



CONSERVATION NEWS

Tidewater Soil & Water Conservation District
6969 Fox Hunt Lane, P. O. Box 677
Gloucester, VA 23061
Phone : (804) 693-3562 ext. 5 Fax : (804) 694-5921
www.tidewaterswd.org

Winter 2009 Serving the counties of Gloucester, Mathews, and Middlesex

Cost Share Update

Our winter sign-up begins on **January 11th** and runs through **February 12th**. This includes the Split Application of Nitrogen on Corn and Small Grain as well as the contractual Nutrient Management Plan Writing and Record Keeping. You may also sign up for any other eligible practices other than the Winter Cover Crop, too. You can come by the office anytime between 8:00AM and 4:30PM during the above dates to sign up.

Cover Crop Reminder

The cover crop must be killed **no earlier than March 15th** and **no later than May 15th**. The practice will be considered complete once the cover crop has served its purpose and been killed. Please give us a call when you have done so at 804-693-3562 Ext. 5.

2009 Clean Water Farm Award Winner -Merryvale Farms, Inc.

Merryvale Farms is located in Deltaville on the northeast tip of the Middle Peninsula in Middlesex County. The farm is situated less than a mile from the Chesapeake Bay. It is run by James T. Crittenden, III (Turk) and his son James Tyler Crittenden, IV (Tyler). They grow specialty fruits and vegetables as well as the traditional corn, soybeans and wheat. The specialty crops include sweet corn, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, cantaloupes, watermelons and strawberries to name a few. The Crittendens have been farming in Deltaville since the late 1800's. They started growing watermelons in the 1920's and hauled them to Washington D.C. where Turk's father had a market. In the 1960's and 70's they also ran a tomato cannery.

Turk and Tyler have always believed in protecting the land and know the importance of utilizing conservation practices to prevent soil loss and excess nutrients from entering the Bay. Merryvale Farms had the first conservation plan in the county of Middlesex. Turk's father, James T. Crittenden, II, served on the ASCS Board in the 1960's and Turk served on the Tidewater SWCD Board for several years in the 1980's. They practice no-till on the majority of their land, use winter cover crops to protect the soil in between crop rotations, and always keep an up-to-date Nutrient Management Plan. Their vegetable rotation has one year of plowing; however, due to proper rotations, they maintain a positive SCI (Soil Conditions Index) which determines if you're losing, holding or gaining soil organic matter. Merryvale is actually gaining organic matter. They also use drip irrigation and put their fertilizer through the drip so it is injected directly into the roots and not lost into the air or bodies of water. The water they use to irrigate the vegetables with is pumped out of ponds so they aren't using any ground water. The majority of their ponds are situated close enough to their vegetables to collect runoff, so the water is captured and reused.

Merryvale also installs buffers voluntarily since they are so close to the Bay to capture any excess nutrients and sediment and leaves some of their land forested for wildlife. They are very stringent about following their Nutrient Management Plan so they don't apply excess nutrients that the crops don't need. Turk and Tyler

scout fields for insects, weeds and diseases, and use established thresholds when applying pesticides. They make sure that their spray equipment is properly calibrated and that empty pesticide containers are properly disposed (triple-rinsed and recycled). Turk has a Restricted Use Pesticide Certificate issued by The Commonwealth of Virginia. Merryvale Farms Inc. is very active in their community. They operate a large produce stand from the middle of May through the end of October. Tyler has served on the Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors for three years. They also work with local Virginia Cooperative Extension agents planting test plots and hosting field days. Merryvale is also a member of the Northern Neck Vegetable Association. This, in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, is why Tidewater SWCD has awarded Merryvale Farms, Inc. as our Clean Water Farm Award winner.

