with air temperatures up to 30 degrees cooler than pavement. A sparse lawn with bare soil needs improvement either by amending the soil or selecting different landscape plants.

The soil should be tested every three years. A composite soil sample of the whole yard is collected. A soil test includes information on the amount of nutrients, organic matter and pH level. The proper balance is essential to a healthy lawn. Additional assessments of patchy bare spots could be done to verify foot traffic, recent disturbance, disease or standing water.

The Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District is working with your local Extension agent to make sure homeowners like yourself have the knowledge and resources to do your part. The District is offering a voucher to cover the cost of the soil test. For these vouchers please contact the District at 540-825-8591 or stephanieD@culpeperswcd.org.

For more information on lawn care see the Virginia Extension Publication list: https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/tags.resource.html?tag=pubs_ext_vt_edu:lawns.

When Volunteers Go Bad

by Sarah Parmelee, Area Forester

Last fall, a little seedling popped up in my yard. It was too young to be readily identifiable, so I left it on the off chance that it was something cool. This spring when it leafed out, I realized that it was a butterfly bush. Now, I do not have any other butterfly bushes in my yard, but other folks in my neighborhood do, and this "volunteer" bush in my yard likely came from seeds spread from a neighbor's yard. Aside from non-native butterfly bushes, my neighbors also have non-native Japanese barberry, burning bush, and Bradford pear that they care for and maintain as part of their landscaping.

Our choices for landscaping may seem innocent enough, but what we plant in our yards matters to our neighbors and our forests because plants like to spread. Some will spread through roots or rhizomes like mints, irises and tree-of-heaven. Others like sycamore, mulberry or cockleburs will produce seeds that disperse in the wind or will be spread by animals. In a yard with a mowed lawn and weeded flowerbeds, there may be few "volunteers" popping up, but downwind, downstream or along paths taken by wildlife, there may be many.

Why does this matter? Many of the plants that we plant in our yards and gardens are not native to this area (such as the plants in my neighbors' yard mentioned earlier.) Plant species spend thousands of years developing important relationships within the place where they grow. This includes relationships between plants and pollinating insects, as well as with larger critters such as birds and deer. When we take a plant that has evolved to live in and contribute to its local ecosystem and replace it with a plant that's native to an ecosystem halfway across the world, we disrupt many of these relationships.

Plants that do not have these developed relationships with the other native fauna are not as easily controlled because they have few natural predators. For example, deer like to eat the growing tips of native hardwood trees like oak seedlings, but they do not like to eat the tips of tree-of-heaven or Japanese barberry (both non-native, invasive species.) Therefore, when the seeds of these non-native plants disperse, there are no predators to slow their growth and spread. This contributes to the widespread infestation of private and public forestland with various non-native plants, some of which were first introduced in our landscaped yards. This is detrimental to forest health because these plants do not support important insects (think about pollinators!) and compete with native plants for resources such as sunlight and water.

There's good news, however: you can help! As we focus on our gardens and landscape plans, I encourage you to take a moment to research what you are planting in your yard. For example, a quick Google search will show that butterfly bush is actually bad for butterflies, and local pollinators would be better served if you plant a spicebush or flowering dogwood. There are many trusted resources available to help folks find native plants that work with their landscaping, such as the [Virginia Native Plant Society](#), which provides regional guides for the whole state.

If we bring native plants back into our yards and lives, we will be giving a helping hand to the many important insects and other critters that are so important for keeping our forests healthy and beautiful. Although the butterfly bush was an undesirable discovery, I have also found yellow-poplar, flowering dogwood and sycamores in my garden that have spread there from trees in the neighborhood. Wouldn't it be cool if instead of spreading harmful plants we could inadvertently spread lots of good ones?

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Conservation District Announces Scholarship Recipients

Each year the Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District awards educational scholarships to students who plan to pursue a career in a conservation related field. Financial assistance is available for eligible students from Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock Counties. Applicants must be full time students enrolled in or who have been accepted to a college undergraduate or graduate program related to soil and water conservation, natural resource management, animal science, environmental science or other related programs. This year recipients were awarded \$2,000 each.

