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

Views From The Foothills

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Welcome Cheyenne!

Good luck Brandy!

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<u>Welcome!</u> You are receiving this newsletter because you receive land use tax benefits in our counties. Please call 540-825-8591 or email <u>stephanied@culpeperswcd.org</u> to remove yourself from our mailing list.

Grass Filter Strips: 100% Cost Share <u>Plus</u> \$80 per acre per year buffer rental

Vol. 23 Issue 4

Fall 2023

Yes. You read that correctly. One hundred percent cost share reimbursement AND \$80 per acre per year buffer payment on the strip, all years buffer "rent" paid up front. That is for a 50 foot wide strip along waterways or intermittent drainage ways that travel through cropland and is for a 15 year contract. If 15 years is too long for you then for 10 years you get 95 percent cost share and the same buffer payments. Still a sweet deal. If 50 feet is too wide for you both options are available as 35 foot buffers; 90% cost share for the 15 year contract and 85% for the 10 year contract. And the same buffer payments for both.

So why riparian grass buffer filter strips? Pretty simple; they can significantly lessen the negative environmental impacts of cash grain farming in the region. Farming right to the edge of the water, even in no till farms, certainly can have its negative impacts. Nutrient loss to waters, pesticide runoff, sediment loss to name a few. All generally not good for the aquatic life.

The filter strips buffer the waterways from the direct impacts by filtering nutrients and pesticides that can be carried from the fields to the surface waters during rainfall events. The strips slow down runoff considerably and allow the water to infiltrate into the soil. Filter strip areas can also provide habitat and cover for wildlife of various types. They obviously don't come without some maintenance responsibilities but once established these can be quite minimal. For the more adventurous spirits reading this — a stronger approach toward bona fide wildlife habitat could be considered. There are many options: grasses, shrubs, trees, etc.

So—check in with us. Now is a good time to start planning for spring operations.



Agricultural Cost Share Practices

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Practice	Details				
Grazing Land Management with Stream Exclusion	Stream exclusion fencing & water development. Includes fence, well, water troughs, pipe, stream crossings, rotational fences, etc. Covers 85% of <i>estimated</i> cost with 35' buffer & 100% with 50' buffer. Buffer payment rate of \$80/acre/year paid upon installation of all practices. 10 and 15 year contracts available.				
Stream Exclusion with Narrow Width buffer	 Stream exclusion fencing & water development with reduced setback. Includes fence, well, water troughs, pipe, stream crossings, rotational fence, etc. Covers 60% of <i>estimated</i> cost with 10' buffer & 75% with 25' buffer. 10 and 15 year contracts available. 				
Afforestation of Crop, Hay & Pastureland	 75% of eligible cost for planting trees (hardwood or conifers). \$100/acre for 10 year incentive & \$150/acre for 15 years. 				
Woodland Buffer Filter Area	 Planting trees in riparian areas. 95% of eligible cost for planting hardwoods or conifers. Conifers: \$100/acre for 10 years OR \$150/acre for 15 years. Hardwoods: \$100/acre for 10 years OR \$250/acre for 15 years. Buffer payment rate of \$80/acre/year paid upon installation. 				
Cover Crops	 October 25th cut off for harvestable cover crop & early planting date for cover crops to be killed in the Fall November 15th, cut off planting date for kill down crops. <i>Note: Dates have been extended by two weeks. Producer input led to this change!</i> Rates: \$20/acre to harvest up to \$90/acre to kill & \$45/acre for legumes 				
Nutrient Management Planning	 Up to \$4/acre to have a nutrient management plan written for your farm. A great way to save money on input costs! 				
Precision Nutrient Management on Cropland	 Up to \$8/acre for the precision application of nitrogen & phosphorus to cropland. Must have current nutrient management plan: provide records, maps & a bill for nitrogen/ phosphorous application. 				
No-Till & Cropland Conversion	 Up to \$70/acre to convert from conventional tillage to a no-till system for 5 years. Up to \$410/acre to convert cropland to permanent hay or pasture. 10 or 15 year contracts available. 				
Sod Waterway, Grass Filter Strips & Critical Area Seeding	 Up to 75% to grade & seed gully erosion. Up to 75% to establish grass filter strips along waterways adjacent to crop, hayland or animal holding areas. <u>NEW! Buffer payment rate of \$80/acre/year paid upon installation.</u> Up to 75% to grade, fill & seed critically eroding areas. 				
Continuing Conservation Initiative	 \$0.50-\$1.25/linear foot of stream bank protected with fencing. \$250-\$1,000 per water system, water trough or stream crossing. A great way to receive funds to maintain existing infrastructure! 				
Streambank Stabilization	Covers 75% of the cost to stabilize &/or grade eroding streambanks on ag or forestall land Can also cover slope toe rip rap for protection (if required), vegetative planting, trees/ shrubs Requires engineered design which is a reimbursable expense				

