



Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation recognizes local farm as a 2009 Bay Friendly Clean Water Farm

Pablo and Esther Elliott of Stoney Lonesome Farm in Gainesville, Virginia were selected by the Prince William Soil and Water Conservation District (PWSWCD) to receive the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Bay Friendly Clean Water Farm Award. The 90-acre farm has been in the Elliott family since 1971 and is one of 2,000 farms in the United States that participate in the Community Supported Agriculture program. The farm operates under a soil and water quality conservation plan and a forest management plan using best management practices that protect the environment while supporting the farmers' production goals.

Community Supported Agriculture farms operate with the help of non-farming members that purchase a share in the farm and in return receive fresh, locally grown products. Often shareholders may help with planting and harvest. The Elliotts' operation has the added bonus of being a completely organic farm that uses natural production methods designed to protect air and water quality while improving soil fertility with compost and green cover crops. Currently about 50 shareholder families enjoy Stoney Lonesome produce.



PWSWCD staff began working with the Elliotts in 2008. In addition to their 3-acre organic garden they have a 45-acre rotational grazing system for cattle, goats, and horses. The Elliotts also raise chickens. The implemented grazing system excludes a pond and Resource Protection Area stream in the Broad Run watershed. These sensitive areas are protected by 35-50 foot wide buffers of tall grasses and trees that filter and slow the velocity in rainwater flow, keeping the waterways cleaner and reducing erosion damage caused by fast moving water. Prince William Soil and Water Conservation District congratulates Stoney Lonesome on its' well-deserved recognition.

If you would like assistance turning the vision you have for your farm into a reality, consider contacting your local Soil and Water Conservation District. Conservation Districts are non-regulatory and work with farmers on a voluntary basis encouraging use of land management practices that maximize farming production while protecting natural resources. Prince William Soil & Water Conservation District is one of 47 conservation districts in Virginia and one of thousands across the country. Districts were formed during the dust bowl era to bring technical, educational, and financial resources to the community they serve and address local natural resources issues. Each conservation district is unique. PWSWCD not only works with traditional farms and the horse community but offers extensive youth education programs to Prince William County residents.

ATTENTION Upcoming Horse Seminar on Page 2

Prince William Soil and Water

Conservation District

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OUR MISSION...

The mission of the Prince William Soil & Water Conservation District is to provide leadership in the conservation of soil, water, and related resources to all Prince William County citizens, through technical assistance information and education.

Board of Directors:

Chairman: Steve Danziger,
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Healthy Horses and a Healthier Chesapeake Bay Seminar

Thursday, January 28, 2010

9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

MARE Center, Middleburg, VA

The Inside Scoop...seminar topics and speakers

By Kate Norris



We offer seminars for horse owners on a fairly regular basis. If you've never attended one or even if you're familiar with some of the concepts we promote, let me share with you why I feel this seminar is going to be worth planning to attend.

The first topic **"Mud & Runoff Management Techniques,"** will be covered by guest speaker Alayne Bickle the founder and director of the Washington-state based Horses for Clean Water program. She promotes environmentally sensitive horsekeeping practices and educates horse owners throughout North America. Alayne publishes a monthly on-line newsletter *The Green Horse* and contributes articles for *Equus*, *Horse & Rider*, and *John Lyons' The Perfect Horse* magazines. I found an article Alayne wrote for *Equus* shortly after I started working for PWSWCD ten years ago and invited her to speak at a seminar we offered in 2000. We've invited her back every few years since that first wonderful program. On-the-road Alayne shares her concepts using

great photos, stories of her own experiences and those of the many clients she's helped. Her presentations are informative, entertaining, and might just provide you with an "ah-ha" moment, whether you're new to the ideas or a mud-managing champ.

After Alayne covers her topic during the morning session, then we will enjoy a nice lunch (we're providing hot soups and sandwiches...mmm!) After lunch I will give a brief update on what's going on at Oakwood, our **Chesapeake Bay Friendly model horse farm**. The farm is looking more and more like an "after" all the time but I've got the photos to remind you of its' muddy, mucky "before" status. It's going to be Extreme Makeover, Horse Farm Edition.



