



The Conservation Strip

John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District

District Manager Retires After 33 Years

Summer 2017

John Marshall SWCD District Manager Jennifer Hoysa will retire on July 1 after being with the District for more than 33 years. In 1984, Jennifer started as the District Clerk and was later promoted to District Manager.

A self-described “local girl,” Jennifer was born and raised in Fauquier County and she credits her local roots to the success she’s had in her job. Over the years, the good working relationships Jennifer has developed with farmers has led to the District’s success implementing the cost-share program. Since 1984, she has overseen the allocation of more than \$8 million in Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share funds.

Some of her other accomplishments include: coordinating farm tours that showcase the value of best management practices for visiting governmental and conservation officials from Russia and China; winning the national Goodyear Grand Award for Conservation Districts in 1986 and 1994; mentoring other district managers and administrative personnel by sharing knowledge and experience; leading



Jennifer Hoysa poses with the JMSWCD Truck.

the effort to establish the use of software for record keeping for the conservation tracking program and financial transactions; and providing leadership and support to allow for the implementation of new programs such as annual tree seedling sales, tree plantings, and local watershed studies.

In addition to all these accomplishments, she ensures sound financial management which has allowed the district to become more financially stable. She emphasizes the use of local vendors whenever possible to meet the mission needs of the local district. This not only supports the economy of the local community but

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Mission Statement

Our Mission is to provide leadership, technical assistance, information, and education to the citizens of Fauquier County in proper soil stewardship, agricultural conservation methods, and water quality protection so as to ensure the wise use of the county’s natural resources.



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Reconnecting Cattle and Quail

by Justin Folks, Private Lands Biologist, NRCS/DGIF/VT

Prior to World War II, our cattle grazed upon pastures of native grasses with scattered wildflowers and brush. These pastures, combined with the way we managed the rest of the land, helped harbor scores of wildlife species, including the beloved (but now rare) bobwhite quail. In 1931, a new tall fescue released in Kentucky (appropriately named Kentucky-31) became popular, agricultural equipment became more advanced, and more and more mouths had to be fed. All forms of agriculture became more intensive, leaving little “weeds and brush” behind that quail needed to thrive. Cattle and quail were becoming mutually exclusive.

While quail have struggled, the cattle farms are now facing challenges. Our summers seem to be getting hotter and drier, feed costs are increasing, and an endophyte found in fescue is affecting herd health. Operations that rely only on common cool season forages such as fescue and orchardgrass may find it increasingly difficult to stay above the bottom line. To help both graziers and quail, the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and its partners are recommending producers go “old school” by grazing native forages once again.

The NRCS’s Working Lands for Wildlife program offers assistance for conserving wildlife on agricultural lands to create a win-win for the producer and the critters.

The regional “Bobwhites in Working Grasslands Initiative” will help reconnect cattle and quail by promoting the use of native, warm-season grasses in grazing systems to boost livestock productivity during the “summer slump,” decrease feed and fertilizer costs, and create habitat for bobwhites and other wildlife at the same time. Dr. Pat Keyser’s recent research at the University of Tennessee’s Center for Native Grassland Management, a leader in U.S. grazing research, has shown that proper management of native forages can maximize livestock productivity and benefit quail on the same acreage. A true win-win!

To help kick off this new initiative, the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council, is partnering with NRCS, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Cooperative Extension, the UT Center for Native Grasslands Management, and the Lake Country Chapter of Quail Forever to host a series of talks and pasture walks with Dr. Keyser. Each event will begin with a 5:30 p.m. dinner, followed by a presentation from Dr. Keyser, personal accounts from the participating producers, and a pasture walk to see native forages in action and learn more about establishing and managing them on your farms.

Event dates and locations are:

July 18, Tim Willis’ Farm in Randolph, VA (Halifax Co.)

July 19, Willis Farm in Brightwood, VA (Madison Co.)

July 20, Bellevue Farm in Swoope, VA (Augusta Co.)

All cattle producers interested in maximizing their animal productivity while helping wildlife in need are highly encouraged to attend. To attend an event, you must register by July 11th at www.vaforages.org. For the Madison County event, you can also contact Private Lands Biologist David Bryan for a registration form at David.Bryan@va.usda.gov. We hope to see you there!

Here’s to fat, happy cows, and that sweet sound of “bob-WHITE!”



Jennifer Hoysa Retiring (Cont.)