Update: Conservation Tillage and Precision Agricultural Equipment Tax Credit has been increased to \$17,500. This is a significant change for producers interested in purchasing this equipment.

Bale Grazing Grant Comes to Kentucky and Beyond, Including Virginia Printed with permission (<u>Website</u> accessed October 2, 2023)

"Bale Grazing: A Practical, Low-Cost, and Environmentally-Sound Management Strategy to Winter Beef Cattle", is a NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant that has been funded for six states – Kentucky, North Carolina, West Virginia, Missouri, Virginia, and New York (see figure 1). The grant started in 2022 and will end February 2028.

Bale grazing is a winter-feeding method where bales are set out on pasture and fed in a planned, controlled manner, somewhat like rotational grazing. Temporary electric fencing limits cattle access to those bales that you want fed in the current move. With each move a fence is set up to expose new bales, usually 30-90 feet in front of the previous fence, which is then taken down to allow the cattle access to the new bales. Where hay rings are used, they are rolled from the old bales to the new bales and flipped over into place. The process is typically repeated every 1-7 days. Properly planned, you will not need to use a tractor for months at a time, nutrients will be deposited where they are needed, and cattle will stay clean of mud. Simple, cheap, and effective. The main requirements to making it work are cattle trained to electric fencing, advanced planning, and an open mind.

NRCS is interested in bale grazing because their previous focus for solving the winter feeding problem with beef cattle has been with engineered feeding structures. Bale grazing is a management-based solution but very little previous research has been conducted on bale grazing, and almost none in the eastern US. Bale grazing has historically been used most frequently in the Great Plains area in the US and Canada. The eastern US gets considerably more rainfall during the winter and bale grazing had to be modified to make it work well here.

This project will provide the much-needed research NRCS desires for the eastern US, and this was likely the main reason the project was funded for \$2.3 million. Thus one of the focuses of the project is to collect data that will provide NRCS with the answers to the many questions they have about bale grazing as well as winter feeding in general. NRCS will use the research that comes out of this project to guide policy decisions.

Soil chemistry, forage productivity, and bale grazing's effect on overall profitability will be evaluated as part of the project. One of the unique attributes of this project is a focus of measuring soil biological activity as part of the soil testing. Soil biological activity is an area that has rapidly developed in the last 4-5 years, and we are learning that improvements in soil biological activity can make available chemical-based fertility that was previously in unavailable forms. It is believed by many proponents of bale grazing that soil biological activity is radiated outward from where bales are fed, and thus when scattered out on pasture can lead to rapid increases in soil biological activity, especially where it has previously been depleted. Another unique attribute of this project is the on-farm focus: All of the research will be conducted on actual farms, in real-world settings.

The other major focus of the project is to provide demonstration farms where cattle farmers in the various regions in each state have a farm where they can see bale grazing in action. I have found that seeing is believing when it comes to most farmers implementing new practices. Presentations to farmer groups is helpful, but will never have the same impact as experiencing a new concept like bale grazing on a real farm. As an example, a few years ago I worked with then ANR agent Tommy Yankey in Anderson County with two bale-grazing demonstration farms (funded by a small SARE grant). A third cattle farmer in Anderson County was highly skeptical of the bale grazing concept and told one of those two farmers he was making a major mistake by adopting it. After a year of observing bale grazing on that farm, the third farmer began bale grazing himself, and is now one of the farms that is bale grazing as part of the current NRCS grant. That is the power of on-farm demonstrations.

This project is already having impacts. NRCS has a half-day session after the main American Forage and Grassland Council annual meeting, and in January 2023 had me present on bale grazing and the bale grazing project. Based on that presentation, an NRCS administrator realized their bale grazing requirements for EQIP funding (currently available only in a few states) require farmers to feed at hay densities

Views From The Foothills

Continued from page 3

that are far too concentrated for conditions in the east. Results and recommendations that come from this grant will continue to advise NRCS on bale grazing protocols.

