



Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District

Serving Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange, & Rappahannock

*351 Lakeside Drive
Culpeper, Va. 22701
(540) 825-8591 Culp
(540) 645-6624 Fax
(540) 825-8591 Orange*

July 2025

Dear Landowners,

Greetings. Well, it's that time of the year once again; a new fiscal year getting underway. The Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District has just received its agricultural cost share allotment for the coming fiscal year (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026) and the news is great. We have \$10 million to allocate across our five counties for ag conservation programs and projects. The most recent few years you have heard us repeatedly say that "this is the most we have ever received." Well, it's true again! This is the most we have ever received. Each year the amount just keeps increasing ... to a point. There are rumors that next year and the year after may see less based on a number of factors. At this time, we don't know but it is likely that Virginia will need to address some loss of federal funds on many fronts and will have to make some difficult decisions. What we do know is that we have \$10 million available now. It's a win-win-win for all involved. The District wins because we have a lot of conservation work to focus on. The landowners win because a solid investment now in conservation management will pay dividends for years and maybe even decades. The local economy wins because for the most part, all \$10 million will get spent right here in our five counties, supporting local jobs, local businesses and local relationships. And, the environment wins, all conservation BMPs lessen the impact of how we use the land. How can you not like all that? Everybody wins!

If you are reading this and are new to who we are and what we do or are not new and just have not been involved in what we have to offer, please take note. Our Fourth Annual New Landowners Workshop is scheduled for September 5, 2025 at Graves Mountain Lodge pavilion. It is a day long program featuring many different agencies that all have something to offer you in terms of funding and/or expertise. It includes refreshments and lunch. We have been told this program is a real "eye opener" (see insert with this mailing).

For agricultural landowners, you will find information enclosed in this writing on a wide array of conservation practices (see spreadsheet) and information on zero interest loans to help up front with the cost of projects; from stream exclusion fencing and new, clean water development, to grazing system design and installation, to pasture renovation, to extended grazing opportunities, to various options for planting trees, to agronomic cover crops, etc. etc. The options are many and all are very well funded. Plus, for many practices, the acreage which is taken out of production, if any, can get paid rent at \$80 per acre per year for the life of the contract; all paid up front! And for croppers; precision nutrient management, cover crops, filter strips, sod waterways and more. We also call your attention to Virginia's Voluntary Ag BMP Survey (see insert). This is an effort to assure Virginia farms get all the credit they are due for their conservation efforts. We encourage you to participate!

There is also information enclosed regarding onsite septic system maintenance, repair and replacement and "backyard" conservation funding for a multitude of "residential" practices and pollinator meadows and soil testing information, which is available District wide.

There are many opportunities to engage resource professional and learn much more than can be included in this mailing. We encourage you to consider what your needs, goals, desires might be and to give us a call. We are available to review more details and discuss options at no cost to you. We hope you will give us a call.

Sincerely,

Lynn Graves, CSWCD Chairman

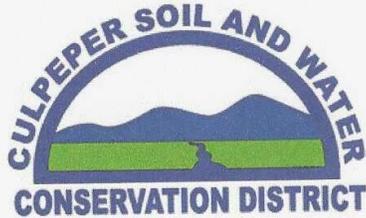
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynn Graves".

The Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District Presents the

FOURTH ANNUAL NEW LANDOWNER CONSERVATION SERVICES WORKSHOP

SEPTEMBER 5, 2025
9:00AM - 2:00PM

GRAVES MOUNTAIN LODGE,
SYRIA, VIRGINIA



stevier@culpeperswcd.org
(540) 825-8591

REGISTRATION
REQUIRED

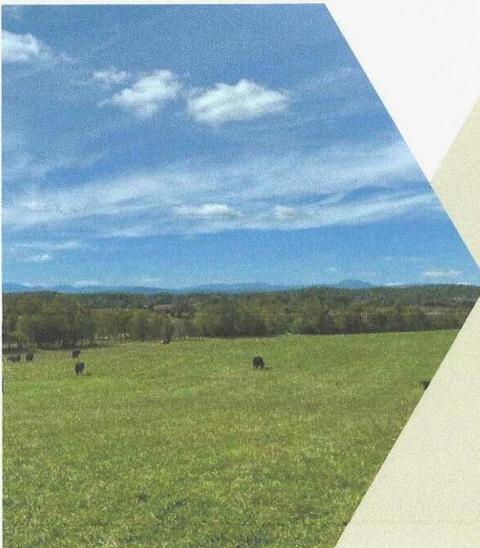
\$20

Limited
to 75
attendees

**LUNCH
INCLUDED!**

WITH PRESENTATIONS FROM:

