

# Views From The Foothills

A Publication of the Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District  
Serving Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange & Rappahannock Counties  
[www.culpeperswcd.org](http://www.culpeperswcd.org)

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M. Johnson

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## Bradford Farms in Orange Recognized with State Forestry Award

Mr. Robert Bradford received the 2018 Virginia SWCD BMP Forestry Award from the State Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts last December. The Forestry BMP Award identifies a cooperator who deserves recognition for outstanding best management practices accomplished during the past ten years. Proper Stewardship objectives, property management accomplishments, forest certifications and conservation activities are part of the standards reviewed of nominees for this award. Mr. Bradford has been Director on the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District Board for over 20 years.

Robert has been a timber producer for the past 40 years. "Initially I did not believe in clearcuts," said Robert when he first bought the family farm. Having to decide how best to manage the forest and make the farm profitable, he quickly realized a growing forest benefits from active management. The first harvest he accomplished was a total harvest, which he left to regenerate naturally: the best hardwoods grew back from seeds and as stump sprouts. He just recently conducted a second harvest on this same 40-year-old small forest stand; however, this time he replanted the cutover with a diminished native pine species, shortleaf pine.

*Continued on page 7*



Left to Right: VASWCD President Steven Meeks, Award Recipients Virginia Rockwell and Robert Bradford and State Forester Rob Farrell

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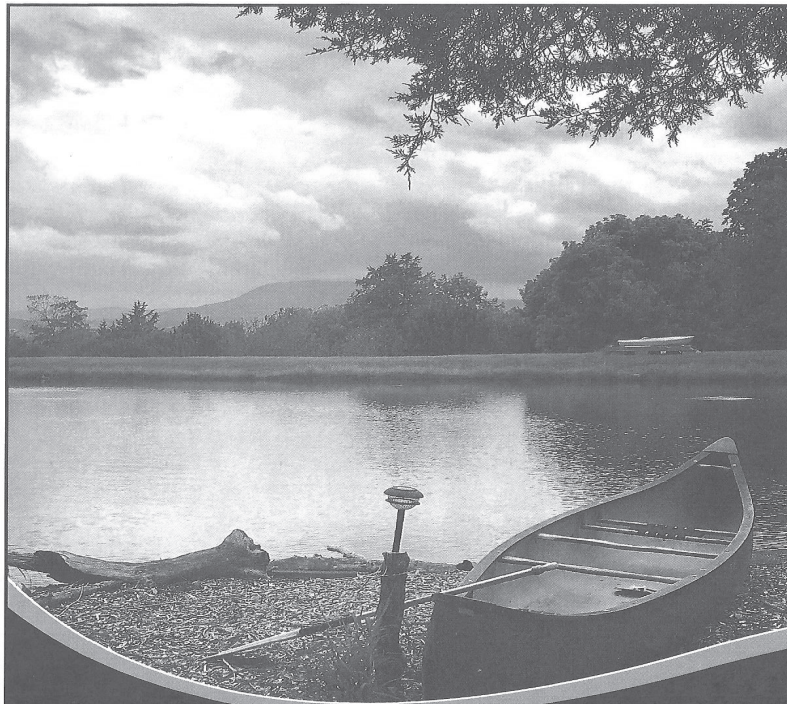
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## **Transition from Stored Feed to Pasture**

**By David H. Massie, Conservation Specialist III**

This spring, pastures will turn green and once again will be producing lush, high quality forages for grazing. Although it may be tempting to put livestock back on these pastures right away, certain precautions should be taken to protect the livestock and the new forage growth.

In order to keep livestock gains and production from suffering, it can often be beneficial to make the transition from stored feed to the new pasture growth gradually. Making an immediate switch from dry hay to the early spring growth can sometimes negatively affect livestock performance. New growth is highly digestible and has lower fiber content than later growth and dry hay. Consuming this highly digestible feed can cause diarrhea, especially when livestock are quickly switched from a dry hay diet. Supplementing a higher fiber feed such as dry hay as a portion of the diet can reduce this issue by slowing rumen passage rates. Often, livestock are turned out onto pastures that have not grown to the recommended height and ground cover may be fairly sparse. Animals may not be getting a full mouth of feed and if there is increased traveling distance to reach adequate amounts of forage, gains and production may decrease. Increasing travel means less time grazing which can attribute to reduced gains. Mixing dry hay into the diet when shifting to early spring pastures can allow animals to become accustomed to the change in diet and can benefit herd health. Hay can be gradually removed from the diet.

