



## Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District

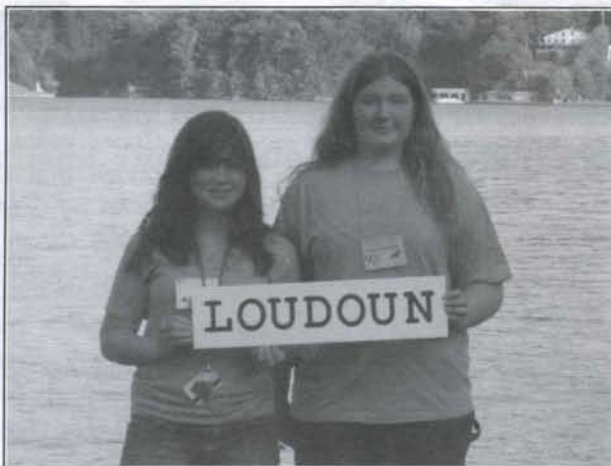
### My Time at Youth Conservation Camp

**By: Lynne Lynch, 9th grader rising 10th grader  
Harmony Intermediate School**

Dear Loudoun SWCD,  
I must admit, I was very nervous during the drive down to Virginia Tech as this was my first time going to camp and being away from home. Right from the start, the friendliness and hospitality of the counselors and my fellow campers eased my anxious state, and I quickly found bonds with the new friends I made.

here I learned about communities and fish shocking. The next day we spent the whole day hiking the Cascades. I don't know how to

When I got home, I told my Dad so that he could use the same idea for our vegetable garden. The most exciting part of camp was visiting the dairy farm and the swine facility. I absolutely adore animals, and greatly enjoyed holding newborn piglets and petting cows as we were told about how every (and I mean every) product of the animals were conserved and used to benefit nature as well as our needs.



2008 Youth Conservation Campers, Lynne Lynch (left), Harmony Intermediate School and Laura Hovatter (right), Freedom High School.

I enjoyed and learned a great deal from my camp experience. We were challenged to reuse and refill one water bottle throughout the entire week, no matter how beat up it got. On the first day, to my pleasant surprise, we visited Claytor Lake where my family and I went camping the previous summer, and

describe it as the word "beautiful" is not enough. Then, I learned how important testing soil can be for planting crops. We visited several acres of farmland. Here I noticed that foil ribbons were placed everywhere to scare away birds from eating the crops.

I truly enjoyed my time at Youth Conservation Camp. Thank you very much for the wonderful opportunity you have given me. Words can not express how grateful I am for being selected for the Youth Conservation Camp and being able to visit places, to learn and make friends during that week.

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## **Corotoman Farm**

### **Governor's 2008 Clean Water Farm Award Winner, Potomac River Basin**

**By: Pat McIlvaine, Agronomist**

Corotoman Farm is located in southwestern Loudoun County, near the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains, north of Upperville and south of Bloomfield in an area locally known as Piney Swamp where the Thompson family has been making improvements to over 550 acres of farmland since 1971 when they purchased the main farm. Located in an area of Virginia rich in history, it endured the Revolutionary and Civil Wars as well as the farming practices of the times. The once forested land logged by early pioneers to open land for crops was worked hard for many years to support a large dairy farm. Many decades of moldboard plowing and heavy grazing pressure took its toll on the land. Soon after purchasing the land, the late Roland Thompson, his son Mark and Dave Helmick, farm manager, began making changes that have considerably improved the productivity of the natural resources of the farm as well as the water quality of two tributaries of Goose Creek, Jeffries Branch and Beaverdam Creek, to develop a grass based cow/calf beef operation.

Conversion of cropland to establish grass pasture for the beef herd created the need for better water sources for the livestock. Starting in 1972 though the mid 1980s Allen Gulick, Soil Conservation Technician designed and assisted with the construction of 6 farm ponds and a spring development for livestock water. Over the next 10 years, access by livestock to the farm ponds took its toll on the banks of the ponds and streams feeding them. "In rainy years, the areas next to the streams and ponds would become a quagmire

of mud where the cows would often get stuck," according to Dave Helmick. In February 1999, Larry Wilkinson, District Conservationist, NRCS, Dana Malone, Area Forester with the Virginia Department of Forestry, and Tom Turner, Water Quality Specialist, and Pat McIlvaine, Agronomist with LSWCD, worked with Dave Helmick and Mark Thompson to develop a conservation plan that resulted in the installation of 6,430' of high-tensile fence to eliminate access to the ponds and streams, improvement of the rotational grazing system, creation of 14 acres of riparian buffer with 5 acres of the buffer planted with hardwood trees and shrubs and development of three alternative water sources. The Thompsons participated in the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practice (BMP) Cost-Share and Tax Credit Program (SL-6 and FR-3 practices) to help offset the cost of these conservation practices.

In February 2007, Corotoman Farm completed another Virginia Agricultural BMP Project that involved the installation of 9,735' of seven-strand, high-tensile fence to protect almost a mile of Jeffries Branch and a tributary from livestock access. The riparian buffer created by the fencing ranges in width from 100' to 600', well exceeding the minimum 35' requirement. Most of the buffer area is comprised of a mature oak-hickory hardwood forest. This forested riparian buffer very effectively filters sediment and traps nutrients from adjacent fields and from upstream sources. The buffer width, length, and vegetative quality provides the best possible conditions to slow flood

waters, recharge groundwater, improve water quality and wildlife habitat.

