



## MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 4, 2020  
 FROM: Laurel Williamson, Watershed Stewardship Manager  
 TO: Albemarle County Board of Supervisors  
 SUBJECT: Update on Two County-supported Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District Programs

### Introduction

In Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20), Albemarle County launched two efforts with the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District (TJSWCD) to augment state funded cost-share programs that support the installation of conservation practices in the county. The County provides financial support and TJSWCD staff administers the programs and provides landowners the necessary technical expertise. This report summarizes the purpose and functionality of these two programs, as well as the outcomes of their first year.

### Albemarle Conservation Assistance Program

The [Albemarle Conservation Assistance Program](#) (ACAP) serves as an incentive for non-agricultural property owners to construct stormwater management facilities or implement other practices to reduce stormwater flows and pollutant discharges to streams and/or enhance native wildlife habitat and help conserve biological diversity. ACAP complements and sometimes serves as match funding for local projects that receive cost share funding through the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program, which TJSWCD has administered locally for multiple years. All conservation practices included in the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program Implementation and Design Manual are eligible for funding under the ACAP program. These include rain gardens, native plant landscape beds, meadows, permeable pavement, and other types of practices.

### FY2020

The Board of Supervisors appropriated \$32,000 for ACAP in both FY20 and FY21; this includes \$5000 for TJSWCD staff technical assistance. For FY20 – the program’s first year – **these funds helped to support the installation of ten conservation features, resulting in runoff reductions from approximately 1.1 acres of land from those properties.** The table below provides cost and runoff reduction details for each of these projects.

FY20 Albemarle Co. Conservation Assistance Program Approvals (ACAP/VCAP)									
Contract Number	Locality	Practice Title	Runoff Reduction (sq.ft.)	Initial Site Visit	TJSWCD Board Approval	Estimated Total Project Costs	Estimated ACAP Cost Share	Estimated VCAP Cost Share	Estimated Total Cost Share
02-19-016	Albemarle	Conservation Landscaping - Mulched Bed	2,474	7/18/2019	12/18/2019	\$ 6,896.25	\$ 3,500.00	\$ -	\$ 3,500.00
02-20-001	Albemarle	Rain Garden	1,820	7/18/2019	1/29/2020	\$ 30,075.95	\$ 1,750.00	\$ 1,750.00	\$ 3,500.00
02-20-004	Albemarle	Conservation Landscaping - Mulched Bed	9,600	2/6/2020	2/28/2020	\$ 7,026.73	\$ 1,750.00	\$ 1,750.00	\$ 3,500.00
02-20-005	Albemarle	Permeable Pavement	2,490	11/20/2019	2/28/2020	\$ 22,122.00	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 15,000.00
02-20-006	Albemarle	Conservation Landscaping - Mulched Bed	9,608	N/A	2/28/2020	\$ 9,250.00	\$ 1,750.00	\$ 1,750.00	\$ 3,500.00
02-20-009	Albemarle	Rain Garden	710	N/A	5/22/2020	\$ 4,931.00	\$ 3,500.00	\$ -	\$ 4,931.00
02-20-010	Albemarle	Conservation Landscaping - Meadow	9,250	2/12/2020	3/27/2020	\$ 5,255.00	\$ 1,750.00	\$ 1,750.00	\$ 3,500.00
02-20-016	Albemarle	Conservation Landscaping - Mulched Bed	320	3/24/2020	5/22/2020	\$ 1,615.00	\$ 591.00	\$ -	\$ 788.00
02-20-017	Albemarle	Rain Garden	3,886	3/24/2020	5/1/2020	\$ 788.00	\$ 460.12	\$ 460.13	\$ 920.25
02-20-018	Albemarle	Conservation Landscaping - Mulched Bed	8,500	1/3/2020	5/22/2020	\$ 2,967.00	\$ 2,225.25	\$ -	\$ 2,225.25
<b>Totals</b>			<b>48,658</b>			<b>\$ 90,926.93</b>	<b>\$ 24,776.37</b>	<b>\$ 14,960.13</b>	<b>\$ 41,364.50</b>

