

State Technical Committee (STTC) Meeting

April 24, 2024, at 9:30am
Large Conference Room, 2nd Floor, & Virtual, via Microsoft Teams
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 209
Richmond, Virginia 23229

9:30 am	Welcome and Opening Remarks	Dr. Edwin Martínez Martínez, <i>State Conservationist</i>
9:45	Programs Status Updates	Marian Jordan, <i>ASTC-Programs</i>
9:55	Notice of Funding Opportunities Update	John Womack, <i>ASTC-Partnerships and Initiatives</i>
10:05	State Resource Conservationist Report	Clarimer Hernández-Vargas, <i>State Resource Conservationist</i>
10:15	Small Farm Outreach Program Updates	Nadine Jackson, <i>Small Farm Outreach Program, Virginia State University (VSU)</i>
10:30	Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Updates and Partnership Opportunities	Joseph 'Joe' Guthrie, <i>Commissioner, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)</i>
10:45	Farm Service Agency Updates Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	Tara Bowley, <i>Farm Program Specialist, Farm Service Agency (FSA)</i>
11:00	Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Districts Updates	Dr. Kendall Tyree, <i>Executive Director, Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD)</i>
11:15	Conservation Engineer Update Watershed Rehabilitation Program	Kelly Ramsey, <i>Acting State Conservation Engineer</i>
11:30	Questions and Answer Session	ALL
11:50	Closing Remarks	Dr. Edwin Martínez Martínez, <i>State Conservationist</i>
12:00	Adjourn	

Next Planned Meeting – October 2024

State Technical Committee - Sign In Sheet			
Name	Organization	Position	Email
In-Person Attendees			
Dr. Edwin Martinez Martinez	USDA -NRCS	State Conservationist	Edwin.Martinez@usda.gov
Kendall Tyree	VASWCD	Executive Director	Kendall.Tyree@VASWCD.org
James Martin	VA DCR	Division Director	James.E.Martin@DCR.Virginia.Gov
Jesse Bander	Dept. of Forestry	Area Forester	Jesse.Bander@dof.virginia.gov
Bill Fleming	Virginia DARE SWCD	Director	wwfleming@hotmail.com
Jimmy Webber	USGS	Hydrologist	Jwebber@usgs.gov
John Jastram	USGS	Section Chief	jdjastra@usgs.gov
Nathan Burrell	VOF	Director of Community Conservation & Gov't Relations	Nburrell@vof.org
Seth Coffman	Trout Unlimited	Chesapeake bay Project Manager	seth.coffman@tu.org
Nadine Jackson	VSU -SFOP	Program + Grants Coordinator	njackson@vsu.org
Kristen Hughes Evans	Sustainable Chesapeake	Executive Director	kristen@suches.org
H.L. Kellam & Tara Bowley	FSA	State Office	HL.Kellam@usda.gov, Tara.Bowley@usda.gov
Mary Sketch Bryant	VA Tech / VA Soil Health Coalition	Director, VSHC	msketch2@vt.edu
Luke Longanecker & Jessica Shippen-Hansen	TJSWCD	Conservation Program Mgr.	Luke.Longanecker@tjswcd.org
Marian. Jordan	USDA -NRCS	ASTC -Programs	marian.jordan@usda.gov
Clarimer Hernandez	USDA -NRCS	SRC	Clarimer.Hernandez@usda.gov

Kelly Ramsey	USDA -NRCS	SCE, acting	kelly.ramsey@usda.gov
Jeff Blakley	USDA -NRCS	Public Affairs Specialist	jeff.blakley@usda.gov
Courtney Kidwell	USDA -NRCS	RCPP Coordinator	courtney.kidwell@usda.gov
John Womack	USDA -NRCS	P&I	john.womack@usda.gov
Dave Byrd	USFWS	State Coordinator - PFW	David_byrd@fws.gov
Online Attendees			
Tori Kennedy	Conservation Partners		
Leann Schmidt	USDA-NRCS	ASTFO	
Bridget Braunscheidel	Conservation Partners		
Matthew Kowalski	Chesapeake Bay Foundation		
Dave Beals	Colonial SWCD		
Rod Walker	Blue Ridge PRISM		rodswalker@gmail.com
Ed Farley	Ducks Unlimited	Manager of Conservation Programs	
Sara Bottenfield	DCR		
Adrienne Kotula	Chesapeake Bay Foundation		
Mark Dubin	UME/CBPO		
Michelle Carter	Three Rivers SWCD		
Michael Carter Jr.	Africulture		
Michael Flessner	Virginia Cooperative Extension	Extension Specialist	

Attendees, STTC 4/24/2024

Shannon Tignor Ellis	United Soybead Board	Virginia Director	
Chris Anderson	EPA Region 3	Regional Source Water Protection Specialist	
Joanna Ogburn	Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape Partnership		
Dana Bayless	USDA-NRCS	CSP Program Manager	
Leslie Grayson	Virginia Outdoors Foundation		
Tammy Heath & Matthew Venable	Mattaponi Tribe and Reservation Envrionmental Department		
Joe Capella	Pamunkey Indian Tribe	Environmental Protection Manager	
Kathy Baker	Stafford County Planning and Zoning	PDR Administrator	
Ken Carter	Association of Soil and Water Districts		
Roberto Franco	AgrAbility Virginia	Program Coordinator	
Kevin Tate	Alliance for Shenandoah Valley		
Kilby D. Majette	USDA-NRCS	ASTFO	
Raven Jarvis	VDH-ODW		

State Technical Committee (STTC) Meeting

April 24, 2024, at 9:30 am
NRCS State Office
1606 Santa Rosa Road, suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229

Welcome and Opening Remarks – Dr. Edwin Martinez Martinez *NRCS State Conservationist*

Welcome, thank you for joining, and for your partnership. Housekeeping: signature book, ensure virtual guests are connected. Important to mention, thinking of 2024 Farm Bill implementation and forward to 2025, feedback made during the State Technical Committee played a part in how FY 2024 has been implemented. CIG overview. Input from the committee included a focus on soil health, forestry, urban agriculture, tribal grants. John Womack, ASTC-P&I will go over Notice of Funding Opportunities later today. Please help us promote these funding opportunities in our state.

Partnership updates about 7 new agreements of over \$2.9 Million, agreements include outreach, education, staffing capacity and support. Department of Forestry is one example -- we set an agreement for over \$550,000, which has provided support for our technical assistance in the field as NRCS only had one forester. This support helps with site visits, etc. Another example is Virginia State University agreement of about \$300,000 to enhance small farms programs, this helps us support minority, veteran, and beginning farmers. Assistance Agreements with Department of Wildlife Resources to support NRCS with private biologists to address the resource concern of Wildlife Habitat Management. In addition, NRCS has worked with soil health coalition, along with Farmers 2020 Coop to do education and outreach around the state, targeting minority farmers to support conservation. State budget for 2024 is \$100 Million dollars.

Slide: Budget overview. **Slide:** Conservation Authorities. **Slide:** Inflation Reduction Act Overview **Slide:** IRA cont'd: overview of 5 main programs. **Slide:** Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) activities list. Climate Smart: Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding is designated for conservation systems expected to deliver reductions to greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon sequestration through the implementation of climate smart and forestry practices. The Climate Smart Practices are listed under different mitigation categories: for example: soil health, nitrogen management, livestock, grazing and pasture management, agroforestry and wildlife habitat, energy, combustion and electricity efficiency, and wetlands. Shellfish Restoration: NRCS Virginia is offering dedicated funding and resources through a RCPP project with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) and Virginia Institute of Marine

Slide: photo overview, top priority practices. **Slide:** Virginia - Top Practices by Acre. **Slide:** Virginia - Obligations by Practice Years 14-23. **Slide:** Progression maps: Acres of Nutrient Management Applied Maps. **Slide:** Acres of Cover Crop Applied, 2010-23. **Slide:** Prescribed Grazing 2010-22 **Slide:** Prescribed Burning Applied 2010-23. **Slide:** Local Work Group Process, EMM wants to promote this sub-committee of STTC, local participation & feedback is pivotal to conservation success. **Slide:** Opportunities to Partner.

Q: Is the IRA funding with Climate-Smart agriculture and forestry focus, was that Federally mandated or a State Office priority?

A: Federally mandated.

Program Status Updates – Marian Jordan NRCS ASTC-Programs

Greetings, welcome. **Slide:** Conservation Stewardship Program budget, significant increase over last year, went over slide showing classic vs IRA funding and amounts. **Slide:** Environmental Quality Incentives Program: went over slide, classic vs. IRA, budget, preapprovals, and changes over the last year into current fiscal year. Dr. Martinez adds that there are general funds, as well as IRA funds. Back to Marian Jordan: **Slide:** Regional Conservation Partnership Program, regarding updates for current fiscal year, Notice of Funding Opportunities and Source Water focus. **Slide:** Conservation Innovation Grants: went over range of awarded funds and VA CIG priorities for the FY2024. **Slide:** Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, overview of allocations for ALE & ACEP ALE. There has been a significant increase in applications, we requested additional funding. NRCS did not receive IRA funding this year but do anticipate applying for extra funding. **ACEP Slide #2:** Wetland Reserve Easement overview, budgets, applications, and current obligations.

Dr. Martinez added: Building on Easement staff, working through partners to expand in that area. Staffing capacity is an opportunity. Wildlife Habitat is an upcoming focus, stream restoration projects. If you know of partners who would be interested in working with NRCS on these initiatives, please spread the word.

Notice of Funding Opportunities Update – John Womack NRCS ASTC- Partnerships and Initiatives

Welcome and Introduction. Last year NRCS entered 7 different agreements. Some of these agreements were discussed at previous State Technical Committee meetings, there have been some updates to recap.

