

# 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)

Vol. 17 Issue 4  
Fall 2017

M. Johnson

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## Resource Management Planning Program

The Virginia Resource Management Planning program provides an additional voluntary tool to promote the use of conservation practices that improve both farming operations and water quality. Resource Management Plans (RMPs) can help farm owners and operators take advantage of all the conservation measures at their disposal. The plans are designed to encourage the use of a high level of best management practices (BMPs) that reduce runoff pollution to local waters and, in many cases, improve the farmer's financial bottom line.

In return for full implementation of an RMP, the plan holder can be assured that he or she is in compliance with any proposed new state nutrient, sediment and water quality standards if any new standards/regulations are adopted. This in particular relates to regulations related to the Chesapeake Bay and all local stream segment TMDLs. The certification is valid for nine years provided the farmer continues to implement the RMP. Participation in the program is completely voluntary and RMPs can be revised during the nine years to adjust to farming or market conditions.

The RMP concept was developed at the urging of the Virginia agricultural community. The approach provides a comprehensive assessment of the conservation needs of a farming operation. Not only will RMPs serve as a tool to encourage BMP implementation, but it will also be used to document practices in use, providing verified data to validate the agricultural sector's level of conservation

*Continued on page 4*

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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. For 2017, the District chose to recognize Culpeper County resident **William Clark** as our top candidate with the John H. Boldridge Academic Scholarship.

- **William Clark** graduated from **Culpeper County High School** with a 3.5 GPA. He will attend **North Greenville University** in the fall, where he will major in agricultural engineering. (\$1,500 award)
- **Valerie Wessel** just finished her first year studying **wildlife conservation** at **Virginia Tech**. (\$1,000 award) She is a 2016 alumna of William Monroe High School.
- **Noel Boyle** graduated from **Orange County High School** with a 4.387 GPA. He will major in **sustainable energy engineering** at **Virginia Tech**. (\$1,000 award)
- **Emily Way** graduated from **Rappahannock County High School** with a 3.9 GPA. She will major in **environmental studies** at **California University of Pennsylvania**. (\$500 award)
- **Hlitshab "Josey" Txakeeyang** graduated from **Eastern View High School** with a 3.6 GPA. She will major in **environmental engineering** at **James Madison University** (\$500 award)

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

## Student Scholarships for Summer Camps

Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District supported six students to attend two different summer camps. Holiday Lake Forestry Camp was held June 19-24 at the Holiday Lake 4-H Center in Appomattox. The students that represented the District were:

- Josh Jones (Rappahannock County Elementary School)
- Josh Vesperman (Culpeper County Middle School)
- Nathan Ryals (Culpeper County High School)
- Colton Williams (Culpeper County High School)

Youth Conservation Camp was held July 9-15 at Virginia Tech. EmmaLee Linaberry (Greene County homeschooled, ) represented the District.

**Interested in converting mowed lawn areas or bare areas to native plants and/or trees? The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program has funding to assist with this. In addition, the District tree sale on page 5 can be utilized. Call 540-825-8591 to learn more!**



*Continued from page 1*

implementation. Better tracking of agricultural BMPs through the use of resource management plans will also provide decision makers more accurate data when determining future funding needs for cost-share and other incentive programs.

A farm owner or operator can choose to have an RMP on the whole farm, a tract or just one field. RMPs can be developed for cropland, hay or pasture land uses. All RMPs must contain a nutrient management plan and a soil conservation plan to reduce soil loss to "T." Crop and hay land require a 35-foot forested or vegetative buffer adjacent to perennial streams. Pasture fields must have livestock excluded from perennial streams, although limited acres areas and stream crossings are allowed. Also, the plan must be written by a certified plan developer.

### **How it Works: Four Steps**

Assessment: A certified RMP developer visits the operation, meets with the farmer, evaluates the land and practices in place and begins development of options to meet the requirements.

Plan Development: The certified RMP developer meets with the farmer and discusses options to meet the requirements. Once the farmer agrees to the particular BMPs and a schedule for implementation, the RMP may be submitted to the Culpeper District for review and approval.

