

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!

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Increasing Farm Income by Maximizing Forage Uptake through Rotational Grazing

**By David Massie, Conservation Specialist III
Reprinted from Winter 2017**

The classic disagreement has been tossed around for years between conservationists and farmers: natural resources conservation versus production, soil and water quality in a tug-of-war with the bottom line. Traditionally, the answer has been payments of some sort from the government to producers to make up for the lost profits that are thought to be the result of conservation.

In recent years, conservationists have come up with evidence-based information to aid in selling conservation to landowners, pointing out things like improved herd health and increased weight gain as a result of fencing cattle out of streams. In addition, the conservation-minded can demonstrate improved water quality in the treated streams.

Virginia's Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) developed and published a document titled "Streamside Livestock Exclusion: A tool for increasing farm income and improving water quality" by R. Zeckoski, B. Benham & C. Lunsford (September 2007). This provides scientific proof that when it comes to livestock exclusion, conservation and increased profits are not mutually exclusive.

Alternative water sources such as frost-free troughs fed by wells are a key to these increased profits and as the document states, studies show an increase of roughly an extra pound per day for steers as well as heifers due to having clean drinking water. One Augusta County farmer has seen a 5-10% increase in weight gain since fencing out a stream and providing alternative water. Cattle have often been seen walking through a stream crossing to get water from a frost-free trough.

This booklet also illustrates the reduction of disease rates once cattle are removed from the streams and the muddy, dirty, unsanitary conditions that one commonly finds when cattle have free access to surface water. It identifies foot rot, environmental mastitis, jaundice, fever, red nose, bovine virus diarrhea and tuberculosis as problems that a stream exclusion project can lessen dramatically. Also, not having access to steep, muddy banks reduces injuries as well as calving losses.

Continued on page 5

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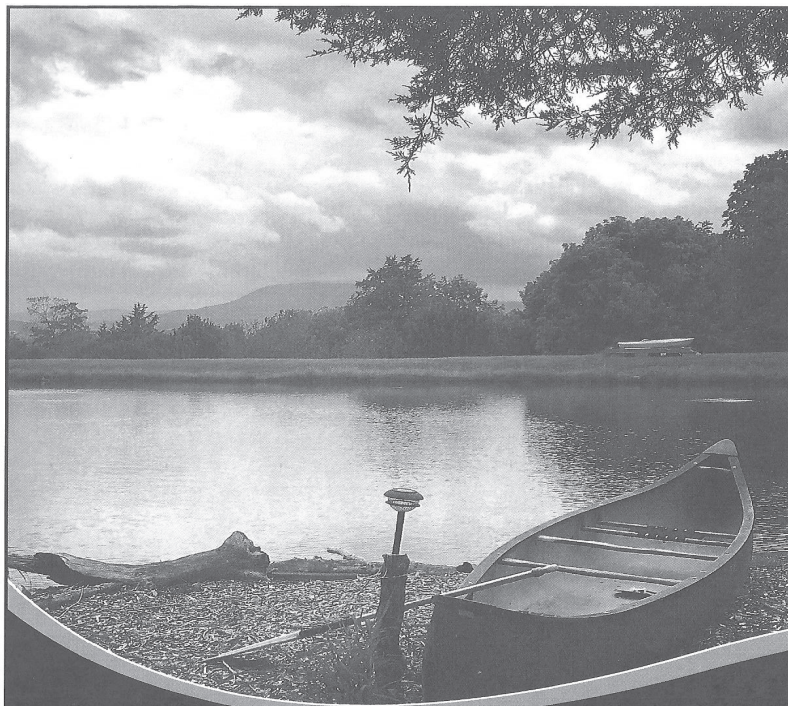
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Save Money with Soil Testing to Improve Your Lawn

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 filter the impervious runoff. Soil compaction, low pH (e.g. acid soils) and low nutrients can impact how you grow vegetation in your lawn. Improperly 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.

Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District's Popular Tree Sale is Back!

