

The District Current

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Learning from Afar!

Even though Henderson County has transitioned to a learn from home school model, the Henderson Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is available to support teachers as they creatively enhance learning for our local students! Here's a shout-out to Heather Sowry, third grade teacher at Hendersonville Elementary. Mrs. Sowry's third grade class learned about soils earlier in the year and participated in our educational poster contest! Did you know that not just students, but teachers also have a chance to win educational prizes? Mrs. Sowry is putting these prizes to good use! A small indoor/outdoor greenhouse and a soil pH test kit are being used to grow plants for this spring season. The class is using seeds from NASA, herbs, and strawberries. Students are able to watch the progress of these plants and learn more about soil and plant development from their homes.

Henderson SWCD applauds all our local teachers as they creatively navigate enhancing learning for our local students. For more information on how the Henderson Soil & Water Conservation District can support teachers or to register your class for a lesson or educational contest for next fall, please contact us at 828-697-4949 or visit our website at <https://www.hendersoncountync.gov/soilwater/page/education>.

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Grassed Waterway with Mills River Partnership



The Henderson SWCD works with the Mills River Partnership (MRP) to put Best Management Practices (BMP) on the ground in the Mills River watershed. The MRP is a non-profit organization that aims to monitor, preserve, protect, and enhance water quality. Henderson SWCD works with the Partnership to provide technical guidance on the design and installation of BMPs.

Recently, MRP completed the construction of a grassed waterway with a reinforced road crossing in the fall of 2019. The farm is located next to the Mills River and has a small tributary that runs along the access road to the farm. Over the past three years, flood waters in the Mills River have backed up into the tributary and crossed the access road. As a result, the road has been washed out several times. To remedy the problem, a section of road was reconstructed using Presto's Geoweb system, which is a 3D web material anchored to the ground and filled with heavy road grade material. The flood waters now can cross the road without damage and access to the site is not restricted. To divert the water crossing the road, a wide grassed waterway was installed to transport the water to another drainage feature. In April 2020, a large storm event produced heavy flooding where water crossed the reinforced road. The photos above show the waterway as the river crested (left) and again as the water had subsided approximately 10 hours later (right). Neither the waterway nor the road crossing sustained visible damage from the flood.

Ecosystem Restoration

The Henderson Soil & Water Conservation District and multiple partner organizations recently completed the restoration of the lower portion of a stream at Rugby Middle School in Hendersonville. The project added meanders back to the stream to create riffles and pools and reintroduced native plants to the banks to create a healthy riparian buffer. The vertical banks were properly sloped to provide flood relief and easy wildlife access to the stream. This snapping turtle, shown right, seems so comfortable in the restored ecosystem that it decided to make a nest at the base of the educational signs. The wildlife has definitely appreciated the restored stream with improved habitat and stream access.



Cost Share Application Period

Sign Up Period: July 1, 2020 – September 30, 2020

The Henderson County Soil and Water Conservation District (HCSWCD) will begin accepting applications for the North Carolina Agriculture Cost Share Program, the Agricultural Water Resources Assistance Program, and the Community Conservation Assistance Program on July 1, 2020. These programs are voluntary and are funded through the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services – Division of Soil & Water Conservation and administered through the HCSWCD to fund the installation of various Best Management Practices (BMPs) to improve water quality and water quantity.

These programs provide technical assistance and funding for a portion of eligible BMPs. To qualify, there must be an existing problem. The design, construction, and maintenance are overseen by HCSWCD. Both rural and urban citizens may apply. A few of the BMPs utilized include:

- Cropland Conversions
- Stock Trails
- Livestock Exclusions (fencing)
- Ag Road Stabilizations
- Stream Stabilizations
- No-till farming practices
- Stream Crossings
- Watering Tanks
- Diversions/Grassed Waterways
- Feed Pads
- Riparian Buffers
- Abandoned Well Closures
- Critical Area Plantings
- Bio-retention Areas
- Stream Restorations/Protections
- Large Cisterns
- Pet Waste Receptacles
- Backyard Wetlands/Rain Gardens
- Agrichemical Handling/Mixing Facilities and Backflow Preventions

For more information, contact the Henderson County Soil and Water Conservation District (828) 697-4949 or visit <http://www.ncagr.gov/swc>.



