

The District At Work

Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practice (BMP) Cost Share Program

2004—2005 Cost Share Statistics

Allocations:		Total Sign-ups: 11 (First-time 7)		
James Basin*	\$130,750	Cost Share Completed and Paid:	\$67,849	
New River Basin *	\$6,456	Projects Started/Carried Over:		
Roanoke River Basin	\$6,582	James River	\$29,367	
Funds from City of Roanoke	\$6,644	Roanoke River	\$6,583 \$6,644	
<small>Note: \$17,000 James Basin and \$6,456 New River transferred to other Districts with approved signups</small>				

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. Approved BMP projects can be reimbursed up to 75% of project costs along with receiving a 25% VA Tax Credit on out-of-pocket expenses.

Financial Report 2004—2005 For District Operations

Revenue	
Local, State, Grants, Other	\$97,899.46
Dam Maintenance and Dam #1 Repairs	3,941
Expenses	
Operations	\$95,415.68

Classroom Assistance at JRHS

Barbara Kolb and Dave Thomas, James River High School science teachers have realized the importance of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) in the classroom. GIS and GPS are quickly becoming required skills within the natural resources fields, and it is important that they are a part of high school science curriculum. The district assisted the JRHS teachers and students in learning how to use and teach both GIS and GPS. Rebecca Evans, with the help of Kolb and Thomas, created a PowerPoint user guide for GIS, which will be used in the classrooms at JRHS next year. Evans has been asked to present this tool to other science teachers around the state at the Virginia Association of Science Teachers Conference in November at Hotel Roanoke.

Environmental Stewardship Forum

April 28, 2005

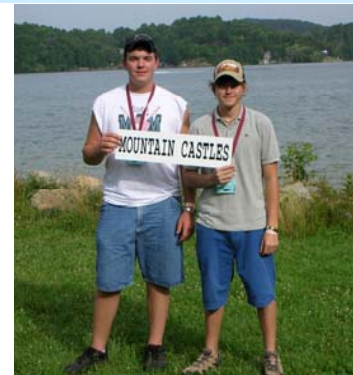


The Mountain Castles SWCD staff, the Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Botetourt County Public Works Erosion and Sediment Control staff partnered in hosting the forum in April at the Greenfield Education and Training Center. Representatives from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Farm Service Agency, the Western Virginia Water Authority, and DEQ, along with Jim Echols and Mark Hollberg from the Staunton DCR office were available to answer questions. A brochure was developed with local environmental resource contacts and ways to reduce non-point water pollution. The forum was supported with funding from the EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program through the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

2005 Youth Camp Scholarships Awarded

Michael E. Hylton and Trevor E. Saville were awarded the District camp scholarships. The two Mountain Castles SWCD scholarships are awarded to students who live in Botetourt or Craig Counties, have interests in environmental stewardship and who have submitted a recommendation from their teacher.

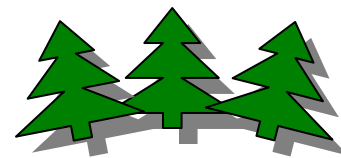
The Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts sponsors the Youth Conservation Camp each year. The camp was held at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg July 10 - 16, 2005.



Michale Hylton and Trevor Saville

2005 Forestry Camp

The District sponsored six \$100 Scholarships for students to attend the Holiday Lake Forestry Camp. The students who attended from Craig County were: Gordon Day, Matthew Humphries, Andrea King, Alisha Oliver, and Josh Orr. Shauna Hylton attended from Botetourt County.



USDA Bonsack Service Center Welcomed Two New Employees

Bill Moss joined the USDA Bonsack Service Center as the District Conservationist, with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in October 2004 filling the vacancy left by Rodney Williams. Moss is a native of Burkes Garden, in Tazewell County where he grew up on the family beef cattle farm. Moss worked in Dinwiddie, Virginia with the USDA NRCS before coming to the Service Center.

Rebecca Evans, District Technician joined the Mountain Castles District in February 2005. Evans recently graduated from Virginia Tech with a BS degree in Natural Resources Recreation.



2004 Annual District Awards and Recognition Banquet

Forestry Award

Botetourt and Craig Conservation Farmers of the Year



Bob Boeren, Forester presenting Forest Award

The Mountain Castles Soil & Water Conservation District held their Annual Awards Recognition Banquet immediately after the Education Program at the Greenfield Education Center on December 1, 2004. The District awarded a Botetourt and Craig Conservation Farmer of the Year.



The Botetourt County recipient was awarded to John and Hallie Seibel who own and operate Oxbow Farm. The Seibel's received the Clean Water Farm Award and were recognized as this year's Botetourt Conservation Farmer of the Year. The Oxbow Farm is located between the towns of Eagle Rock and Buchanan on Route 43. The James River makes a 3.5 mile loop around the farm, surrounding the beef cattle operation on three sides. The Oxbow Farm feeds one hundred fifty (150) head of cattle on an intensive rotational grazing system consisting of more than 30 paddocks. All ponds, the river, streams and other water sources have been fenced out and buffers established to filter sediment and nutrients before entering the James River.

The Craig County Conservation Farmer of the Year Award and Clean Farm Award was presented to J. C. Winstead who operates a 200 acre, 100 head beef cattle farm between New Castle and Sinking Creek. The farm is located in the James River watershed only a few miles from the continental divide for the James and New Rivers. Mr. Winstead designed a test plot of forages near their home that allows him to see changes to the variety of forages planted on the farm throughout the year to improve the cattle grazing system. Mr. Winstead also designed a unique watering system that uses springs located in different areas of the farm that provide water for the cattle without the use of electricity or pumps. Using gravity, the water from the spring feeds ten heavy equipment tire troughs and the constant flow of water keeps the trough from freezing in the cold winter months and the excess water from the troughs is used to irrigate hay fields and pasture fields through underground pipes at the base of the mountain during the hot dry summer months. Mr. Winstead has voluntarily installed conservation practices on the farm because he believes that it is better for the farm and environment and feels the practices pay for themselves.