Another important aspect to herd health and performance in early spring grazing is to supply the livestock with adequate minerals. Minerals play a large role in animal health, growth, reproduction, and overall performance. These can either be fed free-choice or can be added to a supplemented feed. Minerals should complement the forages and other feed livestock is consuming. Location of free choice feeders can affect intake. Placing the feeder closer to a water source will increase mineral intake. High salt concentration in a mineral mix will decrease intake. In the early spring, a high magnesium, or high “Mg” mineral should be available to reduce the risk of grass tetany. This supplement should be available to livestock starting in December or January and should continue until spring time when temperatures are consistently above 60F. 20 grams of magnesium need to be consumed daily to effectively prevent grass tetany. Free-choice minerals should contain 12 to 15% magnesium (from magnesium oxide) and cattle need to consume 4 ounces of the mineral. It is important that the livestock have minerals available daily whether minerals are available to them free-choice or being added to a supplemented feed. Consuming the correct minerals in adequate amounts will keep herd health and performance high.

Early spring is a crucial time for forage and pasture management as it will affect the stands production throughout the grazing season. Spring growth should be at least 6 inches before grazing and animals should be removed when plants are grazed down to approximately 3 to 4 inches. Because early spring usually has high amounts of precipitation, it is important to protect forages and soils from possible damage during these wet conditions. Livestock should be rotated at a faster rate or put into a sacrifice or corral area during wet periods to keep damage to a minimum.

Keeping livestock, forages, and soil in good condition in the early spring as pasture production starts to rapidly increase can benefit the performance of all throughout the grazing season. Drastically changing an animal's diet can have negative effects of the animal's health and performance. When changing a diet from stored feed to lush, new forage growth, gradually removing the hay from the diet can decrease negative effects. Supplying hay or other stored feed can also be beneficial if the new growth is sparse to keep gains (or milk production) high and to protect pastures from overgrazing at this time. Keeping animals supplied with the minerals needed at all times is crucial to animal performance. Supplying a high “Mg” mineral will protect against grass tetany. It is necessary to allow pastures to establish before heavy grazing. Protecting pastures during periods of extremely wet conditions can help to keep forages stands healthy and productive. Taking steps to keep livestock and pastures in good condition in the early spring will pay off with high production and performance throughout the grazing season.

## All County Septic System Funding May End Soon

All Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District residents (Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock counties) continue to be eligible for reimbursement of fifty to eighty percent of the expense of pumping, maintaining, repairing or replacing existing conventional septic systems. Several different reimbursement payments are available depending on the actual needs of the system, with more than fifty percent reimbursement available on a sliding scale based on household income. **Applications are required and need to be approved prior to the work being started or funding can be denied.**

Septic tank pump-outs and system inspections are encouraged for everyone; such preventative maintenance extends the life of a system and prevents higher costs later on if the systems fail. If further repairs or replacements are indicated by the inspection, the owner is eligible for the repair or replacement. The program is entirely voluntary and assistance from the District is free of charge.

The District has been providing septic system cost share programs in all 5 counties since the summer of 2016. The District utilizes numerous grants to provide the same opportunities to all residents; some are federal grants and one is a state grant. The grant option that allows the District to cover all 5 counties is only available while funding lasts. Once all funding is allocated, any new inquiries will go on a waitlist. The remaining grants will continue but they too have an end date. Anyone who is interested in participating in the program should act now, and contact the District soon.

These septic grants focus on reducing any existing or potential impacts to local ground and surface water quality. E. Coli bacteria in some local streams has long been identified as being higher than expected by state water quality standards, although other pollutants can also be involved, particularly nutrients. An additional benefit to the property owner is the assurance that their system is functioning properly. It's a win-win for both water quality and property value.

Further information on the program is by calling (540) 825-8591 or (540)948-7531. A program brochure is available at <http://www.culpeperswcd.org/wp-content/uploads/septic-all-5-june-2018.pdf>.

