

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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Beauregard Farms Recognized with Rappahannock River Basin Award

Beauregard Farms has a long, rich history in Culpeper County, but its legacy of conservation began in 1981 when former farm manager Jim Bowen retired the old moldboard plow. Cover crops and crop rotation over the course of 20 years has helped rebuild the soil's organic matter. In the 1990s, focus turned to pastures and livestock operations. Today, 200 cow-calf pairs are pastured on 400 acres and rotationally grazed through 30 fields. More than 6.2 miles of streambank are fenced off from livestock, creating a 37.7-acre riparian buffer. In the 2000's, the farm entered the world of precision agriculture and began using GPS targeting and a variable rate fertilizer spreader. Soil mapping, soil testing and data from yield monitors created a wealth of information for making better, smarter decisions. Beauregard Farms is a good neighbor and actively works to help other farms solve problems and adopt cost saving measures.

Beauregard Farms was nominated by the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District for the Rappahannock River Basin Award Recipient at the Annual Meeting of Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Districts. They were awarded as with a plaque, farm sign and Proclamation from the Governor as winners of the recognition.



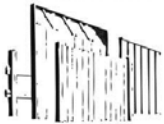
Jamie Shank (center) received the Rappahannock River Basin Award at the State Association Annual Meeting in December 2016. Also pictured are Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources Molly Ward and Department of Conservation and Recreation Director Clyde Cristman.

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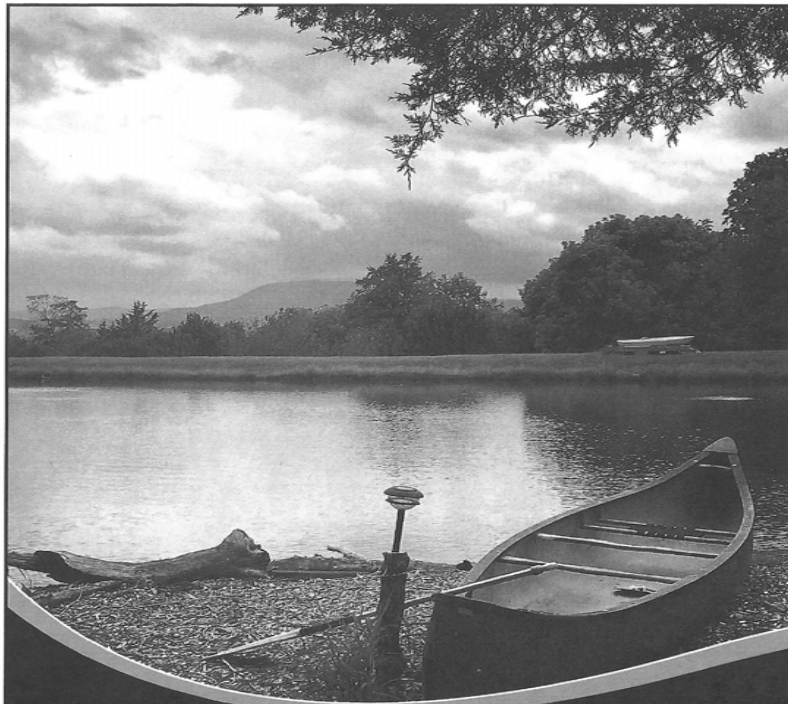
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Improving Pasture Quality through the Use of Legumes

By David Massie, Culpeper SWCD Conservation Specialist

Do you want to add 75-200 lbs. of nitrogen per acre per year to your pastures? With rising fertilizer and other input costs, this spring might be a great time to get legumes back into our pastures and fields. Legumes will enhance the amount of nitrogen in your soil and will benefit the growth of grasses. To have a successful renovation of these fields, follow these steps:

Take soil samples to see if soil fertility needs to be adjusted. Lime and fertilizer should be applied according to soil test results. Remember, lime takes a while to fully take effect so plan at least six months ahead. Split applications may make better economic sense in the long term.

Curb sod growth, decrease residue and control broadleaf weeds. High density, intensive grazing in the fall and winter will remove as much vegetation as possible. This will ensure good seed-to-soil contact which is essential to germination and emergence. Broadleaf weeds are best controlled the season prior to planting; however herbicides may be a possible option.

Make sure that you seed within the proper seeding date and to use high quality seed that is adapted for local climate. Frost seeding or drilling legumes is best done in late winter or early spring. If frost seeding is the chosen method, it might be a good time to drag pastures to break up and distribute manure, achieving better seed-soil contact. Use either certified or propriety seed to ensure high germination rates, genetics, and low noxious weed content. A great mix for pastures is 4-5 lbs. of red clover, 1-2 lbs. of ladino or white clover, and 10-15 lbs. of lespedeza per acre.