Conservation practices are an every day routine in the Thompson's management strategy for Corotoman Farm. Land stewardship ethics are an integral part of the Thompson family's values for the environment. Protecting all the streams on Corotoman Farm with over 3 miles of fence, creating 54 acres of riparian buffers with buffer width well in excess of the minimum requirements and practicing sound land management with a rotational grazing system significantly contributes to improvement of water quality for Jeffries Branch, Goose Creek, the Potomac River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. In terms of water quality protection, the Thompsons have created a role model farm. The Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to announce that Corotoman Farm was chosen by Governor Tim Kaine for the 2008 Clean Water Farm for the Potomac Basin.

The Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practice (BMPs) Cost-Share and Tax Credit Program provides both technical and financial assistance to landowners for the installation of conservation practices (BMPs). These practices are designed to improve the productivity of the natural resources of the farm as well as the water quality of streams in Loudoun County. Please call Pat McIlvaine at 703/777-2075, ext. 104, for more information.

## Catoctin Creek TMDL Program Offers New Programs for Farmers

By: **Chris Van Vlack, TMDL Agricultural Specialist**

The fifth and final year of the Catoctin Creek TMDL Agricultural Implementation Program has begun with the announcement of two new cost-share practices for farmers and landowners in the Catoctin watershed. These new practices join the existing offerings from the district which include funding for stream fencing, water troughs, cover crops, and tree plantings.

The first new program involves a 50 percent cost-share payment for fencing and accompanying water troughs to keep livestock from entering streams. The fencing may consist of a minimum of two lines of polywire electric fence, and may be placed a minimum of 10 feet from the upper stream bank. This is in contrast to the requirement of the existing programs which require permanent fence such as woven

wire, high tensile wire, or board fencing and in addition require a minimum of a 35 foot buffer to the upper stream bank.



*Water trough installed at a goat farm with Catoctin TMDL cost-share funds.*

The second new program offering increases the cost-share rate for

fencing and water troughs. For permanent (woven wire, high tensile wire, or three or four board) stream fencing installed at a minimum of 35 feet from the upper stream bank that keeps livestock from accessing the stream, the cost-share rate is now 85 percent of eligible costs. These costs include the fencing, water pipeline, and troughs to serve fields that are being fenced from stream, pond, or wetland access.

These practices will only be available for calendar year 2009, and when the Catoctin Creek TMDL Project ends, these new practices will no longer be offered! To learn more, contact TMDL Agricultural Specialist Chris Van Vlack at 703/777-2075, ext 107 or send an email to Chris at: [Chris.vanvlack@va.nacdnet.net](mailto:Chris.vanvlack@va.nacdnet.net)

## Conserving Natural Resources in the Chesapeake Bay

By: **Larry Wilkinson, District Conservationist, NRCS**

U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service recently released a report highlighting its activities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed for fiscal year 2009.

NRCS provided more than \$76 million in financial and technical assistance in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to help farmers protect water quality, recycle nutrients, preserve open spaces and improve wildlife habitat. The agency used existing Farm Bill programs such as Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Farm and Ranch Lands Protection

Program and Wetlands Reserve Program to help farmers carry out conservation practices such as riparian buffers, prescribed grazing systems, waste storage, manure composting facilities, and wetland creation, restoration, and enhancement.

For more information about any of these programs, please contact Larry Wilkinson, at 703/777-2075, ext. 102 or email [larry.wilkinson@va.usda.gov](mailto:larry.wilkinson@va.usda.gov). Sign-up for the 2009 program is taking place now.



*NRCS District Conservationist, Larry Wilkinson, (right) works directly with landowners to plan and design conservation practices such as this watering trough.*

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## Rain Barrels Are Back!

**By: Suzanne Brown, Public Information/Education Specialist**

Yes, Loudoun we have rain barrels! Why rain barrels? Rain Barrels have started to re-emerge as an economical and practical way for homeowners to conserve water, reduce run-off, save money, and help protect our waters. The drought of 2007 has left many looking for ways to conserve water. A rain barrel collects the water that runs off the roof and makes it available for homeowners to water plants, fill the birdbath, or wash the car, the dog, or even muddy feet. It can even be used in toilet tanks when the well pump isn't working. This water is free and is collected before it runs off and picks up sediment and contaminants that pollute our streams and rivers that drain to the Potomac River and eventually the Chesapeake Bay.

The Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District will be presenting a workshop on Sunday, April 26<sup>th</sup> during the EarthDay@Loudoun 2009 event being held 11 a.m.– 3 p.m. at Willow Creek Farms (behind Clyde's) in Broadlands. Homeowners can learn more about the benefits of rain barrels and make one to take home. Admission to the event is FREE. Participants are reminded to dress appropriately as they will be constructing their own barrel. There will be a \$50 charge for the workshop which includes 1 rain barrel. Supplies are limited, so come early to ensure a barrel for your home. For more information please call the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District at 703/777-2075 or send an email to [suzie.brown@va.nacdnet.net](mailto:suzie.brown@va.nacdnet.net).



*Pete Holden, District Liaison unloading rain barrels*