

ANNUAL REPORT

2022/2023

July - June



**JAMES RIVER
SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Serving the Counties of Chesterfield and Prince George

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

THANKS, AND APPRECIATION FROM THE CHAIRMAN

As I journey through our District, many ask me, "What exactly is the James River Soil and Water Conservation District?" Simply put, we collaborate with rural, urban, and suburban landholders to promote conservation best practices in partnership with federal and state agencies. I feel privileged to have been elected as a director from Chesterfield County for eight years now, and I am pleased to state that our District team is one of the finest I have ever had the pleasure of working with. Our team is tremendously dedicated to serving our communities every day.

It is with regret that we inform you that one of our Directors, Jerry Ford, has decided not to seek reelection this fall. Jerry has been serving as an appointed and then elected Director since 2020 and is also the District Agriculture Committee Chair. We are grateful for his valuable insights and thoughtful deliberations, which have greatly benefitted the District. Jerry's presence will be missed, and Andy Petik, Laura Thompson, and I wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

We are excited to announce that Avis Bennett will be taking over as the new director of Prince George's County this fall. Over the past year, we have also welcomed Greg Powers, Heath Locke, and Marlie Creasey-Smith as directors. If you are interested in joining the Board and becoming involved, we invite you to consider becoming an associate director with the JRSWCD.

The District is fortunate to have a great team of staff members. Brianna Moring, Joe Gerdes, and Anne Devine, our newest member. In PY23, they have conducted conservation workshops, distributed over \$854,900 in agricultural cost-share and \$56,757 via the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP), managed watershed activities, and promoted conservation education. Thanks to their efforts, the Chesterfield and Prince George Counties conservation mission has been accomplished and advanced.

We are thrilled to announce that Brianna Moring, JRSWCD District Manager, was elected President of the Employee Association at the Annual meeting in December. Furthermore, she was invited to deliver a training session at the Annual Meeting of the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Joseph Gerdes and Anne Devine have effectively implemented VACS and VCAP programs across the District. At the same time, the James River District has planned multiple rain barrel workshops and will attend several fairs and community events across the two counties. These events will inform citizens about our conservation district's offerings. One such service is the availability of a no-till drill that landowners can rent in Chesterfield and Prince George's Counties. If you are interested, don't hesitate to contact our office at (804)732-6550.

In closing, if your civic or private organization could benefit from a presentation on the District's services, please don't hesitate to reach out to our staff. We would be happy to arrange a question and answer session for you. Here's to a prosperous new year as we continue to serve the citizens of Chesterfield and Prince George's counties. Keep up with our programs and events by following us on Facebook and visiting our district website.

Best Regards,
Carey Allen

STAFF

Brianna Moring *District Manager*
Joseph Gerdes *Conservation Specialist*
Anne Devine *Conservation Technician*

DIRECTORS

Carey Allen (Chairman) *Chesterfield*
Laura Thompson (Vice Chairman) *Chesterfield*
Andrew Petik (Treasurer '22) *Prince George*
Jerry Ford *Prince George*
Stuart Jones At-Large Appointed *Chesterfield 2022*
Gregory Powers (Treasurer '23) At-Large Appointed *Chesterfield 2023*
Scott Reiter Extension Appointed *Prince George*

ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

Sierra Seekford *Chesterfield*
Marlie Creasey-Smith *Chesterfield*
Avis Bennet *Prince George*
Heath Locke *Prince George*

AGENCY PARTNERS

Olivia Leatherwood *DCR*

JAMES RIVER SWCD PARTNERS

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION
NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE
FARM SERVICE AGENCY

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION
DISTRICTS

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
LOWER JAMES ROUNDTABLE

CRATER PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION
PLAN RVA

VIRGINIA NATURALLY
PRINCE GEORGE FARM BUREAU
CHESTERFIELD FARM BUREAU

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL
ENGINEERING

CHESTERFIELD COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
PRINCE GEORGE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION

COVER CROPS

Cover crops are plants, typically small grains or legume/grain mixes, sown in the late fall after harvesting a cash crop. These cover crops stay on the field through the winter and early spring. These fields would otherwise remain fallow. Cover crops help prevent soil erosion and capture excess Nitrogen that would otherwise leach out of the soil and run off into nearby waterways. Cover crops have also been shown to suppress weed and insect pests and add valuable organic matter to the soil ecosystem. In PY23, farmers in the James River SWCD planted 8,427 acres of cover crops and received \$707,142 in cost-share reimbursement for this vital agronomic practice.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Nutrient Management is a critical component of any agricultural operation, especially for row crops that require specific and well-timed fertilizer applications to achieve good yields. Therefore, Nutrient Management Planning is an important part of growing crops and using nutrients wisely and effectively. In PY23, farmers in the James River SWCD enrolled 6,517 acres in our Nutrient Management Planning program and received a total of \$13,033 in cost-share reimbursement for these new plans. These farmers then utilized these plans to split- and precision-apply their fertilizer on over 3,723 acres of corn and small grains. By applying these nutrients in an environmentally sensitive way, these producers received \$21,739 in combined cost-share reimbursements.

OTHER AGRONOMIC PRACTICES

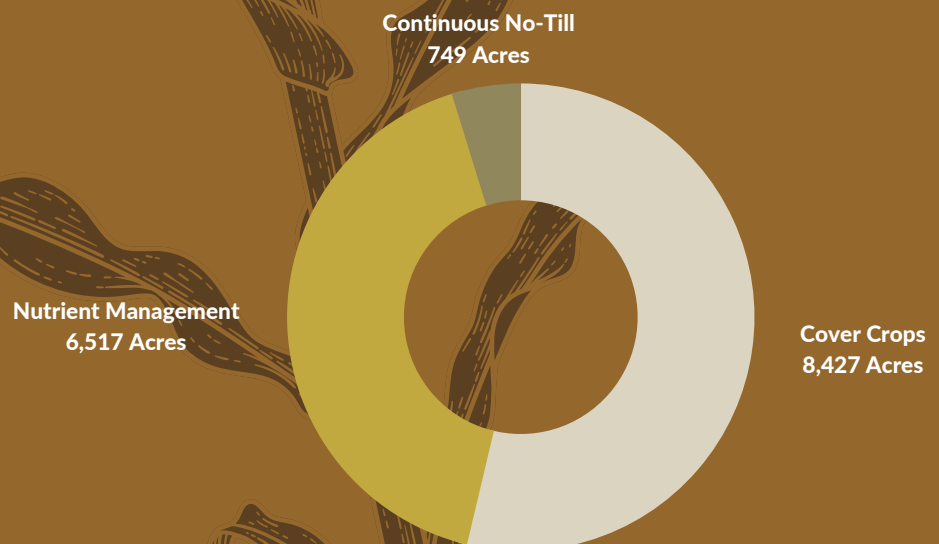
Additionally, our producers committed 749 acres of cropland to continuous no-till planting and received \$18,730 for their commitment. We obligated \$7,386 to convert 18 acres from cropland to forested land, helping to reduce soil erosion. Our livestock and equine producers were approved for over \$57,562 in cost-share for excluding livestock from streams. James River SWCD thanks all our producers for their commitment to protecting the natural resources in our community. The success of our programs only happen with their hard work.

ADDITIONAL COST-SHARE PRACTICES

- Cropland Conversion
- Stream Exclusion with Grazing Management
- Riparian and Grass Buffers
- Strip Cropping
- Grassed Waterways
- Manure Management
- Erosion Stabilization

FARMERS EVENTS

Each year James River Soil and Water has the opportunity to talk with local producers about the opportunities offered by our District, NRCS, and Virginia Cooperative Extension at our Farmer's Events. This year we held our Program Kickoff on August 17th at the Scott Memorial Park Pavilion and were joined by many of our local producers. On December 15th, we hosted the Farmer's Breakfast to re-certify producers for private pesticide applicator licenses and provide information on the upcoming projects and programs from our partner agencies.



COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

VCAP VIRGINIA CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The District provides support to landowners in urban, suburban, and rural areas to control erosion and runoff on non-agricultural properties through the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP). Properly managed stormwater can help recharge groundwater and protect land and streams from erosion. The VCAP program has twelve practices available to help landowners understand and manage the unique aspects of stormwater runoff on their property. In Program Year 2023, the James River SWCD expanded the VCAP program to the City of Richmond. The District has partnered with Capital Region Land Conservancy (CRLC) to provide site visits and technical assistance within City limits. To help alleviate the financial barriers to conservation, the James River SWCD Board has approved the Start-Up Payment Pilot Project (SUPPP) to provide up to 50% of the approved cost-share upfront to cover contractor start-up fees for qualifying participants.