Slide: 2023 Agreement: Virginia Tech – Integrated Conservation Agronomy slide. New partner agronomists hired & accomplishments so far. **Slide:** 2023 Agreement: VT/Soil Health Coalition updates slide. This agreement will focus on underserved and minority farmers. New Liaisons and accomplishments. **Slide:** 2024 Opportunities: Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program. Agreement with NFWF, went over important dates for Notice of Funding Opportunity. VA focus on Eastern Hellbender. **Slide** 2024 Opportunities: NRCS Notice of Funding. These are still in internal review, be patient is funding amount or priorities change. Went over anticipated opportunities: two grant opportunities and one cooperative Agreement opportunity listed on slide. Cooperative agreement opportunity is \$4 Million, the dollar amount is missing from slide. While we aim to allow 60 days, this may be a quick turnaround of 30 days for applications.

Q: One agreement for \$4M?

A: No, that is one opportunity, we would hope to get about 8 agreements out of that notice.

Comment from chat: thank you for highlighting partnership with VA Tech!

State Resource Conservationist Report– Clarimer Hernandez NRCS State Resource Conservationist

Clarimer introduced herself.

Slide: SRC Specialist Team: brief overview of SRC team. There are two more folks being added to the team in the next few months. We also have about 5 part-time employees through partnerships. **Slide:** Highlights: Wednesday Webinar Training, went over upcoming training dates

and topics, with invitation for anyone interested to join. **Slide:** New Conservation Practice Standards Overview: went over slide including new practices. Typo on slide: Sol Carbon = Soil Carbon.

Dr. Martinez adds: Please share feedback, this helps up enhance program effectiveness through the chain of review process.

Back to Clarimer, **Slide:** Conservation Planner Certification and trainings. **Slide:** Question: Please provide feedback for potential training needs.

Dr. Martinez adds: Call to action for feedback and provides examples of when partners were able to provide feedback for training needs.

Small Farms Outreach Program Updates- Nadine Jackson, VSU-SFOP

Good morning and Introduction.

Slide: About Us: Overview of who SFOP is, and their mission. **Slide:** SFOP Territories Map with list of regional program assistants. **Slide:** NRCS-VSU SFOP Partnership, overview. **Slide:** Sample Newsletter, this is a snapshot of how VSU-SFOP promotes programs through flyers and newsletters. **Slide:** Technology and Training Initiative: overview of technologically advanced high tunnel, used to educate folks on NRCS high tunnel opportunities. **Slide:** Drone Technology used for soil health education.

Slide: Encourage Participation in NRCS programs... overview of programs. **Slide:** Photos from workshops, partnering with SWCD & NRCS. **Slide:** During Last Reporting Period: Overview. **Slide:** Cost Sharing: overview of slide. **Slide:** Questions: None. **Contact Slide:** NJackson@vsu.edu, Wcrutchfield@vsu.edu, learn more at links provided.

Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Updates and Partnership Opportunities - Joseph 'Joe' Guthrie, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)

Greetings, introduction, and thanks for invitation. There was a briefing of house and senate committee members regarding avian influenza and dairy cattle, that required a scheduling pivot. There won't be a presentation today, instead just a brief overview of updates for VDACS and conservation efforts. No budget yet, so any discussions of funding are preliminary. There are some bills that have been passed that have affected VDACS. One of which is a law to be enacted, it's passed general assembly and received governor signature: this law will move the Office of Farmland Preservation from Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to VDOF where OFP will be combined with VDOF office of forest land preservation to create new Office of Working Lands Preservation. This will combine resources of VDACS and VDOF to one group to provide farmland and forest preservation more effectively throughout Virginia. The background on this change is there was a need to hold more easements of farmland. By combining the offices, we can get more done, more quickly and efficiently through conservation easements.

VDACS will preserve programs that are done with new and beginning farmers. There will be a new webpage, some overlap with SFOP. Outside of this, most other work from VDACS will be transferring to new office. Other areas that VDACS acts in coordination on conservation practices, most work is done through ag stewardship in office of policy and research. This is complaint driven, investigating complaints regarding pollution of state waters. Generally, they work with the landowner to encourage best practices and working with SWCD, NRCS, others for cost share programs to mitigate/eliminate issues.

In addition to that, staff in office have been proactive to engage with landowners around the state to network and to look into best management practices; in particular, stream exclusion that may not have been included in Cost Share Program modelling. When those instances are found, they are returned to EPA to make EPA aware. Bay modelling typically includes cost share programs, but they are unaware that there are additional programs.

Working with EPA and USDA on renewing practices that have expired. For example, 10-year useful life in the Bay model may fall off. How can we renew or continue to count in Bay Model. VDACS looks for way to renew practices that have timed out. Stream Exclusion will be important to meeting goals in the Chesapeake Bay.

Most of the work VDACS is doing is in partnership with Secretary of Historic Resources office.

Wrapped up, no questions. Thank you all!

Farm Service Agency Updates Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)– Tara Bowley, *Programs specialist*, FSA

Greetings and introduction.

Slide: Current Timelines for CRP: went over slide, batch process, important dates, sign-up updates, and deadlines. **Slide:** Current Timelines for CRP (cont'd): Went over slide timeline. General CRP updates should be happening any day now. Grassland Signup hasn't started yet, sign-up will be about a month long with announcement soon. Forest Management Incentive funding isn't confirmed yet, while they are in the process of assessing additional funding, applications are being accepted. **Slide:** CRP Contract Acres in Virginia; went over chart, slow start to the year but hopefully by the end of the year these numbers will increase. **Slide:** CRP topics of interest: are easements eligible? This has been a point of confusion in the past. Handbook has a short section, Code of Federal Regulation is similar to FSA handbook, which is pretty broad. Easement is fine if CRP is already in existence, once CRP expires, land would no longer be eligible for re-enrollment. This is to encourage CRP funding to go to lands that aren't already under an agreement for resource concerns. Concern of many agencies. This can feel prohibitive as some folks want to participate in both. This may change or stay the same in the next farm bill, but this is current guidance.

Dr. Martinez adds: NRCS has received many questions about this subject, thank you for bringing to the discussion.

Comment: An unintended consequence of this language seems to disincentivize those who place land in easements from including any resource concerning measures. Feels counterproductive to shared goal.

Tara: This is a common sentiment with CRP as it makes it hard to enroll in multiple programs, when CRP expires, landowners cannot re-enroll if they are entered into other resource concern programs. Tara started about 1.5 years ago, there have been some changes to the process since then, but not a single re-enrollment or application has been accepted for CRP if it was in an easement.

Q: This language originates in the federal code then? **A:** Yes. Section 1410.6 deals with ineligibility.

Q: Does this issue affect other conservation practices? **A:** Not sure on NRCS programs, CRP seems to be specific to CRP.

Q: This conflict can only be solved by legislation? **A:** Yes, that is my understanding.

Comment: We need someone in congress to get something done then. **A:** Yes. There is potential to change for next Farm Bill.

Q: FMI National Allotment has been depleted? **A:** Yes. This is the next slide to go over...

Slide: CRP Topics of Interest: Forest Management Incentive

Chat Question: Someone from VDACS or SWCDs can confirm that the state still funds VACS best management practices after an easement is recorded. **Q:** Also, conserved lands can also be enrolled into Ag and Forestal districts. Doing the easement prior to enrollment has more benefits and incentives to the landowner.

A: yes, they confirm state still have the funds.

A: yes, VACS is available.

Comment: USFWS has done work with lands that have easements. It would be allowed for that. Typically, permanently protected lands are better for conservation practices getting funded.

Q: Back to FMI, are these practices or just an incentive because the forest is being managed accordingly? **A:** This a Cost Share type payment. The applicant needs to already have a CRP contract with a forested cover. This is one way that they can receive a cost share.

Q: Are there examples of the FMI that are available here? **A:** Depends on type of forested cover: one example is long leaf pine; prescribed burns can be a management practice. Western side of state has CREP and hardwood, practices could include controlling invasives. This may include spraying, with larger invasives you may need mechanical means.

Tara: Wrapped up, any other questions?

Q: If I have a forest, can I enroll it in CRP and then obtain FMI assistance?

A: It would depend on how you become eligible in the first place. For instance, riparian buffers are going to be open areas when they start, due to previous cropping, if it's an open area, marginal pasture ground it would be eligible for that program. Land will need to meet cropping history.

Q: So, FMI can't be used for an established forest?

A: Correct

VASWCD Dr. Kendall Tyree, *Executive Director, Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD)*

Greetings and thanks for the invitation to speak. Thank you, Dr. Martinez, for joining our six spring meetings and visiting with our districts.

Slide: Promoting Conservation Across Virginia's Landscapes: Photos. Association is umbrella over 47 soil and water conservation districts. We don't have authority over them, each district is

separate, the association handles advocacy, outreach, and educational support.

Slide: SWCD Role. VASWCD has entered high education season. **Slide:** Envirothon photos. Many partners are sending counselors to the Youth Conservation Camp in July. Youth Conservation Leadership Institute allows students to dig deeper and apply what they learned at Envirothon or YCC. We have intersected with partners at many levels, which is a state focus. Additional highlights: over 3000 students this month. Went over some recent events, Northern Neck events, and waste collected reached a million pounds. There is still much to be done.

Slide: Legislative Outreach & Advocacy: much of Dr. Tyree's time is spent here in and with the general assembly, planning for the next fiscal year and budgeting.

Slide: Virginia Agricultural Cost Share Program (VACS). While there isn't a state budget yet, we know this year will be a record year for cost-share funding for this upcoming Fiscal Year in July. If you have questions on VACS and how to prepare for funding, we have many experts who can help. State will fully fund Ag Needs Assessment for the first time this year, which is historic.

Slide: How Can VCAP Help? This is a project that has been grown by the association through a number of grants. About 6/7 years ago a number of districts came to the association and wanted to develop a pilot program, to help with requests they couldn't fulfill, storm water runoff, etc. The goal was to see what VASWCD can do to help landowners (not just producers).

Slide: VCAP: This pilot has grown to 12 different programs as a sister program to Cost-Share. If you aren't eligible for one, you will be for the other.

Slide: VCAP Practice Info: list of practices. Manual is going through huge upheaval to ensure compliance with DEQ stormwater manual to change lifespans and reduce barriers. Currently practices have a 10-year lifespan, which we recognize can be difficult for a homeowner to maintain for 10 years. We also have start up payment options, since being a reimbursement only program can be difficult, lots of changes on the way. Depending on the practice: 80% of cost can be covered with a cap of \$7k to \$30k depending on the practice. Very excited to see these partnerships come together, just in the last month she has had over 3 districts interested in rainwater harvesting at a NRCS funded structure.