Funding for these projects has been secured by the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Commonwealth of Virginia and the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

*Photo caption: Septic effluent on surface of yard*



## **Pond Health Assessments Available - Signup Now**

The Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District regularly provides technical services and guidance to landowners in its 5 county geographic area on a myriad of topics; soils, drainage, erosion control, vegetative land cover options, ponds and pond construction or repair, agriculture cost share program options, septic system repair and maintenance options, road and driveway siting, engineering and maintenance and more. Technical assistance and guidance is just one of the many things we do at the SWCD.

Among the list of technical assistance areas just listed is ponds and pond maintenance. We annually receive many requests from all counties for technical guidance on aquatic weed infestations, erosion issues on the dam and/or in the drainage area, vegetation management issues, algae problems, other undefined problems or at least the perception of problems, structural problems such as decayed spillway pipes, leaking dams or embankment collapse and many others. Typically these requests come in the summertime when owners are more likely to frequent their pond environments and when pond “problems” are likely to be more pronounced. District guidance typically includes both short and long term strategies towards remedying the undesirable situation(s) and also includes providing a thorough assessment of contributing factors. The District encourages landowners to become more familiar with their pond environments on a seasonal basis since there is always something to be learned by repeated observations during the same year. This helps the landowner to understand both the how and why of the pond imbalance and the how and why of restoration.

The District is now taking signup for free pond assessments during calendar year 2019. We will conduct seasonal visits to your pond with you and develop long term strategies for attaining your goals. Signup is required. For more information or to sign up for an assessment, email the District Manager at [gregw@culpeperswcd.org](mailto:gregw@culpeperswcd.org).

## **Fence Maintenance Cost Share Payments Available**

The Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District is accepting applications from agriculture producers for support payment to maintain existing fences along streams and other surface water in the District. Fences must be preexisting, must be capable of keeping livestock out of the streams and cannot be under any other contract lifespan with the District, NRCS or other entity. Successful applicants are required to continue to maintain the fence for 5 years after payment. Payments are \$1 per foot of stream bank excluded by fence. For more information contact David Massie or Amanda McCullen at 540-825-8591 or Spencer Yager at 540-308-6301.

## **College and Summer Camp Scholarships Available**

Each year, Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District offers college and summer camp scholarships to students from our counties. The college scholarships are open to students majoring in a field related to conservation — agriculture, environmental science/engineering and biology, among others. Priority is given to current high school seniors but current undergraduate and graduate students are eligible as well. Previous recipients are also eligible. Visit our website, [www.culpeperswcd.org](http://www.culpeperswcd.org) for the application or call 540-825-8591.

Scholarships are available to attend two summer camps as well. Camp Woods & Wildlife (formerly known as Forestry Camp) will be held at Holiday Lake 4-H Center June 17-22, 2019. Youth Conservation Camp will be held at Virginia Tech July 7-13, 2019. Visit our website at [www.culpeperswcd.org](http://www.culpeperswcd.org) for more information.

## Stormwater Conservation Practices in the Backyard

The record rainfall we had last year has probably left a mark on your yard. The low lying areas saw prolonged periods of standing water, possibly killing the grass. Slopes might have seen erosion in the form of rills and gullies. The grass and invasive weeds grew uncontrollably. If this sounds familiar, then you probably spent time and money to correct the lawn and slopes. When Mother Nature pours, there can be very little we can do. But there is help available. The District can meet with you and evaluate the problems and provide recommendations. For some sites, there is financial assistance available for stormwater practices that treat runoff at the source.

Through the statewide Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP), the District provides financial assistance to homeowners, businesses, and local government to address erosion, poor drainage and poor vegetative cover. The site must have been built more than 3 years ago, and the proposed stormwater practice must address a water quality problem such as erosion, poor vegetative cover, impervious runoff or potential nutrient loss from fertilized lawns. Funds are available through VCAP when the site or practice is not eligible for other conservation programs. Finally, the owner must be willing to keep and maintain the practice for 10 years.

Interested individuals need to contact the District for a site assessment. If there is a suitable practice that is eligible for cost share assistance, then an application is submitted with a design plan. Once approved for funding, the applicant will have a set time to complete installation. The payment is made as a reimbursement after the practice has been successfully installed in accordance with the design plan.

