AREA V - District Reports
Area V Spring Meeting – March 1, 2023
VASWCD Quarterly Board Meeting – March 9, 2023

Blue Ridge SWCD  Peter Francisco SWCD
Halifax SWCD     Piedmont SWCD
Lake Country SWCD Pittsylvania SWCD
Patrick SWCD     Robert E Lee SWCD
Peaks of Otter SWCD Southside SWCD

BLUE RIDGE SWCD

District:
Field work has been steady at the Blue Ridge SWCD over the last few months. Weather has been rainy and muddy during this time, but a few practices have gotten done. Included in these is our first SL-6F, which also may be the practice of this kind completed in the state. This practice is new to our manual and is basically the same thing as an SL-6W (Our flagship stream exclusion and grazing management practice) only there is allowance for a hay field in the flood plain between the exclusion fence and a marked off area for the buffer. This practice and a companion SL-6W were completed in near record time after the pre-construction meeting was held, around 1 month. These were also the last practices that Allen Jackson helped check-out before he left our District to become Deputy Fire Marshall for Franklin County. In addition to field work, we have been taking advantage of trainings that are held this time of year like most other districts. This has included both Agricultural training and training related to VCAP. We are hoping to have our first approved VCAP practice soon.

Dams: Several of the watershed dam Emergency Action Plans have been successfully updated.

VCAP:
The Senior Conservation Specialist and the Program Manager/Education Coordinator participated in the Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional field exercise on February 16, 2023 in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Education:
Area V hosted its’ Envirothon Training at Longwood Environmental Education Center on Friday, February 24th. Several students from Area V participated in this event to prepare for the Area V Envirothon competition at the Holiday Lake 4-H Center in Appomattox, Virginia. Blue Ridge SWCD is sponsoring fourteen students and two coaches from Franklin County High School and a home-school team from Henry County.
Ferrum College is hosting their first ever “Environmental, Recreation and Eco-Tourism Career and Internship Fair” on Friday, March 24, 2023.
BLUE RIDGE SWCD, continued

District Staff:
During this quarter the district’s Conservation Technician, Allen Jackson, made a career move as the Deputy Fire Marshall for Franklin County. Allen served the district well and we wish him the best in his new career endeavors.

HALIFAX SWCD

Education
- We are in the middle of our Ag Series. Topics have included pasture weeds, agency updates, hay production, and our last meeting in March will be about precision agriculture.

- We are accepting applications for 3 scholarships, Youth Conservation Camp, and we are sponsoring one camper for Camp Woods and Wildlife.

- Melissa Waller, our education and outreach specialist has been doing a weekly natural resources and agriculture class for a local private school and a bi-weekly class for a homeschool group.

- Luke Hudson and Justin Smith gave updates on the cost share program to the Halifax County Cattlemen’s Association at their February meeting.

Cost Share
Cost Share- Halifax SWCD has been extremely busy, as have other districts, obligating record funding in PY23. Along with our regular cost share funds, we have also been busy with learning the Whole Farm Approach pilot practice and signing producers up for that.
OCB Agricultural BMP Cost-Share Program FY23/24
We have obligated $2,093,000.00 in cost-share funds. We are continuously taking new applications in dealing with BMP’s that need to be wrapped-up material needed is scarce and on back order.

Tire Recycle with Emanual Tire Recycle Service, Inc
Approximately 700 tires were loaded on the tractor trailer for recycle. We are pleased and proud of this service we have to offer our farmers in the counties we serve.

Picture to right: I am Emily Oberholtzer and I am from Mecklenburg County, Virginia. I began working at Lake Country Soil and Water Conservation District as a Conservation Specialist in October 2022. I graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a bachelor’s degree in Environmental Studies in 2017. I enjoy the outdoors, running, and my two dogs, Si and Sarge.
The Patrick County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors recognized staff for their
dedicated and devoted service:

Sandra Heath, District Manager, 25 years
Tony Collins, District Conservation Specialist, 20 years

Recognized Veterans and Patrick SWCD Directors: Joseph Sparks and Richard Kreh for their dedicated
service to our country.

