Halifax SWCD Newsletter

Fall 2018

We work with the people who work the land.

Roller/Crimper Benefits

Luke Hudson, Halifax SWCD

Halifax SWCD has a 10 ft roller/crimper for terminating cover crops before a cash crop is planted. Rolling/crimping a cover crop has numerous benefits. A rolled/crimped cover crop creates a thick matt of mulch that covers the ground. This mulch layer has many benefits including:

- Weed suppression, especially early in the season
- Summer time soil temperatures are cooler with a mulch layer
- Increased moisture retention
- Thick mulch layer reduces erosion and raindrop impact with bare soil
- Cleaner harvesting of some crops (bare soil not touching product)
- Mulch layer provides environment for beneficial organisms

When rolling/crimping a field the objective is to crimp and crush the stems of the cover crop, not to chop up the cover into small pieces. The cover crop should still be in one piece and attached to the soil to help prevent soil and cover movement off the field. Since the cover crop is still mostly intact decomposition is slowed which helps to prolong weed suppression. A roller/crimper provides the option to terminate a cover crop using little to no herbicides. Cover crops should be allowed to reach the flowering or early reproductive stage before termination if the goal is to kill the cover crop without herbicide applications. The cover should be terminated before seed are produced, if allowed to make seed, nutrients will be tied up in the seed and will take longer to cycle those nutrients. Common cover crops that work well rolling/crimping are cereal grains rye, wheat, barley, oats and some annual legumes.

A roller/crimper could be mounted on the front of the tractor and a no-till drill behind the tractor. This would allow for simultaneous rolling/crimping and directly planting behind it, which would not add another trip across the field for rolling/crimping. Rolling/crimping works well from large scale to smaller garden plots. The Halifax SWCD roller/crimper is available and with no acreage charge, just call the Halifax SWCD office at (434)476-7923 to schedule a date. Resources: Penn State, USDA

Cost-Share Assistance

Lower Banister and Terrible Creek TMDL Grant

DEQ has allocated funding to Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District to administer technical assistance and on-farm project funding to help farmers voluntarily exclude livestock from creeks and ponds in these impaired watersheds.

Eligible Components

- Exclusion and cross fence
- Watering troughs and pipeline
- Well construction if needed, Pump and components

Funding Available

- Up to 85% project cost-share
- Tax Credits

DEQ Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

The Benefits to Your Operation:

- Cleaner water for your livestock
- Healthier livestock
- A better grazing system
- Improved pasture utilization
- Quicker pasture recovery
- Less soil compaction

Landowners! Do you have some areas of your property that you're just mowing to keep open? Do you have timber that you'd like to transition to better wildlife habitat? Do you have cattle who struggle during the summer heat? Are you a beekeeper who wants more wildflowers? If so, there's help!

If you're interested in any of the above, please contact Private Lands Biologist, Lorien Koontz at lorien.koontz@va.usda.gov to learn more or to schedule a site visit.

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Halifax Soil and Water Conservation District through financial assistance and administrative assistance provided by the Virginia Soil and Water Board and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. An equal opportunity provider and employer.

2018 Poster Contest

Halifax SWCD just completed the annual Conservation Poster Contest at the local level. This year's theme was "Watersheds – Our Water, Our Home". Education Specialist, Melissa Waller conducted watershed lessons for eight classes throughout the county.

The annual Conservation Poster Contest provides kindergarten through twelfth grade students an opportunity to convey their thoughts about soil, water and related natural resource issues through art. It also highlights the educational outreach efforts of conservation districts and their state conservation associations, auxiliaries and agencies. The poster contest theme follows the annual NACD Stewardship theme.

Each year, the poster contest starts at the district level. Individuals and teachers with questions regarding district contests should contact their local district. District winners advance to the state level. State winners advance to the National Contest. National winners are recognized each year at the NACD Annual Meeting.

Three posters were submitted for state level judging. Local winners for the 4th through 6th grade division were; First place – Alyssa Pope, second place – Ashlyn Barksdale, tied for third place – Zel'Khya Morton and Karlissa Royal, and honorable mention were awarded to Tristin Andrade and Abigail Morris. Local high school winners were; first place – Faith Roberts, tied for second place - Kayla Hollingsworth and Callie Snyder, third place – Shawna Powell, fourth place – Avryl Taylor and honorable mention Shakayla Chisholm, Haley Duffer, and Ehani Garratt. Each of these winners received cash prizes. Alyssa Pope, Faith Roberts, and Shawna Powell all advanced to the state level competition.

The Halifax Soil & Water Conservation District would like to thank all the students who participated in the contest as well as the Halifax County teachers and school administrators that helped promote the contest and allowed students the opportunity to participate. We hope to continue to provide opportunities and resources for conservation education and outreach efforts throughout Halifax County.

Abigail Morris, Tristin Andrade, Alyssa Pope and Karlissa Royal

Principal Mr. Michael Lewis, Faith Roberts, Avryl Taylor, Shakayla Chisolm, Ehani Garratt, Kayla Hollingsworth, Haley Duffer and Callie Snyder

Zel'Khya Morton, Ashlyn Barksdale and Jack Saunders

Dominion Energy®
ENVIROTHON
Presented by Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

We are currently attempting to form an Envirothon Team. Envirothon is a hands-on environmental problem-solving competition for high school students. Teams are tested in five areas; aquatics, wildlife, soils, forestry and a current environmental issue topic where the students are tested on a current environmental issue with an in-field test and oral presentation. Any high school students that may be interested in being on a team, please contact our office for more information.

Central Virginia Beginning Forest Landowners' Weekend Retreat

Join fellow forest landowners, the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension for an interactive weekend learning about actively managing your woodlands.

