

Views From The Foothills

A Publication of the Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District
Serving Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange & Rappahannock Counties
www.culpeperswcd.org

Vol. 26 Issue 3
Summer 2026

M. Johnson

The Culpeper Soil and Water
Conservation District Presents the

FIFTH ANNUAL NEW LANDOWNER CONSERVATION SERVICES WORKSHOP

SEPTEMBER 4, 2026
8:30AM - 2:30PM

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



Agricultural Cost Share Practices

All staff can now be reached at (540) 825-8591

- Amanda McCullen amandac@culpeperswcd.org ext. 1003
- Lily Smith lilys@culpeperswcd.org ext. 1010
- Cheyenne Sheridan cheyennes@culpeperswcd.org ext. 1008
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- Spencer Yager spencery@culpeperswcd.org ext. 1012
- Kendall Dellinger kendalld@culpeperswcd.org ext. 1009

Practice	Details
Grazing Land Management with Stream Exclusion	• Stream exclusion fencing & water development. • Includes fence, well, water troughs, pipe, stream crossings, rotational fences, etc. • Pays 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	• Stream exclusion fencing & water development with reduced setback. • Includes fence, well, water troughs, pipe, stream crossings, rotational fence, etc. • Pays 60% of <i>estimated</i> cost with 10' buffer & 75% with 25' buffer. • 10 and 15 year contracts available.
Afforestation of Crop, Hay & Pastureland	• Pays 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	• Planting trees in riparian areas. • Pays 95% of eligible cost for planting hardwoods or conifers. • Conifers: \$100/acre for 10 years OR \$150/acre for 15 years. • Hardwoods: \$100/acre for 10 years OR \$250/acre for 15 years. • Buffer payment rate of \$80/acre/year paid upon installation.
Cover Crops	• 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: \$20/acre to harvest, up to \$100/acre to kill & \$45/acre for legumes.
Nutrient Management Planning	• Pays 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	• Pays 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	• Pays up to \$70/acre to convert from conventional tillage to a no-till system for 5 years. • Pays up to \$410/acre to convert cropland to permanent hay or pasture. • 10 or 15 year contracts available.
Sod Waterway, Grass Filter Strips & Critical Area Seeding	• Pays up to 75% to grade & seed gully erosion. • Pays 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> • Pays up to 75% to grade, fill & seed critically eroding areas.
Continuing Conservation Initiative	• Pays \$0.50-\$1.25/linear foot of stream bank protected with fencing. • Pays \$250-\$1,000 per water system, water trough or stream crossing. • A great way to receive funds to maintain existing infrastructure!
Streambank Stabilization	• Pays 75% of the cost to stabilize &/or grade eroding streambanks on ag or forestall land including cover slope toe rip rap for protection (if required), vegetative planting, trees/shrubs • Requires engineered design which is a reimbursable expense

From the Archives

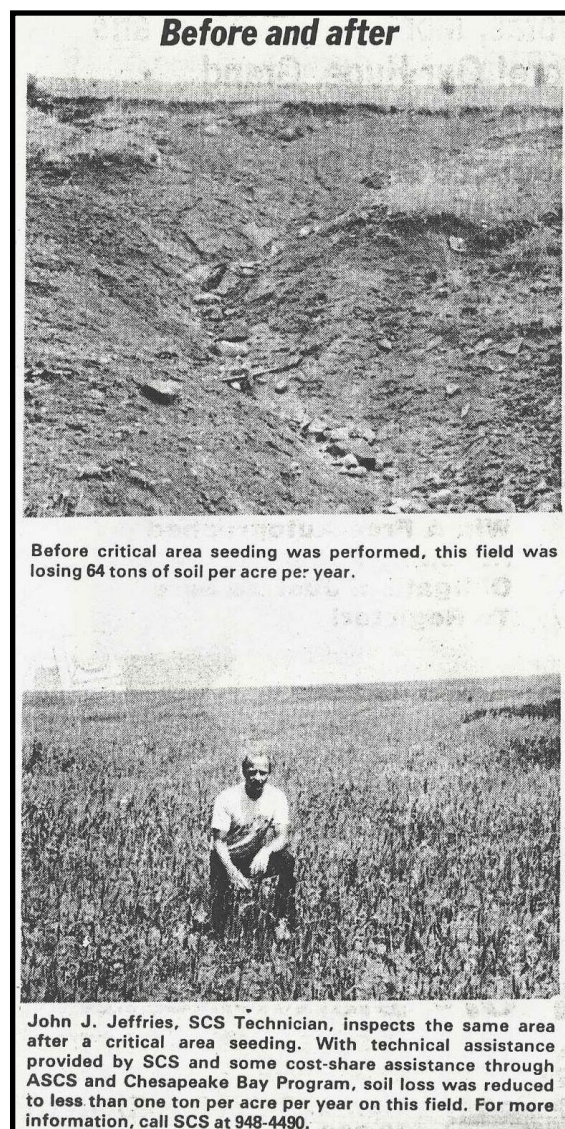
"A nation that destroys its soil, destroys itself." - Franklin D. Roosevelt

