



# **Peter Francisco Soil and Water Conservation District Strategic Plan 2022-2025**

**January 2022 – December 2025**

*Approved: 10/20/2021*

## **Mission Statement**

The Peter Francisco Soil & Water Conservation District will provide the citizens of Buckingham and Cumberland counties educational programming, technical assistance, and conservation practices to encourage stewardship of the environment and natural resources.

## **Vision Statement**

The Peter Francisco Soil & Water Conservation District envisions Buckingham and Cumberland counties as agricultural, rural and urban areas committed to water quality and soil health. The District is accessible, committed, and focused on service for our community. We strive to educate our rural and urban landowners and the general public to be responsible stewards now and into the future.

## **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Statement**

We value the educational and program benefits of diverse ideas, peoples, and cultures in order to contribute to equitable inclusion through collaboration and partnerships, guided by open expression, self-awareness, and mutual respect.

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## **Peter Francisco Soil and Water Conservation District Strategic Plan 2022-2025**

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### **Overview:**

The Peter Francisco Soil and Water Conservation District (PFSWCD) is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia and is responsible under State Law for soil and water conservation work within the boundaries of Buckingham and Cumberland Counties. The District's purpose is to encourage and initiate land use practices that help improve water quality and reduce soil erosion as well as educating the community in protecting our natural resources.

Soil conservation is not something new or recently considered. In the mid-1930's, Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote to the governor of each state recommending legislation to establish soil and water conservation districts to prevent the loss of valuable soil resources. The President's letter expressed this concern: "The nation that destroys its soil, destroys itself." Soil Conservation District laws were passed in all states to provide local leadership for soil conservation programs. The Peter Francisco SWCD was originally organized on July 24, 1940, and was made up of the counties of Amherst, Appomattox, Campbell, Buckingham, and Cumberland. During a time of reorganization, Buckingham and Cumberland Counties separated to form the Peter Francisco SWCD in December 1972, and became active on January 1, 1973. The District covers an area of 873 square miles and is located in the Southern Piedmont Region of Virginia. It is bounded on the North by the James River and bounded on the South by the Appomattox River. Within the District, there are over 17 watershed dams that were built for flood control that affect the Slate and Willis Rivers and are a part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The District is a rural, agricultural district with the majority of the area in woodland and small farms. The main industries are timber, cattle, and poultry.

The Commonwealth of Virginia supports the District through financial and administrative assistance provided by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) as well as the District utilizing local and some federal funds. The Board of Directors is the governing body of the District, consisting of six members: Four Directors, two from each county, elected every four years in the general election; one is appointed by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Board, and one is appointed as a representative of the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service within the District.

### **Peter Francisco SWCD's partnering agencies:**

- Bear Creek Lake State Park
- Buckingham Cattlemen's Association (BCA)
- Buckingham County Government
- Buckingham County Public Schools
- Central Virginia Christian School

**Peter Francisco SWCD's partnering agencies continued:**

- Cumberland County Government
- Cumberland County Public Schools
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF)
- Farm Service Agency (FSA)
- Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center
- Holliday Lake State Park
- James River Association (JRA)
- James River State Park
- National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD)
- Virginia Cooperation Extension (VCE) and Buckingham VCE and Cumberland VCE
- Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (DACS)
- Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR)
- Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
- Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF)
- Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Buckingham
- Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR)
- Virginia Naturally
- Virginia Soil & Water Conservation Board

## **GOAL ONE: Improve Water Quality and Soil Health**

**Objective One:** Provide conservation and technical assistance to the agricultural and forestry community for land management and erosion and sediment control

**Strategy One:** Assist landowners on technical assistance and the implementation of cost-share program for best management practices (BMP's)

**Strategy Two:** Assist producers in developing conservation plans for their operations

**Strategy Three:** Work with partner agencies and organizations to ensure resources are used efficiently

**Strategy Four:** Provide producers an opportunity to improve soil quality through use of conservation equipment available through the District's Equipment Rental Program

