

# Area I Quarterly Report

Kevin Craun & Rick Shiflet; Area I Co-Chairs

September 29, 2020

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## HEADWATERS SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

### Administrative & Technical

- In July, we welcomed Rhonda Cline, District Operations Manager to our team! Rhonda is hard at work completing training, preparing for the District's 1-year audit, writing the FY 20 Annual Report and much more! If you have the opportunity to meet Rhonda (virtually) during one of the training blitz sessions this fall and winter please help us welcome her to the District.
- District staff have begun the transition back to working from the office as safely as possible. Staff continue to telework when necessary. Our office still remains closed to the public, however technical staff are hard at work conducting field visits for new and existing projects.

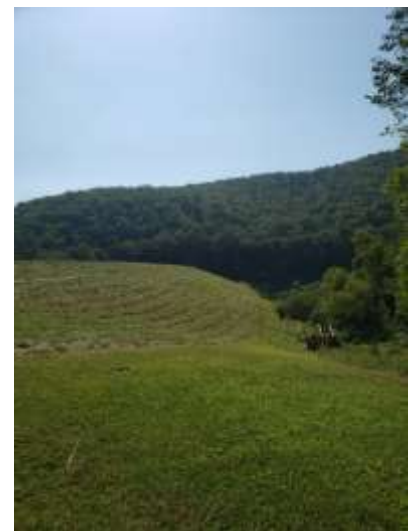


### Education

- Headwaters had the opportunity to take the Underground Classroom to the neighboring Rockingham County Fair during the week of August 17<sup>th</sup>. The fair was significantly scaled back due to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions but agricultural and outdoor exhibits were available to the public. We had approximately 200 visitors to the classroom throughout the week.
- With two of our school districts being all-virtual for the first semester, and the other operating under a hybrid schedule, our education and outreach efforts have had to adjust to meet the new needs of our community. Starting in September, we will be partnering with Staunton Parks & Rec to offer a 3-part lesson series for elementary students utilizing the outdoor spaces at Montgomery Hall Park.

### Flood Control Dams

- District staff have completed annual mowing on flood control dams. Headwaters will be issuing an IFB for abutment clearing which includes tree removal and slope repairs at Stoney Creek.
- Progress is underway for a mid-level gate installation at Inch Branch dam. This will give staff the ability to lower the water level for maintenance purposes without completely draining the reservoir. The install will be completed February 2021.
- Fall Maintenance is scheduled to begin in October, this include control burns, vegetation spraying, tree removal, stilling basin repairs, IFLOWS upgrades and new staff/stage gauge installments.



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## LORD FAIRFAX SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT



**Technical Updates:** PY2020 was a very successful year for LFSWCD. We were allocated \$3.4 Million from DCR to obligate within our 4-county jurisdiction. Even though the service center closed to the public in March, staff kept diligently working from alternative spaces. Staff continued to meet with landowners at their discretion, and were able to contract over 90 projects, obligating 100% of our District's \$3.4 Million in VACS funds. Signup included a wide range of practices from agronomic practices, to the popular SL-6's and multiple waste management practices.

Looking forward to PY21, LFSWCD has been allocated approximately \$2.2 Million of VACS funds. The Strasburg Service Center is still closed to the public, so LFSWCD staff remains working from home with limited office time, however signups continue to be strong. Many of our landowners are interested in the expanded waste management practices, and SL-6 options continue to be very popular. Since July 1, we have obligated approximately half of the VACS funds for PY21.

**Education Updates:** LFSWCD worked with our education partner, The Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River, to provide a virtual summer camp titled "Summer STREAM Adventures with Friends". We offered two age groups for our local community, 4-9 years old and 10-15 years old. Each week throughout the 5-week period featured a different theme focused on outdoor learning and fun. Activities included scavenger hunts, catching macroinvertebrates, researching animal scat and more. The summer camp also featured a pilot program for rising 4<sup>th</sup> graders who were provided thermometers to measure water temperatures in their local water source. Each student picked their local stream, creek or river, and a specific spot and time to measure water temperature each day (or as often as they could). We then collected their data, graphed it, showed them the trends we see in water temperatures, and discussed why they fluctuate. Hopefully once schools are open again, this program will be converted to classroom projects for schools in Shenandoah County.