Comment: Love connecting the dots.

Slides: Spot checks before, during, after pictures of recent spot checks. Thomas Jefferson practice of permeable pavement, before/during/after photos. These photos are very helpful for helping landowners understand what goes into permeable pavement, etc.

Slide: Funding Sources and Progress: VASWCD currently have \$4M from state which haven't been obligated. Record number of applications 27 just last month. There is money earmarked for low-income areas, which will carry into new fiscal year. Governor's budget isn't determined, VCAP funding hasn't been determined. In addition to State Budget, there is funding from DCR, DEQ, NFWF, Virginia Environmental Endowment.

Slide: VCAP Completed Practices to Date: Map of all practices to date, as of the end of March, there are more now. Over 1000 approved and 900 completed at this point. Outside Chesapeake Bay area is largest growth. Growing capacity with staff to expand.

Q: Are there areas that don't fall within a VASWCD?

A: Great point to bring up, while there are 47 districts that cover the commonwealth, some don't cover those areas. In those cases, we encourage districts to enter an MOU: One example is the James River, the Chesterfield SWCD has an MOU with the city of Richmond to provide

technical assistance. Don't let district coverage be a limiting barrier. Just because a district isn't there, doesn't mean a nearby one can't help.

Q: Envirothon available to urban youth?

A: Sometimes, depends on the area. NOVA is included for now as they expanding to offer more education to urban youth. If there is interest from a particular area, Dr. Tyree encourages reaching out so VASWCD can try to fold them into existing programs.

Q: Low Income funding at same cost share as regular VCAP funding.

A: It is at this time, which is why VASWCD was seeking additional NFWF funds to increase that percentage to 100%.

Q: What, if anything, do the SWCDs do to help landowners to deal with invasive plants?

A: Certainly, part of the legislative agenda is to work on Trapa issues. Specifically, Trapa in Northern Virginia. We are hoping to add a maintenance practice to VCAP in the next year that can help. There are experts in the room who may be able to speak more to that.

A: Representatives: Doesn't believe there are currently any practices in place for invasive controls. While that seems to be the case, it is a popular question in general. Aside from technical assistance, we don't have programs currently.

Additionally, tied up in the assembly's budget (which are in negotiation) are positions and support relating to invasive species. Positions would have existed across agencies, the GA supported strongly but governor removed in amendments. Next week when budget is discussed, they will start with General Assembly budget which puts invasive species back in play.

Comment: Regarding the Urban Agriculture question, the new farm bill may be able to assist.

Jessica Shippen from TJSWCD intro & presentation. **Slide:** Alliance to Advance Climate Smart Ag Slide. Went over all info on slide. Typo on slide: states listed include "AK", but it should be "AR" for Arkansas.

Slide: Preliminary Results: Pie Charts of how applicants are discovering SWCDs and what percentage of those applicants qualify as "underserved producers". The majority of folks find SWCD through SWCD outreach, and over 50% of applicants are underserved.

Slide: Bar Chart with details of Alliance Goals to review progress. A note that the top two charts are covering applicants, bottom chart covers acres and animals.

Dr. Martinez: Thank you for the presentation on this project. NRCS had about 29 approved applications for climate smart agricultural commodities, VA partners are bringing so much throughout the state. Thank you for your discussion and for being here today.

Conservation Engineer Update – Kelly Ramsey, SCE

Greetings, thank you and introduction. No slides. Kelly provided her notes from this presentation:

1. Engineering staffing at the State Office
 - a. Permanent State Conservation Engineer position closed in April, expected to be fully on board in 3 months.

- b. Unsuccessful with filling a Design and Environmental Engineer positions. We currently have 4-5 vacant engineering positions, in the state office.
- 2. Conservation Engineering update:
 - a. Engineering staff around the state completed their quality review checks on field staff planning, designing, and installing engineering works. No major issues reported that can't be addressed by adequate training.
 - b. To help facilitate Engineering conservation practice standards' updates, state office engineering staff reestablished relationships with regulatory agencies with the state and federal.
- 3. Watershed Program update:
 - a. Flood recovery work in Hurley, VA (Buchanan County), authorized work under the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program, will be complete by the end of June.
 - b. Currently working with local organizations and private engineering firm to design the rehabilitation of Four (4) Watershed Dams, which typically take 18 months to 2 years to complete.
 - i. John's Creek Dam No. 1 for Mountain Castles Soil and Water Conservation District, Craig County – in early stages of field investigations.
 - ii. Beaver Creek Dam No. 1 for the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority, Albemarle County - in early stages of field investigations.
 - iii. Cherrystone Creek Dam No 1 for the Town of Chatham and Pittsylvania County – 30% design under review.
 - iv. Cherrystone Creek Dam No 2z for the Town of Chatham and Pittsylvania County – 90% design under review.
 - c. To date, NRCS committed \$5.11 million to complete the planning and design to rehabilitate the four (4) Watershed Dams listed above.

Questions and Answer or general discussion Session – ALL

Round Robin of folks attending in person, introductions.

Comment: Spanberger is new representative & sits on agriculture committee. She would be a person who can help with adjusting legislature.

Discussion: There are some dams, which aren't covered by SWCD, that are blocking migration of fish like river herring, shad, and others. One example is Ashland dam on route one. Are there any entities focused on efforts to remove these dams?

Comments: Yes, through several partners. There is an active Virginia Stream Barrier Task force, meets quarterly. Has members from DWR, USFWS, others. Their priorities run the gamut from funding opportunities to removal projects.

Online comments: American Rivers is working to remove dams, and just reorganized to have a mid-Atlantic director, Adam Shellhammer.

Q: What can partners do to help NRCS?

A: Dr. Martinez Speaks on education and outreach to promote programs. Getting to the landowners equitably, going beyond farmers who already have set up practices with NRCS, and reaching those who are underserved. Help NRCS promote NOFOs, CIGs, and build tribal partnerships.

We are doing a great job of building staffing capacity for NRCS. Between NRCS & VASWCD, there

are a lot of conservationists on the ground, but with the complexities of VA – we need more. Participation in the State Technical Committee is important and represents all the work we are doing in Virginia. Lastly, conservation is locally led – making the LWG process essential, we need that local, on the ground feedback. Input from the field is key. We need feedback on CIG funding subjects, current priorities are Tribal, Urban, Soil health. Speak with John Womack for more on CIG.

Q: VCAP program, what is the process for adding practices, this may be an offline question.

A: Lengthy process: let's talk offline.

Q: Invasive Plants, there are 10s of thousands of landowners having problems. Any chance that NRCS would offer specific assistance focused on helping with this issue?

A: We have practices that would help with this, brush management for example. We try to target more forest and ag land, creating management plans including invasive plants. All those funding opportunities will be very competitive. If you have more specific information, we can follow up with some more information regarding this concern. Send your contact information to Clarimer for follow-up.

Q: We are aware of the EQIP programs, unfortunately since most landowners are specifically wanting to address this problem only, they rank lower in application process. Will there ever be a more focused program?

A: NRCS can create some specific funding pools. Based on this feedback from STTC, NRCS can internally determine with authorities if demand is high enough to create a new funding pool. We know how critical these practices can be and how competitive the process is. We appreciate the feedback.

Q: Congrats on staffing! Is there any funding or alternative strategy for adding more conservationists to rural areas?

A: NRCS: We do have a staffing plan for VA, there are 41 offices throughout the state, our main priority now is for field staff. Great question.

A: VASWCD: We are growing and adding more training opportunities. Pushing as hard as we can to get district staff trained up. There is a need for more conservation planners, training and staffing are an important step in conservation implementation. Great question, we are doing all we can to make courses available.

Closing Remarks – Dr. Martinez Martinez

Thank you, Marian for leading the meeting, thank you John, and Clarimer for planning the event. Thank you for your attendance both in person and online. Thank you to everyone for your partnership, participation, and support. Let us know where NRCS can attend and be at the table, we are happy to support. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Dismissed at 12:02pm.



United States Department of Agriculture

Dr. Edwin Martinez Martinez
Virginia State Conservationist

USDA NRCS Updates

State Technical Committee Meeting

4.24.24



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Conservation Authorities used in Virginia



- **Farm Bill Programs**
 - Conservation: EQIP, CSP, ALE, RCPP, etc.
- **Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)**
 - Climate Smart Ag and Forestry
- **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)**
 - Watershed Rehabilitation
- **Emergency Watershed Protection Program**
 - Emergency work
- **Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program**
 - Water quality

Inflation Reduction Act



- The Inflation Reduction Act provides an additional **\$19.5 billion** to support USDA's conservation programs that yield climate change mitigation benefits.
- **This act represents the single largest investment in climate and clean energy solutions in American history.**
- NRCS showed record investments in private land conservation in 2023, investing over **\$850 million in IRA financial assistance**, more than any year in the history of NRCS.



Inflation Reduction Act (Cont.)



- Most **IRA financial assistance funds** will be made available to landowners through fiscal year **2026** in **five** conservation programs with **implementation happening through fiscal year 2031**.
 1. Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)
 2. Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
 3. Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
 4. Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)
 5. Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)



Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Activities List for FY2024



Highlighted activities have been added to the list in FY2024.