## Examples

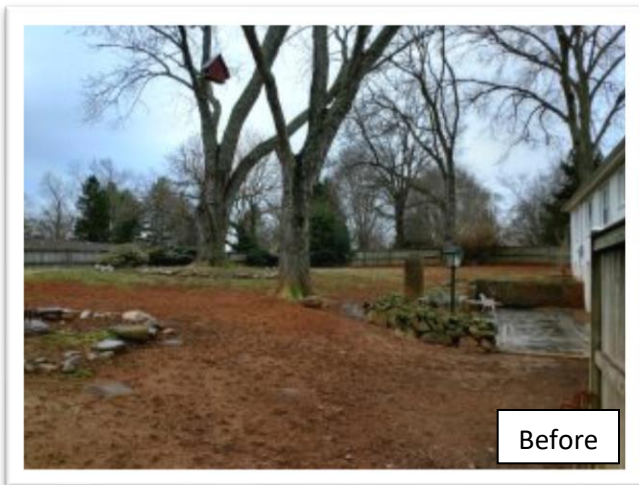
The photos below highlight two project sites in Albemarle County supported financially in FY20 by ACAP and with technical assistance from TJSWCD staff.

### Rain Garden:



This home had two downspouts draining to a steep slope close to a stream. With ACAP, two small rain gardens were installed to capture runoff from the house and the lawn. The homeowner installed these practices to increase the infiltration of runoff and help prevent erosion of the hill and stream bank downslope.

### Conservation Landscaping:



This Conservation Landscaping project transformed 2000 square feet of sparse traditional lawn into a diverse landscape that helps to protect clean air and water and support wildlife. Converting traditional lawn landscapes into highly functioning ecosystems can have significant benefits for local water quality and that of the Chesapeake Bay.

*"The back garden is a fantastic habitat for pollinators, birds, grasshoppers, and more. It was wonderful working with the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District Team. A real collaboration for which I am grateful!" —Ruth Mary*

## Agricultural Administrative Assistant Position

For many years, the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District has implemented the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share (VACS) program – a program providing financial support to agricultural landowners for installing practices that protect water quality. A key ingredient for the success of this program is developing strong relationships between farmers and TJSWCD staff. While cost share funding from the Commonwealth for such practices is often plentiful, what often limits implementation of the program at many Virginia Conservation Districts is enough staff to work one-on-one with farmers and to navigate the administrative load of cost share contracts. This was particularly true in FY20 when available funding for farms within the district increased to \$2.8 million, up from \$780,000 the previous year. Seeing an opportunity to take full advantage of this State funding, in FY20 the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors appropriated \$60,000 to support one additional staff person at the TJSWCD to focus on Albemarle County for one full year. The new Agricultural Administrative Assistant position was filled by Audrey Kirschner in February 2020; the TJSWCD has found additional funding to support the position through June 2021, but not beyond that.

### Activities

The primary roles of the Ag Admin Assistant position are to (1) assist with cost-share contract administration and (2) enhance outreach to farmers. Below is a list of just a few of the tasks accomplished by Ms. Kirschner in the first eight months of her time with TJSWCD.

- Posted weekly best management practice reminders on social media (e.g., seeding pastures in early fall)
- Created and emailed ag cost share informational flyer to farmers markets vendors
- Expanded ag education materials on TJSWCD website
- Prepared information mailing for absentee landowners with farms in Albemarle County
- Input project and GIS data for new program sign-ups into tracking system

Although many of these activities are focused on Albemarle County, some have an impact throughout TJSWCD's five-locality district. Getting past the COVID crisis will also allow for more in-person outreach activities, as well.

### Seeing Results

FY20 was a record-breaking year for agricultural cost share sign-ups in Albemarle County, in part due to the ability of TJSWCD technical staff to spend less time on administrative tasks (alleviated by Ms. Kirschner's work) and more time meeting in the field one-on-one with landowners. **In FY20 a total of \$1.39 million in cost-share funding – out of the district-wide total of \$2.8 million – was approved for 81 individual conservation practices on Albemarle County farms.** For context, the TJSWCD paid out a total of \$7.2 million between the years 1998 and 2020 – supporting nearly 900 conservation practices in Albemarle County.

### Examples

The photos below highlight two of the many types of best management practices for which farm owners can receive funding through the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share (VACS) program, administered locally by the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District.



#### Livestock Exclusion from Streams:



#### Livestock Watering Systems:



#### For More Information:

To learn more about these and other collaborations between Albemarle County and the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District, please contact Laurel Williamson in the Environmental Services Division at [lwilliamson@albemarle.org](mailto:lwilliamson@albemarle.org).

*Credit: All images in this report are courtesy of TJSWCD*