Halifax SWCD Newsletter

Summer 2017

We work with the people who work the land.

Vegetation Management Along Fencerows

By Rick Brown
Halifax SWCD

High-tensile electric fence has become increasingly popular over the past 20 years and has been installed on a large scale through producer adoption and cost-share programs. The primary reason for its implementation has been due to relatively lower initial cost and easy repair and maintenance in the event of major events (tree falls, car wrecks, etc.). However, the year to year maintenance can often be much higher than other types of fences. The reason for this is the need for adequate electrical current to deter animals from escaping paddocks. Tru-Test Group (Stafix) recommend the following minimum voltage requirements to contain different livestock species:

Beef Cattle: 2000-3000,
Horse: 2000-3000,
Sheep and Goats: 4000-5000
Predator Exclusion (Coyotes): 4000-5000

Most electric fence boxes are set to output 10,000 volts at the box but as we increase the length of fence and add some debris or vegetation, the drain on the system can be to so that the levels listed above may be hard to maintain. Along with that, many producers may need more voltage depending on the type of livestock (stocker, replacement heifers, backgrounding, etc.) or may not be satisfied with that level of voltage.

My estimate is that the average fence in area for Halifax Co. is likely around 75-100 acres. This puts the average length over fence somewhere between 7000 and 8500 ft and assuming it's 4-strand all electrified that is around 30,000 ft of fence or roughly 6 miles. The reason for this exercise is that most fences are rated for length of fence or area enclosed and often times we are well under those ratings with the pastures we enclose. So then, why are we often having trouble getting the voltage we desire out of our fence? The likely culprit is drain on the fencing system through grounding out. Now there can be a litany of cause to grounding and without going to deep into fence troubleshooting they can be missing insulators, tree falls, slack wires, etc. If you would like to learn more on fence troubleshooting I encourage you to attend our grazing school in October where we will have a session devoted to this. The main culprit of grounding out we like to focus on this time of year is grounding out due to growing vegetation on fence lines.

There are many methods for vegetation control including manual methods using a weedeater, machete or bush axe and often this cannot be avoided if chemical management is not utilized for many years. There are also specially designed fence mowers that mow under and around fence lines, but the cost of one is upwards of $3,000. But, primarily let's look at some options for weed control using chemical methods, since that is often the first line of defense to prevent an overgrown fence line.

Glyphosate products are commonly used in fence row maintenance and since glyphosate is broad spectrum herbicide it will likely kill all non-woody vegetation and often some woody vegetation as well. I seldom recommend using glyphosate for fence line except in the case of hard to control weeds where it should be mixed with other herbicides since it leaves a denuded area under the fence line. For most fences in Virginia, the common height for the first electrified wire is greater than 12 inches and rarely does a thick mat of grass get to this height and cause problems with grounding. In denuded fence lines, there are often problems with severe erosion and hard to control weeds like pokeweed and milkweed which can often be outcompeted by grass stands. So, before you use glyphosate, consider the potential consequences of spraying.

There are many selective herbicides available to control broadleaf and woody vegetation. Crossbow® is a widely used herbicide that controls both. Common weeds like red cedar, blackberries, multiflora rose, greenbrier, and sweet gum are well controlled with this herbicide. This is a great option along roads and areas with high visibility that you are more likely to pay attention to frequently. Two other products that are less used are Milestone® and Surmount®. Milestone is labeled for annual and perennial broadleaf weeds, certain annual grasses, and certain woody plants. This is like Crossbow with the addition of annual grasses and some residual soil activity to prevent growth of new vegetation. Surmount is also labeled for annual and perennial broadleaf weeds and provides some residual soil activity, however it is a restricted use pesticide requiring a pesticide license. These products may be better suited for areas that may get neglected due to access or location where some residual activity could provide longer weed suppression over the long-term.

As always, consult the label of the product you plan to use before applying it to see what restrictions and guidance there may be for your situation. Also for more information on this topic, the Virginia Tech Pest Management Guide is an excellent resource for many things pesticide related.

