CULPEPER SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Annual Report 2025-2026



Our Mission:

To promote the stewardship of soil and water and the conservation of our natural resources by educating and providing technical assistance to manage, protect and enhance the land and water for the benefit and enjoyment of the citizens of Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock Counties

Our Vision:

To achieve clear, clean surface and groundwater and improved soil conditions that enhance the intrinsic value of Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock Counties



Your local partner in conservation

Culpeper Service Center
351 Lakeside Drive
Culpeper, Virginia 22701
(540) 825-8591
https://culpeperswcd.org

ABOUT US

Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District (CSWCD) is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Geographically, it includes the counties of Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock. Founded in 1939 by citizens concerned about soil and water conservation, the CSWCD is the largest of forty-seven conservation districts within Virginia and serves an area covering 1,445 square miles with about 136,000 constituents (according to US Census 2021 estimates).

The staff consists of a District Manager, Financial Specialist, Information/Education Coordinator, Urban Programs Manager and eight Conservation Specialists.

A 12-member Board of Directors governs CSWCD. Each of the five counties within the District elects two members in the general election, one member is appointed at large and a Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent from one of the member counties is appointed by Virginia Tech. Directors are not paid, but are locally elected officials who direct both the functioning of the district and the district staff as they work in partnership with the state and federal conservation staff. Directors are expected to attend monthly board meetings, participate on CSWCD Committees and work groups, represent the citizens of their county in regard to conservation issues and be willing to stay abreast of local conservation issues. They are also required to participate in policy and program development, as well as provide financial direction for proper expenditure and management of funds within CSWCD. The Board also appoints Associate Directors as needed. Associate Directors are non-voting members. The Board meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 10:30am and rotates meeting locations among the five counties.

All citizens of CSWCD may have a voice in resource and conservation planning by attending monthly board meetings, communicating their concerns to directors or staff and by participating in District programs. CSWCD develops a wide range of programs to encourage community participation in conserving and protecting soil, water and related natural resources, with particular focus on the impact of land disturbance and management of the Chesapeake Bay. CSWCD programs are funded by local, state and federal support and by CSWCD sponsored grants. Technical support is received from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Board of Directors



Lynn Graves, Chair
Madison County



Mike Sands, Vice Chair
Rappahannock County



Bob Williamson,
Treasurer
Culpeper County



Mike Biniek
Rappahannock County



Robert Bradford
Orange County

David Cox
Greene County



Anthony Jewett
Madison County



Molly Elgin McWilliams
Orange County



Steve Morris At-Large
Greene County



Robert Runkle
Greene County



Sarah W. Sharpe
Extension Agent,
Greene County



Dennis Verhoff
Culpeper County

Find information about the CSWCD Board of Directors here!

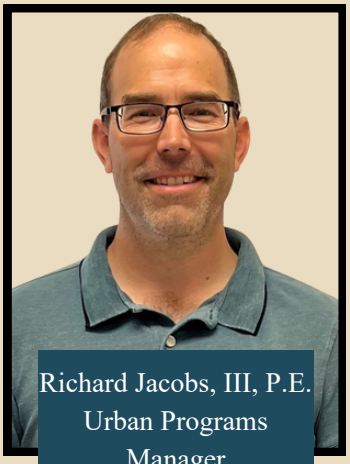
Staff



David Massie
District Manager



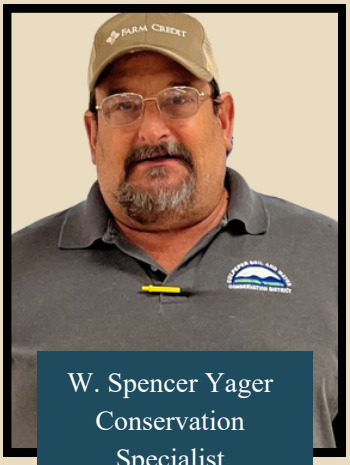
Stevie Ross
Financial Specialist



Richard Jacobs, III, P.E.
Urban Programs Manager



Stephanie DeNicola
Information & Education Coordinator



W. Spencer Yager
Conservation Specialist



Henny Calloway
Conservation Specialist



Amanda McCullen
Conservation Specialist



Kendall Dellinger
Conservation Specialist



Lily Smith
Conservation Specialist



Cheyenne Sheridan
Conservation Specialist



Trevor Talley
Conservation Specialist



Jack Bourdon
Conservation Specialist

Find information about the CSWCD Staff here!