### Other Expectations:

- **Maintenance and Inspection requirements** – Annual maintenance will be required of the installed practices. Periodic inspection verifications will be done by the District to ensure the practices are maintained and functioning properly.
- **Channel Flooding** – VCAP will not be able to address flooding of large streams or channels. The intent is to address runoff from your site and mitigate damage from offsite whenever possible.

**Solving Problems** – It is possible that a VCAP practice will not address your problems. The District will endeavor to provide the best solution and other resources to consider.

### Example Practices:

**Impervious Surface Removal:** the demolition and conversion of pavement to either vegetation cover or another runoff reducing practice covered by VCAP. Typical cost: \$0.75–3 per sq. ft.

**Conservation Landscaping:** using native plants that require less water and no fertilizer. Native plants also create habitat for birds and pollinators. Typical cost: \$1–10 per sq. ft.

**Rain Gardens:** depressed mulch bed garden that temporarily ponds and infiltrates runoff from downspouts, driveways and patios. Typical cost: \$4–5 per sq. ft.

**Cisterns:** harvest rainwater to store for future use. Minimum size of 250 gallons and must collect 1 inch of rainfall from roof. Typical cost: \$0.9–5 per gallon

**Dry Swales:** vegetated stormwater channels that have a wide bottom and engineered soil designed to temporarily pond and infiltrate runoff. Typical cost: \$4–50 per sq. ft.

### How to Request a Site Visit

For more information or to request a site visit, contact the District at [www.culpeperswcd.org](http://www.culpeperswcd.org) or 540-825-8591 or [RichardJ@culpeperswcd.org](mailto:RichardJ@culpeperswcd.org). Please include the following information:

- The site address
- A basic description of any drainage, erosion and vegetation issues on your property
- Which practice you are most interested in
- Names and contact information (email preferred) for all property owners/decision makers



*Continued from page 1*

The past three decades has seen Bradford Farm expanded in size to accommodate the beef-cattle operation, and hardwood forest and pine plantations came with the pastureland acquired during this period. Robert actively manages his pine and hardwood forests because of how fast they grow. Density reductions through forest thinning operations are required to ensure all trees get enough sunlight to grow well. His goal for his loblolly pine plantations is to grow large pine trees for saw timber. In choosing to do so he can create diverse wildlife habitat and practice silvopasture (e.g. the practice of grazing cattle under a forest canopy). “Woods are good,” says Robert. Forests provide diversity on his lands that he very much enjoys.

Different forest types around central Virginia can take 30-80 years to mature: depending on tree species, topography, weedy competition and the soils underneath. To achieve land management objectives and not waste a lifetime of waiting a forest management plan is recommended. Written by Virginia Department of Forestry foresters, Virginia Forest Stewardship Management Plans give management recommendations to landowners, and while consulting foresters and industrial foresters write similar forest management plans – they often differ by the financial advice included with the plan.

Mr. Bradford is a Certified Virginia Forest Stewardship forest owner and Certified Virginia Tree Farmer. Receiving technical assistance is paramount to having a successful and productive forest; however, it is not always easy relying on someone else. Just like most landowners Robert gets frustrated when he sells some of his timber. Sometimes he cannot help but feel taken advantage of and often wishes he could merchandise his own timber. It is nearly impossible to itemize and track all timber from farm to mill but long enduring relationships with timber harvest companies and receiving professional assistance alleviate these concerns.

What’s next for this 2018 Forestry Award winner? Robert plans to touchup some of his lesser productive, but aesthetically important hardwood forests. In the long-term, he will follow “forest life cycles” along with his forest management plan to decide how to grow his trees properly and he hopes Bradford Farms will be an intergenerational affair but that is up for his daughter to decide.



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## **Water Testing Clinic for Greene, Madison and Orange County Residents**

- Kickoff: October 10, 2019
- Samples due: October 16, 2019
- Follow-up meeting: November 14, 2019

Locations TBA. To sign up, contact Katie Jenkins Woodward at [kjenk@vt.edu](mailto:kjenk@vt.edu) or 540-948-6881.

