Halifax SWCD Newsletter

Winter 2017-2018

We work with the people who work the land.

Halifax SWCD Awards Banquet

On Tuesday, November 14, 2017, the Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District hosted its annual Awards Banquet at Berry Hill Resort in South Boston. This year the SWCD celebrated 50 years of serving the residents of Halifax County by honoring members of the community who have contributed to soil conservation. Approximately 70 invited guests, district directors and staff enjoyed the delicious meal prior to the presentation of awards.

Dr. Bobby Hall, District Director and Education/Youth Activities Chairman, presented the Wildlife Food Patch Contest Awards to the young conservationists who had outstanding food plots in the annual competition sponsored by the district and Pennington Seed, Inc. This year seed packets and planting instructions were made available to 11 area youth. This years winners were; Savannah Terrell (1st place tied), Noah Terrell (1st place tied), Caleb Bomar (2nd place), Austin Crews (3rd place), Jacob Gravitt (4th place tied) and Noah Waller (4th place tied).

Mr. Hudson Reese, District Associate Director, presented Mr. Jim Zeigler the 2017 Wildlife Conservation Award for his exceptional work in beekeeping, protecting pollinators and educating the public about them. Mr. Zeigler has been a great supporter of SWCD activities has shown great leadership in implementing wildlife and pollinator conservation.

Mr. Trevor Simmons, Virginia Department of Forestry recognized J.G. Hurt for outstanding accomplishments in forestry. Simmons discussed his concern for the land and forests, and described the work he has done over the years and continues to do on his farm.

Mr. Larry Layman, District Director, and Vice Chairman, presented the 2017 Clean Water Farm Award to Mr. Earl McDaniel. He has participated in many conservation efforts of the soil and water conservation district including providing demonstrations for summer cover crops. He has been involved in many programs such as the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Ag-Best Management Practices Program, and the Conservation Stewardship Program. Through his implementation of best management practices Mr. McDaniel has installed over 21,000 ft of stream exclusion and 22 acres of riparian buffer.

The highlight of the evening featured the presentation of the 2017 Outstanding Cooperator Award, given annually to individuals who do an outstanding job of conserving the land and natural resources. Mr. Bruce Pearce, District Director, recognized Mr. Scott Hudson of Virgilina for his tremendous efforts. Mr. Hudson has been involved with the soil & water district for many years working to protect his soil. He is very conscious of soil as a resource and has implemented steps to reduce erosion and improve his soil health. Scott has been one of the leading proponents in Halifax Co. for implementing soil health practices and has shown his commitment by implementing them on his farm.

Dr. Bobby Hall, District Director with the Wildlife Food Plot Contest winners. (left)

Mr. W. Page Wilkerson with the 2017 Wildlife Conservation Award Winner, Jim Zeigler. (right)

Mr. Trevor Simmons, Department of Forestry and J.G. Hurts, the 2017 Forestry Award. (left)

2017 Outstanding Cooperator Award Winner,
Scott Hudson with Bruce Pearce, District Director. (right)

Mr. Larry Layman, District Director and Vice Chairman and 2017 Clean Water Farm Award Winner Earl McDaniel. (left)

Reconnecting Cattle and Quail – NRCS's Working Lands for Wildlife Program

Prior to World War II, our cattle grazed upon pastures of native grasses with scattered wildflowers and brush. These pastures, combined with the way we managed the rest of the land, helped harbor scores of wildlife species, including the beloved (but now rare) bobwhite quail. In 1931, a new tall fescue released in Kentucky (appropriately named Kentucky-31) became popular, agricultural equipment became more advanced, and increasingly more mouths had to be fed. All forms of agriculture became more intensive, leaving the "weeds and brush" behind that quail needed to thrive. Slowly, cattle and quail became mutually exclusive.

While quail have struggled, the cattle farms are now facing challenges. Our summers seem to be getting hotter and drier, feed costs are increasing, and an endophyte found in fescue is affecting herd health. Operations that rely only on common cool season forages such as fescue and orchard grass may find it increasingly difficult to stay above the bottom line. To help both grazers and quail, the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and its partners are recommending producers go "old school" by

