

FY21 ANNUAL REPORT



LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN...

Directors

- James Christian, Chairman
- Marina Schumacher, Vice Chairman
- John Flannery, Treasurer
- Michelle Thomas, Director
- James Hilleary, Director

Associate Directors

- Robin Bartok
- Barbara Christian
- Holly Flannery
- Terri Higgins
- Tia Walbridge
- James Wylie

LSWCD Staff

- Suzanne Brown, District Operations Manager
- Kris Dennen, Program Assistant
- Jay Frankenfield, Conservation Specialist II
- Peter Holden, District Financial Officer
- Pat McIlvaine, Conservation Specialist III
- Chris Van Vlack, Urban/Ag Specialist
- Jennifer Venable, Education Specialist

On behalf of the Directors and staff of the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District, I am pleased to present our FY21 Annual Report (July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021). The report provides an overview of our programs as well as a summary of our accomplishments during the year.

Loudoun SWCD looks back at FY21 as a year like no other for our Directors, Staff, and for those we serve in Loudoun County. Due to COVID-19, LSWCD staff participated in teleworking, Directors continued to hold monthly Board meetings virtually, our Education program flourished, and Loudoun landowners received a record amount of cost share dollars as part of the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Program. FY21 was truly a year like no other.

The Virginia Ag BMP Cost share Program financially, technically, and administratively assists Ag producers with installing practices that will help protect, clean up and keep clean Loudoun's streams, ponds, and wetlands, and further downstream, the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay. Ag producers can choose from a variety of practices including installing livestock fencing to keep farm animals out of surface water, installing frost free water troughs to supply clean drinking water to the animals, and planting cover crops to help trap nutrients and reduce soil erosion during the winter months.

In FY2021, LSWCD allocated over \$1,200,000.00 in state dollars to Loudoun Ag producers to assist with the installation of these and other conservation practices. These monies also assist local businesses hired to install the BMPs. This cost share amount far exceeds any other annual total in the history of the LSWCD. That number is a testament to the partnership LSWCD has forged with Loudoun producers and landowners and their commitment to protecting Loudoun's natural resources.

Loudoun also allocated \$38,021.26 for similar practices to small acreage and non-income producing horse farms that aren't eligible for state cost share dollars. LSWCD's County Funded Horse and Small Farm Cost Share Program has been a successful partnership between the District and the County to help landowners with projects that might otherwise not be possible. Since Loudoun has the largest equine population in the Commonwealth, assisting our equine producers, whatever the size or type of their operation, is critical!

This year looked different for students, but our Education Specialist met the challenge. A new focus on online resources provided conservation education to a large number of students. Social media was utilized to share these resources and provide training. The District staff served as a mentor to students participating in the Youth Conservation Leadership Institute. It was so encouraging to see the hard work and dedication of our students in promoting conservation. The District worked with other Area Districts to host a virtual Envirothon competition and training. This year Loudoun had 2 teams participate in the program. A new team was formed from Lightridge High School and a team from Academies of Loudoun returned for a second year term. We are so excited to see the growth in our Education Program.

In closing, I wish to thank the County of Loudoun, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, VA. Coop. Extension Service, Virginia Department of Forestry, and the many individuals who worked with us during the past year. Promoting conservation in Loudoun is a partnership between local, state, and federal agencies and we look forward to the continued growth in protecting the soil and water in Loudoun County.

Sincerely,
James B. Christian
Chairman

> *(Top right) LSWCD and DCR Engineering staff survey for a new spring fed livestock watering system south of Lovettsville.*

> *LSWCD provided funding for this tree planting through County non-ag tree planting program at Falconaire subdivision in Lucketts.*

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS VIRGINIA AG BMP COST SHARE

- \$991,949.40 paid to local landowners in FY21
- 37 SL-6, SL-7 and WP-2 practices installed with 81,939' of fencing..
- 13 CCI practices installed with 39,975' of streambank protected.
- 15 SL-8B, SL-8, SL-8H, SL-1 and SL-10 practices installing 1,139.4 acres of grass and cover crops.



LOUDOUN COUNTY COST SHARE PROGRAM



- \$47,243.15 paid to local landowners in FY2020.
- 8 SL-6 and SL-7 practices installed with 2,497' of fencing.
- 3 practices installed on 6,507' of streambank protected.

CONSERVATION FARM PLAN ASSISTANCE

One of the longest serving resources LSWCD has provided to Loudoun's farmers and landowners (and now backyard poultry producers!) are conservation farm plans. These plans can fulfill requirements of Loudoun County's Land Use Tax Assessment Program, Ag and Forestal District Program, zoning requirements for agricultural building construction, and small acreage livestock regulations.

