

FY23 ANNUAL REPORT



LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN...

Directors

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

LSWCD Staff

- Suzanne Brown, District Operations Manager
- Kris Dennen, Program Assistant
- Fletcher Dilldine, Conservation Specialist I
- Jay Frankenfield, Conservation Specialist III
- Kimberly Gleason, Financial Administrative Asst.
- Pat McIlvaine, Senior Conservation Specialist
- Kaylea Powell, Conservation/Education Specialist
- Chris Van Vlack, Urban/Ag Cons. Specialist
- Jennifer Venable, Education/Outreach Specialist
- Robert Wilbur, Conservation Specialist I

On behalf of the Directors and staff of the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District, I am pleased to present our FY23 Annual Report (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023). The report provides an overview of our programs as well as a summary of our accomplishments during the year.

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 voluntary practices including the installation of 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 FY2023, LSWCD allocated over \$2,150,000.00 in state dollars to Loudoun. This amount of state cost-share dollars coming to Loudoun landowners is unprecedented in the history of the LSWCD. These funds were paid to Ag producers to put a variety of livestock and cropland practices on the ground. To help promote these practices, District staff were in the community at numerous outreach events. This included the District's first ever Small and Minority Farmer Event hosted at Potomac Vegetable Farms in Wheatland. District staff also presented at the Loudoun Equine Expo, the Loudoun Conservation Fair, and the Loudoun Farmer Exchange kick off.

These monies provide a boost in Loudoun's economy not only to the landowner, but also to assist local businesses hired to install the BMPs. The participation of Loudoun producers in the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Program shows agriculture is still vibrant contributor to Loudoun's economy and that the county's farmers are committed to environmental stewardship.

For the District's Urban and Suburban programs, outreach events were held with the Potomac Green HOA, Loudoun Master Gardeners training, and dozens on one on one site visits all around the county. LSWCD was able to assist in planting over six acres of new forest through the county-funded Non-Ag Tree planting program and complete six new Virginia Conservation Assistance Program practices ranging from rainwater harvesting to permeable pavers and conservation landscaping.

Loudoun also allocated **\$11,313.73** 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!

We had a great year back in the schools with our Education Program. Live presentations were given to over 1300 teachers and students in nine schools. Our Youth Conservation Leadership Institute had five amazing students participate this year (the most since YCLI began). Envirothon grew to four teams this past school year. For the first time, LSWCD co-hosted a local Envirothon competition to decide which two teams would move on to the Area 2 competition. Over sixty students and coaches from LSWCD and NVSWCD participated in this event. Multiple staff and Directors volunteered at the competition as judges and assistants. We were excited to have one of our Conservation Poster contest winners win at the state level. LSWCD also secured grant funding to implement a tree planting at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve and helped to create educational signage about water quality and habitat.

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 of course the landowners, residents, farmers, and students of Loudoun for helping us put conservation on the ground. I also want to take this opportunity to recognize our dedicated staff for their outstanding accomplishments in providing conservation assistance to Loudoun residents. Protecting the water quality and natural resources of Loudoun, and the promotion of conservation stewardship is something that requires many partners, we are honored to be part of a great team here in Loudoun working to meet those goals.

Sincerely,
James B. Christian
Chairman

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

VIRGINIA AG BMP COST SHARE

- \$1,454,735.29 reimbursed to local landowners for voluntary participation in the FY23 program.
- 47 SL-6, SL-7 and WP-2 practices installed with 48,253' of fencing.
- 30 CCI practices installed with 73,600' of streambank protected.
- 12 SL-8B, SL-8, and SL-8H practices installing 1,534.5 acres of cover crop.
- FR3 and FR1 practices planting 8.16 acres of trees.



> (Top right) Jay Frankenfield, Conservation Spec. III discusses the VA. Ag BMP cost-share program with landowner.

> Conservation Specialists Robert Wilbur, Fletcher Dilldine, and Jay Frankenfield work on clearing the spring.

LOUDOUN COUNTY COST SHARE PROGRAM



- \$1001.25 paid to local landowners in FY2023.
- 1 CCI practice installed with 1335' of streambank protected.
- Total Non-Ag Tree Planting Cost Share Paid Out in FY23 \$27,805.27.

CONSERVATION FARM PLAN ASSISTANCE

The Districts Conservation Farm Plans provide a resource to landowners seeking conservation advice for their ag operations as well as fulfilling the requirements for various county and easements programs. Conservation Farm Plans are a requirement for entering Loudoun's Ag and Forestal District program, for keeping livestock on under five acres, or for entering the land use tax deferral program. In addition, many land trusts require farm plans for establishing conservation easements.