**Objective Two:** Provide conservation and technical assistance to the general public

**Strategy One:** Create a media campaign to share important District information and encourage public pride for conservation efforts

**Strategy Two:** Continue to offer the District's annual awards banquet

**Strategy Three:** Create mobile friendly apps for the public

**Strategy Four:** Search and apply for local, state, and federal grants to support residential practices such as the septic tank pump-out program and the VA Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP)

**Objective Three:** Provide conservation and technical assistance to Local Government

**Strategy One:** Assist localities with implementation of the Erosion & Sediment (E&S) programs

**Strategy Two:** Provide input to each county's Comprehensive Plan

**Strategy Three:** Advise and educate local government on land use issues

### **Goal One Metrics**

- Provide agricultural program support to 5 new landowners annually
- Add one district mobile app for social media outreach by July, 2022

## **GOAL TWO: Educate Youth and Adults about Natural Resources**

**Objective One:** Provide educational opportunities for adults

**Strategy One:** Conduct farm tours and field days to provide conservation programs in action

**Strategy Two:** Annually recognize outstanding agricultural program participants and educators (e.g. Clean Water Farm award)

**Strategy Three:** Provide residential programming on soil and water conservation

**Strategy Four:** Work to be a presence at local public events to promote District programs

**Strategy Five:** Utilize social media and on-line platforms in educational program delivery

**Strategy Six:** Specifically reach out to underrepresented communities for programming

**Objective Two:** Provide educational opportunities for youth

**Strategy One:** Conduct and evaluate educational programs for public schools, home-schools, and private schools correlated to the VA Standards of Learning (SOL's)

**Strategy Two:** Provide scholarships to promote continuing education in the field of natural resources, biology, or agriculture

**Strategy Three:** Conduct and evaluate educational programming such as Envirothon, camps and watershed explorations

**Strategy Four:** Publicize events and activities before and after

**Strategy Five:** Specifically reach out to underrepresented communities for programming

### **Goal Two Metrics**

- Re-establish water quality education programming at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level in Buckingham County public schools by July 1, 2023

## **GOAL THREE: Strengthen District Outreach and Communication**

**Objective One:** Promote the District's services to adults and youth across the counties

**Strategy One:** Keep the website updated weekly with educational events and natural resource issue information

**Strategy Two:** Update the mailing list for all informational material(s)

**Strategy Three:** Develop a path forward for increasing diversity, equity, and inclusivity (DEI) for underrepresented populations

**Strategy Four:** Utilize an evaluation form for District programming activities

**Strategy Five:** Continue to provide scholarships for education in natural resources, biology, or agriculture

### **Goal Three Metrics**

- Increase social media participants by 50% by January 1, 2023

## **GOAL FOUR: Maintain District Program and Operational Funding**

**Objective One:** Seek to increase locality funding for staff

**Strategy One:** Keep an open line of communication with localities to increase staff funding and services

**Strategy Two:** Share the economic analysis of technical services and value (Appendix D expanded)

**Strategy Three:** Board and staff will increase legislative involvement

**Objective Two:** Obtain additional funding for educational programming

**Strategy One:** Create a stakeholder's group for in-kind services and fundraising

**Strategy Two:** Seek and apply for additional grants

**Strategy Three:** Work with each school division to assist in supporting conservation programs and Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEE) events

**Objective Three:** Through policy advocacy, seek increased cost-share funding

**Strategy One:** Inform state and local officials of agricultural and residential cost-share needs

**Strategy Two:** Search for and apply for grants that support residential practices

**Strategy Three:** Search for and apply for grants that support agricultural practices

### **Goal Four Metrics**

- Hire an administrative position by June, 2024

## **GOAL FIVE: Operate and Maintain 17 Watershed Flood Control Dams**

**Objective One:** Manage dams to ensure compliance with the VA Dam Safety Regulations

**Strategy One:** Coordinate with Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) dam safety engineers for PE inspections, permitting and repairs

**Strategy Two:** Perform annual owners' inspections and submit inspection forms through Dam Safety Inventory System (DSIS)