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also ensures the wise and prudent use of public funds.

However, despite all these great feats, Jennifer says her proudest accomplishment was leading the effort to institute a career ladder for JMSWCD district employees. This ladder provides for professional development and promotional opportunities for district personnel.

When asked about some of her favorite memories from her tenure, she quipped “It’s been 33 years. My mind can’t remember that much.” Despite this claim, Jennifer has a knack for reeling phone numbers off the top of her head. It is widely known around the office that if you need a phone number for someone, Jennifer will know it without even having to look it up.

Jennifer has said that she will miss the people and directors the most, as well as the friendships built with other district employees, staff, and local farmers.

Jennifer said “I’m just thankful for the opportunity the directors have given me.” And after 33 years on the job with a host of impressive accomplishments behind her, the staff of the John Marshall District are also thankful for that opportunity. Staff know that she is an extremely hard worker and that she does a great job for both the staff and the public that she serves.

After life at John Marshall, Jennifer plans to volunteer with “People Helping People,” an organization that her father, Calvin “Boots” Ritchie started. She also plans to spend more time with her family and friends.

JMSWCD Staffing Changes

With the retirement of Jennifer Hoysa, there have been some changes to the structure of the John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District:

Conservation Specialist

A change, (unrelated to Jennifer’s departure) is Larry Dunn, Conservation Specialist, has decided to retire from JMSWCD. Larry has worked with the District for nearly 12 years. He previously retired from the Virginia Department of Forestry after 30 years. Throughout this time, he worked in the Farmville, Lawrenceville, Bowling Green, and Warrenton offices.

In the time that he has worked for John Marshall, he has said that the best parts have been working with the people, getting to know the farmers, and the satisfaction of doing good projects.

In retirement, Larry plans to volunteer at Fauquier Hospital and the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute as well as playing plenty of golf and taking a much needed vacation. We wish Larry a happy and peaceful retirement.

District Manager

Tom Turner, who has been with the District for nearly 16 years was promoted from Conservation Manager to District Manager. Tom’s approach to his job is to consider the resource as a whole and find a way to assist farmers to improve the important resources on their land.

Tom’s work stems from his background in Biology and desire to get more conservation on the ground. In his spare time, he enjoys fly fishing and mushroom hunting. Congratulations to Tom on his promotion!

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John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District

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Hours: 7:30 am-4:30 pm
Monday-Friday

District Directors

A. Gray Coyner, Chairman
John Schied, Vice Chairman
Deirdre Clark, Sec./Treas.
Tim Mize
Mary Lou Trimble

Associate Directors

John Bauserman
Howard Grove
Patricia Johnson
Michael Webert

Honorary Directors

Henry Green

JMSWCD Staff

District Manager
Tom Turner
Conservation Specialist
Claire Hilsen
Conservation Specialist
Kris Jarvis
Conservation Education Specialist
Michael Trop
Office Administrator
Wendy Merwin

NRCS Staff

District Conservationist
Roger Flint
Soil Conservationist
Casey Dietzen Iames

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JMSWCD Staffing Changes (cont.)

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Office Administrator

Wendy Merwin has been hired as the new Office Administrator and will be taking over administrative duties for the District. Wendy has a Bachelor of Business Administration and previously worked in the medical field doing medical billing.

Wendy is a graduate of Fauquier High School, but for 22 years, she was a military wife and spent time living in Germany, Texas, and Virginia. She enjoys gardening and working outside. Please be sure to welcome her to the office!



Office Administrator Wendy Merwin.

Calendar of Events

July 1		Start of Fiscal Year—New Cost-Share program starts	
July 3-4		John Marshall SWCD Office Closed	
July 12	4:00 PM	John Marshall SWCD Board Meeting	CANCELLED
July 12-15		Fauquier County Fair	County Fairgrounds
August 9	4:00 PM	John Marshall SWCD Board Meeting	JMSWCD Office
September 4		John Marshall SWCD Office Closed	
September 13	4:00 PM	John Marshall SWCD Board Meeting	JMSWCD Office

Staying Connected: The John Marshall SWCD makes it easy to stay connected through social media. If you're on Facebook, "Like" our page to get updates on what's happening at the District.



The Conservation Strip is a quarterly publication of the John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District. To be added to our email list, please send an email to Jennifer Hoysa at: jennifer.hoysa@fauquiercounty.gov.

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