The Clean Water Farm Awards recognize Virginia farmers who implement conservation practices and are doing their part to preserve water quality. Farmers and landowners who receive the Virginia Clean Water Farm Award progressively manage their operations and have adopted and implemented innovative conservation tools, technologies and Best Management Practices (BMPs). This results in a reduction of nutrients, pesticides and chemicals in local waterways — protecting and enhancing water quality. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation is proud to sponsor the Clean Water Farm Award.

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/soil-and-water/cwfa

During the TJSWCD awards dinner in December, the District was pleased to recognize our Clean Water Farm Award recipients. Attending guests enjoyed staff presentations recognizing the hard work, best management practices and strategies put forth by farmers and managers resulting in award winning farms that are in fact contributing in positive ways to improving the wellness of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and sustainable agriculture through soil and water conservation. Encouraging words from the award winners, grateful for the technical assistance, financial incentives and cooperative partnership with TJSWCD and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) was the highlight of the evening.

The 2017 Clean Water Farm Award goes to

INNISFREE FARM, Albemarle County, receiving the James River Award

and

SPRING VALLEY FARM, Louisa County, Jack and Sharon Manzari receiving the York River Award
Innisfree Farm founded in 1971 is nestled at the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains on about 550 acres. The farm serves as a nonprofit, therapeutic farm community for adults with intellectual disabilities. The farm community is dedicated to providing a life sharing home and work environment for more than 75 coworkers, volunteer care-givers, and long term staff.

For nearly fifty years prior to being part of Innisfree Farm, the property was once a tobacco farm, and after that an orchard. When Innisfree Farm first began the original farmer had first let livestock roam on a continuous system. When current farm manager Nich Traverse’s father took over the farming, he began applying many conservation practices, and believed that Innisfree needed to give back to the land.

Nich’s father experimented with Keyline plowing across parts of the property, subsoiling along contours to allow better drainage and infiltration (“Keyline plowing is a form of subsoiling. Subsoilers are implements used to loosen and break up soils to double the 6 to 8 inch depths that a traditional disk harrow reaches. The tool used for keyline plowing is the Yeoman’s plow, a subsoiler with very thin shanks. Created in the 1950s by P.A. Yeoman, an Australian mining engineer and farmer, it was designed to lift and aerate the soil while limiting soil disturbance to minimize oxidation of organic matter. www.onpasture.com”). Nich’s father later came up with an idea to ‘keep the farm protected, and keep the farm going’ in order to not only be good stewards of the land but to also create a sustainable funding source for implementing conservation practices on the farm. After years of work they were able to put the farm in conservation as a Stream Mitigation Bank. By doing so Innisfree Farm is now home to one of the largest mitigation banks in the state with over 500 acres of land protected in perpetuity, including both forested and parts of previous pasture land. Some of the requirements meant, fencing livestock from all of the streams on the property which has now protected over 7 miles of streambank which livestock previously had access to. Most of these areas have at least a 75 foot buffer to the stream, and the farm has planted nearly 5,000 native trees and shrubs within those buffers. The mitigation bank area also serves as a large protected wildlife habitat for countless whitetail deer, foxes, coyotes, kestrel and bluebirds.
Nich's father has moved on to run another farm, but Nich has since taken over as the Farm Manager. The farm currently has about 200 acres of pasture and keeps about 35 brood cows, 400 chickens, and 35 sheep. Nich regularly takes a hard look at the animal numbers and is sure not to put unnecessary pressure on pastures. Rotational grazing has become a key component to his success, by moving the livestock every 1 to 4 days with a variety of permanent fencing and temporary division fences. Nich believes with the right rotations and management of the land, it is not necessary to bring in additional fertilizer and nutrients into the farm. Nich has also experimented with additional conservation practices, such as planting tillage radishes on pasture areas that have critical slopes and serious erosion concerns.

Aside from the great community service Innisfree already provides for its residents, Nich and the farm have been very receptive to other educational programs. They allow interns to work on the farm teaching them a variety of studies such as: GIS, grassland management, animal health, farm infrastructure, and egg production. Additionally field days have taken place on the farm for groups, such as Waldorf School’s and the University of Virginia. One of the University of Virginia classes, went as far as to complete an experiment with dozens of weather stations on the farm to test changes in micro-climate during the 2017 eclipse.

All of the conservation and practices on the farm are extremely important to Nich and the community. Much of the production of the farm such as eggs, beef, and vegetables from the gardens go to the kitchen for the community members. Additional products are sold to local restaurants and businesses, and the goodness all comes back around to help continue keeping the community funded.

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Thomas Jefferson Soil & Water Conservation District
2018 Virginia Agriculture Cost Share Program
Accepting Applications Now!

This program provides financial & technical assistance to farmers interested in improving water quality & soil health.