RAIN BARREL WORKSHOP

LAST CHANCE for 2017 — August 26

Rain Barrel Workshop in South Boston

Thanks to a generous RiverBank Fund Grant from the Community Foundation of the Dan River Region, the Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District, in conjunction with Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Southside Master Gardener Association, has hosted two rain barrel workshops in Halifax County this year. Space is still available for our final workshop of the year, which will be held on August 26, 2017 at the South Boston-Halifax County Museum of Fine Arts & History.

Workshop participants learn about the benefits of rain barrels, how to construct and install rain barrels, and 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 soon, there are a limited number of seats available.

Virginia Agriculture Cost-share Program Sign-up Open

On July 1, 2017, Halifax SWCD began their sign-up for the 2017-2018 Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost-Share Program. This program provides cost-share for producers to implement conservation practices on their property to protect water quality. Since 2001, Halifax SWCD has provided this program to producers in Halifax Co. The program includes practices such as: stream exclusion, cover crops, permanent vegetative cover on cropland, afforestation of openland, grassed waterways, and critical area plantings. Anyone interested in the program should contact the Halifax SWCD office to find out more information.

Please visit us online at:

WWW.HALIFAXSWCD.ORG

Targeted Funding Now Available to Help Protect Family Forest Lands

Submitted By Raymond Cocke, USDA-NRCS

Halifax, VA, July 5, 2017 – USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is now making $250,000 in funding available for Socially Disadvantaged* landowners interested in protecting and improving forested areas on their land.

Offered in partnership with the Black Family Land Trust, this grant project will primarily focus on former peanut/tobacco farmers who previously participated in USDA buyout programs and either aged out of farming or have not identified a replacement cash crop. NRCS will accept applications from applicants throughout the state but will give priority ranking to those from the following counties: Brunswick, Dinwiddie, Greenville, **Halifax**, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Sussex and Southampton.

Technical and financial assistance will be offered for planting and management of hardwoods and loblolly, longleaf, and shortleaf pines. Available practices include tree and shrub establishment, forest stand improvement, tree/shrub site preparation, and forestry management plans.

Interested individuals should complete an application to be considered for funding. If all funds are not obligated, the next deadlines will be **July 21** and the third Friday of each succeeding month till funds are obligated.

"Well-managed, productive forests offer many benefits but can present a financial challenge for landowners," says State Conservationist Jack Bricker. "NRCS is pleased to partner with the Black Family Land Trust on this important outreach effort to increase African American awareness of and participation in federal and state forestry programs to help them reach their goals."

"Our goal is to ensure that Southside Virginia's African American forest owners retain their woodlands as family assets while promoting sustainability to preserve and conserve these natural resources," says Ebonie Alexander, Executive Director of the Black Family Land Trust.

The *Black Family Land Trust Sustainable Forestry African American Land Retention Program: A Tree Is A Tree Is A Tree* is an asset protection strategy with emphasis on African American landowners in Southside Virginia.

Contact your local NRCS Halifax office to learn more about how Farm Bill programs can help you better protect and manage natural resources on your land. Visit http://offices.usda.gov for USDA service center locations. General program information is available on the NRCS Virginia website at www.va.nrcs.usda.gov.

A **Socially Disadvantaged farmer is an individual who has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudices because of his/her identity as a member of a group without regard to individual qualities. Those groups include African Americans, American Indians or Alaskan natives, Hispanics, and Asians or Pacific Islanders.*

17th ANNUAL WATERSHED ADVENTURE CAMP

The Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District sponsored five local students that attended the 17th Annual Watershed Adventure Camp at Staunton River State Park, held June 19-23, 2017. A total of eighteen students from Halifax, Lake Country, and Southside Soil and Water Conservation Districts attended this five-day program to learn about a variety of natural resources and environmental conservation topics. Valuable assistance came from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the staff at Staunton River State Park, Dominion Energy, Halifax County Parks and Recreation, Jim and Ginger Zeigler and the Halifax Beekeepers Association, SWCD employees, Virginia Cooperative Extension, VCE-Southside Master Gardener Association, and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Camp participants were chosen based upon the submission of applications stating their interest and experience in environmental issues. The curriculum of this fun and educational week included: watershed and map study, soils, forestry, tree and plant identification, pollination, wildlife, stream quality surveying, biological and chemical water monitoring, canoe safety and canoeing, a tour of the Dominion Energy-Clover Power Plant, and several natural resources themed arts and crafts projects.

