BLUE RIDGE SWCD
July 1, 2022-August 31, 2022

Annual Farm Tour featuring Henry County:

After a two-year hiatus, the Blue Ridge SWCD bounced back with a tour of Henry County Virginia on Monday, August 22nd. Our first stop was at Hopkins Lumber Company. Hopkins Lumber is a wholesale lumber company, established in 1936 and incorporated in Virginia. Current estimates show this company has an annual revenue of over $20M and employs a staff of approximately 62.

We then traveled to Jenning’s Creek Farm & Kennel. On this farm, angus cattle have been grazing the land since 1959, and tobacco was grown annually until the late 1970’s. Streams are protected by fencing made possible through Blue Ridge SWCD programs, and there is a solar well on the property. This farm has several acres of loblolly pine, oak and poplar, all managed through the VCOF best management practices. Ashley’s Taste of Home catered lunch at the Horse Pasture Volunteer Fire Department. During lunch, Michael Drummond was awarded the Blue Ridge SWCD’s 2022 BMP Forestry Award and our district held a brief board meeting.

For our third stop we traveled to Performance Livestock & Feed Company where Christy Ingram (Operations Manager) provided our group with a personal tour through their production facility and store. Performance Livestock & Feed Company has a rich tradition of family that is deeply rooted in Lawsonville, NC. Their cattle operation initiated the development of their feed production to supply cattle, and others, with great feed. Today, Performance Livestock & Feed Company services customers from Florida to Michigan.

Last, but not least, our last stop was held at Livy’s Ice Cream Shop. There are lots of happy faces in the picture of our group above.
Congratulations to Michael Drummond, Blue Ridge SWCD’s 2021-2022 BMP Forestry Award Winner. Since 2014, Mr. Drummond has worked diligently to manage 179 woodland acres (located in Henry County) with assistance from the Virginia Department of Forestry. Mr. Drummond’s primary objectives are geared toward wildlife for hunting and timber production. Two tracts of land became Certified Stewardship Forests in 2016 and a Certified Tree Farm in 2019.

With the goal of preserving or improving existing soil and water quality, he planted all of the logging decks into wildlife food plots which minimized erosion following the logging operations. Also, all of the bare soil areas that were created during the pond construction were stabilized with permanent grass vegetation. Mr. Drummond’s land management demonstrates stewardship concepts in management of the forest land by following all of the VDOF recommendations that have been put into his Forest Stewardship Plans. He also manages his three properties for a variety of uses.

Mr. Drummond promotes his conservation story by bringing other landowners by his properties to look at the practices he has successfully implemented. It is evident, he has a love for his property that one rarely sees with most landowners. He spends a tremendous amount of time working to improve his land and listens to advice from others on anything that he can do to make improvements.

Dams: The Blue Ridge Soil and Water Conservation District operates 10 high hazard watershed dams in Franklin and Henry counties. All of the dams are mowed twice a year with risers cleaned brush control performed. Currently, four of the dams have remote monitoring equipment installed. One of the dams in Franklin County, the Blackwater #6 (Bowman) dam, had an extensive brush clearing operation performed during the past year on an area between the dam itself and the emergency spillway. This area had been allowed to grow up for upwards of 20 years and now should be in a state that can be mowed and controlled. Two of the dams in Henry County (Leatherwood 2A (Walker) and Leatherwood 6 (Laurel Park) have perennial wet areas on the downstream area below the dams and Blue Ridge SWCD has been working with DCR to address this. The Leatherwood 5 (Lawrence) dam, also located in Henry County, is currently the District’s highest risk dam and is in the process of being rehabbed. This endeavor has recently reached the 60% design phase.

VACS-MVP-VCAP: The PY2022 Virginia Agricultural Cost Share (VACS) and Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) programs were competitive at the Blue Ridge SWCD, seeing funding associated with both programs being practically completely obligated during the program year and a waiting list of unfunded practices left. Due to cancellations, some of the MVP funding has now become available for the PY2023. As has been seen in other Districts, inflation and shortages in materials caused installation costs to increase at a rate higher than cost lists could be adjusted. Many of the approved practices from PY2022 in both programs have been carried over. The District has also taken on Virginia Cost-share Assistance Program (VCAP) funding and is in the process of learning how to administer the program.