Use correct seeding rate and inoculate seeds. Take time to calibrate your seeder or drill so that you don't waste seed by over applying or risk the chance of a weak stand due to under applying. Make sure that the seed you buy is either already inoculated or that you inoculate the seed with the proper strain of nitrogen fixing bacteria prior to seeding.

Control seed depth and seed distribution pattern. Make sure that small seeds are not placed deeper than ½ inch. Always check the seed depth when using a drill because failed stands will result from drilling seed too deep. Also, check the spreading pattern of spinner type spreaders. Since seeds are much lighter than fertilizer, seeds aren't thrown as far. This can result in "clover strips" throughout the pasture rather than uniform stands.

Control post-seeding competition. Without controlling post-seeding competition, you run the risk of failed stands. Competing vegetation needs to be clipped or grazed to a height just above the developing seedlings. It is better to do this sooner than later to ensure vegetation does not get ahead and choke out the seedlings.

If you follow these steps, you will be on your way to improved pasture plant diversification, adding nitrogen to the soil, and saving money on fertilizer costs.

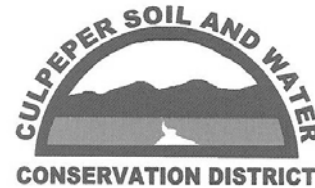


Associate Director L. Brad Jarvis &
Board Chair Lynn Graves

Brad Jarvis Recognized for Years of Service on Culpeper SWCD Board

The Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors recognized Brad Jarvis at its January 3, 2017 Board meeting for his nineteen years of service on the Board. The recognition particularly emphasized Brad's level of expertise, his professionalism and his support of District staff on many projects year after year. Brad's involvement with the District exemplifies the importance of the relationship between Virginia Tech, Virginia Cooperative Extension and Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

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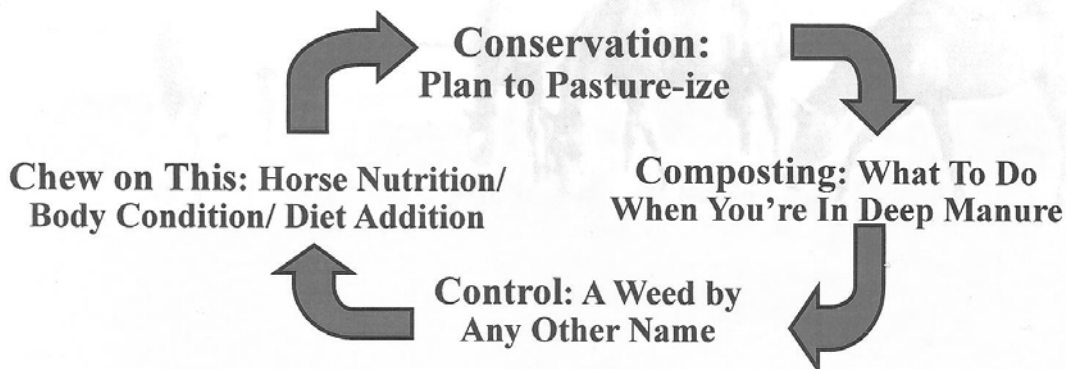
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Tom O'Halloran Recognized with Watershed Connections Award



CSWCD Board Chair Lynn Graves & Culpeper Director Tom O'Halloran

Culpeper Director Tom O'Halloran was recognized with the Watershed Connections Award by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts at its annual meeting in December 2016. Tom O'Halloran has been a Culpeper District Director since July 2007. He immediately began to serve as Vice Treasurer for 1 year and then Treasurer ever since. Tom has served on the Rappahannock River Basin Commission representing conservation districts since 2011, first as an alternate and then as a full member of the Commission. He is well informed on many issues of importance to both conservation districts and agriculture. He serves as Chairman of the Culpeper County Ag/Forestral Advisory Committee and is a member of the Culpeper County Economic Advisory Committee. He serves on the Extension Leadership Council and is a Director of the Virginia Farm Direct Marketing Association. He is a past president of the Virginia Christmas Tree Growers Association and past director of the National Christmas Tree Growers Association. The Board and staff of Culpeper SWCD are proud to work with Tom.

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This is no ‘blond’ joke!
Press Release from the Virginia Department of Forestry

Landowners across Northern Virginia and Northwest Virginia are seeing damage to the bark of ash trees, and many are calling the Virginia Department of Forestry asking what is wrong. Bark on these trees is being stripped off by woodpeckers hunting for Emerald Ash Borer larvae – a process called “blonding.”

Emerald Ash Borers (EAB) are wood-boring beetles with a metallic green body that are feeding on the layer of the tree just under bark that moves life-sustaining sugar, water and nutrients throughout the ash tree.

“A single EAB larva has little effect on an ash tree,” said Lori Chamberlin, VDOF’s forest health manager. “But the feeding of thousands of EAB larvae will kill the tree. So, the blonding process isn’t killing the ash trees per se, but the thousands of EAB larvae that are attracting the woodpeckers are.”

