This year we were proud to partner with the James River Association (JRA) by providing outreach and referring interested landowners to participate in the James River Buffer Program. The James River Buffer Program assists landowners by providing funding in order to establish and maintain an area of trees and shrubs along streams, known as a ‘riparian buffer zone’. Buffer zones improve water quality by trapping and filtering sediment and nutrients, reducing erosion of streambanks, and reducing flood impacts. This year we were proud to partner with the James River Association (JRA) by providing outreach and referring interested landowners to participate in the James River Buffer Program. The James River Buffer Program assists landowners by providing funding in order to establish and maintain an area of trees and shrubs along streams, known as a ‘riparian buffer zone’. Buffer zones improve water quality by trapping and filtering sediment and nutrients, reducing erosion of streambanks, and reducing flood impacts. They also help support birds, mammals, and stream organisms by providing habitat and shade. This program is especially beneficial to the landowners we work with who may experience issues such as erosion or nutrient runoff from pastures or cropland. JRA has assisted 13 landowners and planted 80.5 acres of buffer area across our district. We are so grateful to be collaborating with JRA and look forward to our continued partnership. Visit the JRA Buffer Program website to learn more.
Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District wrapped up a record-breaking year for cost share in FY2020 with 1.32 million in funds allocated for projects within Loudoun. As in past years, the majority of the projects were SL-6 to exclude livestock from surface water and installing water troughs, but projects also included FR-3 tree plantings, SL-8B and SL-8H cover crops, and CCI practices.

The projects were a collection of new landowners as well as existing producers looking to add on to their current conservation practices on their farms. With high interest, LSWCD had to acquire funds from neighboring Districts to help fulfill the need. The popularity of the cost share program is exemplified by the amount of producers who after their 10 year lifespans have expired, choose to re-enroll in the cost share program through the CCI practice to maintain their fences and troughs for another five years.

LSWCD has continued the high rate of cost share sign up by allocating all of its FY2021 funds with well over a half a million on additional cost share ready to be put on the ground. With the budget picture less clear for FY2022, its all the more important that a substantial amount of conservation is now on the ground to help Loudoun and Virginia meet their Bay TMDL goals.

Northern Virginia SWCD
“Conservation Work Continues”

NVSWCD welcomes Meredith Keppel, as our fall outreach intern. Meredith is a junior at George Mason University studying Environmental and Sustainability Studies with a concentration in Policy and Economics. In 2016, Meredith was featured by NVSWCD as part of our Green Breakfast series, speaking on “Mushrooms, Fungi, and Environmental Remediation,” and has shared in TEDx on the subject.: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SeI2Kkk3rg. Meredith will be assisting with many of our in-person and virtual education events this fall.

VCAP

NVSWCD received 67 applications for VCAP site visits for consideration in FY21. Staff selected the top 50 sites using geographic criteria approved by the NVSWCD Board of Directors that include targeted watersheds and communities with poor water quality and/or are socio-economically disadvantaged. Site visits are currently being scheduled and will take place through mid-December.
The 2019 Session of the Virginia General Assembly resulted in record high levels of funding for agriculture conservation incentive program available to District ag producers and across Virginia. This resulted due to a significant state budget surplus the previous year, a portion of which must be spent on water quality. Concurrent with those funding decisions by the General Assembly, significant changes were occurring to some of the ag programs to increase program flexibility and options for producers. All this to help move Virginia forward with meeting its Chesapeake Bay goals. Ag producers in the District responded loud and clear to the improved program offerings and flexible program options. Culpeper District staff allocated a record high $4.3 million across the 5 member counties; essentially all of the funding allocated to the District. Previous to this a "high" cost share year was in the neighborhood of $1.5 million. Producers in the District are to be applauded for moving forward with many of their projects and engaging the staff in what they do well; conservation planning and design. Program funding still remains strong and now is an excellent time to consider additional projects while funding is available.

Midway through the program year, the District Board took the opportunity to recognize staff for their hard work and excellent customer service; taking on nearly three times the normal workload. The Board engaged ex Delegate Butch Davies to present the staff with the recognition on their behalf. According to Davies, “This plaque represents what the District is well known for ... excellent customer service and a strong work ethic. The District's reputation is no secret, if you want to get something accomplished on your land, these are the people to get in contact with.”

In addition to all the ag work, staff also completed a $750,000 four-year septic cost share grant, published a gravel driveway BMP guide and completed Year 1 of a three-year NOAA education grant.