



# The Conservation Strip

## John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District

### 2015 Annual Awards Luncheon

Winter 2016

The John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District held its annual Awards Luncheon on December 16 at Stoneridge Events Center in Warrenton. A number of local citizens were recognized for their outstanding commitment to conservation throughout Fauquier County. This year, several distinguished guests attended including Delegate Michael Webert (VA-18), Supervisor Holder Trumbo, (Scott District), and Supervisor-Elect Mary Lee McDaniel (Marshall District).

This year's luncheon began with a presentation by David Bryan, a NRCS Private Lands Wildlife Biologist. David spoke about the status and decline of grassland birds and the work that the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries are doing to improve habitat for Northern Bobwhite and associated early successional species.

The awards ceremony began by recognizing Larry Dunn for 10 years of service to the District. After the District employee recognition, the following awards were presented to members of the community:

The **TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) Conservation Farm Award** was presented to **Daron Culbertson** of Willingham Farm. Through two phases of stream exclusion practices, he has protected 12,200 feet (2.3 miles) of stream bank while creating over 15 acres of riparian buffer. Students from Liberty High School planted an acre of hardwood seedlings in one acre

of the new buffer. He is in the process of installing additional stream exclusion practices which will protect another 11,800 feet of stream bank in the Marsh Run watershed.

The **Conservation Farm Award** was given to **Midtrees Farm**. Midtrees farm is run by mother and daughter Janice and Karen Dorschner. The Dorschners installed livestock stream exclusion fence, an alternative water system, and heavy use protection. Their livestock exclusion system protects 1,200 feet of stream bank and 2.5 acres of riparian buffer. Existing stream protection fence was enrolled in the Continuing Conservation Initiative program protects an additional 1,490 feet of stream bank.

The **Clean Water Farm Award** was presented to **Irvin and Nancy Woods**. The Woods have protected 4,800 feet (0.9 miles) of stream bank, installed 6 water troughs, and created three hardened stream crossings to facilitate rotational grazing. This resulted in the protection of all surface water on their property and the creation of 3.3 acres of riparian buffer. The Woods facilitated the planting of their riparian buffers into native hardwood species and hosted a program manager's tour for state and federal agencies, as well as an engineering training for natural resource professionals.

The **Conservation Partner Award** was given to **Friends of the Rappahannock**.

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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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## NFWF Grant Completed

In October of 2012 the John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District (JMSWCD) was awarded a two year National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Small Watershed Grant for a riparian (stream side) restoration project entitled “Riparian Tree-age.” In this grant, JMSWCD planned to plant 20 acres of forested riparian buffers with native fruit-bearing species on recently fenced pastureland in priority watersheds. Additionally, over 25,000 feet of stream bank was intended for stabilization through live stake plantings. Live-stake plantings not only stabilize the stream banks as they grow, but will also serve as a low cost, local source for live cuttings for future restoration projects.

Beginning in the spring of 2013, JMSWCD and partners planted hundreds of trees and shrubs on land that had been previously grazed by livestock. These areas were mostly void of trees and dominated by non-native grasses which have limited conservation value. Additionally, live stakes were installed to promote stream bank stabilization. In the spring of 2014, trees, shrubs, and live stakes were again planted with volunteer help. By spring of 2015 JMSWCD had exceeded its obligations under the grant; however, since the effort had been highly successful, the District and funder committed to extending the grant through October, 2015.

Over the last three springs the JMSWCD and partners (which include Friends of the Rappahannock, Stafford High School, Liberty High School, Piedmont Environmental Council, Goose Creek Association, Highland School, Middleburg Academy, as well as other students and parents from both Loudoun and Fauquier Counties) planted over 39 acres of riparian forest buffer: almost double the original goal. Volunteers and agency personnel have spent over 3,600 hours in this effort to protect our valuable surface water resources. This has not only been a great way to restore the native habitat of local rivers and streams, it has also been a great way to build community partnerships working toward a common goal. In this cooperative effort, landowners allow JMSWCD to utilize their farms, volunteers expend personal time to restore the integrity of our riverine environment, and



*Bryan Hoffman of Friends of the Rappahannock assists a few “Riparian Tree-age” volunteers with planting trees to help protect the environment.*

governmental agencies coordinate the project. In many respects this project has demonstrated the effectiveness of good community collaboration.