Congratulations to Clara Higgins the 2021-2022 Leo Painter Scholarship Award recipient (receiving $1,000). Ms. Higgins is a 2022 honor roll graduate from Patrick Henry High School and Roanoke Valley Governor’s School of Science & Technology. Ms. Higgins’ interests include promoting leadership in the conservation and natural resources field, with an
**Blue Ridge SWCD, continued**

emphasis in Ecological Restoration. She has extensive experience in community service, Girl Scouts, athletics, taking many diverse advanced placement classes and other college level courses throughout her high school career. She plans to continue her education at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University. We at the Blue Ridge SWCD wish Ms. Higgins a prosperous and rewarding career in her future educational endeavors.

**Education:**
Sontag Elementary School: 4-H Garden Project using “See Them Sprout” curriculum began in spring 2022 for 3rd and 4th grades. This project began its’ second season in August 2022. The Blue Ridge SWCD plans to construct a Tumbler-style Composter for Sontag Elementary’s garden project. This environmental outreach project is a cooperative effort of the Virginia Cooperative Extension, Franklin County Master Gardeners, Blue Ridge SWCD and Franklin County Schools. Other environmental outreach programs will be conducted for 1st, 2nd & 5th as well.

**HALIFAX SWCD**

**Cost Share** – The district has had around 45 applications so far. That should account for most of our $1,04,455 allocation. We are one of the districts selected for the pilot Whole Farm Approach Program.

**Education**

**Watershed Adventure Camp** - Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District sent eleven local students to attend the 21st Annual Watershed Adventure Camp at Staunton River Battlefield State Park, held June 27 – July 1, 2022. A total of sixteen students from Halifax, Lake Country, and Southside Soil and Water Conservation Districts attended this five-day program to learn about a variety of natural resources and environmental conservation topics. Valuable assistance came from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the staff at Staunton River Battlefield State Park, Ward Burton Foundation, Barbara Martin with the Halifax Beekeepers Association, Randy Wade and Ward Burton and the Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation, Longwood University, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Southside
Halifax SWCD, continued

Master Naturalists, Virginia Department of Forestry, SWCD employees, and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**Food Plot Contest** – The district provided 18 youth with a seed mix consisting of cow peas, sunflowers, buckwheat, sorghum, and crimson clover. We have judged the plots and they look great. The winners will be recognized at our annual banquet in November.

Youth Conservation Camp – Halifax SWCD sponsored three campers for YCC.

**LAKE COUNTRY SWCD**

**OCB Agricultural BMP Cost-Share Program**

The district has been busy with Virginia BMP sign-up. For PY23 the district was allocated $2,093,460.00 for BMP Cost-Share assistance. We are continuing to meet with new clients and take applications.

**Lake Country SWCD ‘s New Office Location**

Lake Country SWCD purchased the old Touchstone Bank property and has relocated to our new office. We are located at 581 Madison Street, Boydton VA.
Lake Country SWCD, continued

Lake Country SWCD help sponsor a fencing school held at the new Mecklenburg County Middle/High School on April 7, 2022. Stay-Tuff Fence Manufacturing, the VA Forage and Grassland Council and VA Cooperative Extension.

Watershed Adventure Camp 2022
Camp was held in July at the Staunton River Battlefield State Park. Lake Country, Halifax and Southside SWCD conducted the week-long camp. The camp was held for 4th and 5th grade students the opportunity to be physically active and enjoy hands on activities.

Staunton River Battlefield State Park Instructor enlightening students through re-enactment on how to march, stand at attention, properly load and use a musket during battle.
Students take turns at the hands-on activity on soil erosion presentation.

Mulberry Hill located at Randolph VA – Longwood University Professor demonstrates the Arch-logical dig at one of the activity stops during the Watershed Adventure Camp.