**Strategy Three:** Maintain dams in accordance with DCR/NRCS standards to ensure future rehabilitation eligibility

**Strategy Four:** Perform bi-annual mowing and general maintenance

**Strategy Five:** Install remote monitoring equipment and periodically review rainfall/lake level data collected

**Strategy Six:** Keep Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) current

**Objective Two:** Uphold requirements for Emergency Action Plans (EAPs)

**Strategy One:** Provide updates/reports to the counties including inspection reports, Dam Break Inundation Studies (DBIS), and EAP's

**Strategy Two:** Encourage localities to use DBIS as part of their comprehensive plans and appropriate ordinances

**Strategy Three:** Routinely work with localities Emergency Services Coordinators to generate an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) exercise for emergency action responses to include an annual review of EAP documentation and a tabletop exercise every 6 years as required by DCR Dam safety regulations.

**Objective Three:** Communicate the purpose of the watershed flood control dams, structures and maintenance responsibilities as pertaining to the Public Law-566 Watershed Project and Flood Prevention Program

**Strategy One:** Inform landowners of upcoming maintenance and site inspections

**Strategy Two:** Educate our elected/legislative officials, landowners, realtors, and developers about sound land use practices to protect water quality of the lake and downstream watershed

**Strategy Three:** Continue to provide publications and fact sheets to new landowners and offer educational meetings periodically

### **Goal Five Metrics:**

- Install remote monitoring equipment by June 30, 2022 on watershed dam structures.

## **The Strategic Planning Process**

The strategic planning process involves not only the staff and directors within the organization, but guidance from local, state and federal agencies and citizens from Buckingham and Cumberland Counties. All 47 Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Districts are obligated every 4 years to conduct strategic planning. The Peter Francisco Soil and Water Conservation District last conducted a planning process in 2016. The facilitator assisted with that process as well. As a part of the planning process, stakeholder interviews were conducted with past Board members and county government, landowners, and school officials.

A strategic planning event was held July 21, 2021. The following participated in the July 21 event:

- Peter Francisco Directors and Associate Directors
- Representatives from Buckingham and Cumberland local governments
- Governmental partners: Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Departments of Forestry, Conservation and Recreation Division of Soil and Water staff and State Park staff and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Peter Francisco District employees

The Strategic Plan is a document that will enable the District to incorporate anticipated changes that may affect our natural resources for the future. The planning committees have recognized future priority issues, set goals and strategies, and identified steps needed to accomplish the goals within the next four years. The District's Strategic Planning Committee will track this plan on a quarterly basis. District Staff will refer to stakeholder survey notes and use it as a tool to update and develop on-going plans for further growth within the District.

The District office is housed in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Service Center, Sprouses Corner located at 16842 W. James Anderson Highway, Buckingham Virginia. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The District phone number is (434) 983-7923.

Monthly District meetings are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday at 9:00 a.m. at the USDA Service Center Conference Room.

**During COVID Restrictions and while the Office is closed to the public:** The Peter Francisco SWCD Board of Directors currently hold meetings at the Buckingham Agriculture Building Auditorium (located by the Buckingham Extension Office) 54 Admin Drive Buckingham VA for social distancing and until restrictions are lifted.

Website: <http://peterfranciscoswcd.org/>

**2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

M. Todd Smith, Chairman (Cumberland)  
Terry Seal, Vice-Chairman (Cumberland)  
James McDaniel, Jr. Treasurer (Buckingham)  
Kevin Dunn (Buckingham)  
Barbara Teeple (Buckingham – Appointed)  
Amber A. Taylor, Cumberland Extension Agent Appointed

**ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS**

Ruth Wallace  
Vertie Mae Jamerson  
Jennifer Ligon  
Linda Eanes  
Gene Absher

**DISTRICT STAFF**

Sherry Ragland, District Manager  
Kelly Snoddy, Conservation Specialist  
Elise Corbin, Conservation Education Coordinator  
Olivia Leatherwood, Conservation Technician

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