Plan Implementation: Once the approved plan has been fully implemented, the farmer requests that the planner visit the farm to certify implementation. Then the District reviews that certification. A certificate of RMP implementation is issued once the District certifies full implementation.

Verification: Continued verification visits are conducted every few years to ensure the continued proper functioning and maintenance of the BMPs.

Funding is being made available to pay for the development of resource management plans. Cost share funding is available for most of the BMPs needed to meet RMP requirements.

For more information on RMP options contact the District at 540-825-8591.




## 2018 Tree Seedling Sale Returns!

Trees will again be 5 for \$5. Species available are:

- American elderberry
- Black walnut
- Eastern redbud
- White dogwood
- Northern red oak
- Eastern white pine

Pick up will be March 2018. Contact Stephanie at 540-825-8591 or [stephanied@culpeperswcd.org](mailto:stephanied@culpeperswcd.org) for ordering information.



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## 2017 Conservation Awards

The District's Annual Conservation Awards Dinner was held on November 9, 2017 in Culpeper to honor residents who have demonstrated leadership in the stewardship of local soil and water resources.

The **Bay Friendly Farm Awards** are given to one farm in each county of the Soil and Water Conservation District that is exemplary in its protection of the state's soil and water quality, with particular emphasis on nutrient management. The recipients of the Bay Friendly Farm Awards were:

- Culpeper County, *Salubria Farm*
- Greene County, Scott Sullivan, *Wilhoits Farm*
- Madison County, *Banks Mountain Cattle Farm*
- Orange County, Shane and Tammy Fletcher, *Red Crest Farm*
- Rappahannock County, *The Farm at Sunnyside*

The **Conservationist of the Year Award** is given to an individual or individuals who demonstrate outstanding leadership, hard work and investment in conservation practices that protect the quality of soil and water in the Culpeper District and exhibit strong advocacy to others for conservation. This year's award was presented to **Jim White** for exemplary conservation practices in **Orange** County and for support to District outreach efforts.

The 2017 **Educator of the Year** was presented to **Kimberly Adams** of **Madison** County.

The 2017 **Forestry Award** was given to **Jeff DuBro** of **Culpeper** County.

The 2017 **Wildlife Habitat Award** was given to **Dana Squire** of **Madison** County.

The 2017 Service Award was given to **Medge Carter** of the Virginia Department of Health for her support of District program development.





## **CSWCD Cost-Share Payments Increase for Septic System Maintenance in all Five Counties**

Effective July 1, 2017 the septic system cost-share reimbursement rates offered by the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District increased for all the practices. Originally, maximum payments were \$150 (pump-outs), \$2,337 (repairs), \$4,000 (full systems); \$4,500 (full pump systems) and \$10,000 (alternate engineered systems). Now with higher maximum payment amounts and increased options for lower income families, payments can be as high as \$240 (pump-outs), \$4,000 (repairs), \$6,400 (full systems); \$8,000 (full pump systems) and \$19,200 (alternate engineered systems). Actual reimbursement levels vary with household income levels.

The District is currently emphasizing opportunities for full system replacements for those situations that either lack a bona fide system or those where the system is already beginning to fail. According to Greg Wichelns, CSWCD District Manager, "Experience has shown us over the past nine years of the septic cost-share grants that these situations do exist and they are not that uncommon. It is only a matter of time before these cease to function."

The primary focus of the grants the District administers is to reduce the levels of E. Coli bacteria in some local streams that currently do not meet the state water quality standards for E. Coli. The District has four different grants that address various impaired watershed areas of the District. There is also a grant that covers the entire District. In addition, septic system impacts on the Chesapeake Bay are coming under scrutiny and that is likely to further increase.

"Now is a very good time to consider what these grants we have can do for you," Wichelns said. "The grant opportunities to obtain the assistance exist now but may not be around forever."

In addition to the increases in cost-share available, there is also a new practice that pays for both a pump-out and a full system inspection. Any needed repairs identified by the inspection can then be funded through a repair practice. Wichelns creates an analogy to automobile maintenance. "This is a heck of a deal. If this existed for automobiles it would mean you would get a reimbursement for inspecting your car and then you get a reimbursement for repairing it too. Think about it. That's a good deal!"



