



We work with the people who work the land.

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

ALLEGHANY COUNTY, BATH COUNTY, HIGHLAND COUNTY,  
and the CITY OF COVINGTON July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023

**MOUNTAIN SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**65 Courthouse Hill Rd.**  
**P.O. Box 310, Warm Springs, Virginia 24484**  
**540-839-4616 or 1-800-254-3854**

The Mountain Soil & Water Conservation District, a legal subdivision within the state of Virginia, is charged with conserving the soil and water resources of Highland, Bath, and Alleghany Counties, and the City of Covington. The District works closely with the following agencies in order to help farmers, other landowners and land managers, businesses, and local units of government in the wise management and protection of their natural resources.

### U.S. Government

**National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)**-Technical Assistance and Planning in conservation, Soil surveys

**Forest Service**-Management of National Forests and related Environmental Issues

**Farm Service Agency (FSA)**

Cost Sharing for conservation practices

### STATE OF VIRGINIA

**Virginia Division of Soil & Water Conservation**-The Administrative Agency for Conservation Districts provides guidance for employees, Erosion and Sediment Control, Conservation Tax Credits, and Nutrient Management Planning

**Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts**

**Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources**-Wildlife Conservation, Planting materials and Fish Stock

**Virginia Cooperative Extension Service**- Education and information

**Virginia Department of Forestry**- Management of privately owned forests and related environmental issues

**Chesapeake Bay Foundation**- Working across Middle & Upper James Watersheds to improve quality of local water ways.

**Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)**-Environmental management and regulations

The District is governed by a Board of Directors, who serve without salary and are elected by the voters of the District. Two Directors are elected from each county unit. Berkley Casady, Extension Agent, Bath/HighlandCounty, is appointed by the Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Board for a 4-yr. term.

Ellen Ford, Bath County, is also appointed by the Board to serve as a Director-At-Large for a 4-yr. term.

The composition of the Board as of January 1, 2021 is as follows:

- Chair** Ellen Ford  
**Bath County**
- Vice Chair** Terry King  
**Asso. Director Bath County**
- Secretary** Dave Peters  
**Asso. Director Bath County**
- Treasurer** L. Ryan Hodges III  
**Bath County**

### **MEMBERS:**

- Allen Dressler
- Robert Short, Sr.
- City of Covington**
- Rodney P. Leech
- Ari Daniels
- Highland County**
- Christine Hodges
- John Quantz, Sr.
- Alleghany County**
- Kari Sponaugle
- Ext. Agent Appt.

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Mountain Soil & Water Conservation District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the **Department of Conservation and Recreation. (DCR)** Also, with the help of local funds, and self-generated funds from the equipment program, the District employs Lorie Baldwin, Office Administrator; Sue Ailstock, part-time BMP Coordinator; and Chris Swecker, Conservation Specialist.

All of the District's programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, regardless of age, color, race, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, political affiliation, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, marital or familial status, or any other basis protected by law.

The Mountain Soil & Water District meets the third Wednesday of every month at 9:00 a.m. The meeting is open to the public.



**MOUNTAIN SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT STAFF**  
Sue, Lorie and Chris

Lorie & Sue manned a station for the Agriculture Natural Resources Field Day for all 5<sup>th</sup> Graders attending schools in Alleghany County and the City of Covington on Oct. 5, 2022; We partnered with Virginia Extension Agency. There were several stations in which each group of students participated. Our activity represented the layers of soil.



Lorie & Sue manned a station for the Soil Education Field Day (PEN PAL Day) held in Covington on May 23, 2023 for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students attending Sharon Elementary and Callaghan Elementary Schools.



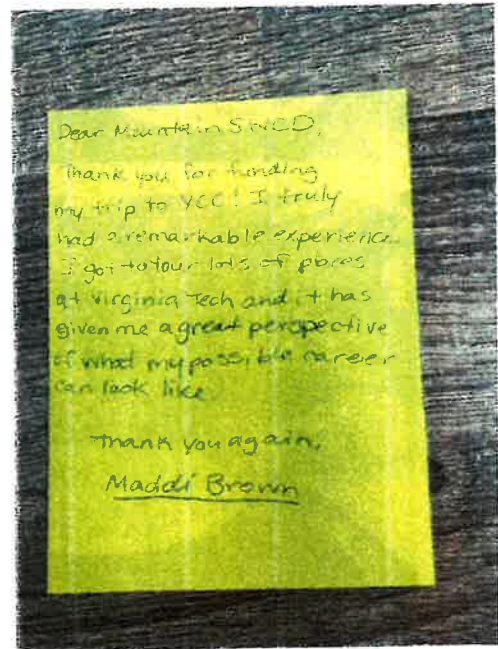
Mountain SWCD partnered with Virginia Cooperative Extension by: purchasing Owl Pellets for 4-H programs in Bath County and Highland County schools



Mountain SWCD sponsored the Underground Classroom that was at the Highland County 2022 Fair and the Bath County 2022 Fair.



Mountain SWCD sponsored (2) Allegheny High School Students for the 2023 Youth Conservation Camp held at



Hayden Fridley and Maddie

### Soil Surveys

Bath, Highland, and Allegheny County surveys are available on the internet at <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>. There are instructions to help guide the user in outlining an area of interest and producing a soil map and information. Additional soil reports and descriptions can be obtained at Soil Data Mart @ <http://soildatamart.nrcs.gov> which is fairly easy to navigate.

