

Strategic Plan: July 2021 – June 2025

Modern Traditions

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) were established in the 1930s to develop comprehensive programs and plans to conserve soil resources, control and prevent soil erosion, prevent floods and conserve, utilize and dispose of water.

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. NVSWCD 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.

NVSWCD is a locally-led conservation agency with a long history of responding to Fairfax County's changing rural to urban landscape, transitioning programs based on identified needs. NVSWCD is valued for its leadership in using new and emerging techniques to address both traditional issues and current challenges.

NVSWCD 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.



www.fairfaxcounty.gov/soil-water-conservation

Adopted by NVSWCD Board of Directors on June 22, 2021

Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District

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The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District, in part, through financial and administrative assistance by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Introduction:

Strategic planning affords an agency the opportunity to reflect on efforts made over the last plan period and to project ways to maximize the organization's strengths over the next. For the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District, this process revealed the significant number of accomplishments that our collective has made toward our goals, which are outlined every year in our annual reports. In addition, a survey of our partners and a facilitated discussions highlighted challenges and opportunities. The lingering effects of the pandemic make it more difficult than ever to forecast into the future. However, the strengths of our partnerships, our team and our resolve will help us to weather any challenges that may be before us. The planning effort revealed various interests in using the organization's strengths to be proactive in promoting new opportunities and build upon the foundation of keystone programs to further our services.

The balance of external demands, internal interests, and available resources will need to be revisited frequently throughout NVSWCD's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan period.

Each goal includes objectives and sub-objectives that will be further refined in an Annual Plan of Work, prepared at the beginning of each fiscal year. The following reference serves as a key to the phases of implementation included in the table, which are anticipated for each sub-objective. Note that it is not unusual for specific efforts to go through several stages in a given year or change based on resources.

P	Planning
D	Developing
I	Implementing
E	Evaluating

Performance measures are included at the end of the document and are arranged by goal. Additional measures may assess unique programs that occur on an annual basis.



Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District

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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, plants, and animal resources in Fairfax County – vital components of 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.

Goals	1 Provide Leadership in Natural Resource Conservation	2 Provide High Quality Technical Assistance	3 Increase Natural Resource Stewardship through Outreach and Education	4 Develop, Facilitate and Strengthen Partnerships	5 Ensure a Strong Organization to Meet Responsibilities and Achieve Goals
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborate with County on strengthening its policies, regulations and practices. 2. Demonstrate, evaluate and promote innovative conservation techniques. 3. Advocate for state and federal policies and legislation to introduce and encourage innovative conservation practices in developing or developed areas. 4. Promote public involvement in natural resource protection and restoration. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide technical assistance to the private sector. 2. Provide technical assistance to government agencies. 3. Provide technical assistance to traditional and non-traditional agricultural land users. 4. Provide technical assistance to county residents and groups. 5. Maintain soil science expertise and resources. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide, develop and evaluate effective public outreach. 2. Provide, develop and evaluate adult conservation education programs. 3. Provide, develop and evaluate strong youth and school education programs. 4. Sponsor and promote award programs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster an integrated approach with local and regional government agencies. 2. Bring together diverse agencies, businesses, organizations, and individuals to implement conservation projects. 3. Develop, facilitate and strengthen relationships with federal and state agencies. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek reliable and adequate funding. 2. Recruit and retain high quality staff. 3. Recruit and engage associate directors, consultants and volunteers. 4. Effectively manage District operations. 5. Emphasize a results-based accountability system. 6. Encourage, provide and facilitate employee and board development. 7. Fully use technology to assist in program implementation. 8. Celebrate District accomplishments.

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PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION

1. Collaborate with County on strengthening its policies, regulations and practices.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Participate on county boards and management committees and encourage the county to adopt policies and practices that conserve natural resources.	I	I	I	I
Support the county initiative to meet the requirements of the MS4 permit by managing its own lands using best management practices.	P	D, I	I	I
Consult on better land development and re-development practices.	P	P	P	P
Advise on emerging environmental trends that need to be addressed.	P	P	P	P
Appoint representatives to serve on local climate, energy, adaptation, and resiliency planning initiatives and support implementation of strategies.	P, D	D, I	I	I
Assist with resolution of agriculture-related complaints in Fairfax County.	I	I	I	I

