Halifax SWCD Newsletter

Spring 2017

Halifax County Rain Barrel Workshops Planned for 2017

Thanks to a generous RiverBank Fund Grant from the Community Foundation of the Dan River Region, the Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District will be working in conjunction with Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Southside Master Gardeners Association to host three rain barrel workshops within Halifax County during 2017. The first workshop has already sold out, but it will be held in conjunction with the 9th Annual Town of Halifax Earth Day Extravaganza on April 22, 2017. Registration is still open with spots available for our second workshop which will be held at the North Halifax Volunteer Fire Department on June 3, 2017. The third workshop will be held during late summer or early fall of 2017 in South Boston.

If collected in a rain barrel, one inch of rain on a 1,000 square foot roof can yield more than 620 gallons of usable water. Without rain barrels or similar systems in place, roof runoff can collect pollutants as it flows and drains into local waterways or municipal storm water systems. Additionally, catching and saving rain water can reduce the need to use treated, potable water to water gardens, lawns, and landscaping. During the workshops, individuals will learn about the benefits of rain barrels, how to construct and install rain barrels, and will construct their own rain barrel out of a heavy food-grade barrel and hardware kit from Clean Virginia Waterways. The registration cost of $12.00 will reserve your spot in the workshop and will include the necessary supplies to construct one rain barrel. Participants will have the option of purchasing a second barrel and hardware kit for $37.50, at the time of registration.

If you're interested in participating in one of the remaining workshops, registration information is available on the Halifax Soil & Water Conservation District's website (www.halifaxswcd.org) or by visiting their office located at 171 South Main Street, Halifax, VA. Please register early, as there are a limited number of seats available for each workshop.

Do We Need to Bump our Soybean Rates

By David Holshauser
Virginia Ag Pest Advisory

It's hard to believe, but June is here and we need to start thinking about increasing our soybean seeding rates. I've been recommending only 100 to 115 thousand seeds per acre for full-season production, enough to give you 70 to 80 thousand plants – yes, that's all you need to maximize yield.

But as the season gets shorter, yields will start falling with delays in planting date. On average, we lose about 1/2 bushel/acre per every day we delay planting after the middle of June. The graph below shows the results of last year's 4-state early wheat harvest/soybean planting double-crop study. Note that yield does not decline very much during the first week or two of June, but rapidly drops off afterwards.

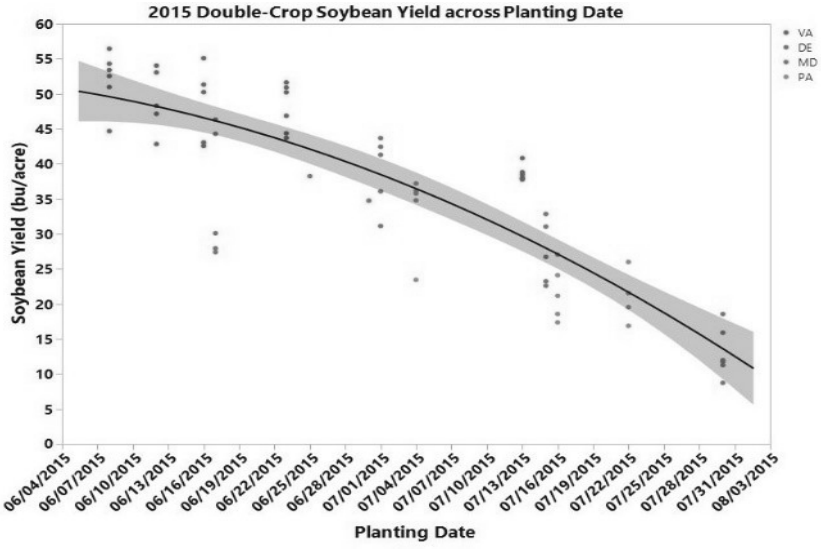
The main reason for this yield decline is that the crop struggles to develop enough leaf area to capture 90-95% of the sunlight by early pod development, due to the shorter growing season. We can alleviate some of this by narrowing rows and increasing seeding rate.

I usually suggest that farmers plant enough seed to result in a final plant population of 180,000 plants/acre for double-crop soybean. That means planting 200,000 to 220,000 seed/acre. Yes that is a lot of seed, but my research shows that yields (and profit) continue to increase up to this seeding rate, especially when planting is delayed until late-June and early-July.

There are stipulations. More productive soils and irrigated soybean usually require less seed. Good years that allow lots of quick growth require less seed (but who can predict a good year?). Later maturity groups may require slightly less seed. Less seed are needed as you move south (growing season is longer and you can plant a later relative maturity). I think that a soil profile that is full of water at soybean planting (this year) might allow less seed to be planted – but I have not documented that – It just makes sense to me that plants will grow better when the small grain has not depleted most of the subsoil moisture.