The overall project is being led by me (Greg Halich) and managed by Samantha Kindred, both in the Department of Agricultural Economics. Jeff Lehmkuhler (Animal Science) and Ray Smith (Plant and Soil Science) are co-principal Investigators for the project.

We are currently finishing with our first winter bale grazing for the project, but are looking for cattle farms that would like to participate in this project in the next four years. If you are potentially interested, or if you just have questions related to bale grazing, you can contact your county extension agent or you can contact Greg Halich at greg.halich@uky.edu directly.

Grazers who find themselves interested in a more in-depth conversation from other grazers who are implementing bale grazing, visit the Culpeper SWCD website <u>here</u> for an extended article about winter feeding.



Photo courtesy of Carl Stafford



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Finding harvested deer (All hunting stops for the day once drone operations begin) Mapping & Inspections



Views From The Foothills



Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech Virginia State University

www.ext.vt.edu

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments. Its programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, sexual orientation, genetic information, military status, or any other basis protected by law.

fyou are a person with a disability and learne any assibility devices, services or ther accommodations to participate in is activity, please contact Sarah Sharpe, VCE-Greene at (434-985-5267/DDP) during business hours of 8 a.m. and 5 mt to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event. TDD number is (800) 828-1120.



HOW TO START A FARM

DETAILS:

When: Friday, November 17 from 9 am - 3 pm

Where: PVCC Giuseppe Center (222 Main Street, Stanardsville)

How Much: \$20 per person (lunch provided)

Topics to be Covered

- Soil Basics
- Business Planning
- Zoning/Building Regulations
- How to Decide what to Grow
- Livestock
- Vegetables/Small Fruit
- Vineyards/Orchards
- Funding Opportunities
- Conservation Opportunities
- And more!

Register Here:

www.tinyurl.com/howtostartafarm2023

Questions? Reach out to Sarah Sharpe at seweaver@vt.edu or 434-985-5236



<u>9th Annual Culpeper SWCD Tree Sale</u>

Five of one species for \$5 (except American chestnut) PICK UP FOR ALL PLANTS IS 3/22/2024 and 3/23/2024



American chestnut hybrid (*Castanea dentata x mollisima x crenata*) Full Sun to Partial Sun; seedlings from open-pollinated nuts collected from select (blight tolerant with American chestnut form and appearance) trees in the Lesesne State Forest chestnut breeding area. Exact pedigree cannot be guaranteed because they are open-pollinated (male parent unknown), but these likely contain more than 50% American chestnut DNA with the remainder a mix of Chinese and/or Japanese chestnut origin. Should have improved blight resistance and are more likely to survive than wild-type American chestnut, but still are likely to become infected and may not survive to maturity.





Eastern redbud (Cercis canadensis)

Full sun to shade tolerant; Eastern redbud reaches a mature size of 15 to 30 feet in height and 6 to 10 inches in diameter. It grows on moist, well-drained woodlands. The wood is heavy, hard, not strong and rich, dark brown in color. Some birds and mammals eat the seeds. Redbud is planted as an ornamental tree suitable for small landscapes.





American elderberry (Sambucus canadensis)

Full sun to shade tolerant; this is a small understory species that grows well in riparian woodlands, but can also grow as individuals in a woodland setting. They grow well on moist, welldrained sites. Elderberry can grow to be 6-14 feet tall and wide. Pollination occurs in the early summer by bees and native pollinators. Flowers will be big, beautiful white clusters in the early summer. In late summer to early fall, the plant with be covered with clusters of black berries that are 4 to 6 mm wide. The fruit is eaten by bear, game birds, small mammals and song birds. The stems and foliage are desired by deer.





Red-osier Dogwood (Cornus sericea)

Full sun to shade tolerant; Red-osier dogwood is a large, 7- to 9-foot erect shrub best suited where the background, such as evergreens, will show off the dark red winter stems. Besides attractive, red stems in the winter, red-osier dogwood has yellowish-white flowers that appear in late May to early June, and bluish-white fruit borne in late summer. Fall color is reddish-purple.