*Noted activities are added to the list as "provisional".⁽¹⁾

Mitigation Categories ⁽¹⁾	Code	Conservation Practice Standard Name ⁽²⁾ ⁽³⁾ (practice unit)	Code	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Enhancement Activities
Soil Health	327	Conservation Cover (acres)	E327A	Conservation cover for pollinators and beneficial insects ⁽²⁾
			E327B	Establish Monarch butterfly habitat
	328	Conservation Crop Rotation (acres)	E328A	Resource conserving crop rotation
			E328B	Improved resource conserving crop rotation
			E328E	Soil health crop rotation
			E328F	Modifications to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter
			E328N	Intercropping to improve soil health
			E328O	Perennial grain crop conservation rotation
	329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (acres)	E329A	No till to reduce soil erosion
			E329B	No till to reduce tillage induced particulate matter
			E329C	No till to increase plant-available moisture
			E329D	No till system to increase soil health and soil organic matter content
			E329E	No till to reduce energy
	332	Contour Buffer Strips (acres)	None Available	
	336	Soil Carbon Amendment (acres) [*]	None Available	
	340	Cover Crop (acres)	E340A	Cover crop to reduce soil erosion
			E340B	Intensive cover cropping to increase soil health and soil organic matter content
			E340C	Use of multi-species cover crops to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter
			E340D	Intensive orchard/vineyard floor cover cropping to increase soil health
			E340F	Cover crop to minimize soil compaction
			E340G	Cover crop to reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excess soil nutrients
			E340H	Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles
			E340I	Using cover crops for biological strip till
			E340J	Cover crop to improve moisture use efficiency and reduce salts
	345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till (acres)	E345A	Reduced tillage to reduce soil erosion
			E345B	Reduced tillage to reduce tillage induced particulate matter
			E345C	Reduced tillage to increase plant-available moisture
			E345D	Reduced tillage to increase soil health and soil organic matter content
			E345E	Reduced tillage to reduce energy use

CSAF MITIGATION ACTIVITIES LIST FOR FY2024

2

Highlighted activities have been added to the list in FY2024.

*Noted activities are added to the list as "provisional".⁽¹⁾

Mitigation Categories ⁽¹⁾	Code	Conservation Practice Standard Name ⁽²⁾ ⁽³⁾ (practice unit)	Code	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Enhancement Activities
Soil Health	386	Field Border (acres)	E386A	Enhanced field borders to reduce soil erosion along the edge(s) of a field
			E386B	Enhanced field borders to increase carbon storage along the edge(s) of the field
			E386C	Enhanced field borders to decrease particulate emissions along the edge(s) of the field
			E386D	Enhanced field borders to increase food for pollinators along the edge(s) of a field
			E386E	Enhanced field borders to increase wildlife food and habitat along the edge(s) of a field
	393	Filter Strips (acres)	E393A	Extend existing filter strip to reduce water quality impacts
	412	Grassed Waterways (acres)	E412A	Enhance a grassed waterway
	484	Mulching (acres)	E484A	Mulching to improve soil health
			E484B	Reduce particulate matter emissions by using orchard or vineyard generated woody materials as mulch
			E484C	Mulching with natural materials in specialty crops for weed control
			E484D	Lowbush Blueberry Mulching for Moisture Management
	585	Stripcropping (acres)	None Available	
	601	Vegetative Barriers (feet)	None Available	
	603	Herbaceous Wind Barriers (feet)	None Available	
Nitrogen Management	590	Nutrient Management (acres)	E590A	Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses
			E590B	Reduce risks of nutrient loss to surface water by utilizing precision agriculture technologies
			E590C	Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses on pasture
			E590D	Reduce risks of nutrient losses to surface and groundwater by increasing setback awareness via precision technology



