

## July 1, 2014 is the beginning of a new cost-share year!

Here are the latest updates and reminders of financial assistance programs that are available for farmers:

- ◆ **SL-6—Stream Exclusion with Grazing Land Management.** If your farm is in agriculture production (gross receipts are >\$1,000/year) and your livestock have access to a stream, then this practice is for you! **This is the last fiscal year to sign up for 100% cost-share!** That means you would be reimbursed up to 100% of your costs for fencing your livestock out of the stream, alternative watering systems, rotational grazing systems, etc. **You must be signed up and approved before May 30th, 2015 to be guaranteed for 100% cost-share!**
- ◆ **\*SL-8B-Small Grain Cover Crop.** The rate for this practice is now a maximum of \$48/acre. Cover crops must be planted before October 10 to receive benefits for early planting. The latest planting date is November 1 in order to be eligible for this practice .
- ◆ **\*SL-8H—Harvestable Cover Crop.** The rate for this practice is now \$20/acre. Cover crops must be planted before October 10 in order to be eligible for this practice.
- ◆ **CCI-SE-1— Stream Exclusion.** If you already have stream exclusion fencing on your property, then this program may be for you! The rate is \$1.00/linear foot of stream-side fencing, which will help cover your costs for keeping your fencing maintained and functional.

*\*If cost-share funding is not available, these practices would then be eligible for 25% tax-credit.*

For more information on these cost-share programs, and for other financial assistance programs, please visit:

<http://dswcapps.dcr.virginia.gov/htdocs/agbmpman/agbmptoc.htm>.

If you are interested in signing up for any of these programs, or have questions, please contact us at 571-379-7514 or e-mail [jayyankey@pwsxcd.org](mailto:jayyankey@pwsxcd.org).

### Volunteer Opportunity!

**Environmental Education Program Assistant**—manage scheduling, distribution and maintenance of District “Conservation Capsule” programs under the Education & Outreach Specialist, 10-15 hours per week during the school year. For position description and volunteer application visit [www.pwsxcd.org/news-events](http://www.pwsxcd.org/news-events).

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.

If you would like to be removed from the newsletter mailing list or would prefer to receive it by e-mail, call 571-379-7514, or email [pwsxcd@pwsxcd.org](mailto:pwsxcd@pwsxcd.org).

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## Conservation InFARMatIon

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.

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### Featured Landowners: The FitzSimmonds Family

The face of agriculture is beginning to change throughout Prince William County (PWC). As large acreage farms are sold off to developers, many are being subdivided into ~10 acre, single family residence parcels. While this equates to a net loss in productive agricultural land within PWC, some of these small acreage property owners are finding that they can maintain the agricultural integrity of their land, while increasing agricultural diversity within the community.

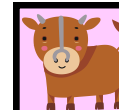
The FitzSimmonds family represents such landowners. With a 12 acre lot in Nokesville, the FitzSimmonds have opted out of recreational lawn maintenance and have made their land productive while protecting soil and water resources at the same time. Making the most of their land, they are preserving historical heritage breeds of fowl, while also branching into the world of growing specialty crops. Bob FitzSimmonds shared a bit about his operation and his experiences with us below:

***What motivated you to raise the breeds that you chose, such as the cotton patch geese?***  
 “We are new to farming, so while we wanted animals, we knew we should chose ones we could care for properly. We knew we wanted eggs, so I began looking into chickens and what keeping poultry would involve. This naturally led to research about heritage breeds. We were excited to see that we could be part of saving some of these breeds. Often these breeds are more suited to farms like ours than modern breeds that were developed mostly for production. We are working now on establishing a breeding program for Buff Orpington chickens and Bourbon Red turkeys, both heritage breeds.

As we looked into cotton patch geese, there were several aspects of raising them that attracted us. They are smaller geese, one of two American breeds, friendly (as geese go), and they are critically endangered. Cotton patch geese were raised across the South to weed the cotton fields. They began dying out as the farming industry became more mechanized and more dependent on chemical weeding. I entertained the mistaken notion that I could get the geese to weed my garden – anyone who has tried to get geese to do their bidding will know immediately that this was not likely to be successful. I am still trying. The geese are friendly (except during breeding season), they are beautiful, and they are pretty self-reliant. I worried about them all winter, but even during the coldest days they stayed outside. This spring we were rewarded with 4 goslings and expect a good deal more next spring as we fine tune our breeding program. We sold



### Farm Field Days 2014



Farm Field Days is not too far away, and we could use your help! We are looking for volunteers, and anyone who can bring their farm animals.



The dates this year are **Oct. 15th & Oct. 16th** at the Prince William County Fairgrounds.

An online registration form is available at: [www.pwsxcd.org/educators.html](http://www.pwsxcd.org/educators.html).

For more info., please email [education@pwsxcd.org](mailto:education@pwsxcd.org) or call (571)379-7514.

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**The FitzSimmonds Family Continued**

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**What got you interested in growing hops?**

“One of the challenges of small farms is to make the farm pay for itself. We only have 12 acres, so there are a lot of things we could do, but they would never turn a profit. We don’t know that hops will either, but it is a small acreage crop with a growing demand and it holds the potential to be profitable. There are a lot of unknowns though. Hops have not been grown in PWC, as far as we know, and it may not take to this area at all. We have planted a small patch to see how they do. We also planted several varieties to see which ones do best. One incentive to getting involved in hops production is a very supportive Virginia Hops Growers co-op. The support of this group made us feel that we had resources that would be important to our success.”