Financial incentives are available for:
- Stream Fencing & Rotational Grazing Systems
- Cropland Conversion
- Cover crops (apply by 8/31)
- Tree Plantings
- Alternative Water Systems

Contact TJSWCD at 434-975-0224 or email lisa.hyatt@tjswcd.org to apply or for additional information
SPRING VALLEY FARM
WINNER OF THE 2017 YORK RIVER CLEAN WATER FARM AWARD,
LOUISA COUNTY

Spring Valley Farm is located in Louisa County, Virginia and feeds the York River Basin. Jack and Sharon Manzari bought their farm in 2002 and quickly began renovating the farm’s aging infrastructure. While the Manzaris saw the importance of repairing and replacing the buildings and working facilities, they also saw the importance of protecting the natural resources on their farm. From the very beginning, the Manzaris sought help for the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Spring Valley Farm is primarily an Angus cattle operation with around 60 cows. The farm also houses 4 retired thoroughbred race horses. Of the 400 acres that make up the farm, the animals currently are grazed on 150 acres divided into 12 separate paddocks. The rest of the farm is forested with a mix of hardwoods and planted Loblolly pine.

The Manzaris have been very proactive with conservation throughout rebuilding their farm. They have worked closely with NRCS implementing numerous conservation practices. The Thomas Jefferson SWCD and the Department of Forestry have also partnered with NRCS to provide cost-share assistance in multiple practices.

One of the programs the Manzaris utilized to install many conservation programs was NRCS’s Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Among the practices in this program, the Manzaris have protected 2.36 miles of streambank through the installation of stream exclusion practices. Tree plantings were utilized in some of the buffer acreage along the protected streambanks. By implementing Prescribed Grazing and Forage Biomass Planting, there was a plan designed to help with herd rotation allowing for better pasture health providing their herd with quality forage.
A waste storage facility, that included heavy use area protection, was also built to protect an area of the farm that normally deteriorates during the winter months due to a high volume of animals in the feeding area. This facility provides an area protected by a roof to store manure. These practices greatly reduced the amount of nutrients and sediments that were previously being deposited into the waterways on the property.

After accomplishing so much through EQIP, the Manzaris were able to advance to the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) through NRCS to help them maintain and improve their conservation systems. CSP is considered an “above and beyond” type program that is implemented when a producer has accomplished everything they can through other conservation programs. The Manzaris’ practices include stockpiling forages for longer grazing, planting a multi-specie diverse mixture of forage and monitoring pasture health.

The commitment that the Manzaris have made to conservation has not just benefited the farm, but has also vastly improved the water quality on and around their farm. They have adopted and implemented numerous conservation practices and look to continue to improve their land productivity and the overall health of their local waterways. Congratulations!

Spring Valley continued

INTRODUCING

Lexi Monteleone, Conservation Technician, is originally from Davis Creek, West Virginia, but has spent the last 6 years in Morgantown, WV studying at West Virginia University. First she received her bachelor’s degree in environmental protection and minored in environmental microbiology and sustainable design. Then she earned her master’s degree in agronomy while simultaneously working on a reforestation reclamation research project on mountaintop removal coal mines throughout West Virginia. Her role with the TJSWCD will include involvement on projects of all disciplines including both agricultural and urban.

Brian Viglione, Management Analyst, is a native of Staunton, Virginia. He studied Political Science and International Relations as an undergraduate at Wake Forest University. After college Brian moved to Miami, Florida to pursue a career in wealth management. In 2010 Brian decided to further his education by attending the University of Durham School of Business, Economics and Finance in England. In returning from England, he continued to work in wealth management for both Merrill Lynch and BB&T’s private wealth division. After 10+ years in the financial services sector, Brian went to work for a multi-national start-up manufacturing company where he served as an accountant and financial analyst. Brian decided to exit the private sector in 2017 and join The Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District as a Management Analyst where he feels he can make more of an impact with his knowledge of accounting, financial analysis and business administration.
RICHMOND, Jan. 18, 2018 – Agricultural producers wanting to enhance current conservation efforts are encouraged to apply for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

Through CSP, USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps private landowners build their business while implementing conservation practices that help ensure the sustainability of their entire operation. NRCS plans to enroll up to 10 million acres in CSP in 2018.

While applications for CSP are accepted year round, applications must be received by March 2, 2018 to be considered for this funding period.

Through CSP, agricultural producers and forest landowners earn payments for actively managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities like cover crops, buffer strips, and pollinator and beneficial insect habitat — all while maintaining active agriculture production on their land. CSP also encourages the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and new management techniques such as precision agriculture applications, on-site carbon storage and planting for high carbon sequestration rate, and new soil amendments to improve water quality.

Some of these benefits of CSP include:

- Improved cattle gains per acre;
- Increased crop yields;
- Decreased inputs;
- Wildlife population improvements; and
- Better resilience to weather extremes.

NRCS recently made several updates to the program to help producers better evaluate their conservation options and the benefits to their operations and natural resources. New methods and software for evaluating applications help producers see up front why they are or are not meeting stewardship thresholds, and allow them to pick practices and enhancements that work for their conservation objectives. These tools also enable producers to see potential payment scenarios for conservation early in the process.

Producers interested in CSP are recommended to contact their local USDA service center or visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted.

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NOW ACCEPTING COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS. We are pleased to announce the availability of the 2018 Scholarship Awards. Additional information and application can be found on our website www.tjswcd.org. Or contact Lauriston at 434-975-0224 ext.107 or by email, lauriston.damitz@tjswcd.org. Scholarship application deadline is 4:00 pm 3/7/2018.

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