The Henderson County Soil and Water Conservation District (HCSWCD) is now accepting applications for the North Carolina Agricultural cost Share Program (NCACS). The NCACSP is a voluntary program administered through the HCSWCD to fund the installation of various Best Management Practices (BMP’s) for water quality improvement. These funds will be available after July 1st. The NCACSP pays up to 75% of the cost for installation of the BMP. Examples of BMP’s include:

- AgriChemical Handling Facility
- Chemigation/Fertigation Backflow Prevention Systems
- Livestock Exclusion (fencing)
- Watering Tanks
- Stock Trails
- Cropland Conversion
- Streambank Stabilization

To be eligible for the NCACSP, there must be an existing water quality problem. The BMP’s must be designed by the HCSWCD and be maintained for 10 years.

If you have any questions, call Jonathan Wallin at the Henderson County Soil and Water Conservation District (828) 697-4949.

Mills River sees water quality improvements, and new challenges

Since 1998 the Henderson County SWCD has been working to clean up the pesticides once found in the lower Mills River at relatively high concentrations. The Mills River is the drinking water supply for water customers in Henderson County, south Asheville, and parts of Polk County. In the past 3 years the project has seen measurable improvements from those efforts. The stream is again healthy enough, by a small margin, to remove it from the Federal 303(d) list of Impaired Streams.

Though, the stream is now being impacted by sediment loading levels that have not been seen in the Mills River in recent years. The Project has been sampling sediment levels since 2000. Some of those samplers that have been in place since before construction had begun on a large housing development on steep slopes in the watershed. The data from those samplers shows a three time increase in sediment since the beginning of construction. This does not include the samples taken during the September 2004 hurricanes.

The Henderson County SWCD is continuing work with the agriculture community to shore up the gains made on pesticides, but we are soon moving into a phase where sediment from new development may out weigh the work that has already been done.

Shaun Moore
Mills River Watershed Project Coordinator
The Mills River Watershed Protection Project works on a voluntary basis with land owners to improve and protect water quality with in the Mills River watershed.
2005/2006 Educational Contests

We had a great time this year with Henderson County students who participated in our 2005/2006 Poster, Essay, and Speech Contests. These contests are sponsored by Henderson County Soil & Water Conservation District in an effort to bring conservation awareness to the youth of Henderson County. All the students did an outstanding job making the judging process very difficult.

This year’s theme was “Water . . . the Cycle of Life.” Each student either created a poster, wrote an essay, or prepared a speech related to this subject matter. The Poster Contest is held for fifth graders, the Essay Contest for sixth graders and the Speech Contest for eighth graders.

Our congratulations go out to all of this year’s winners. Betsy Shogren, an eighth grader from Flat Rock Middle School, won first place in the Speech Contest with her presentation. Caleb Oates, a sixth grader from Mountain Community School won first place in the Essay Contest, and Brandon Dorn, a fifth grader from Atkinson Elementary won the Poster Contest.

We would like to thank all of the students who entered this year’s contests as well as the teachers and families of participants for their support and encouragement of their students. All of this year’s participants did an outstanding job, and we are eagerly anticipating next year’s contests!
Farm City Day will be here soon! This year Farm City Day will be more focused on farming and farm-related activities. SWCD is planning our famous corn box and a big pile of straw for the kids to climb. This year the theme of our display booth will be “invasive plant species”.

Come and have fun by entering in the many contests offered this year. See if you can identify the antiques at the booths on all fields. Ladies—get that arm in shape now for the frying pan toss, and fellows get ready for the milk pail toss. There will be an apple peeling contest to see who can make the longest continuous peel, a corn shucking contest and a corn shelling contest. How about trying to grow the largest pumpkin or longest handled gourd? The kids and grandkids can make an old-fashioned toss game using chicken feathers and a corn cob!

Mark your calendars and call your friends because we want this year to be a great year at Farm City Day!

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If you need more information on Farm City Day call Cary at SWCD 697-4949.

As you manage your farm this summer I encourage you to step back, observe, and record what is going on – objectively seeing the big picture. It is a good time to take stock of what is working on your farm and what is not working quite as good as you would like. Some questions to consider include: Is your pasture resource being utilized properly? Is it overstocked or understocked? Is there really not that much grass mixed in with all of those “weeds”? What is the condition of the fences, and are they located optimally? Is your system of providing water to your animals inefficient?

Do you have a stream that goes through your farm? Is the water surface shaded? Are the banks protected from erosion? Is your farming operation doing all it can to improve the water quality in the stream? Would you like to create some wildlife-habitat on your farm?

Is your fruit or vegetable operation having high losses due to damage from insects or other pests? Does the cost of pesticide usage on your farm keep on going up, making it harder and harder to run a profitable operation? Should I consider growing something organically? Are you losing valuable topsoil during storms? Are you applying more fertilizer per acre than you would like to get desired yields? Are your pesticide handling methods and facilities outdated?

The role of NRCS historically has been, and continues to be, to provide conservation planning assistance to farmers. All of the issues that I touched on above can be addressed for you in a conservation plan tailored to your specific acreage and location. A conservation plan addresses the areas of concern that you, the farmer, would like some help with. Quite often NRCS is able to provide financial assistance to help implement some of the items identified in a conservation plan. Please feel free to call me at 697 – 4949 to discuss writing a conservation plan for your farm, or section of farm that you would like help addressing resource concerns on. The fall and winter are good times for conservation plans to be written as your recent farming season highs and lows are still fresh in your mind.

Daniel Rosenberg
NRCS District Conservationist
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