Picture to Left: Ward Burton’s Wildlife Cove – Randy Wade, Naturalist instructs students on the Wildlife habitat, dangers, and the importance of wildlife to help complete our ecosystem.
Lake Country SWCD, continued

No Till Drill and Manure Spreader Equipment Program
The district’s rental no-till drill equipment continues to be steady. Approximately 3200 acres were no-tilled during PY21/22.

Local Work Group Meeting-Outreach
Davie Harris and Harvey Baker, NRCS, held a local work group survey/question meeting following the April 11, 2022 board meeting with board of directors and others.

NACD 2022 Summer Meeting
Area V Districts had representation during the NACD Summer meeting held in San Juan, Puerto Rico in August 2022. Pictured are Mr. and Mrs. Richard Chaffin, Mr. Steven Meeks, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Anderson.

PATRICK SWCD
- Patrick County Soil and Water Conservation District partnered with Kevin Keith, Virginia Department of Forestry Senior Forester and presented E. Wayne Clark of Critz, Virginia community with an Outstanding Forest Steward plaque and Stewardship Forest sign at the Patrick County Soil and Water Conservation District’s Board of Directors meeting.
Patrick SWCD, continued

- Patrick SWCD partnered with Virginia Cooperative Extension and local conservation agencies at the Patrick County Summer Pasture Walk at Wind Ridge Farm in Meadows of Dan, Virginia. Folks learned how Tim Service is developing a forage chain for finishing beef using a unique forage sequence including warm season grasses, annuals, perennial ryegrass and novel endophyte fescue as well as stockpiled forage, pollinator plots, two step weaning and riparian areas in his cattle operation.

- Partnering with Virginia Farm Bureau in promoting the 2022 Women's Leadership Gator Raffle to Support Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom and continues to work closely with Patrick County Farm Bureau on activities.

- Patrick SWCD spearheaded the annual Patrick County Kids’ Trout Fishing Day and partnered with Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and various local organizations with approximately 90 participants in attendance enjoying the outdoors along the Mayo River.
Patrick SWCD, continued

- The Patrick SWCD calendar is filling up quickly late summer early fall as word of mouth spreads about the District’s new Haybuster no-till drill. District staff have been busy with landowners interested in using the seeder. The District has available two no-till drill seeders for lease. They are available for planting grasses, legumes, small grains & summer annuals. The rental rate is $9 an acre with $50 minimum. Sod seeding can minimize soil loss during establishment. It can also conserve time, labor, fuel & soil moisture.

- The Patrick County Soil and Water Conservation District continues to actively promote the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practice (BMP) Cost-Share Program and is working with landowners in implementing practices, providing technical assistance and making site visits.

PEAKS OF OTTER SWCD

District staff have been busy performing site visits and developing conservation plans for producers wishing to participate in the VACS program for FY 2023. Staff have met with 10 potential participants since the beginning of the new fiscal year and are busy finalizing plans for 24 BMPs. With hope of completion before the end of the calendar year, Peaks’ has 4 FY22 SL-6W practices currently under some phase of construction.

Several Bedford County producers have also expressed interest in the RMP program this year. District staff have been working closely with a planner and DCR to receive training.
PETER FRANCISCO SWCD

Education

• Peter Francisco SWCD provided 76 educational programs/events with a total of 3,816 participants for FY 2021-22. The best part was that 73 of these programs were in person.

• Students at Central Virginia Christian School summer camp learned about wildlife in Virginia and made edible scat.

• The District sponsored 4 students to 2022 Youth Conservation Camp: Ammon Harkins and Elizabeth Grant from Buckingham and Austin Cox and Celeste Mitchell from Cumberland attended. All 4 students also serve on their respective Envirothon teams.