The Watershed Adventure Camp was administered cost-free to the students; lunches, snacks, drinks, travel and incidental expenses were made possible through monetary donations from Abbott Farm Suppliers Inc., B&B Consultants, Benchmark Bank-Kenbridge, Benton-Thomas Inc., Boyd Honda, Charlotte County Farm Bureau, Colonial Agricultural Education Foundation Inc., Cooper Insurance Agency, Dominion Energy-Clover Station, Drs. Campbell and Rutherford, DDS, Morgan Lumber Company Inc., Owen Fencing LLC, Spaulding Equipment Company Inc., Tri-County Ford Inc., and Wagstaff Construction Services Inc.

The students from Halifax County that attended the Camp were: Josh Brown, Samantha Burns, Kolby Layne, Jonathan Tulloh, and Noah Waller. Each year the Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District chooses up to ten fourth/fifth grade students to attend the Watershed Adventure Camp. If you are interested in attending the Watershed Adventure Camp in the future, please contact Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District at 434-476-7923 or visit www.halifaxswcd.org for more information.

HALIFAX SWCD SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
We work with the people who work the land.

2017 Grazing School

October 18-19, 2017 @ Locust Level Farm
12065 Chatham Road, Vernon Hill, VA

PITTSYLVANIA SWCD SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
We work with the people who work the land.

The Halifax SWCD, in partnership with the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Pittsylvania SWCD, and Natural Resource Conservation Service will be hosting a grazing school at Locust Level Farm in Vernon Hill, VA. The Grazing School program is implemented by the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council throughout the state to increase education on grazing best management practices. This is the first time in recent years that this program is being implemented in Southside VA. This makes it a great opportunity for any producer interested in grazing management.

Designed with beginning and experienced producers in mind; this 2-day, intensive course will teach you everything you need to know to better manage grazing on your farm. You will have hands-on opportunities to work with grazing tools and try out fencing materials. Finally, put it all together for your farm. The last day of the school features a workshop where you can sit down with your instructors to begin developing a custom grazing plan. Topics will include:

- Pasture renovation & improvement
- Pasture grazing and management
- Designing a rotational grazing system
- Fencing and watering options
- Strategies to extend the grazing season
- Matching forage quality & animal needs
- Creating a forage budget

For registration information, contact the Halifax SWCD office or visit our website @ www.halifaxswcd.org.

Halifax Soil & Water Conservation District
171 S. Main St., Halifax, VA 24558
P.O. Box 247, Halifax, VA 24558
Office: 434-476-7923

Board of Directors:
Page Wilkerson—Chairman
Larry Layman—Vice Chairman
Bruce Pearce
Bobby Hall
Jason Fisher—VCE Appointment
Blair Hall—Associate
Hudson Reese—Associate
Rebekah Slabach—Associate

Staff:
Rick Brown—Conservation Specialist
Janice Jackson—Administrative/Technical Assistant
Todd Puckett—Education & Outreach Specialist

Upcoming Events:

July 13 – Halifax SWCD Board Meeting
July 18 – Native Summer Forage for Beef & Bobs, Randolph, VA
July 25 – Annual Livestock & Forage Field Day, SPAREC, Blackstone, VA
August 10 – Halifax SWCD Board Meeting
August 26 – Rain Barrel Workshop, South Boston-Halifax County Museum
September 14 – Halifax SWCD Board Meeting
October 12 – Halifax SWCD Board Meeting
October 18-19 – VFGC Grazing School, Locust Level Farm, Vernon Hill, VA

Halifax SWCD
P.O. Box 247
Halifax, VA 24558

PLACE
STAMP
HERE