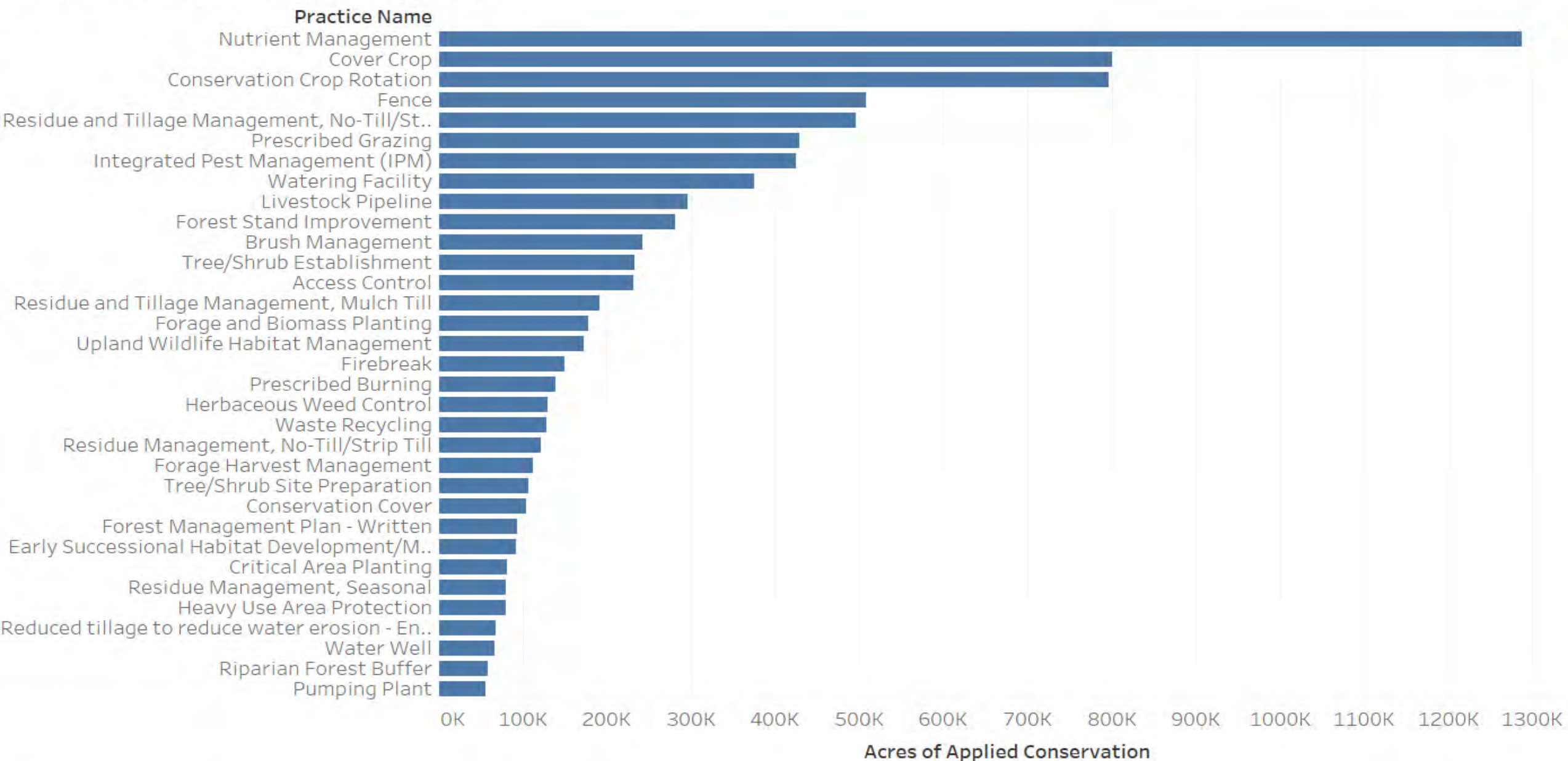
United States Department of Agriculture



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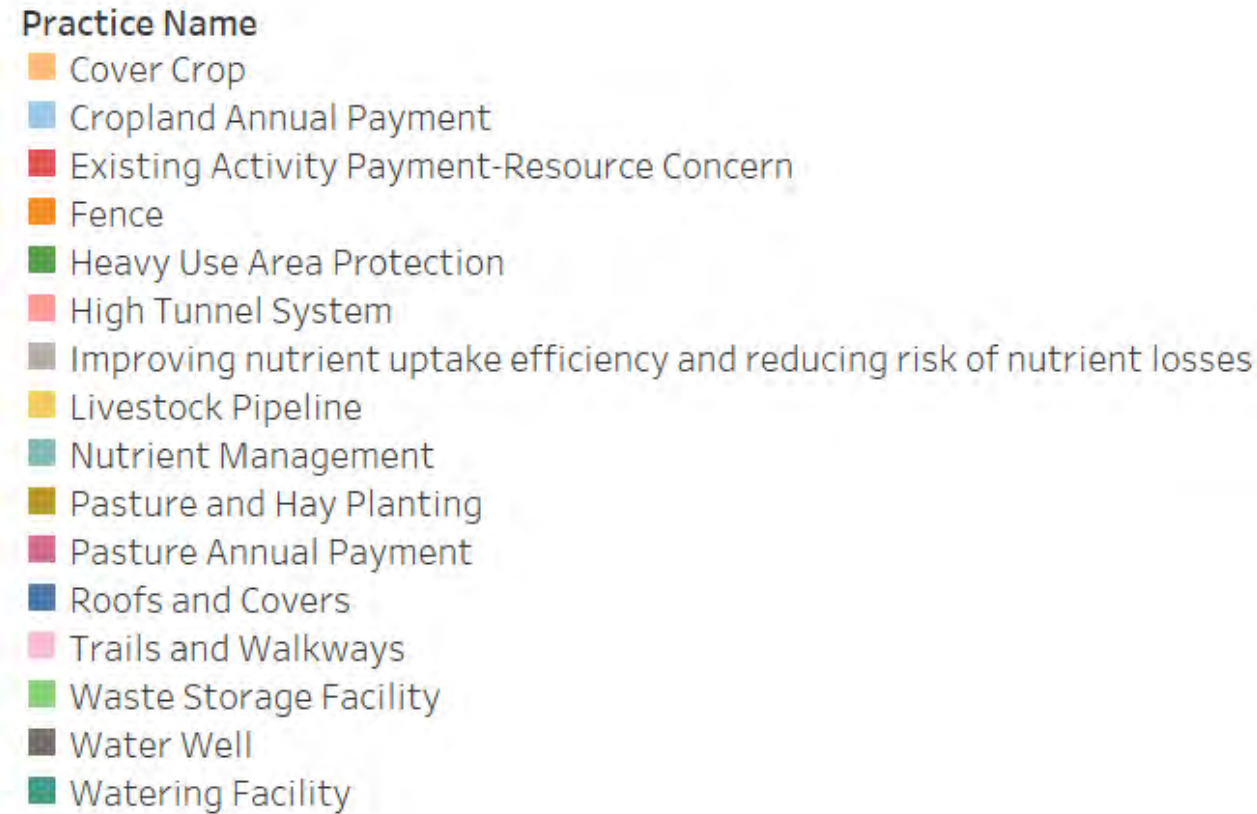
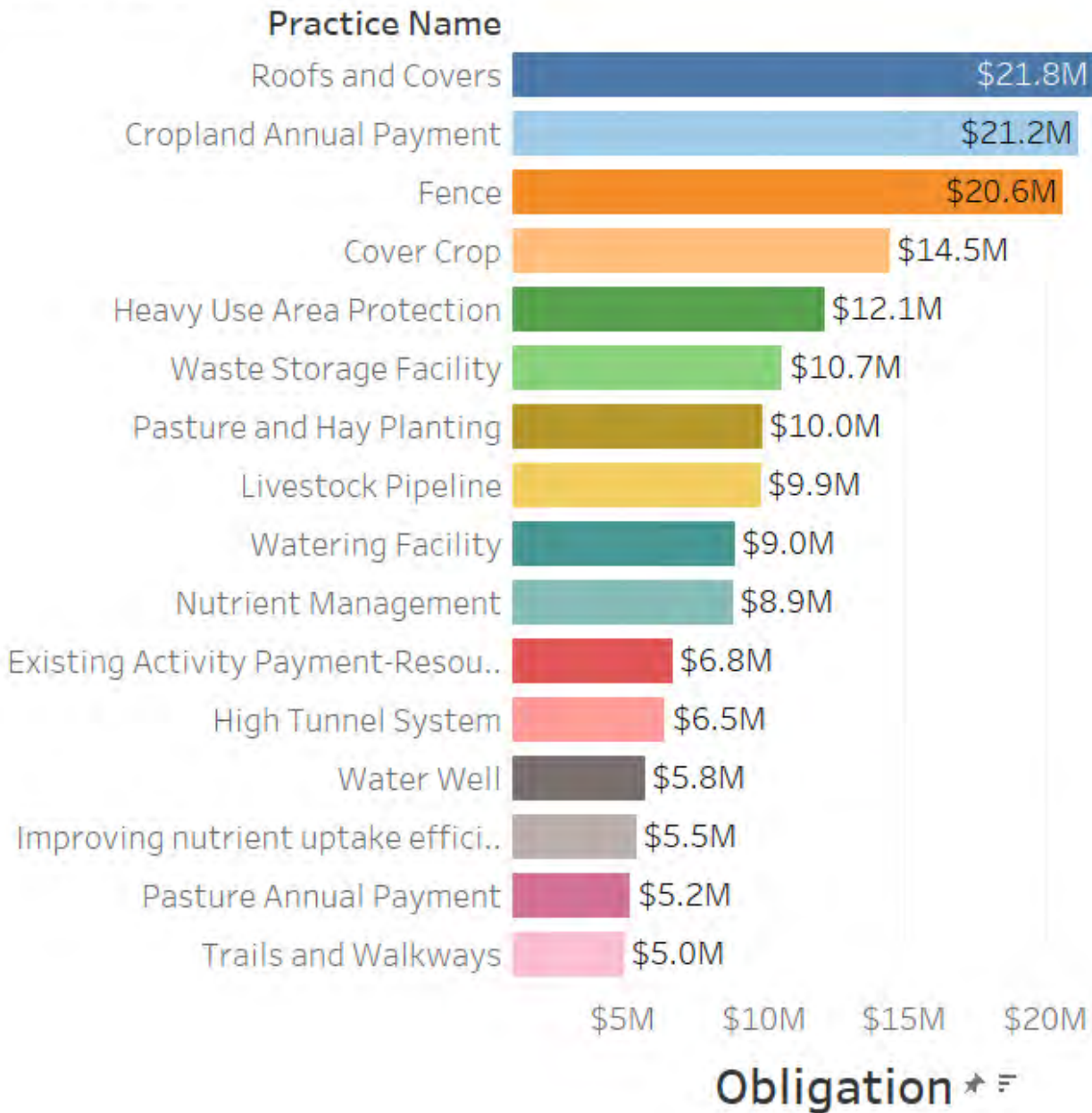
nrcs.usda.gov/

Virginia - Top Practices by Acre



Sum of Acres of Applied Conservation for each Practice Name. The view is filtered on sum of Acres of Applied Conservation and Practice Name. The sum of Acres of Applied Conservation filter ranges from 50,000 to 2,000,000. The Practice Name filter keeps no members.

Virginia - Obligations by Practice - Years 2014 to 2023

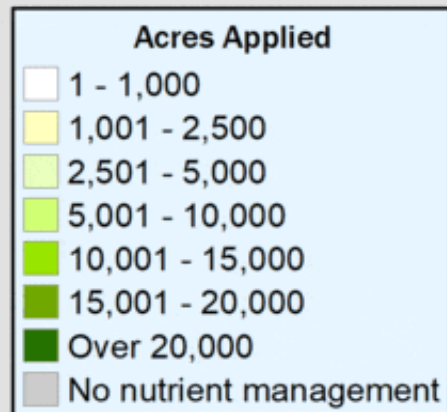


Acres of Nutrient Management Applied, 2010

Map ID: m14900_RIAD

Data Source:
2023 National Planning and Agreements Database (NPAD)
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Map Source:
U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Soil Science and Resource Assessment (SSRA)
Resource Inventory & Assessment Division (RIAD)
Beltsville, MD October 2023



2010 Total Acres: 87,757

0 25 50 100
Kilometers
Albers Equal Area Projection

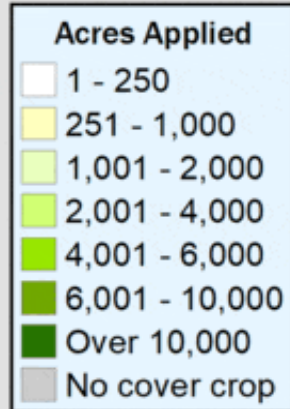
Acres of Cover Crop Applied, 2010

Map ID: m14898_RIAD

Data Source:
2023 National Planning and Agreements Database (NPAD)
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service

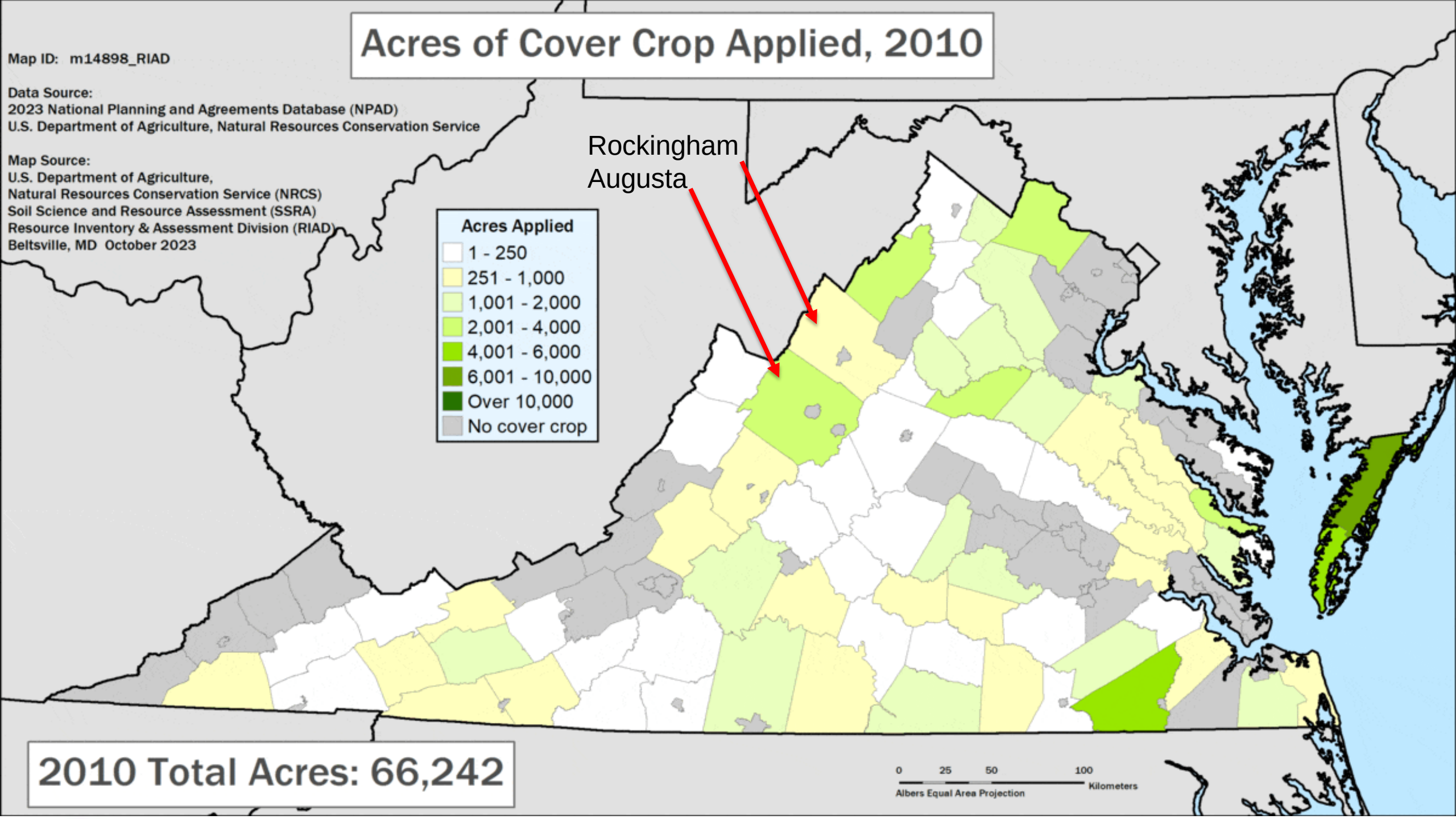
Map Source:
U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Soil Science and Resource Assessment (SSRA)
Resource Inventory & Assessment Division (RIAD)
Beltsville, MD October 2023

