



Headwaters **Headlines**

A Publication of Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District

◀Fall, 2006 ▶

▶COME HOME TO AUGUSTA COUNTY - FREEDOM'S FIRST FRONTIER

Augusta County's Jamestown 2007 initiatives include successful farm tours for the public. Chairman of the Jamestown 2007 Committee, Nancy Sorrells, was the farm tour guide, sharing history and anecdotes along with the agricultural, and Headwaters' Sandy Greene drove the Augusta County Parks and Recreation bus to visit dairy, beef, sheep, horse, and vegetable farms in northern Augusta County. Next spring, tours will be scheduled for southern Augusta County, and visitors will have the opportunity to visit more of Augusta's finest farms. For photos and more info go to www.AugustaJamestown2007.org.



Happy Farm Tourists

▶New Director of Agriculture Development

Miles Bobbitt has been selected as the first Director of Agriculture Development for Augusta County, beginning work in September. The Augusta County Agricultural Task Force findings and recommendations (including the establishment of a Council and Director), are available at the County website: www.co.augusta.va.us.

▶Headwaters Tour 2006 - Natural Resource Sustainability

Take a virtual tour on our new website with the Headwaters Board, and visit successful young farmers, local high tech industries, the South River at Grand Caverns, the Blue Ridge Community College rain garden, and Dice's Spring. The tour was a firsthand inquiry into the potential impacts of our decisions and practices today on the health and sustainability of our water and soil.



Employee owned CEMSI Corporation in Weyers Cave recycles water in the manufacture of computer circuit boards.

▶Fort Defiance Wins National Envirothon

Fort Defiance High School placed first in the Canon National Envirothon, in Winnipeg, Manitoba-Canada this July. The team - Kate Abshire, Ryan Bugas, Ali Fitzgerald, Whitney Hawkins and Bob Michaels, coached by Brent Hull and Eric Stogdale - topped 51 teams from all over the US and Canada with their knowledge of wildlife, aquatics, forestry, soils, the topic (Water Stewardship in a Changing Climate), and excellent presentation skills. Each team member won a \$5,000 college scholarship through Canon, the contest's sponsor, as well as other Canon products. Our team was sponsored by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Virginia Manufacturers Association Outreach Group,

Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund and Philip Morris. Over 500,000 students in the U.S. and Canada participated in Envirothon in 2006.



Headwaters will sponsor Envirothon in spring of 2007, when the topic will be "Alternative Fuels". For more information about forming a team, contact the District office.

➤Christians Creek E.coli Bacteria Results

Headwaters teamed up with the VA Department of Environmental Quality and the Augusta River Monitors to sample various tributaries on Christians Creek for fecal coliform bacteria levels from January through July 2006. Mentorship student Adam Nulty, DGIF fisheries biologist Paul Bugas and Headwaters education specialist Sandy Greene were trained to incubate and count the bacterial colonies. The goal of the study was get a more detailed picture of the bacterial levels along Christians Creek, which does not meet Virginia State Water Quality standards because of its fecal coliform bacterial levels. The standard in surface water requires less than 200 fecal coliform cells per 100 ml of water. Over the study period, 5 of the 12 sites exceeded the allowable bacteria levels consistently, the highest being Folly Mills Creek, Barterbrook Branch, and Christians Creek at Stuarts Draft. The lowest bacteria levels were found at Goose Creek, Lower Christians Creek, and at Barrenridge. These data are only a part of the picture, but they will help the cleanup efforts in the future. E. coli bacteria only come from the intestines of warm-blooded animals. For more detailed information, or for assistance in implementing practices that will help decrease the amount of bacteria in

Christians Creek near you, call the District office at 248-6218 (ext 3).



Bacterial plates after incubation

➤Forestry Cost-Share Programs Available to Forestland Owners

As we lose more and more forestland to development, it is more important than ever for forestland owners to manage the land they own in a sustainable and economical way. Many farmers and forestland owners already implement conservation practices to achieve their goals while doing so with less negative impact. While such conservation practices protect the environment and save money in the long run, some can be expensive to install. Additionally, with so many different programs out there, it can be confusing as to which program to use, who to contact for information, and where to sign up. Hopefully, this brief article will serve as a quick "who's who" of some Forestry-related cost-share programs that are available.

Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP)

This is a federally funded program that is administered through the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) aimed at protecting and improving forestland on private property. Several practices are covered under this program, including Pine Planting, Hardwood Planting, Fencing to exclude cattle from woodlands, Invasive species control work, Timber Stand Improvement and Crop Tree Release (Pre-commercial thinning practices to improve species composition of a stand), and some wildlife practices as well. The sign-up period is continuous and funds are allocated based on a "first come-first serve" basis. Once applications are approved, the owner has one year to complete the work to receive payment. Incentive rates vary for different practices. Contact the local VDOF office if

you have more questions or are interested in enrolling in the program.

Reforestation of Timberlands (RT)

This is a state-funded program that is administered through VDOF to help with the cost of reforestation of pine species following harvesting. Establishing new stands of pine in fields, etc. can also be included in this program. This program covers pine planting only. Some site-prep. practices are also covered under this program. Species included are: Loblolly Pine, White Pine, Shortleaf Pine, Pitch Pine, and Pitch-Loblolly Pine. Incentive payment varies by species and sign up begins May 1st. Funds are allocated on a "first come-first serve" basis and projects must be completed within a year of being approved. Contact the VDOF office if you are interested or would like more information.

Riparian Buffer Tax Credit

This is a relatively new program administered through VDOF that focuses on giving forest owners a monetary incentive for keeping riparian buffers intact during harvesting operations. This program applies to lands that have been harvested commercially and are adjacent to perennial or intermittent streams. Under this program, landowners can receive a tax credit for leaving a Forested Riparian Buffer intact at the time of the harvest. There are several criteria that have to be met in order to qualify for the tax credit.

- 1) At least half of the overstory trees have to have been removed from the harvest area
- 2) The timber harvested is adjacent to the proposed buffer area
- 3) The minimum buffer width is 35 feet and the maximum width is 300 feet. The buffer does not have to be on both sides of the stream.
- 4) The buffer must remain in place for 15 years, and cannot be damaged. Livestock must be excluded from the area.
- 5) The tax credit must be claimed the same year the harvest was completed.
- 6) The property has an updated Forest Stewardship Plan
- 7) The buffer can be partially harvested, but it will reduce the amount of the tax credit

Sign-up for the tax credit is continuous and there is an application fee. For more information on the Riparian Buffer Tax Credit program, contact the Virginia

Department of Forestry, located in Crimora ON Route 340 at the Augusta Forestry Center. 540-363-7002
- Patti Nylander, Augusta County Forester
- Rodger Moyer, Augusta County Technician

➤New Conservation Technician Hired

Headwaters would like to introduce Bobby Drumheller, the new conservation technician hired on June 1st. Bobby is a recent graduate of Virginia Tech and, with his background in agriculture, economics, and agronomy, is eager to start his career in conservation. Bobby is from Swoope, VA where he has lived and worked on a beef cattle farm since he was a young child. He also was employed at the Augusta Cooperative Farm Bureau during the time he attended Buffalo Gap High School. From there, he went to Virginia Tech to study Agricultural Economics, Soil Science, and Geographic Information Systems.

Bobby's tasks for the new position include implementing Virginia's Best Management Practices (BMP's) for agricultural land, giving technical assistance to farmers, assisting with dam maintenance, and other duties held responsible by District staff. Bobby is most interested in improving soil and water quality, preserving farmland, and increasing the profitability of farms in the area. He believes that his new position on the District staff will give him the opportunity to explore all of these interests.

Bobby says, "Having grown up on a farm, I am well aware of the hardships farmers face in today's modern world. I am also aware of the countless and priceless benefits in having your own piece of land. Having majored in Agricultural Economics, I have useful knowledge in managing a farm for profitability. Efficiency, value-added marketing, and planning for the future are just a few concepts that promote good farm management. Having been an outdoorsman my entire life, I have an interest in protecting open space, wildlife habitat, and the environment in general. Based on my experiences, I am able to serve farmers in managing their land for profitability, risk-aversion, and resource conservation."



Bobby Drumheller

Martha Cowles

➤New NOWCC Employee

Martha Cowles joined the staff of NRCS and Headwaters District in March, 2006 as a National Older Worker Career Center contract worker. She relocated to Waynesboro from Manassas after taking early retirement as an executive liability account underwriter for Travelers Insurance. Prior to that position she had adjusted claims in the commercial property division of Travelers. Martha has found the part-time position as administrative support rewarding because the staff she supports is truly dedicated to carrying out the assigned mission of promoting conservation practices. This position is allowing Martha to enjoy the best of two worlds: being employed part-time with an organization that has a meaningful purpose and having free time to enjoy travel and to participate in community activities in the beautiful Shenandoah Valley.