Turk and Tyler Crittenden



Sustainable Timber Marketing and Harvesting Seminar

Making decisions about how to manage a forest can challenge even the most experienced natural resource manager. There are so many questions to answer about what does the landowner want to achieve? Does she/he own the property as an investment or do they own it for purely aesthetic reasons but want enough income to cover the taxes? What is the need for cash flow? Once these questions are answered the dynamics of the forests need to be understood and if that is not complicated enough there is all the technical information about how to find the best buyer for the trees and what is the best way to harvest the trees. To help land owners and natural resource managers answer these questions, the Virginia Sustainable Forestry Initiative Committee developed a series of short courses. Tidewater Resource Conservation and Development Council is hosting the Sustainable Timber Marketing and Harvesting Class on **Saturday, February, 6, 2010** at Whitcomb Lodge near Gloucester Courthouse. The registration is \$ 40 per person or \$ 50 for two sharing one set of materials. Registration is at 8:00 with the class starting at 8:30 and continuing until 5:00. Lunch is included. To register call 804-443-1118 or email [Helen Heck@va.usda.gov](mailto:Helen_Heck@va.usda.gov)

Topics include Planning a Timber Harvesting and Regeneration Methods, Best Management Practices for Water Quality, Wildlife Considerations, Timber Sales Process, Income Re-Investment, Taxes and Land Use Conservation Strategies. Speakers represent both private businesses and agency staff and include Rebecca McCoy, Frank Brooks, John Magruder, Jess Crawford, Jim Vadas, Galon Hall, David Slack, and Rich Steensma. A field exercise is planned if the weather is cooperative. The class is designed for the landowners with five acres or more of forestland and resource managers. Professionals such as attorneys, accountants and real estate brokers who have clients with forestland have found the class valuable in improving their understanding of the implications of forest management. Tidewater RC&D Council is an equal opportunity provider. Contact Person: Patricia Tyrrell, RC&D Coordinator, NRCS 804-443-1118



Tap or Bottled Water ?

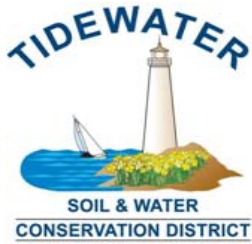
Did you know that a customer buying a year's worth of bottled drinking water at Costco would spend more than \$400? Compare that to the average cost of tap water per person, about 55 cents a year, according to a survey by the American Water Works Association. The Virginia Department of Health supports consumption of tap water as an inexpensive, green, safe source of drinking water.

Community water systems are regulated by the Office of Drinking Water (ODW) and tested regularly to ensure that they meet federal standards. That's important because a typical single-family home uses about 100 gallons of water per person per day.

Please join me in an effort to increase awareness and use of tap water as individuals and when we host department events. Fill your mugs, cups and water bottles throughout the day at work with water from the tap. For more information, contact Wes Kleene, ODW Director, at tapwater@vdh.virginia.gov.

Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP)

The new Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) provides financial assistance to eligible material owners (EMO) who deliver eligible biomass material (ie.switchgrass, forest byproducts) to 'qualified' biomass conversion facilities for use as heat, power, bio-based products or bio-fuels. This may prove beneficial to local forest landowners and companies that harvest forest biomass and deliver to approved facilities. Locally, Smurfit Stone Container West Point Va is an eligible conversion facility. Initial assistance will be for the Collection, Harvest, Storage and Transportation (CHST) costs associated with the delivery of eligible materials. FSA may begin approving applications for matching payments from EMOs who deliver to an approved facility. A biomass material owner is eligible to receive payments for two years. The purpose of the matching payments is to assist biomass producers with the CHST cost of delivering biomass to a qualified biomass conversion facility. Eligible material owners or producers in our area , who market eligible material to a qualified biomass conversion facility, may apply for the matching CHST payment at their local FSA office. An application must be submitted **before** the eligible material is sold and delivered to a qualified biomass conversion facility. After the product is delivered, a producer must provide FSA with documentation of product quantity, quality and payment rate. County offices will validate payment requests with information in the county office and information provided under the terms with the qualified biomass conversion facilities.



P.O. Box 677
Gloucester, VA 23061

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District Directors

Jason Bray-Chairman-Middlesex
Tyler Crittenden-At Large-Vice Chairman
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Robert Respass,Jr-Secretary-Mathews
Vacant -Gloucester
David Moore -At Large-VCE
Alan Sutherlin-Middlesex
Ronnie Lewis-Mathews

Return Service Requested

All programs of the Tidewater SWCD are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis; without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, political affiliation, marital/familial status, or handicap. The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

District Personnel

LaVerne Calhoun - District Manager
Staci Merkt - Conservation Specialist
Rene Moring- Conservation Assistant

NRCS Personnel

Charlie Ivins-District Conservationist