What about now? How many seed/acre do we need to plant in the first week of June? Here are my suggestions. Keep in mind that these are general guidelines; you need a gradual increase in seed/acre. I'm assuming 80 to 85% emergence for June/July plantings. To easily determine how many seed you need per row foot, see VCE pub 3006-1447, Suggested Soybean Seeding Rates for Virginia

May: 100 to 115K; June 1-7: 120-140K; June 8-14: 140-180K;
June 15-21: 180-200K; June 22-30: 200-220K; July: 220-250K



Halifax SWCD Announces Educational Scholarship Winners

The Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District recently awarded three $1,000 educational scholarships to Halifax County High School students. Scholarships were awarded to individuals expressing a desire to major in a college course curriculum related to natural resource conservation and/or environmental studies. Two J. T. Burton Natural Resources Educational Scholarships were awarded, one to Trey Dawson and one to Jacob Wilson. One Halifax SWCD Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Patrick Salley. Additionally, Patrick's scholarship application was selected to be considered for one of four state-wide scholarships that will be awarded by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts later this spring.

Pictured– Patrick Salley, Trey Dawson, and Jacob Wilson.

2017 Youth Conservation Camp at Virginia Tech

For 40 years, the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts has sponsored a week long summer conservation camp for Virginia high school students (*currently enrolled in grades 9-12)* on the campus of Virginia Tech. The program brings together about 70 interested students for a week of learning about Virginia's natural resources from conservation professionals and faculty from Virginia Tech.

This camp is an outstanding opportunity for students to gain hands-on training and experience in the fields of conservation and natural resources. Only a limited number of campers are accepted each year and scholarships to cover registration fees will be available from the Halifax SWCD for the Halifax County students selected to attend the camp. Application forms are available @ www.halifaxswcd.org or by visiting the Halifax SWCD office. **Applications MUST be submitted to the Halifax SWCD office by April 28, 2017.**

Feeder Cattle Opportunity in Southern Virginia

By Kimley Blanks, Halifax County Agricultural Marketing Director

The Southern Virginia Beef Alliance (SVBA) headquartered in Halifax County, VA is a membership based organization selling feeder cattle. The SVBA welcomes producers from around the region in Virginia and North Carolina. They sell both heifers and steers that are either natural or regular / conventional.

As all producers know, the cattle market is down. Until last year, the market had been strong for approximately seven years and as all markets do – it will correct itself. The market for feeder cattle usually corrects itself approximately every five years.

An excellent option for producers is to join the SVBA and sell their cattle with the organization during Tel-O-Auctions through the Virginia Cattlemen's Association.

At a recent membership drive meeting, about fifteen new producers indicated that they would like to start selling with the SVBA. The SVBA is willing and able to have sales any time of the year as long as a full load of cattle is offered. Most buyers prefer a full load to make transport easier with just one pick-up location.

The opportunity for increased feeder cattle sales exists with producers working together and comingling their cattle for loads. Working through the SVBA when markets are down offers a great opportunity for collaboration and leveraging the power of increased number of producers. When the markets inevitably recover, the SVBA still offers many benefits of group collaboration.

To sell with the SVBA, producers will need to be BQA certified and an opportunity to become certified will be offered on Wednesday, April 12 from 4 – 7 p.m. at the Halifax Agricultural Marketing Center presented by VCE. Please RSVP to reserve your seat at the class.

Membership in the SVBA offers marketing of feeder cattle, volume buying of minerals, membership meetings during the year, and mentoring from experienced cattle farmers.

Currently, there is the capacity and opportunity to grow the feeder cattle production in Southern Virginia. To be a part of and benefit from this growing market, please contact me at 434-476-3300 ext. 3331 or via email at Kimley.blanks@co.halifax.va.us for more information.

