

**MOUNTAIN SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
STRATEGIC PLAN
JANUARY 1, 2025 – DECEMBER 31, 2028**



We work with the people who work the land.

**P.O. Box 310; 65 Courthouse Hill Rd.
Warm Springs, Virginia 24484
540-839-4616**

www.mountainswcd.org

The Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD), a legal subdivision within the Commonwealth 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: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF), U S Forest Service (USFS), Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), and Trout Unlimited (TU) 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.

The MSWCD was organized on January 25, 1944 to carry out soil and water conservation work. Originally it covered only Bath, Highland, and Alleghany counties. It was expanded in 1985 to include the City of Covington.

The District is governed by a ten-member Board of Directors, who serve without salary, and are elected by the voters of the District. Two Directors are elected from each county unit. The other two Directors are appointed - one is the Extension Agent, appointed by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board for a four-year term, and the other is Director-At-Large, also appointed for a three-year term. The Mountain District employs a full-time Conservation Specialist, a full-time Office Administrator, and a part-time BMP Coordinator. The District may have Associate Directors. Associate Directors have no voting privileges on District policy, but can offer advice and guidance as well as serve as a District Officer and/or on committees and assist Directors in carrying out District programs.

With technical support from NRCS, MSWCD works to inform farmers, forestry cooperators, professional workers, local governments, and citizens of the District about the District's work. The District contains 900,540 acres.

The Commonwealth of Virginia also supports MSWCD through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Other sources of financial support include County of Alleghany, County of Bath, County of Highland, and the City of Covington.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District works with its partners, farmers, landowners and greater community to conserve land and water resources for future generations.

+++++

All 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, handicap, political, or any other basis protected by law.

STRATEGIC PLANNING GOALS

GOAL #1: Establish and Maintain a Stable and Reliable Funding Base

GOAL #2: Recognize and Address Non-Point Source Pollution

GOAL #3: Strengthen and Modernize the District's Marketing Program

GOAL #4: Promote Conservation Education Across All Demographics

GOAL #5: Enhance Public Awareness of Conservation Efforts

MSWCD strategic goals - 2024 Review

Based on the 2024/25 survey analysis from 20 full-time residents of Bath, Highland, and Allegheny Counties, VA, the goals and strategies below reflect the evolving priorities and interests of stakeholders. These revisions integrate feedback on current program successes, interest in future initiatives, and demographic insights, ensuring alignment with the Mountain SWCD's mission and community needs.

GOAL #1: Establish and Maintain a Stable and Reliable Funding Base

Strategies:

1. Expand revenue sources by pursuing diverse grant opportunities from businesses, corporations, and conservation-focused foundations.
2. Strengthen relationships with County and City Boards by presenting data-driven cases for increased public funding.
3. Enhance rental equipment programs and explore the feasibility of adding requested tools (e.g., more no-till seeders, updated litter spreaders).

GOAL #2: Recognize and Address Non-Point Source Pollution

Strategies:

1. Continue implementing successful programs such as:
 - Equipment Rental Program
 - Multi-Flora Rose Spray Program
 - Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) Program
2. Expand promotion of Ag. BMPs to address water quality, soil erosion, and livestock stream exclusion, as prioritized in survey responses.
3. Partner with local officials to monitor erosion and sedimentation issues, ensuring proactive solutions.

GOAL #3: Strengthen and Modernize the District's Marketing Program

Strategies:

1. Promote equipment availability (e.g., no-till seeders, weed wipers) through targeted campaigns informed by survey feedback.
2. Redesign marketing materials, including business cards and brochures, to reflect current programs and resources.
3. Broaden the District's reach through digital engagement, such as:
 - Social media campaigns featuring conservation success stories.
 - Regular updates to the Mountain SWCD webpage, ensuring user-friendly navigation and accessible resources.
4. Collaborate with media outlets (local radio, newspapers, community magazines) to raise awareness of cost-share programs and other services.

GOAL #4: Promote Conservation Education Across All Demographics

Strategies:

1. Develop and distribute comprehensive information packets tailored to community interests (e.g., livestock management, stream protection).
2. Sponsor youth participation in conservation-focused camps, ensuring outreach to diverse age groups.

3. Launch hands-on field days featuring topics like regenerative agriculture and water quality improvement, aligning with expressed interest in future programs.
4. Expand support for Envirothon teams and other youth-led conservation initiatives to cultivate future stewards.

GOAL #5: Enhance Public Awareness of Conservation Efforts

Strategies:

1. Host collaborative events with partner agencies and conservation organizations, focusing on mutual goals like livestock exclusion and stream health.
2. Establish annual awards to recognize outstanding conservation efforts, increasing visibility through media coverage.
3. Maintain regular communication with local and state legislators to align on conservation policies and funding needs.
4. Share practical resources (e.g., best practices for soil health, funding opportunities) through accessible platforms like newsletters and workshops.

These goals integrate 2024/25 stakeholder feedback to position the District as an adaptive, innovative leader in natural resource conservation.