Silver maple (Acer saccharinum)

Full sun to shade tolerant; Silver Maple is a tall, fast-growing multibranched tree that can reach heights of 50 to 80 feet. It is often planted in hedge rows, wetlands and riparian areas. It flowers in the spring in small, dense reddish clusters. The seed are samaras (winged) and mature in the early summer. The samaras are the biggest of any native maple in Virginia. Wildlife use varies from squirrels eating buds in the early spring; deer eating the bark in the winter, and the trunk tends to make cavities that provide shelter for tree-dwelling mammals, owls and wood-peckers.





Shortleaf pine (Pinus echinata)

Full sun; Shortleaf pine reaches a mature size of 80 to 100 feet in height and 2 to 3 feet in diameter. It is used largely for interior and exterior finishing, flooring, general construction, veneers, paper pulp and poles. Shortleaf pine produces high-quality lumber. It grows best on deep, well-drained soils, but tolerates nutrient-deficient sites.





Chestnut oak (Quercus prinus)

Full sun; Chestnut oak reaches a mature size of 50 to 70 feet in height and 2 to 3 feet in diameter. The chestnut oak attains best growth in well-drained coves and stream sides, but is commonly found on dry, rocky slopes and ridges. The wood is similar to, and often marketed as, white oak, and is used for lumber, beams, railroad ties, flooring, furniture and planking. The large acorns are sweet and are eaten by a variety of wildlife.



PICK UP FOR ALL PLANTS March 22 & 23, 2024



Just clip the order part and send it to our office with a check. Ordering early is important because we usually sell out before the pick up date.

RETURNING: POLLINATOR MEADOW SEED MIX FOR SMALL AREAS OF YOUR YARD!

This meadow seed mix includes an already pre-mixed cover crop and will cover a 1,000 square foot area. The meadow mix does best in sunny areas that receive 6 hours or more of sunlight. See article on page 5: <u>culp-swcd-nletter-09.21.pdf (culpeperswcd.org)</u>. The mix is designed for both riparian and upland sites. Detailed instructions will accompany the seed mix at pick up. Anyone willing to plant more than the 1,000 square foot plot should consider contacting a qualified contractor.



Live stakes to address streambank erosion and other uses

Silky dogwood (*Cornaceae cornus amomum*) and Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*). These shrub cuttings come in bundles and root readily when planted in moist soils. Silky picture from Virginia Tech Dendrology Buttonbush picture from <u>Penn State Extension</u>



Checks payable to CSWCD. Pick up dates are Friday March 22 and Saturday March 23, 2024 at Culpeper office.

 Plants not picked up by 12pm on Saturday March 23, 2024 may be forfeited without a refund. We do our best to insure quality control. <u>However, no refunds on trees that do not grow</u>. Questions? Contact Stephanie DeNicola at <u>stephanied@culpeperswcd.org</u> or 540-825-8591
 Mail order form & payment to ATTN Tree Sale, CSWCD, 351 Lakeside Drive, Culpeper, VA 22701 Species descriptions & pictures from Virginia Tech Dendrology <u>https://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/factsheets.cfm</u> & VDOF

Species	Price	Quantity	Species	Price	Quantity
Eastern redbud (5 seedlings)	\$5		Silver maple (5 seedlings)	\$5	
American elderberry (5 seedlings)	\$5		Shortleaf pine (5 seedlings)	\$5	
Red osier dogwood (5 seedlings)	\$5		Chestnut oak (5 seedlings)	\$5	
American chestnut (5 seedlings)	\$30		Meadow mix	\$30	
Silky dogwood (25 live stakes)	\$25		Buttonbush (25 live stakes)	\$25	
Т	OTAL (COST: (che	eck or cash only)	· · · · ·	

Name	
Address	
Phone	
E-mail	

Interested in our Meadow Mix? Start Planning and Prepping Now! By Richard Jacobs, CSWCD Conservation Specialist III

Meadows provide ground cover that protects the soil and habitat for birds and pollinators. These benefits make meadows an important practice to conserve soil and protect clean water and provide wildlife habitat. For the 2022 tree sale, the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District is offering a meadow mix sample for small areas of your yard or adjacent areas.