- Five of one species for \$5
- Available species: Eastern redbud, crab apple, pin oak, Virginia Pine, Honey locust and common buttonbush — supplies are limited!
- Pick up trees March 13 or 14, 2020 at the Culpeper SWCD office only

Virginia Conservation Assistance Program putting VCAP on Pollution

By Richard Jacobs, CSWCD Conservation Specialist III

Through the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP), the District provides financial assistance to homeowners and business owners to address erosion, poor drainage and poor vegetative cover to create more watershed-friendly landscapes and help solve landscape problems. Financial assistance is available for the following practices:

Impervious Surface Removal. The demolition and conversion of pavement to either vegetation cover or another runoff reduction practice covered by VCAP. Minimum size: 200 square feet. Cost Share is up to \$2.50 per square foot.

Conservation Landscaping. No watering and no fertilizing your lawn when it is converted to native plants. Native plants also create habitat for birds and pollinators. Minimum size: 200 square feet. Cost Share is 75%.

Rain Gardens. Bowl-shaped mulch bed that temporarily ponds and infiltrates runoff from downspouts, driveways and patios. Typical cost range from \$5 to \$15 per square foot. Cost Share is 75%.

Dry Wells. A gravel filled pit covered with sod that temporarily stores and infiltrate runoff from downspouts, driveways and patios. Typical cost range from \$7 to \$20 per square foot. Cost Share is 75%.

Cisterns. Harvest rainwater to store for future use. Minimum size of 250 gallons and must collect 1 inch of rainfall from roof. Cost Share is up to \$2.00 per gallon.

Permeable Pavements. A surface material is used that promotes infiltration into a stone reservoir. Includes permeable pavers, pervious grids or porous asphalt/concrete for driveways, parking lots and patios. Cost Share is 75%.

Dry Swales. Are vegetated stormwater channels that have a wide bottom and engineered soil designed to temporarily ponds and infiltrates runoff along a slope channel. Cost Share is 75%.

For a full list of practices, please visit www.vaswcd.org/vcap

There is a four step application process.

1. The homeowner or business contacts the District to request a site visit. District staff visits your property and provides recommendations that address your concerns.
2. Based on the recommendations, the homeowner or business will submit an application with a plan for construction including a layout, schedule and cost estimate.
3. The District will review the application and supporting documentations for completeness and the application is reviewed by the District Board and VCAP Steering Committee. Once approved the District will notify the applicant of approval and the applicant should begin work within 90 days.
4. Once the practice is complete, notify the District for a final inspection and provide copies of invoices and receipts. The District will review the receipts and invoices for eligible costs and reimburse the applicant the appropriate cost share amount.

Eligibility Requirements:

New construction is **not** eligible for assistance, only retrofits to existing development 3 years or older. Property area where a VCAP practice is planned must not be eligible under any other conservation programs. Other parts of the property may be under various conservation programs.

Practice must provide a water quality benefit (i.e. addresses erosion and nutrient loss).

Property owner is willing to keep and maintain the practice for 10 years.

Native species will be used for all plantings.

Continued from page 1

Along with stream fencing, an additional method of grazing management that has proven to benefit both your land and animal weight is controlled or **rotational grazing**. Rotational grazing enables the producer to control where livestock graze and livestock are then able to better utilize forages. How does it work? It's fairly simple. Take a pasture that is continuously grazed and run a single wire across it. Now you have two paddocks within the same pasture that are each grazed 50% of the time. If you bisect that wire with another wire, you now have four paddocks. However, paddock design needs to be based on landscape, land productivity, water availability and the number and types of animals in the system.

What are the benefits of such a system? First and foremost, you improve the performance of the forages in your paddocks because they have more time to recuperate after being grazed and you keep them in an active stage of growth. You can produce more forage per acre per year. Livestock then eat more and what they eat is of higher nutritional value. This also leads to a stronger root system and increases the volume of water held in the roots. This is especially important during times of low rainfall or even drought. Weed control is better accomplished also. Rotational grazing also tends to promote better water infiltration and leads to less runoff from paddocks which is good for water quality. Nutrients from manure are also distributed more uniformly over the field and not concentrated in certain areas of the field. Plus, if you are worried about agriculture's role in climate change, it is comforting to know that you are helping sequester carbon from the atmosphere and putting it in the soil to improve organic matter content and water infiltration capacity.