- ✓ Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District
- ✓ Natural Resource Conservation Service
- ✓ VA Department of Forestry
- ✓ VA Cooperative Extension
- ✓ VSU Small Farm Outreach Program
- ✓ Virginia Outdoors Foundation
- ✓ Piedmont Environmental Council
- ✓ Smithsonian - VA Working Landscapes
- ✓ Ponds



DRAFT AGENDA

Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District's
Fourth Annual Landowner Conservation Services Workshop
At Graves Mountain Lodge in Syria, VA
September 5, 2025 | 9:00 – 2:00

8:30 – 9:00 Registration

9:00 – 9:45 Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District

9:45 – 10:15 USDA – Natural Resource Conservation Service

10:15 – 10:30 Private Lands Wildlife Biologists

10:30 – 10:45 BREAK

10:45 – 10:55 Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) Overview

10:55 – 11:15 Farm Leases (VCE)

11:15 – 11:35 Virginia Department of Forestry

11:35 – 11:50 Virginia State University, Small Farm Outreach Program

11:50 – 12:30 LUNCH

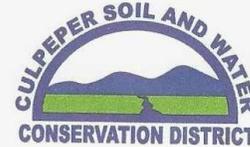
12:30 – 12:50 Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative

12:50 – 1:10 Virginia Outdoors Foundation

1:10 – 1:30 Piedmont Environmental Council

1:30 – 1:50 Ponds and more

1:50 – 2:30 Q&A, Evaluation, Feedback, Networking



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service



Smithsonian
National Zoological Park
Conservation Biology Institute



Agricultural Cost Share Practices (Contact info on back)

Practice	Details
Grazing Land Management with Stream Exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting trees in riparian areas; \$1500/acre for site prep • 95% of eligible cost for planting hardwoods or conifers. • Conifers: \$100/acre for 10 years OR \$150/acre for 15 years. • Hardwoods: \$350/acre for 10 years OR \$500/acre for 15 years. • Buffer payment rate of \$80/acre/year paid upon installation.
Cover Crops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 25th cut off for harvestable cover crop & early planting date for cover crops to be killed in the spring • 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: \$30/acre to harvest, up to \$100/acre to kill & \$45/acre for legumes.
Nutrient Management Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to \$70/acre to convert from conventional tillage to a no-till system for 5 years. • Up to \$400/acre to convert cropland to permanent hay or pasture. • 10 or 15 year contracts available.
Sod Waterway, Grass Filter Strips & Critical Area Seeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covers 75% of the cost to stabilize &/or grade eroding streambanks on ag or forested land • Can also cover slope toe rip rap for protection (if required), vegetative planting, trees/shrubs • Requires engineered design which is a reimbursable expense

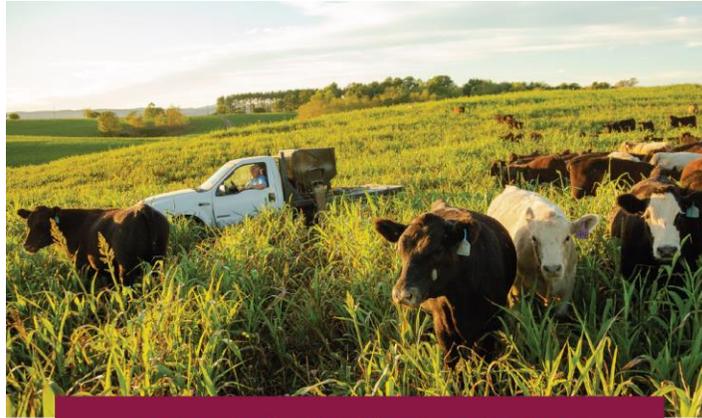
All Employees (540) 825-8591

- David Massie davidm@culpeperswcd.org ext. 1004
- Lily Smith lilys@culpeperswcd.org ext. 1010
- Amanda McCullen amandac@culpeperswcd.org ext. 1003
- Kendall Dellinger kendalld@culpeperswcd.org ext. 1009
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- Cheyenne Sheridan cheyennes@culpeperswcd.org ext. 1008
- Trevor Talley trevort@culpeperswcd.org ext. 1014

We offer these pictures of completed projects as examples of projects we have completed. In general, they provide protection for stream corridors, improve water quality for livestock and stabilize stream crossing areas. Photographs of water troughs, stream crossings, pasture management and stockpiled fescue. These are just a few examples of the many practices we offer.