2. Demonstrate, evaluate and promote innovative conservation techniques.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Engage in emerging trends, issues and resources, particularly related to stormwater best management practices on private property, urban agriculture/edible landscapes, invasive species, and energy conservation and efficiency.	P, D	P, D	P, D	P, D
Identify opportunities to implement demonstration projects.	P, D	P, D	P, D	P, D
Study the performance of innovative natural resource conservation techniques in meeting their desired outcome.	D, I	D, I	I	I
Host trainings and workshops to share lessons learned.	P, D, I	P, D, I	P, D, I	P, D, I

1

PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION

3. Advocate for state and federal policies and legislation to introduce and encourage innovative conservation practices in developing and developed areas.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Conduct studies and promote results to support the appropriate use of urban Best Management Practices (BMPs).	I	I	I	I
Propose items for consideration in the annual VASWCD Legislative Agenda development process.	I	I	I	I
Communicate regularly and meet with local General Assembly members during the annual VASWCD Legislative Day in Richmond.	I	I	I	I
Host field tours for legislators and local officials to showcase programs and on-the-ground practices.	P, D, I		P, D, I	

4. Promote public involvement in natural resource protection and restoration.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Provide conduits for the exchange of natural resource information and related project results (e.g. Green Breakfasts).	P, D, I	P, D, I	P, D, I	P, D, I
Provide opportunities for the public to meet with and learn from each other (e.g. Sustainable Garden Tours).	P, D, I	P, D, I	P, D, I	P, D, I
Continue to provide programs that offer structural and non-structural environmental enhancement and restoration resources to the public at reasonable rates.	P, D, I	P, D, I	P, D, I	P, D, I
Provide opportunities that allow the public to enhance their local environment through local and VASWCD-sponsored Conservation Assistance Programs.	P, D, I	I	I	I
Administer Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost-Share Program.	I	I	I	I

2

PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

1. Provide technical assistance to private sector.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Provide technical assistance to consultants and developers, as requested, on stream restoration projects, better site design, conservation landscaping, LID practices, invasive species, soils and natural resource protection strategies.	I	I	I	I

2. Provide technical assistance to government agencies.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Assist in the county development process by providing meaningful review and comments on rezoning and special exception cases.	I	I	I	I
Assist in the operation and maintenance of the Pohick Creek PL-566 structures.	I	I	I	I
Co-sponsor programs that recognize positive efforts in land conservation during the development process. (e.g. Land Conservation Awards).	I	I	I	I
Facilitate and co-sponsor professional training and certification programs by bringing experts to Fairfax County.	P, D, I	P, D, I	P, D, I	P, D, I
Serve as advisors to support the implementation of innovative stormwater management techniques and stream restoration projects.	D, I	D, I	D, I	D, I
Assist with the planning and implementation of efforts to meet Fairfax County's MS4 Permit and Chesapeake Bay TMDL.	P, D, I, E	D, I, E	I, E	I, E

2

PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

3. Provide technical assistance to traditional and non-traditional agricultural land users.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Prepare soil and water quality conservation plans and provide technical assistance with their implementation.	I	I	I	I
Pursue grant funding to pilot a project to provide financial and enhanced technical support to non-traditional agricultural operations that are not eligible for participation in the Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share Program.	P, D, I	P, D, I	P, D, I	P, D, I
Serve on the Fairfax Food Council's Urban Agriculture Workgroup to enhance food security and food sovereignty throughout Fairfax County.	P, D, I, E	P, D, I	P, D, I	P, D, I

4. Provide technical assistance to county residents and groups.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Work collaboratively with government and non-profit groups to identify common public information gaps and inconsistencies; develop resources to fill them.	P, D	I	I	I
Respond to requests for technical assistance with drainage, erosion, soils, vegetation and other related problems. Maintain accessible online resources for homeowners to trouble shoot their properties.	D, I	I, E	D, I	I, E
Promote nutrient management planning on private properties.	I, E	I	I, E	I

5. Maintain soil science expertise and resources.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Update the GIS database to keep the Soil Survey maps current with land use and facilitate dissemination of information to the industry and general public.	I	I	I	I
Study and recommend changes that would improve the use of soils information in the development process.	P, D	I, E	P, D	I, E
Co-sponsor tri-annual Soil Morphology course in partnership with the Virginia Association of Professional Soil Scientists.	P, D, I	-	-	P, D, I
Engage with Virginia Soil Health Coalition to translate and promote soil health practices to the urban/suburban landscape.	I	I	I	I