➤New Contractual BMP's For 2007

The 2007 program year brings many changes to the cost-share program. Among these changes are the three new contractual BMP's. Virginia is offering a three-year contractual practice for cover crops, nutrient management plan writing, and nutrient management plan implementation. These practices allow the landowner to commit to implementing a BMP for three successive years, while receiving an annual payment.

The three-year small grain cover crop practice (SL-8C) is an option to the popular annual small grain cover crop practice (SL-8B). SL-8C provides some benefits to the landowner, allowing him or her to receive a higher annual payment for implementing the practice. In this practice, the participant agrees to plant the enrolled number of acres for at least three consecutive years. The

landowner gets an added bonus to his payment in years two and three. However, the practice requires a clear understanding of the specific rules. Interested landowners should contact John Kaylor or Bobby Drumheller for details.

The three-year contract for nutrient management plan writing (NM-1) is a revision of last year's nutrient management plan BMP. The changes for this year include allowing for revisions to the nutrient management plan in years two and three.

The three-year contract for nutrient management plan implementation (NM-2) is directed towards record-keeping of nutrient management plans. Applicants may receive up to \$3.00 per acre per year for the life of the contract. For information on any of these practices, contact John Kaylor (John.Kaylor@va.nacdnet.net) or Bobby Drumheller (Robert.Drumheller@va.nacdnet.net). John and Bobby can be reached at the District Office at (540) 248-6218 x-3.

Headwaters note: *When a landowner makes an appointment with Bobby Whitescarver, Lori, John or Bobby Drumheller, all potential options for programs to meet their needs and wishes are considered. All of these planners work together to bring landowners all options, including the option of technical assistance and advice, with no obligation to use cost-share programs.*

➤Highlighted Conservation Practice - Cover Crops

Why are cover crops getting so much attention these days? Most farmers already agree that cover crops are effective at controlling erosion and adding nitrogen to the soil. Those who are converting to continuous no-till are benefiting from the mulching effects against weeds and moisture conservation, especially during the dry part of this year. But there are even more positive benefits, so that the VA Department of Conservation and Recreation has named Cover Crops and Riparian Buffers as the top two conservation practices for meeting the Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy requirements.

One reason is the dramatic decline in the need for nitrogen, as organic content of the soil increases. For every 1 percent increase of organic matter in the soil, there are 15-20 lbs/acre of extra available nitrogen for crops (Dr. Ron Morse, VA Tech). Another is natural weed suppression, not just by the mulch, but the plant chemistry itself. Another is the increase in fungi and bacteria in the soil, and other soil life. The breakdown in organic matter ultimately increases nutrient availability.

Living soil breathes and stores carbon dioxide. Allowing the residue of cover crops to become incorporated in the soil - increasing the amount of living organisms in your fields - actually enhances air quality, too. These are some of the reasons the VA DCR and the USDA Conservation Security Program assign a high value to cover crop practices, and increasing organic matter in the soil.



Roller-Crimper for mechanically killing cover crops -



Subsoil ripper/tiller for leaving residue intact

Contact for free roller/crimper loan: 540-433-2853(ext 3)

➤ Virginia's Best Farmers Use Best Management Practices

By Bobby Drumheller

"How can I become a better farmer?" You might ask yourself this question from time to time. Well, first, you must think about what it means to be a better farmer. Does it mean that you make more of a profit this year than last? Does it mean that you have the ability to make it through a year with unfavorable weather conditions? Does it mean that you use your resources in a wise and sustainable manner? The answer to all of these questions is probably a resounding "YES!" However, the real question is how to achieve all of these goals for your farm.

If you are a typical American businessman or businesswoman, then you are probably most concerned with making profit year after

year. If you are not much of a risk-taker, then you are probably concerned about your farm's capability during a drought year. If you are involved in my line of work, or want to be a good steward of the land, or are just worried about the state of the environment, then you are probably concerned with conserving your land's resources. But before you throw conservation out the window in hopes of achieving the first two goals, you might be surprised to know that a few simple practices may achieve all three goals for your farm.

The Virginia BMP program is designed with conservation in mind, but it may help to increase yield and profit for your farm. Along with improving water quality, BMP's improve soil quality by reducing erosion and building organic matter. An improved soil retains more moisture, reduces the amount of fertilizer needed, helps to alleviate compaction problems, and grows a better crop year after year. Also, conserving your on-farm resources improves your farm's long-term viability, allowing your heirs to maintain the way of life that is so dear to you today. To quote Bobby Whitescarver, ***"These days, it's not enough to be the best herdsman, or the best agronomist, or the best mechanic, or the best accountant --- farmers today have to be stewards of the land as well."***

State BMP cost-share is usually 75% of the eligible cost of approved projects, and some federal programs (like the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program) may pay over 90% of the out-of-pocket expenses to the farmer. In many cases, farmers realize savings over the long run directly related to their BMPS, such as rotational grazing or nutrient management plans, but there is still some upfront cost, which is why there are...