<u>What makes a meadow?</u> Meadows have a mix of warm-season grasses and forbs (i.e. wildflowers). A diverse mix is desired since each site is unique and some species may not grow as abundant as others. Diversity also ensures that something will be growing and blooming throughout the year and over the many stages of the meadow. Meadows do have a life cycle in Virginia. Without periodic mowing or prescribed burns, a meadow will transition into a forest. Forests are the dominate land cover of Virginia, but grassland meadows can occur where there is disturbance such as fire, grazing, wind damage and mowing (once a year). <u>Choosing your site:</u> Sunny and dry areas are best. Shady and wet areas require a more diverse seed mix and require additional maintenance to control trees and shrubs. Meadows do well in poor soil as long as there is not excessive erosion or foot traffic. Connecting the meadow with another habitat structure such as a pond, stream, forest, or rock pile will attract more wildlife. Meadows can be any size. Starting from seeds you'll want to start with 1,000 square feet. You could start as small as 100 square feet with seeds or container plants.

<u>Preparing the site:</u> If the site already has a good mix of native plants or you're not sure what lives there, just let it grow for a season or two. You may not need to seed the area. When you have undesirable plants that smother the native plants, you'll want to remove them and prepare a seedbed. Removal methods vary depending on size and type of vegetation.

- Smothering with plastic tarp or cardboard covered with mulch or compost can be effective. Best for small areas covered with annual grasses.
- Using a double treatment of a non-selective herbicide such as Roundup® or Rodeo® is most common for thicker stands of vegetation. Herbicide should be applied following the label's instructions and never applied on a windy or rainy day.
- Tilling every two to four weeks for one to two month is a suitable alternative. Repeated tillage weakens the root systems of perennial plants.

After undesirable plants are controlled, the soil needs to be exposed for good soil/seed contact. Rake the dead thatch and grass clippings and rake to loosen up the soil.

<u>Seeding</u>: The best time to seed the meadow mix is October thru December along with a winter cover crop such as annual rye or a winter grain. This seeding scheme allows for the seeds to stratify over the winter to increase germination rates.

Seeding can also be done from April to July using a summer cover crop such as oats or buckwheat.

Spread seed mixture by hand or with a broadcast spreader at a rate of 1/2 pound per 1,000 square feet evenly over the site. Mix/scratch seed into the soil with the back of a rake, do not turn soil or bury seeds. Press seed into the soil by stomping with feet or rollers. Watering of the seeds is not necessary. Meadow seeds will sprout and grow at their own pace.

<u>Maintenance</u>: Remove invasive and undesirable species by hand or spot herbicide. Mow once a year between November and March. March is preferred to provide winter cover for wildlife. Mow high to leave about 4-6 inches of the plant stem uncut. More specific instructions will accompany your seed order. Our packets will include the cover crop(s).

If you would like to order the meadow mix, email Stephanie DeNicola at <u>stephanied@culpeperswcd.org</u>.

It's that time of the Year Again! Live Stakes: Using Live Cuttings to Propagate Shrubby Plants to Stabilize Stream Banks and Wet Areas

NOTE: We are again including live stakes as part of the Culpeper District's Annual Tree Seedling Sale. Orders are being taken during the fall and winter for early Spring 2024 delivery. We include this article as an introduction to live staking. Assuming you know your plant identification you could possibly cut your own. However, in our opinion it is much easier to order professionally cut and stored stakes.

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, various willow cultivars, 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 from the "parent" tree 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 of about 24 inches. 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 September 2023. <u>https://extension.psu.edu/live-staking-for-stream-restoration</u>

Davis, Ryan. Live Staking: A Trusty Technique for Planting Trees and Shrubs on the Cheap. Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. Accessed September 2023. <u>Live Staking: A Trusty Technique for Planting Trees and</u> Shrubs on the Cheap - Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (allianceforthebay.org)





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



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Small Farm Outreach

The Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP), a part of Cooperative Extension at Virginia State University, educates and empowers small, limited-resource, socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers to own, operate and sustain farms and ranches independently with agricultural training programs that improve farm management skills and quality of life. For more information, visit <u>https://</u> www.ext.vsu.edu/small-farm-outreach-program.

Hardwood Initiative: Ensuring a Hardwood Resource into the Future Contributed by Virginia Department of Forestry

What is the Hardwood Initiative?

Virginia's hardwood initiative is focused on growing and sustaining healthy hardwood forests for future generations. Through direct support and expert guidance from Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) foresters, this initiative will help landowners grow enduring hardwood forests.