The Conservation Farmers of the Year received an engraved plaque and a Clean Water Farm Award Certificate signed by the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia along with an outdoor sign for display on the farm.

2004 District Forestry Award

The Soil & Water Conservation District Forestry Award was presented to John Dredger by Bob Boeren, with the Virginia Department of Forestry at the December Annual Awards Banquet. Mr. Dredger's property is located near the Great Eastern Divide about 8 miles south of New Castle and contains the headwaters of Sinking Creek. Mr. Dredger is in the forest stewardship program and has followed the Department of Forestry's Best Management Practices. Mr. Dredger manages a total of 175 acres with 150 in woodland acres. Logging roads were properly stabilized with water bars, grass, or gravel, designed to control erosion and help preserve water quality. Mr. Dredger consulted with the MeadWestvaco foresters, as well as the Virginia Department of Forestry and obtained a forest management plan which included proper timber harvest and stabilization of streamside buffer zones that improves water quality. Bob Boeren said, "Mr. Dredger is committed to following the forest stewardship concept and has implemented proper techniques to maintain a healthy and productive forest."

District's First Envirothon Team from James River High School Recognized

The Envirothon Team and Coaches were presented with a plaque for the school during the Annual Award Banquet. The coaches for the team were: Judy Mundy, Barbara Kohl, Richard Furman and Dave Thomas. Team members: Erastus Hylton, Ryan Hasty, Heather Ayers, Ryan Brush, Kate Lawrence, Michael Hylton. The Envirothon 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.

Mountain Castles Soil & Water
Conservation District
36 Executive Circle, Suite 1
Roanoke, VA 24012

Board of Directors

Elected Directors

Jeffrey T. Bowles, Chairman - Botetourt County
William MacIntosh, Vice Chairman - Craig County
Jay R. Day, Craig County
Harold Entsminger, Botetourt County

Appointed Directors

John Seibel, At-Large
Andy Allen, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Associate Director
Michael Beahm, Treasurer

Conservation District Coordinator

Mark Hollberg

USDA Bonsack Service Center

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Mountain Castles SWCD

Email: mcsxcd@vaswcd.org

Charlene Oliver, District Manager
Rebecca Evans, Conservation Technician

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Bill Moss, District Conservationist

Farm Service Agency

C. Jean Hazlegrove, County Executive Director
Joan Crenshaw, Program Technician
Pat Willoughby, Program Technician
John Price, Field Assistant



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. The District also received local support provided by Botetourt and Craig Counties. All programs and services are offered on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap.

Mountain Castles Soil & Water Conservation District

Annual Report July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005

Serving the Counties of Botetourt and Craig

OUR MISSION

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

Message From The Board of Directors

Today, there are forty-seven Conservation Districts across the Commonwealth of Virginia that serve as political subdivisions of State Government that assist in utilizing 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 the government. Our District was formed in 1987 to serve citizens of Botetourt and Craig Counties.

Serving as District Directors, it is our challenge and also our responsibility to stay aware of local natural resource issues and influence decisions that will enhance and protect our community. The 2005 General Assembly has charged Soil and Water District Directors with seven new responsibilities. It will be our challenge to continue to engage in actions that will improve soil and water stewardship through the use of locally led programs and increase understanding among community leaders of their role in soil and water quality protection and improvement. Today, many conservation districts must operate on less operational funding than in years past; so it is important that we manage our resources effectively and wisely both in operations and cost share dollars. In our fiscal year 2004—2005, the Mountain Castles Soil and Water Conservation District received \$84,460 for operational funding from the Department of Conservation and Recreation along with our local funding of \$11,000 from Botetourt and Craig Counties. Our District employs two full-time employees who work together to fulfill the District's mission and strive to achieve District goals that are outlined in our Annual Plan of Work. The combined efforts of the Commonwealth's Soil and Water Conservation Districts across the State of Virginia work together through the Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts and the National Association of Conservation Districts to provide lobbying support at the state and national levels.

It is all about partnerships . . . how and why we do it.

The Mountain Castles Soil & Water Conservation District focuses attention on land and water quality issues and partners with other agencies to assist in implementing conservation practices. The Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practice (BMP) Cost-Share Program is funded by the State of Virginia through the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. DCR supports the District with financial and administrative assistance that allows us to work with other state and federal agencies to assist local landowners with grassroots conservation. The District, NRCS and the Farm Service Agency are located in the Bonsack Service Center and work together on related programs. The Farm Service Agency is usually the first point of contact for producers and farm landowners, as they administer federal farm programs and maintain the farm records for Botetourt, Craig and Roanoke Counties. Upon request from landowners and farmers, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Mountain Castles Soil and Water Conservation District provide technical assistance out in-the-field for design and recommendations for installation of conservation practices. Conservation Farm Plans are then presented to the District Board of Directors for approval that are in accordance with federal, state, and local requirements. The local Virginia Cooperative Extension offers educational support for our public education outreach programs and the Virginia Department of Forestry assists the District and landowners in providing technical assistance in Forestry Management and offers recommendations for our Forestry Awards. It is the District's goal to work together with our partners, to accomplish our mission and support programs that promote conservation of our natural resources and reduce non-point source pollution. It is everyone's responsibility to be good stewards of our earth. *Partnering with other agencies and encouraging citizens to be good caretakers of our natural resources is . . . why we do it. By being good stewards of our land and water, we can improve our water quality and reduce soil erosion, so generations to come can use the natural resources we have been entrusted with.*