

# Virginia's Approach to Marketing the Agricultural BMP Program



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# Background

- >90% of ag. acres in the Chesapeake Bay basin of VA (~60% of the state) need some “BMP” treatment
- Nonpoint source pollution goals looming
- We only have until 2010 to reach our goals
- Must reduce N, P, sediments and toxins
- VA relies on Districts to sell cost share and get farmers to install BMPs
- DCR must find better ways to Connect with Farmers

# Districts Sell Cost Share

- Administered and funded by state
- Carried out by all 47 Districts
- Incentives, funding for agricultural producers (75% state, 25% farmer)
- Over 30 unique BMPs available
- 2006 BMP Program \$10 million
- 2007 BMP Program \$14 million

# DCR's Marketing Initiative

- **RESEARCH:** Identify most effective tools, strategies and messages for increasing adoption of agricultural Best Management Practices
- **CREATIVE:** Develop and execute research-based advertising, marketing communications and public relations activities to promote BMP adoption
- **PILOT:** Spring 2007 pilot marketing advertising, communications and PR activities in the Shenandoah Valley (6 Districts)

# DCR's Research Objectives

- Identify major decision steps and influencers
- Determine farmer perceptions of conservation and the Cost-Share Program
- Identify the most believable messages
- Understand needs of District staff
- Define the marketing media that maximizes audience reach

# Qualitative Research Methods

- Focus groups
  - § 8 Farmer groups (84 participants)
  - § 2 District/NRCS groups
  - § 2 Extension Agent groups
- Telephone surveys
  - § 27 District Board Members
- Phone interviews with other states
  - § What can we learn from what is already working

# Researched Farmers' Opinions & Attitudes About:

- Water quality
- Conservation
- Cost-Share programs
- Barriers to Cost-Share participation
- Specific Cost-Share practices
- Support agencies
- Promotion and communication

# Farmer Perceptions

- Farmers identify with conservation, stewardship
  - § Messages should focus on conservation
- Farmers tired of being overlooked, even blamed
  - § Craft messages carefully to avoid finger-pointing
- Virginia's Cost-Share Program has low recall
  - § Branding, stronger visual identity
- Farmers don't understand how some BMPs work
  - § Look for educational opportunities



What's the most effective message?

Conservation methods  
can be compatible  
with

**PRODUCTION**

# Integrated Campaign Components

- Graphic identity: logos
- Advertising: print, radio, outdoor
- Collateral: brochure, display
- PR: news releases/articles
- District staff orientation and training

# Graphic Identity

- Strongly recommended that Districts use a uniform BRAND in the campaign
- Good logos convey essence, not details
- Visual repetition builds AWARENESS

# Campaign Logo



We work with the people who work the land.

# Advertising Placement

- Rural newspapers, mostly weeklies
- Districts chose from 8 print ad options
- Rural radio stations that have farm reports
- Outdoor boards

# Newspaper Ads

**He's of a mind to  
make a profit.**



**He's of a mind to  
protect the land.**



**They'll have a meeting of the minds at their local SWCD.**

Stop by your local Soil and Water Conservation District, and you'll learn how some conservation practices improve production and, with federal and state cost-sharing, can be affordable, too. Experienced staff at your district office can recommend practices that fit your situation. Answer any questions that come up. And help you qualify for funding. Because successful farmers know conservation makes good business sense.

Natural Bridge SWCD: (540)463-7124 Opt. 3

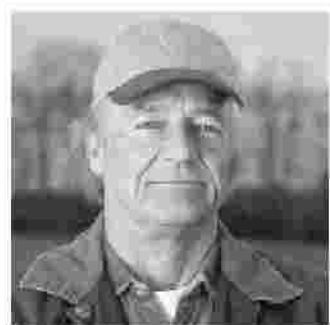


We work with the people  
who work the land.

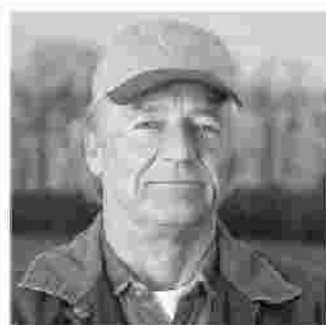
*Sponsored by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.*

# Newspaper Ads

**Beef producer.**



**Conservationist.**



**Your local SWCD is geared to the success of both.**

Stop by your local Soil and Water Conservation District, and you'll learn how some conservation practices improve production and, with federal and state cost-sharing, can be affordable, too. Experienced staff at your district office can recommend practices that fit your situation. Answer any questions that come up. And help you qualify for funding. Because successful farmers know conservation makes good business sense.