Animal weight gain is improved because livestock constantly have nutritious, palatable forages to utilize. Another benefit is improved animal behavior because they are being handled more frequently. This is beneficial when it comes time to vaccinate and wean your livestock. Also, by observing your livestock when moving them into new paddocks, you are able to identify any health issues that can be treated in the early stages.

The best part about adopting a rotational grazing system is the economical benefits involved. Profits can increase because herd health is improved, stocking rate can often be higher, the grazing season is extended and there is less dependence on hay production. Personally, I like the feeling of having leftover hay at the end of the year to carry into the next winter. These benefits, along with the agronomic and environmental improvements for your land, make rotational grazing a practical method of pasture management. If you are interested in rotational grazing systems, contact the District and we can discuss your options.

To receive a copy of the aforementioned publication contact the District. The District currently has cost share funds available to assist with the implementation of wells, troughs and fencing.

Culpeper & Rappahannock:

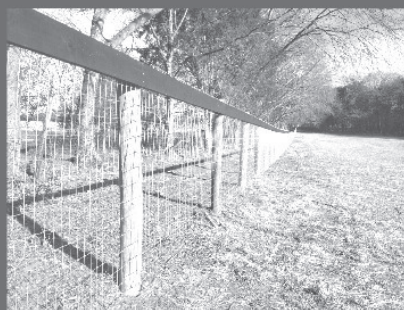
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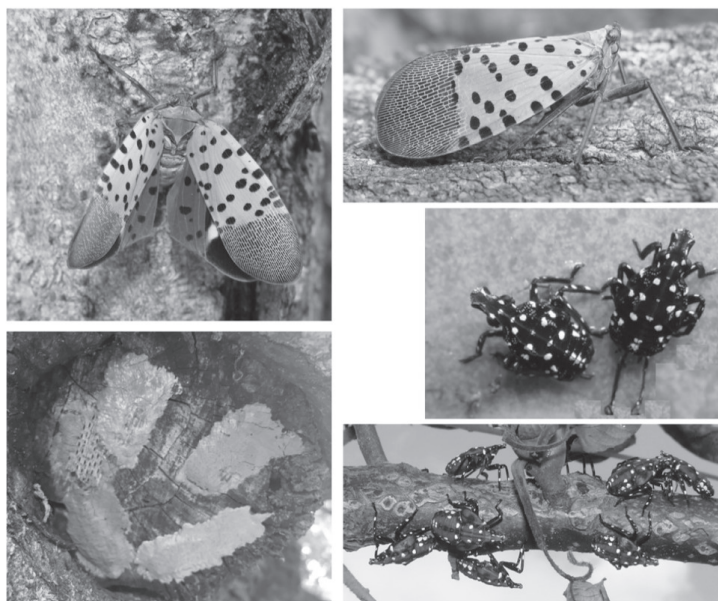
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Spotted Lanternfly Look out!

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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Chronic Wasting Disease Detected for the First Time in Clarke and Fauquier Counties

For Immediate Release January 15, 2020

Contact: Dr. Megan Kirchgessner, megan.kirchgessner@dgif.virginia.gov, 804-837-5666

RICHMOND, VA — The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) conducted extensive chronic wasting disease (CWD) monitoring in CWD Disease Management Area 1 (Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren counties) and Disease Management Area 2 (Culpeper, Madison, and Orange counties) this past hunting season. To date, over 900 deer have been tested for CWD from Disease Management Area 1 (DMA1) and over 1,500 deer have been tested from DMA2. Early test results have confirmed CWD in a deer harvested from Clarke County and in another deer harvested in Fauquier County. Results from samples collected towards the end of hunting season or collected through the statewide DGIF taxidermist-assisted CWD surveillance effort are still pending and will be released in the coming weeks.

