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# The Lord Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District Annual Plan of Work

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July 1, 2023- June 30, 2024



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## Annual Plan of Work July 1, 2023– June 30, 2024

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Lord Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. In exchange for that support, the District is charged with providing specific administrative and technical assistance in the jurisdictions it serves.

The District's Annual Plan of Work is implemented by the work of its committees. Committees work to directly benefit water quality and to further Virginia's commitment to the Chesapeake 2000 agreement, the Commonwealth's TMDL program, EPA's Chesapeake Bay TMDL program, and requirements to protect soils and improve water quality in the District.

The State of Virginia encourages all SWCDs to apply public funds in the most cost-effective manner and to take every opportunity to increase the effectiveness of every public dollar spent. With this in mind, each District committee has considered its activities for the coming year. The District presents the following Plan of Work to guide its employees and committees.



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## Conservation Easements Committee

**Chair: I. Richards**

**Committee Members: J. Comanor, D. Gochenour, J. Fagan**

Mission: The Committee is engaged in education, development, holding, and monitoring of conservation easements. The District's primary expertise regarding conservation easements is related to soil and water conservation, water quality, and sustaining natural resources including the development of conservation plans and implementation of agricultural BMPs. The Committee will evaluate easement opportunities on behalf of the Board to determine the following:

- The extent to which proposed easements are consistent with the District's overall mission.
- Whether or not proposed easements will unduly burden the District.
- For each proposed easement, recommend that the Board accept or decline to hold such easement.
- Ensure that a process is in place to monitor all easements held by the District.

Goal: Strengthen the capacity of the District to effectively address the soil and water conservation needs of our communities.

Key Activities: Support and develop programs that educate and involve all members of the community in the work of the district. Strengthen existing partnerships, and develop new ones to support the work of the District.

Tasks:

- Evaluate proposed easements and seek to partner with appropriate land trusts, local governments and state agencies to ensure that adequate resources are in place to prepare legal documents and provide enforcement of easement terms.
- Ensure that necessary monitoring is properly completed for easements held solely and co-held by the District.
- Participate with other area land trusts, local governments and various stakeholder groups to educate the public about the benefits of easements and purchase of development rights.
- Work with other SWCDs and DCR to obtain enforcement powers through the Attorney General's office.
- Maintain the Conservation Easements held or co-held by the District, and inspect easements when needed. (Clarke County: 5 easements, Frederick County: 1 Easement, Warren County: 1 Easement, and Shenandoah County: 8 Easements).



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## Conservation Technical Committee

**Chair: C. Childs**

**Vice Chair: M. Gessner**

**Committee Members: J. Bushong, M. Coffey, S. Gaffey, D. Gochenour, S. Heltzel, N. Livesay, J. Mackay-Smith, A. Ponn, I. Richards, W. Webb**

**Mission:** To assist the District in improving soil and water quality by establishing priorities for the allocation of cost-share funds for the installation of soil and water conservation BMPs, reviewing applications for those funds, and recommending approval of applications to the Board. The committee will prioritize the allocation of cost-share funds to projects that demonstrate the greatest pollution reduction.

The Conservation Technical Committee will carry out all responsibilities mandated by the District Board and DCR.

**Goal:** Strengthen the capacity of the District to effectively address the soil and water conservation needs of our communities.

### Key Activities: Water Quality Objectives:

The focus of our activities in the coming year will be to increase the number of Agricultural BMPs that are installed throughout the District in TMDL watersheds with particular emphasis on the Chesapeake Bay TMDL watershed. The District will direct its resources to cooperator recruitment and installation of the most cost-effective practices to obtain the greatest water pollution reduction and soil protection. The committee will continue to identify sources of water quality impairment in District watersheds and to encourage cooperation of the landowners at such locations.

### Tasks (in no priority order):

1. Annually establish secondary consideration priorities for the funding of BMPs and determine local priority watersheds. At its meeting in June of 2024 the Committee will develop its priorities and secondary considerations, to be submitted for approval at the June Board meeting. (DCR must approve the priorities and secondary considerations before any fiscal 2025 cost-share applications can be approved).
2. Review applications and make recommendations to the Board of Directors for tax credits and cost share funding for BMPs.
3. Assist in BMP Verifications and inspections within each Director's jurisdiction, to insure proper installation and maintenance of BMPs, as directed by DCR.
4. Make certain that BMPs are cost-effective and directly benefit water quality.