VCE Programs & Opportunities

Contact: Rebekah Slabach
Halifax County Extension Agent
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Grants:

- Agribusiness Information Technology Grant
  Applications available April 1, 2017
- Producer Support Grant*
  Accepting applications beginning June 1, 2017
  *May 2 - Producer Meeting (Attendance required to apply for grant) 7:00pm @ Halifax Ag Marketing Center

Other Events:

May 18 - Small Grains Field Day, Featherstone Seed, Amelia, VA
April 26 - Organic Farming Workshop, Crickets Cove, Victoria, VA
July 27 - Beef and Forage Field Day, Virginia Tech-Kentland Farm, Blacksburg, VA

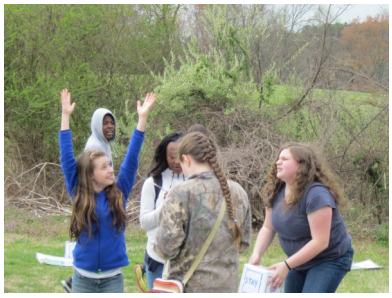
Household Water Quality Program:

- Pick up packet by **May 8th;** $55/kit
- Collection date is Wednesday, May 10, 2017

2017 Halifax SWCD Youth Conservation Camp

The Halifax Soil & Water Conservation District hosted our 46th Annual Youth Conservation Camp at Edmunds park on Thursday, March 30, 2017. This year's camp was attended by 110 seventh-graders from Halifax County Middle School that spent the day learning about conservation and natural resources. Instructors and volunteers from the Halifax County Beekeepers Association, Shealy's Southside Serpents, Southside Master Gardener Association, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service provided the students with hands-on learning opportunities. Classes were presented covering forestry, herpetology, plant identification, pollination, soils, water resources, and wildlife. The students enjoyed a full day of classes along with a delicious cookout lunch prepared at the park.

The Halifax Soil & Water Conservation District is grateful for the volunteers and conservation colleagues who dedicate their time to environmental education and make this camp possible. Additionally, we'd like to thank the area businesses and organizations that made financial contributions to help offset the cost of the camp. This year's donors included: Abbott Farm Supply, Charles Anderson Lawncare Service Inc., Cooper Insurance Agency, Farm Credit of the Virginias, Fry Jordan & Wilson Insurance, Huber Engineered Woods, and Owen Fencing LLC.



Harvesting Timber and Growing Pines (part 1)

Submitted By Virginia Department of Forestry

Forests in America are owned and used for many reasons, including recreation, family legacy, relaxation, protection and management of wildlife and as a crop for income. In many areas of Appalachia and up into Pennsylvania, hardwoods are very valuable and can be intensively managed for income as well as wildlife and recreation. In southside Virginia and states farther south, pine is generally the crop of choice. Some people think that too much pine is being planted. The percentage of forested land in Virginia that is in pine is much smaller than most people realize, however. While 62 percent of Virginia's land base is forested, 80 percent of that forestland is in hardwoods. That means than only 20 percent (3.2 million acres) is in pine. And, of those 3.2 million acres of pine forest, just 2.1 million acres are in pine plantations.

There are many reasons for harvesting a crop, such as trees. Some people harvest for financial reasons; some for aesthetics, and others to improve the health of the forest. Some of these harvested tracts of land are left to revert for wildlife, and some are left because of lack of interest or knowledge. Planting pines, however, can be an incredible investment opportunity. What people do with their land if they choose to clear cut their hardwood or pine forests is where I get involved. As anyone who knows me can attest, I have been a passionate forester for more than 18 years.

Finding the knowledge and know-how on reforestation is actually fairly simple – you can call an area forester with the Virginia Department of Forestry or a consulting forester who provides such services in your locality.

Now, if I have piqued your interest in learning more, or if you own property and have some questions, please contact your local VDOF forester or a consulting forester in your area. As I tell everyone with whom I work, it's always best to educate yourself before making any agreement or signing a contract on the dotted line.

In the next newsletter, I will explain more about understanding soil productivity and its effect on pine growth; pine genetics; possible site preparation options; how it all fits into your objectives as a landowner, and how the site preparation activities influence pine volume growth.

Thanks for helping grow Virginia's future forests.

Halifax SWCD is Now Online! **Please visit us online at: WWW.HALIFAXSWCD.ORG**

HALIFAX SWCD SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

We work with the people who work the land.

Halifax Soil & Water Conservation District
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Janice Jackson—Administrative/Technical Assistant
Todd Puckett—Education & Outreach Specialist

Upcoming Events:

April 12 – BQA Certification—Halifax Ag Marketing Center
April 13 – Halifax SWCD Board Meeting
April 22 – 9th Annual Town of Halifax Earth Day Extravaganza
April 22 – Rain Barrel Workshop – **SOLD OUT**
May 5 – Halifax County Junior Livestock Show
May 5-7 – Halifax County Heritage Festival
May 18 – Virginia Small Grains Field Day - Featherstone Seed, Amelia, VA
May 20 – Farm and Market Stroll
June 3 – Rain Barrel Workshop - North Halifax Volunteer Fire Department
October 18-19 – VFGC Grazing School, Locust Level Farm, Vernon Hill, VA

Halifax SWCD
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