VIRGINIA FARM VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES INVENTORY

Virginia is embarking on a year-long survey to learn more about voluntary conservation practices on Virginia farms in the Chesapeake Bay watershed ... conservation practices that were not funded by conservation programs but installed at the farmer's or landowner's expense.

It is known that Virginia farmers have done much to improve water quality and soil health. Yet many of the conservation practices that farmers have implemented are not accounted for in tracking progress toward water quality goals, including cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay. This is especially true where farmers have implemented practices voluntarily, using their own means to do so. This includes those years when no cost share was available to all farmers because of lack of funding and also may include practices done years ago. By capturing this information, we will be able to document unreported practices and have them count toward Virginia's agricultural water quality goals for the Chesapeake Bay. This survey will inventory these practices and ensure that the agricultural community receives the credit it deserves for improving water quality.

Participation in the survey is completely voluntary. Nonetheless the survey administrators hope that all farmers will choose to fill out the survey and help tell a very positive story about Virginia agriculture's role in protecting and improving the quality of Virginia's streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. It is important to understand that farmers have to meet the nutrient reduction goals by 2027 or legislation that passed the 2020 General Assembly mandates practices for implementation by farmers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. For general information about the survey, contact Greg Wichelns, District Manager at gregw@culpeperswcd.org. If you are interested in participating in the survey you can access it [here](#). If you need assistance with the survey, contact Courtney Kidwell at courtp96@vt.edu.

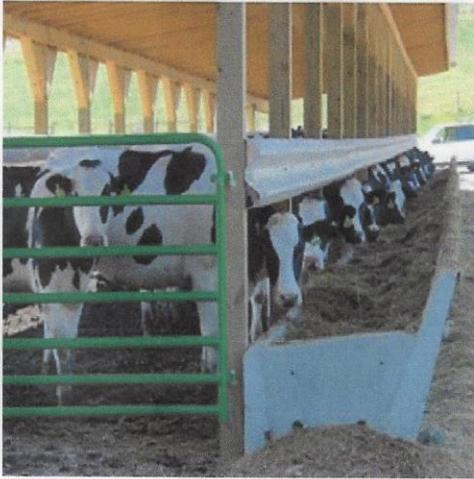
Anonymity assured. All names and location information about individual farmers and farms will be protected. The results reported by Virginia Commonwealth University will be cumulative by county and will not include individual names or locations. Names and addresses will be removed from all inventory and farm visit results to prevent identification of participants.

The survey was developed collaboratively by Virginia's Voluntary Agricultural Best Management Practices Task Force. Task force members worked closely together and include representatives from the: Virginia Farm Bureau (VFB), Virginia Cattlemen's Association, Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD), Virginia Agribusiness Council, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Department of Forestry, and VCU Evaluation and Research Laboratory, among other partners. Questions were pre-tested by a group of Virginia farmers, Extension agents, and conservation professionals with VCE, VASWCD, and VFB and the survey was refined based on their input.



Virginia DEQ Agricultural BMP Loan Program

Cost Effective Financing for Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs)



Loan Terms

All loans at 0% interest

Debt repayment begins 6 months after project completion

Up to 10 year repayment schedules available, depending on loan amount and asset useful life

