

THE WATERSHED



Chairwoman's Report

May 2024

All programs and services of the District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, handicap, or political affiliation.



Not only is spring in full bloom, but our District is moving at a rapid pace into the final quarter of our fiscal year. This brings an extra urgency to our work. Thanks to the sustained interest by our local farmers, we are cautiously optimistic that we will complete this year with another record-breaking enrollment in best management practices! We still have funds available to help improve the conservation of our land and water resources in addition to the numerous projects already underway.

Our talented staff are also busy earning or maintaining the work certifications they need so they are best prepared to provide the technical advice needed to address each farm's unique circumstances and challenges. Two of our staff are about to receive their conservation planner certifications after a year's online study

and site work, and two others are qualifying for renewal of their certifications (required every three years). One of our staff has received national certification as a professional soil scientist and hopes to be certified in Virginia this summer after passing a 5-hour examination! Our Board gives careful attention to hiring AND MAINTAINING the best qualified folks, an essential component of success. Spring also includes accelerated outdoor educational activities and our Education and Information Specialist is also working in high gear as well. You will learn of some of her activities in this newsletter.

Our five new Directors have also been busy, participating in local and regional orientation sessions and online training, so they can be fully up-to-speed on the inner workings of soil and water conservation district board responsibilities. We are fortunate to have such community minded volunteers who provide their time and attention to District operations.

Sadly, as noted elsewhere in this newsletter, we lost our former District Chairman Richard Hoover, who just retired from the Board last December.

As the Board and staff work diligently to close out this fiscal year at a high level and begin preparations for the next, we wish everyone a wonderful, productive spring and summer!

Joan Comanor
LFSWCD Board of Directors
Chairwoman

IN THIS ISSUE

Chairwoman's Report	1
VACS Update	2
Tribute to Richard Hoover	3
New Directors	4
2024 Envirothon	5
LFSWCD Information	6

Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) Updates

Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share Program (VACS)

As you may remember in our last newsletter (February 2024), the Lord Fairfax SWCD had obligated 45% of the \$5.5 million allocation for this year's agricultural cost-share program. The board and staff have been very busy designing various practices, receiving engineering permissions and approving projects on behalf of soil and water quality. As of April 2024, LFSWCD has obligated 83%, totaling just over \$4.5 million.

Each soil and water district has a goal of obligating 90% of their total VACS funds for the program year in order to receive the full amount of technical assistance (TA) funds from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). These TA funds are exclusively used for conservation staff salaries. LFSWCD staff are confident that our District will reach the 90% goal by the end of the program year on June 30th, 2024. There are more multiple large scale projects in the application and design process that will be up for approval in the coming months.

As part of the grant agreements with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, soil and water conservation districts must host at least one agricultural outreach event each year, with the goal to broaden outreach to farmers we have yet to work with to include those that have been historically underserved. This year, LFSWCD will be hosting a Farmer Breakfast at the Strasburg Community Center on Friday, June 7th. The breakfast will be free for any agricultural producer and will include short presentations about the VACS cost-share program. LFSWCD plans to invite partner agencies and organizations to present if they are interested in attending.



We work with the people who work the land.

- 6:30 AM – Doors Open
- 7 AM – Breakfast Buffet Served!
- 8:00 AM – Learn about Cost Share opportunities.
- 8:20 AM – Final Questions & Meet Lord Fairfax SWCD Conservation Specialists



**REGISTRATION
PREFERRED
BY JUNE 1ST**

Scan QR Code or
visit our website
to RSVP!

**FRIDAY, JUNE 7TH
STRASBURG COMMUNITY CENTER**

Enjoy FREE breakfast while learning about potential cost-share opportunities for your operation!
Breakfast catered by Queen Street Diner.

Contact Allyson with any questions:
allyson.ponn@lfswcd.org

(540) 465-2424 ext 104
www.lfswcd.org

A Tribute to Richard W. Hoover

Richard “Dick” Hoover, previous Chairman of the Lord Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District, passed away on Friday, March 29th.