Chairman's Report

Dear Citizens,

Looking back on FY2026, I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished together. We are fortunate to live and work in a community that cares deeply about our land, water, and the environmental legacy we leave behind. Over the past year, we focused heavily on strengthening water quality initiatives and advancing practical, on-the-ground conservation efforts. Thanks to vital funding and strong partner collaborations, we empowered more landowners to adopt proven conservation practices. These initiatives—ranging from planting cover crops and installing riparian buffers to implementing stream exclusion fencing and watering systems development—do far more than look good on a report. They represent tangible, lasting improvements for our local soils and waterways.

Beyond our field projects, our educational outreach remains a cornerstone of our mission. Seeing students actively engage in hands-on lessons about soil health, water resources, and the natural world reinforces exactly why this work is so critical. To everyone who partnered with us, welcomed us into a classroom, created unique learning opportunities, or supported our mission: thank you. Conservation only succeeds when people step forward, and our partner counties continue to show remarkable leadership. As we enter FY2027, I am confident we will build on this strong momentum and continue protecting the natural resources that make our region such a special place to call home.



Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District
Board of Directors, Chair

Our Corner of Virginia

	Culpeper County	Greene County	Madison County	Orange County	Rappahannock County
Population	52,552	20,552	13,837	36,254	7,348
High Schools	2	1	1	1	1
Cost Share*	$1,263,308.25	$85,923.25	$1,043,031.83	$1,962,573.93	$46,367.34
% of Total	28%	2%	23%	45%	1%
Farms	609	187	447	430	389
% of Total	29%	9%	22%	20%	19%
Farm Acres	115,816	30,811	99,536	141,607	66,894
% of Total	25%	6%	22%	31%	15%
Watershed Dams	3	0	8	0	0



Population: US Census Bureau
Farm Data: 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture
*Virginia Agriculture Cost Share Program (VACS) Cost Share projects completed in Program Year 2026

Committee Accomplishments

Technical Committee:

- Allocated **over $8.9 million** in agricultural cost share funds.
- Completed over **202** cost share projects totaling **$4,401,204.60** in agricultural cost share funds and **$46,747.43** in state tax credits.
- Allocated **$298,985.18** in residential cost share funding to **299** projects in the Upper Hazel, Upper Rapidan, Robinson River, Upper York and Mountain Run TMDL watersheds in the District. The District also administered a District-wide program for septic systems outside of TMDL watersheds.
- Committee Chair & Staff provided input on programmatic improvements as a member of the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Technical Advisory Committee & BMP Subcommittee.
- Reviewed **112** site plans across five counties and the Town of Culpeper for Erosion & Sediment Control & Stormwater Management Engineering.
- Inspected, maintained & repaired **11** watershed flood control dams in Culpeper & Madison Counties.
- Participated in quarterly dam safety trainings for conservation districts.

Education & Information:

- Delivered educational programs to **12,191** participants.
- Coordinated CSWCD Annual Awards banquet.
- Provided year-long training to **one** Envirothon team, coordinated **one** State-wide virtual Envirothon training for coaches and students and organized the Area Envirothon competition with over **300** people in attendance.
- Coordinated DCR grant for MWEEs and assisted with water testing clinics.
- Sold **48** rain barrels, **8,500** tree seedlings and **150** packets of meadow seed mix.
- Published **four** editions of the CSWCD newsletter & submitted articles for newspapers & other publications.
- Recognized **five** local students with college scholarships.
- Hosted **two** interns for the summer.

