

NORTHERN VIRGINIA

SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT



FY2023 ANNUAL REPORT

WHO WE ARE

VISION

Engaged communities working together to protect and restore natural resources

MISSION

To promote sustainable urban and suburban activities and stewardship to conserve our soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources in Fairfax County - vital components to the Chesapeake Bay watershed. We achieve this through effective leadership, technical assistance, and outreach programs in partnership with government, industry, non-profit organizations, and the public.

ABOUT US

Founded in 1945 by citizens concerned about conserving natural resources, the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District is now one of 47 conservation districts in Virginia and approximately 3,000 nationwide. Northern Virginia SWCD is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia, governed by a five-member Board of Directors. Its boundaries are the same as those of Fairfax County, home to over 1.1 million people.

Northern Virginia SWCD is not a regulatory agency. Instead, it serves the residents of Fairfax County directly and through partners to provide conservation information, technical services, educational programs and volunteer opportunities to residents on many aspects of water quality, nonpoint source pollution and ecological health and connects residents with environmental initiatives and opportunities.

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Northern Virginia SWCD through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. In addition, Northern Virginia SWCD is grateful for the financial support and partnership of Fairfax County government.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Special Thanks

Cole Gandee, *Outreach
and Education Intern*
Jan-Aug 2023

Rebecca Grossi, *George
Mason University
Bonner Leader &
Northern Virginia
SWCD Intern*
Oct 2022-May 2023

STAFF

Willie Woode, Executive Director
Scott Baron, Urban Conservation Specialist II
Taylor Beach, Environmental Educator
Meghan Cunha, Urban Conservation Specialist I
Stacey Evers, Urban Agricultural Specialist
Judy Fraser, Urban Conservation Specialist III
Heather Hunter-Nickels, Agricultural Water
Quality/Conservation Specialist
Donald Lacquement, Urban Conservation
Engineer
Ashley Palmer, Communication and Education
Specialist
Dan Schwartz, Soil Scientist
Heather Shackley, Operations Manager
Sophia Wood, Urban Conservation Specialist I

PARTNERS

USDA-NRCS - Casey James, District
Conservationist
Virginia DCR - Debbie Cross, Conservation
District Coordinator

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Northern Virginia SWCD provides technical assistance and expertise to landowners, agricultural managers, community partners, and government agencies across Fairfax County. We provide advice and recommendations at in-person site visits and respond to inquiries from the public.

At right: Northern Virginia SWCD staff conduct an inspection of a multi-cell composting facility installed through the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share program. The system treats roughly 48 tons of manure per year.



SOIL HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES WORKSHOP

Northern Virginia SWCD partnered with Loudoun SWCD and the Loudoun Extension Services to host a workshop specially designed to inform and encourage under-served and minority farmers of farm programs and services available to them.

The three-hour long workshop was held at the Potomac Vegetable Farm in Purcellville with 39 participants in attendance. Various topics were presented by experts from different government agencies, with Northern Virginia SWCD presenting on how to collect soil samples and how to interpret soil test results.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Over 100 unique requests for assistance with drainage and erosion concerns
- 70 site visits
- 33 construction plans
- 7 rezoning and other related land development applications
- 12 soil and water quality conservation plans for the treatment of 735 acres in total



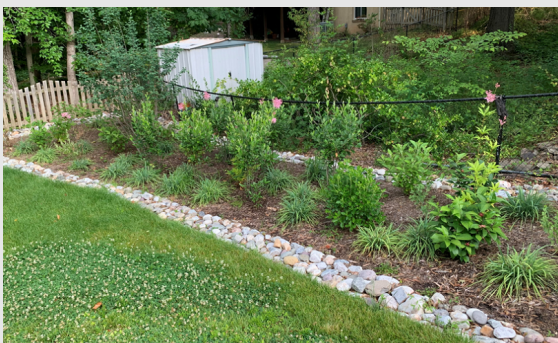
At right: Northern Virginia SWCD staff collect soil samples for testing.