In FY21, small acreage poultry plans continued to be a hot item with more residents looking to keep backyard chickens, turkeys and ducks. These plans provide good "rule of thumb" management techniques for keeping livestock on small acreage and are developed with resources from both the District as well as Virginia Cooperative Extension. In addition, a number of Loudoun's Ag and Forestal Districts were up for renewal which meant new plans for new owners of parcels in those Districts and updates for new uses for farmers previously enrolled. District staff have also worked with Loudoun Cooperative Extension to provide Spanish farm plan template sheets to make sure plans aren't 'lost in translation' for homeowners and producers whose first language may not be English. Overall, 65 new Conservation Plans were prepared by LSWCD in FY21.

URBAN CONSERVATION

As with all aspects of our lives the pandemic threw a curveball into LSWCD’s suburban and urban conservation efforts, but Loudoun landowners still stepped up to the plate and adapted.

During FY21, four new non-agricultural tree planting projects were signed up, totaling nearly 4 acres of new forest. Because of current restrictions on establishing riparian buffer plantings due to Loudoun’s “unique” floodplain ordinance, LSWCD is able to provide funding for plantings beyond streamside areas to establish forest on currently non-forested acreage. These projects spanned the county from Ashburn to Lucketts and Lovettsville.

LSWCD has also continued to help deliver the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program to Loudoun residents. Although state funding was scarce through most of the fiscal year, an additional four VCAP practices were signed up pending funding and have since been approved in early FY22. These projects included practices such as Permeable Pavers in Leesburg, Conservation Landscaping in Sterling and Leesburg, and Rainwater Harvesting in Middleburg. More information about the VCAP program can be found at www.vaswcd.org/vcap. Funding for additional projects look more promising for FY22, so interested homeowners are encouraged to get in touch!

Beyond the cost share provided by our tree planting and VCAP programs, LSWCD continues to provide e-mail, phone, and field visits for homeowners seeking advice on soil and water issues around the home such as erosion issues and drainage questions.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District (LSWCD) is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia funded by four revenue streams: federal, state and local governments, as well as the private sector. The federal government, through the USDA, provides a full time employee to the Loudoun SWCD at no expense to the locality. The state provides funding for operational expenses, technical assistance and cost share funds. The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors (BOS) has provided most of the District staff’s salaries for over 40 years. The private sector provides funds through the purchase of rain barrels and their equity share of the Cost Share Program.

The Directors of the Loudoun SWCD are appointed or elected volunteers. Their hundreds of hours of devoted public service are provided at no cost the taxpayers of Loudoun County. Few taxpayers look at local government expenditures as an investment with a tangible Return on Investment (ROI). However, if one were to total revenues brought in to Loudoun County from the state by the Loudoun SWCD and divide this amount by the level of County funding, the ROI is astonishing. This generated an ROI of **\$3.66** for every dollar invested by the Loudoun County BOS in FY 2021.



“For every dollar invested by the Loudoun Board of Supervisors, \$3.66 is generated from other sources of income.”



Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District 30 Catoctin Circle, SE., Suite 218 Leesburg, VA 20175 571-918-4530 www.lswcd.org

The LSWCD website, is maintained to inform and educate the public about District activities. District activities are also publicized on the District Facebook page. Visit www.lswcd.org.

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors supports the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District through an annual grant and provides administrative assistance by the Department of Financial Services, Division of Payroll and Benefits, to administer payroll and benefit matters.

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

CONSERVATION EDUCATION OUTREACH EDUCATION GROWTH

Conservation Education and Outreach in 2020-21 looked different this year due to COVID-19. The pandemic created a new focus with online resources to pursue conservation education and outreach. Utilizing social media, the LSWCD website and learning how to incorporate videos as well as understanding how to use the YouTube platform has allowed us to create and share conservation topics and resources to students and community. Our Facebook posts have reached over 11,000 views as of June 2021! In the spring we were able to attend a few outdoor events, such as Dirt Days at Loudoun Heritage Farm Museum and the Stream Monitoring Kickoff event by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy.

Videos helped with education and outreach

Videos played a huge part in filling in the gap left by the inability to visit students in the classroom during the pandemic. LSWCD education staff, both independently as well as working with our partners, created multiple videos on various conservation topics and learned how to utilize YouTube to share them to students as well as the community.

In typical years our most popular lesson requested by teachers is the Enviroscape Watershed model demonstration. LSWCD converted this in person lesson to a digital format. It is comprised of two videos which are available on our [YouTube Channel](#). [The first video](#) covers what is a watershed, watershed addresses of Loudoun County, stormwater runoff, where our water comes from and the importance of clean water. [The second video](#) is the actual Enviroscape Demonstration showing how pollution from our land use in Loudoun County ends up in our waterways and what we can do to improve the problem.



