

State Technical Committee Meeting
March 24, 2015, at 10:00 a.m.
NRCS State Office Conference Room

A G E N D A

Welcome and Opening Remarks	NRCS - Bricker
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP & CREP)	FSA - Horsley DCR - Moore
Regional Conservation Partnership Program	NRCS - Delaney
Status of FY-15 Program Funds Easements EQIP, CSP National and State CIG	NRCS - Dunaway NRCS - Vincent NRCS - Delaney
Agency Updates	All

Next Meeting - May 26, 2015

State Technical Committee Meeting Minutes

March 24, 2015

10:00 a.m.

NRCS State Office, Large Conference Room
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Richmond, Virginia

Attendees: Those in attendance were:

Bowles, Betsy (DEQ)
Carter, Ken (VASWCD)
Coffman, Seth (TU)
Cumbia, Dean (VDOF)
Groh, Todd (VDOF)
Hanson, Graham (National Wild Turkey Federation, phone-in)
Horsley, Emily (FSA)
Moore, Gary (DCR)
Norris, Libby (CBF, phone-in)
Pennington, Amanda (DCR)
Roller, Jon (Ecosystems Services)
Rowe, Ben (VGPA)
Schonbeck, Mark (VABF)
Stoneman, Wilmer (Virginia Farm Bureau)
Bricker, Jack (NRCS)
Delaney, Blaine (NRCS)
Dunaway, Diane (NRCS)
Jackson, Leticia (NRCS)
Vincent, Patrick (NRCS)
Wentz, Chad (NRCS)
Anderson, Kathleen (NRCS, recorder)

The meeting opened with a warm welcome from Jack Bricker. Everyone present introduced him/herself.

Jack Bricker briefly reviewed the agenda. Funds have been obligated but not as much funding as in previous years. We received 13.1 million dollars this year and have the highest demand in applications at 53 million. Two hundred thirty five applications do not have cost estimates so the demand should be more than 55 million potentially. We will request additional funding from headquarters but there is not much money for anyone. Most states will use about 100% of their allotments.

We have a soil health event coming up April 21, 2015, at Nuckols' Farm in Goochland. There will be a training session, with Monacan SWCD and Virginia Tech.

There were reports from some of the attendees:

Emily Horsley (FSA) — handout — The current numbers for Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) sign-up for Chesapeake Bay and southern rivers watershed are 1631 and 2074 contracts approved, respectively. There has been good enrollment with the quail habitat and long leaf pine, with 255 and 78 contracts approved, respectively. These numbers are through the end of February, as the reports for these conclude at the end of every month. Some early enrollments are getting ready to expire. We want to keep the acres under contract and active, as there has already been a significant investment.

Blaine Delaney (NRCS) — handout — The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCCP) rolled out in late May of 2014 as part of the new Farm Bill. There are three funding pools: a **national** pool or multi-state proposals (Virginia is not involved in this), a **Critical Conservation Area (CCA)** pool, and a **state** pool. There are eight CCAs in the nation. The two CCAs that affect Virginia are the Chesapeake Bay and the Long Leaf Pine Initiative. Accelerating Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plans (\$5.5 million award): the lead partner is the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and affects Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. Comprehensive Watershed Conservation in Dairy and Livestock Landscapes of the Chesapeake Bay (\$7.0 million award; \$1.4 million for Virginia – Rockingham County is targeted: The lead partner is the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Again, this affects Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. Delmarva Whole System Conservation Partnership – From Field to Stream: The lead Partner is The Nature Conservancy (\$5.0 million award; not sure if Virginia is still included). State Funding Pool (Virginia project) Forests – Fundamental for Conservation in Virginia (\$1.3 million award; 940,000 EQIP FA): The lead partner is the Virginia Department of Forestry. Three hundred eighty-five EQIP contracts will be developed to implement forestry practices on 25,700 acres. Forestry practices will include: Forest Management Plan (106), Tree Establishment (612), Site Preparation (490), Forest Stand Improvement (666), Riparian Forest Buffer (391), Prescribed Burning (338), Firebreak (394) and Critical Area Stabilization (342).

Diane Dunaway (NRCS) — handout — Policy interpretations came out from the national manual released yesterday. There is a building up of some backlog and a ranking process to select the best projects. Some projects may carry over to next year. New regulations were released in February. Look online for the statute. The final application due date will be at the end of April. The last revision of the ranking worksheet was two years ago. Some paper copies are here; if you have called in to the meeting on the phone, we will send this out if you request it. Copy is being sent out for review to easements and wetlands subcommittee. Does anyone want on or off the list? We closed four easements, wrapped up our last GRP, and acquired 14 easements last year. We have seven easements in the pipeline from prior years. \$1.4 million is expected as the final allocation. We want a backlog so that we can demonstrate Virginia's need and capacity for more projects.

- **Received 15 ACEP applications** (7 WRE, 8 ALE), totaling **requests for approx. \$8.7 million**. This was in response to last October's request for applications. It is the highest number of agricultural land easement (FRPP, ALE) partner applications in several years.
- Revised WRE Ranking Criteria Worksheet for FY-15 – comments are invited by Mar. 31. The STC meeting Subcommittee for Easements & Wetlands is also being invited to review the Worksheet.