Hardwood trees, also known as deciduous trees, have broad leaves that drop each fall. Common hardwoods include oak, yellow-poplar and maple, and feature wood that's generally denser and harder (hence the name, hardwood).

In contrast, *softwood* or coniferous trees, such as pine, hemlock and spruce, have needle-like leaves that most keep year-round, which is why they are sometimes called "evergreen" trees.

Hardwood forests currently make up roughly 80% of Virginia's forestland, but they are in decline due to lack of proper management. The hardwood initiative aims to fix this by providing landowners the tools to manage and improve their land.

The Hard(wood) Facts

The majority of Virginia's hardwood forests today are high in oak populations. Oaks are known as "cornerstone" species because they support more life-forms than any other North American tree genus. Healthy oak populations are the foundation of our thriving hardwood forests.

For the last several decades, most hardwood forests haven't been receiving the management they need for new oaks to grow (regenerate). Without a statewide improvement of hardwood management, our hardwood forests will continue to decline.

Together, we can stop and even reverse this decline through the implementation of best practices. In addition to improving our forests, activities that facilitate tree regeneration are often beneficial to game and other wildlife.

Why Focus on Hardwoods?

Essential for many reasons, hardwood trees:

- Provide a valuable timber resource due to the strong and diverse forest products industry in Virginia (e.g., furniture, flooring, cabinets, pallets, railroad ties, barrels and fine paper.)
- Provide valuable wildlife food (fruits, nuts and tender shoots), shelter and nesting habitat.
- Protect watersheds by filtering water, providing clean air, and capturing and storing large amounts of carbon.
- Exhibit outstanding scenic views, fall foliage and outdoor recreation opportunities

What the Initiative Offers

DOF foresters and consulting foresters work closely with landowners to discuss ownership goals (e.g., wildlife habitat, game hunting and commercial harvesting), perform a forest assessment and then make management recommendations based on the data and desired outcomes.

Foresters and forestry businesses can help landowners carry out recommendations when the time is right. While cost-share assistance may be available for some activities, all recommendations will improve the forest for the landowner, wildlife and the Commonwealth.

For more information, contact your Forester below!



New Forester Assignments:Culpeper & Rappahannock: Peter Schoderbek 434-282-4169peter.schoderbek@dof.virginia.govGreene & Madison: Ed Furlow 540-395-1164 ed.furlow@dof.virginia.govOrange: Stuart Baker 434-987-8326stuart.baker@dof.virginia.gov

Backyard Conservation Funds Available

By Richard Jacobs, III, PE, CSWCD Conservation Specialist III

Conserving water while using attractive gardening and landscaping practices beautifies your yard, attracts beneficial pollinators, adds curb appeal and also helps improve the environment by reducing the amount of storm water runoff from your property. Creative management of those small areas of your front or back-yard to address problem areas (too wet, too dry, doesn't drain, won't grow grass, etc...) now has funding available to support simple, on the ground landscape practices that benefit both you and the local environment. The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program or VCAP provides financial assistance to residential, institutional and commercial property owners to implement such practices. Payment rates vary among the practices but generally are focused on providing up to 80 percent of the cost. The district will provide technical resources for your planning efforts and visit your site to better understand what you hope to achieve. For more information on VCAP visit <u>http://vaswcd.org/vcap</u> or contact the District at 540-825-8591 or <u>richardj@culpeperswcd.org</u>

0% Interest Loans Available

Are you interested in conservation practices but do not have the money upfront to fund the project? No worries. Department of Environmental Quality's Ag BMP Loan Program offers funds for you with no money upfront with 0% interest, no long-term requirement, and potential for principal forgiveness. Fortunate for you, projects are accepted year-round and reviewed monthly. Debt repayment begins 6 months after project completion with 1 -to-10-year repayment schedules depending on loan amount and asset useful life. DEQ will prioritize applications and tentative authorization will be granted. Contact DEQ tat 804-929-5085 to find out if you're eligible.



Missouri Grazing Manual Available By David H. Massie, CSWCD Conservation Specialist III

The Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District has copies of the Missouri Grazing Manual available to producers interested in expanding their grazing knowledge. This grazing manual encompasses so many different aspects of grazing management – soils, plant growth, nutrient cycling, water system and fence layout, grazer's arithmetic, and economics of grazing. This manual also brings together different groups of researchers, educators, and producers with broad experience in land management, forage, and livestock systems to provide a comprehensive guide to understanding and managing grassland ecosystems.

