

Conservation on the Ground

Summer 2007

BMP Loan Assistance

Low interest loan financing is available to producers for implementation of specific cost share practices. In addition to the eligible practices for financing, the VA AG BMP Loan program also finances No-Till Drills. The minimum loan amount is \$5,000. Loan assistance will be made available at an effective rate of 3% per year. Applications will be accepted after July 1, 2007.

CREP

CREP Easements are now paying landowners \$1000 per acre (a one-time payment), up from \$500. An easement ensures that your current CREP land use decisions remain unchanged permanently, after you no longer own the land. DCR holds the easement, coordinates the deed recording process, and pays all the costs for surveying and titling. For more info contact Diane Dunaway at DCR at 804-786-7717.

New Cost Share Program Sign Up Announced

Sign up for the Virginia Best Management Practice (BMP) Cost Share Program will begin on **July 16, 2007** at the District office. This program provides cost share and technical assistance to landowners and agricultural operators that voluntarily install selected BMP's. With the approaching deadline of 2010 for removing the Chesapeake Bay from the federal impaired waters list, Virginia has intensified its focus on implementation of cost effective agricultural BMP's that will provide the greatest reduction of nutrients and sediments. Cost share practices must protect the taxpayer's interest by implementing the most effective practices possible in locations that achieve the greatest reductions. Livestock exclusion, riparian buffers, nutrient management, cover crops, vegetative cover and continuous no-till are all designated as priority practices.

Producers who are interested in implementing a BMP through the cost share program are urged to visit the office to begin planning and signup. The District will accept applications until **August 17, 2007**. After the deadline, applications will be ranked based on environmental considerations, all funds are usually allocated during the signup period, therefore, timely applications are encouraged. For additional information contact Wayne Pierson at 804-443-2327 ext. 101.

Agricultural Clearing and Grading

Prior to any maintenance, clearing and/or grading for agricultural related activities, the District strongly recommends that farmers and landowners first contact the local NRCS or FSA office. Some of these activities require local, state or federal permits and approvals prior to commencement of activity. The guidance and advice may prevent the landowner from incurring penalties and fines for performing the work without required approvals or adversely affecting eligibility for USDA programs.

At the Three Rivers SWCD Awards Banquet the following were recognized for their outstanding contributions to the conservation and preservation of our natural resources.

Wildlife Conservationist of the Year

Three Rivers SWCD recognized Mr. & Mrs. Edgar Lafferty of Elsing Green for their outstanding contributions to wildlife restoration in the York Watershed. Elsing Green is located along the Pamunkey River in King William County and is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register, the National Register of Historic Places and the Secretary of the Interior has designated Elsing Green as a National Historic Landmark. This Colonial Virginia Plantation has been in continuous operation for over 300 years. Elsing Green currently consists of approximately 2,254 acres. Much of the land is cultivated to continue as an operating plantation. The remainder consists of woods, marsh and swamp land, currently serving as a wildlife refuge. The Lafferty family personally designed, laid out and planted the gardens, shrubbery and trees resulting in a beautiful, simple and natural setting for one of this country's most beautiful homes. Also situated on the property are a smoke house, spring house, gate house, two necessities, and a plantation office.

The Laffertys have made significant contributions to the conservation of wildlife in the area. Before the Laffertys acquired Elsing Green, Canada Geese had left the fields and marshes, but after establishment of the refuge nearly 40 years ago, geese and ducks returned to the area and on any given day you can see deer in the fields and on the lawn of the manor house. In 1980, Mr. Lafferty granted a preservation easement on Elsing Green, and the surrounding farmland, marshes and forest to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission. The easement not only protects the property from demolition, inappropriate change, but also subdivision and commercial development forever.

