

SWCD FIELD DAYS “HOW TO”

Activity: Farm Days

This is the third year for school tours in the Virginia Beach area. In 2000 and 2001 the SWCD participated in the the planning committee and worked with the State Fair of Virginia and our local departments of agriculture to put on the tours at the “Harvest Fair of Hampton Roads.” The Harvest Fair was a regional effort with financial support from the State Fair. The District donated items for the goody bags both years and in 2001 gave a donation of \$1,000.00 towards the general fund to promote the tours.

This past year for 2002, the State Fair decided to longer fund our efforts and without financial support from the other cities involved, the Virginia Beach Department of Agriculture decided to take charge of the event to benefit our city and Farmers Market. The District agreed to sponsor the school tours so we named them “Farm Days” just like other districts call their events and I served as the coordinator for Farm Days. One of our directors works for the City’s Ag department so we worked closely together in the planning of Farm Days and the department’s Harvest Fair that was held on Saturday at the Farmers Market. I am also a member of the City’s Harvest Fair committee.



Audience: Two day event held for first graders in Chesapeake and Virginia Beach (830 students from 8 schools). With over 70 elementary schools, we limited each city to 500 students per day and registration was done on a first come first served basis. If we had more than the limit of students sign up, then the schools would have been selected on a lottery system.

Resources/Partners needed:

Farm Days was the kick-off to Virginia Beach’s Harvest Fair at the Farmers Market that was opened to the public on a Saturday, we had to have large tents to accommodate our livestock area and fun barn activities. We were fortunate enough to have the Sheriff Department’s tents free of charge, which saved thousands of dollars.

Over 50 volunteers from the agricultural community and other agencies participate in Farm Days. Agency representatives included staff from: the Departments of Agriculture in Chesapeake and Virginia Beach, four SWCDs, the VASWCD, DCR, NRCS, DOF, Virginia Beach Master Gardeners, the Tidewater Beekeepers, the Virginia Beach Mounted Patrol(police officers on horseback), and district directors.

The District purchased items for a goody bag that was given to each child. A teacher packet was prepared for each teacher in the hopes that they would use some of the materials in their classrooms. Donations of some items were received from the District, Ag in the Classroom, the Southeast Dairy Association, the American Peanut Council and the Department of Forestry. We were able to purchase a coloring book for the kids from Farm Bureau entitled *Virginia ABCs, Learning the Agriculture Alphabet*. These were great books and only cost \$.17! Pumpkins were also purchased for our pumpkin patch.

Items that we needed for the stops included:

Pens and bedding for the animals

Straw bales for the straw maze

Items for the fun barn - toy tractors for the sand pile, tractor tires for the kids, pumping station with tub, soil tunnel, roper(horse that kids sit on and rope calf in front of them, etc.)

Crops for the crop display

Soybean baby supplies: soybeans, cotton ball, small plastic jewelry bag and yarn

Portable potties and hand washing stations

Dairy samples of chocolate milk

Pumpkins for the pumpkin patch, each child received a pumpkin to take home

Tractors from local dealer plus producers for display
*the other stations and crafts brought their own items

We had two teams of draft horses that pulled wagons to the pumpkin patch for the kids to select their pumpkins. A donation was given to both businesses.

Length of time for activity: Farm Days was held 9:30am-12:30pm each day. School buses would begin arriving at 9am and everyone was loaded to go home by 1pm. Each station lasted 20 minutes.

Goal: The goal of our program was to promote agriculture to local students, teachers and parents. It is amazing what many folks do not know or understand about agriculture.

Evaluation Tools: Each teacher received an evaluation form in their teacher packet to fill out about their Farm Day experience. We suggested faxing them back to us so they wouldn't have to worry about postage. Unfortunately, we do not have a large number returned. I'm not exactly sure what the reason could be. The ones that we did receive have been very positive and appreciative to have included their school in our event. Many of our schools have attended three years in a row. We also request that the tour guides and presenters at the stations provide us feedback as well, so we know what we need to improve on for next year.

Timeline and instructions: Start planning early, you need at least 6 months depending on the size of your event. If you plan your dates ahead of time, or have the event the same week of the month, people can put them on their schedule early. For instance we have planned our event for the third week in October for the past three years so you have something to shoot towards. Besides getting folks that are willing to bring out their animals for the kids to see, it is very hard to get a large number of volunteers, especially for a 2 day event. We request that our volunteers come both days if possible so you don't have to train new people for the second day. However, we do the best we can because not everyone can afford two days out of the office or the time to travel to your area. We were very fortunate to have great volunteers, you can't do it without them!

Budget: Total Cost \$ 4,100. Charge each student \$4 to attend Farm Days. The District also budgeted \$2,000.00 to provide Farm Days, lunch and t-shirts for volunteers. This two day event required overnight security.