INCREASE NATURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP THROUGH OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

1. Provide, develop and evaluate effective public outreach.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Maintain and improve the usability of NVSWCD's website.	P, D, I	I, E	I, E	I, E
Conduct outreach to under-served populations.	P, D, I	D, I	I	I
Develop, implement, and evaluate communications plan to promote relevant and timely information through the most effective means, including print, social media, and videos.	D, I, E	I	I, E	I
Provide presentations to homeowners, civic, watershed, governmental and other groups about NVSWCD and its programs, with special emphasis on identified priority areas.	P, D, I	I, E	I, E	I, E

2. Provide, develop and evaluate adult conservation education programs.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Manage and conduct programs that engage and educate adults in reducing impacts from nonpoint source pollution (e.g. rain garden workshops, rain barrel and composter building, and storm drain education).	I, E	I	I, E	I
Administer and support programs that allow for environmental and community engagement (e.g. volunteer stream monitoring and sustainable garden tour).	I, E	I	I	I
Support and lead trainings for related organizations and programs.	P, D	I	P, D	I

INCREASE NATURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP THROUGH OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

3. Provide, develop and evaluate strong youth and school education programs.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Sponsor the local Envirothon program.	I	I	I	I
Coordinate local participation in VASWCD-sponsored programs (e.g. Scholarship and Youth Conservation Camp).	I	I	I	I
Encourage scientific curiosity and mentorship through local and regional science fairs, Youth Conservation Leadership Institute, and independent research projects.	I	I	I	I
Facilitate school participation in watershed stewardship and MWEE activities (e.g. stream monitoring, storm drain marking, cleanups and outdoor classrooms.).	I	I	I	I
Participate as a member of the Fairfax Environmental Education Team to coordinate efforts to engage teachers and school administrators in support of Standards of Learning and FCPS' Get2Green program.	I	I	I	I

4. Sponsor and promote award programs.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Name and recognize an annual Diane Hoffman Cooperator of the Year.	I	I	I	I
Name and recognize Bay Friendly-Clean Water Farms.	I	I	I	I
Nominate NVSWCD programs and projects for awards.	I	I	I	I
Nominate NVSWCD directors, associates, staff, partners, and colleagues for awards.	I	I	I	I

DEVELOP, FACILITATE, AND STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS

1. Foster an integrated approach with local and regional government agencies.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Identify opportunities for mutually beneficial partnerships for technical, outreach, financial and administrative efforts between NVSWCD and appropriate county agencies, including DPWES, FCPS, FCPA, LDS, OEEC, FCHD, DPZ, Board of Supervisor members, and the County Executive's Office.	P, D	P, D	P, D	P, D
Support the Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District.	I	I	I	I

2. Bring together diverse agencies, businesses, organizations, and individuals to implement conservation projects.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Develop, facilitate and strengthen relationships with non-profits, community, environmental and faith-based organizations. Explore opportunities to engage non-traditional groups.	I	I	I	I
Develop, facilitate and strengthen relationships with public and private regional organizations.	I	I	I	I
Provide administrative and coordination support to the Potomac Council and Potomac Watershed Roundtable.	I	I	I	I

3. Develop, facilitate and strengthen relationships with federal and state agencies.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Engage state and federal partners on projects when appropriate, including DCR, VCE, VDOT, DEQ, NRCS, BLM, NPS, FWS, USACE, and EPA.	P, D, I	P, D, I	P, D, I	P, D, I
Support and participate in VASWCD and NACD-sponsored events.	I	I	I	I

ENSURE A STRONG ORGANIZATION TO MEET RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACHIEVE GOALS

1. Seek reliable and adequate funding.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Prepare and submit funding request to Fairfax County.	I	I	I	I
Meet DCR grant deliverables.	I	I	I	I
Earn income from Seedling Sale.	I	I	I	I
Encourage VASWCD to support adequate state funding for all workloads.	I	I	I	I
Pursue grants to provide non-recurring support for NVSWCD programs.	I	I	I	I

2. Recruit and retain high quality staff.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Provide competitive salary and benefits package.	I, E	P, D, I	I, E	P, D, I
Ensure opportunities for professional development.	I	I	I	I
Promote internal cooperation and learning through cross-training opportunities.	I	I	I	I