Committee Accomplishments

Operations:

- Reviewed monthly functions of all aspects of CSWCD business.
- Coordinated preparation of the annual budget & annual plan of work.
- Oversaw expenditures and provided guidance for organizational growth.
- Sought to increase funding from the Commonwealth.
- Sought out additional funding grants and project grants.

Finance:

- Reviewed monthly bank reconciliations and Treasurer's Report.
- Submitted quarterly reports to DCR.
- Provided monthly review of Treasurer's Reports & input to annual budgeting.
- Provided oversight for longer term financial planning.

Legislative:

- Participated in discussions with legislators.
- Drafted CSWCD positions on conservation & land use issues & provided opinions to Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- Informed CSWCD Board on all legislative issues relating to conservation & funding affecting Districts.

Personnel:

- Provided employee performance reviews & training guidance.
- Provided workload analysis and reviewed staffing levels.
- Guided policy development on all personnel matters.



Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost Share Program Accomplishments

The Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices (Ag BMP) Cost Share Program, which provides financial assistance for the installation costs for approved conservation practices to eligible farmers, is administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) and implemented by CSWCD.

The purpose of the program is to improve water quality in the state's streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay. The program encourages the voluntary installation of Ag BMPs to meet Virginia's non-point source pollution water quality objectives. The cost share program has benefitted from record funding levels for the last few years and continues to be a robust program - all for the benefit of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Improvement Plan goals.

In PY2026 CSWCD allocated more than **$8.9 million** to agricultural producers across our service area to fund conservation practices. Not all practices approved in PY2026 were completed. Those carry-over practices, worth an estimated **$4.5 million**, will be completed in the next program year.

In PY2027 CSWCD has received an allocation of **$10.2 million** and its staff are actively recruiting producers to apply for a variety of BMPs.

PY2026 Completed Ag BMP Practices

County	# of Practices	Cost Share Funds	Tax Credits Issued
Culpeper	58	$1,263,308.25	$7,582.28
Greene	8	$85,923.25	$0
Madison	71	$1,043,031.83	$8,311.02
Orange	59	$1,962,573.93	$29,559.97
Rappahannock	6	$46,367.34	$1,294.16
District Totals	**202**	**$4,401,204.60**	**$46,747.43**

Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost Share Program by the Numbers

Practices Completed

125,162 feet
of streambank protected

113.9 acres
of riparian buffer created

35,260 acres
of cover crop planted

53.92 acres
of trees planted

508 tons
of animal waste treated

185 acres
of cropland conversion

199.9 acres
of improved grazing management

47
Continuing Conservation Initiative (CCI) projects

14,831 acres
enrolled under Nutrient Management Practices

$8.9 M

in state cost-share funds obligated to farmers and producers within our service area!

294

project approved for funding in PY2026.

161

participants voluntarily signed up for the VACS program in PY2026.

In a recent study completed by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, an average of $1.75 is returned for every $1 invested in agricultural best management practices.

Virginia Agricultural Cost Share
Department of Conservation and Recreation and Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost Share Program Project Highlights













Septic System Maintenance Cost Share Program

The Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation Plans for the Upper Hazel River watershed in Rappahannock, Madison and Culpeper Counties, the Mountain Run, Muddy Run, Lower Hazel watershed in Culpeper County, the Upper York watershed in Orange County, the Robinson River watershed in Madison County and the Upper Rapidan River watershed in Greene, Madison and Orange Counties, the Department of Environmental Quality provided grants awarded on a competitive basis. At this time, due to very significant increases in State agricultural funding, the TMDL funding has been primarily on septic system assistance. In addition CSWCD secured funds to provide septic system cost share for all areas of CSWCD not included in the TMDL watersheds. There has been expanded outreach in all areas through signs, meetings, mailings and more. The results of all of these grant projects are tabulated on the following pages by both project and by county.

During FY 2026, CSWCD assisted with the completion of **two** additional TMDL implementation plan development projects: North Fork Rivanna River in Greene County and Lower Rapidan River in Culpeper and Orange Counties.

In total, District staff allocated **299** projects totaling **$298,985.18**.



