

## 2023-2024 Conservation Field Day

The Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District Field Day took place on Friday, April 19, 2024 in Bath County beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Dave Peters' Farm in Millboro, VA. Ellen Ford, Chair and Terry King, Vice Chair of the Mountain SWCD Board of Directors welcomed the attendees. Mr. Peters presented a history of the farm. Office Administrator, Lorie Baldwin and Conservation Specialist, Chris Swecker introduced the directors present, gave a brief history of the district, as well as an overview of the programs offered by the district. Handouts were distributed to the attendees. Natural Resources Conservation Service and Virginia Department of Forestry discussed the existing Riparian Buffers. They talked about Streambank Erosion, Function of a Buffer, and NRCS/SWCD Conservation Programs. Mr. Forrest Hobbs with Virginia State University Outreach Program talked about the various Virginia State Programs. District personnel along with DCR, NRCS, TU, and USFS personnel were also available to answer questions about agency programs. The field day provided a complimentary lunch. There were 43 in attendance for the field day.

Dave Peters addresses the group



Members of the group listen with interest



Members of the group along the Cowpasture River

Charlie Simmons, NRCS talks to the group about Buffers and Streambank Erosion

### Soil Surveys

Bath, Highland, and Alleghany 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.



We work with the people who work the land.

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

## ANNUAL REPORT 2024

ALLEGHANY COUNTY, BATH COUNTY, HIGHLAND COUNTY, and the CITY OF COVINGTON July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024

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

**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. Kari Sponaule, 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, 2024 is as follows:

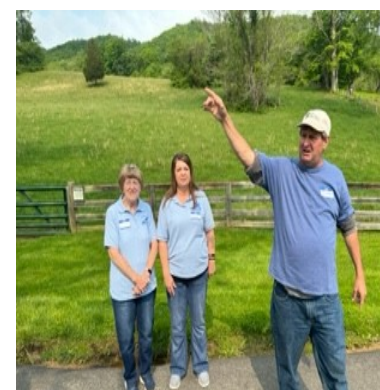
**Chair** Ellen Ford  
**Bath County**  
**Vice Chair** Terry King  
**Asso. Director** Bath County  
**Secretary** Dave Peters  
**Asso. Director** Bath County  
**Treasurer** L. Ryan Hodges III  
**Bath County**

**MEMBERS:**  
 Allen Dressler  
 Xavier Storey  
**City of Covington**  
 Wes White  
 Ari Daniels  
**Highland County**  
 Christine Hodges  
 John Quantz, Sr.  
**Alleghany County**  
 Kari Sponaule  
**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 assisted with the Underground Classroom that Mountain SWCD sponsored 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. 23, 2023; Mountain SWCD partnered with Virginia Cooperative Extension.



The Underground Classroom was a "big hit" for the students.



Alleghany Equine FFA



Alleghany Livestock Poultry FFA



Livestock—Goats  
Valley View-Animal Rescue

Lorie & Sue manned a station for the Soil Education Field Day (PEN PAL Day) held in Covington on May 31, 2024 for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students attending Sharon Elementary and Callaghan Elementary Schools. Mountain SWCD partnered with Virginia Cooperative Extension.



The students meet their Pen Pal in person for the first time



Ben Hindman with Virginia Cooperative Extension talks about adaptations-how animals adapt to their environment

## 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. (1) landowner rented the Weed Wiper this year which resulted in (18) acres being treated.

### NO-TIILL 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 380 acres of orchard grass, clover, timothy, rye, and alfalfa were seeded, resulting in a soil savings of 880 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 47 days were utilized spreading litter and lime ( 46 days for poultry litter and 1 day of spreading lime.). This resulted in 1,830 acres being applied using "Mini-Nutrient" plans.

### 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 (11) landowners rent the Drag with 606 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 41 landowners were serviced with 2,114 acres of land treated. This resulted in 80 mixes of spray being distributed. The County of Bath purchased 143 (2 oz.) containers of Ally and 71 gallons of Aquagene.



Bath County Farmer using Spreader

### 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, 2023 to June 30, 2024:

VACS Total Paid : \$1,653,767.76 (\$ 146,357.50 for 2021 CB VACS , \$ 644,341.42 2022 CB VACS, \$ 794,563.27 2023 CB VACS, \$ 68,505.57 2024 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-8H Harvestable Cover Crop                          |
| SL-6N Stream Exclusion w/ narrow buffer & grazing land mgmt. | SL-8B Small Grain Cover Crop                          |
| WP-2N Stream Protection (fencing w/narrow width buffer)      | SL-1 Long Term Permanent Vegetative Cover on Cropland |
| WP-2W Stream Protection (fencing w/wide width buffer)        | FR-3 Woodland Buffer and Filter Area                  |

Lorie and Sue attended the 2024 Area I Envirothon competition as working volunteers. The Envirothon Special Topic this year was Renewable Energy for a sustainable Future. The (2) top teams advanced to State Competition



**First Place Team  
Harrisonburg  
High School**



**Second Place Team  
Massanutten Regional  
Governor's School**



**Third Place Team  
Eastern Mennonite  
High School**

The District made a donation again this year to be used by a student for Forestry Camp held at Holiday Lake.

Mountain SWCD hosted the Area I Spring Meeting on March 13, 2024. The meeting was held at Mountain Gateway Community College. The meeting started with registration and a light breakfast. Terry King, MSWCD Vice-Chair welcomed the attendees. The morning session included reports from our partnering agencies, and updates from the Area I Districts. The Business items included approval of the Winter Business Meeting Minutes. The group heard an update on the upcoming 2024 Envirothon. After lunch all directors/staff were encouraged to attend the new director orientation-phase II training. Also, the Mountain Gateway Community College Forestry Department provided a tour of the Sawmill located on campus for those not attending the new director orientation. During the meeting Ellen Ford, Mountain SWCD Chair was presented an award for her many years of service to the district.



Richard Chaffin presents a service pin to Ellen Ford for 20 plus years of service as a Director with Mountain SWCD

**RESOLUTION**

from the  
**Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District**  
**Dr. Benjamin Terry King**  
**(1942 – 2024)**

At the meeting of the Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District on September 18, 2024 the following resolution of respect was adopted:

- WHEREAS, Dr. Benjamin Terry King** had been a Director and Associate Director with the Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District, which he faithfully served for many years;
- WHEREAS,** played an active role in various officer positions and served on several committees;
- WHEREAS,** was involved in VASWCD activities at the local, area, and state level;
- WHEREAS,** was instrumental in organizing events for MSWCD;
- WHEREAS,** his knowledge of farming was crucial in furthering MSWCD'S conservation objectives;
- WHEREAS,** his experience as a prominent educator here and elsewhere was apparent in his leadership;
- WHEREAS,** the Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District Directors and staff feel a great loss of a faithful Director and Friend;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District Directors and Staff, by this resolution, wish to express our enduring gratitude and to convey our feelings to his family and friends;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that a copy of this resolution be sent to his family, published in the "Virginian Review" and "The Recorder", and a copy recorded in the minutes of the Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District



**Terry and Ellen**