

# Mountain Castles Soil & Water Conservation District

## Annual Report

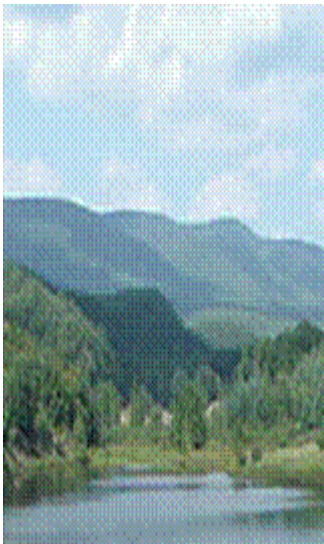
July 1, 2003 - June 30, 2004

*Serving Botetourt and Craig Counties*

### MISSION STATEMENT

**Promote leadership in conservation of natural resources through stewardship and education programs.**

#### History of the Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Districts



Craig County Mountains

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in a letter written to governors, said, "The history of every nation is eventually written in the way it cares for its soil." Over 50 years ago state legislators recognized the need to support grassroots conservation efforts. In 1938, the Soil Conservation Districts Law of Virginia was passed. The first District was located in the Tidewater area. Today, there are forty-seven Conservation Districts which serve as political subdivisions of State Government that utilize state, federal, and private sector resources to solve today's conservation problems. The guiding philosophy of all Conservation Districts is that decisions on conservation issues should be made at the local level, by local people, with technical assistance provided by government. Each District is led by a Board of Directors, elected or appointed to study local natural resource issues and make decisions which enhance and protect their community. The Mountain Castles District was formed in 1987 to serve Botetourt and Craig Counties. It was so named for the two county seats, New Castle and Fincastle and the beautiful mountains found in each county.

#### Overview of the District

The Mountain Castles Soil & Water Conservation District focuses attention on land and water quality issues, then implements the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Program (BMP) Cost-Share Assistance Program with local landowners. The District provides the technical expertise for design and installation of conservation planning. Farm plans are approved by the District Board of Directors for the USDA/NRCS Farm Bill, in accordance with federal, state, and local requirements.

Districts plan and coordinate educational programs that provide public awareness of conservation programs and watershed pollution problems through field days, farm tours, and classroom programs. The Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts also sponsors the Virginia Envirothon which is a natural resources competition for high school students testing their knowledge of soils, forestry, aquatics, wildlife, and agriculture land preservation. District teams compete locally with the possibility of going on to the State Envirothon, then may advance to the National Competition.

## District Programs

### Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practice (BMP) Cost Share Program

The District and the Department of Conservation and Recreation administers the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Cost Share Program. During the fiscal year from July 2003 through June 2004 cost-share payments were issued in the amount of \$46,868 to Craig and Botetourt County farmers within the District. The BMP Program offers 75% cost share and 25% tax credit. The most common practices in the District are Permanent Vegetative Cover on Cropland, Grazing Land Protection, Alternative Water System, and Permanent Vegetative Cover on Critical Areas. The Conservation District Cost-share Program payments, including CREP (USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program) totaled \$57,319. The USDA Farm Service Agency also issued cost-share payments for CREP in the amount of \$99,178.

### Tax Credits

The Virginia General Assembly enacted the Virginia Agricultural BMP Tax Credit Act in 1996 to allow any individual engaged in agricultural production for market to receive a tax credit for Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) installed to improve water quality. The goal of this program is to encourage voluntary installation of BMPs that will address Virginia's non-point source pollution water quality objectives. To be eligible for the tax credit, individuals must apply for approval prior to starting the eligible practice. For the tax year 2003, the District issued \$13,672 in tax credits for eligible District and United States Department of Agriculture conservation practices.

### Financial Report

#### July 1, 2003—June 30, 2004

The Mountain Castles Soil & Water Conservation District's revenue for the year was \$98,132 which comes from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and local governments. Of this amount, \$87,132 was received from DCR, bank interest or various grants. The District received local funding from Botetourt County (\$8,550) and Craig County (\$2,450). The combination of monetary support and services provided by the local governments and DCR allowed the District to fund the operational budget, dam maintenance and education programs. The operational expenses totaled \$76,751 which covered normal business operation expenditures.