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Tasks, Continued:

5. Respond to State and local requests for input on BMP cost share programs.
6. Support the Chesapeake Bay TMDL Development Plan as well as TMDL Implementation Plans for all TMDL watersheds within the District.
7. Assist the District as requested with Agricultural Stewardship complaints.
8. Provide guidance to the Board of Directors with respect to special requests made to the District that relate to technical soil and water conservation issues.
9. The Committee will usually meet monthly at the District office on the Thursday preceding the District Board meeting to review cost-share applications and take care of other business.
10. Utilize the list of primary and secondary considerations to develop the LFSWCD ranking spreadsheet and update it prior to the start of each fiscal year.
11. Approve cost- share funds and tax credits for projects using the hydrologic unit priority (established by DCR), LFSWCD ranking spreadsheet, and Conservation Efficiency Factor to determine its recommendations.
12. Prepare its plan of work for fiscal year 2025 for submission to the Board before June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.
13. Partner with other organizations and agencies to maximize the resources available for soil and water conservation programs, and to utilize the wide array of free expertise.
14. Encourage staff to promote all applicable soil and water conservation related programs (federal cost share programs such as CREP, EQIP, CSP; state cost share, grants and loan programs) when recruiting cooperators and designing effective conservation plans.
15. Staff will report all project information relating to BMPs by entering data into the DCR tracking program, supplying up-to-date tracking forms (parts I, II, & III) to the Administrative Specialist for payment upon certification of practice completion.
16. Establish and update the average cost list annually. Actual practice installation costs will be used for updating the average cost list.
17. Propose outreach activities needed to help inform and recruit Ag BMP participation to the Education and Outreach Committee.



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## Dam Safety Committee

**Chair: J. Fagan**

**Committee Members: P. Burkholder, J. Comanor, D. Gochenour, M. Gessner, W. Webb**

Mission: The Dam Safety Committee will work with DCR and NRCS to ensure that Lake Laura Dam #9 and Bird Haven Dam #10 are maintained and improved in compliance with applicable state regulations. We will also facilitate DCR's assistance to the Town of Woodstock for the Woodstock Reservoir.

Goal: Strengthen the capacity of the District to effectively address the soil and water conservation needs of our communities.

Key Activities: Support and develop programs that educate and involve all members of the community in the work of the district. Strengthen existing partnerships, and develop new ones to support the work of the District.

### Tasks:

- Obtain technical and engineering support for the maintenance and improvement of the District's dams, working through NRCS, DCR's Design and Construction Group), DCR's Dam Safety group and the DCR Division of Soil and Water Conservation's Dam Safety Consultant
- Conduct required dam inspections and maintenance through District staff, the Dam Safety Committee, and Consultant
- Maintain and operate the District's dams safely, satisfying federal and state requirements, in cooperation with Bryce Resort.
- Secure current operating certificates for the dams, work with the Consultant, and Shenandoah County to maintain current emergency action plans.
- Obtains funds for maintenance and repair to the extent possible.
- Encourage both staff and Directors to participate in the Dam Owners' Work Group meetings in Charlottesville, to learn about dam safety, maintenance and other dam issues.
- Cooperate with the Legislative Committee to encourage funding by the State and Federal governments of dam maintenance, repair, and improvement.

### *NRCS Action Plan:*

- Assist the District in annual maintenance inspections of Stony Creeks Dams #9 & #10.
- Coordinate as necessary with NRCS Watershed Programs Manager and State Engineer about needed improvements to Dams # 9 and #10.



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## Education and Information Committee

**Chair: J. Comanor**

**Committee Members: R. Barrett, D. Gochenour, S. Fleming, S. Gaffey, K. Gaither, M. Gessner, S. Heltzel, A. Ponn**

Mission: To increase community knowledge of, and commitment to the conservation of soil and water through communication with local communities, local governments, agricultural organizations, environmental organizations and individuals. To promote environmental education programs in the community and to support and encourage related education activities within the District.

Key Activities: Identify, design and implement a variety of educational activities to inform constituents about the purpose and work of the district, and the jurisdiction residents' roles in conserving water quality and soil health.

### Information/Communication Tasks:

- Keep the community informed of conservation activities by distributing three newsletters a year to the District's email address list. Expand the list. Solicit submissions from directors, associate directors and partners for the District's newsletter.
- Publish and distribute by mid-August the annual report for the previous fiscal year.
- Annually update the Ag BMP Action Plan, outlining education and information efforts for promoting cost-share programs.
- Partner with other District committees to develop and distribute informational materials and presentations as requested.
- Work with other staff members to create, maintain, and update a diverse library of materials, including photos of Ag BMPs, examples of conservation problem areas, youth activities, etc., for District informational displays and presentations.
- Maintain the District website and Facebook page and update as needed.
- Monitor expenditures of the current fiscal year approved budget and develop an operational budget for next program year by April.
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with local print media to enhance coverage of the District activities.
- Submit no less than six (6) conservation-oriented items per year to appropriate information outlets, such as newspapers, other newsletters, partners' websites, etc.
- Develop and maintain a calendar of education and information events, activities and deadlines. Keep Education & Information Committee members informed of progress and due dates for action items.
- Establish and maintain working relationships with key individuals, organizations and partners.
- Monitor FOIA requests and follow-up actions taken. Annually review the policy regarding fees for provision of requested documents to ensure they are appropriate.