Envirothon Tree Identification training was also converted to an online format by working with the Loudoun County Urban Forester, Kyle Dingus.

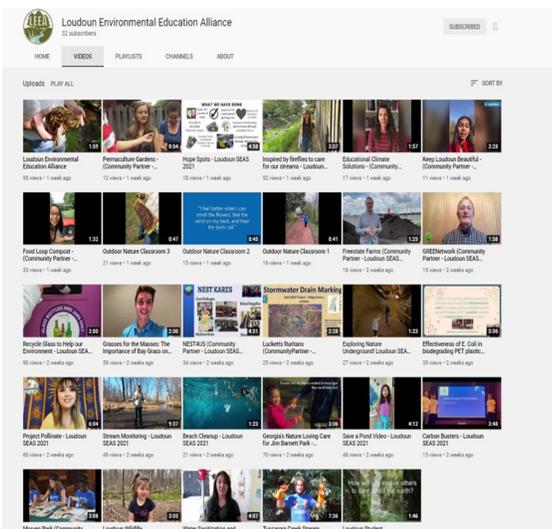
LSWCD captured the Arbor Day celebration, "Trees Make Me Happy", by video this year by working with the Department of Forestry and Loudoun County. The video showcased Arbor Day student poster winners, Arbor Day photo contest winners and a tree planting with foresters.



CONSERVATION EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

For the quarterly spring Area 2 meeting, Director John Flannery highlighted the importance of education of our youth in this inspiring video: <https://vimeo.com/545251789>.

Other videos created included a promotional video for Loudoun Student Environmental Action Showcase (SEAS) and an educational video showing Confluence Park – a VCAP supported project. We also organized and presented over 20 student videos on various conservation topics for the Student Environmental Action Showcase event in Spring of 2021.



Finally, LSWCD volunteered to create a video when the National Association of Conservation Districts requested submissions to help celebrate this year’s Soil and Water Stewardship Week, with the theme of Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities. The video was centered around Forest Bathing to help students take a break from constant online learning during the pandemic and was shared on a National Level by NACD.

Videos (available on our YouTube channel)	Number of people reached as of 6/17/21 (this number constantly grows).
Watershed Video	1082
Enviroscape Demo Video	1283
Arbor Day Video	484
NACD Stewardship Video (Forest Bathing)	18
Loudoun SEAS Marketing Video	96
SEAS Virtual Event	1052
VCAP - Confluence Park	7
Tree ID Video (Urban Forester)	457
TOTAL	4479

CONSERVATION IN ACTION

LOUDOUN SUPPORTS OUR YOUTH!

Youth Conservation Leadership Institute (YCLI)



Despite many events and programs being canceled this school year, LSWCD supported our Youth by serving as a mentor through the Youth Conservation Leadership Institute program. Working with Lexi Howard, a senior at Heritage High School, incredible education and outreach was accomplished with her multifaceted YCLI project, “Project Pollinate”. Lexi, described as “hard working, persistent and bold”, blazed a path to accomplish her plan for community outreach. She did not hesitate to reach out to many important organizations in Loudoun to help her achieve her mission, including Loudoun County Government, Loudoun County School Board, the Leesburg Mayor, Loudoun County Public School administration and teachers, Loudoun County Public Library, her own community HOA, privately owned Landscaping Nurseries, and many local parks! Her efforts to educate others on the importance of pollinators included creating this logo, posters, handouts, stickers, signage, free seed packets, QR codes, education tabling events, native plant stickering, a comprehensive website and three amazing educational videos. Her artistry and graphic design skills made all of these efforts amazingly beautiful. She also volunteered with multiple restoration efforts at Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Studies, Banshee Reeks and Confluence Park. In addition, for all of these events, she organized an army of student volunteers to help. Through all of this, she kept a never-ending supply of enthusiasm and positivity—something we all needed with our challenging year! [Visit her website by clicking here.](#)

ENVIROTHON

LSWCD continues to support the Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon program. This year we worked together with other Areas to host a virtual training and competition. Despite not having our typical in person event, a new team was created with students from Lightridge High School, and the Academies of Loudoun continued as a second-year team. LSWCD supported the online training event in the winter of 2021. We also coordinated local Forestry training by creating a Tree ID video with Kyle Dingus (Loudoun County Urban Forester). LSWCD secured an Envirothon grant which allowed us to purchase tools to assist in our video education goals with the students.