ELIGIBLE PRACTICES

Conservation Landscaping
Impervious Surface Removal
Permeable Pavement Installation
Dry Wells

Constructed Wetlands
Bioretention
Rain Gardens
Rainwater Harvesting System

Vegetated Conveyance System
Infiltration
Green Roofs
Living Shorelines

Rain Gardens
\$3,500

Vegetated Stormwater Conveyance
\$10,000

In Program Year 2023 our District approved \$56,757 in cost-share funding to residents installing conservation practices through the VCAP program. Landowners in our District installed one Vegetated Stormwater Conveyance System, five Conservation Landscaping projects, one Rain Garden, and one Permeable Paver practice.

Permeable Pavers
\$20,000

Conservation Landscaping
\$23,257

RAIN BARREL WORKSHOPS

James River SWCD and Chesterfield-Environmental Engineering partner to provide Rain Barrel Workshops where local homeowners and conservation-minded community members can make their own custom rain barrels that collect rainwater to use as non-potable watering sources. Workshops in PY23 took place in July, May, and June. Participants met at Chesterfield County Fairgrounds, where they received training from a stormwater professional and took home over 90 rain barrels, which will put conservation immediately into practice.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Donald A. Bagshaw Memorial Scholarship

The Donald A. Bagshaw Memorial Scholarships' goal is to promote the higher education of our community in fields emphasizing natural resource conservation, agriculture, or environmental studies. Each year the James River SWCD will provide one \$1,500 scholarship to a student whose interests align with our mission to promote the stewardship of our environment. Our Program Year 2023 scholarship recipient Chesterfield resident Lillianne McMinn, who will be pursuing a degree from the University of Virginia.

Envirothon

The Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon is a team-based natural resources competition for high school students. Students who participate learn stewardship and management concepts and work to solve real-world environmental problems. The program is field-oriented and community-based and allows students to work with natural resource professionals. In Program Year 2023, we had three teams representing our District at the Area VI Competition, which was held on April 26th at the Wakefield 4-H Center. Two of our Envirothon teams, both from CTC@Hull, came in second and third place. They moved through to the State competition at VSU on May 21st and 22nd. We were lucky this year that the State competition was located in our District.

Youth Conservation Camp

Youth Conservation Camp is a week-long summer conservation camp for Virginia high school students (currently enrolled in grades 9-12) on the campus of Virginia Tech. During YCC, high school students get to explore nature and natural resources with conservation professionals from across our Commonwealth. The District provided scholarships to cover costs associated with YCC to two students from Chesterfield County.

YOUTH CONSERVATION CAMP ACTIVITIES INCLUDE

Map Your Watershed
Hike to the Cascade Waterfall
Electroshock Fishing

Beekeeping Demonstration
Tour of Lane Stadium
Canoe the New River

Explore the Vet School
Tour Virginia Tech Colleges
Tree ID Hike with DOF

Fairs and Festivals

Our Vice Chair, Laura Thompson, is also the James River SWCD Legislative/Outreach Committee chair. Through her outreach efforts, we had a booth at the Chesterfield County Fair, Midlothian Days, and Chesterfest. At these events, we were able to hand out information on our District programs and services and talk with conservation-minded citizens about the conservation issues they are seeing in their communities.

JAMES RIVER SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

James River Soil and Water Conservation District would like to thank all of the producers and partners that make soil and water conservation happen in Prince George and Chesterfield Counties. In Program Year 2023, James River focused on the practical ways we can help curb pollution in our district. By working with farmers, land, and homeowners, and the next generation of conservation-minded citizens, we were able to fight non-point source pollution in Prince George and Chesterfield Counties. These efforts were made possible by Brianna Moring, our District Manager, our Conservation Specialist, Joseph Gerdes, and our Conservation Technician, Anne Devine.

With the close of the 2022/2023 Program Year, we want to acknowledge the citizens of Chesterfield and Prince George that make the James River Soil and Water Conservation District a success. This year we obligated \$854,990 in agricultural cost-share funding and an additional \$56,756 through the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program. By expanding our outreach to producers, conservation-minded citizens, and educators in the community, we hope to have an even more successful Program Year 2024.

Monthly Board Meetings of the James River SWCD Board of Directors are held on the third Thursday of each month to conduct business. All meetings are open to the public. Don't hesitate to contact our office for the location, date, and time of our monthly Board Meetings. If you have questions or suggestions about our programs or want copies of this Annual Report, please call our office at (804)732-6550 or email us at jrswcd@princegeorgecountyva.gov.

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