In a forest setting, there isn’t an effective treatment for EAB; the ash trees are, unfortunately, going to be killed by EAB. A forest landowner can perform salvage logging or enjoy the wildlife habitat that is created by the standing dead trees. In a landscape setting, however, ash trees can be treated with systemic insecticides through either a stem injection or a root soak. The treatment process can be expensive and has to be repeated either every year or every other year.

“One of the biggest problems with trying to treat ash trees is that it’s best to begin the treatment before the tree shows signs of infestation,” Chamberlin said. “Unfortunately, most ash trees are infested with EAB before anyone knows the beetles are present. At some point – typically when a tree has lost half of its crown, the tree reaches the tipping point where the damage is so severe that it’s too late to save it. It’s now time to remove and destroy the tree, and plan tree replacement with alternative species. Never move infested wood as that’s the quickest way to spread EAB,” she said.

If you have ash trees on your property that you are interested in preserving, contact a certified arborist in your community to examine the trees and recommend a plan of action. If the trees are not able to be saved and they have the potential to cause property damage if they fall, the trees should be removed by a certified arborist as ash wood is brittle and prone to breaking during the removal process.

To learn more about EAB insecticides, visit www.emeraldashborer.info/documents/Multistate_EAB_Insecticide_Fact_Sheet.pdf



NRCS plans Soil Survey Updates in Orange, Madison and Rappahannock Counties

Soil Scientists from the Natural Resources Conservation Service will be updating some soil mapping units in Orange, Madison, and Rappahannock Counties.

In older soil surveys some map units were identified as either Alluvial land or Rock land with little or no data collected on these map units. NRCS will be gathering data on these map units to bring the soil survey information up to current standards.

Soil Scientists working out of the Culpeper Service Center will begin collecting this data in May. As a landowner in the three counties listed above, you may be contacted and asked for permission for a soil scientist to visit your property to gather data, if you have one the soils listed above mapped on your land. The visit should not take longer than a few hours and you do not need to be present. The soil scientist may excavate a small pit in the map unit to gather information. The pits are small and will be refilled by the soil scientist.

The information gathered will update and improve our county soil surveys. If you have questions please contact District Conservationist Rex Rexrode at 540-825-4200 extension 101.



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Culpeper SWCD 2nd Annual Tree Seedling Sale a Success!

Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District sold or donated 4,000 tree seedlings through its 2nd Annual Tree Seedling Sale. Stay tuned for next year!



District staff distribute tree seedlings in March 2017.



Cost Share for Septic System Maintenance and Repairs Opens to Entire 5-County Area

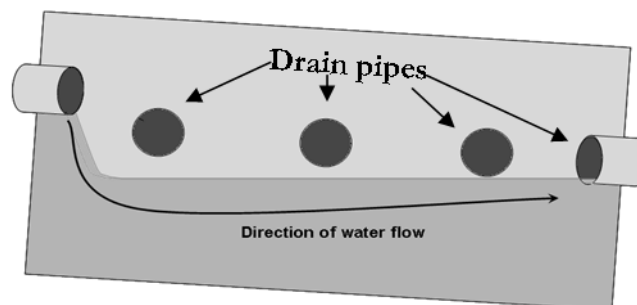
By Henny Calloway, CSWCD Conservation Specialist II

All residents of the District are now eligible for reimbursement of fifty percent of the expense of pumping, maintaining, repairing or replacing septic systems. The Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District has just received a two year grant to expand their current septic system program to all areas of the five county conservation district; all areas Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock Counties. This grant is focused on reducing any existing or potential impacts on 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 up to standards and functioning properly. It is a win-win for both water quality and property value. This grant compliments several others already in existence by expanding the options to the entire District.

Program participants are eligible for several different payments depending on the actual needs of their system. Reimbursement payments are typically fifty percent although can go as high as seventy-five percent for individuals that qualify for low income status. Maximum payments to property owners under average income levels are \$150 maximum towards a pump out and inspection; \$2,337.50 maximum towards a repair; \$4,000 maximum towards a conventional system or \$4,500 if a pump is required to move the liquids to the drain field; and \$10,000 maximum towards an alternative engineered system. Pump outs and 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 are indicated by the inspection, the owner is still eligible for the additional repair payments. **Applications are required and need to be approved prior to the work being done or funding can be declined.** Free assistance with initial assessments of individual system needs is available from the District. Reimbursement payments are made promptly once the work has been completed. The program is entirely voluntary and assistance from the District is free of charge.

Further information on the program is available from the District at 825-8591 or 948-7531. 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.

A Common Septic System Problem



An unlevel distribution box forces all of the septic wastewater into 1 drain line. This causes the water to appear above ground because the soil is saturated.

SPRING 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.



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