Continue to promote the 2023 VASWCD Photo Contest, this year's theme is "Conservation: Small
Actions, Big Impact"

Partnering with local Virginia Cooperative Extension office with the 2023 Producer Tour, featuring
livestock and crop tours.

District staff have been busy with landowners renting the District’s Haybuster no-till drill. Many
landowners have stopped by the office expressing interest in the seeder and discussing their needs to
improve conservation on their land. The District also works closely with the local extension office in
assisting landowners with soil sample information.

Held annual Christmas Tree Recycling event to help with fish habitat at Fairy Stone Lake.

District staff discussed District programs with members of the Patrick County Cattlemen’s Association at
their recent meeting.

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. The District also
continues sharing valuable information through their Facebook page.
PEAKS OF OTTER SWCD

Peaks of Otter has been very busy with not only VACS projects but with VCAP and RMPs. With a total of $670,342.00 in cost share funds to allocate, Peaks has found a home for all but $34K! Not to mention we have over $128K in CREP this fiscal year!

Interest in VCAP in Bedford has really picked up over the last 2 years. A conservation landscaping practice was just approved for a commerical site where a 95,371 sq.ft. area is being converted from turf grass to a native meadow. Another conservation landscaping practice is in the works for a large site along the shores of Smith Mountain Lake.

New to Peaks this fiscal year, several RMPs are in various stages of development. One producer, with 11 RMPs covering just over 900 acres is in the final stages of review with certification to follow soon after. The District is also in the final stages of organizing a community outreach event. The date will be April 1st and the location will be the Watson farm just a few minutes from the District office. Once the agenda is finalized we will send the invite out to all districts through VASWCD.

Finally, with the ever increasing interest in District programs, our office of 2 is overwhelmed! Peaks is currently hiring for a Conservation Technician and Conservation Specialist. The closing date for applications is March 13th so we will soon be welcoming new staff!
PETER FRANCISCO SWCD

Education

- Peter Francisco staff continues offering weekly after-school STEM programs for Buckingham Middle School during the months of January and February as part of their 21st Century Grant. Programs included: Wildlife, Water and Your Body, Water and Your Heart, Gyotaku Fish Printing, Icky/Sticky/Ooo, Chemical reactions (Dancing heart and lava lamp experiments), Native Virginian Birds, Intro to Soils/Edible soil profiles, Erosion experiments/Erosion & Sediment Journey.

- The District teamed up with Buckingham Cooperative Extension for a “Caring and Sharing” Fun Friday after-school program at Buckingham Elementary School. Students rotated among 4 stations: Caring for the Elderly where students made Valentine’s for local nursing home residents, Caring for your family where students made coupon booklets for family members, caring for animals where students made bird feeders and caring for yourself where students made trail mix—a healthy snack for themselves.

- Education Programs were conducted at Buckingham Preschool for January and February. Students learned about the water cycle and how important water is for their bodies. Students are sitting in front of two outlines their classmates and colored in the amount of water in their for a visual.

- PFSWCD has two teams participating in the 2023 Envirothon Competition. Joshua Fleenor (Cumberland Ag teacher) will be coaching the Cumberland team. Andrew Schmitt (Buckingham Ag teacher) will be coaching the Buckingham team. A training workshop was held at the Longwood University Environmental Education Center on February 24. The area has 8 teams competing this year and the workshop had 88 participants!

Peter Francisco SWCD staff have been busy over the last few months verifying cover crop practices, inspecting fencing/watering system practices, no-till drill winter maintenance and partnering with DCR Engineering Staff and Virginia Cooperative Extension staff on various site assessments. 44% approved of a 2.1 million budget with 2 technical staff is quite an accomplishment considering the workload associated with it.
We conducted a watershed dam landowner informational meeting in partnership with DCR Dam Safety Staff, providing updates to the landowners and County officials on the history behind the dams, easement definitions, the District’s responsibilities, dam break inundation studies and emergency action planning expectations.