CONSERVATION LANDSCAPING

BEFORE



AFTER



IMPERVIOUS SURFACE REMOVAL, CONSERVATION LANDSCAPING, AND PERMEABLE PAVERS

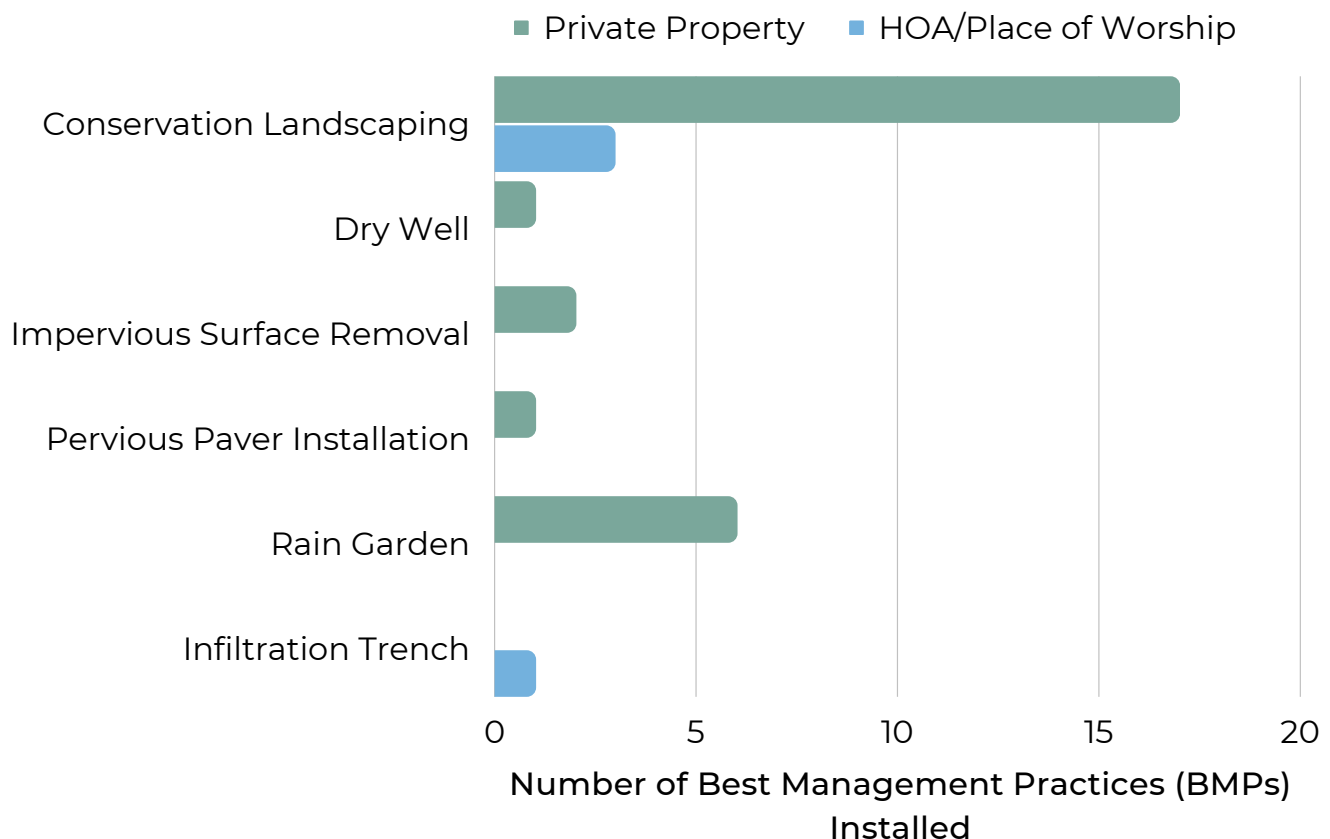


CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

The Conservation Assistance Programs (CAP) provide cost-share funding to implement stormwater best management practices, like rain gardens and permeable pavers. Since its inception in 2014, 205 practices have been installed on private property using CAP assistance. Northern Virginia SWCD continued to expand CAP's reach in 2023 through a partnership with Fairfax County's Stormwater Management and Maintenance Division.

The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) is the centerpiece of Northern Virginia SWCD's CAP offerings. VCAP is a statewide program administered by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) and local districts provide technical and financial assistance for stormwater management projects on private properties.

FY2023 CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM COMPLETED PROJECTS



URBAN AGRICULTURE

Northern Virginia SWCD assisted in the development and opening of two new community gardens and continued to support five other local community gardens as an extension of our 2022 *Nourish the Land, Cultivate Community* project. The initiative aims to boost access to fresh, affordable produce in food-insecure parts of Fairfax County by creating and bolstering production-scale gardens with a priority on teaching sound conservation practices.

Our committed garden partners receive extensive technical assistance, mentorship, and materials such as seeds and transplants from Northern Virginia SWCD and its project partners. This engagement allows gardeners to sustainably grow food that meets their dietary, budgetary and cultural needs.

Northern Virginia SWCD's project partners include the Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture, the Fairfax Food Council's Urban Agriculture Work Group, Food for Others, Hands On Harvests, the Fairfax Unit of Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Fairfax County Master Gardeners.



Kingsley Common Garden in Falls Church, VA



Laurel Hill Community Victory Garden in Lorton, VA

INVASIVE PLANT CONTROL

MANAGING FOR WATER CHESTNUT, *TRAPA BISPINOSA*

The Northern Virginia SWCD received a grant for the control of two-horned trapa (*Trapa bispinosa*) in Fairfax County through the county's Environmental Improvement Program. Together with the Fairfax County Park Authority (FPCA) and the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES), Northern Virginia SWCD continued to monitor and control trapa as well as educate citizens on how to identify the invasive weed and report it.



Volunteers in kayaks removing *Trapa bispinosa* covering a pond in Fairfax County.