This quote was written in a letter from Roosevelt to all the Governors in the United States in February 1937.

He goes on to state, "In the Act of Congress approved April 27, 1935, the Federal Government, through the Soil Conservation Service of the Department of Agriculture, initiated a broad program for the control of soil erosion. To supplement the federal programs, and safeguard their results, State legislation is needed. At the request of representatives from a number of States, and in cooperation with them, the Department of Agriculture has prepared a standard form of suitable State legislation for this purpose, generally referred to as the Standard State Soil Conservation Districts Law. The Act provides for the organization of "soil conservation districts" as governmental subdivisions of the State to carry on projects for erosion control, and to enact into law land-use regulations concerning soil erosion after such regulations have been approved in a referendum. Such legislation is imperative to enable farmers to take the necessary cooperative action."

For over 90 years, federal, state, and local agencies have been serving landowners to assist with managing their natural resources.

Originally published in the
Madison County Eagle, Madison, VA
Thursday July 10, 1986



Participant Corner:
Erich Jenkins, Culpeper and Madison Counties

“As a first-generation farmer starting out on recently purchased farmland, I contacted the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District for help getting started. We started by converting the cropland to perennial pasture, with the goal to begin a cattle operation. After the pasture was established, the cattle were brought to the property. The cattle’s only water sources were streams, so I looked into alternative livestock water systems. This led to installing water troughs and installing stream exclusion and interior cross-fencing on the property. I was able to accomplish some major goals in a timely process because of the District’s cost share programs. The conservation specialists helped me divide the project into three phases to cover the entire farm, section by section. Working with Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District has been financially and technically beneficial, at the same time providing clean, healthy water for my feeder cattle. I have also utilized the cover crop program and have moved on to stream exclusion practices on land that I lease. The conservation specialists are always eager to assist or answer any questions that may arise. They have farming backgrounds and really seem to have the producers’ goals in mind.”

To receive technical assistance and learn more about the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share Program, see page 2 for staff contact information.



Agricultural Information

Selling your Land? Got BMP's?

By Lily Smith, CSWCD Conservation Specialist III

If you're planning to sell your land, don't forget to check for active Best Management Practices (BMPs) on the property. Many BMPs, such as livestock exclusion fencing or watering systems, receive cost-share or tax credits and come with a maintenance requirement that can last anywhere from 10 to 15 years. New landowners are often unaware that a BMP is under contract, which can lead to compliance issues down the road.

To make the transition smoother, the cost share program offers a Transfer of Maintenance Responsibility Agreement. This form allows the responsibility for maintaining the BMP to shift from the seller to the buyer, ensuring the practice continues to be properly maintained for the remainder of its lifespan. If you're selling land with BMPs that are still in lifespan, contact our office to obtain the form and then get it dual signed. Not only will this protect the investment, but it will also set the new owner up for success. If you do not officially transfer the responsibility, you remain responsible for the BMP regardless of who owns the land.

