Cost Share, CCAP 2010 Initial signups accepted July 1-31

By Laurie Brokaw

The Henderson County Soil and Water Conservation District (HCSWCD) is currently accepting applications for North Carolina Agriculture Cost Share Program (NCACSP) and Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP). Both programs are voluntary and are funded through the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources – Division of Soil & Water and administered through the HCSWCD to fund the installation of various Best Management Practices (BMPs) to improve water quality.

The NCACSP can pay up to 75 to 90 percent of the costs for installation of these accepted agriculture-related BMPs:

- Critical Area Planting
- Agrichemical Handling / Mixing Facilities
- Stock Trails
- Livestock Exclusion (fencing)
- Stream Stabilization
- No-till Vegetables
- Stream Crossing
- Diversion / Grassed Waterway
- Ag Road Stabilization
- Watering Tanks
- Feed / Waste Storage Structure
- Riparian Buffer
- Feed Pads
- Critical Area Planting
- Abandoned Well Closure
- Agrichemical Backflow Prevention

The CCAP can pay for up to 75% of the costs for installation of these accepted urban BMPs:

- Critical Area Planting
- Backyard Wetland
- Bio-retention Area
- Stream Restoration/Protection
- Abandoned Well Closure
- Backyard Rain Garden
- Cistern
- Diversion
- Grassed Swale
- Stormwater Wetland
- Riparian Buffer
- Pet Waste Receptacle

To be eligible for either program, there must be an existing water quality problem. The BMPs must be designed by the HCSWCD and be maintained for 10 years. If you have any questions, call Jonathan Wallin, Shaun Moore or Laurie Brokaw at the Henderson County Soil and Water Conservation District (828) 697-4949.

Some information courtesy of the NCDENR website.
ROADS, DRIVEWAYS CAN POLLUTE WATERWAYS

By Shaun Moore

With the heavy rains we have seen this spring, have you seen a pile of gravel or sediment streaking out across a paved road at the bottom of a gravel access road or driveway? Not only are these sediment piles a serious road hazard, but two extensive studies conducted on the Mills River watershed and the Mud Creek watershed in Henderson County have clearly shown that gravel roads and driveways are one of the top contributors of sediment pollution to our waterways.

It is ironic that roads designed to help people enjoy the Appalachians often destroy the beautiful scenery and clear water that make the mountains so attractive. Poorly-constructed access roads and driveways often cause severe erosion and stream sedimentation. These effects can degrade water quality and cause costly repair and maintenance issues for the landowner for decades. Remember this important truth – if you cut corners during planning and construction, you will pay more for future maintenance.

If your driveway or access road is causing a water quality concern, or you’re planning to build a new one, look first at this very helpful guide to building access roads and driveways. It was developed by a team from the USDA NRCS, USDA Forest Service, NC Forest Service, and NCDENR. It’s called The Layman’s Guide to Private Access Road Construction in the Southern Appalachian Mountains second edition 2005. It’s available online at www.dfr.state.nc.us/publications/laymans_guide_to_access_road.pdf.

The guide will cover everything from planning a new road to maintaining an existing one. It covers proper slope, how frequently to turn out water, the importance of out-slope, cost-effective and low-maintenance water turn-offs, when to use and how to construct ditches, how to establish vegetation along the road cut, and much more.

If after studying this Layman’s Guide you still have questions, please contact our office for free guidance.

PLEASE PATRONIZE OUR CONSERVATION-MINDED SPONSORS

“Remember this important truth – if you cut corners during planning and construction, you will pay more for future maintenance.”
AUTOS & FARM EQUIPMENT MUST SHARE THE ROAD

By Laurie Brokaw

It's that time of year again — time for fresh, locally-grown produce. That also means that there will be farm equipment, or Slow Moving Vehicles (SMVs), on the road.

Many of the tractors and towed agricultural equipment can only travel safely at about 25 mph. On a road with much higher posted speed limits, the danger of accidents increases dramatically, because the speed difference limits the approaching vehicles' time to react. Many auto/SMV accidents are rear-enders, caused by any combination of: distracted/speeding auto drivers, improper lighting/signage on SMVs, illegal passing, etc. Researchers at NC State University found that although these account for only about 1 percent of all vehicle accidents in NC, the percentages of those accidents involving serious injury or death is very high.

Remember, it is legal for SMVs to share the roads and they've paid extra fees to license some of their farm vehicles.

Here are some pointers for both SMV operators and the rest of us that share the road with them:

*SMV operators should frequently check to make sure their equipment is safe for the road, by checking steering, brakes, lights and signage.
*Auto drivers should look for flashing lights and the orange triangle emblem — proper safety signage/markings and lighting on farm equipment.
*Slow down immediately when SMVs are sighted, and increase following distance.
*Don't pull out in front of each other. Tractors can't brake as quickly as cars. SMV operators should wait until traffic is completely clear, so they can pull out safely.

*Don't expect the SMV to move to the shoulder for you to pass. Driving a tractor at high speeds can be dangerous, even on good roads. Shoulders are frequently rough and sloped, which can easily cause a tractor to overturn.
*Pass carefully, and only when it is legal and safe to do so.
*Watch for SMVs swinging out to make wide turns, unexpected left turns while you are trying to pass, and hand gestures. Left arm out at a 90 degree angle with hand pointing skyward indicates a right turn. Left arm straight out at a 90 degree angle means a left turn. Waving arms and hands? Who knows! Be very cautious or you might end up getting an unfriendly hand gesture!
*SMV operators can try to travel on secondary roads and not during rush hours. Expanding urban/suburban areas are mixing with what once was rural agricultural property, though, and this mixed use and increased traffic on once-quiet rural roads can be a dangerous combination.
*Yes, there is a tourist season and no, you can't shoot them. They come to enjoy our beautiful area, which often includes visiting farms and road side stands. I guess you could say that they bring a lot of money into our area. But also remember that agriculture has been our #1 industry for much longer than tourism.
*Be patient and appreciative of the wonderful products our local farmers provide for us.
*PS – Remember to share the road with bikes and motorcycles, too!

“...Although these account for only about 1 percent of all vehicle accidents in NC, the percentages of those accidents involving serious injury or death is very high.”
COST SHARE, CCAP FY 2009 IN REVIEW

By Jonathan Wallin

- Fixed four eroding orchard roads totaling 1,690 ft and saving an estimated 144.92 tons of soil per year.
- Funded one animal waste application system for proper land application of waste.
- Funded two Fertigation Backflow Prevention Systems to prevent backflow of any nutrients used during irrigation back into a water source.
- Funded one Stream Protection System consisting of two watering tanks, livestock exclusion, rotational grazing, heavy use area protection and a well for livestock watering.
- Funded the construction of 13 wells used for crop irrigation through the Drought Assistance Grant Program.
- Funded the construction of two wells and two watering tanks for livestock watering through the Drought Assistance Grant Program.
- Funded one 1,900-ft. stream restoration project, using special grant funds, with an estimated savings of 1,500 tons of soil.
- Funded two pet waste receptacles at a stream-side park.
- Funded one demonstration cistern.

For Program Year 2009 the District wrote 28 contracts totaling nearly $271,000.