830 First Graders From Chesapeake and Virginia Beach Attended

Virginia Dare's 2002 "Farm Days" At The Farmers Market

Virginia Beach, VA – As part of the kick-off for the 2002 Harvest Fair, the Virginia Dare Soil and Water Conservation District, in cooperation with the City's Department of Agriculture, sponsored "Farm Days" for 830 first grade students from five Virginia Beach Schools and three Chesapeake Schools. "Farm Days" was held at the Virginia Beach Farmers Market on Thursday and Friday, October 17th and 18th. Students toured several educational stations where they learned about the many facets of agriculture as well as the importance of the industry to the city and region.

"Farm Days" was held 9:30 am until 12:30 pm each day. Students were able to visit six out of eleven different hands-on educational stations during their tour. Each tour stop lasted 15 minutes. Tour stops included: a demonstration by Virginia Beach's Mounted Patrol, the Farmers Market Rural Heritage Center, the livestock tent, "Beachy" the dairy cow, crops, forestry, farm equipment, beekeeping and several craft stations to make a spider, ladybug and soybean baby. Each child also visited the Fun Barn and took an old fashioned hayride to the pumpkin patch to pick out a pumpkin to take home.

Some teachers have provided great reviews for this year's event. Trisha Hamilton from New Castle Elementary said, "This was the best, most well-organized field trip I have ever attended. Thank

you so very much for the opportunity. It was absolutely wonderful!" Lisa Phillips from Deep Creek Elementary said, "Please book us for the same field trip this time next year! We loved it!"

"Farm Days" would not have been such a great success without over 50 wonderful volunteers from the agricultural communities in Virginia Beach and Chesapeake as well as staff members from the Departments of Agriculture in both cities, four Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Department of Forestry, Virginia Beach Master Gardeners, the Tidewater Beekeepers, the Mounted Patrol and Virginia Dare's Board members. Special thanks to Triple R Ranch and Bergey's Dairy both of Chesapeake for bringing their draft horse teams to pull the wagons for the hayrides. For further information on Virginia Dare's Farm Days, please contact Jenny McPherson 757-427-8637.

Activity: Agriculture Awareness Day

Serves: 700-750 fourth graders

Partners:

NRCS
Virginia Cooperative Extension
Local Farmers
Local Farm
Pittsylvania Farm Bureau Womens Committee
Virginia Department of Forestry
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
Virginia Farm Bureau
Chatham High School FFA chapter
Royster Clark

Resources Needed:

Centrally Located Farm
Producers willing to bring livestock
Liability Insurance
Gates or coral panels for livestock
Tables and chairs
Portable Toilets
Straw for kids to sit on
Food for tour guides and workers
Set up Tour Guides, Volunteers, & Speakers
Paper Bags for Goody bags (Donated by local grocery store)
Donated material for Goody Bags (ex. Virginia Soybean Association, Virginia Cattlemens Association, Virginia Dairy Commission, Sheep Industry, Farm Bureau)

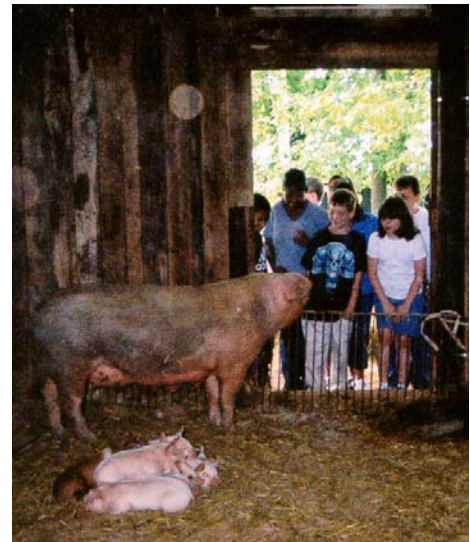
Length of Time: Two day event. (4 schools in the morning, 4 schools after lunch)

Timeline: Start talking to school administrator the first of January to set up dates in May. Also start making contacts for Goody Bags. Start lining up speakers in February. Make sure farm is a good location to host event. Line up items needed to bring for speakers and meals.

Goal: To educate fourth grade students about agricultural industries in Pittsylvania County. To promote the conservation of natural resources and understanding of agricultural production. To involve county volunteers (agricultural, business, etc.) in an agricultural education effort.

Stations: Dairy, Livestock, Horses, Conservation, Forestry, Wildlife, Vegetable Production & Field Crops

For more information contact the Pittsylvania SWCD.