0% Interest Loans Available

Are you interested in conservation practices but do not have the money upfront to fund the project? No worries. Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) Ag BMP Loan Program offers funds for you with no money upfront with 0% interest, no long-term requirement, and potential for principal forgiveness. Fortunate for you, projects are accepted year-round and reviewed monthly. Debt repayment begins 6 months after project completion with 1-to-10-year repayment schedules depending on loan amount and asset useful life. DEQ will prioritize applications and tentative authorization will be granted. Contact DEQ today at (804) 929-5085 to find out if you're eligible.

Missouri Grazing Manual Available

By David H. Massie, CSWCD District Manager

The Culpeper SWCD has copies of the Missouri Grazing Manual available to producers interested in expanding their grazing knowledge. This grazing manual encompasses so many different aspects of grazing management – soils, plant growth, nutrient cycling, water system and fence layout, grazer's arithmetic, and economics of grazing. This manual also brings together different groups of researchers, educators, and producers with broad experience in land management, forage, and livestock systems. Manuals are for sale for \$20 plus tax.

The distribution of these manuals will be on a first come, first serve basis. We also have pasture grazing sticks for sale for \$5 plus tax. Pasture grazing sticks are a great tool for helping producers "train their eyes" to the amount of forage available for their livestock. A two page instruction manual comes with the pasture grazing stick, and District Staff will be happy to assist using this valuable tool on your farm.

Small Farm Outreach

The Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP), a part of Cooperative Extension at Virginia State University, educates and empowers small, limited-resource, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers and ranchers to own, operate and sustain farms and ranches independently with agricultural training programs that improve farm management skills and quality of life.

For more information, visit <https://www.ext.vsu.edu/small-farm-outreach-program>.

Geotextile Fabric Available!

The District carries nonwoven geotextile (filter fabric) for sale that meets most state and federally funded project requirements, as well as many on-farm needs. Geotextile is sold by the foot, which comes in 12.5' widths. Please call the Culpeper Office at (540) 825-8591 for pricing and more information!



Cover Crop Grazing: Turning Conservation into Opportunity for Virginia Farms

By: Elizabeth Beggins ebeggins@farmland.org

For many Virginia farmers, cover crops have become a valuable tool to protect soil, improve water quality, and build long-term resilience. But what if cover crops can do even more?

Across the Mid-Atlantic, a growing number of producers are discovering that the benefits of cover crops extend beyond the well-known advantages of erosion control, nutrient retention, and soil health improvement. When livestock are thoughtfully integrated into crop systems, cover crops become a forage-producing asset while continuing to deliver conservation benefits.

Through a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) funded by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), American Farmland Trust (AFT) is working with producers and advisors to explore practical approaches to integrating livestock grazing into cover crop systems.

Spring 2026 marked the first grazing season for the project, which includes four participating farms spanning Virginia from Loudoun County to Franklin County. The project brings crop and livestock producers together to evaluate whether and how cover crop grazing can generate conservation benefits like improved soil structure and enhanced nutrient cycling while also expanding forage resources and potentially strengthening farm profitability for both parties.



Photo left: Demonstration plots at Green Sprig Ag in Franklin County, Virginia, provided producers with an opportunity to share ideas and learn about cover crop grazing, soil health, and livestock integration during a field day hosted by Daniel and Joel Austin in March, 2026.

More Than a Winter Cover

Cover crops help protect soil, retain nutrients, suppress weeds, and improve water infiltration between cash crop seasons. For livestock producers, cover crops provide high-quality forage during periods when perennial pasture growth is limited, helping reduce feed costs and allowing perennial pastures time to recover.

For crop producers, grazing livestock can accelerate nutrient cycling. Livestock consume cover crops and crop residues, converting plant material into manure and urine that return nutrients to the soil and support the next cash crop. This process moves fertility through the system efficiently while also helping build soil organic matter. The result is an integrated system that seeks to benefit both the land and the farmers.

Learning from Producer Partnerships

A key component of the project is the partnership between crop and livestock producers, helping both operations get more value from existing resources. One participating livestock producer, Tyler Lineweaver of Ginger Creek Farm in Culpeper County, recently described the advantages of grazing cover crops: "This allows our pastures at home to have a break and time to rejuvenate and grow and has taught us a lot about the ins and outs and importance of rotational grazing."