These are the first detections of CWD in Clarke and Fauquier counties. Clarke County is already included in the northeast portion of DMA1 and the CWD-positive deer from Fauquier County was harvested less than 2 miles outside of the DMA1 boundary. DGIF is grateful to all cooperating hunters, processors, and taxidermists for their continued support of DGIF's efforts to monitor CWD's spread across the landscape. Working cooperatively with avid outdoorsmen and women is a crucial component of effective CWD surveillance.

CWD has been detected in twenty-six states and three Canadian provinces. This incurable disease, found in deer, elk, and moose in North America, is a slow and progressive neurologic disease that ultimately results in death of the animal. The disease-causing agent is spread through the urine, feces, and saliva of infected animals. Noticeable symptoms, though they may not appear in animals for 15 to 24 months, include staggering, abnormal posture, lowered head, drooling, confusion, and marked weight loss. There is no evidence that CWD can be transmitted naturally to humans, livestock, or pets, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advise hunters to test all deer harvested from known CWD-positive areas and to not consume any animals that test positive for the disease.

Regulations pertaining to CWD, maps of affected states, and information about CWD can be found on the DGIF website at: www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/disease/cwd.

Scholarships Available for Summer Camps and College!

Do you know a young person who loves the outdoors? Culpeper Soil & Water offers scholarships to two summer camps. Camp Woods and Wildlife is held in June 22-27, 2020 at the Holiday Lake 4-H Center. Youth Conservation Camp is held in July 12-18, 2020 at Virginia Tech. Contact Stephanie DeNicola for more information at stephanied@culpeperswcd.org.

The District also offers college scholarships to students dedicated to natural resource conservation. Contact Stephanie DeNicola for more information at stephanied@culpeperswcd.org.

Dr. Monira Rifaat Retires from Culpeper SWCD



On Tuesday December 3, 2019 Dr. Monira Rifaat attended her last meeting as an elected Director representing Rappahannock County on the District Board of Directors. Dr. Rifaat was originally appointed as an Associate Director in 2002 and was appointed to be a Director representing Rappahannock County in February 2003. Since that time she had been regularly elected by the citizens of Rappahannock County to represent them on matters of natural resource conservation. During her tenure on the District Board she served as District Board Chair for 3 years, Legislative Committee Chair for 12 years and Area II Chair for 2 years. She received numerous recognitions during her terms not the least of which was the 2013 Watershed Connections Award from the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts for her contributions within the Rappahannock River Basin.

The Culpeper SWCD recognized the conservation practices on Manor Farm by presenting Dr. Rifaat with the Clean Water Farm Award in both 1992 and 2013. In 2018, she was awarded the District's "Chairman's Award" for her many contributions to the District Board.

Madison Farmer Recognized with Clean Water Farm Award

Charlie Thornton, a farmer in Madison County, was chosen as a Clean Water Farm Award winner at our awards banquet in November. The Clean Water Farm Award Program recognizes farms in the Commonwealth that utilize practices designed to protect water quality and soil resources. Mr. Thornton was unable to attend the banquet so he received his plaque and proclamation at the CSWCD Board of Directors meeting on February 4, 2020.

Photo caption: CSWCD Madison Director Dr. Stephen R. Hill, Award recipient Charlie Thornton and CSWCD Madison Director and Board Chair Lynn Graves





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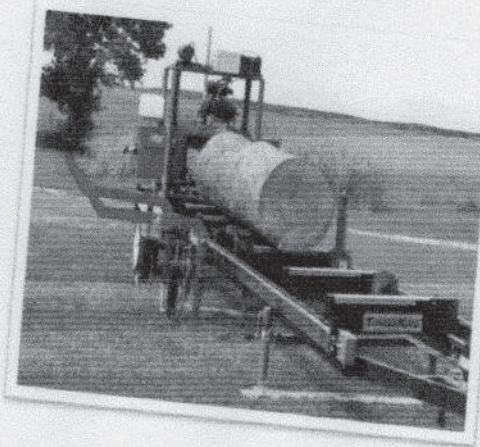
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Conservation Incentive Programs

Available in the Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District Updated December 2019

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)	Cost to obtain easement	Permanent easement	Open space easement; requires a partner agency to provide funds and hold easement	None	None	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

Welcome New Directors!