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### Education Tasks:

- Sponsor and conduct the Annual District-level Envirothon Competition, as well as sponsor the District winning team at the Area I Regional Competition. Recruit full participation by ALL District high schools. Continue sponsorship of the District Envirothon winning teams, as appropriate and needed, to State and National Competitions.
- Solicit, evaluate applications, select, and sponsor camper(s) to the annual State Youth Conservation Camp.
- Solicit, evaluate applications, select, and nominate a High School Student from the District for the State SWCD scholarship. Recommend LFSWCD-sponsored scholarship (s) as appropriate.
- Partner with all local school systems in the District to sponsor environmental education activities.

### Special Events/Activities Tasks:

- Participate in conservation activities across the District as opportunities arise to promote District activities (eg., Conservation Field Days, Earth Day, Arbor Day, Soil & Water Stewardship Week, and local watershed meetings).
- Enlist the involvement of directors and associate directors in carrying out education-related activities for adults and families, especially within their home jurisdictions and localities.
- Cooperate with District committees on educational programs and meetings that address relevant issues. Conduct at least one (1) producer Field Day/Workshop or cooperate with a partner organization in a field event.
- Arrange logistics and plan the program and awards for the Annual Awards Luncheon.
- Conduct an evaluation of current District educational and informational activities and develop a long-range plan based on results of the evaluation for activities most effective in promoting conservation knowledge and implementation, with community and partner involvement.
- Host at least one agriculture outreach event as outlined in the Attachment F of the Department of Conservation and Recreation Grant Deliverables.





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## Finance Committee

**Co-Chairs: S. Shillingburg, W. Webb**

**Committee Members: P. Burkholder, J. Comanor, S. Fleming, HB Simpson**

**Mission:** The Finance Committee oversees financial aspects of District operations. The Committee assures compliance with applicable fiscal laws, protects District assets, enables the District to operate in a financially sound and efficient manner, and monitors use of funds to ensure surety bond compliance and auditor approval.

**Goal:** To assure that The District fiscal operations are conducted in a manner consistent with the District's Standard Operating Procedures and the Desktop Procedures for District Fiscal Operations, issued by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, July 1, 2022.

**Key Activities:** Conduct District fiscal operations in a manner consistent with the District's Standard Operating Procedures and the Desktop Procedures for District Fiscal Operations, issued by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, July 1, 2022.

### **Tasks:**

- Prepare monthly budget reports for presentation at Board Meetings.
- Apply sound and consistent accounting principles to the management of all District funds.
- Manage and invest District funds. Establish and maintain a plan to optimize CD management.
- Review financial data on a monthly basis to assure the District's sound financial position.
- Assist directors and staff, and ensure coordination with all committees to:
  - Identify funding sources;
  - Obtain funds from such sources; and,
  - Integrate these funds into the total budget
- Track all funding accounts and complete required DCR quarterly and annual reports in a timely fashion.
- Maintain accounts in a condition that will successfully pass all audits.
- Make preparations for an audit this fiscal year.
- Maintain and update District written financial policies, including the purchasing policy and the credit card policy, and ensure compliance.
- Comply will all surety bond requirements.
- Establish specific reserves for dam maintenance and other contingent obligations.
- Draft annual budget to propose to the District Board by May.



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## Legislative Committee

**Chair: P. Burkholder**

**Committee Members: J. Fagan, K. Gaither, M. Gessner, R. Hoover**

**Mission:** With Board approval, the District Legislative Committee will recommend legislation to the State Association's Legislative Committee. It will evaluate proposed legislation pertinent to soil and water conservation introduced in the General Assembly, alert the Board to issues relevant to local concerns and recommend action when appropriate.

**Goal:** Maintain and enhance a District Advocacy Plan.

**Key Activities:** Support the VASWCD annual legislative priorities. Maintain effective relationships with Federal, State, and local government decision makers.

### Tasks:

- Maintain liaison with legislators concerning proposed legislation.
- Work directly with legislators and through the State Association's office on issues affecting soil and water conservation.
- Respond to requests for support of needed legislation from the State and National Associations of Conservation Districts.
- Maintain liaison with other agencies, including USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency, DCR, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Virginia Department of Forestry and the Virginia Department of Transportation so as to coordinate efforts.
- Attend state, area, and national meetings when possible to keep abreast of actions, concerns, and proposed efforts at those levels.
- Become acquainted with and maintain liaison with local governing and planning agencies and their personnel, to apprise them of our interests and willingness to provide information for planning and zoning.
- Invite legislators to address Board meetings on an annual basis
- Support VASWCD funding and other legislative initiatives. The Committee will participate in state lobbying efforts related to cost- share programs for BMPs and Soil and Water Conservation Districts' administrative budgets.
- Work with the General Assembly members to encourage funding for dam maintenance.