Mr. Hoover served as a Warren County elected Director for 16 years. His involvement in District programming was extensive. Not only did he serve as the Chairman of the Board of Directors, but he tirelessly served on various committees to ensure District business was maintained and productive.

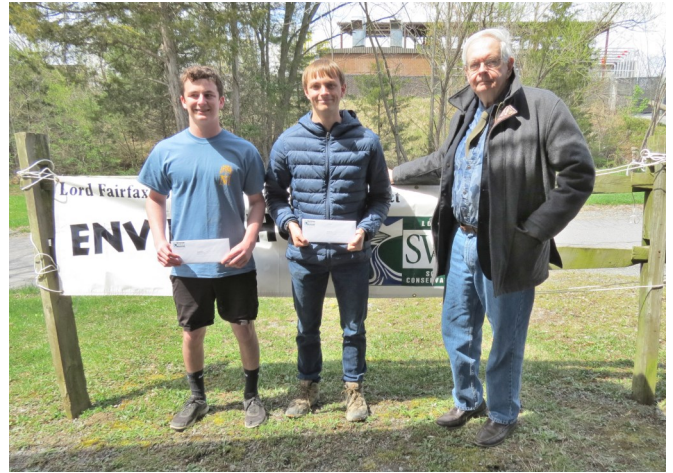
After retiring from the U.S. Department of the State as a Foreign Service Officer, he brought his many years of experience in collaboration, public speaking and advocacy to the District. Mr. Hoover was passionate about our environment and protecting natural resources, believing in the work of the District. Each year, he was an integral asset to the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) legislative agenda, increasing state funding for our cost-share programs and maintaining positive relationships with elected officials representing our service area.

The Lord Fairfax Board of Directors and staff will miss the quick wit, endless jokes and positive demeanor that Mr. Hoover provided. Almost notably, at the start of every meeting, Mr. Hoover always made the same opening, referencing that Lord Fairfax himself could not attend due to various reasons, and sent him to talk instead—it never failed to make the room smile.

Mr. Hoover was our biggest advocate and a steadfast leader. At his last Annual Awards Luncheon as Chairman of the Board in 2023, we were proud to recognize him for the second time as Director of the Year for his commitment to all District programming.

You can find the full published obituary for Richard W. Hoover online via [The Royal Examiner](#).

You will be missed, Chairman Hoover.



New Directors Jump Into Action

Newly elected Directors to the LFSWCD Board have jumped in head first and are off to a great start with their District involvement!

The Education and Information Committee hosted a Director Orientation Day for the entire Lord Fairfax Board that included project visits and a general information session on District programming. Directors started their day at a local farm in Shenandoah County that has installed a variety of best management practices (BMPs) through the Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) program. The farm features a stream exclusion project, a feeding and animal waste building, rotational grazing and an alternative watering system. In addition to seeing all of the components, they were able to ask the farmer and staff question about project installation.

Their next stop was the Woodstock Parking Lot on Church Street. This project is a great example of urban stormwater BMPs, and initially started as a potential Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) project. Public works and Town staff were able to show design plans, before and after pictures and discuss the various installed components and how they serve to control and mitigate stormwater.



The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) also provides training and orientation to newly elected Directors across the state. DCR, in partnership with VASWCD, recently renovated their onboarding process for newly elected directors. The new program features a two phase process—Phase 1 is a virtual training class that provides the foundational knowledge for Phase 2, an in-person workshop and panel that was held in coordination with all Area meetings this Spring. All 5 of our newly elected Directors are expecting to complete this onboarding process in the coming weeks.

In addition to their required training, they have shown great interest in all District programming, including all education and outreach efforts! A few of the LFSWCD Directors volunteered for the local Envirothon competition, helping judge and score the oral presentations. They also helped present for LFSWCD at the county budget hearings this past quarter and have already joined various committees, where most of the District business is completed on behalf of the Board. Listed below are the committees chosen by the newly elected and associate directors.