Outreach signage for Septic System Maintenance Cost Share Program

Septic System Maintenance Cost Share Program Accomplishments

Culpeper County	# of Practices	Allocated
Septic pump out	74	$17,732.50
Hook up to public sewer	1	$4,164.50
Septic inspection & pump out	31	$35,608.00
Septic replacement	6	$38,842.49
Septic replacement with pump	1	$9,900.00
Engineered replacement	1	$13,760.32
Totals	**114**	**$120,007.81**

Greene County	# of Practices	Allocated
Septic pump out	22	$5,536.08
Septic inspection & pump out	10	$18,780.57
Totals	**32**	**$24,316.65**

Madison County	# of Practices	Allocated
Septic pump out	46	$11,085.00
Septic repair	2	$7,500.00
Septic inspection & pump out	16	$30,797.50
Septic replacement	3	$22,982.45
Septic replacement with pump	1	$10,725.00
Totals	**68**	**$83,089.95**

Orange County	# of Practices	Allocated
Septic pump out	25	$6,572.25
Septic repair	1	$3,750.00
Septic inspection & pump out	14	$24,780.70
Totals	**40**	**$35,102.95**

Rappahannock County	# of Practices	Allocated
Septic pump out	35	$8,260.00
Septic repair	1	$2,575.00
Septic inspection & pump out	7	$9,382.82
Septic replacement	2	$16,250.00
Totals	**45**	**$36,467.82**

Education Accomplishments

Culpeper SWCD is committed to providing high quality, hands-on learning opportunities for Kindergarten through College students and interested adults. CSWCD worked with local educators and the community to provide various outreach programs.

Our jurisdiction is uniquely located in the James, Rappahannock and York River watersheds. We also experience both agricultural and urban non-point source pollution issues. This is why many of our programs focus on connecting students with their watershed through soil and water health.

In the table below you will see the number of programs and students reached last year.

County	Number of Visits	MWEEs	Number of Participants
Culpeper	118	Sycamore Park ES & Culpeper MS	4,252
Greene	11	William Monroe MS	1,087
Madison	14	William Wetsel MS (Fall & Spring)	776
Orange	31	Locust Grove MS & Prospect Heights MS	2,190
Rappahannock	3	Rappahannock County ES	193
Other	39	Homeschool groups, private schools, etc.	3,693
District Totals	**216**		**12,191**

Education Highlights

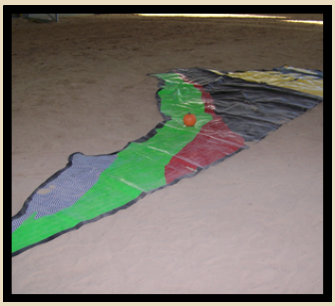


Enviroscape Model Showcases Intro to Watersheds

The Enviroscape watershed model addresses watershed basics, pollution sources and prevention and connects students and adults to the larger concepts of the Chesapeake Bay. It addresses Science standards related to human impacts on natural resources at every grade level. It also addresses environmental literacy goals of the Portrait of a Graduate.

Virginia Regions and Products

Our newest activity is a giant (18 feet by 24 feet) map of Virginia made of different colored duct tape. Pictures just don't do it justice! This activity covers products and regions of Virginia through Virginia Studies Standards for fourth grade.





Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs)

All school districts in Virginia are required to deliver MWEEs to their students - it is referred to as another unfunded mandate. However, CSWCD covers all aspects at the Middle School level – staff to lead the program, supplies, bus costs and site fees! CSWCD MWEEs include a pre-test, several days in the classroom, a field experience, data analysis and post-test.

In FY 2026, CSWCD piloted the popular sixth grade program with the fourth grade at Sycamore Park Elementary School in Culpeper. It went so well that the MWEE will be expanded to all fourteen elementary schools in our five counties for FY27!

Annual Tree Seedling Sale

The Annual Tree Sale was another success! Culpeper SWCD distributed nearly 9,000 tree seedlings and live stakes as well as 200 meadow mixes, which provide enough seed for 1,000 square feet.



Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon

The Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon competition is a natural resources competition for high school students. Student teams are tested at five field stations: Soils, Forestry, Wildlife, Aquatics and a Special Topic that changes each year. Students are also tasked with giving a 20-minute oral presentation on a real-world problem based on the special topic. The 2026 topic was “Nonpoint Source Pollution Begins at Home.”

Eastern View High School, coached by AP Environmental Science teacher Rachel Stuart, meets weekly as soon as school starts. For the 2025-2026 Program Year, as many as 18 students met every Friday to learn the topics. As spring approached, they met through snow closures and school breaks to work on their presentation.

The Eastern View team competed against seven other teams at the Area II competition. They placed second overall, which earned them a spot at the Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon competition.

The State competition was held on May 18 and 19 at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg. The Eastern View team placed third overall and fourth in Oral Presentation.

CSWCD continues to be proud of the work and commitment the Eastern View students and coach give towards Envirothon each year. The 2027 Envirothon competition will be held at Northern Fauquier Community Park. CSWCD will start working with Envirothon students to prepare for the next competition! The 2027 Special Topic is “Soil Health Management: Agricultural Principles and Stewardship”.





Above left: The Eastern View team delivers their presentation at the Area II competition.
Above right: The Eastern View team works on the Forestry station test at the Area II competition.

District Scholarships

Each year, the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District awards up to $10,000 in educational scholarships to students who plan to pursue a career in a conservation-related field. These scholarships are available to eligible students living in the five-county area the Culpeper SWCD serves.

Individuals are full time students enrolled in, or who have applied to, a college undergraduate or graduate program in an area that supports soil and water conservation, natural resource management, environmental science or a related field.

In awarding scholarships priority is given to graduating high school seniors, but current undergraduate and graduate students will also be considered. Consideration will be given primarily to achievement and demonstrated interest in natural resources.

- Grace Faulk graduated from Fauquier High School and lives in Culpeper. She attends Virginia Tech, where her major is Dairy Science. (Laura Campbell Memorial Scholarship)
- Holly Savage graduated from Eastern View High School. She attends Virginia Tech, where her major is Horticulture and Agriculture Education. (John Boldridge Memorial Scholarship).
- Isaac Plaksin graduated from Rappahannock County High School. He is attending Skidmore College and his major is Environmental Studies.
- Declan FT Perrott graduated from Rappahannock County High School. He attends the University of New Hampshire and his major is Marine, Estuarine and Freshwater Biology.
- Ilyana Rodriguez graduated from Eastern View High School. She attends Virginia Tech and her major is Sustainable System Science.





Above left: Dennis Verhoff, Ilyana Rodriguez and Bob Williamson.
Above right: Grace Faulk and Stephanie DeNicola.

Community Outreach and Staff Development

Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District staff provide and participate in numerous trainings and events to help the community and deepen our professional knowledge. These include:

- Area II Spring Meeting
- Area II Dominion Energy Envirothon Training
- Area VI Dominion Energy Envirothon Workshop
- Central Virginia Cattlemen's Association Meeting
- Culpeper Library Summer Reading Program
- Culpeper Parks & Rec Summer Camp
- Culpeper SWCD Conservation Programs' Updates Workshop
- Culpeper SWCD New Landowner Workshop
- DCR Security Awareness Training
- Emergency Action Plan Dam Meeting
- Farm Service Agency Farm Safety Day
- Greene County Farm Show
- Heritage Day
- Master Gardener training: Water Conservation
- Master Naturalist training: Water and Wetlands
- Orange County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting
- Orange County Public Schools' Teacher Professional Development
- Play Date Museum Nature Camp
- Play Date Museum Science Saturday
- Precision Ag Training
- Tracking Program Training
- VANTAGE No-Till Conference
- Virginia Association of Conservation Districts' Annual Meeting
- Virginia Association of Conservation District Employees' Annual Training
- Virginia Black Bear Festival
- Virginia Forage and Grasslands Council Grazing School
- Virginia Forage and Grasslands Council Winter Conference
- Virginia Master Cattlemen's Conference
- Women in Ag event
- Woods and Wildlife Conference