Dennis Verhoff (photo bottom left) joined the CSWCD Board as an elected Director from Culpeper County in January 2020. Dennis grew up on a diversified farm in northwestern Ohio that included dairy, hogs, poultry (chickens and ducks), sheep, tomatoes, corn, soybeans, wheat, oats, alfalfa and, in the early 1950s, sugar beets. He is a graduate of the University of Dayton, the University of Pennsylvania and the Ohio State University with degrees in French, Middle Eastern Studies, Arabic and international relations. Among many other endeavors, he was an English teacher in Tunisian public schools as a member of the US Peace Corps. This was a life-changing event in so many ways. After his return to the US, in addition to continuing his education, he taught school in New Jersey, worked as a Senate aide, analyzed and developed international policy in several Washington, DC organizations and owned his own construction business. In 1995, he began an organic vegetable operation in Culpeper County and marketed his produce at farmers' markets in Charlottesville, Culpeper and the Washington, DC area. In retirement, his travels have taken him to Germany, Italy, China, South Korea, India, Morocco and Iran among other countries.

Michael Sands (photo bottom center) joined the CSWCD Board as an elected Director from Rappahannock County in January 2020. Michael serves on the Technical Committee and Technical Review Committee for Resource Management Plans. Mike and his wife are the owner/operators of Bean Hollow Grassfed, a pasture based sheep and cattle farm in Flint Hill, VA. The farm practices include a number of BMPs including rotational grazing of cattle and sheep, riparian area exclusion, and warm season grasses. Mike was the Founding Executive Director and is now Senior Associate of the Liberty Prairie Foundation (LPF) in Grayslake, IL. The LPF is a small private operating foundation dedicated to providing leadership in the integration of economically prosperous, ecologically sensitive farms and protected, high quality natural areas.

Bob Williamson (photo bottom right) was appointed as an Associate Director from Culpeper County in January 2020. Bob was born and raised on a beef cattle and burley tobacco farm near Abingdon, VA. He graduated from Virginia Tech with a Bachelor's degree in Animal Science, where he was a member of Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity. He is married to Julie Gentleman Williamson. They have two children, Clifford and Lindsey, who are both Virginia Tech graduates. Bob and Julie are owners and operators of Step at a Time Farm, a horse boarding, breaking and training barn in Reva. Bob is retired from the USDA Farm Service Agency. He is an active 4-H volunteer and adult leader and member of the Virginia State Extension Leadership Council. He is also an active Farm Bureau member as a Virginia State and American Farm Bureau Convention Delegate and member of Virginia Farm Bureau Federation Political Action Committee Board of Directors.



Road and Driveway Maintenance Guide Reprinted

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 results in loss of channel capacity. Improved maintenance incorporating best management practices (BMPs) can save money and better protect local 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's website (www.culpeperswcd.org) under publications. Hard copies can be picked up from CSWCD as well as your local extension office or building office.