Mountain Castles SWCD: (540)977-2698 ext. 3

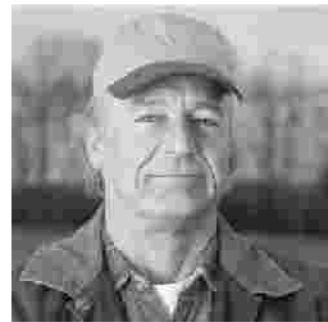


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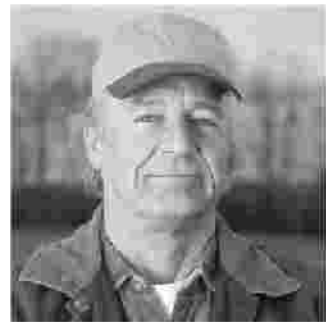
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# Newspaper Ads

**You have to produce.**



**You want to conserve.**



**Announcing a Conservation Event for the both of you.**

## **Crop Production Field Day**

*In Partnership with Virginia Cooperative Extension and NRCS*

You'll learn how some conservation practices improve production and, with federal and state cost-sharing, can be affordable, too. There's no charge to participate. A light breakfast and lunch will be provided. To register, call (540) 868-1130, ext. 3 by 3/13/07. Plan to attend. Because successful farmers know conservation makes good business sense.



We work with the people who work the land.

Sponsored by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. \*Visit [www.clarkecountyfair.org](http://www.clarkecountyfair.org) for directions.



# Outdoor Ads

**You have  
to produce.**



**You want  
to conserve.**



**Learn how you  
can do both at your  
local SWCD.**



*We work with the people who work the land.  
Sponsored by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation*

**Shenandoah Valley SWCD: (540)555-1212**

# Outdoor Ads



# Radio Spots

- Reinforce print campaign
- Two :60 spots played in rotation
- Tagged with local contact information

# Marketing Pieces

- Updated Cost-Share brochure
- Tabletop Cost-Share display

# Updated Cost-Share Brochure

## Farmers and District staff wanted:

- § color photos of BMPs
- § bigger, clearer map of Districts
- § more accessible text
- § information about how to qualify
- § text that speaks to farmers

# Public Relations

- Local news releases
- Use releases in District newsletters
- Media outreach

# PR Placements



# Where Are We Now?

- Deciding what to do next
- Want to spread campaign to rest of VA
- Possibility: Cost-Share Display for all districts
- Possibility: PR & Marketing Training
- Engaging all 47 Districts



# What We Learned

- Building relationships is important
- District staff are busy!
- Press releases are valued
- People seemed to notice radio
- Need frequency and repetition to build awareness

# Invest in Research

- Confirms hunches, prompts new thinking
- Can help gain buy-in from subject group
- Can help win funding, lends credibility
- Provides platform for planning, programs
- BEST basis for effective communication

Some more things  
farmers told us...

# Farmers Want Partnerships

Extension Agents are the Most Trusted Source for Virginia Farmers

Disseminate  
information  
to farmers

HOW DO  
FARMERS SEE  
ROLE of EXTENSION?

Diffuse  
distrust about  
conservation  
practices

# Farmers Have Media Preferences

- Face-to-face communication with trusted sources
  - § Other farmers
  - § District personnel with established relationship
  - § Extension agents
- Partnership events with their producer associations
  - § Field Conferences
  - § Days
- Farmers like traditional media
  - § District and other newsletters
  - § Rural weekly newspapers
  - § Rural radio advertising, adjacent to ag. content
- Farmers LOVE field signs

# Develop Strategic Messages

It goes beyond giving people information, or telling them what they should do....

- What are their perceptions?

*Farmers are unfairly blamed for pollution*

- What are their motivators?

*Bottom line productivity, positive recognition*

- How can you reframe your message to connect with your audience?

*You have to produce, you want to conserve*

# To view the full presentation given at the SE NACD Meeting

- go to the DCR website at [http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/soil\\_&\\_water/](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/soil_&_water/) and look for PR and Marketing for Conservation Districts: Ideas You Can Use (PDF) under "New Stuff"
- Or access it directly at [http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/soil\\_&\\_water/documents/senacdprmktg.pdf](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/soil_&_water/documents/senacdprmktg.pdf)
- Or <http://tinyurl.com/33mr7w>

If you remember nothing else...

It's all about your target audience

*and what's in it for them.*



# Any Questions?