We welcome our new Conservation Technician, Cody Smith. Cody is settling into his new role taking the lead on the District DEQ 319 TMDL Residential Septic Grant and the Local Septic Grant for the District. He is working his way through the conservation planning and engineering design process.

Kelly Snoddy represented the Peter Francisco SWCD, VACDE and SECDEA at the 2023 NACD meeting in New Orleans February, 2023 in her roll has the alternate Southeast regional representative for the NCDEA. She is currently serving as the SECDEA Vice-President.
VACS Program and Conservation Practices
PSWCD conservation staff, Kevin Dunn, Ty Smith and Charlie Wootton are working diligently to implement the largest VACS funding program to date! Highlights of approvals to date: Over 20,195 acres of cover crops and 8,830 acres of nutrient management practices. PSWCD continues to work with NRCS and VCE partners in promoting program. No-till drill equipment rental program seeded 1,620 acres in 2022.

Education and Outreach
PSWCD is working with Longwood University Design Lab students to develop designs for the trailer (inside walls and outside wrap), focusing on healthy soil and watersheds.

- Other resources PSWCD staff have produced: ‘Seek’ app for Scavenger hunts; Wildlife Scat & track shadow boxes; “Journey Boxes” to loan to educators and schools to assist with teaching natural resources

-PSWCD is developing a partnership with the Farmville Library and Longwood Center for Visual Arts to provide an educational poster contest event for homeschoolers.

- Recognizing our dedicated board by creating individual, custom “Spotlights” that are shared on Facebook have been a nice way to say thank you.

- Other education programming in the works: Poster Contest, Scholarships, Envirothon, Classroom programs, Youth Conservation Leadership Institute student project, YCC promotion/applications
PIEDMONT SWCD, continued

2022 Awards: CWFA, Conservation Educator, Exhibit and Service

![Conservation Educator](image)

We are proud to have the recipient of the Conservation Educator of the year award in our district. Congratulations to Amelia County High School Agriculture Teacher Mrs. Margaret Jones. Mrs. Jones was recognized at the annual meeting and got a surprise visit from Kelly Atkinson and board member Allison Crews at a faculty meeting.

Clean Water Farm Award

John Shepherd, Nottoway County grain farmer, was awarded the Chowan Basin Clean Water Farm Award at the VASWCD Annual Meeting in December. John has been farming for over 15 years and implements many best management practices to protect and grow healthy soil and clean waterways.

PITTSYLVANIA SWCD

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 held several rounds of approvals and have approved a variety of projects including: Stream Exclusion, Watering System Extensions, Cover Crops, Manure Injection, Grass Plantings, Woodland Buffer Filter Area, and a Tree Planting. Pittsylvania SWCD is still conducting field visits and plans to hold another round of approvals at the March Board Meeting.

The District hosted an outreach event and invited other local Ag Agencies to speak in February. The event was called “Agricultural Program Opportunities in Pittsylvania County.” At the event, representatives from Pittsylvania SWCD, NRCS, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Small Farms Program, and Virginia Department of
Forestry spoke about programs and/or technical assistance that are offered. Farm Service Agency was unable to attend but did provide information to pass along to the producers. Pittsylvania SWCD also had a producer that spoke at the meeting about his experiences with some of the programs. There were fifty-three attendees, not including speakers.

*Pictured above is Pittsylvania SWCD Board of Directors and Staff before the Outreach Meeting. Left to Right: Amber Eanes (District Manager/Conservation Specialist), Steve Cassada (Treasurer), Stephen Barts (VCE Director), Tom Keatts (Vice Chairman), Jimmy Rigney (Secretary), Logan Mills (Associate Director), Tom Kelley (Chairman), and Jessy Lacks (Conservation Technician).*

*Above are pictures during the Outreach Meeting held in February*
PITTSYLVANIA SWCD, continued

Pittsylvania SWCD staff taught two classes at Heritage Academy in Dry Fork, Virginia. During the first class, staff taught the students about the water cycle and how pollution can occur. During the second class, staff brought in an Enviroscape to demonstrate to the students what happens when pollution occurs. Staff ran several scenarios with the students ranging from worst case pollution scenarios to the best-case scenarios. District staff is continuously looking for ways to improve our education and outreach program.