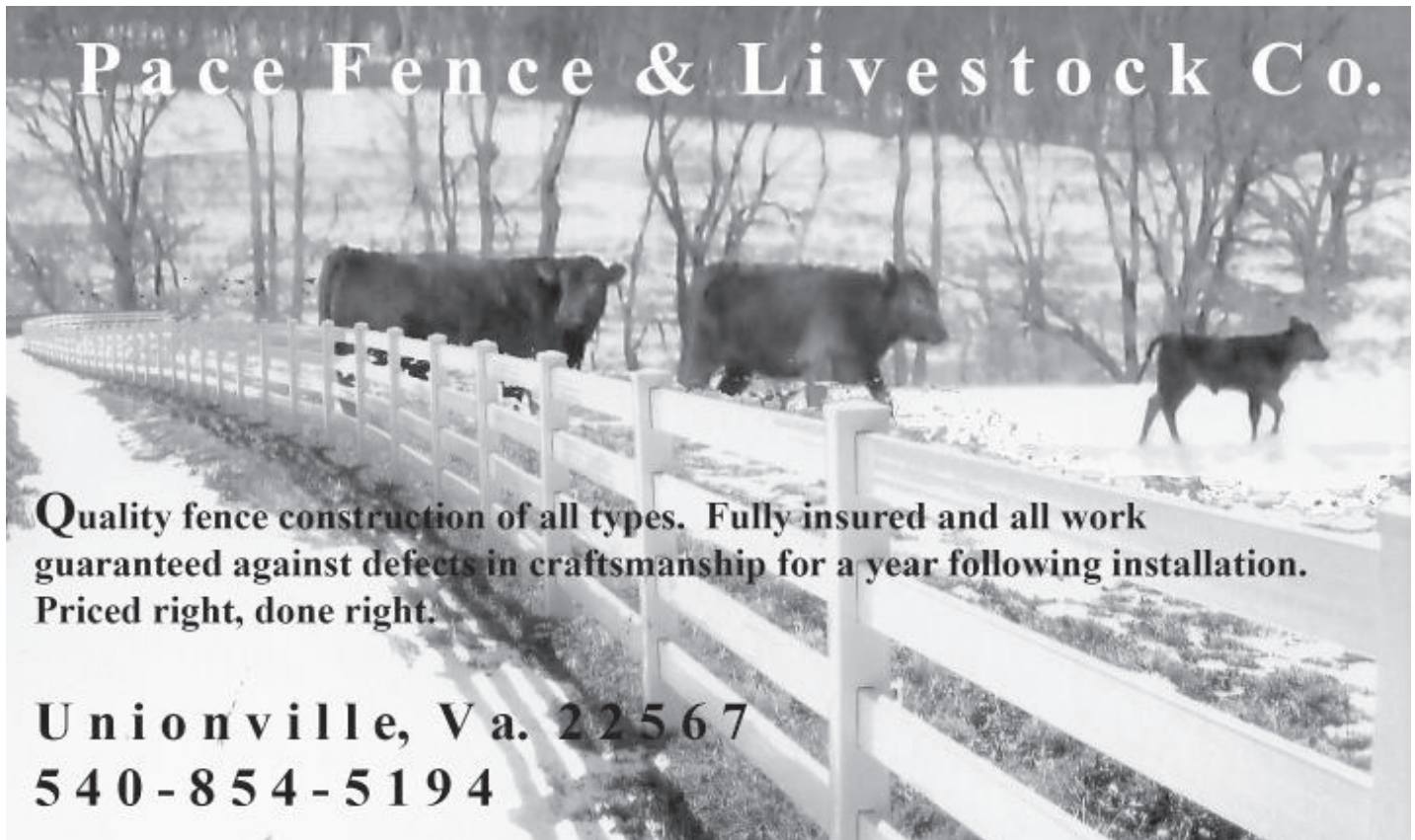
For technical assistance contact Richard Jacobs at 540-825-8591 or RichardJ@culpeperswcd.org.

James River Buffer Program

The James River Buffer Program assists landowners within the Middle James River watershed restore forested buffers along all waterways (tributaries, ponds, streams and rivers) on any type of land use. Land in the southern part of Greene County is eligible.

The program offers flexibility to meet landowner objectives and assistance with site preparation, installation and three years of establishment and maintenance. The program covers 100% of project's total cost without and up front cost to the landowner. You may be eligible even if you are not eligible for conservation programs offered by USDA and Culpeper SWCD.

For more information call 434-286-7000 or email buffers@thejamesriver.org. You can also apply online at www.jamesriverbuffers.org.



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