Left to right: Austin Cox, Celeste Mitchell, Elizabeth Grant, Ammon Harkins

• Sent out Welcome Back email newsletter to Buckingham and Cumberland Teachers showcasing some of our spring and summer programs and field trips. Here’s a link to our latest newsletter as posted on the District’s website: f4d3c5_9602780cc8094b2cb8b1b83af242654c.pdf (peterfranciscoswcd.org)

• Lillian McConkey’s 2020 and 2021 1st place local, state and national award-winning artwork was made into 16 x 20 posters with wood frames and brass plaques. These pictures will hang on the walls at Cumberland High School for a few months and then at the Cumberland Public Library before being hung on the walls here at the District office.
Conservation
District staff have been busy assisting producers and contractors on active projects. Current sign up for PY23 is on-going and productive with new SL6W practices and annual cover-crop and nutrient management practice enrollment.

Peter Francisco SWCD continues to partner with the James River Association on an additional grant agreement for the James River Buffer Program. Staff coordinates the connection of JRA staff to producers implementing SL6Ws interested in installing native hardwoods and participates in the Upper and Middle James Riparian Consortium.

Above: Pipeline for trench on a SL-6
Left: Harwood buffer within an SL-6 fence with James River Association Program

PIEDMONT SWCD
Welcome Dennis Thompson

Dennis joined the Piedmont SWCD team in March as our part time Watershed Dam program manager. Dennis is a retired NRCS Conservation Engineering Technician with 36 years of experience. His expertise will ensure our fourteen watershed dams comply with VA Dam Safety Regulations. PSWCD has several upcoming projects including installing remote monitoring systems on the dams and also completing a small dam repair that Dennis will supervise.

VACS Program and Conservation Practices
PSWCD conservation specialists, Kevin Dunn and Charlie Wootton, completed the FY22 VACS program with allocating over $1.2M of VACS funding! The program protected 16 miles of streambank, installed 12,131 acres of cover crop, implemented 22,032 acres of nutrient management practices and created 709 acres of buffer. Our no-till drills were used to plant 1,600 acres. We expect our FY23 program to be just as successful.
Piedmont SWCD, continued

**Education and Outreach**

With mini-grants offered by PSWCD, eight schools completed projects that created and/or enhanced their outdoor learning areas. Projects included: installing pollinator gardens, building benches, upgrading an aquatic learning station and providing tools and resources for student investigations and explorations. PSWCD also presented several programs at the local library, awarded certificates for over 375 posters, coordinated an “Imagine a Day Without Water” essay contest, awarded 4 continuing education scholarships and co-hosted the Area V Envirothon competition.

![Mini Grants 2022]

**2022 Strategic Planning**

PSWCD completed the planning process to create a new four-year strategic plan that will lead us through FY2026. Highlights include increasing public awareness of the District, increasing participation in VCAP, developing new educational programs targeting families, implementing board development trainings at monthly board meetings and fostering new partnerships in the community.

**New Board Members**

Erin Small joined our Board as the VCE agent appointment. Erin is the VCE Ag & Natural Resource Agent for Prince Edward County. Her education and past experience include freshwater fisheries, high school agricultural teacher and horticulture specialist. Mackenzie Gunn, VCE Ag & Natural Resource Agent for Amelia County, joins the Board as an Associate Director. Mackenzie’s background includes marine biology,
Piedmont SWCD, continued

sustainable agriculture, aquaculture research and monitoring groundwater contamination. Dr. Kathy Gee, Associate Professor of Environmental Science at Longwood University, also joins the Board as an Associate Director. In addition to her work at Longwood University, Dr. Gee is a licensed stormwater engineer with a small local practice. She grew up on a beef cattle and tobacco farm in Nottoway County.

![Erin Small](image1.png)  
![Mackenzie Gunn](image2.png)  
![Dr. Kathy Gee](image3.png)

PITTSYLVANIA SWCD

Pittsylvania SWCD will be holding the first round of FY23 approvals on September 20th. We have a wide variety of projects, pending approval, such as Stream Exclusion, Watering System Extensions, Cover Crops, Manure Injection, Grass Plantings, and a Tree Planting. Pittsylvania SWCD has been continually working with producers and contractors during project construction to ensure projects are completed to the correct standard. The District has recently paid out two Mountain Valley Pipeline Funds projects. The remaining approved MVP Funds projects are currently under construction or waiting on a contractor to start the project.