Outstanding Stewardship Award

This year's recipient of the Outstanding Stewardship Award is Dunkirk Farm. Dunkirk Farm is operated by the Otto brothers, Wayne and Kenneth, since 1970. The Otto's farm in the counties of Essex, King William and King & Queen. Their operation consists of 2,285 acres of cropland. The crop rotations utilized by the Otto's are 750 acres of corn, 875 acres of wheat, and 1200 acres of soybeans. Throughout the acres of cropland, continuous no-till is practiced. During the winter months, fields are planted with cover crops not only for nutrient value but also to decrease erosion. Nutrient Management and Integrated Pest Management are two valuable tools used by the Ottos. Soil tests are taken regularly to determine fertilizer and liming rates. Their Nutrient Management Plan was written by the Department of Conservation & Recreation, Bob Waring, and is currently being implemented. The Ottos regularly practice split applications for their wheat and corn. They have worked closely with their local extension agents Mike Day and Chris Lawrence to actively implement an Integrated Pest Management Program. This program is being implemented through scouting to determine economic thresholds to keep crop damage at an acceptable level. Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act Plans and Conservation Plans have been developed and are actively utilized on all cropland. The Ottos have voluntarily installed 1500 feet of fencing to prohibit their cattle from the stream and practice rotational grazing using Rye. They are also active in our community by participating in the local Farm Bureau. Numerous waterways and critical area seedings have been installed to prevent excessive erosion from soil entering Virginia's waterways.

Field borders and/or filter strips are maintained along the edges of fields to trap sediment and nutrients and provide wildlife benefits. Therefore, the Three Rivers District feels the Ottos have demonstrated a conscious effort to preserve and conserve natural resources within our community.

Bay Friendly Clean Water Farm Award

This year's recipient of the Bay Friendly Clean Water Farm Award is Cloverfield Enterprises. Cloverfield Enterprises is operated by the Father-Sons partnership of James, Jay and Robert Hundley since 1982. The Hundley's farm in the counties of Essex, Caroline and King George. Their operation consists of 6,061 acres of cropland, 40 acres of pasture, 60 acres of hayland and 75 acres of woodland. The crop rotations utilized by the Hundley's are 2709 acres of corn, 826 acres of barley, 958 acres of wheat and 2918 acres of soybeans. Throughout the 6061 acres of cropland, no-till is consistently practiced. In the winter months most fields are planted with cover crops not only for nutrient value but also to decrease erosion. They routinely leave crops around field edges for wildlife benefits. Nutrient Management and Integrated Pest Management are two valuable tools used by the Hundleys. Soil tests and tissue samples are taken regularly to determine fertilizer and liming rates. Their Nutrient Management Plan was written by the DCR and is currently being implemented. The Hundleys work closely with Keith Balderson, Extension Agent, to actively implement an Integrated Pest Management program. Conservation plans have been developed and are actively utilized on all cropland. In addition to cropland conservation management, the Hundleys maintain forest BMP's on their woodland and work closely with the Department of Forestry through a Stewardship Plan. The Hundleys have voluntarily installed 17 acres of fencing to prohibit their cattle from the stream. They also implement GPS guidance for the sprayer and custom booms to avoid overlapping of chemicals on cropland. They are motivated to be good stewards of the land by implementing these conservation measures for the improvement of the water quality in their community and the Rappahannock River Watershed. They are also active in our community by participating with the Extension Agent on many variety trials and field days. The Hundleys also opened their farm for a "Down on the Farm" Tour and entertained hundreds of guests by answering questions regarding farming and equipment. The Three Rivers SWCD feels Cloverfield Enterprises exhibits outstanding work with resource management and is dedicated to the protection of Virginia's waterways and the Chesapeake Bay.

Additional Award Recipients

Megan Patterson—Three Rivers Volunteer Award—volunteer for 43 1/2 hrs. in office

Tappahannock Essex Volunteer Fire Department—Paul Richardson & Robert Morris—Volunteer Award—Support of the Farm Safety Day Camp program.

Vincent Redman & Zack Quick—King William High School—Wildlife Food Plot Contest Winners

John Dille & Hugh Markham—NRCS—Partnership Award

Brian Cauthorn –Synagro—Business Conservation Leadership Award—support of environmental education.