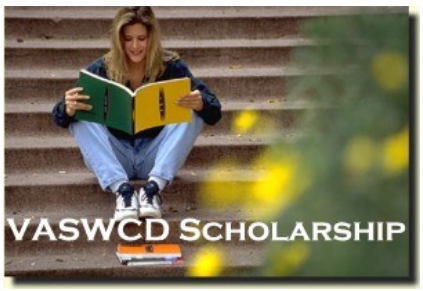
grazing native forages once again. The NRCS's Working Lands for Wildlife program offers assistance for conserving wildlife on agricultural lands to create a win-win for the producer and the critters. The "Bobwhites in Working Grasslands Initiative" helps reconnect cattle and quail by promoting the use of native, warm-season grasses in grazing systems to boost livestock productivity during the "summer slump", decrease feed and fertilizer costs, and create habitat for bobwhites and other wildlife at the same time. Dr. Pat Keyser's recent research at the University of Tennessee's Center for Native Grassland Management, a leader in U.S.

grazing research, has shown that proper management of native forages can maximize livestock productivity and benefit quail on the same acreage. Cattle and quail no longer have to be mutually exclusive! If you're interested in maximizing cattle productivity while helping wildlife in need on your land, contact your local USDA Service Center to get started. For more information on managing native forages for cattle, visit http://nativegrasses.utk.edu. For more information on the bobwhite quail initiative in Virginia, visit www.VAquail.com.

Here's to fat, happy cows, and that sweet sound of "bob-WHITE"!

Scholarship Opportunities Available from Halifax SWCD & VASWCD

the Halifax SWCD will be awarding three $1,000 scholarships. This local scholarship opportunity includes two J. T. Burton Natural Resources Scholarships and one Halifax SWCD Memorial Scholarship. Scholarship applicants should be majoring in, or show a strong desire to major in, a college course curriculum related to natural resource conservation and/or environmental studies. Halifax SWCD will also select one applicant to be considered for state-wide scholarship opportunities. A single application should be submitted to the Halifax SWCE office by March 1, 2018 to be considered for all scholarship opportunities listed above.



Grazing School

A total of 23 people participated in a grazing school aimed at increasing the ability of producers to graze livestock more effectively. The program, held Oct. 18-19, was implemented by the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council and partner groups including Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District, Pittsylvania Soil and Water Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. The two-day event was hosted by Mike and Wanda McDowell at Locust Level Farm in Vernon Hill. During these two days, participants learned about soil fertility, forage growth, livestock nutrition, allocation forage to animals and herd health. As a part of the program the participants were divided into groups with each group given a group of cattle and scenario in which they had to manage the forage for a day. This hands-on experience gave the participants a better understanding of meeting forage supply with animal demand.

Anyone interested in forage management or to attend one of these sessions in the future should contact Halifax SWCD or the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council.

Industrial Hemp Summit Announced

Focused on assessing potential opportunities for developing the United States' industrial hemp industry, the first Annual Industrial Hemp Summit is the result of a partnership between the Halifax County Agricultural Development Office (HCAD) and the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR). A specific focus of the summit will be building the supply chain for this emerging industry and developing markets for industrial hemp fiber and food. The summit will highlight current innovation in the industry, as well as explore solutions for resolving resource and infrastructure needs to move the industry forward. The summit will explore legislative and regulatory changes that are needed to allow the hemp industry to flourish.

The United States is the world's largest market for hemp products with estimated sales of $688 million in 2016, according to Vote Hemp market research. Most hemp products sold in the U.S. have been imported. With potential changes in legislation, the U.S. hemp industry has accelerated following the inclusion of a key provision in the 2014 Farm Bill, which authorized state regulated hemp pilot programs and research. The summit seeks to serve as a catalyst to help the hemp industry grow and create jobs and economic development in rural communities.

Panel Members will include Trey Riddle, CEO of Sunstrand LLC a processor and supplier of biomaterials for composites, Chad Rosen, Founder of Victory Hemp Foods provides nutritious, delicious, sustainable Hemp grain in the form of Oil, Protein Powder, Flour, and De-Hulled seeds, and Chad Ulven, CTO of C2Renew, Inc. a material designer and producer of bio-composite materials to name a few.

The summit will be held at the Conference Center at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, 150 Slayton Avenue, Danville, VA 24540

Monday, February 26, 2018 – Evening Networking Reception in the IALR Atrium

Tuesday, February, 27, 2018 – Daylong Summit of Experts

Additional information, sponsorship opportunities, and registration information available at: www.industrialhempsummit.info www.facebook.com/industrialhempsummit

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The District Has Acquired a New No-Till Drill

Halifax Soil & Water Conservation District recently replaced its' Haybuster 107C no-till drill. The new drill is the same model as the drill that was replace with a few updated features. This drill has a 10 ft planting width with 7" row spacings and will be able to plant in no-till or conventional till settings. The drill has three seed boxes, two for larger seeded crops like tall fescue, wheat or soybeans and one for small seeded plants like clover and alfalfa. This drill along with the Great Plains 1006NT are available