Similarly, row crop producer Daniel Austin of Green Sprig Ag sees livestock as an important piece of the agricultural system. "In modern agriculture, I believe livestock integration is the missing link. It is making for healthier soils, healthier cattle, and I think it is going to make for healthier crops—specifically more nutrient-dense grains where there is animal impact."

If the Benefits Are Clear, Why Isn't Grazing Cover Crops More Common?

Despite the advantages, cover crop grazing is not yet widely adopted across much of Virginia. One of the biggest hurdles is infrastructure. Decades of agricultural specialization have physically separated grain and livestock production, so the crop systems lack necessary components like fencing, corrals, and watering devices.

Timing also presents challenges. Producing sufficient forage often requires earlier establishment

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

through aerial seeding, planting into standing crops, or other management adjustments. And maximizing spring grazing opportunities demands flexibility in crop planting schedules. Crop producers also raise concerns about soil compaction, particularly when livestock graze fields during wet conditions. Effects can vary depending on soil moisture, stocking density, grazing duration, and management practices. One objective of the project is to better understand how those factors influence crop production outcomes through the collection of observations, management data, and yield information.

“One of the first questions crop farmers ask is, ‘Will cover crop grazing compact my soils and negatively impact my crop yields?’” said Jacob Gilley of JG Land & Livestock, a consulting advisor for the project. “Projects like this one lessen the risk to producers considering cover crop grazing and help them experiment with new techniques. It’s truly eye-opening for them and has huge impacts for agriculture and conservation throughout the region.”

Finally, livestock producers may face management challenges associated with transporting and monitoring animals on land they do not own. While temporary electric fencing and rotational grazing systems have become increasingly efficient, grazing cover crops still requires producers to adopt new management approaches.



Caption: Regenerative agricultural consultant Doug Peterson shares insights with producers during an educational event. Access to experienced practitioners and technical experts helps farmers evaluate new practices, learn from real-world experiences, and reduce implementation risk.

Testing Practical Solutions

In addition to focusing on key research questions, the project is evaluating accessible solutions that farmers can realistically implement.

Taylor Adam, AFT’s Mid-Atlantic Livestock and Grazing Manager, explains, “Grant funding can help demonstrate what’s possible, but success depends on what works for producers. Our goal is to understand what practices and technologies make cover crop grazing practical and economically viable for producers while improving soil health supporting farm profitability.”

Project participants are testing a variety of fencing approaches, including permanent, semi-permanent, temporary, and virtual fencing systems. These technologies may help reduce infrastructure costs and simplify livestock management in crop fields.

Water access is another major focus. At one project site in Loudoun County, AFT worked with a producer to install a solar-powered water pumping system that moves water from an existing pond to grazing areas within a crop field. The team is demonstrating above-ground, removable water lines that can provide livestock access to water without requiring extensive permanent infrastructure.

Researchers are also testing cover crop establishment methods, diverse cover crop mixtures, and weather-monitoring tools to better understand how growing conditions influence grazing performance and conservation outcomes.

Looking Ahead

Although still in its early stages, the project is generating valuable insights that will be shared through webinars, educational resources, a project website, and on-farm workshops.

Cover crop grazing is not a new idea, but modern technologies, changing economics, and interest in soil health are making adoption more practical for many producers. By bringing crop and livestock farmers together, this project aims to explore and demonstrate how conservation practices can generate value not only for soil and water resources, but also for the farms that steward them.

Interested in seeing cover crop grazing in action?

American Farmland Trust plans to host a fall field day in Loudoun County, Virginia highlighting cover crop benefits, livestock integration, grazing infrastructure, and cover crop demonstration plots. Watch for additional details in the coming months by following us on Instagram (@farmlandmidatlantic) and Facebook (facebook.com/AFTMidAtlantic) or on our website: farmland.org/mid-Atlantic.

District Awards College Scholarships

Through June and July 2026, Culpeper SWCD recognized five local students with college scholarships in recognition of their dedication to natural resources.