2002 Pittsylvania SWCD Ag Day
 Wednesday, May 15 2002
 9:30 – 11: 37 AM

Time	Horses	Forestry	Field Crops	Gardening	Conservation	Livestock	Wildlife	Dairy
9:30	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9:46	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6
10:02	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5
10:18	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4
10:34	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3
10:50	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2
11:06	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1
11:37	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Gretna Elementary – Groups 1,2,3,4,5
 Chatham Elementary – Groups 6,7,8

2002 Pittsylvania SWCD Ag Day
 Wednesday, May 15 2002
 12:10 - 2:17 PM

Time	Horses	Forestry	Field Crops	Gardening	Conservation	Livestock	Wildlife	Dairy
12:10	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12:26	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6
12:42	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5
12:58	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4
1:14	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3
1:30	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2
1:46	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1
2:02	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Kentuck – Groups 1,2,3,4
 Union Hall – Groups 5,6
 Mount Airy – Groups 7,8

Activity: Down on the Farm Tours

Resources needed:

1. Site selection/site team leaders – fish hatchery, dairy, wood products, vegetable farm, organic farm, horse farm, forestry, vineyard/greenhouse, grain/precision farming, farm industry (fertilizer plant)
2. Publicity and Marketing Committee
3. Budget and Fundraising/Grants Committee
4. Logistics Committee

Partners: Tidewater RC&D takes the lead on this project. This program rotates between Tidewater SWCD, Northern Neck SWCD and Three Rivers SWCD. Other partners include Virginia Cooperative Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service, High School FFA, Parks and Recreation, and Agri-Business.

Goal: A public event that promotes a sense of community by celebrating the farming, forestry, and fishing heritage of the region in a fun and educational day that promotes tourism.

Evaluation Tools: Number of visitors to each site. Each visitor is asked to complete an evaluation form. If the evaluation is completed, they would be eligible in a drawing for a door prize.

Timeline: Begin planning in February for a September Event. Approximately 10 hours per month.

Publicity & Marketing Committee – Brochure Concept and Newspaper Articles (April), Flyer and contact papers on features (May), Map (June), Brochure and Poster Layout (July), Brochure and Poster printed (July), Distribute Poster and Brochure (July-August), Organize Feature Articles (August), News Releases (August-September), PSA's (late August).

Site Leaders – Sites Selected (April), Sites Developed (directions and paragraph on tour content – June), Write feature article for newspaper and enlist volunteers (August), Complete Site preparation (September 4), Coordinate Volunteers (Get tshirts, signs – September 5)

Fundraising Committee – Funders Database (March), Letters mailed (April), Phone Calls (May), Donation Deadline (July), Door Prize Donations (July), Thank you with brochures (July)

Logistics –

Signs and Tshirts designed and ordered – August 15th

Reserve portable toilets – July 1st

Prepare registration material – September 7th

Farm Tour – September 14th

Equipment Returned – September 26th

Evaluation Meeting & Budget Report – September 26th

Mail Thank You Letters – September 27th



Tour Sites:

Greenfield Farm – Greenfield Farm is a family operated cash grain farm with several hundred acres planted to corn, soybeans, and small grains. Features include a beautiful farm pond, conservation practices, and a display of modern farm machinery. A small animal exhibit with sheep and goats will be of interest to the youngsters.

Ball Lumber, Inc. – Stop in to see what happens to your local pine trees after harvest and transport. Ball Lumber uses cutting edge technology in the form of a Horizontal Bandmill. Witness full tree utilization right down to the saw dust, and learn how a tree becomes a home. Virginia Department of Forestry staff will answer your questions about forestry and logging.

King and Queen Fish Hatchery – Up to ten species of fish are grown at this hatchery. Some fish like the striped bass and shad are caught locally and hand spawned. Eggs from other fish are received, incubated, and grown to be shipped as fry and fingerlings for stocking public waters. A guided tour by

staff will provide all the details of the raceways, ponds and indoor laboratory. Extensive pond renovations limit the species for this tour to blue gills and minnows.

Hillsborough Farm – Visit this Virginia Historic Landmark to see alternative agriculture on a family farm. Corn and soybeans are grown organically and irrigated to insure high quality. The 30 brood cows are raised naturally on certified organic pastures. Conservation practices are used to protect the soil and water. See a newly installed shoreline erosion control structure. Families are welcome to bring their picnic lunches and enjoy the view of the historic home and Mattaponi River from a shaded lawn.

Royster Clark Fertilizer – Come visit Virginia’s most automated fertilizer plant, where soil amendments are custom blended and distributed to farmers. Of particular interest at this state-of-the-art facility are the numerous safety precautions and conservation measures designed to protect the environment. Learn about soil amendments, why they are used, and how they are applied.

Riverside Farm – One of the few dairies remaining in this area, Riverside Farm has over 200 Holstein cows. Visitors can observe the dairy milking parlor. Petable cows will offer children a close-up experience. It is calving season so expect to see new calves. The dairy offers insights on conservation practices including rotational grazing, nutrient management, no-till and buffers. Ice cream for sale!

EXCERPTS TAKEN FROM THE VASWCD EDUCATION COMMITTEE CONSERVATION EDUCATION COOKBOOK – ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE [HTTP://WWW.VASWCD.ORG/COOKBOOK.HTM](http://www.vaswcd.org/cookbook.htm)