- **Cassandra Patton** graduated from **Culpeper County High School**. She is attending **Virginia Tech**, where she is majoring in **Horticulture**.
- **Alexandra Ramey** graduated from **Eastern View High School** and Roanoke College. She will attend graduate school at **Arizona State University** where she will major in **Global Sustainability**.

The Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District is honored to recognize these students and wish them well in their future endeavors.

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) Announces Agency Name Change Contributed from DWR

As of July 1, 2020, the Virginia DGIF has been renamed to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR). The new name reflects the wide range of wildlife conservation responsibilities and opportunities the agency has, from hunting and fishing, to wildlife watching, public lands, boating and outdoor recreation.

If you have already purchased a hunting or fishing license, registered a boat, signed up for Restore the Wild membership the change won't affect you. Your licenses are still valid. When you renew they will have the new logo.

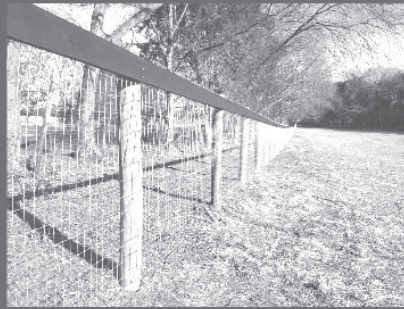
The new website address is www.dwr.virginia.gov. Employee email addresses have also changed to @dwr.virginia.gov.



Drinking Water Testing Clinic for Residential Wells

Residents and landowners in Culpeper and Rappahannock are eligible for a clinic to test your well water. Contact Becky Sheffield at Rebes13@vt.edu or 540-727-3435 ext. 344. Test kits can be picked up or mailed to you and the follow-up meeting will be virtual. The dates are:

- Pick up sample kits: October 7 from 4-6pm at Rappahannock Extension office or Culpeper Baptist Church
- Drop off samples: October 14 from 7-9am at same locations
- Results meeting: November 12 (presentation link will be mailed to you)



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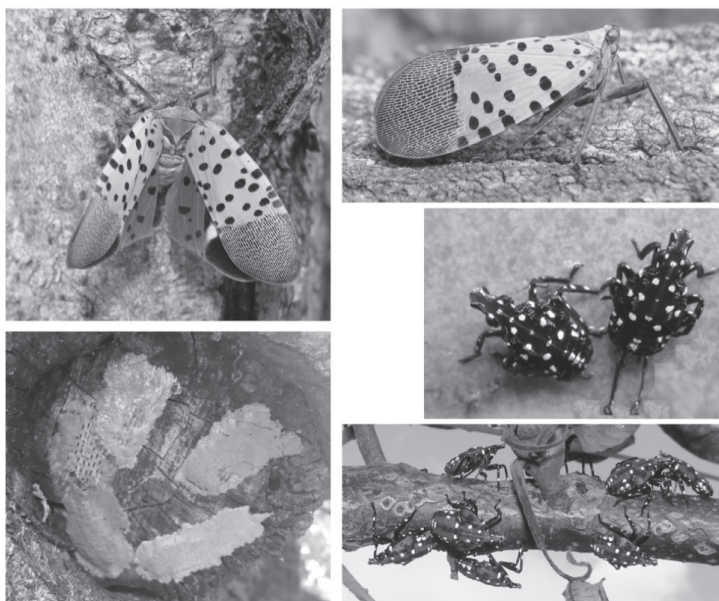
VirginiaFence.com

Spotted Lanternfly Look out!

Please be on the look out for the egg masses of the Spotted Lantern Fly (SLF). The first egg mass found was one year ago today near Winchester. In less than a year, it's spread now includes Virginia's Clark County and Berkley County, WV. It was also confirmed for the first time in Cecil County, MD last year. This is the most effective time of year to do something positive about this situation.

1. If an Egg Mass is found in a new area, report it
2. If an Egg Mass is found in a known area, destroy it (because each egg mass is 30-50 new adults by the summer)

Go to this site for more information and join the squash and Smash SLF Army! <https://ext.vt.edu/agriculture/commercial-horticulture/spotted-lanternfly.html>



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Our Annual Tree Sale Will Begin Accepting Orders in Late Fall!

Do you have a tree species you would like us to include? Send suggestions to Stephanie DeNicola at stephanied@culpeperswcd.org.

Annual Report Available!

Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District's Annual Report is available on our website! This 38 page publications details cost share allocated, education programs and much more! Visit our website, www.culpeperswcd.org and click on the Publications tab. Questions can be sent to Stephanie DeNicola at stephanied@culpeperswcd.org.



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Live Stakes

Using Live Cuttings to Propagate Shrubby Plants to Stabilize Stream Banks and Wet Areas

NOTE: Commencing this fall as part of the Culpeper District's Annual Tree Seedling Sale we will be offering live stakes for sale. Orders will be taken during the fall and winter for early Spring 2021 delivery. We include this article as an introduction to live staking.

Whether you have an eroding stream bank or want to restore a riparian area, consider planting with live stakes. Live staking is the practice of using unrooted cuttings to propagate shrubs and some trees for establishing vegetation in difficult riparian areas such as stream banks and floodplains. Using cuttings from dormant multi-stem shrubs and trees which have the capacity to grow roots once they are tapped or hammered into the ground.

There are specific species that are particularly well suited for this; these include the silky, gray or red osier dogwoods, willows, buttonbush, arrowwood viburnums, elderberries and sycamores. These plants root easily from cuttings. The cuttings should be between 1/2 inch and 1.5 inches in diameter and between 18 and 24 inches long.

Cuttings are taken in the dormant season, usually 2 to 3 weeks before planting in the spring (February and March). Use your thumb to gauge the diameter of the cuttings and start at the base of the branch and then cut into shorter lengths. Keep cuttings cool, moist and covered until planting.

Planting live stakes involves making sure the cutting has a sharp point to help with pushing or tapping into the ground. There needs to be at least one active bud above ground and the stakes need to be planted with the bud facing up. A push rod can be used to aid planting by making a pilot hole for cutting. The live stake needs to be as deep as possible, leaving the active bud near the surface. The bottom of the planted stake should be in the soil that remains constantly wet or nearly so. Space the cuttings about 1 to 2 feet apart, depending on the desired density.

Not all of the live stakes will survive. After 2 to 5 years you can always take more cuttings from the living to replant the bare areas. Good luck planting!

Other Resources:

Fetter, Jennifer & Koch, Kristen. Live Stakes for Stream Restoration. Penn State Extension. March 17, 2015. Accessed August 2020. <https://extension.psu.edu/live-staking-for-stream-restoration>

Davis, Ryan. Live Staking: A Trusty Technique for Planting Trees and Shrubs on the Cheap. Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. Accessed August 2020. <https://www.allianceforthebay.org/2019/03/live-staking-a-trusty-technique-for-planting-trees-and-shrubs-on-the-cheap/>

Below left: Stream bank sloped, bench and toe planted with live stakes
Below right: 5 years of growth, live stake willows