ENSURE A STRONG ORGANIZATION TO MEET RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACHIEVE GOALS

3. Recruit and engage directors, associate directors, consultants, and volunteers in NVSWCD activities.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Define roles for associates and others in their participation in projects and programs.	P, D, I	D, I, E	D, I, E	D, I, E
Invite associates and others to assist with legislative efforts.	I	I	I	I
Recruit volunteers and encourage their participation and assistance with District programs and committees.	I	I	I	I
Maintain a robust volunteer and paid internship programs.	I	I	I	I

4. Effectively manage operations.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Develop and review an Annual Plan of Work.	D, I, E	D, I, E	D, I, E	D, I, E
Maintain Board-appointed committees and establish permanent or ad hoc committees to support implementation of strategic elements for various program areas (e.g. Legislative, Education Committees).	I, E	I, E	I, E	I, E
Monitor and update the Strategic Plan on a semi-annual basis.	I, E	I, E	I, E	I, E
Develop an Annual Budget and implement established financial processes and controls throughout the fiscal year.	I, E	I, E	I, E	I, E
Review NVSWCD policies and procedures on an annual basis, update as necessary to improve clarity.	I, E	I, E	I, E	I, E

ENSURE A STRONG ORGANIZATION TO MEET RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACHIEVE GOALS

5. Emphasize a results-based accountability system.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Incorporate performance measures into Annual Plans of Work	I, E	I, E	I, E	I, E

6. Encourage, provide and facilitate employee and board development.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Sponsor employee attendance at seminars, workshops, trainings, conferences and meetings.	I	I	I	I
Provide resources to encourage staff to strengthen capabilities and pursue certifications to provide credible means for meeting emerging issues.	I	I	I	I
Sponsor director attendance at seminars, workshops, conferences and meetings.	I	I	I	I
Strengthen orientation materials and programs for new NVSWCD staff, board, and associate representatives.	E, I	E, I	E, I	E, I
Establish employee performance expectations and conduct annual evaluations.	I	I	I	I

7. Use technology to assist in program implementation.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Maintain computer equipment reserve fund for replacement on a five-year cycle (anticipated upgrade in fall 2025).	I	I	I	P, D, I
Inventory equipment and prepare maintenance/replacement schedule.	I	I	I	I
Provide in-person/virtual hybrid option for participation in Board of Director and Committee meetings.	I	I	I	I

ENSURE A STRONG ORGANIZATION TO MEET RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACHIEVE GOALS

8. Celebrate District accomplishments.

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Publish and distribute annual, semi-annual and monthly reports, newsletters and meeting minutes.	I	I	I	I
Sponsor and participate in county, community, regional and state committees, projects and events.	I	I	I	I
Sponsor, participate in and apply for awards and recognitions.	I	I	I	I

PERFORMANCE MEASURES, BY GOAL

Goals	1 Provide Leadership in Natural Resource Conservation	2 Provide High Quality Technical Assistance	3 Increase Natural Resource Stewardship through Outreach and Education	4 Develop, Facilitate and Strengthen Partnerships	5 Ensure a Strong Organization to Meet Responsibilities and Achieve Goals
Performance Measures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Customer satisfaction 2. Number of citizen contacts 3. Number of participants at semi-annual community exchange events, including Green Breakfasts, Sustainable Garden Tours. 4. Distribution and installation rate of build-your-own rain barrels and composters. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of technical assistance site visits (Green Sheets). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Number of acres/parcels benefitting from technical assistance.</i> 2. Treated acreage served by VCAP/CAP projects and certified NMPs. 3. Number of parcels and acres of RPA protected by SWQCPs. 4. Customer satisfaction with technical assistance provided. 5. Value of flood insurance costs avoided by County residents as a result of NVSWCD assistance. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of volunteers involved in activities, supported by NVSWCD. 2. Percent of activities in NVSWCD's defined targeted areas that receive an adult or youth education program sponsored by or in partnership with NVSWCD. 3. Number of participants at events. 4. Percentage of county storm drains marked during reporting period. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Number of households educated.</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of on-the-ground projects facilitated through partnerships. 2. Acres treated by partnership projects. 3. Tax dollars saved as a result of NVSWCD assistance. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of website page views. 2. Number of likes and followers on NVSWCD social media. 3. Total volunteer hours. 4. Employee satisfaction. 5. Score of DCR evaluations for TA/Ops and VACS grant agreements.



Providing Conservation Leadership in Fairfax County since 1945

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