### Thank You

We would like to thank all cooperating agencies and governmental units at the federal, state, and local levels, as well as the fine people that encompass the Mountain District for their cooperation and support. The Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District program is a program for the people, and only through the cooperation of the people will it succeed.

## RENTAL EQUIPMENT

### GRASSWORKS WEED WIPER

The Mountain Soil & Water Conservation District's now owns a GrassWorks Weed Wiper. It helps eliminate noxious weeds fast, effective, and economically. It allows the landowner to run the specialized synthetic carpet covered steel rotating drum very saturated. Therefore an ample amount of chemical is available to apply to the targeted weeds. With this constant rotation, any drip issues are eliminated. It applies the chemicals to the stems and the underside of the leaves. This is the weakest portion of the plants which provides an excellent kill. With the adjustment height chemicals are only applied to the targeted weeds and not wasting chemicals on the desirable crops, grasses, and clovers that the landowner wants to keep. (2) landowners rented the Weed Wiper this year which resulted in (26) acres being treated.

### PASTURE & CROP DRAG

The MSWCD owns a pasture drag to better distribute manure into the ground and reduce runoff in early spring months. We had (14) landowners rent the Drag with 715 acres being treated.

### MULTI FLORA ROSE PROGRAM

The Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District is heavily involved in the administration and coordination of Bath County's multi-flora rose program. During the year 47 landowners were serviced with 2,114 acres of land treated. This resulted in 85 mixes of spray being distributed. The County of Bath purchased 143 (2 oz.) containers of Ally and 71 gallons of Aquagene.

### NO-TILL SEEDER

A major emphasis of any soil & water conservation district is reducing soil erosion and improving water quality. One thrust of the Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District is to promote the use of no-till seeding. The District owns two seeders. During the year 522 acres of orchard grass, clover, timothy, rye, and alfalfa were seeded, resulting in a soil savings of 1,421 tons of soil that would have been downhill, possibly entering our streams and rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay.

### POULTRY LITTER SPREADER

The Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District owns three poultry litter spreaders. They are used to help landowners spread their litter more efficiently and therefore help to improve water quality. It gives landowners a better understanding of nutrient management and the importance of following nutrient management plans. The District rents the spreaders out on a daily basis. During the year 54 days were utilized spreading litter and lime ( 53 days for poultry litter and 1 day of spreading lime.). This resulted in 2,365 acres being applied using "Mini-Nutrient" plans.



Sprayer used for the Rose Program

### CHESAPEAKE BAY COST-SHARE PROGRAM

The Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District includes both the James River Watershed, and is the headwaters for the Potomac River. The Virginia Agriculture Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program (VACS) is administered by (DCR) Department of Conservation & Recreation through local SWCD's as well as the state portion of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The program's goal is to improve water quality in our rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay. We paid out the following in Cost-Share Payments from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023:

VACS Total Paid : \$767,812.93 (\$ 285,003.88 for 2020 CB VACS , \$ 81,422.00 2021 CB VACS,  
\$ 333,445.65 2022 CB VACS, \$51,683.10 2023 CB VACS)

Several Best Management Programs (BMP's) funded by the state help the district to implement the Nutrient reduction strategies. Some of the more popular practices used were:

SL-6W Stream Exclusion w/ wide buffer & grazing land mgmt.  
SL-6N Stream Exclusion w/ narrow buffer & grazing land mgmt.  
WP-2N Stream Protection (fencing w/narrow width buffer)  
WP-2W Stream Protection (fencing w/wide width buffer)

SL-8H Harvestable Cover Crop  
SL-8B Small Grain Cover Crop  
SL-1 Long Term Permanent Vegetative Cover on Cropland  
FR-3 Woodland Buffer and Filter Area

## 2023 Conservation Field Day

The Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District Field Day took place on Wednesday, May 17, 2023 in Bath County beginning with registration at the Old Dairy Barn (46 Old Dairy Rd, Warm Springs) at 9:00 a.m. Ellen Ford, Chair and Terry King, Vice Chair of the Mountain SWCD Board of Directors welcomed the attendees. Office Administrator and Conservation Specialist introduced the directors present, gave a brief history of the district, as well as an overview of the programs offered by the district. The group moved to Gramercy Farm (3236 Dunn's Gap Rd, Hot Springs, VA) where Chris Swecker, Conservation Specialist, and Scott Robertson, Farm Manager, Gramercy Farm addressed the group about the Virginia Best Management Stream Exclusion Cost-Share Practice that was recently completed on the farm. The group then returned to the Old Dairy Barn meeting room for a presentation by Mr. Brent Noell, Regional Program Assistant with Virginia State University Outreach Program. District personnel along with DCR, NRCS, TU, and USFS personnel were also available to answer questions agency programs. The field day ended with a complimentary lunch. There were 31 in attendance for the field day.

Those attending the Field Day were able to see the benefits of the completed project and were given a detailed description of what steps were taken to complete the project by Mountain SWCD Conservation Specialist Chris Swecker and Scott Robertson, Gramercy Farm Manager.