Disbursements of loan proceeds made on a reimbursement basis

Program Incentives

Potential for principal forgiveness

Expanded list of eligible practices

Expanded list of eligible applicants

Eligible Practices Types

BMPs for water quality

Manure Composting, Woodland (Riparian) Buffer, Livestock Exclusion with Riparian Buffers, Livestock Exclusion with Reduced Setback, Shoreline Stabilization, Terrace System Grazing Systems, Alternative Water Systems, Stream Exclusion, Support Extension of Watering Systems, Animal Travel Lane Stabilization, Sediment Retention, Streambank and Channel Stabilization, Stream Crossing, Stream Protection with Fencing, Animal Waste Control Facility, Dairy Loafing Lot Management System, Composter Facilities, Animal Waste Structure Pump Equipment, Animal Mortality Incinerator Facilities, Stormwater Retention Pond, Ag Chemical & Fertilizer Handling Facility, Surface Water Runoff Impoundment, Relocation of Confined Feeding Operations, Water Table Control Structure, Constructed Wetlands

More Information online at:

www.deq.virginia.gov (Search for AG BMP)

www.virginiaresources.org

Or Contact Lars Bolton

(E)lars.bolton@deq.virginia.gov (P)804-929-5085

For more information, visit www.deq.virginia.gov (Search for AG BMP) or www.virginiaresources.org. You can also send an email to Lars.Bolton@deq.virginia.gov or call 804-929-5085.

Cost Share for Septic System Repairs Opens to All Residential Properties in Five County District

Homeowners! Do you have your own septic system? When was the last time you had it pumped out or inspected? Do you know how well it functions? As a homeowner, it is in your best interest and beneficial for local streams and groundwater to maintain your system and the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District is here to help!

Effective July 1, the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District has recently received additional funding for its residential septic cost share program which allows the District to expand its eligible areas in Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock Counties. Previously, this program was limited to certain watershed areas. Now all five counties can benefit.

This program 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 functions properly. It is a win-win for both water quality and property value.

If you have not had your septic system pumped out in the last five years and you are a resident of the District you are now eligible! Residential properties only. A basic pump out of your septic tank and an inspection are the best insurance for maintaining a functional system.

The program offers 50 percent reimbursement for any occupied residential property, with up to 80 percent for low-income households. See chart below.

Cost Share Payment Amounts	
Pump out	50% of cost or \$225 max (up to \$360 low income)
Pump out & Inspection	50% of cost or \$3,250 max (up to \$5,200 low income)
Repair	50% of cost or \$3,750 max (up to \$6,000 low income) Alternative systems not eligible
Conventional system	50% of cost or \$6,250 max (up to \$10,000 low income)
Conventional system with pump	50% of cost or \$8,250 max (up to \$13,200 low income)
Engineered/ Alternative system	50% of cost or \$15,750 max (up to \$25,200 low income)
Connection to public sewer	50% of cost or \$6,250 max (up to \$10,000 low income)
Connection to sewer with pump	50% of cost or \$10,250 max (up to \$16,400 low income)

Pump outs with an inspection extend the life of a system and prevent higher costs later on if the systems fail. If further repairs are indicated by the pump out and 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 540-948-7531 or 540-825-8591. Funding for these projects has been secured by the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District and from the Environmental Protection Agency through the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality Non Point Source Program, Commonwealth of Virginia.

BACKYARD CONSERVATION FUNDING



Backyard Conservation Funding

The Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District *provides technical and financial assistance* to homeowners, businesses and local government to address *erosion, excess runoff and poor vegetative cover*.

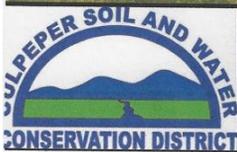
Financial assistance is provided through the *Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP)* which is a cost share program that *reimburses participants 80% of the cost* of installing eligible conservation practices.

Eligibility Requirements:

- **New Construction** less than 1 year old is **not eligible**.
- Practice addresses a water quality concern (erosion, excess runoff, poor vegetation cover).
- Practice is not needed to meet regulatory requirements.
- Property owner maintains the practice for 10 years.

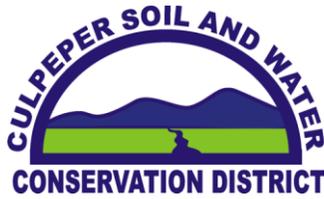
For a full list of practices, please visit www.vaswcd.org/vcap

Meadow



How to Apply?

For more information or to request a site visit, contact the District at www.culpeperswcd.org or 540-825-8591; RichardJ@culpeperswcd.org



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(540) 948-7531 Madison*

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 applied 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 improves 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 full cost of the soil test. For these vouchers, please contact Stephanie at 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.