Below left: Grace Faulk (Culpeper County resident) with Culpeper SWCD Education and Outreach Coordinator Stephanie DeNicola

Below right: Culpeper Director Dennis Verhoff, Eastern View High School graduate Ilyana Rodriguez and Culpeper Director Bob Williamson



Below left: Rappahannock Director Mike Sands, Rappahannock County High School graduates Declan Perrott and Isaac Plaksin and Rappahannock Director Mike Biniek

Below right: Culpeper Director Bob Williamson, Board Chair Lynn Graves, Eastern View High School graduate Holly Savage and Culpeper Director Dennis Verhoff



District Hosts Two Summer Interns

Beginning in June, Culpeper SWCD has hosted two summer interns. They have been joining District staff on site visits for residential and agricultural cost share programs, stormwater practice inventory and helped lead Nature Camp with Play Date Museum of Culpeper.

Ilyana Rodriguez (left in picture) joined as an Intern for the CSWCD in summer 2026 after graduating from Eastern View High School. She intends to go into a career in Environmental Science post-college. She will start at Virginia Tech in August 2026 where she will major in Sustainable Systems Science.

Iman Ali (right in picture) joined the District in June 2026 as an intern. Iman was born and raised in Culpeper County and graduated from Culpeper County High School in 2025. She is currently pursuing her Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Science at The College of William and Mary and is expected to graduate in Spring 2027. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends, and time outdoors.



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Deer scouting

Finding harvested deer (All hunting stops for the day once drone operations begin)

Mapping & Inspections

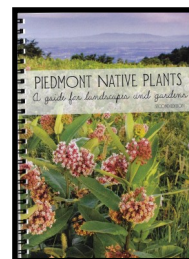


Back 40 Drone Worx

Woods & Wildlife Information

Hot Off the Press: Piedmont Native Plants 2nd Edition!

The Second Edition of Piedmont Native Plants is available for purchase through our office for \$20. This beautiful, full color resources includes pictures, descriptions and growing needs for wildflowers, ground covers, ferns, shrubs short trees, tall trees and edibles. To purchase, email Stephanie DeNicola at stephanied@culpeperswcd.org. Check or exact cash accepted.

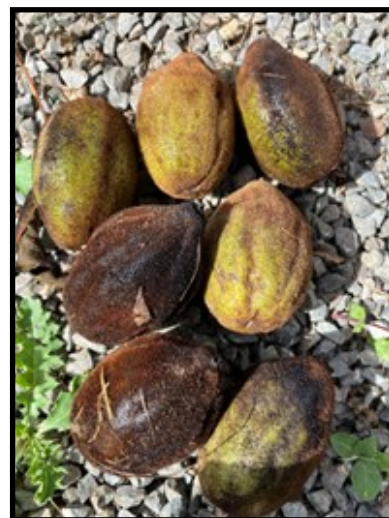


State Arboretum Seeks Butternuts

by T'ai Roulston, Curator & Research Associate Professor,
State Arboretum at Blandy
Reprinted with permission

The State Arboretum at Blandy is in search for butternut trees in Virginia. Butternuts (also called white walnut) are declining rapidly due in large part to butternut canker disease, an introduced fungal pathogen that causes black fissures to erupt over the tree's trunk, eventually killing it. Here at the arboretum, we are trying to document the health of existing trees over diverse areas in Virginia and propagate ones from a geographically wide range.

The Arboretum is interested in butternut trees in Culpeper, Madison and Rappahannock Counties. If you see the nuts, please take a picture and email tai.roulston@virginia.edu to confirm identification. It is challenging to identify the tree from photos without nuts. The grand hope is to find some butternuts resistant to the blight somewhere out there, and maybe you can point us to one.





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Backyard Conservation Funds Available

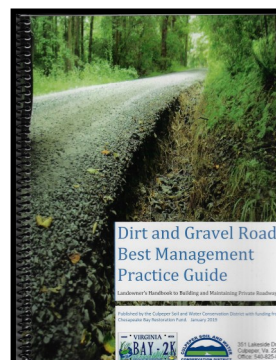
By Richard Jacobs, III, PE, CSWCD Conservation Specialist III

Conserving water while using attractive gardening and landscaping practices beautifies your yard, attracts beneficial pollinators, adds curb appeal and also helps improve the environment by reducing the amount of storm water runoff from your property. Creative management of those small areas of your front or backyard to address problem areas (too wet, too dry, doesn't drain, won't grow grass, etc...) now has funding available to support simple, on the ground landscape practices that benefit both you and the local environment. The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program or VCAP provides financial assistance to residential, institutional and commercial property owners to implement such practices. Payment rates vary among the practices but generally are focused on providing up to 80 percent of the cost. The District will provide technical resources for your planning efforts and visit your site to better understand what you hope to achieve. For more information on VCAP visit <http://vaswcd.org/vcap> or contact the District at (540) 825-8591 or richardj@culpeperswcd.org.

Road and Driveway Maintenance Guide Available

Spring is a great time to start maintenance of your road or driveway! 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 channel capacity. Improved maintenance incorporating best management practices (BMPs) can save money and better protect 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 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.



Rain Barrel Sale!

A new order of rain barrels will arrive soon! Prices are not confirmed yet. For more information, contact Stephanie DeNicola at (540) 825-8591 or send an email to: stephanied@culpeperswcd.org.

FREE LAWN SOIL TESTS ARE STILL AVAILABLE!
CONTACT STEPHANIE DENICOLA AT
stephanied@culpeperswcd.org for info!

Have a tree species you would like to see in our annual sale?
E-mail Stephanie DeNicola at stephanied@culpeperswcd.org.

Partner Spotlight: Virginia Department of Forestry **New Growing and Protection Forests Cost Share Program**

The Growing and Protecting Forests Cost-Share Program (GAP) provides Virginia forest landowners with financial assistance to conduct forest management practices recommended by a forestry professional to improve the forest resource for the landowner and the Commonwealth.

GAP cost share targets pine stands and some mixed pine-hardwood stands for improvement. The forest improvement can be designed to increase growth rate, increase carbon sequestration, improve forest health or improve wildlife habitat.

Who is Eligible

Private non-industrial forest landowners may apply, including individuals, corporations, limited liability corporations (LLCs), non-profit organizations and local governments. Landowners who also own primary wood processing facilities are not eligible. Before applying, landowners must meet with a forestry professional, either from the Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) or a trained consulting forester to establish objectives, conduct a site assessment and create a management plan that includes recommendations for eligible management practices.

What Qualifies

Cost share is available starting at 5 acres of forestland up to a maximum of 100 acres per tract, per year and up to 100 acres per landowner per year. Cost share is 70% of the total project cost, not to exceed the per acre rate for each practice (see table). Invasive plant control may be cost-shared on as little as 1 acre, although the tract must contain at least 5 acres of forest.

This cost share cannot be combined with another cost share to complete the same practice on the same acre. Practices must be completed by May 31 so they can be verified and payments processed before the end of Virginia's fiscal year June 30.

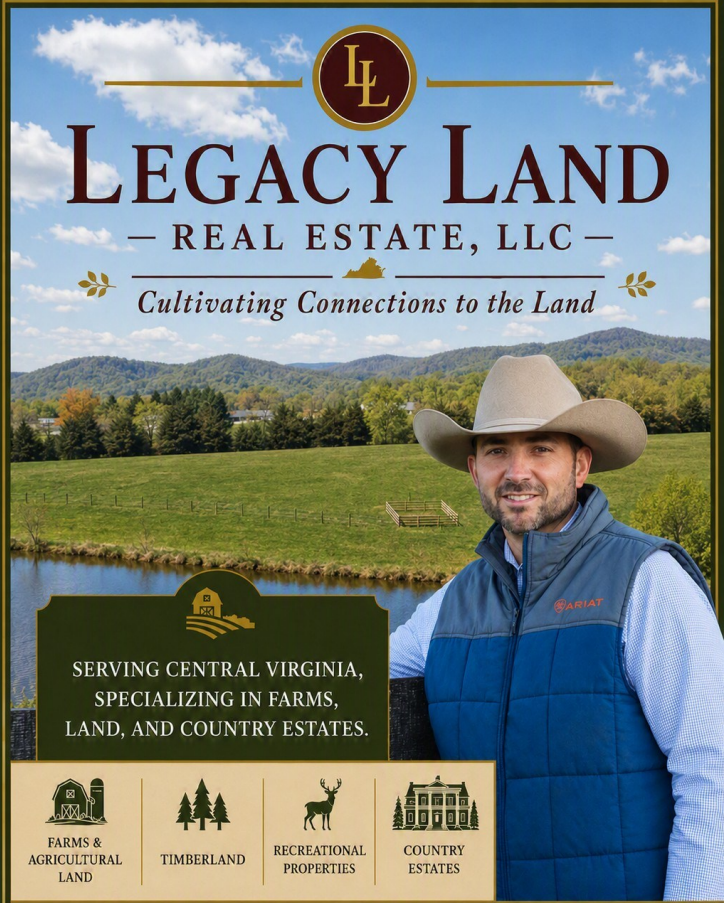
Get Started

Interested landowners should contact DOF or a professional consulting forester for management recommendations. If recommended practices are eligible for incentives, assistance with the application process can also be provided. To get started, contact your local DOF forester:

- Culpeper & Rappahannock: Peter Schoderbek; peter.schoderbek@DOF.virginia.gov; (434) 282-4169
- Greene & Madison: Ed Furlow; ed.furlow@dof.virginia.gov; (540) 395-1164
- Orange: Kinner Ingram; kinner.ingram@dof.virginia.gov; (540) 216-6524

Eligible Practices	Rate Per Acre
Crop Tree Release	\$133
Pre-Commercial Thinning	\$175
Midstory Management	\$175
Cull Tree Control	\$175
Other Timber Stand Improvement	\$140
Prescribed Burning (including fire lines)	\$62
Prescribed Burn Preparation	\$70
Invasive Plant Control	\$210
Stand Marking	\$70





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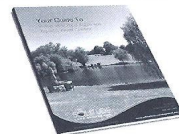


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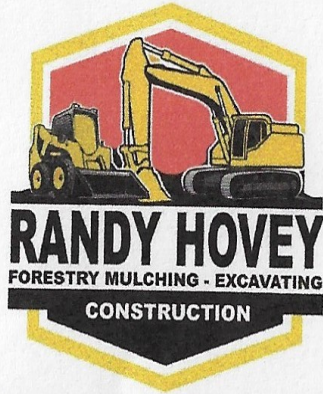
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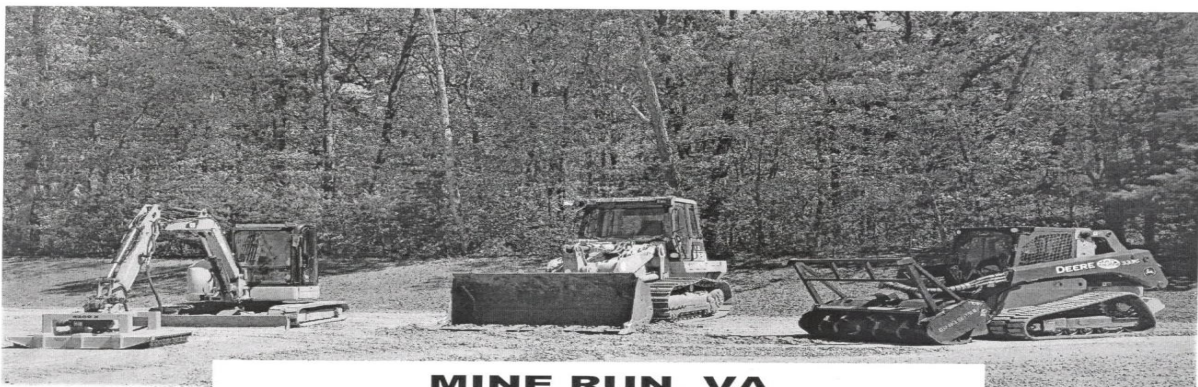
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Attention! New Orange Office!

Effective October 28, 2024 the Culpeper SWCD Orange office has moved to 591 N Madison Road. We are located at the north end of the Food Lion shopping plaza. The phone number is still (540) 825-8591.

Help us Conserve Paper!
Would you like to receive this newsletter via E-mail? Send an e-mail to **stephanied@culpeperswcd.org**.

Views From The Foothills

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