Pittsylvania SWCD will be holding their annual educational event, Agriculture Awareness Day, during the month of September at Hill and Dale Stock Farm in Chatham, VA. This event will be held over two days for all 4th graders in Pittsylvania County. There will be approximately 800 students that come to learn about the different aspects of agriculture in our county. They will visit 8 stations: Conservation, Livestock, Field Crops, Horses, Gardening, Forestry, Dairy, and Wildlife. Pittsylvania SWCD staff will also be participating in Career Choice Day on September 28th and September 29th to talk with students about our occupations. District staff is continuously looking for ways to improve our education and outreach program.
ROBERT E LEE SWCD

Robert E. Lee Soil and Water Conservation District is staying busy working on plans and designs for new projects. Monitoring progress on projects under construction and meeting with new producers that are interested in our programs. Our district projects consist of: livestock exclusion, cover crop for residue management, reforestation of hayland, and extension of existing water system. Helping landowners with their nutrient management plans. Also monitoring the six district watershed dams. Our Clean Water Award went to Kinkle Robinson owner of Laithreach Farm in Pamplin VA.

K-12 EDUCATION Our District offers many opportunities to be involved in learning about soil and water conservation Our fun K-12 classroom programs & workshops are designed to fit the science SOLs and are offered free of charge to schools and other organizations within our district. These programs are interactive and can be modified to fit your classes’ schedule and needs. Some topics include: water cycle, water pollution/conservation, composting, recycling, Virginia wildlife, and soil conservation. We were able to provide soil programs and water cycle activities to Appomattox and Amherst Co Schools this Spring. It was wonderful for the schools to be opened back up to field trips. We enjoyed getting back to our programs in person and able to provide two station with invertebrates in the creeks and the Enviroscape. We hosted a field trip with the Appomattox Christian Academy at James River State Park with 18 of their Elementary and Middle School Kids. We also were able to assist with a field trip for Amherst Co Middle School for two days and were able to work with 98 kids. Lauran participated in Camp Woods and Wildlife, as well.

We had to say good bye to Lauran Campbell our Conservation Education Specialist who was able to get into her Masters Program with WVU. We appreciate all of the hard work Lauran was able to do while with us. She updated our Education Contact list, helped revamp our Website and rebuild our Education Program. While Lauran was here from November thru July she reached 1643 people. This is a huge amount! Lauran stayed busy and had a wondertime with her groups. Lauran did an awesome job and it will be hard to replace her! We are currently recruiting for this position and are hoping to fill it soon.
Southside SWCD has allocated 60% so far of its 2023 VACS allocation with more practices to approve at the September meeting. Staff has been busy meeting with producers and creating plans for the year. The District has been to a few outreach meetings over the past few months, the most recent being the Central Virginia Crop Expo to meet with producers and give program updates. We have had several producers complete practices over the summer. It has certainly been a busy season for the VACS program.

Southside SWCD granted two scholarships to two deserving seniors that are pursuing future careers in conservation and agriculture: Hannah Geesaman (Charlotte Co.) and Kayla Foster (Lunenburg Co.), through the Joe and Helen Vaden Scholarship. The District assisted in sponsoring Ben Atkins, a student at Virginia Tech and resident of Lunenburg County, to attend the International Soil Judging Contest that was held in Scotland in July. Ben was a national individual winner at the US Soil Judging Contest this past April. Staff has been conducting activities for school summer camps, focusing on water quality and wildlife conservation. In partnership with Halifax SWCD and Lake Country SWCD, we had an amazing week with 16 students at Staunton River Battlefield State Park for our annual Watershed Adventure Camp. It was definitely a fun-filled week that covered water quality, wildlife, pollinators, forestry, soil and so much more. We can’t wait to do it again next June. This year, the office is getting requests for more school programs, so we are excited to finally get back into the classroom!

All of us at Southside SWCD hope our fellow Districts are doing well and thriving as we get moving along with a new fiscal year.

Respectfully submitted,
Daphne Jamison, Area V Chair
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