Erosion and Sediment Control Review

The Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Program, adopted as state law in 1973, established minimum standards and guidelines to be followed when nonagricultural lands are disturbed. The state program is implemented primarily through local program adoption. The CSWCD is contracted with four of five member counties (Culpeper, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock) to provide plan review service for their Erosion and Sediment Control Programs and provides assistance to Greene County as requested. The Town of Culpeper also contracts with CSWCD for services. CSWCD responsibility as the reviewing authority involves reviewing site plans for developments and to review rezoning requests, special-use permit applications and preliminary subdivision plans upon request by the County.

There were 135 plans reviewed during Program Year 2026. These site plans include single family homes and private driveways that disturb greater than one acre.

Locality	Number of Plans
Culpeper County	28
Town of Culpeper	20
Madison County	8
Orange County	71
Rappahannock County	8
Total	**135**

Virginia Conservation Assistance Program

Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District provides technical and financial assistance to homeowners, businesses and local governments to address erosion, excess runoff and poor vegetative cover. Financial assistance is provided through the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP). VCAP is a state-funded stormwater cost share program that provides financial assistance for installing eligible Best Management Practices (BMPs). VCAP offers 12 eligible BMPs and is locally administered by Culpeper SWCD.

Eligible Practices:

- Conservation Landscaping
- Impermeable Surface Removal
- Permeable Pavement
- Rain Gardens
- Dry Wells
- Rainwater Harvesting
- Vegetative Conveyance Systems
- Constructed Wetlands
- Bioretention Basins
- Infiltration Basins
- Green Roof
- Living Shorelines



VCAP helps control and mitigate stormwater related issues and non-point source pollution. When it rains, water moves through stormwater features and over impermeable surfaces, collecting possible pollutants as it goes. VCAP is a solution to cleaner waterways!

Virginia Conservation Assistance Program Highlights

The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) has gained a lot of interest in the CSWCD! The program has $4 Million available for projects across the state over the two-year state budget.

VCAP is specifically for non-agricultural lands, targeting water quality related issues from stormwater.







51

Initial visits completed in PY2026

$142,753.04

Cost-share allocated to completed projects in Program Year 2026.

18

Projects completed in PY2025

20.74 acres

of stormwater runoff treated

Virginia Conservation Assistance Program

Presented by Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

District Awards

The CSWCD Annual Conservation Awards Dinner was held on November 20, 2025 in Culpeper to honor residents who have demonstrated leadership in the stewardship of local soil and water resources. The Clean Water Farm Awards are awarded to one farm in each county of the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District that is exemplary in its protection of the state's soil and water quality.

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 CSWCD and exhibit strong advocacy to others for conservation.





Above left: Lynn Graves and Greg Wichelns.
Above right: David Massie, Carl Stafford, Bob Williamson and Dennis Verhoff.

Annual Awards Banquet Recipients (November 2025):

Culpeper County Clean Water Farm Award: Glebe Farm LLC
Greene County Clean Water Farm Award: Evan Bowman and Family
Madison County Clean Water Farm Award: Shepherd and Sons Farm LLC
Orange County Clean Water Farm Award: Brooke Farms LLC
Rappahannock County Clean Water Farm Award: Thornhill Farms LLC
Conservation Educator of the Year Award: Ken Cranston of Culpeper County
Forestry Award: James Madison's Monpelier of Orange County
Wildlife Habitat Award: Chancellors Rock Farm of Rappahannock County
Conservationist of the Year: Carl Stafford of Culpeper County
Recognition Award: Greg Wichelns, CSWCD District Manager 1998-2025

Partner Agencies





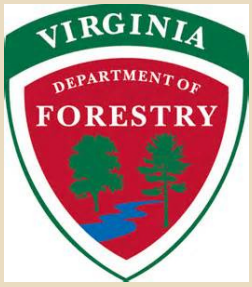














































What a Great Year!









