→ 2024/25 Strategic Planning Survey Results -

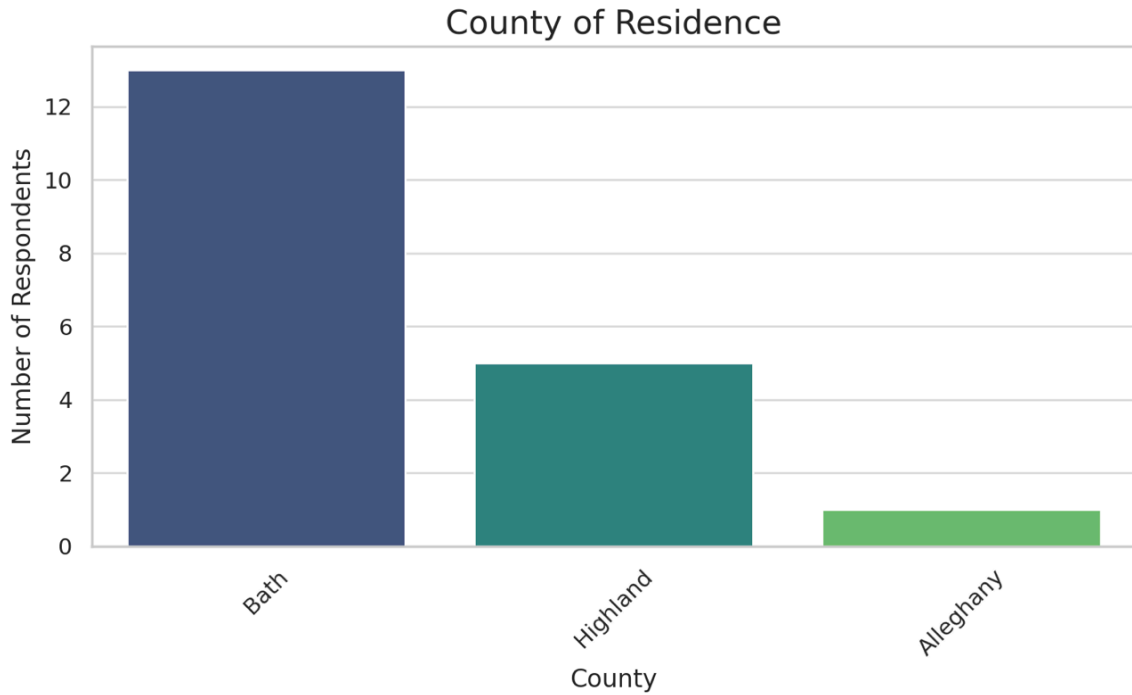
The strategic plan 4-year survey was distributed in November to early January through email to current stakeholders, social media, Extension stakeholder email groups and word of mouth. Responses were collected in two main forms - an online Google Survey with shared QR code and printed surveys during project and field visits made by the MSWCD Technician. From these distribution methods, the survey received 20 responses including a collection of demographic information, current/previous/potential participation in conservation programs, and open-ended feedback.

Key survey components included:

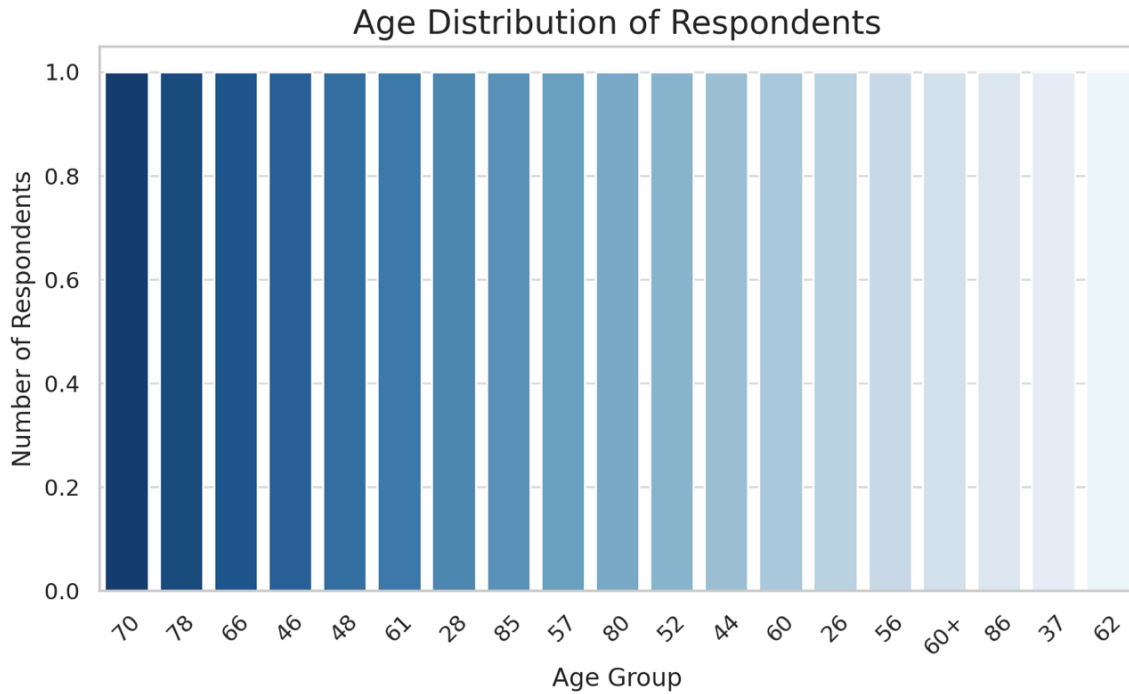
1. Timestamp: Time of response submission.
2. County of Residence: Indicates where respondents reside.
3. Participation: Current and potential interest in programs offered by the District.
4. Feedback: Suggestions for improvement and resource concerns.
5. Opinions: Agreement with voluntary vs. regulatory approaches to land conservation.
6. Demographics: Age and group identification.
7. Contact Information: Name and email [optional]