- FY-14 total: Acquired 14 easements (1,739 acres of farmland & wetland.) This closed a significant number of the easements in the backlog from prior years
- ACEP has few new statutory provisions when compared to GRP, FRPP and WRP.
- Reduces ownership requirement from 7 years to 2 years.
 - Allows waiver for enrollment of CRP land established to trees.
 - Allows “cash match waiver” for landowner donation of up to 45% (up from 25%), reducing the amount of cash match required from partnering entity.

Patrick Vincent (NRCS) — handout — There has been a significant cut in funding for our FY15 EQIP budget. Virginia was allocated \$13.5 million. So far we have obligated \$5.5 million for 223 contracts and pre-approved 181 contracts for \$7.2 million. The funds remaining are \$821,557. The majority of those funds are allocated to National Initiatives and cannot be moved to other subaccounts. We have \$216,593 in our reserve account for cost overruns needed for preapproved and obligated contracts. There are 1,475 pending/eligible applications remaining with an estimated cost of \$39.2 million. We still do not have estimated cost for 235 applications. Field Offices have been taking CSP applications for general signup and renewals. For the general signup 97 applications have been received. The deadline for those applications was March 13, 2015. This year our 2011 CSP contracts are set to expire and those participants have the opportunity to sign-up for an additional five years. So far we have received 59 renewal applications. The deadline for CSP renewals is March 31.

Mark Schonbeck — Is there much interest in the CSP program? Patrick said that sign-up went up this year. Schonbeck asked how to help organic farmers, as their farms are intensively managed, and recommended a minimum contract payment for \$1500 year. We are rewarding and supporting farmers to maintain and continue. He encouraged to give feedback to the national office to make this more effective. Julie is interested in the findings. He will send the link for this report. Julie said that we are waiting for a national bulletin and instructions for EQIP about funding. Perhaps it will be out at the end of the month. He also asked if there was any move away from confinement to pasture system. Is there any provision in the program to support this transition? Julie re-defined raking criteria for most effective conservation benefit. We are already starting to look at this for 2016 and there will be an online tool. Decision for where the funding will go in future years. Yes to this question.

Blaine Delaney (NRCS) — handout — The National Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) Program started about 12 years ago; we began the State CIG Program in 2010. CIG encourages recipients to develop innovative practices and/or accelerate adoption of proven conservation technologies through demonstrations. For example, the Hanover-Caroline SWCD is demonstrating “cocktail mixes” of cover crops to promote soil health. Most of Virginia’s State CIG projects have used workshops, field days and other demonstrations to accelerate adoption of various conservation practices.

States can use up to 5% of their EQIP allocation for their CIG Program. Unless Virginia receives a lot more EQIP funding for FY15, we will not have a 2015 CIG Announcement, since the current EQIP signup is four times our EQIP allocation. We have never used anything close to 5% of the EQIP allocation in the past; our biggest year for CIG in Virginia was when we made seven awards in 2013 for a little over \$400,000.

The 2015 National CIG Announcement has \$20 million in funding; \$10 million for an Environmental Markets Funding Pool and \$10 million for a Natural Resources Funding Pool. They are currently reviewing the pre-proposals.

There are two significant changes to the CIG Program this year: (1) – on-farm conservation research is now allowed; and (2) – the cash match requirement has now been dropped. In prior years, an applicant had to provide cash to equal 25% of the total project cost. With this change, any combination of in-kind services and cash is allowed to provide at least one dollar in matching funds for every CIG dollar.

In Virginia, we have used CIG to help implement our Soil Health Initiative; eleven of the twenty-one State CIGs promote Soil Health practices. We are working to do a better job in getting the CIG outcomes and recommendations shared with NRCS and District staff and other partners. A 2-page CIG fact sheet was handed out as an example. Three active CIG projects will be showcased this spring at JED Trainings for NRCS and District staff.

AGENCY UPDATES

Dean Cumbia (VDOF) — It is seed time, but for two nurseries in Virginia, the cold weather has been causing things to get off to a slow start. The longleaf cooperators group proposal for RCPP did not move forward.

Todd Groh (VDOF) — Last year's budget was smaller, but it is good that EQIP could pick up some of this.

Betsy Bowles (DEQ) — There is a goal of working toward small animal feeding operations. Progress is made, at 60% of the goal. If you have an opportunity to promote the program when can get you information.

Wilmer Stoneman (Virginia Farm Bureau) — There will be a grain producer meeting on May 14 James City County. Very little agriculture there, so good opportunity to exhibit slate of presenters to focus on conservation. He'll be in touch with this for more info.

Seth Coffman (Trout Unlimited) — Interest has increased in the upper James River areas, especially in Highland and Bath counties. In the Valley, the planting season has been affected by the long cold winter by things being slowed, so there is a lot of activity now to catch up.

Mark Schonbeck (VABF) — There is a soil health series video with Chris Lawrence. A cover crop for three years has higher than average yields (EQIP). In southwestern Virginia, there is some highly diversified practices, including no-till, too. other videos coming out over the next few years. Check the website of vabf.org.

Emily Horsley (FSA) — There is a learning curve too about the Ag Risk programs. Disaster assistance in southwest with livestock losses from the winter (cold weather) and crop insurance for non-insurable crops – producers can buy up additional coverage. Farm Storage Facility loans, CREP agreements, we may see a general sign-up 30th anniversary to CREP — a lot of outreach in promotions. This will be highlighting farms around the country, and some from Virginia too, of course. Calvin Parrish, state executive director of FSA, will be retiring in April.

Gary Moore (DCR) — There is a software module available at the end of February, for training registered resource development planners.

Libby Norris (CBF, phone-in) — CBF opened up a new building Virginia Beach, called the Brock Center— greenest building in U.S. or even in North America — 10 acres with native plants. Tours of the building are available. There is meeting space for use, at no charge. Call or email Libby to get scheduled. It is located on Marlin Bay Drive along the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel. This parcel of land was slated for development, but CBF bought part of it for this center.

Graham Hanson (NWTF, phone-in) — There are no updates at this time, but Greensboro is working with short leaf pine, long leaf pine, and quail. If anyone wants to talk to him, he will be happy to give his input.

Jack Bricker thanked everyone for coming. Dollars will be obligated to get closer for the \$20 million mark. Virginia has averaged about 25-29 million of the last five years when we had CBWI.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Sign-up Progress

As of 2/28/2015

Chesapeake Bay -

1631 contracts approved
14,917.6 acres
AVAILABLE ACRES: 10,082.4
Current Allocation: 25,000

Southern Rivers -

2074 contracts approved
13,268.4 acres
AVAILABLE ACRES: 1,731.6
Current Allocation: 15,000

Other Continuous CRP (CCRP)

CP-33 - *Habitat Buffer For Upland Birds*

255 contracts approved
1,649.2 acres
AVAILABLE ACRES: 1,850.8
Current Allocation: 3,500

CP-36 *Longleaf Pine*

78 contracts approved
834.8 acres
AVAILABLE ACRES: 3,915.2
Current Allocation: 4,750

REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP)

Critical Conservation Area Funding Pool (*Virginia projects*) 3.24.15

Accelerating Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plans (\$5.5 million award)

Lead partner: Maryland Department of Agriculture

To meet a large unmet demand for conservation programs that will contribute to meeting the Chesapeake Bay TMDL, this project will utilize state implementation plans to accelerate targeted, cost-effective conservation in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. Implementation will be adapted to each state's high priorities and opportunities for innovation. Virginia requested financial assistance from EQIP to support implementation of additional stream exclusion and riparian buffer practices, with additional technical assistance funds (EQIP) to design and implement these types of practices.

Comprehensive Watershed Conservation in Dairy and Livestock Landscapes of the Chesapeake Bay (\$7.0 million award; \$1.4 million for Virginia – Rockingham County is targeted)

Lead Partner: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

A large, diverse group of partners will use a "raise the bar" approach that rewards agricultural producers in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania for implementing higher impact, priority conservation practices in targeted subwatersheds and counties of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The approach will address both water quality degradation and inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife in the CBW through a combination of comprehensive conservation planning, conservation practice implementation, and strategic habitat restoration. A new concept of conservation delivery is proposed: the conservation brokerage, where agency-neutral funding is used to best address resource concerns. The partners will also use cost-benefit targeting to focus financial assistance dollars. Five Rockingham County sub-watersheds will be targeted in Virginia.

Delmarva Whole System Conservation Partnership—From Field to Stream

Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy (\$5.0 million award; not sure if Virginia is still included)

This public-private partnership in Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia will use a science-based approach to achieve significant environmental objectives: 1) improve water quality through the implementation of advanced nutrient management practices on 95,000 acres and restoring, enhancing, and protecting 3,000 acres of natural filters (wetlands (WRE) and buffers); and 2) expand wildlife habitat by enhancing, restoring, and protecting 3,000 acres of high quality wetlands and buffers. The partners estimate that these conservation systems in priority locations will reduce 836,000 pounds of total nitrogen, 33,300 pounds of total phosphorus, and 58,000 pounds of total suspended solids currently delivered to local waterways each year, which will support achieving the goals of the Chesapeake Bay TMDL. Amounts listed above will be scaled back as they finalize the agreement to match reduced funding.

State Funding Pool (*Virginia project*)

Forests – Fundamental for Conservation in Virginia (\$1.3 million award; 940,000 EQIP FA)

Lead Partner: Virginia Department of Forestry

There is a significant, demonstrated need for additional forestry assistance to meet resource concerns in Virginia. This project will improve water quality, reduce soil erosion and improve wildlife habitat. The state's *Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) Program* along with the EQIP program are over-subscribed each year. The Virginia Department of Forestry and NRCS have developed a very successful partnership over the years to reach out and assist landowners through planning and implementation of forestry practices. This project will improve forest management planning; implement forest management and improvement practices; and maintain and enhance forests. Three hundred eighty-five EQIP contracts will be developed to implement forestry practices on 25,700 acres. Forestry practices will include: 106 Forest Management Plan, 612 Tree Establishment, 490 Site Preparation, 666 Forest Stand Improvement, 391 Riparian Forest Buffer, 338 Prescribed Burning, 394 Firebreak and 342 Critical Area Stabilization.

Land Conservation Easements

ACEP, FRPP, GRP, WRP

Report to State Technical Committee, Virginia

March 24, 2015 Meeting

Easement Highlights in FY-15

- **Received 15 ACEP applications** (7 WRE, 8 ALE), totaling **requests for approx. \$8.7 million**. This was in response to last October's request for applications. It is the highest number of agricultural land easement (FRPP, ALE) partner applications in several years.
- Received part of ACEP FA allocation, with remaining coming in March, to tentatively total **expected allocation of approx. \$1.9 million**. Details below.
- New Farm Bill ACEP regulations were released in February and the public comment period ends April 28. See Federal Register, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program.
- New ACEP programs manual and associated documents released Mar. 23.
- ACEP application final due date – probably May 1.
- Revised WRE Ranking Criteria Worksheet for FY-15 – comments are invited by Mar. 31. The STC ~~meeting~~te- Subcommittee for Easements & Wetlands is also being invited to review the Worksheet.
- FY-15 acquisitions to date: 4 easements; details in table below. 7 easements in acquisition process.
- 3 WRP restorations completed.
- FY-14 total: Acquired 14 easements (1,739 acres of farmland & wetland.) This closed a significant number of the easements in the backlog from prior years.
- Annual monitoring is underway for all easements for FY 2015.

Easement Allocation Details for FY 2015 (FA)

Advisory allocation received

(75% of final):

\$ 633,000 for ACEP-WRE

\$ 814,150 for ACEP-ALE

\$ 1,447,150 Advisory allocation

Total allocation tentatively expected

(100% of final):

\$ 844,000 for ACEP-WRE

\$ 1,085,533 for ACEP-ALE

\$ 1,929,533 TOTAL expected

Easements Acquired: Closed and Recorded in FY 2015 to Date

Area	Prog.	County	Acres	Partner/ Easement Holder
1	FRPP	Clarke	58	Clarke Co.
1	FRPP	Clarke	65	Clarke Co.
			123	Total FRPP Acres
1	GRP	Augusta	111	na
			111	Total GRP Acres
3	WRP	Charlotte	86	na
			86	Total WRP Acres
			320	TOTAL Easement Acres

ACEP – New Farm Bill 2014 Easement Program – Summary

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) has two components:
 - ALE** - Agricultural Land Easement (FRPP, GRP functions)
 - WRE** - Wetland Reserve Easement (WRP functions)
- FRPP, GRP and WRP have been repealed, but their purposes and functions have been consolidated into ACEP.
- ACEP has few new statutory provisions when compared to GRP, FRPP and WRP, though ACEP will require a new regulation for its implementation. Does not impact authority to provide support for easements and agreements obligated under previous legislation.
- WRE highlights:
 - Reduces ownership requirement from 7 years to 2 years.
 - Allows waiver for enrollment of CRP land established to trees.
 - No option to enroll stand-alone restoration cost-share agreements.
- ALE highlight:
 - Allows “cash match waiver” for landowner donation of up to 45% (up from 25%) of fair market easement value, thus reducing the amount of cash match required from partnering entity. This might also allow landowner to claim Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credits for the donated value. (Call if you have questions.)



*Charlotte County, -Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) easement,
86 acres, closed December 2014.*

EQIP Budget Allocation 3/23/15

Fund Code	Account Name	Allocated	Contracts	Contract Approval	# Preapproved Applications	Preapproved	Funds Remaining	Account Name	Eligible / Pending Applications	Estimated Cost	No Cost
76F 51	Virginia	\$13,550,429.00	223	\$5,526,190.00	181	\$7,202,681.40	\$821,557.60	Virginia	1475	\$39,247,224.73	235
76F 51 AQ	Aquaculture	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Aquaculture	36	\$446,743.00	1
76F 51 BF	Beginning Farmer	\$684,385.50	5	\$293,227.00	12	\$391,158.50	\$0.00	Beginning Farmer	70	\$237,4095.29	12
76F 51 CA	CAPS-Conservation Activity Plans	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	CAPS-Conservation Activity Plans	121	\$252,310.00	7
76F 51 CC	Cropland - Christiansburg	\$69,970.00	3	\$69,970.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Cropland - Christiansburg	5	\$83,172.00	0
76F 51 CF	Cropland - Farmville	\$191,728.00	1	\$8,756.00	4	\$182,972.00	\$0.00	Cropland - Farmville	22	\$205,084.00	5
76F 51 CH	Cropland - Harrisonburg	\$1,058,417.00	14	\$782,459.00	11	\$275,958.00	\$0.00	Cropland - Harrisonburg	47	\$836,513.00	5
76F 51 CS	Cropland - Smithfield	\$2,079,149.57	35	\$1,041,967.00	43	\$1,037,182.57	\$0.00	Cropland - Smithfield	87	\$2,030,901.60	6
76F 51 FS	Forestry - Statewide	\$934,929.00	69	\$840,806.00	7	\$94,123.00	\$0.00	Forestry - Statewide	199	\$1,421,951.91	30
76F 51 2	FY15 Certified Organic	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	FY15 Certified Organic	2	\$19,019.00	0
76F 51 4	FY15 On-Farm Energy	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	FY15 On-Farm Energy	69	\$2,947,820.05	7
76F 51 EC	FY15 On-Farm Energy CAP	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	FY15 On-Farm Energy CAP	61	\$135,600.00	1
76F 51 3	FY15 Organic Transition	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	FY15 Organic Transition	7	\$145,459.00	1
76F 51 5	FY15 Seasonal High Tunnels	\$606,253.00	52	\$510,153.00	10	\$96,100.00	\$0.00	FY15 Seasonal High Tunnels	99	\$868,892.00	10
76F 51 GW	Golden Winged-Warbler	\$32,384.00	0	\$0.00	4	\$32,384.00	\$0.00	Golden Winged-Warbler	0	\$0.00	0
76F 51 IW	Irrigation Water Management	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Irrigation Water Management	8	\$72,772.00	0
76F 51 AC	Livestock - Christiansburg	\$1,158,316.00	3	\$674,138.00	2	\$484,178.00	\$0.00	Livestock - Christiansburg	148	\$9,546,531.00	28
76F 51 LF	Livestock - Farmville	\$1,258,981.00	3	\$179,253.00	10	\$1,079,728.00	\$0.00	Livestock - Farmville	157	\$6,694,743.70	17
76F 51 LH	Livestock - Harrisonburg	\$2,455,656.80	3	\$281,311.00	19	\$2,174,345.80	\$0.00	Livestock - Harrisonburg	202	\$8,605,699.20	42
76F 51 LS	Livestock - Smithfield	\$402,910.50	3	\$206,699.00	4	\$196,211.50	\$0.00	Livestock - Smithfield	16	\$283,437.00	9
76F 51 LP	Long Leaf Pine Initiative	\$126,731.20	1	\$39,555.00	3	\$87,176.20	\$0.00	Long Leaf Pine Initiative	4	\$72,329.00	0
76F 51 SP	Longleaf / Short Leaf Pine - Statewide	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Longleaf / Short Leaf Pine - Statewide	2	\$1,350.00	1
76F 51 FM	NWQI - Fifteen Mile Creek	\$123,000.00	1	\$4,940.00	1	\$25,000.00	\$93,060.00	NWQI - Fifteen Mile Creek	1	\$0.00	1
76F 51 MR	NWQI - Smith Creek - Mountain Run	\$123,000.00	1	\$7,605.00	1	\$10,800.00	\$104,595.00	NWQI - Smith Creek - Mountain Run	0	\$0.00	0
76F 51 WB	NWQI - Smith Creek - War Branch	\$123,000.00	0	\$0.00	1	\$5,690.85	\$117,309.15	NWQI - Smith Creek - War Branch	1	\$0.00	1
76F 51 SD	Socially Disadvantaged	\$761,612.00	5	\$151,282.00	5	\$610,330.00	\$0.00	Socially Disadvantaged	32	\$1,826,189.90	4
76F 51 SC	Specialty Crop Fund Pool	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Specialty Crop Fund Pool	6	\$38,250.00	0
76F 51 HM	Wildlife - Habitat Maintenance	\$22,545.00	1	\$2,045.00	3	\$20,500.00	\$0.00	Wildlife - Habitat Maintenance	7	\$60,248.00	4
76F 51 HC	Wildlife - Wildlife Habitat Creation	\$547,565.98	16	\$148,723.00	41	\$398,842.98	\$0.00	Wildlife - Wildlife Habitat Creation	31	\$151,533.08	12
76F 51 SF	StrikeForce	\$290,000.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$290,000.00	No Fund Code	35	\$126,581.00	31
76F 51 CD	2014 Carryover - Cropland	\$111,738.00	3	\$111,738.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Totals	1475	\$39,247,224.73	235
76F 51 FY	2014 Carryover - Forestry	\$39,206.00	3	\$39,206.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00				
76F 51 LK	2014 Carryover - Livestock	\$132,357.00	1	\$132,357.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00				
76F 51 16009	FY15 CIG State Component	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00				
76F 51 16077	FY15 EQIP Reserve	\$216,593.45	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$216,593.45				
		\$13,550,429.00	223	\$5,526,190.00	181	\$7,202,681.40	\$821,557.60				

Conservation Stewardship Program Update

FY15 General Signup Applications - 97

FY16 Contract Renewal Applications - 59

Virginia Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) History

YEAR	# of CIG Awards	CIG Funds Awarded
FY 2015	?	?
FY 2014	3	\$224,923
FY 2013	7	\$406,641
FY 2012	3	\$164,415
FY 2011	6	\$248,704
FY 2010	2	\$143,054

NATIONAL FY2015 CIG Program

- NRCS will announce selected pre-proposals by April 1, 2015
 - Full proposals are due by April 30, 2015
- \$20 million available
 - \$10 million for the Environmental Markets Funding Pool
 - \$10 million for the Natural Resources Funding Pool
 - Maximum award is \$1 million
- Two key changes to CIG Program
 - On-farm conservation research is now allowed
 - No “cash match” requirement, matching funds can be up to 100% in-kind

Summary of Current VA NRCS Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) Projects

Project Title	Start	Duration	Recipient Organization(s)	Contact Person	Geographic Region Targeted	NRCS Financial Contribution
Advancing Agroforestry Riparian Buffer Implementation for Soil Health in Virginia	Fall 2014	2 years	Appalachian Sustainable Development	Emily Lachniet	Southwest Virginia	\$74,923
Cover Crops as a Conservation Approach: What Dairy Farmers Need for its Adoption (SOIL HEALTH)		2 years	Virginia Tech	Gonzalo Ferreira	Shenandoah Valley & other dairy regions	\$75,000
Improving soil health and crop productivity by utilizing diverse and high-residue cover crops in Virginia (SOIL HEALTH)		3 years	Virginia Tech	Mark Reiter	Eastern Shore & Tidewater	\$75,000
Soil Health and Wallet Wealth in Intensive Dairy Systems (SOIL HEALTH)	Fall 2013	2 years	American Farmland Trust	Jim Baird	Shenandoah Valley & Northern Piedmont	\$75,000
Strip Tilling Vegetables to Boost Soil Organic Matter, Farmland Conservation and Grower Productivity (SOIL HEALTH)		2 years	Appalachian Sustainable Development	Chick Fish	Southwest Virginia	\$32,913
Farming on the Edge: Evaluation of the edge effect in grain cropping systems		1 year	Colonial SWCD	Brian Noyes	Tidewater	\$12,350
Improved Soil Health through Livestock and Pasture Diversity: a Farm Demonstration (SOIL HEALTH)		3 years	Piedmont Environmental Council of Virginia	Don Loock	Northern Piedmont	\$62,276
Soil Health and Grazing Management: Putting Science into Practice (SOIL HEALTH)		3 years	Virginia Forage and Grassland Council	Patricia Johnson	Statewide (Western VA emphasis)	\$75,000
Healthy Farms from the Soil Up: Finding Common Ground (SOIL HEALTH)		3 years	Virginia Tech	Eric Bendfeldt	Shenandoah Valley & Northern Piedmont	\$74,102

Project Title	Start	Duration	Recipient Organization(s)	Contact Person	Geographic Region Targeted	NRCS Financial Contribution
Establishing and Managing Pine and Hardwood Silvopastures in the Mid-Atlantic Region of the United States	Fall 2013	3 years	Virginia Tech	Chris Teutsch	Statewide	\$75,000
Feasibility of Multi-species Cover Crops in Central Virginia Cropping Systems to Affect Soil Quality (SOIL HEALTH)	Fall 2012	3 years	Hanover-Caroline SWCD	Jim Tate	Northeast VA	\$49,900
Managed Grazing for Improved Soil Health and Environmental Protection (SOIL HEALTH)	Fall 2012	3 years	Virginia Tech	Ben Tracy	West of Blue Ridge	\$75,000
Innovative Cropping Systems Using Diverse Cover Crops & Manure Injection (SOIL HEALTH)		3 years	Virginia No-Till Alliance	Matt Yancey	Shenandoah Valley	\$39,515
Strategically Reducing Phosphorus Excretions in Grazing Beef Cattle		2 years	Virginia Tech	Mark McCann	Statewide	\$30,000
Enhanced Nutrient Management in Virginia: Precision Soil Phosphorous, Potassium, and pH Management	Summer 2011	3 years	Virginia Tech	Mark Reiter		\$75,000
Comprehensive Conservation Outreach Training for Limited Resource and Beginning Farmers in Central Virginia		2 years	Local Food Hub, Inc.	Adrianna Vargo	Central Virginia	\$75,000
Beneficial Reuse of Large Animal Mortality		2 years	Virginia Tech	Bobby Clark	Shenandoah Valley	\$2,900
GPS Zone-Based Variable Rate Nitrogen Fertilizer CIG Project		3 years	Colonial SWCD	Brian Noyes	Tidewater	\$15,804
Greenseeker Sensor-Based Variable Rate Nitrogen Fertilizer CIG Project		3 years	Colonial SWCD	Brian Noyes	Tidewater	\$50,000
Alternative Winter Cover Crop Species and Seeding Techniques for Virginia (SOIL HEALTH)	Fall 2010	2 years	Virginia Tech	Wade Thomason	Statewide	\$69,769
Cost Share for Slug Management in Corn and Soybeans		3 years	Virginia Tech	Bobby Clark	Shenandoah Valley	\$73,285



Project Title:

Strategically Reducing Phosphorus Excretions in Grazing Beef Cattle

Grant Recipient:

Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University (Virginia Tech)

Other Key Project Partners:

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Project Timeline:

June 2011 to March 2014

Project Funding:

NRCS Contribution:	\$30,000
Recipient & Partner Match:	\$30,000
Total:	\$60,000

Recipient Technical Contact:

Dr. Mark McCann, Virginia Tech
PH: 540-231-9153
Email: mmccann@vt.edu

NRCS Technical Contact:

J.B. Daniel, State Grassland Agronomist
PH: 434-392-4171 x115
Email: j.b.daniel@va.usda.gov

Project Objectives

- Conduct a controlled feeding demonstration where cattle phosphorus (P) intake and excretion could be quantified.
- Collect information and field samples from beef cattle farms in Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Watershed, documenting P status and supplementation.
- Extrapolate the results of the feeding demonstration to the on-farm conditions reported from field samples.

Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) Fact Sheet

Summary/Abstract: The goal of this project was to conduct a controlled feeding demonstration where cattle P intake and excretion could be quantified and extrapolated to on-farm conditions reported from field sample P status results from beef cattle farms throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed in Virginia.



Excess P is primarily excreted in the feces.

Steer feeding demonstrations indicated that increased P supplementation, both inorganic and organic sources, increased P excretion in parallel fashion. In addition, higher levels of P supplementation resulted in a greater percentage of excreted P in the inorganic or water soluble form. Seventy percent of the forage samples collected on farms exceeded the P need of a beef cow at peak lactation and 99% of the samples exceeded the late gestation and late lactation P requirement.

The results of the farm collected fecal samples also suggest that cattle are receiving P supplementation beyond their nutritional needs. Project survey results revealed that 82% of the cattlemen would consider reducing their P supplementation if they were confident that forage was meeting their cattle P requirement. Based on the demonstration results, reduced P supplementation should result in decreased P excretion and reduced importation of P into the Bay watershed while still meeting animal nutritional requirements.

Background / Phosphorus (P) Supplementation of Beef Cattle

- P supplementation of beef cows is a commonly recommended and accepted management practice.
- Deficient P intake levels have been reported to negatively impact cow reproduction rates.
- Cattlemen are ingrained with the concept of P and bovine reproduction.
- The new TMDL proposed by EPA for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed outlines significant target reductions for sediment, nitrogen and phosphorus.
- Educating beef cattlemen on the status of P in their forages and supple-



Feces is collected for subsampling and analysis.

mental feeds will provide a more efficient, economical and environmentally friendly means of meeting their cow's P requirements.

Methods / Plan of Action

- Two controlled feeding demonstrations were conducted to demonstrate the rela-

tionship between P intake and P excreted.

- One feed demonstration used a form of inorganic P commonly used as the P source in mineral supplements.
- The parallel feed demonstration used dried corn gluten pellets, an organic source of P, commonly used as a feed supplement on farms.
- All feed and fecal samples were dried, ground, subsampled and analyzed for inorganic and total P.
- Production surveys were completed and on-farm forage samples were collected representing over 120 locations throughout the watershed.

Results: Technical Findings

- Feed demonstrations indicated that as greater amounts of P were fed, greater amounts were excreted via the feces.
- This relationship held true regardless of the source of P fed (mineral vs. corn gluten).
- As greater amounts of P were fed and excreted, the fraction of inorganic P excreted in the feces also increased (Fig. 1).
- As the amount of P supplemented exceeds cattle requirements, the amount of inorganic (water soluble) P excreted also increases.
- The net result of feeding P above cattle nutrient needs is that a greater amount of P is excreted and a larger portion of this excreted P is in a form more vulnerable to runoff.

Results: Outreach Activities

- The demonstration results were shared at 3 regional summer producer field days and one county meeting reaching nearly 500 cattlemen.
- An article was published in the VA Cattlemen's Magazine.

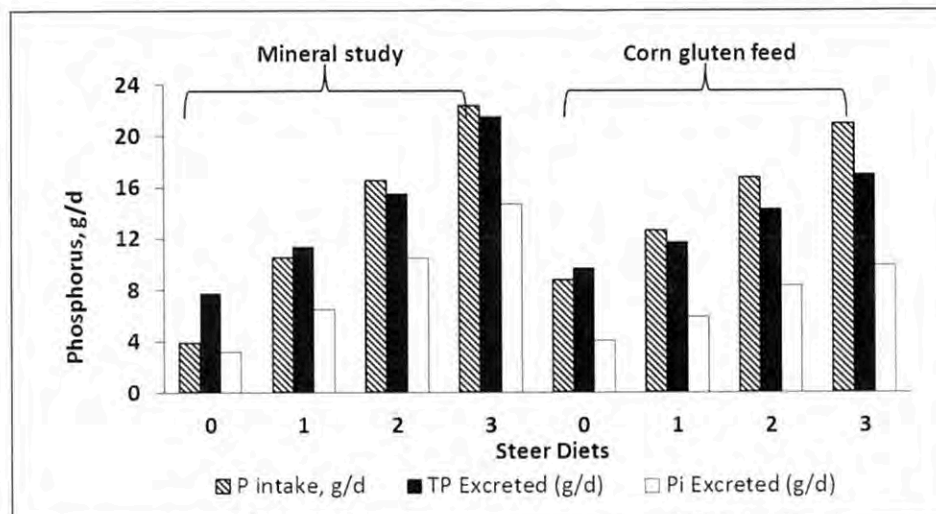


Figure 1: Phosphorus intake and excretion as influenced by amount of supplemental P

- Based on the project results three regional Cattlemen Associations now offer a low P mineral mix to their membership.
- A face-to-face meeting was held with a major formulator and marketer of livestock mineral in VA and the southeast U.S., to share results and discuss the possibility of adding more low P mineral choices to their offering.
- An Extension publication was produced based on project results providing producer recommendations.

