

Surry SWCD Case Study

Compiled by Debbie Cave, District Administrator, Surry SWCD, 2009

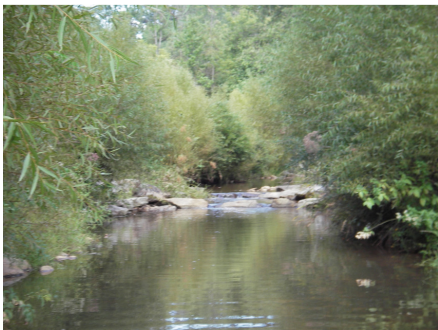
One of the best forms of land protection is through conservation easements. This legal document not only prevents future development, but also protects nature and water quality for our future. For eleven years the Surry SWCD has been applying for and receiving grants to specifically address watershed and land protection. What started as an effort to protect the Mitchell River watershed has now spread across the county to include the Ararat, Fisher River, and the Dan River watersheds.

Surry SWCD has easements on 47 sites through out the county. These easements are located along stream banks and provide protection for approximately 254.05 acres. Annual monitoring ensures that the requirements of the easement are being met. If a site is found to be out of compliance a followup is immediately initiated by staff. Non-compliance items are generally small and usually result from owners misunderstanding and are easily corrected.

Piedmont Land Conservancy (PLC) usually handles conservation easements on larger tracts of land for Surry SWCD. PLC has the resources to assist owners with cost, tax benefits and legal advice. SWCD and NRCS staff assists PLC with obtaining any information necessary to complete the easements. Currently there are over 8,500 acres in Surry County under easements being held by PLC.

The general timeline to complete an easement is six to eight months. This is from the first meeting to the final recording. CWMTF has provided funding through grants to help with the administrative cost of obtaining additional easements and PLC is assisting with this.

With conservation easements to monitor, BMP's to plan, samples to gather, and surveying to complete the watershed program has expanded to many capacities. Watershed programs not only improve water quality but also protect farmland with conservation easements. Most programs and projects are funded through grants and partnership with other agencies. There is continual effort to seek funds and grants for additional projects.



Photos of Conservation Easements taken during 2008 Reviews