In FY23, District staff wrote 36 farm plans. These plans provide recommendations related to the type of agricultural activities taking place on the property. These include best practices for row crops, hay production, pasture establishment and pasture management, vineyard production, orchard production, vegetable production, nursery production, berries, and cut flowers. District staff have collaborated with Loudoun Cooperative Extension to put together template sheets for each type of production and then provide specific input based on the soils, topography, floodplain, wetlands and other features on the farm. The bilingual plans developed in conjunction with Extension staff continue to be a valuable resource for Spanish speaking landowners.

The biggest single category of farm plans over recent years have been for small acreage livestock. This year, 24 of the plans fell into this category. These range from plans for keeping two backyard chickens on a quarter acre lot, up to intensive management for multiple horses on four and a half acres.

Associate Directors

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

URBAN CONSERVATION

Loudoun SWCD's suburban and urban programs continued to flourish in FY23. The District's Non-Agricultural Tree Planting Program followed up a record FY22 with four new projects totaling over six acres of new plantings completed. The projects covered both individual landowners and HOAs with the largest covering over three acres. The Non-Agricultural Planting program covers costs associated with permanently reforesting turfgrass areas to improve water quality by reducing nutrient, sediment and bacteria run off. The new forested areas also provide valuable native habitat.

This District's promotion and delivery of the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) also stayed strong in FY23 with four new projects signed up and six projects completed during the fiscal year. These included the revegetation of an eroding steep slope in the Cascades Community in Sterling, a large native perennial planting in the Potomac Green HOA in Ashburn, and rainwater harvesting and permeable paver projects at private homes in Leesburg.

Beyond participating in formal programs, the Urban/Ag Conservationist and other staff conduct site visits and respond to countless e-mails and phone calls for advice on conservation issues in communities around Loudoun. This included presentations at the Loudoun Conservation Fair, Loudoun Master Gardeners Training, community environmental awareness events, and more.



< Total State VCAP payments in FY23 paid out \$26,922.00 to Loudoun residents.

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 cover Loudoun County 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 **\$5.68** for every dollar invested by the Loudoun County BOS in FY 2023.

"For every dollar invested by the Loudoun Board of Supervisors, \$5.68 is generated from other sources of income."



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www.lswcd.org

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

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

- The use of three conservation “check-out” trunks reached 330 students and adults.
- Live presentations were given to 1344 teachers and students in nine local schools.
- The soil tunnel activity reached over 200 youth and teachers.
- Staff co-mentored two students for the Youth Conservation Leadership Institute. Five local students participated in the program this year (the most since YCLI began in our district).
- Staff served on the Loudoun Environmental Education Alliance (LEEA) and served on the Student Environmental Action Showcase programming committee.
- Staff recruited and assisted four teams for the Area II Envirothon.
- Staff planned and co-hosted a local Envirothon Competition at EC Lawrence park. Over 60 students and coaches from LSWCD and NVSWCD participated in the event. Multiple staff also volunteered at the competition as judges and assistants.
- Staff and directors support the Area 2 Envirothon competition in Culpeper, Va. Over 70 students and coaches participated.
- Staff planned, recorded and edited the Arbor Day Celebration which was presented online alongside Loudoun County Urban Forestry.
- Staff facilitated one community storm drain marking project.
- Staff hosted three students as a host for LCPS “Job for a Day” program.
- Staff hosted one student for a two-week capstone experience.
- Staff received three scholarship applications. One applicant on the VASWCDEF scholarship award and the other two from LSWCD were awarded scholarship money towards conservation education undergraduate work.
- Over 4400 pieces of Soil and Water Stewardship Week Education Materials were ordered, sorted and delivered to 28 elementary schools in Loudoun by staff.
- Staff supported two official stream surveys of local waterways.
- Staff participated in special community events including Creek Critters of the Catoctin, Goose Creek Family Celebration, Student Environmental Action Showcase (SEAS), Pollinator Festival at Banshee Reeks
- LSWCD online watershed lesson on YouTube reached over 3500 views in the past year.
- Staff mentored and supported two college summer intern.
- 3 staff and 2 board members supported the LCPS Regional Science and Engineering Fair. LSWCD awarded
- LSWCD secured a grant for funding a tree planting and signage for Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve.

CONSERVATION IN ACTION



Chris Van Vlack, Urban Ag/Conservationist talks to landowners at Small Farm Outreach event in Lovettsville.

Participants learned about hi-tunnels at the small farm outreach event.



District Staff Member, Robert Wilbur, Conservation Specialist at the District booth during the Equine Expo.