This manual will assist producers with furthering their knowledge of grazing management and provide more detailed, specific information they will need to enhance their grazing techniques. Jim Gerrish, a nationally recognized, well-respected grazer, is one of the key contributors and editors of this manual. His background in agronomy, as well as forage management and research, adds an unparalleled perspective which is useful for the beginning grazer as well as the seasoned grazer.

The distribution of these manuals will be on a first come, first serve basis. We also have pasture grazing sticks for sale for \$5 each. Pasture grazing sticks are a great tool for helping producers "train their eyes" to the amount of forage available for their livestock. A two page instruction manual comes with the pasture grazing stick, and District Staff will be happy to assist using this valuable tools on your farm.



Courtesy of South Dakota State University Extension



Road and Driveway Maintenance Guide Available

Fall is a great time to start maintenance of your road or driveway! Over time, many roads and driveways deteriorate for a variety of reasons: poor initial design or construction, poor maintenance, extreme weather or heavy traffic. In addition to costly repairs, many roads and roadside ditches drain into local streams delivering both sediment and gravel into stream channels. This is destructive to the stream, resulting in loss of stream bottom habitat and channel capacity. Improved maintenance incorporating best management practices (BMPs) can save money and better protect waterways.

Currently available to property owners is the Dirt and Gravel Road BMP Guide, published with funding from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund. The guide can be found at the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District website (<u>www.culpeperswcd.org</u>) under Publications. Hard copies can be picked up from CSWCD as well as your local Extension office or Building office. For technical assistance, contact Richard Jacobs at 540-825-8591 or <u>RichardJ@culpeperswcd.org</u>.



Views From The Foothills



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The District carries nonwoven geotextile (filter fabric) for sale that meets most state and federally funded project requirements, as well as many on-farm needs. Geotextile is sold by the foot, which comes in 12.5' widths. Please call the Culpeper Office at 540-825-8591 for pricing and more information!





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Welcome Cheyenne Sheridan!

Cheyenne began as a Conservation Specialist in September 2023. She grew up on the outskirts of Culpeper County in Lignum and earned a Bachelor's degree in Biology at University of Mary Washington. She has been blessed with a wonderful husband and two energetic boys. She enjoys working outside, wildlife and spending time with her dogs and chickens. You can reach Cheyenne at Cheyennes@culpeperswcd.org.



Good Luck Brandy!

After two years with Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District, Brandy Harris has left for a Soil Conservationist position with NRCS in Farmville. We will miss her but wish her luck in her new role.

Woods and Wildlife Conference

The 20h Annual Woods and Wildlife Conference returns to the Daniel Technology Center in Culpeper on Saturday February 24, 2024! This all-day conference is for owners of large or small tracts of land and is a one stop/first stop for individuals, families and managers to learn about woods, wildlife and other natural resources. It provides multiple links to information, sources of assistance and a broader community of landowners and professionals and will explore a myriad of forest issues relevant to woodland owners.

Contact Adam Downing at adowning@vt.edu or 540-948-6881 for more info!

FREE LAWN SOIL TESTS ARE STILL AVAILABLE! CONTACT STEPHANIE DENICOLA AT <u>stephanied@culpeperswcd.org</u> for info!



Students Chosen for Summer Camps

Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District supported two students to attend Youth Conservation Camp held July 9-15 at Virginia Tech. The students representing the District were:

- Grace Faulk (Rappahannock)
- Will Lillard (Madison)

New Landowner Update

Culpeper SWCD hosted the 2nd Annual New Landowner Workshop at Graves Mountain Lodge on September 15. Over 50 people were in attendance. In preparation for the workshop CSWCD produced a binder for new landowners. If you would like to see the binder contents given to attendees, visit our website at: <u>New Landowner Binder - Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District (culpeperswcd.org)</u>.

The District plans to hold this event each September.



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A new order of rain barrels are have arrived! Prices are \$90 for one and \$175 for two plus sales tax. For more information, contact Stephanie DeNicola at 540-825-8591 or send an email to: stephanied@culpeperswcd.org.

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Views From The Foothills

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