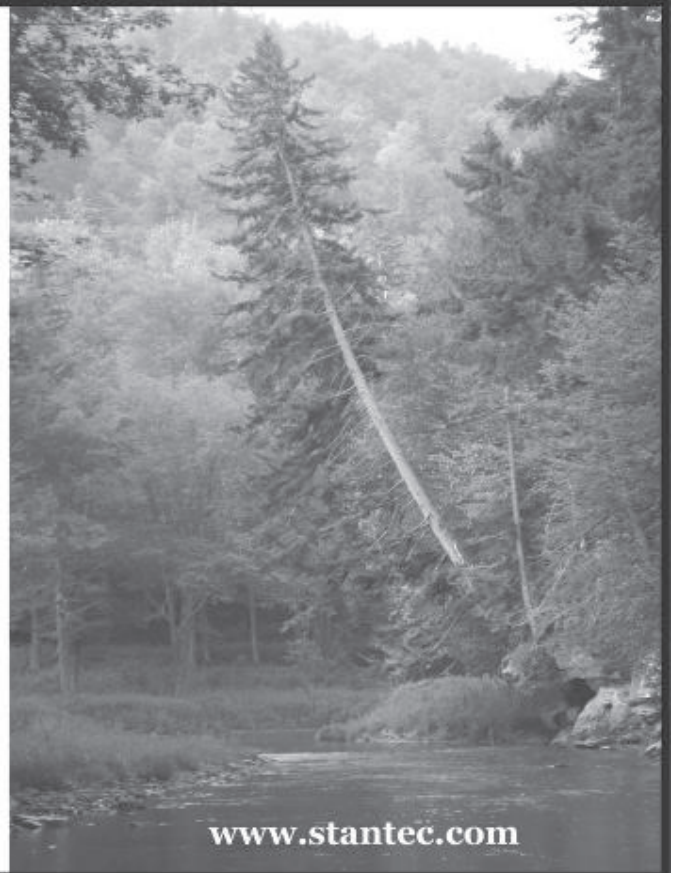




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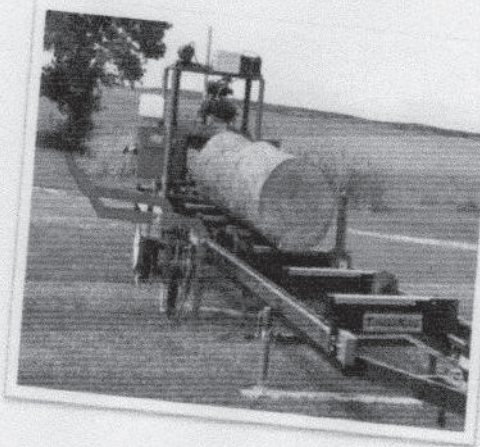
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Conservation Incentive Programs

Available in the Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District Updated August 2020

Program	Cost Share Rate to Establish Practices	Agreement Period	Requirements	Annual Rental and Other Payments	Other Cost-Sharing	Where & When to Sign-Up
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Up to 90% of estimated costs	2-10 years Must be part of conservation plan	Threat to soil, water, air, and related natural resources on land	None	VA BMP Cost Share Program	FSA or NRCS
Reforestation of Timberlands (RT)	Up to 75% of estimated costs	10 years	Water quality BMP's must be installed. Pines only. 100-acre maximum.	None	None	VA Department of Forestry
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Partners for Fish & Wildlife	75% to 100%	10-year-minimum	Priority areas include Upper James, Upper Roanoke, Upper Tennessee watersheds	None	VA BMP	Culpeper SWCD USFWS
Virginia BMP Program	60-100% plus incentives	5 - 15 years	Existing water quality problems	Yes for buffers	Some areas	Culpeper SWCD
Virginia BMP Loan Program	Zero interest loans – no maximum.	Up to 10 years	Must be an eligible practice	None	None	Culpeper SWCD
BMP Tax Credit Program	25% of out-of-pocket expenses	5 - 10 years	Existing water quality problem	None	BMP Program	Culpeper SWCD
Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)	50 - 64%	10 years	Damage to agricultural production due to declared agricultural emergency	None	None	FSA When announced
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	No more than 50%; varies by component	10 or 15 years	Vary according to practice	Varies based on soil types	None	FSA
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)	No more than 50%; varies by component	10 or 15 years	Vary according to practice	Varies based on soil types Various additional incentives available	SWCD	FSA
TMDL Ag BMP Program	50-85% depending on the practice	10 years	Stream exclusion projects with 10-35 foot setbacks in selected watersheds	Optional bonus payments per foot for fencing in selected watersheds	None	Culpeper SWCD
TMDL Septic Cost Share Program	50-80% depending on income	5-10 years	Inspections, pumpouts, repairs or replacements of septic systems in selected watersheds	None	None	Culpeper SWCD
VA Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP)	75% of costs	10 years	Problems with erosion, poor vegetative cover & impervious runoff. Existing Homes more than 3 years old are eligible	None	None	Culpeper SWCD
Agricultural Land Easement (ALE)	Easement purchased	Permanent easement	Open space easement; requires a partner agency to provide funds and hold easement	None	State program options	NRCS
Wetland Restoration Easement (WRE)	100% of wetland restoration costs plus cost to obtain easement	Permanent easement	Area must meet criteria for wetland restoration	None	None	NRCS

A Guide for New Virginia Woodland Owners: Part 1: Your Woods are Working for Everyone

By Adam Downing, Virginia Cooperative Extension Forestry Agent

We all depend on and benefit from the woods every day, whether we know it or not. The trees, shrubs, plants, animals and soil that make up your woods provide you, your neighbors and your region with a host of environmental, social and economic benefits.