Rockingham
Augusta



2010 Total Acres: 66,242

0 25 50 100
Kilometers
Albers Equal Area Projection

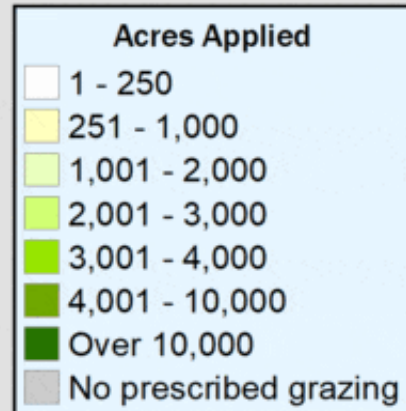


Acres of Prescribed Grazing Applied, 2010

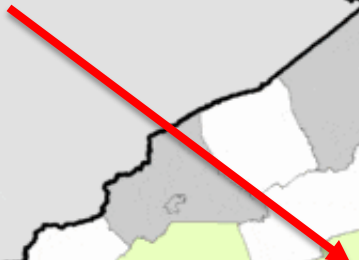
Map ID: m14901_RIAD

Data Source:
2023 National Planning and Agreements Database (NPAD)
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Map Source:
U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Soil Science and Resource Assessment (SSRA)
Resource Inventory & Assessment Division (RIAD)
Beltsville, MD October 2023



Washington



2010 Total Acres: 16,778

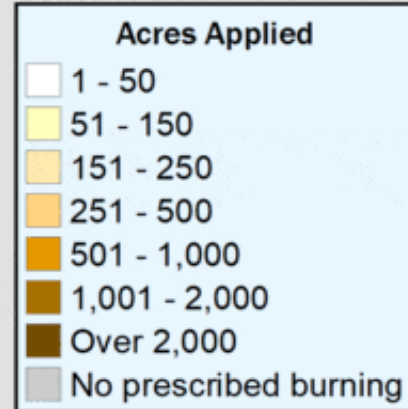
0 25 50 100
Kilometers
Albers Equal Area Projection

Acres of Prescribed Burning Applied, 2010

Map ID: m14954_RIAD

Data Source:
2023 National Planning and Agreements Database (NPAD)
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service

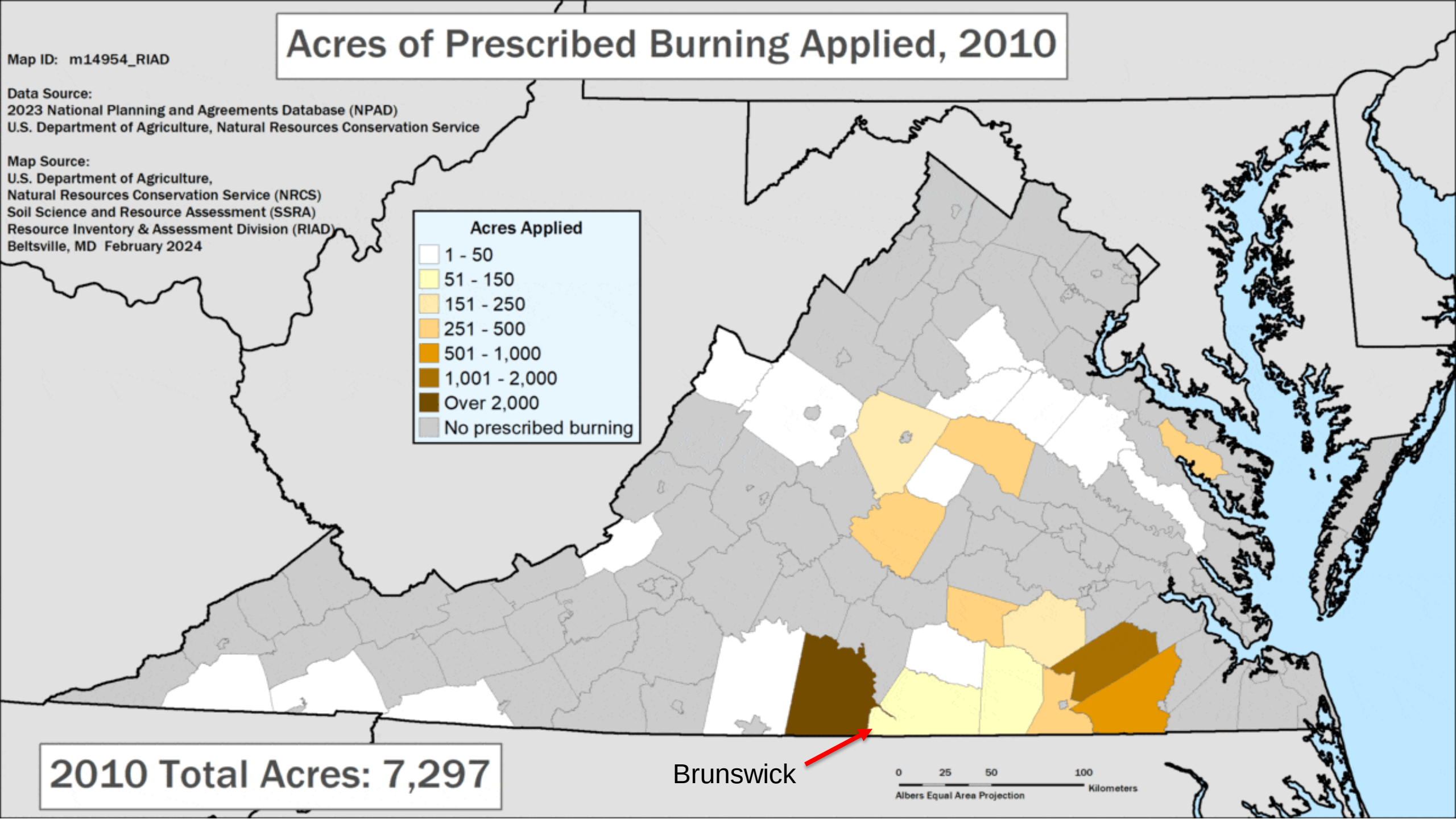
Map Source:
U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Soil Science and Resource Assessment (SSRA)
Resource Inventory & Assessment Division (RIAD)
Beltsville, MD February 2024



2010 Total Acres: 7,297

Brunswick

0 25 50 100
Kilometers
Albers Equal Area Projection



Local Work Group

- Local Work Groups are a sub-committee of the State Technical Committee
- Locally led conservation consists of a series of phases that involve community stakeholders in natural resource planning, implementation of solutions, and evaluation of results.
- Locally led conservation begins with the community itself, working through the local conservation district.





Opportunities to Partner

- State Technical Committee
- Local Work Group Process
- Conservation Innovation Grants
- Notice of Funding Opportunities
- Training Support

Contact Information

Edwin Martinez Martinez, Ph.D.
Virginia State Conservationist
Edwin.Martinez@usda.gov



Scan this QR code
to learn about our
agency and review
our open positions.



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Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FY24 Programs Update

Marian. Jordan, ASTC-Programs



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Conservation Stewardship Program

- CSP Farm Bill \$13,815,000
- CSP IRA \$9,215,000
- Total CSP Budget \$23,030,000
-
- 249 Contract total obligation of \$ 9,823,538
 - 66 CSP for \$ 3,159,533
 - 183 EQIP for \$ 6,664,005
 - Of these 47 are IRA for \$ 1,932,242.
 - 25 CSP for \$ 1,003,116
 - 22 EQIP for \$ 928,126.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- **EQIP Farm Bill: \$ 21,238,542.00**
- **EQIP IRA: \$ 28,608,000.00**
- **FY24 EQIP:**
 - 881 unique application in ProTracts;
 - 694 preapprovals for \$ 42,527,867.55
 - 302 EQIP IRA Preapprovals for \$ 24,668,424.64
- 392 EQIP FB Preapprovals for \$ 17,807,495.57

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

■ RCPP update:

- 62 producer applications across three RCPP projects
- Just over \$3.2 million to be obligated across these projects
- FY24 Notice of Funding Opportunities (classic and AFA) was released and they active on grants.gov. Both are open until July 2nd at 4:59 PM EST.

■ Source Water update:

- Planning meetings have begun for source water protection priorities (including areas/HUC12s and practices)
- Bulletin should be released soon, and tools for selection are already active for state input.

Conservation Innovation Grants



- Since FY2010 NRCS Virginia has awarded over **43 projects** with an NRCS contribution of **\$3.1M**, with individual awards ranging from \$75,000 to \$300,000.
- VA CIG Priorities for FY 2024:
 - Forestry, Soil Health, Tribal and Urban Ag
 - \$1,200,000.00 will be awarded in CIG Grant

Anticipate receiving 10 CIG proposals

Active - CIG Recipients	Project Title	Amount
2021 - Sustainable Chesapeake	Controlled Traffic	\$299,891.91
2022 - Virginia Tech	Increase cool season grass pasture diversity	\$195,351.00
2022- Clifton Institute/VSU	Pollinator restoration	\$200,000.00
2023 - Virginia Tech	Investigate soil indicators in vineyard	\$200,000.00

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

ALE:

- FY24 Allocation
- ALE = \$713,267
- ALE Additional Funding = approx.. \$2.3 million

- FY24 ALE Apps: 23
- FY24 IRA Apps: 10

- ACEP ALE = 5 Pending Obligations, 1 Obligation, Federal Share totals = \$2,705,000

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

WRE

- FY24 Allocation
- WRE = \$491,000
- IRA = \$0
- FY24 WRE Apps: 3
- WRE = \$491,000
- IRA = \$0
- ACEP WRE = 1 Pending Obligation, Potential Easement Payment = \$2,470,000



United States Department of Agriculture

John M Womack

Assistant State Conservationist for
Partnerships and Initiatives

State Technical Committee Meeting

April 24, 2024



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2023 Agreement

Virginia Tech – Integrated Conservation Agronomy

2 Partner Agronomist

- Lydia Fitzgerald – Cropland
- Matt Booher – Grassland

Accomplishments

- Assembled cadre of growers/mentors
- Participated in over 80 educational events
- Provided direct assistance to 72 farmers



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SCHOOL OF PLANT AND
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
VIRGINIA TECH.