Emma Bricker: Dam Safety/Easements, Education/Information.

Mark Huddleston: Dam Safety/Easements, Personnel

Reid Hoak: Education/Information, Area 1 Vice Chair

Randy Buckley: Conservation Technical

Jack Owens: Dam Safety/Easements, Finance, Legislative

We are happy to have them serving on our Board of Directors!





On Tuesday, April 9th, seven student teams from Shenandoah, Warren and Frederick Counties competed in the Lord Fairfax SWCD local Envirothon competition at Clermont Farms in Berryville, VA. It was a beautiful day for Envirothon, featuring sunny and 75 degree weather, and incredible students working through the six field stations.

One of the key takeaways from the competition is the Oral Presentation. Students are asked to create a presentation on a problem related to the special topic. This year's topic is "Renewable Energy for a Sustainable Future". Students were asked to come up with ideas on how a city could integrate renewable energy into their energy sources. The problem asked students to identify why there is a need to transition to renewable energy and present a plan for at least two renewable energy sources that would be feasible for the region. Student presentations included various ideas, including off-shore wind turbines, solar panel incentives for homes, commercial properties and parking lots, and hydropower from waves or dams.

This year was one of the closest competitions we've had, with the top 5 teams all being within 12 points of one another. In the end, the following teams ranked in the top three and will be advancing to the Area 1 Envirothon competition on April 30th at McCormick Farms in Raphine, VA: First Place—Massanutten Regional Governor's School Team B, Second Place—Massanutten Regional Governor's School Team D, and Third Place—Massanutten Regional Governor's School Team B.

The LFSWCD Board of Directors and staff would like to acknowledge and thank the following agencies, organizations and individuals who volunteered for our local Envirothon competition: Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) , Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), Cindy Frenzel, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and John Crandell.



Image 1: Two student teams work to answer questions about texture, horizons and drainage in the soils pit. **Image 2:** The 1st place team, MRGS Team B, pictured with Clermont Foundation CEO, Bob Steig. **Image 3:** Central High School students pose with local DOF Foresters who volunteered for the competition.

LFSWCD Conservation Technical Committee Meeting

First Thursday of Every Month
10am @ Strasburg Community Center

LFSWCD Board of Directors Meeting

Second Thursday of Every Month
10am @ Strasburg Community Center

VASWCD Dominion Energy Envirothon

May 19th -20th @ Radford University

Karst Symposium

June 4th @ Blue Ridge Community College
[Registration Required](#)

Farmer Breakfast Outreach Event

June 7th @ Strasburg Community Center
[Registration Preferred](#)

MARK YOUR
CALENDAR!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Joan Comanor, Shenandoah
Mary Gessner, Shenandoah
Jack Owens, Frederick
Kermit Gaither, Frederick
Reid Hoak, Winchester
Paul Burkholder, Winchester
Emma Bricker, Warren
Mark Huddleston, Warren
Randy Buckley, Clarke
Justin Mackay-Smith, Clarke

James Fagan, Shenandoah At-Large
C. Corey Childs, Warren At-Large
Jason Bushong, Associate Director -
Shenandoah
Stephanie Shillingburg, Associate
Director - Shenandoah
Ed Pendleton, Associate Director -
Winchester
Ira Richards, Associate Director -
Warren

DISTRICT PERSONNEL:

Sarah Fleming, Administrative Specialist
Sam Shelton, Conservation Technical Assistant
Dana Gochenour, Supervisory Conservation Specialist
Madison Coffey, Conservation Specialist
Ben Loyd, Conservation Specialist
Nick Livesay, Conservation Specialist
Sabrina Vladu, Conservation Specialist
Allyson Ponn, Education & Program Support Specialist



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. Funding is also provided by Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah and Warren Counties and the City of Winchester.