![Image of Amber Eanes teaching children]

*Pictured above is Amber Eanes (District Manager/Conservation Specialist) teaching children at Heritage Academy about non-point source pollution.*

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 The Bennett Family who owns Knoll Crest Farm in Red House, VA.
ROBERT E LEE SWCD, continued

K-12 EDUCATION:
Our district offers various lessons and activities for all grade levels, covering many topics related to agricultural, natural resources, and conservation. One project conducted by staff this year was the construction of a Soil Tunnel Table. The table was designed and constructed over the course of 4 weeks using two card tables and plywood as the base. The table features vegetables and other plants as well as animals such as an earthworm, spider, and rabbit. Since completion we have brought the table to events and schools, it has been well liked by participants. We also presented the Enviroscape to several elementary school classes while introducing the concepts of water pollution and soil erosion. Additionally, we have done soil erosion boxes with elementary students. Another unit we focused on this season was macroinvertebrates. On several dates throughout the fall, we partnered with Holiday Lake 4-H Center to assist with their school field trips. Students conducted water quality assessments via chemical tests and calculated pollution indexes based on macroinvertebrate specimens they collected themselves. We have also continued to work closely with our local libraries through story time events to increase community engagement. The final large project we have worked on is the planning of the Envirothon competition this April. We have an estimated 8 competing teams this year for Area V.

We have two exciting programs that are intended to kickoff Fall 2023. We are in the process of obtaining an Underground Classroom trailer, similar to Headwaters SWCD trailer, that we will use to further educate and connect with our local schools and community events. Lastly, we are introducing an Outdoor Classroom Grant program open to all K-12 teachers in our district. This program will provide 4 grants a year, $500 to educators desiring to create a space or $250 for additions to established outdoor classrooms. One grant will be awarded to each school district (Appomattox, Amherst, Campbell County, and Lynchburg City). These funds can be used to construct any outdoor learning space such as a garden or to purchase equipment such as water tests.
We have a new director! Sadly, Eugene Wells (Elected Charlotte County) has had to step down as a voting member of our board and will now be an associate director. We welcome William V. Nichols (“V”) to fill Eugene’s position on our board. V is a life-long farmer from Charlotte County and serves on our local FSA County Committee. He has worked with Southside SWCD in the past through the VACS program and drill rentals.

Southside SWCD has allocated 100% its 2023 VACS allocation with more participants asking for conservation plans that will be considered for the upcoming cost-share year. The staff has enjoyed getting out in the field and meeting with new producers.

Southside hosted their 2023 Agency Partner Outreach meeting on February 14th, 2023, at the Barn at Pine View, Keysville. Attendance of 59 got to learn about the history of Southside SWCD and all of the programs that we offer. Partner agencies, NRCS, FSA, DOF, VCE and VSU Small Outreach, gave updates on their programs. Lydia Fitzgerald with NRCS/VA Tech arranged a producer panel for a cover crop question and answer. We met with several producers that are new to the area and were available for one-on-one conversation throughout the afternoon. We appreciate all of our agency partners being available to speak and as well as several of our directors that could attend to meet producers. We were very pleased with the turnout of this event and look forward to having it again next year.

Southside SWCD has been back in the classroom! We are so excited to get back to school for programs with our students. We have had several soils lessons, erosion and rock cycle, watersheds, and backyard habitats. We look forward to doing more lessons this spring and working with our fellow Districts, Halifax and Lake Country, to execute Watershed Adventure Camp again this summer.

All of us at Southside SWCD hope our fellow Districts are doing well!

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Dunn, Area V Chair
Peter Francisco SWCD Director