Voluntary Agriculture Districts

In late spring of 2014, the Town of Mills River worked with the Henderson County Soil & Water Conservation District and the Henderson County Agricultural Advisory Board to bring a Voluntary Agriculture District ordinance to their town. Administered by the Henderson County Soil & Water Conservation District, the program is designed to increase pride and identity in the agricultural community; encourage economic and financial health in agriculture; and increase protection from non-farm development and other negative impacts on properly managed farms. There is no fee to property owners for participation in the VAD program. (Continued, page 2)
The Henderson County GIS webpage contains a feature to display Agriculture Districts and Agriculture District Buffer layers. This is part of the public notification portion of the Voluntary Agricultural District Program. Folks buying property can find out if they are near or adjacent to agricultural operations. If not currently in a Voluntary Ag District, new neighbors may not fully understand what it may mean to live adjacent to an agricultural operation. The VAD program is the first step in identifying the agricultural use of lands nearby.

On June 27th, 2014, the Town of Mills River’s Agricultural Advisory Committee sponsored a Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) Signup event at the Mills River Town Hall. Staff from the Henderson County Soil & Water Conservation District was on hand to assist landowners and answer questions. There was a great turn-out and staff spent the morning describing the VAD program to local farmers, assisting with enrolling agricultural land, and answering questions.

Over 600 acres of agricultural land was added to the VAD in Mills River that morning alone, with more to be added by landowners that were unable to make the event. Another 150 plus acres were added the next week. We all look forward to a long and positive working relationship and are excited to have those Mills River farmlands protected.

Right: Signing up property for the new VAD program in Mills River
ATTENTION FARMERS!!!!!

IS YOUR SOIL SICK??

Are your soils working their hardest for you? Are they at their most productive peak? Do you want to know how to get them there? There is a new movement underfoot in NC, and in the nation. It’s the Soils Health Movement! If you grow commodity crops or if you grow grass for pastures then you need to be informed about this potentially game-changing movement coming from America’s heartland. We are starting to look at our soils very differently than we did 10 years ago. We used to look at soil in terms of its “quality” (what are the soil nutrient levels (i.e. N, P & K)). As one farmer recently observed, “Anything can have quality, but only Living things can have health.” And so it began - this focus on the health of our soils and how that translates to the productivity of our farmlands. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has recently launched its “Unlock the Secrets in the Soil” campaign to help educate farmers on the basics and benefits of Soil Health. Did you know that one teaspoon of healthy soil can host 100 million to 1 billion bacteria, several yards of fungal hyphae; several thousand flagellates and amoeba; several hundred ciliates; dozens of nematodes and tiny arthropods such as millipedes, and as many as 5 earthworms. These living organisms are your factory workers. They are the ones helping you produce as much as possible out of the crops you are growing. When you keep the workers happy, the production goes up. Every time you put an implement on that soil to disturb it (disking, subsoiling, etc.) you are burning down the factories and killing off all of your workers. You wouldn’t do that if you owned a factory making tires, or chainsaws, or any other product would you? So why would you want to do that to your most valuable assets on your farm? There is hope though. Through certain conservation practices, we help you build up your factories again, and increase your workers so that your soils are now working for YOU!

Healthy Soils = Happy Soils = Productive Soils = $$$$ in your pocket!!

To find out more please contact your local NRCS office at 828-697-4949. Call today to set up an appointment to get started on conservation planning for your farm!
The District Current

No-till drill now available for use!

Henderson County’s No-till Drill is now available for use! The no-till drill was sponsored by the TVA Ag & Forestry Fund through the NCDA & CS. This TruAX FlexII Drill is designed to plant grasses and legumes on a variety of site conditions throughout the county. The use of a county shared drill offsets the initial high investment costs for a landowner. The drill manager will schedule a time to bring the drill and tractor to your site, you provide the seed and choose to pay by the hour or acre. Call the Soil and Water office at 828-697-4949 for more information on how to schedule your site today!

Interested in becoming a sponsor? Now’s your chance! This once a year opportunity is coming up soon. Please call our office at 828-697-4949 for more information! Show that you support Soil & Water Conservation in Henderson County!
Earthworm populations consume 2 tons of dry matter per acre per year, partly digesting and mixing it to form healthy soil.

Source: Earthworms a Penn State publication by Sjoerd Duiker, Assoc. Prof. of Soil Management and Richard Stehouwer, Assoc. Prof. environmental Soil Science

Want more soil secrets? Check out www.nrcs.usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.