As part of the grant program evaluation process, JMSWCD staff and volunteers conducted a series of bio-assessments at key planting sites during the springs of 2013-2015. Baseline surveys of benthic macroinvertebrates, songbirds, amphibians, and plants were completed during or shortly after the installation of seedlings at several of the farms. Hopefully, this baseline information can be contrasted with future studies as the plant composition of the buffers change over time.

Of particular note was that Fauquier County Farm fields are home to a diverse song bird population, including many species of concern such as Grasshopper sparrows and Prairie warblers. In less than a year after the buffer area was taken out of production and planted with native trees and shrubs, additional nesting sites were observed and plant diversity had greatly increased. Similarly, overall water quality scores using macroinvertebrate indexes improved within two seasons at farms with large cattle herds in particular.

For more information on this project, please contact Tom Turner, Conservation Manager.

# 2015 Annual Awards Luncheon Continued

*(Continued from page 1)*

Friends of the Rappahannock has been partnering with the John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District to conduct tree planting restoration activities since 2012. Friends of the Rappahannock covers the material costs and brings student volunteers to a site that the District locates (typically those that have been recently excluded from livestock). The benefits of these projects include no obligation for the landowner, students receiving community service hours, and both JMSWCD and Friends of the Rappahannock further their missions of water quality protection. In three years, this partnership resulted in the planting of over 7,500 trees and live stakes on six farms in Fauquier County. Over 350 students and volunteers contributed over 1,700 hours of time to these projects.

The **Conservation Business Partner Award** was presented to **Dan Stell** – Geographic Information System (GIS) Department, Fauquier County. GIS is a system that captures, stores, analyzes, manages, and presents all types of spatial and geographic data. Prior to 2005, District staff utilized photocopies of maps for conservation practice planning. Since that time, Dan has assisted District staff in upgrading their planning capabilities by providing additional data layers (unique to Fauquier County) as well as additional

training for new software. In 2012, the District received a county-supported ArcMap program and Dan set up a more robust layer system with unique symbols for conservation practice features. This new system has resulted in higher quality maps and other information for landowners as well as more readily available data for governmental reporting purposes.

The **Edwin F. Gulick Conservation Educator Award** was given to **Debbie Fisher**. Debbie is an Ecology and Biology teacher at Fauquier High School, but has worked with and supported the mission of the District since the late 1990's when she was with the Rappahannock Conservation Council. As a teacher, she leads her students in outdoor activities, which helps them understand our natural world and the importance of conserving it. Her students participate in Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences through visits to Cedar Run four times per semester where students conduct water monitoring activities, measuring a variety of parameters. Her students also collect recyclables from classrooms all across the school.

Pictures of the Awards Luncheon are available on the John Marshall SWCD Facebook page.



*The John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District recognized (from left to right) Debbie Fisher, Bryan Hoffman representing Friends of the Rappahannock, Dan Stell, Daron Culbertson, Janice and Karen Dorschner, and Nancy and Irvin Woods on December 16 at the annual Awards Luncheon held at Stoneridge Events Center in Warrenton.*

**John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District**

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# NRCS EQIP Deadline Approaching

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) deadline to sign up for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is February 19, 2016.

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits. Key Resource Concerns include **soil erosion** (sheet, rill, wind, and excessive bank erosion from streams), **water quality** (excess quantities of nutrients in surface and ground waters, pathogens and chemicals from manure, bio solids or compost applications, sediment in surface waters), **livestock production** (limited or inadequate), **degraded plant condition** (undesirable plant productivity and health or inadequate structure and

composition) and **fish/wildlife habitat degradation**.

Agricultural producers and owners of non-industrial private forestland are eligible to apply for EQIP. Eligible land includes cropland, pastureland, non-industrial private forestland, and other farm lands. Payments are made to participants after conservation practices are implemented.

For more information or to apply for EQIP, contact Roger Flint (540-347-3120 x108) or Casey Dietzen (540-347-3120 x110).



## Calendar of Events

January 5	9:30 AM	John Marshall SWCD TRC Meeting	
January 13	4:00 PM	John Marshall SWCD Board Meeting	JMSWCD Office
January 15		John Marshall SWCD Office Closed	
January 16	1:00 PM	Thumb Run Community Meeting	Leeds Church
January 18		John Marshall SWCD Office Closed	
February 10	4:00 PM	John Marshall SWCD Board Meeting	JMSWCD Office
February 15		John Marshall SWCD Office Closed	
March 9	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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