Key Insights from the Collected Data:

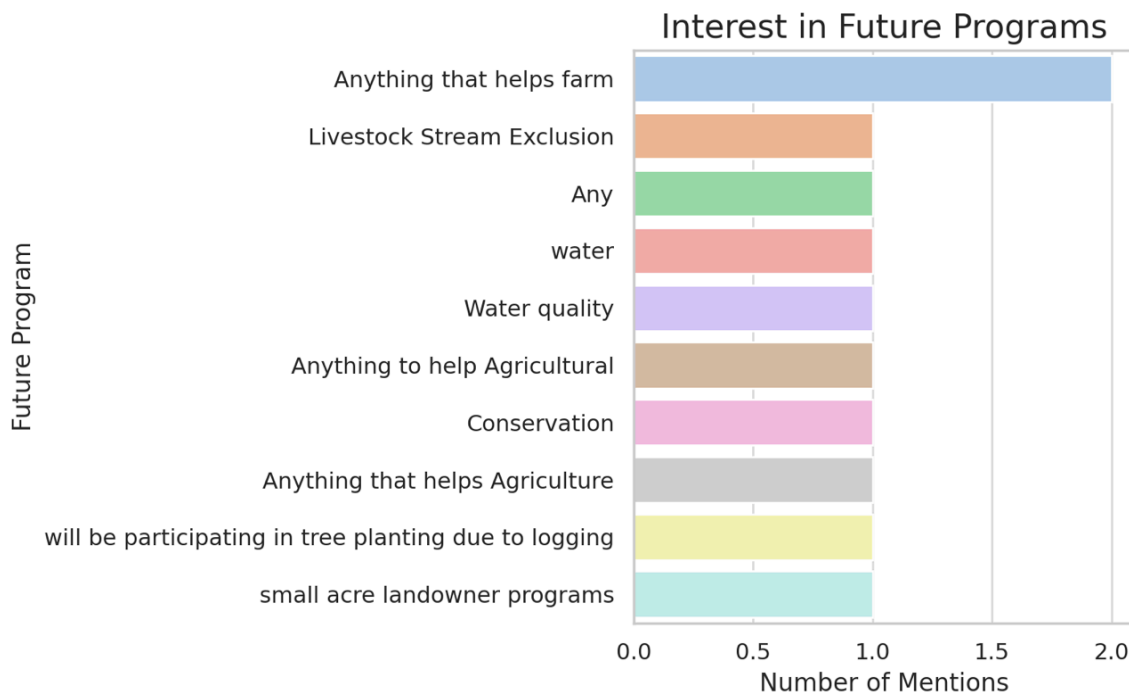
1. County of Residence - respondents come from a mix of counties, with Bath County being the most prominent. - see Graph 1
2. Age Distribution - the majority of respondents were age 60 and over. See Graph 2
3. Current Program Participation - participation varies, with notable interest in programs like “Education,” “Cover Crops,” and “Litter Spreader.”
4. Preferred Future Programs - respondents expressed interest in initiatives like “Livestock Stream Exclusion,” “Farm Visits,” and “Feeding Structure Construction.” See Graph 3.



Graph 1 - distribution of survey results by county.



Graph 2 - Age Distribution of Survey Respondents -



Graph 3 - expressed interest by respondents in future program participation

FOR INFORMATION CALL, WRITE OR VISIT:

USDA-NRCS- FSA OFFICES serving MSWCD:

LEXINGTON SERVICE CENTER

40 Magnolia Square, Suite 5
Lexington, VA 24450
PHONE: 540-463-7124
FAX: 540-463-1061

VERONA SERVICE CENTER

70 Dick Huff Lane
Verona, VA 24482
PHONE: 540-569-4663

MOUNTAIN SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

65 Courthouse Hill Rd.
Bath County Courthouse
Ground Floor
Warm Springs, VA 24484
PHONE: 540-839-4616
FAX: 540-839-5246

Approval Date: January 15, 2025 Board of Directors Meeting

Approval Date for updates: