HEADWATERS SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Technical

- Headwaters will be providing outreach on the VCAP program this coming growing season at the Staunton Farmer’s Market! We are looking forward to this opportunity to increase awareness of the VCAP program and stormwater BMPs to the City of Staunton. Come visit us one Saturday morning this year at the market!
- BMP staff continue to work with producers on current VACS projects, and process new applications. Staff also attend the VANTAGE and VA Forage & Grassland Council Conferences held this winter.

Education

- Planning is underway for our 2022 Local Dominion Energy Envirothon! This year the District will also be hosting a separate local competition for middle school students. Our high school teams attended the Area I Training held March 5th at Valley View Farm. Our local competitions will be held April 6th and 7th and Ridgeview Park in Waynesboro.

Flood Control Dams

- Headwaters staff will be conducting our annual dam inspections in March. This will cover all sixteen dams in Augusta County. Staff will be joined by our County Emergency Services Coordinator, along with first responders, district directors, state engineer and landowners.
- This District was awarded the Virginia Lakes and Watersheds Association Dam Safety Award for Best Major Dam Rehabilitation at this year’s VLWA Conference. The Hearthstone Lake rehabilitation project was completed in May 2019. The structure received numerous upgrades including toe drain replacement, new riser hardware, and embankment stabilization and widening of the spillway.
Technical Updates: Technical staff have been busy promoting the cost-share program and taking applications for the 2022 program year. Staff are continuing to work with established landowners, as well as making new connections with local producers. Many of our producers are appreciative of the new cover crop planting dates and have taken advantage of the buffer incentives for the stream exclusion practice. With the $4.8 million in VACS funds, staff are working to push many of our bigger practices through this year, including a variety of animal waste projects. As of March 2022, LFSWCD has obligated approximately 87% of the 2022 VACS finds.

Education Updates: Spring is the busy season for Lord Fairfax SWCD! We are planning for various soil and water education activities in the next few months. We are hosting an in-person local Envirothon competition and are expecting at least 5 competing teams. LFSWCD is also co-hosting the Area 1 Envirothon with the Shenandoah Valley SWCD.

Education staff are currently planning community events to celebrate National Trails Day, Earth Day and Father’s Day with many of our partner organizations. Planning for outdoor environmental education summer camps is underway and will be held in June. LFSWCD co-host these summer camps with Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River for two age groups, River Players (6-9 years old) and River Rangers (10-13 years old).

Strasburg Community Garden: The Strasburg Community Garden is now approaching its fifth year of programming. Garden plots have been rented out by community members and families to grow fresh, healthy produce for the season. For the Spring Semester, we have a college student with the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation completing a hands-on practicum placement with the garden. She will be completing various projects, including new infrastructure and general maintenance, as well as hosting a community workday.
The Mountain SWCD has been extremely busy with the BMP program.

The District has assisted other agencies with adult education programs.

The Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District’s equipment program is underway. We offer a litter spreader, No-Till seeder, pasture drag, and weed wiper.
MOUNTAIN CASTLES SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

- Staff have been busy sending out new mailings advertising the VACS program and creating and updating a district email and mailing list.

- Staff have written conservation plans which have resulted in the allocation of approximately 50% of the VACS Chesapeake Bay funding and 100% of the OCB and Mountain Valley Pipeline funding. There has been significant interest in animal waste storage facility projects.

- Jeff Mutter has been working toward attaining Engineering Job Approval Authority with Ben Chester of DCR.

- Abby Pierson and Jeff Mutter have been participating in RUSLE2 training.

- Abby is working toward Chesapeake Bay Landscaping Certification and completed field training in Fredericksburg.

- Appalachian Trail Conservancy Community Grant update: 8 different wildlife kits have been rotating through 2nd grade classrooms. Education staff have also been leading classroom activities related to the kits and have been preparing for spring planting in the school gardens.

- Education staff have been preparing for a District Middle School Envirothon and spring MWEEs for 6th and 7th grades.
The District Board unanimously voted in January to appoint Charles Winder as Director following the resignation of John Knox in 2021. Charles will represent the City of Lexington on the NBSWCD Board of Directors.

Officer elections for the Board of Directors were held at the January 19 business meeting and are as follows: Rob Deyo, Chair; Reid Mackey, Vice Chair; Larry Hurd, Treasurer.

The firm performing the District’s audit in December released its final report in February, with no significant findings of concern.

The Clean Water Farm Award has been presented to John Houser of Fairfield.

Sarah Coffey with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation has been participating in our monthly business meetings to share updates on local programs and events. Sarah is finalizing plans for Spring planting projects in the area, which include Kendal at Lexington and Sunnyside Farm, among others. A “Buffers for Birders” event is being planned tentatively for June 11, to be held at the Highland Center in Monterey. The event will focus on how riparian buffers can be used to create suitable habitats for birds and include guest speakers, lunch, and other activities.

Conservation staff have completed cover crop registrations and continue working with Jeff Cline at DCR to update Nutrient Management Plans as needed.

The Personnel Committee is in the process of interviewing candidates for the Office Administrator position, as Lisa Howe’s last day with the District is March 31.

The Lexington USDA Service Center remains closed to the public and staff are working remotely as much as possible.
SHENANDOAH VALLEY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

SVSWCD Staff and Partners coordinated and organized a Teacher Workshop at the Massanutten Technical Center Land Laboratory located on Valley View Farm. The purpose of the workshop was to introduce teachers to the Land Laboratory and provide an opportunity for them to increase their base knowledge on various natural resource topics. The Workshop was conducted Envirothon station style and was attended by 16 teachers from Rockingham County Public Schools.

SVSWCD Staff recently scanned copies of VACS Manuals from 1986 – present, and saved the electronic copy in order to eliminate the need to store the older paper copies of these manuals. The paper copies were recycled. To request an electronic copy of a VACS Manual, contact Elizabeth Dellinger at elizabeth.dellinger@svswcd.org.

Our District was recently awarded a grant from the Pure Water Forum to support the purchase of tree watering bags for distribution to localities in Rockingham County and Page County. Watering bags are designed for deep root saturation to promote deep root growth and reduce transplant and drought shock for trees after being moved from a pot into the ground. The gator bags have been purchased and Chelsea is in the process of distributing them to localities for their use with spring tree plantings.

Photo Credit: https://ikesproducts.com/products/tree-watering-bag/