Contributed Article: Conserving Carolina

This summer, a project to restore the ecological function of a 100-acre floodplain at the confluence of the French Broad River and Mud Creek will be complete. The project, led by Conserving Carolina with support from many partners including the N.C Wildlife Resources Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Henderson County SWCD, aims to restore the hydrology of the property by reconnecting it to the French Broad River, creating and enhancing wetlands, and constructing large slack water areas for fish like the giant Muskie to spawn. **Henderson County SWCD played an important role by sponsoring a grant application on behalf of the project with the N.C. Water Resources Development Grant Program.**



Scott Loftis (NCWRC) with a Muskie he caught in the French Broad River.

Although Muskie are native to the French Broad River, very few fish start their life there. The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission rears them in a hatchery and releases them once they are large enough to survive. It is thought that adult Muskie are not reproducing in the river because areas of slow-moving water off of the main channel no longer exist. A focal point of this project is to create this spawning habitat so Muskie can reproduce naturally again. Construction of three backwater spawning areas is ongoing at the site.



2.5-acre backwater spawning area under construction. Two very similar features are also in-progress.

In addition to the backwater areas, several acres of wetlands are being created and enhanced. Wetlands provide critical habitat for amphibians and reptiles and are extremely important to the health of our region. Wetlands on this site will improve water quality by holding stormwater and floodwater, allowing it to slowly filter through the ground. Without wetlands, the storm and floodwater would quickly

enter the French Broad River, taking any sediment or pollutants with it. Over 3-acres of wetlands have been created on this site, and more than 20-acres have been enhanced.

One way we are enhancing wetlands is by restoring their natural hydrology by breaking an artificial berm along the French Broad River and allowing water to spill over its banks more easily during significant rain events. By breaching this berm, we are giving the river a place to naturally flood. During significant rain events, this will help ease flooding downstream and significantly decrease the amount of sediment that is eroded into the river.

Other features of this project include the creation of pollinator fields, a floodplain forest, a raised access path, and a canoe campsite. Construction began in February and is expected to be complete at the end of June. Revegetation of the site is ongoing and is expected to be complete by next spring.



French Broad River spilling over onto the floodplain property.

Contributed Article: Farm Service Agency Reporting Guidelines



In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers are encouraged to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline. Please call the office to let us know the best way to send your farm maps to you. We can email or mail them, we can also print them and you can pick them up from the front foyer area of the office. The main office area is currently closed to the public.

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable for Henderson-Polk-Transylvania County:

July 15, 2020	Alfalfa, Asparagus, Beans (Planted 6/26-7/10), Caneberries, Corn, CRP, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Grain Sorghum, Okra, Peppers, Soybeans, Squash, Tomatoes, Perennial Forage and Grazing, All Other Crops
September 15, 2020	Beans (Planted 7/15-9/5), Cabbage (Planted 7/15-9/5)
September 30, 2020	Aquaculture, Grass/Sod, Value Loss Crops

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of “cover only,” “green manure,” “left standing,” or “seed,” then the acreage must be reported by July 15th.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact the Henderson-Polk-Transylvania County FSA office at (828) 693-1406.

Contributed Article: USDA Announces Grants for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced on May 6, 2020 the availability of \$3 million for grants through its new Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. The competitive grants will support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects through two categories, Planning Projects and Implementation Projects. **USDA will accept applications on Grants.gov until midnight July 6, 2020.**

“These grant opportunities underscore USDA’s commitment to all segments of agriculture, including swiftly expanding areas of urban agriculture,” Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Bill Northey said. “Such projects have the potential to address important issues such as food access and education and to support innovative ways to increase local food production in urban environments.”

“It makes good sense to support food recovery and community-based solutions that address food access and support urban farms and community gardens,” said Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Greg Ibach. “The best approaches can be scaled up across the Nation.”

Planning Projects

USDA is making available \$1 million for Planning Projects that initiate or expand efforts of farmers, gardeners, citizens, government officials, schools and other stakeholders in urban areas and suburbs. Projects may target areas of food access, education, business and start-up costs for new farmers and development of policies related to zoning and other needs of urban production.

Implementation Projects

USDA is making available \$2 million for Implementation Projects that accelerate existing and emerging models of urban, indoor and other agricultural practices that serve multiple farmers. Projects will improve local food access and collaborate with partner organizations and may support infrastructure needs, emerging technologies, educational endeavors and urban farming policy implementation.

More Information

The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production was established through the 2018 Farm Bill. It includes representatives from many USDA agencies, including Farm Service Agency and Agricultural Marketing Service, and is led by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. More information is available at farmers.gov/urban.

Additional resources that may be of interest to urban agriculture entities include USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service grants to improve domestic and international opportunities for U.S. growers and producers and Farm Service Agency loans.



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Our mission:

To provide educational, technical and financial assistance to conserve soil, improve water quality and enhance the natural resources of Henderson County.