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2023 Agreement Virginia Tech/Soil Health Coalition

Farmer Liaisons

- Deborah Morton
- Kelci Hoylman

Accomplishments

- Hands-on Equipment training
- Held two **Conservation Speed Dating Workshops** in the Hanover and Halifax service areas



2024 Opportunities

Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program



- **Full Proposal Due Date: Thursday, July 18, 2024 by 11:59 AM EDT**
- **Applicant Webinar Monday, June 3, 2024, 11:00 AM-12:30 PM EDT**
- In Virginia, projects are encouraged that build local capacity to design and engineer hellbender habitat restoration projects on privately-owned forests and farmland in the boundary of NRCS's Working Lands for Wildlife - Eastern Hellbender initiative. Proposals should seek to accelerate implementation of projects being funded through NRCS cost-share programs by addressing the bottleneck in project design and engineering. Applicants should coordinate development of proposals with NRCS to ensure they address existing and anticipated needs.
- <https://www.nfwf.org/programs/central-appalachia-habitat-stewardship-program/central-appalachia-habitat-stewardship-program-2024-request-proposals>



2024 Opportunities

NRCS Notice Of Funding



- **Two Grant opportunities**
 - Tribal Conservation Grants (\$250,000)
 - Urban Agriculture Conservation Grants (\$250,000)
- **One Cooperative Agreement opportunity**
 - Outreach and technical assistance (\$ million)
- **Still in review process, priorities and funding may change**
- **When released will have shorten application period, maybe 30 days**





Questions?

www.va.nrcs.gov

Helping People Help the Land

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United States Department of Agriculture

Clarimer Hernandez Vargas
Virginia State Resource Conservationist

State Resource Conservationist Report



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SRC Specialist Team:



Michelle Pope
Farm Bill Program Assistance



J.B. Daniels
Forage & Grassland Agronomist



Christopher L. Lawrence
Cropland Agronomist



Jeffray Jones
State Biologist



Chris Bradshaw
Resource Conservationist



Thomas Burke
Forester



Matthew Monroe
Agricultural Economist



Nora Sheehan
Archeologist



Highlights:

- Currently we offer biweekly webinar training to our staff in different arrays of subjects from soil health, erosion to forest practices to even employee benefits.
 - o April 3rd: RCCP training
 - o April 17th: Exploring RIAD's Integrated Landscape Planning Toolbox
 - o May 1st: Local Working Group Training
 - o May 15th: Employee development
 - o June 12th: Possible training on Environmental Evaluation Worksheet Overview
 - o June 26th: New NRCS Hydrology Tool Training, Safety/PPE Update



➤ New Conservation Practice Standards Overview:

- Review process and chain of review.
 - NHQ to the states; state to the State Technical Committee; State to NHQ.
 - Practices in Virginia get updated every 5 years.
 - VA adopted 5 new practices:
 - 311 Alley Cropping
 - 336 Sol Carbon Amendment
 - 379 Forest Farming
 - 810 Annual Forages for Grazing Systems
 - 823 Organic Management



➤ Conservation Planner Certification:

- We are in the process to complete trainings needed for planners to complete their certification for Level 1 or level 3.
- These upcoming trainings are:
 - Pasture Condition Score
 - Prescribe Burning
 - Cultural Resources (Part 2 Module 8)
 - Soil Health



Question:

- Now that I mention trainings, NRCS is working with state conservation partners to determine our state training needs.
- We would like to ask the Committee for feedback regarding potential training needs.
- Last year Agroforestry was a big topic for us.
- Any feedback would be greatly appreciated.





Small Farm Outreach Program Updates

Presenter: Nadine Jackson

About Us



The VSU Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP) was established in 1986 as a pilot project with 5 staff and became a program in 1991. Since then it has grown to over 35 staff, including Program Director, Assistant Director, Field Coordinator, Regional and State Small Farm Program Assistants, Hispanic Coordinator, Field Tech, Veteran Coordinator, Program & Grant Coordinator, Administrative Assistants, & Student Interns.

Our Mission:

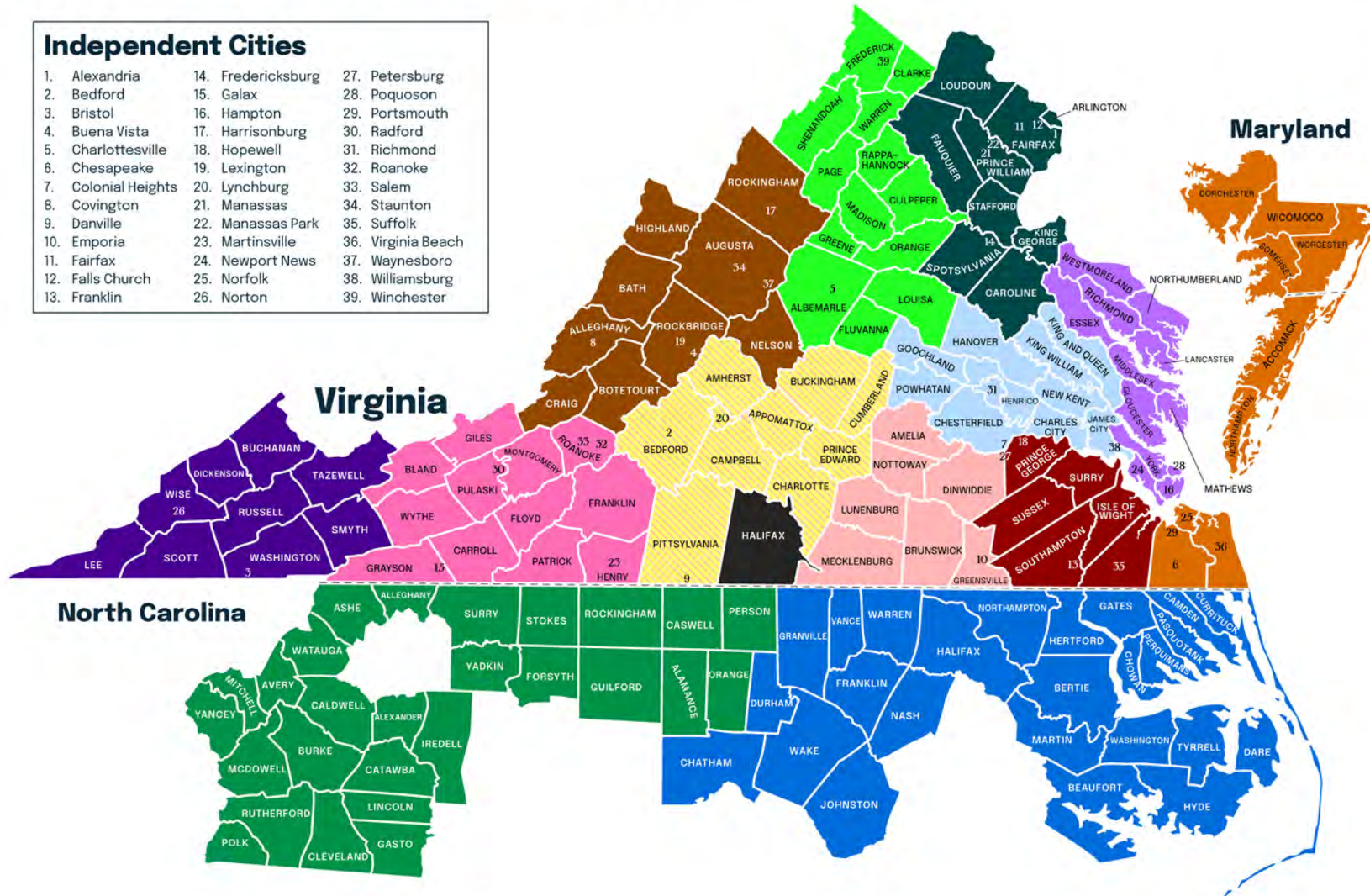
The Mission of SFOP is to provide Outreach, Training and Technical Assistance to small, limited resourced, socially disadvantaged, veteran and beginning farmers and ranchers, that will assist them in making informed decisions about their farm operations.

SFOP Territories Map

Contact Our Program Assistants

Independent Cities

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Alexandria | 14. Fredericksburg | 27. Petersburg |
| 2. Bedford | 15. Galax | 28. Poquoson |
| 3. Bristol | 16. Hampton | 29. Portsmouth |
| 4. Buena Vista | 17. Harrisonburg | 30. Radford |
| 5. Charlottesville | 18. Hopewell | 31. Richmond |
| 6. Chesapeake | 19. Lexington | 32. Roanoke |
| 7. Colonial Heights | 20. Lynchburg | 33. Salem |
| 8. Covington | 21. Manassas | 34. Staunton |
| 9. Danville | 22. Manassas Park | 35. Suffolk |
| 10. Emporia | 23. Martinsville | 36. Virginia Beach |
| 11. Fairfax | 24. Newport News | 37. Waynesboro |
| 12. Falls Church | 25. Norfolk | 38. Williamsburg |
| 13. Franklin | 26. Norton | 39. Winchester |



Regional Program Assistants*

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|--|
| Michael Carter Sr. | 804-481-1163 | mcarter@vsu.edu |
| Ben Dukes | 804-731-7916 | bdukes@vsu.edu |
| Leonard Elam | 804-894-3095 | lelam@vsu.edu |
| Marilyn Estes | 804-481-0485 | mestes@vsu.edu |
| Mandy Fletcher | 804-892-0108 | afletcher@vsu.edu |
| Derrick Gooden | 804-586-5352 | dgooden@vsu.edu |
| James Gibson | 804-720-6826 | jegibson@vsu.edu |
| Vacant | 804-524-3292 | |
| Forrest Hobbs | 804-524-3292 | fhobbs@vsu.edu |
| Brent Noell | 804-892-0140 | bnoell@vsu.edu |
| Cliff Somerville | 804-892-4581 | csomerville@vsu.edu |
| Roland Terrell | 804-892-4612 | rterrell@vsu.edu |

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Agriculture Management Coordinator

Derrick Cladd | 804-892-4489 | dcladd@vsu.edu
Beginning Farmers

James Edwards | 804-720-2588 | jtedwards@vsu.edu
Military Veteran, AgrAbility

Barry Harris | 804-720-6367 | bdharris@vsu.edu
Conservation Practices

Tammy Holler | 804-229-2730 | tholler@vsu.edu
Nutrient Management

Wanda Johnson | 434-632-9701 | wjohnson@vsu.edu
Community Gardens, Food Services

Grace Summers | 804-712-0093 | gsummers@vsu.edu
NRCS, SFOP High Tech Tunnel

*If you have any difficulty figuring out which region is yours, please call 804-524-3292 for clarification.