➤ 3% Low Interest Loans For Ag BMPs

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's Construction Assistance Program (DEQ - CAP) continues to accept applications from Virginia's agricultural producers for low interest loans for the installation of specific Agricultural Best Management Practices (Ag BMP's).

Qualifying agricultural producers may borrow all or a portion of the costs associated with the installation of eligible conservation practices designed to improve water quality. Unlike most traditional agricultural cost-share programs, loan funds are provided to cover up-front expenses associated with project installation. A satisfactory credit review and Conservation Plan are required.

A few of the practices eligible for loan funding include: animal waste storage, grazing land protection, dairy loafing lot systems, composting and stream protection. A complete listing of Ag BMPs that are eligible for loan funding is found in the Virginia Agricultural BMP Loan Program Guidelines.

Beginning in February of this year, DEQ extended the Ag BMP loan eligibility to include the purchase of new or used No-Till drills / planters. Purchase of the equipment must be made through a dealership.

A pre-application for Ag BMP loan funding is included in the Loan Program Guidelines. Copies of the Guidelines are available at local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Farm Credit and DEQ offices throughout the state.

If you would like to receive a copy of the Ag BMP Loan Guidelines and pre-application, or if you have specific questions about practice eligibility, contact the DEQ - Construction Assistance Office in Richmond at (804) 698-4243, or the Harrisonburg DEQ Office at (540) 574-7891. Internet users can log on to: www.deq.virginia.gov/cap/aghomes.html

➤Headwaters 2005-6 Annual Report in Brief

In its 21st year of state Best Management Cost-share assistance, the Headwaters District paid landowners a total of \$432,670 to install the following practices:

Grazing Land Protection (SL-6)	11
Permanent Vegetative Cover (SL-1)	3
Small Grain Cover Crop (SL-8B)	27
Reforestation (FR-1)	1
Animal Waste Control Facility (WP-4)	5
Loafing Lot (WP-4B)	1
Legume Cover Crop (WQ-4)	4

22 approved landowners obligated \$4,992 worth of vouchers for 50% of the cost of the approved herbicides for multiflora rose or kudzu.

The 12th annual Tree Seedling Sale was held in February/March, making 1,715 native trees and 100 shelter kits available to over 60 landowners. 150 free hardwood trees were made available to local schools.

Total funds expended for dam repair and maintenance for FY-05/06 were \$20,424 (local) and \$107,335 (state grants).

Education staff led 19 student field trips and field days for over 1070 students, with 70 different teen and college helpers. We led 4 teacher workshops, made 39 classroom presentations to almost 910 students, and presented 10 civic programs.

USDA Conservation Practices Installed:

Stream Banks Protected from Livestock:	73,980 feet (14 miles)
Conservation Fencing:	119,538 feet (22.6 miles)
Livestock Watering Facilities:	37
Riparian Buffers Established:	170 acres
Protected Stream Crossings for Livestock:	11
Forest Stand Improvement:	257 acres
Animal Waste Storage Facilities:	6
Wetlands Restored:	40 acres

For a full annual report, visit the Headwaters website, or call the office for a copy.

➤US Forest Service Ranger District Change

The Headwaters District is now within the North River Ranger District, formed by the combination of the Deerfield and Dry River Ranger Districts. Headquartered at 401 Oakwood Drive, south of Harrisonburg, under the direction of District Ranger Elwood Burge, Headwaters still maintains a close relationship through Augusta Springs. New Phone: 540-432-0187.

➤Governor's Poll:Widespread Support for Land Conservation Efforts

Governor Timothy M. Kaine announced results of a statewide survey showing widespread support for using government resources to protect open space. The survey also shows that many Virginians consider outdoor recreation and access to open space to be important to their families.

The questions on protecting natural resources and open space were part of the Virginia Outdoors Survey, conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. The 3,300 household mail survey was conducted as part of the revision of the State's comprehensive outdoor recreation and open space planning guide, the Virginia Outdoors Plan.

