



September, 2005

Dear Teachers:

Your local Soil and Water Conservation District is celebrating Natural Resources Conservation Week with activities for all ages. This year's theme "Celebrate Conservation" highlights the progress made in protecting and improving our natural resources over the past fifty years.

For years, private individuals have worked quietly and without fanfare to improve the soil, water, air, plants and animals we all depend upon. We all benefit from these conservation efforts. For example, over the past fifty years, food production has grown more than 40 percent, even though the number of people on earth has doubled. Despite rapidly growing urban areas, forests still cover one third of the land in the U.S. and half the state of Virginia. Some experts think there are more trees today than when Columbus landed. Thirty years ago, only a third of America's rivers and streams were safe for fishing and swimming. By 1994, 86 percent of them were safe. Over the past five years, Virginians have planted grass, trees, and shrubs along more than a thousand miles of streams to keep pollutants out of waterways and the Chesapeake Bay.

By almost every standard, our lives and the quality of our environment is better than it was 50 years ago. "Celebrating conservation" reminds us of these positive changes. It also reminds us that there will always be new challenges and that each of us can do something to protect natural resources.

The federal, state and local partnership of natural resource agencies are entrusted with helping citizens enjoy and properly use our natural resources. Since today's students will make tomorrow's conservation decisions, we want them to be educated, concerned and pro-active in their choices.

Enclosed are classroom activities that will be an educational and enjoyable way for your students to learn the importance of soils and the role conservation plays in the availability of food for our future. These activities have been correlated to the Virginia Standards of Learning.

Your local SWCD also has videos, posters, booklets, and games that teach conservation concepts. District staff and the conservation partners can assist with presentations, demonstrations and hands-on activities.

Please contact the District Office and let us know how we can be a resource for you.

Sincerely,

District Contact Person