Environmental Benefits

Clean Air

The plants that make up what we generally refer to as woods or forests clean the air. The leaves of trees and shrubs create shade and reduce air temperatures. The lower temperatures reduce chemical reactions that form ozone pollution. Plants also remove other air pollutants such as dust, smoke and ash.

Through photosynthesis, your woods remove carbon from the atmosphere and provide long-term carbon storage. The amount of carbon stored in the Commonwealth's 15.9 million acres of woods is approximately 1.2 billion metric tons, which has been estimated to be equivalent to 37 years of Virginia emissions! While the trees are alive, they continue to store carbon. In addition, if they are harvested and made into a long-lasting product, such as a house or furniture, the carbon stays stored in the wood.

Clean Water

Your woods improve water quality by removing pollutants before they enter nearby streams. Leaves — both live leaves on branches and dead leaves on the ground — reduce the momentum of rainfall. This minimizes soil disturbance and prevents soil particles from dislodging and moving into streams. The roots of trees and other woodland vegetation also slow the movement of water, reducing soil erosion and increasing infiltration. Water in the soil is either used by plants or recharges groundwater supplies.

Trees that line streams are particularly important for protecting water quality. These buffer trees keep the water cool for aquatic wildlife, stabilize stream banks and provide habitat.

Cleaner water means safer and more enjoyable recreational activities too.

Wildlife Habitat

Many wildlife species depend on woods like yours for food, water, shelter and space. Your woods may provide some or all of these elements. However, even if they don't, your woods are part of a larger system that crosses property boundaries. Adjacent woodlands can provide the wildlife habitat elements that may be missing on your property. The exact mix of birds, mammals, fish and other critters will vary from one property to the next depending on many factors, including the type and age of trees in your woods, the acreage of woods and the characteristics of neighboring properties.

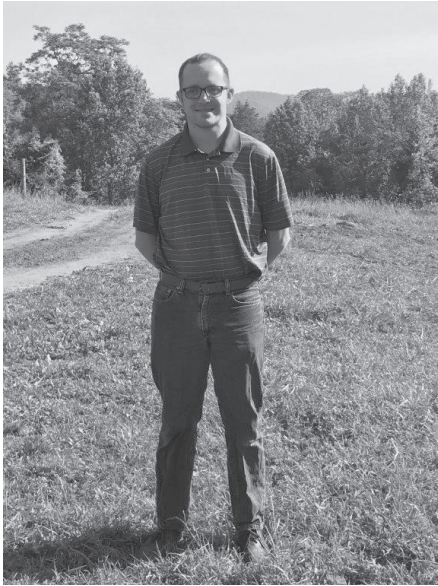
These environmental benefits, along with others, are sometimes called ecosystem services. In Virginia, they are valued at \$21.8 billion annually.

Social Benefits

Humans are inherently connected to the natural landscape. Some of the social benefits of trees are obvious. They provide fruit and nuts, create shade, reduce glare and are aesthetically pleasing. Trees provide less obvious benefits as well. Green space in urban areas can lower health care costs by encouraging physical activity. It can promote a sense of community as people see each other and interact more. Studies also show surgery patients with a view of trees heal faster than those without. And proximity to green space can increase property values.

Economic Benefits

In addition to environmental and social benefits, your woods provide economic benefits. Forestry is the second largest industry in Virginia, contributing \$17 billion a year to the economy and approximately 104,000 jobs. Forestry accounts for 3 percent of employment and 3 percent of the gross domestic product in Virginia. Landowners sell more than \$250 million of standing timber annually.



Welcome Corey Bray!

On behalf of Culpeper SWCD, we welcome Corey Bray to the Culpeper Service Center as the new Soil Conservation Technician for Natural Resources Conservation Service. Corey graduated from Old Dominion University in 2016 with a Bachelor's degree in Biology with a Concentration in Marine Biology and a minor in Ocean, Earth and Atmospheric Science. He is currently working towards a Master's degree in Natural Resource Management from Virginia Tech. He expects to graduate in 2021. He recently spent time with the AmeriCorps Cape Cod program focusing on environmental work. He enjoys spending time outdoors, hiking, camping, running, canoeing and scuba diving.

To reach Corey send an email to Corey.Bray@usda.gov.

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Views From The Foothills

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