March 16-18, 2018 Holiday Lake 4-H Educational

For more information contact Jason Fisher jasonf@vt.edu 434-476-2147

Soil Sampling

Justin Smith, Halifax SWCD

The southeastern U.S. consists mostly of Ultisols, which are typically characterized as "older" soils, leached of nutrients with a high clay content and low pH. However, these soils can be very productive if limed, fertilized and managed properly. Soil tests are needed to know what amendments are needed and how much. Without soil tests you may be applying too much of a certain nutrient to your soil causing damage to your crop or forage, damage to surface water bodies from runoff and wasting your hard-earned money. Soil tests are the best free information you can receive to help you manage your soils, however, the results are only as good as the sample collected. When collecting samples in a conventionally tilled field, sample at a depth of around 8"; in hayfields or pastures sample at a depth of around 2-4". Make sure rocks and organic matter are removed from the sample and that the soil is air dried before placing in the box (may be moist, just do not place in box wet). It is recommended that you collect separate samples where there is an obvious change in the soil color and or texture. Landscape position and vegetation change can be indicators of where the soil is changing and how to collect your samples and apply your soil amendments.

With a routine (free) soil test you will receive Phosphorus (P), Potassium (K), Calcium (Ca), Magnesium (Mg), Zinc (Zn), Manganese (Mn), Copper (Cu), Iron (Fe), and Boron (B) amounts in the soil and a designation of very high (VH) to Low (L) or deficient (DEF) or sufficient (SUFF). Also, soil pH, Buffer Index, and Estimated Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC) are measured to determine the amount of lime needed. When filling out the Information Sheet use the crop codes on the back to indicate what crop you are growing (maintenance) or intending to grow (establishment) on the field. When results are given you will receive fertilizer (lbs/acre) and lime (tons/acre) recommendations for the crop code you provided. Also, there may be micronutrient requirements for crops such as soybeans, alfalfa, corn, etc. Take into consideration that lime can take several months to start neutralizing the soil. Do not wait until the spring to apply lime for a spring crop planting. If more than 2 tons per acre of lime is recommended on conventionally tilled fields, half should be applied, incorporated into the soil and then apply the second half and incorporate into the soil. When applying lime onto pasture or hayfields it is recommended that applications should not exceed 2 tons per acre at a time. Also, Virginia Cooperative Extension recommends frequent small applications where incorporation of the lime into the soil is not possible. When your soil pH is very acidic your money is better spent on lime until you can get your pH to 6.0-6.5. Until then nutrients will not be available to the plant and money will be wasted on fertilizer. Be patient. Depending on several factors it could take several years to see the full benefits of lime. In some cases, your budget may dictate how much fertilizer and lime you can apply. Just remember liming can improve fertilizer efficiency by 50 percent or more.

If you have any questions or need help getting started with your soil sampling feel free to contact our office at 434-476-7923 or the Cooperative Extension office at 434-476-2147. Also, you may find more information at www.soiltest.vt.edu/sampling-insttructions.html and click on the "Soil Testing for the Farm" link at the bottom. Forms and boxes for soil sampling can be picked up at the VCE office at 171 S. Main St. Halifax, or you can print off forms online at https://www.soiltest.vt.edu/fees-and-forms.html.

Agritourism Workshop November 8 at 5:30 pm

Agritourism is one of the most popular trends in small farms today. Some producers love to share their crops and pastures with guests, often taking the opportunity to educate people about farming and ranching, both conventional and alternative. Is this an enterprise that you have considered adding to your farm? If so, you might be looking for ideas to make your agritourism venue unique. Yes, pumpkin patches, hay rides, petting zoos, bed and breakfasts, etc. are all great examples. But maybe together we can brainstorm something a little different. Please call 434-476-3300 ext. 3331 if you have any questions. Workshop is free to attend and open to everyone.

Ag Breakfast Series

Ag Breakfast Meetings: 2nd Tuesday of Every Month

Location: Ag Marketing Center: 1001 Landfill Lane, Scottsburg

Time: Begins with Breakfast - 9 AM—11 AM

This breakfast series seeks to bring in experts to address producer needs and issues facing their operation. Each month, the two hour morning event over a free breakfast focuses on topics for producers as well as planning for upcoming seasons.

There is no cost to attend but registration is required by the Friday before each meeting.

Contact Halifax SWCD 434-476-7923

The series is put on by the Halifax agriculture agencies, VCE, NRCS, Ag Development and Halifax SWCD

Nov. 13th—Cattle Genetics, AI & Overall Livestock Health

Dec 11th—Soil Health and Soil Testing

Jan 8th—Ag Policy and County Ag Agency Programs

Feb. 12th—Row Crop Production

Mar. 12th—Forestry Management and Generation Next

Halifax Soil & Water Conservation District

171 S. Main St., Halifax, VA 24558

P.O. Box 247, Halifax, VA 24558

Board of Directors:

Page Wilkerson—Chairman
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Rebekah Slabach—Associate

Staff:

Justin Smith—Conservation Specialist
Luke Hudson—Conservation Specialist
Melissa Waller—Education and Outreach Specialist

Upcoming Events

November 5 – Halifax Cattleman's Association meeting; Soils and Hay
November 8 – Informational meeting on cattle facilities at ODAC
November 8 – Agritourism Workshop at Ag Marketing Center
November 8 - Halifax SWCD Board Meeting
November 13 – Ag Breakfast Series
November 13 – Halifax SWCD Awards Banquet
December 7 – Soil Health Workshop; VSU
December 11 – Ag Breakfast Series
December 12 – Market Ready Training in Keysville
January 16—2019 Winter Forage Conference, Blackstone

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