Conclusions for Farmers

- Phosphorus status of our waterways is affected by both agricultural and non-agricultural activities in the watershed.
- Overfeeding P to beef cattle simply leads to greater fecal P excretion, much of which is in the higher risk, inorganic form.
- By monitoring forage P content and selecting the correct mineral, fecal P excretion can be minimized at both an environmental and economic benefit.

Conclusions for Policymakers

- Evaluating the farm P status, by sampling and analyzing forage and/or fecal samples, provides the basic information needed to determine if

cattle are receiving enough P to meet their requirements.

- Matching P supplementation to cattle P requirements, based on sample analysis, is a strategic management practice that can reduce P imported into the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

References / For More Info

1. Poster Presentation: P Status of Grazing Beef Cattle Farms in VA
2. Final CIG project report (link)
3. Beef Cattle P Calculator Worksheet
4. Extension web publication titled: Optimizing Phosphorus Supplementation of Grazing Beef Cattle on the Beef Extension Website at <http://www.apsc.vt.edu/extension/beef/index.html>



Alston Horn, a field technician with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, collects and analyzes fresh forage samples to use as a decision making tool.

CAN HIGH-VALUE CROPS MARRY CONSERVATION IN SW VA?

A Full-Day Partnership Training on Agroforestry (Food Production) in Riparian Buffers and Strip Till Vegetables

(Serves as April "JED" for local NRCS & SWCD personnel)

Hosted by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and
Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD)

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2015
9:30 AM – 3:30 PM



Please join us for a discussion about conservation practices that make \$en\$e!

Join project partners from NRCS, VA Tech, VA Cooperative Extension (VCE), and Appalachian Sustainable Development for interactive presentations and discussion on:

- The pros and cons of using strip tilling for vegetable production to increase yield, organic matter and soil conservation.
- Agroforestry and its use in riparian buffer zones. See the Buffer\$ tool that assists landowners with calculating the income potential of an agroforestry riparian buffer in comparison to other agricultural and livestock operations in the floodplain.

TURN THE PAGE FOR FULL AGENDA!

APPALACHIAN
sustainable

USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture

*With
Presentations
By*

ASD

Katie Commender
Chick Fish
Emily Lachniet
Kathlyn Terry

Virginia Tech/VCE
Dr. Allen Straw
Katie Trozzo

**WYTHEVILLE
COMMUNITY &
MEETING CENTER**

333 Community Blvd.
Wytheville, VA 24382
(276) 223-3416

TRAINING AGENDA

CAN HIGH-VALUE CROPS MARRY CONSERVATION IN SW VA?

A Full-Day Partnership Training on Agroforestry (Food Production) in Riparian Buffers and Strip-Till Vegetables
(Serves as April "JED" for local NRCS & SWCD personnel)

Thursday, April 16, 2015

Wytheville Community and Meeting Center, Wytheville, VA

Time	Title	Description	Presenter
9:30-10:00am	Introduction	• Introductions and announcements	NRCS Staff
10:00-10:15am	ASD Overview	• Introduction to the organization • Overview of programs and CIG projects	Kathlyn Terry, ASD Executive Director
10:15-11:00am	Strip Tilling Vegetables	• Project review and results of strip tilling vegetables to increase soil quality and demonstrate and document the effectiveness of strip-tillage for vegetable production in southwest Virginia	Chick Fish, Agriculture Technical Support Coordinator & Allen Straw, VT Area Specialist, Horticulture, Small Fruit & Specialty Crops
11:00-11:10am DISCUSSION/BREAK			
11:10-11:30am	Strip Tilling Vegetables	• Group discussion about strip tilling pros and cons	All
11:30-12:00pm	What is Agroforestry?	• Overview of practices, landowner interest and policy	Katie Trozzo, PhD student, Virginia Tech
12:00-1:00pm LUNCH BREAK (bring your own!)			
1:00-1:30pm	How to Plan for & Plant Agroforestry Riparian Buffers	• Overview of the best practices for planning, establishing and maintaining agroforestry riparian buffers • Examples using CIG plantings	Emily Lachniet, ASD Sustainable Forestry Program Manager
1:30-1:45pm DISCUSSION/BREAK			
1:45-2:30pm	Agroforestry in Action	• Agroforestry Integration into EQIP and BMP • Riparian Buffer Integration • NAC Buffer\$ Tool	All
2:30-3:00pm	Panel Session	• Open floor to ask questions about agroforestry riparian buffers to a panel of agroforestry technical assistance providers and adopters	Katie Commender, Emily Lachniet, Katie Trozzo
3:00-3:30	Wrap-UP	• Announcements and Wrap Up	NRCS
ADJOURN			

BRING YOUR LUNCH!

**Approved for 4.0 VA NRCS Conservation Planner CEUs
DCR Nutrient Mgmt CEUs expected**