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## Operations Committee

**Chair: J. Mackay-Smith**

**Committee Members: P. Burkholder S. Fleming, K. Gaither, K. Hockman-Nicholas, A. Ponn, I. Richards**

Mission: The Operations Committee undertakes those tasks which do not fall within the purview of other committees, or which may be assigned to it by the Board Chairman.

### Goals:

- To Strengthen the Capacity of the District by Improving Its Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness.
- Strengthen the Capacity of the District to Effectively Address the Soil & Water Conservation Needs of Our Communities

### Key Activities:

- Ensure the appropriate level of representation of local jurisdictions by Directors and Associate Directors.
- Develop and implement concepts, tools, and technologies to improve District efficiency and effectiveness.
- Develop, share and implement an Annual Plan of Work.

### Tasks:

- Vet and recommend for Board approval applicants for associate directorships.
- Vet and recommend for Board approval the nomination of directorship applicants for confirmation by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board.
- Review the District's Standard Operating Procedures, making recommendations to the Board as circumstances require.
- Recommend, for Board approval, nominations for Association and other awards given outside the District.
- Conduct, two times a year, a review of the Annual Plan of Work. Review will be held in conjunction with committee chairs. Recommendations to be presented to the Board for its consideration.
- Conduct, in conjunction with committee chairs, the annual review of the Strategic Plan. Recommendations to be presented to the Board for its consideration.
- Review the District's vehicle maintenance documents at least once a year. Additionally, the committee will access if new vehicles are needed at least once every three years.
- Review the District's office inventory list annually.



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## Personnel Committee

**Co-Chairs: HB Simpson, J. Comanor**

**Committee Members: C. Childs, I. Richards, Shillingburg, S.**

**Mission:** Foster personnel practices that encourage Directors, Associate Directors, and staff to contribute effectively to District activities.

**Goal:** Strengthen the capacity of the District by improving its organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

**Key Activities:** Ensure the appropriate level of technical staff to support the District's work load. Provide for the continuing education and training of Board members and staff, in conjunction with the VASWCD Educational Foundation, and other partner organizations.

### Tasks:

- Review written personnel policies and recommend changes, if any, to the Board.
- Evaluate current staffing levels and responsibilities and recommend any necessary adjustments to meet District responsibilities under the Agricultural BMP program, TMDL Implementation Plans, dam safety and maintenance regulations, and other responsibilities.
- Ensure that personnel policies and decisions are based on merit principles.
- Ensure that personnel management is conducted according to written policies.
- Recommend to the Board salary levels for employees, and appropriate adjustments.
- Apply a Pay Band system to personnel salaries.
- Review staff monthly reports and approve training plans for each employee.
- Conduct annual performance reviews of each District employee.
- Update employee job descriptions and priorities, and communicate any changes to employees.
- Respond to all employee grievances.
- Respond to District Directors' concerns involving employee-related matters.
- Review and update District Director's Reference Book.



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## Urban Best Management Practices (BMP) Committee

**Chair: K. Gaither**

**Committee Members: J. Comanor, S. Gaffey, N. Livesay, A. Ponn, HB Simpson, W. Webb**

**Mission:** The mission of the Urban BMP Committee is to expand the District's relevance and presence in localities where storm water and receiving waterways are affected by increasing impervious surfaces and associated pollutants and to identify a residential, commercial and municipal niche for implementing District programming

**Goal:** Strengthen the capacity of the District to effectively address the soil and water conservation needs of our communities.

**Key Activities:** The Urban BMP Committee will lead the District in implementing the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) and developing outreach for non-agricultural populations in our jurisdiction which will empower and educate communities by way of public-private partnerships, technical assistance and education and outreach.

### Tasks:

- Consult with relevant entities to help them reach their public education and outreach goals in the field of water conservation, and to continue to educate the public on current issues regarding storm water management, non-point source pollution, and urban programs the District has available
- Consult with the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) to determine the urban BMP roles they foresee for districts and the availability of Commonwealth resources to assist the districts in carrying out those roles.
- Review Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) applications and make recommendations to the Board of Directors for cost share funding for BMPs.
- Forward approved VCAP applications to the VASWCD VCAP steering committee for review and approval.
- Assist in BMP Verifications and inspections within LFSWCD jurisdiction, to insure proper installation and maintenance of BMPs.
- Make certain that BMPs are cost-effective and directly benefit water quality.
- Serve on the VASWCD VCAP Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to improve the program and advocate for potential BMPs within our jurisdiction.
- Plan and coordinate activities with partner organizations, such as the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission and the Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River, to promote participation and effective outreach.



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*The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Lord Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.*

*The District also receives financial and administrative support from the Counties of Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren, and the City of Winchester.*