In FY2023, Northern Virginia SWCD hired a limited term staff member to assist with program efforts and began working with contractors and local communities to remove trapa from 20 local ponds, 4 in community common land and 16 in local parks, through chemical treatment and/or physical removal.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

in any slow-moving or still bodies of freshwater in the Potomac River Watershed

FIRST HARD FROST - MARCH



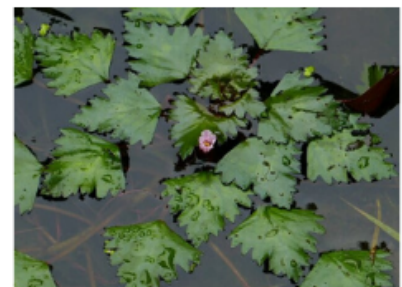
1.5 - 2 inch horned, barbed, dark brown seeds floating in the water or on the shoreline

APRIL - MAY



Seedlings just beginning to come to the surface in shallow water; leaves presenting in a 3" diameter rosette

JUNE - FIRST HARD FROST



Triangular, toothed, green leaves floating on the surface in a 14" diameter rosette pattern

REPORT SIGHTINGS TO: <https://nas.er.usgs.gov/SightingReport.aspx>

ENGAGEMENT & STEWARDSHIP

GREEN BREAKFAST COMMUNITY WEBINARS

- Over 185 attendees
- Topics included *Fairfax County Joint Environmental Task Force; Bringing Conservation to Unexpected Places; Medicines from the Soil; Living with Black Bears in Virginia; and Healthy Plate, Healthy Planet*

RAIN BARREL WORKSHOPS

Northern Virginia SWCD is a member of the Northern Virginia Rain Barrel Partnership, which provides education and resources for rain barrels and water conservation. In FY2023, the Northern Virginia Rain Barrel Partnership distributed 249 rain barrels to 230 residents and community groups in the region at workshops and distribution events.

At right: Northern Virginia SWCD staff and partners build rain barrels to be distributed at the native seedling sale.



ANNUAL NATIVE TREE & SHRUB SEEDLING SALE

- 484 residents and community groups purchased seedlings
- Over 7,200 native tree and shrub seedlings distributed
- 15 tumbling composter kits sold
- 89 rain barrels built and distributed
- More than 200 seedlings were donated to restoration projects in partnership with the Fairfax County Park Authority



Northern Virginia SWCD staff prepare packages of seedlings in preparation for the native seedling sale.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

STREAM MONITORING

- 17 community stream monitoring workshops with 200 volunteers
- 11 stream monitoring field trips for students and adult learners with 487 participants
- Special stream monitoring outreach events engaged over 550 community participants
- Certified 24 new stream monitors in the Virginia Save Our Streams monitoring protocols



Volunteers collect, sort, and identify macroinvertebrates at one of Northern Virginia SWCD's stream monitoring sites located on Big Rocky Run in Centreville, VA.

STORM DRAIN EDUCATION AND LABELING

- 188 volunteers and project leaders
- 752 volunteer hours
- 2,074 storm drains labeled
- Over 3,950 households educated about nonpoint source pollution
- Northern Virginia SWCD received an allocation of funding from the Fairfax County Plastic Bag Tax to support and expand the Storm Drain Education and Labeling Program



Volunteers label storm drains in a community in Herndon, VA.

IN FY2023, NORTHERN VIRGINIA SWCD RECEIVED DONATIONS IN THE FORM OF VOLUNTEER HOURS EQUIVALENT TO

\$40,802.68

Based on "2023 *Value of Volunteer Time Report*" from the Independent Sector, Do Good Institute

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT PROGRAMS

- \$1000 Future Conservation Leader Scholarship Recipient - Leilani Co, Robinson Secondary School
 - Leilani was also awarded one of four state-wide \$1000 scholarships from the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Education Foundation
- 9 Youth Conservation Leadership Institute participants
 - Project topics include creating school gardens, invasive plant removal and establishing native plant gardens, leading tree planting events, engaging high school students in climate activism, educating elementary school students about oil spills, stream monitoring education and workshops for elementary and middle school students, and research on composting practices in Fairfax County
- 9 students from Northern Virginia SWCD participating in Youth Conservation Camp
- 20 entries in the Conservation Poster Contest “Healthy Soil, Healthy Life”
- 6 schools/teams from Fairfax County participated in our 2023 local Envirothon Competition



A student measures tree DBH (diameter at breast height) at the Forestry station of the 2023 local Envirothon competition.



2023 Youth Conservation Camp participants from Fairfax County and sponsored by Northern Virginia SWCD.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

HANDS-ON CONSERVATION IN ACTION

Northern Virginia SWCD partnered with the City of Fairfax to host a Build-Your-Own Worm Composter Workshop, where 46 families learned about the benefits of worm composting and built worm composters to take home.



Northern Virginia SWCD partnered with the Friends of Holmes Run, Fairfax County Park Authority, Second Story, and other community groups and volunteers to lead the Culmore Watershed Activity Day. This Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) was offered to children in the Culmore community of Falls Church, VA and the bilingual programming in English and Spanish covered native plants and wildlife, biodiversity, and stream health.

Northern Virginia SWCD joined undergraduate environmental science classes at George Mason University as guest educators on natural resources and stream health and led the students in a stream monitoring session.



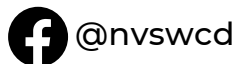
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INFORMATIONAL AND
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