Haybuster	Great Plains
10' planting width	10' planting width
10'6" travel width	13'6" travel width
Pull-type seed metering	Gravity Seed Cup metering
Double disk openers	Double Disc openers with turbo coulter
Washer press wheel adjustment	Slide press wheel adjustment
Seed Boxes	Seed Boxes
2-13.5 bu large boxes	1-25 bu large box
1-2.2 bu small seed box	1-2.4 bu small seed box
Ground drive wheel	Clutch drive wheel

Mark your calendar for the last Halifax County Ag Breakfast Series. The topic for March 13th is Soil Health and Grazing Annuals. The meeting will be held at the Halifax Agricultural Marketing Center from 9 to 11 am. Please RSVP to the Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District at 434-476-7923 by the day before the meeting.

Halifax Soil & Water Conservation District
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Board of Directors:
Page Wilkerson—Chairman
Larry Layman—Vice Chairman
Bruce Pearce
Bobby Hall
Jason Fisher—VCE Appointment
Blair Hall—Associate
Hudson Reese—Associate

Staff:
Rick Brown—Conservation Specialist
Melissa Waller—Education & Outreach Specialist

Upcoming Events

January 18: Private Pesticide Recertification; Halifax Volunteer Fire Dep.
January 19: USDA-NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program Deadline
January 30: Virginia Forage and Grassland Council Conference; Olde Dominion Agricultural Complex
January 31: GAP Recertification Meeting
February 1: VANTAGE No-Till Alliance Meeting; Rocky Mount
February 2nd, 3rd: Halifax Bee Keepers Association Annual Guest Speaker Event; Olde Dominion Agricultural Complex
February 13: Halifax Ag Breakfast Series; Row Crop Production
February 26th, 27th: Industrial Hemp Summit; Institute for Advanced Learning and Research
March 13: Halifax Ag Breakfast Series; Soil Health and Grazing Annuals

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A case for evening feeding

Jan. 9, 2018 08:00 AM
By **Lauren Peterson**

With rising market prices for live calves, staying up all night to supervise first-calf heifers during calving season is well worth the effort to many producers. A recent Oklahoma State University *Cow/Calf Corner*newsletter notes that while supervision at calving does significantly cut calf mortality, it is often less effective in the middle of the night.

"The easiest and most practical method of inhibiting nighttime calving at present is by feeding cows at night; the physiological mechanism is unknown, but some hormonal effect may be involved," says Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist Glenn Selk.

Studies on rumen motility have shown a decline in rumen contractions within hours of parturition. Selk explains that intraruminal pressure falls the last two weeks of gestation, with a rapid drop during calving. By feeding at night, it's thought that intraruminal pressures are more apt to rise at night and decline in the daytime.

Dubbed the Konefal method after Canadian rancher Gus Konefal's observations in the 1970s, this concept has spawned a number of studies. Selk discusses a Canadian follow-up study on 104 Hereford cows. Of the group fed at 8 a.m. and 3 p.m., 38.4 percent delivered calves during the day, compared to 79.6 percent daytime births from cows fed at 11 a.m. and 9 p.m. A more substantial study was conducted on 1,331 cows across 15 Iowa farms. Fed once daily at dusk, 85 percent of the calves were born between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Selk also lists research conducted by researchers at the Kansas State University Agricultural Research Center in Hays, Kan. Here, scientists spent five consecutive years recording the time of calving (to the nearest half hour) of their herd of spring-calving, crossbred cows. Forage sorghum hay was fed daily between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. The results were as follows:

Time of Birth	Percent of calves born
6 a.m. – 10 a.m.	34.23
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.	21.23
2 p.m. – 6p.m.	29.83
6 p.m. – 10 p.m.	8.41
10 p.m. – 2 a.m.	4.4
2 a.m. – 6 a.m.	1.91

"It is interesting to note that 85.28 percent of the calves were born between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., Selk says. "This is very similar to Iowa data when cows were fed at dusk."

This data also revealed that most of the herd typically calved within three hours of their times from previous years. Selk concludes that feeding forage in the early evening undoubtedly influenced the number of cows calving in the daylight hours.

"Records here at Oklahoma State University indicated that when cows had constant access to large round bales but were fed supplements at about 5 p.m., 70 percent of the calves were delivered between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.," Selk adds.

For operations that offer this round-the-clock feeding, Selk suggests putting round bales and ring feeders inside a fenced enclosure. Producers can then provide access at dusk and throughout the evening before moving them to an adjacent pasture the following morning.

"Anecdotal reports have indicated that this method has the desired results with a higher percentage of calves born in the daylight," Selk states.