In addition to managing the cost-share program, the District's responsibilities include dam maintenance on the John's Creek Flood Control Dams and conducting education programs that promote soil and water stewardship. The District financially supported local education programs and scholarships to youth conservation camp and forestry camp in the amount of \$2,288.

### 2003 Clean Water Farm Award and Conservation Farmers of the Year



Ned Jeter; Jeff, Karen, Donna, and Jerry Henderson

### Annual Banquet

The Mountain Castles Soil and Water Conservation District held their Annual Conservation Awards Banquet on February 18, 2004, at the Greenfield Education and Training Center. The Henderson family pictured above are owners and operators of Cave Hill Dairy Farm in Botetourt County. Jeff and Jerry Henderson were recognized as the recipients of the 2003 Conservation Farmers of the Year Award and the 2003 Bay Friendly Clean Water Farm Award for outstanding contributions to water quality.

Bob Boeren with the Virginia Department of Forestry presented the 2003 District Forestry award to Nils Thomas and highlighted the conservation practices on the property.

### Public Workshops Held at Greenfield

The District participated in a partnership with Valley Conservation Council, Botetourt County and several other agencies to host a three-part workshop series in October 2003 titled, "A Dialogue About The Future of Botetourt County's Water Resources."

### Virginia Association of Conservation Districts Area I Meeting

The Mountain Castles SWCD hosted this year's VASWCD Area I Meeting. The event was held at the Natural Bridge Conference Center on April 26, 2004.

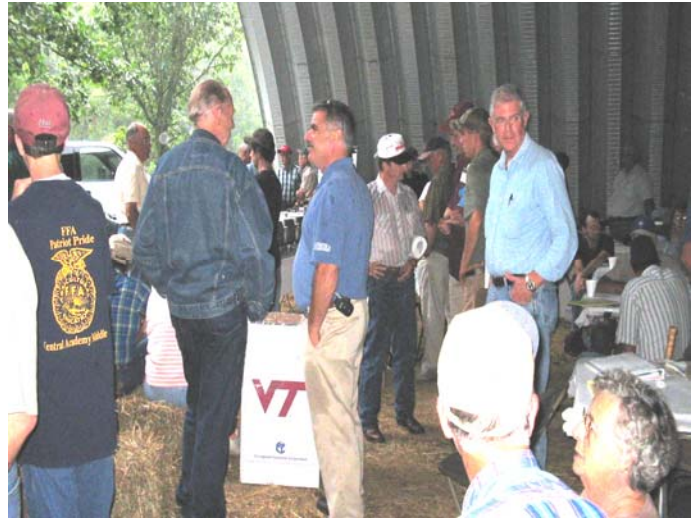
### Dam Maintenance and Rehabilitation

The District owns 4 Flood Control Dams in Craig County on John's Creek and received \$1,941 toward the mowing and maintenance from the Department of Conservation and Recreation. In the Spring of 2004, the dams were inspected and met the requirements of the inspections. John's Creek Dam #1 is tentatively scheduled for rehabilitation in 2009.

## Education Programs

### July 2004 Conservation Farm Tour

As part of the Mountain Castles Soil & Water Conservation District's public education outreach program and a partnership with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the District held a Farm Tour at the Penn Farm located near Buchanan. Jack Spigle has owned the farm since the 1960's and now operates the farm with his daughter Shelly Higginbotham. Although rain moved the planned activities to a hay storage shed, eighty-two local landowners and invited guests listened to Jeff Cline and Richard Fitzgerald from the Department of Conservation and Recreation speak about nutrient management, poultry litter and forage quality. Andy Allen, the Cooperative Extension Agent and appointed Director for the District discussed intensive and rotational grazing. Marc Puckett, Biologist with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries informed guests in areas of Wildlife and Quail Habitat. Dr. John Hall, Associate Professor at Virginia Tech concluded the program by speaking about Livestock Identification and informed local farmers on the latest information on the voluntary cattle identification program and the key points that will be used in this program.