The next topic is one that is particularly near and dear to me **"Whys and ways to slowly feed hay."** Part of my personal horse farm management includes keeping my large pony and my two boarders in our sacrifice area paddock anytime our 4 acres of pasture need a break. That means that they are left with a few flakes of hay from 5 a.m. until whenever I get home from work 12+ hours later. A couple of flakes of hay a piece keeps these easy-keepers looking great but are they bored? Might they have ulcers? I know wild horses have thrived for centuries on large quantities of poor quality (high fiber) forage. If I let them forage through my pastures all day, every day I'll be left with a muddy mess and weeds. If I leave them with free choice hay they'll balloon to the size of elephants and suffer the ailments associated with obesity. RESTRICTED FREE FEEDING is a way to slowly feed hay over a longer period of time using feeders or nets with small openings. Dr. Shea Porr, Superintendent

of the MARE Center and equine nutritionist will share information to help you decide if this option might benefit your horses and how to get started.



The grand finale “**Making Conservation Work**” is an opportunity for a few local horse owners from Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, and Prince William counties to share their experiences with implementing conservation practices on their horse property-- more real-world applications of conservation practices. What works and what doesn't? Ask them what specific products, equipment, and farm service providers they like to use. We're selecting speakers from a variety of types and sizes of relatable horse operations.

Great raffle prizes, opportunities to reconnect with horsey friends, and a lovely winter visit to scenic Middleburg add the final touches to our seminar. Something for everyone I hope! Make plans to attend and bring a friend. **Registration forms and additional information are**

available on our newly re-published website www.pswcd.org or you can contact Nicole Ethier in our office at (703) 594-3621 or nicoleethier@pswcd.org.

Giddy-up and get registered before January 21st!

Welcome Wildlife with Michael Budd Regional Biologist

The Private Lands Biologist (PLB) is available to provide landowners with technical assistance regarding native warm season grass plantings, quail habitat and other wildlife habitat. The PLB will find a cost-share program that best suits the property and help the landowner navigate the process. In addition, the PLB will develop habitat management plans for the property and provide follow up assistance after the plans/practices have been implemented.

Several cost share programs exist that provide financial incentives for wildlife habitat restoration. The PLB will determine what cost-share programs the landowner is eligible for, and work with them to determine which of those programs best suit their needs. A few examples of available programs are the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), and Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). To utilize the expertise of Michael Budd contact Prince William SWCD at 703-594-3621 and speak with one of our conservation specialists.



USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation programs

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has several conservation programs that may be of interest to you for the upcoming 2010 year. First is the **Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)**. This is an all-purpose program looking at conservation concerns on Cropland, Pastures, Forest Lands, and Animal Waste.



Next, the **Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (CBWI)** program is tailored to protect the natural resources of the Bay, such as water quality, while assisting you to protect your soil and water resources at home. This in return helps the Bay drainage areas in Prince William County. NRCS will offer incentive payments for specific conservation practices related to livestock exclusion, buffers, nutrient management, cropland rotations, and cover crops. Another program the **Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)** helps to protect the wildlife resources on the land by improving cover, food and habitat. This program focuses primarily on improving bird habitat for the bob-white quail which is an indicator species for 13 other

ground nesting birds. For those managers doing a good job at conserving their natural resources, the **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)** offers incentive payments over five years. This program concentrates on the job being done, and any additional conservation practices you are willing to install over a five year period. These programs all offer incentive payments for the installation of conservation practice on the land. These incentives are paid through a contract developed with NRCS ranging from 2 to 4 years in length.

There are also three easement programs which protect unique lands, and their natural resource base into the future. The **Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)** helps contribute to local programs to protect and preserve productive farmlands. It helps organizations purchase and hold easements on operating farms with prime farmlands soils in order to guarantee production into the future. Another easement program, the **Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)**, helps to preserve and set aside those unique wetlands which are valuable to wildlife habitat for many of our threatened and endangered species. The eligible wetlands have been altered for some type of crop production. This program will help to pay to revert and enhance the wetlands, and preserve grasslands. These tracts must be forty acres or larger in size, and may be pastured or hayed but not row cropped. There are provisions for long term leases of 10, 20 years or the perpetual easement. Now is the time to be planning for the 2010 growing season if you are interested in the NRCS conservation incentive or easement programs.



Additional information on these programs can be obtained at the website: www.va.nrcs.usda.gov, by telephone 540.347.3120 ext #3 or visit the NRCS office @ 98 Alexandria Pike, Suite 31, Warrenton, VA 20186. Roger Flint serves as the NRCS District Conservationist for Prince William County.

Prince William Soil & Water Conservation District

www.pswcd.org

The Prince William Soil and Water Conservation District programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, veteran status, national origin, disability, or political affiliation.