Nearly 78% of respondents answered "yes" to the question "Should the state spend public funds to prevent the loss of exceptional natural areas to development?" When asked how important is it to protect Virginia's natural and open space resources, 67% said it was "very important" and 28% said it was "important." More than 70% of those surveyed said they favored outright purchase from willing sellers as an appropriate tool for conserving open space.

"The results of this survey reinforce our belief that the people of Virginia have a great concern for this Commonwealth's landscapes and open spaces," said Governor Kaine. "It also shows our citizens expect their state government to take a leadership role in natural resource protection."

For more information, visit the DCR website at www.dcr.virginia.gov.

➤ **Valley Conservation Council Receives Easement Grant**

VCC Director John Eckman announced a Water Quality Improvement Fund grant for the purchase of permanent riparian easements, protecting lands along streams and rivers. This unique program could offer \$1,000/acre to a landowner for a riparian easement as leverage for the conservation of the entire property. The grant presents an opportunity to combine multiple funding sources and to protect critical conservation land. For more information, call 540-886-3541.

👉 On June 30th, the Shenandoah Resource Conservation & Development Council hosted a **Biodiesel conference** for 70 vehicle fleet

managers from all over Virginia. Bottom line: Same cost, same performance, cleaner air!



Farmer Ian Heatwole demonstrates petrodiesel fuel vs. clean-burning biodiesel, which he runs in his tractors and pumps. He says there is no difference in performance, but the biodiesel lamp remained clean.

➤ **The Shenandoah Valley Pure Water Forum is 10 years old.** The first watershed roundtable in Virginia, the Forum brings together agencies, localities, professional and non-profit organizations on issues surrounding water quality and quantity. To mark the occasion, and continue the watershed partnership work, there will be a fishing "tournament" on October 13th, prior to a partners' luncheon at JMU. In light of the third year of a fish kill, we might find that healthy big fish may indicate "what's right, if we can't find out what's wrong". Participants will also be taking water samples for the DEQ on the tournament. Something about the water quality where fish are surviving may give us a clue about what is protecting these fish. Go to: www.purewaterforum.org.

➤ **Natural Resources Conservation Week October 15th-21st, 2006**

This year's "Be Waterwise" theme highlights the importance of conservation of water resources. Through a generous donor, Headwaters SWCD has purchased low-flow showerheads, and variable flush levers for toilets. The Headwaters Board of Directors will be testing these devices during Natural Resources Conservation Week, and reporting on their water savings and satisfaction. Would YOU like to try out one of these water saving devices too? The first three callers to the District will receive one free! Just call 540-248-6218 (ext 3), and say "I want to be Waterwise!"



"Be Waterwise" during Natural Resources Conservation Week October 15th-21st. You can win a free low-flow "Earth Massage" showerhead or variable flusher. Details inside!



Which way to reach you is best?

Traditionally, we have been publishing a printed copy of our newsletter, Headwaters Headlines, for all those in our database. Now that we have our own website (<http://www.headwaters.vaswcd.org>) we plan to post each newsletter there.

If you wish to continue receiving a printed copy, we will be more than happy to send one to you. However, if you wish to view it on-line visiting our website, please contact us to let us know. Please call 540-248-6218, ext. 3 or e-mail Cathy Perry at cathy.perry@va.nacdnet.net and we will stop mailing the printed copy. Thanks!

Look for our Tree Seedling Sale issue in early February.

Upcoming Events

Sept 18th, 7 pm, Augusta County Govt. Ctr. Board Meeting Room - *Opportunities for Slaughter and Processing Local Livestock and Poultry* - Tom Stanley 245-5750

Dairyman's Meeting: Oct 12th Precision Phosphorus Feeding for Dairy Farms - Tina Horn 245-5750 Woodmen of the World - Dayton

Augusta County Comprehensive Plan Review Committee meetings continue- see Augusta County website for schedule. Public welcome as observers. Regular Board of Supervisors meetings: September 13th, 27th, October 11th, 25th, 7 pm Aug. Co. Govt. Center. coming up soon: subdivision ordinances

Headwaters SWCD
Augusta County Government Center
70 Dick Huff Lane, USDA Bldg.
P.O. Box 70
Verona, VA 24482-0070
540-248-6218 (ext 3)

Non Profit Organization
US POSTAGE
PAID
STAUNTON, VA 24401
Permit #101

<http://www.headwaters.vaswcd.org>



MISSION STATEMENT

Representing the public and providing local leadership in the conservation of natural resources.

Headwaters SWCD programs, activities and employment opportunities are available to all people regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability or political affiliation. An Equal Opportunity Employer.



printed on 30% postconsumer recycled paper