**What are some of your goals for your operation?**

“We want to be able to produce enough eggs and meat to supply our family, possibly market to local folks, and increase hops production over the next two years. Long term, we hope to create a profitable farm that will provide our family with a business we can pass onto our children, if they are interested. We believe that this is good for our family and for PWC. We are committed to keeping a large part of PWC rural. We hope we are a part of finding ways to make smaller niche farms profitable.”



**Have there been any specific challenges that you have faced in raising your heritage breeds or in establishing your hops?**

“We had no idea how much really hard work is involved in putting in a hops field. We are currently running 2-3 months behind and may miss a harvest this first year, but we will have a great head start on next year. The biggest challenge is doing this without the proper equipment, which can be expensive. The blessing in this is that friends and neighbors have popped up at the most unexpected times to lend us a tractor, or lend us a hand. In addition, people we hardly know who are members of the Old Dominion Hops Coop have been fantastic – advice, pictures of successful operations – whatever we have needed are available through these folks who are working to expand hops production in the Commonwealth.”

**Do you have any advice that you might offer someone who was considering using their 10-15 acres of land to establish some form of agriculture?**

“Don’t be in a hurry and don’t be surprised when your “bright ideas” don’t pan out. We have tried several things that we thought had great promise, only to realize that the best value in them was that they were learning experiences. One idea in particular turned out to be a dead end, only to pop back up a year later with new promise. Again, be patient. Talk to folks around you. The farming community is the most helpful group of people I have ever encountered. I thought others would see me as competition, but the truth is that I am far more likely to be seen as reinforcements than as a competitor. While you will hear a lot of things that don’t fit your model or your farm, you will also get a lot of great ideas, and you will very often avoid learning things the hard way. There are so many resources out there – local, state, national, etc.”

If you would like to join our **mailing list**, e-mail [pwsxcd@pwsxcd.org](mailto:pwsxcd@pwsxcd.org), or visit our website at [www.pwsxcd.org](http://www.pwsxcd.org) (left hand column). Future newsletters may only be delivered electronically to save paper and be more environmentally conservative. For our events calendar and board meeting dates visit: [www.pwsxcd.org/calendar.html](http://www.pwsxcd.org/calendar.html) (board meetings are open to the public).

*PWSWCD is a non-regulatory agency funded by Prince William County Public Works and Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)*

**Kettle Wind Farm, Clean Water Farm Award 2013**

The Prince William SWCD would like to congratulate two of our cooperators who have been awarded with Clean Water Farm Awards from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. This award recognizes farms that progressively manage their operations and have adopted and implemented innovative conservation tools, technologies, and practices that conserve natural resources and protect water quality.



Paul House, owner of Kettle Wind Farm, in a field of corn

Kettle Wind Farm, LLC. is the 2013 Clean Water Farm Award recipient for Prince William SWCD. Kettle Wind Farm is primarily a dairy cattle operation, but they also farm grain and turf. They manage all of their land by strictly following conservation and nutrient management plans, provided to them by the District and a private consultant. Extensive use of conservation practices such as conservation tillage, cover crops, grassed waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, manure storage, and livestock stream exclusion on this operation show that Kettle Wind Farm is committed to protecting natural resources.

Dutchland Farm, Inc., who received last year’s 2012 Clean Water Farm Award, is the winner of the 2013 Potomac Grand Basin Clean Water Farm Award. This award is only presented to one farm in the entire Potomac River watershed each year. Dutchland Farm is a dairy and cash grain operation and has a long history of working with PWSWCD to conserve and protect natural resources. They manage the entire operation following a conservation and nutrient management plan. All of the cattle on Dutchland Farm have been excluded from the streams and water bodies on the farm. Much of this exclusion fencing was done voluntarily. Over the years, they have installed manure storage systems, grassed waterways, and other conservation practices, as well as implementing conservation tillage and cover crops on their cropland.



From left to right: Tom, Rob, Dale, and Harold House (Dutchland Farm)

It is an honor to be able to recognize these operations for their commitment to conserving natural resources in our community. Contact the District at (571) 379-7514 or [pwsxcd@pwsxcd.org](mailto:pwsxcd@pwsxcd.org) if you would like to nominate someone for the 2014 Clean Water Farm Award.



**Our Super Stars!**



**Teacher of the Year:  
Lara Biendl**

The District would like to recognize Lara Biendl for her outstanding efforts to bring hands-on environmental education to the students of Glenkirk Elementary. In her position as STEM teacher, she routinely checks out capsules on a wide variety of subjects. In total, her partnership with the District brought conservation education to nearly 400 students last year alone.

**Farm Field Days Partner  
of the Year:  
Chris Long**

While the Prince William Veteran’s Farm Club has always provided support for Farm Field Days through the past two decades, the District would be remiss not to single out the efforts of Fairgrounds Manager Chris Long. Since taking over the position three years ago, Chris has worked closely with District staff to ensure a safe, clean, and organized event, routinely going above and beyond the call to assist us in our efforts.

**Farm Field Days  
Volunteer of the Year:  
Amanda Muir**

Amanda Muir has volunteered with District during Farm Field Days since 2011. In addition to her formal role as Barn Manager, she has also assisted with preparation, registration, cleanup, and whatever odd tasks were pitched her way. She would arrive at the crack of dawn each morning and consistently pull 12 hour shifts to ensure a successful event.