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## Orange County Director Recognized for Service

Robert Bradford, who has been an elected member of the five county Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors representing Orange County since 1996, was recently recognized by the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission with the 2017 Regional Distinguished Leadership Award for his years of leadership in the 5-county district. Bradford has served as Chairman of the District's Technical Committee since 1998, overseeing all technical operations related to 11 flood control dams located in 2 counties, all applications for cost sharing from conservation incentive programs administered by the District of approximately \$2 million each year, and providing technical and policy guidance on any District business. Although elected to represent Orange County, Bradford is known for insuring that programs and policies are consistent and relevant across the 5 county region of the district. He has served on the Virginia State Agriculture Technical Advisory Committee for the past 13 years representing the needs of agriculture producers of the region. He is Past President of the Central Virginia Cattlemen's Association. His work on dam safety issues for the District's dams resulted in the District receiving recognition awards from both the Association of Dam Safety Officials (Regional Leadership Award 2005) and the Virginia Lakes and Watersheds Association (Best Publically Maintained Dam 2008). Other awards include the Virginia Watershed Connections Award- Rappahannock River Basin from the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (2005) and the Culpeper District Chairman's Award (2008) recognizing his strong leadership at the Board level. He also received Virginia's Clean Water Farm award from the Commonwealth in 2004. Robert is a full time cattleman in Orange County with approximately 150 brood cows that rotationally graze on 439 acres of well managed pasture, divided into many grazing units. He has installed thousands of feet of pipeline, over a dozen water troughs, over 15,000 feet of stream exclusion fencing and utilized several incentive programs to assist with implementation. In addition he owns 411 acres of well managed forest land, has planted 6 acres of shortleaf pine and 28 acres of upland wildlife habitat. He is a strong advocate for good forage management, stockpiles forages for winter use to lessen the need for hay production and actively promotes the education of other producers in this region. Robert is well known for promoting innovative solutions for many natural resource concerns. In 2015 he and his wife Virginia were selected as Conservationist of The Year by the Culpeper SWCD Board. In his spare time he volunteers for the Orange County Fair Board and the Orange County 4-H livestock judging team.



## **District Awarded New TMDL Grants**

For nearly ten years, your local conservation district has been writing and implementing local water quality grants targeted at reducing in-stream levels of E. coli bacteria, as identified by TMDL studies. This newsletter has often reported on several on-going projects, the most recent report having occurred in the fall 2016 newsletter issue on the Upper Rapidan project area. As reported, that area involves significant portions of Madison, Greene and Orange Counties. It, like all TMDL projects in the District, provides funding for on-the-ground practices for grazing management, stream fencing and cross fencing, water development, cropland conversion to sod, forestry practices and residential septic system practices to maintain, repair or replace failing systems.

Recently the District received notification that two of its longer-term project areas, the Upper Hazel, mostly in Rappahannock county, and the Upper York in Orange County have been selected through a competitive process to receive new project grants covering the next two years. This is very good news for land-owners in these watersheds since they will continue to be eligible for increased cost share rates (85% for both agriculture and septic systems. Cost share rates at 50% unless lower income eligibility exists. Septic cost share under these conditions may be as high as 80%.

Livestock contributions to E. coli levels in streams are well documented. According to most TMDL reports, malfunctioning septic systems also contribute. The replacement of ailing and failing septic systems and the installation of a new system where none currently exist is a high priority for these grants. Higher levels of cost share are possible through this grant for those who are financially less fortunate. In some situations it may be possible to fund septic systems at or near 100 percent.

For more information on these priority areas, TMDLs in general or any service or program administered through the District contact us at 540-825-8591.





## WINTER RAIN BARREL SALE!

Rain barrels are available! Prices are \$70 for one and \$135 for two. For more information, contact Stephanie DeNicola at 540-825-8591 or send an email to: [stephanied@culpeperswcd.org](mailto:stephanied@culpeperswcd.org).



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Printed on recycled paper.

## *Views From The Foothills*

Published Seasonally By  
Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District

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