Starting this fall semester we are working on a practicum project with two college students attending the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. The project focuses on Seven Bends State Park, a newly-opened park in Shenandoah County. The new park features current Ag land that may be converted to other uses for the park. The Park Master Plan is still being developed, so this project would create an advocacy plan/feasibility study to keep the Ag lands fully functional and productive while implementing conservation practices that preserve and promote the ecosystem. The goal would be to create a plan that highlights the following: conservation demonstrations, BMPs that could improve the land and local water quality, cultural demonstrations of Agriculture in the Valley, and the educational opportunities this land could create.

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## MOUNTAIN CASTLES SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT



District staff continue to work partially remotely during this time, but the work of the district continues as normally as possible. BMP applications are being submitted, new farm visits are being conducted, and approved BMPs are under construction. Residential septic cost-share applications/contracts are also being submitted, approved, and completed. Board meetings are being held in the parking lot with only enough Directors necessary to have a quorum.

The district received an extension for the current 319(h) residential septic grant in the Tinker Creek and Glade Creek watersheds of Botetourt County through September 2020. The district also submitted an application to DEQ for an additional grant to continue the program through 2024.

District staff have been involved with two elementary schools to build and plant school vegetable gardens. Should students have to go to an “all virtual” format this fall, the gardens will continue to be monitored and shared virtually.



Content on the District YouTube channel continues to grow, with a new “Virtual Mushroom Foray” video filmed, edited, and posted this quarter. The featured “mushroom enthusiast,” Brett Smith is an 8<sup>th</sup> grader who has presented at previous “Backyard Botetourt” meetings. More videos are planned for the fall.

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAMQLfj4ITgvwdGqhOjmPYg?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAMQLfj4ITgvwdGqhOjmPYg?view_as=subscriber)



OM Certifications were completed for the Johns Creek Dams and the district is currently getting quotes for paving the access road at Dam #2. Remote monitoring instruments are to be installed within the next month.

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## NAUTURAL BRIDGE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT



We work with the people who work the land.

- Due to state-wide mandates as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the NBSWCD staff continue to telework when possible, but are also rotating in-office days each week. Conservation staff are conducting site visits as normal (with necessary safety precautions), but no visitors are allowed in the office.
- The NBSWCD started the new fiscal year on July 1, so June and July were busy months for the Office Administrator. With new grant agreements in place, the conservation staff is busy reaching out to landowners for potential projects.
- With the Buffalo Creek TMDL Grant expiring December 31, conservation staff continue to promote and accept applications for BMPs and Septic projects within the watershed. The COVID-19 crisis again forced the postponement of our Buffalo TMDL Field Day planned for October (which was already rescheduled from April). A new date has yet to be announced.
- The COVID crisis has also caused our district to cancel the Annual Awards Banquet, held each year in October.
- The Office Administrator is currently preparing the district's Annual Report, which is typically released mid-October.
- The NBSWCD recently submitted a grant application for the Woods Creek TMDL, which would begin in late 2021 if approved.

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## SHENANDOAH VALLEY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Pre-Sidedress Nitrate Testing (PSNT) season has concluded! Two local college student interns helped staff collect and analyze soil samples this summer. The season ran from the first of June to mid July. This program continues to support conservation in helping farmers to determine the amount of nitrogen needed for sidedress application. Our college interns and staff worked to collect & analyze 461 total samples representing over 6,990 acres of corn. 316 of those samples were part of the SVSWCD's cost-share program.



We have replenished our supply of 55 gallon plastic barrels for rain barrel projects! We now have a good stock of unassembled barrels available for purchase if Districts are interested in buying barrels in order to host their own rain barrel workshops. The wholesale price for the plastic barrel is \$26.33/ea with a 10 barrel minimum purchase. We also have rain barrel kits for sale. The kits include a spigot, overflow, washers, lock nuts and screen, and the cost is \$15.80/kit with a 10 kit minimum purchase. For more information, contact Chelsea Trice at 540-534-3055.

The SVSWCD's Harrisonburg Conservation Assistance Program (HCAP) was recently featured in the Daily News Record, our local newspaper. The article detailed the benefits of installing a rooftop garden to help reduce and minimize the impacts of storm water on the environment. The feature also included pictures of a green roof project at a local home and the homeowner received financial and technical assistance through the HCAP Program.



Josh Walker

Our team has grown! We're pleased to announce two new staff have joined the Shenandoah Valley SWCD. Shayna Carter, District Technical Assistant was hired in March and Josh Walker, District Engineering Technician began employment with the District in July. If you have the opportunity to meet Josh and Shayna, help us welcome them!



Shayna Carter