### **New Direct Phone Numbers for USDA-NRCS Staff**

- Rex Rexrode 540-317-7724
- Nancy Utz 540-317-7727
- Ashleigh Cason 540-317-7731
- John Jeffries 540-317-7726
- Courtney Pooton 540-317-7728





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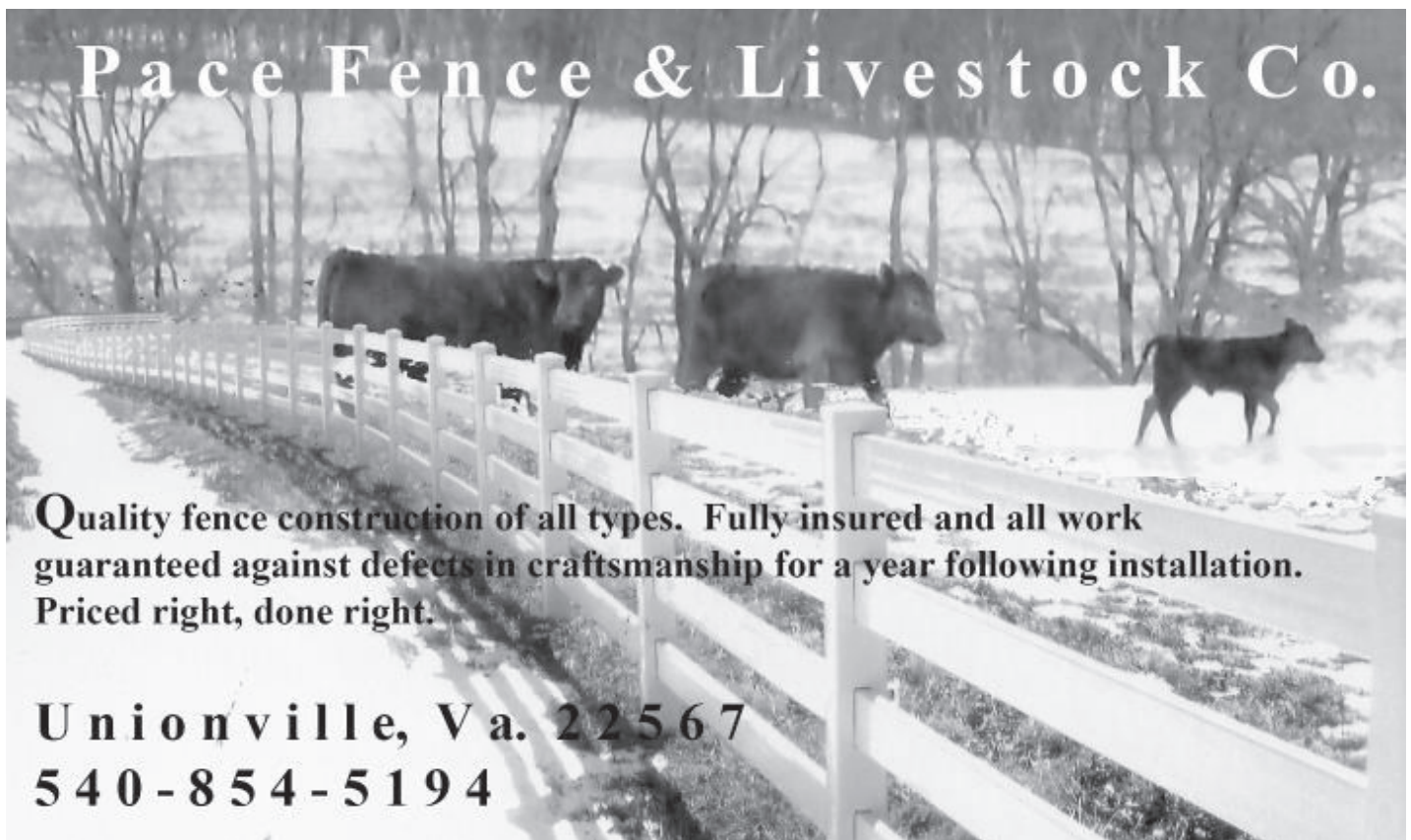
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## *Views From The Foothills*

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