

Mountain Castles Soil and Water
Conservation District

Four Year Strategic Plan
July 2006 – June 2010

Mission Statement:

To provide and to promote leadership in conservation of natural resources through stewardship and education programs.

Vision Statement:

The Mountain Castles Soil and Water Conservation District serves as a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia to assist in utilizing state, federal and private sector resources and makes decisions that enhance and protect natural resources, improve water quality, and will engage in actions that promote soil and water stewardship for all citizens of Botetourt and Craig Counties.

Introduction

The Mountain Castles District was formed April 17, 1987, operations began July 1, 1987 to serve Botetourt and Craig Counties and was originally part of the Natural Bridge Soil and Water Conservation District.

Governing authorization: The Mountain Castles SWCD is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia formed pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 1 of Title 21, of the Code of Virginia, designated and cited as The Soil Conservation Districts Law passed by the General Assembly in 1938.

The District boundaries are defined as the “Lands lying within the boundaries of the Botetourt and Craig Counties including the incorporated towns therein. Within these boundaries there are three major watersheds:

- James River/Chesapeake Bay
- Roanoke River
- New River

The District Board uses the following to assist in accomplishing the mission of the District each year:

- Annual Plan of Work
- Annual Budget
- Annual Report
- Farm Tours
- Camp Scholarships (Youth Camp/Forestry)
- Employee Performance

The following three items were identified as goals for the new Strategic Plan.

1. Reduce non-point pollution
2. Identify soil and water issues
3. Education

Public meetings were held in the Counties of Craig and Botetourt to receive public comment for the development of the Strategic Plan July 2006 - June 2010.

Goal I: Natural Resources - Reduce Non-point Source Pollution and Improve Water Quality

Enhance and improve water quality with the continuation of the following programs.

1. Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost-Share and Tax Credit Program
Provide technical assistance for Best Management Practices for agriculture and urban programs.
2. Promote wise development and implementation of state and local ordinances that protect natural resources and public life.
 - Provide input during the development of new land use regulations and any comprehensive plans.
 - Provide support for low impact developments.
 - Wetlands
 - Nutrient trading
3. Support Programs: Farm Bill/NRCS/FSA
 - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
 - Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
 - Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)
 - Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)
 - Nutrient Management
 - o Offering assistance to: Golf Courses, landowners, residential homeowners, kennel owners
 - o Equine Community - farmette/small farm community
4. Support Erosion and Sediment Programs with local Counties
Minimize soil erosion of agricultural, residential and forest land.
5. Support Conservation Easements
Western Virginia Land Trust, Valley Conservation Council, Virginia Outdoors, DCR
 - Continue to take a leadership role with land protection by co-holding voluntary riparian conservation easements with local partners.
 - Promote and encourage conservation and preservation of farmland, forestland and open spaces. (Agricultural & Forestal Districts)

6. Seek Grants that support water quality
 - Models for Good Development
 - Residential water treatment/septic systems
 - Poultry Litter – spreader, litter shed
 - Developers - mediation

(DCR Mini Grant, Chesapeake Bay License Plate Grant, Tributary Strategy Grant)

Goal II: Public Relations - Soil and Water Issues

Continue to enhance and promote local partnerships that will provide for better communication and support on new or existing programs and services.

Partnerships (but not limited to):

- Associate Directors
- Board of Supervisors/Counties Administration/School Boards
- Local Stakeholders
- Legislators
- Local grassroots groups
- Partnering Agencies
- Support efforts in the creation of the regional Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D)
- Local Media Resources
- Libraries

Communication

- Continue to submit news articles to local media
- Promote conservation through displays at local events
- Recruit, train and encourage earth team volunteers
- Support local save our streams programs
- Generate political support for soil and water management that promote public awareness (watershed/groundwater protection).
- Continue to seek support for the John's Creek Dam Rehabilitation
 - Mapping Inundation and zoning
 - Operation and Maintenance
- Continue to be receptive to local landowners concerns and suggestions
- Support Eco-tourism
- Communicate information with local stakeholders, Boards of Supervisors and partnering agencies
- Home Builders/Home Owners Associations

Rewards

- Recognize excellent/superior conservation efforts through recognition programs and award banquets.
- Recognition using display signs for conservation projects.

Office

- Annually re-evaluating equipment
- Evaluate staffing needs
- Consideration of future office space
- Continuously pursue funding from state, local, federal and private sources to support district activities.

Goal III: Education Program

Enhance, promote and provide educational opportunities and resources for local citizens, students and organizations by continuously keeping current with local soil and water issues.

- Provide educational assistance to schools and community civic organizations (Enviroscape Model Demonstration, Community Festivals, Career Days, Garden Clubs, Homeowner Associations).
- Provide education materials that promote soil and water stewardship but not limited to:
 - Natural Resource Week
 - Soil and Water Stewardship Week
 - Earth Day
 - Arbor Day
- Host farm, forestry or urban tours that demonstrate:
 - Best Management Practices
 - Better models for development in agriculture and urban areas
 - Low Impact Developments
- Consider funding a district scholarship each year for students in Botetourt and Craig County that could be awarded by the VASWCD Education Committee.
- Continue to support the VASWCD Youth Camp Scholarships, Forestry Camp and the Envirothon Team(s).
- Continue to support the district website and use as a marketing tool for district activities.
- Provide educational opportunities that address challenges that can impact water quality.
 - Impacts of increased population growth and land use changes (Equine and domestic animals)
 - Nutrient runoff/impervious surface
 - Urban growth reduced agriculture/forest land
 - Education toward conservation, protecting and preserving natural resources
 - Horses on limited acreage

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Partnership Acknowledgement Statement

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Mountain Castles Soil and Water Conservation District by providing basic operational funding and administrative assistance through the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Division of Soil and Water. Botetourt County and Craig County also assist the District by providing local support to the district.

Approved:

Mountain Castles Soil and Water Conservation District

Date: June 20, 2006

_____(Botetourt)

Jeffrey T. Bowles, Chairman

_____(Craig)

Jay R. Day, Vice Chairman

_____(Botetourt)

Harold Entsminger, Jr., Director

_____(Craig)

William MacIntosh, Director

_____(Appointed At-Large)

John Seibel, Director

_____(Appointed)

Andy Allen, VCE Director

_____(Associate)

Michael Beahm, Treasurer