NRCS- VSU SFOP Partnership

Seeds to Successful Conservation

In 9/2023 U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Virginia State University Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP) entered into an agreement to increase the number of participation in climate smart and soil and water conservation practices.

These funds allow SFOP to provide educational workshops, demonstrations and events that will increase participants awareness of NRCS programs and services.



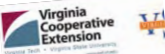
Small Farm Orientation



October 13, 2022 · 9–11 am · **FREE!**
Space is limited to 30 participants!
Join us on Zoom

This two-hour Zoom session will provide you with years of experience of the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program and walk attendees through the steps to start a profitable farm.

Register at
ext.vsu.edu/



Visit ext.vsu.edu for info on upcoming events.

If you are a person with a disability (804) 524-3292 / TDD (800) 828-7100. Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partner with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

Farm Equipment Safety



Small Ruminants: Preparing for Winter



October 25, 2022 · 7:30–9 pm · **FREE**
Join Us on Zoom!

Fall is often a time of rest for sheep and goat producers. The ewe and doe flock is in varying stages of pregnancy and does not require as much attention. But sound management at this time is extremely important. Proper vaccination programs, mineral supplementation, and other nutritional factors can directly affect success at lambing/kidding. Join us for an evening of learning and a Q & A session with Dr. Scott Greiner, Extension Sheep Specialist with Virginia Tech.

Register at
ext.vsu.edu/calendar

For more information, contact Mandy Fletch

Hispanic Hoop House Fall Tour



October 25, 2022 · 10 am–12 pm
Lawrenceville, Virginia
FREE · Space is limited to 10 participants

Pedro Lopez, Hispanic Mentor Farmer, will host participants on a Fall Tour in four hoop houses. The Spring Tour was very successful with participants showing a great interest in the innovative activities, so Pedro agreed it would be a great idea to do it again in the Fall. He grows ethnic Hispanic crops, local vegetables and herbs. Pedro will show participants how he uses reusable fabric over the beds instead of plastic for total weed control and water conservation. Some innovations include the use of solar panels for lighting and fans, and a cold storage room to keep vegetables fresh at all times.



SFOP Quarterly NEWSLETTER

Is Tilapia a “Franken-Fish,” and is it Unhealthy?

By: Nicholas Romano, Ph.D., associate professor/ Extension specialist & coordinator

Tilapia is currently the fourth most-consumed fish in the United States with tuna, salmon and Alaskan pollock taking the first, second and third spots. However, unlike these fish, memes emerged on social media around 2017 that tilapia is artificial and is as unhealthy as eating bacon. Some even claimed tilapia is full of cancer-causing toxins and lacks nutrients.

Is tilapia a franken-fish?

No, tilapia is not a franken-fish. It is a freshwater fish that belongs to a group of cichlids that have hundreds of different species. The most commonly farmed and sold include Nile tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*), blue tilapia (*O. aureus*) and Mozambique tilapia.

—continued on page 2



GIFT tilapia hybrid

Dear Small-Scale Farmers, Ranchers and Veterans,

Soil health and maintenance are essential to good quality produce, healthy forage and livestock. To meet the needs of small, socially disadvantaged, limited-resource, beginning and veteran farmers and ranchers, VSU has entered into several climate-smart partnerships with you in mind. We have partnered with Virginia Tech, the University of Tennessee, West Virginia University, and Plant Switch. Be alert and check our calendar of events at <https://www.ext.vsu.edu/sfop-events> for upcoming workshops, where you can learn more about climate-smart practices that you could implement on your farm operation.

If you are an urban ag producer, we also have great news. We are partnering with Virginia Tech on an FSA Urban and Innovative Agriculture Community-Based Project. We want to connect with you. Look at our territory map on page 11 and find the State Program Assistant (PA) who covers your area. Reach out and schedule a meeting for them to visit your operation.

VSU is also a licensed vendor for the FSA Borrowers training. This training is one of the prerequisites when applying for an FSA loan. Upon successfully completing the Agribusiness Production and Financial Management online course, you will have met this requirement and will receive a certificate to include in your application packet.

Check out the Ag Tips and upcoming workshops section of this newsletter. You can find additional resources online at <https://www.ext.vsu.edu/small-farm-outreach-program> or on our Small Farm Resource Center at vsusmallfarms.com. Sign up for our text alerts at <https://vsusmallfarms.com/sfop-text>, or email us at smallfarms@vsu.edu.

William Crutchfield, SFOP Director



A sample of the types of workshops offered by the Small Farm Outreach Program.

Technology and Training Initiative



- Automated Systems for Power, Water & Ventilation
- Alternative Energy Systems & Storage
- Water Collection & Storage Solutions
- Back-Up Power Systems
- Applied Economic & Agronomic Data Research
- Potential for Scalability & Increased Efficiency
- Technology and Training Initiative

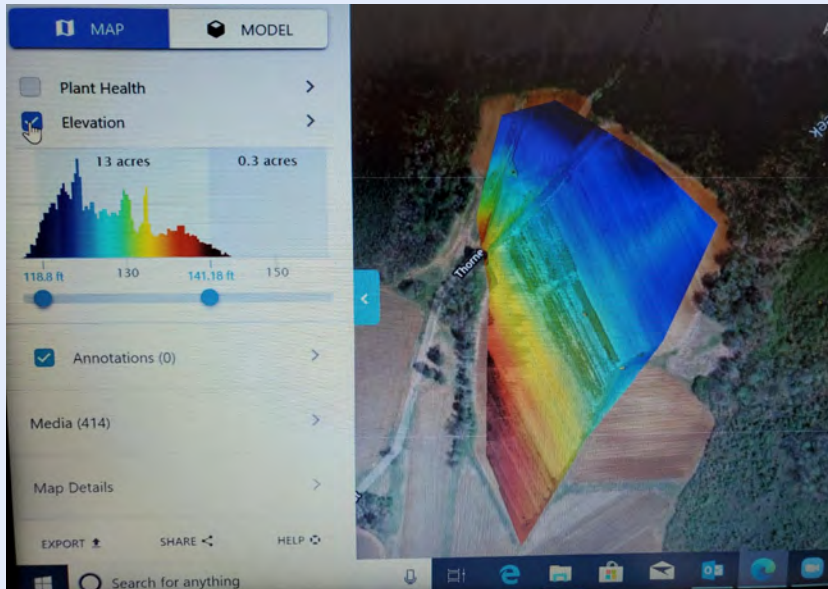


Drone Technology

We train farmers on the benefits of using drone technology to take aerial photos that detects problems areas on the land, and use findings for spot applications or targeted actions.

Contact:

Tim Sexton—tsexton@vsu.edu, 804-524-1028



Encourage participation in NRCS programs



Cost Share, Best Management Practices, Nutrient Management, EQUIP program, Conservation reserve Program, Forestry Plans, Climate Smart practices & Reforestation project.



Training and Technical Assistance- Boots on the ground”.

During last reporting period:

Outreach info shared with 1,339 participants

13 Workshops - Attendance -162

One-on-one on-farm technical assistance - 140

Nutrient Management – 37

Soil samples assessed - 45

Acres - 8,549

Cost Sharing

VSU has acquired funds provided by Agua Foundation to assist producers with Cost share.

Requirements prior to receiving these funds:

- provide a copy of approval notification from NRCS
- Complete the online Agribusiness Production and Financial Management Course
- With their PA's assistance create a project plan (include business plan)

Questions



Nadine Jackson
Program & Grant Coordinator
njackson@vsu.edu (804)895-0198

William Crutchfield, Program Director
wcrutchfield@vsu.edu, (804)524-3295



Learn more about us at: www.ext.vsu.edu/sfop · vsusmallfarms.com



FSA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Updates

tara.bowley@usda.gov

(804) 287-1546



Current Timelines for Conservation Reserve Program

Continuous CRP – Signup Continues with a Process that Includes Batching Periods for Approval. Submission deadline for next batch of offers to be considered is May 10, 2024.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) - Signup Continues and is not Under a Batching Timeframe

****Final date this year a producer can submit an offer for new or re-enrolled land or a combination of new and re-enrolled land for Continuous CRP (both CREP and non-CREP) is July 31, 2024****

Current Timelines for Conservation Reserve Program (Continued)

General CRP – Signup was Held March 4 – 29, 2024

Grassland CRP – Signup Coming Soon!!

Forest Management Incentive (FMI) for CRP Contracts with a Forest Cover – Legislation has authorized FMI until 2031. The funding originally allocated for FY 2024 has been depleted. FSA continues to take applications and is assessing additional possible funding for this year

CRP Contract Acres in Virginia

CRP Signup Type	Acres as of 4/19/24
Continuous CRP (Non-CREP)	2,872.59
CREP	14,368.89
General CRP	4,813.82
Grassland CRP	6,281.15
Other (Including CLEAR 30 and HEL)	83.05

CRP Topics of Interest

Is land enrolled in an Easement eligible for CRP?

According to Code of Federal Regulation (CFR)
Section 1410.6 on Eligible land (for CRP)

(e) land will be ineligible for enrollment if the land is one of the following:

(2) Land on which the use of the land is either restricted through deed or other restriction prior to enrollment in CRP prohibiting the production of agricultural commodities, or requires any resource-conserving measures, during any part of the contract period

CRP Topics of Interest



Forest Management Incentive

- FMI is limited to farmers participating in CRP who have established conservation covers comprised of trees
- Provides payment for completing authorized forest management activities
- Payment is equal to the lesser of actual cost or 85% of Payment Scenario rate
- Cannot be approved during last 2 years of contract