Chairman Jeffrey T. Bowles speaks with guest, while Dr. John Hall talks to Ned Jeter

### Workshop Held For Botetourt Educators

Dr. Diana Dixon, Director of Instruction from the Botetourt County School Administration and Charlene Oliver coordinated the Spring workshop for Project WET (Water Education for Teachers). Cynthia Hancock, from the Skyline SWCD and trained facilitator, demonstrated water related activities that could be conducted in the classroom to the nineteen teachers who were from many different grade levels.

### Educational Material Distributed To Botetourt and Craig Schools

In celebration of Natural Resource Conservation Week and Soil & Water Stewardship 2004, educational material was delivered to all elementary grades in Botetourt and Craig Counties. Third grade teachers were given their very own Dirt Baby with instructions, so students could make one also. The theme of Soil & Water Stewardship Week was centered around "The Living Soil."



### 2004 Youth Camp Scholarships Awarded

The Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts sponsor a Youth Conservation Camp each year. The camp was held at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg July 12 - 16, 2004. This year the District awarded 3 camp Scholarships to students who attend James River High School. The students participated in camp activities that included field trips to Claytor Lake State Park, canoeing on the New River, and tours on the Virginia Tech Campus to include the Vet School and the Colleges of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Ryan Hasty was voted Conservation Camper of the Year.

The District sponsored three scholarships for students to attend the Holiday Lake Forestry Camp in Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest. The students, Steven Carter and Trevor Saville were from Botetourt County; and Craig Emerson and William "Bill" MacIntosh, District Director, both from Craig County attended the camp. The campers spent time in the classroom and then ventured to the field for hands-on activities that included tree identification, fire suppression, skeet shooting, archery and wilderness survival.

### James River High School Envirothon Team Attends Area I Competition

James River High School students placed third in the soils category at the Area I Envirothon Competition held April 21, 2004 at the Northern Virginia 4-H Education Center in Front Royal, Virginia. Six students were accompanied by Judy Mundy, Science Teacher from James River High School and Charlene Oliver, District Manager. The group traveled to compete in the Competition Virginia Soil and Water Districts. The teams on soils/land use, ecology, wild issue of management



Area I Envirothon competition sponsored by the Association of Conservation tested knowledge of forestry, aquatic life and a current conservation in urban areas.

The teams that win at the Area competitions advance to State and then the top scoring team advances to the National Competition organized by the National Association of Conservation Districts.

## District Directors

The Mountain Castles Soil & Water Conservation District is served by six Directors and Associates. Directors are either elected or appointed to a four-year term of office and serve voluntarily without pay. The elections in the Fall of 2003, brought three new members to the Board of Directors - Jeffrey T. Bowles, Chairman (Botetourt); William MacIntosh, Vice Chairman and Jay R. Day both are from Craig County. Harold Entsminger was re-elected and continues to serve with the Appointed Directors, John Seibel, Director At-Large and Andy Allen, the Cooperative Extension Director. Members of the Board are not employees and do not receive money to represent the District except for travel-related expenses. Directors are legislatively mandated to protect and manage the local natural resources.

## Associate Directors

The Mountain Castles Soil & Water Conservation District is served with Associate Directors who offer technical assistance and services to the Board. Michael Beahm, serves as Treasurer and Bob Boeren, Forester with the Virginia Department of Forestry offers technical assistance.



## Directors Recognition

John Hancock, Chairman leaves the District Board of Directors after twelve years of service to the District. Hancock was recognized for his service at the February Annual Awards Banquet. Ralph Bradley and Stanley Myers, the Craig County Directors were also recognized for their service to the District.

*“Partnership to conserve natural resources.”*

## Mountain Castles SWCD

36 Executive Circle, Suite 1

Roanoke, VA 24012-8939

## Conservation Partners

**Department of Conservation and Recreation, (DCR)**  
**Botetourt County Board of Supervisors**  
**Craig County Board of Supervisors**  
**United States Department of Agriculture**  
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Farm Service Agency (FSA)  
Rural Development (RD)  
**Valley Conservation Council**  
**Virginia Cooperative Extension**  
4-H Craig County  
4-H Fincastle  
**Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD)**  
**Virginia Department of Forestry**  
**National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)**  
**Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries**  
**Virginia Department of Environmental Quality**  
**Virginia Outdoors Foundation**  
**Western Virginia Land Trust**  
**Upper James River Watershed Roundtable**

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Mountain Castles Soil & Water Conservation District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

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