**VACS news release template**

Want to mobilize local media to help let farmers know that a new round of VACS funding is here? The following template can help. Simply add your district’s information where you see yellow highlights. Send to local newspapers, radio stations and television stations.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Media Contact:**

Name, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Soil and Water Conservation District, [phone number], [email address]

**NEW ROUND OF FUNDING NOW AVAILABLE TO LOCAL FARMERS**

*Producers can apply for up to $300,000 to implement methods that conserve soil and water*

**YOUR CITY OR TOWN, Va. (month and day you send the release, 2023)** -- Local farmers have access to a new round of funding — plus technical assistance — for agricultural best management practices that conserve soil and water.

Through the [Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program](https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/soil-and-water/costshar), or VACS, a farmer can apply for up to $300,000 to support the cost of practices that keep nutrients, sediments, and waste out of streams and rivers.

These practices can also help boost farm productivity and profitability.

The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Soil and Water Conservation District manages the VACS program in this area, providing technical recommendations and distributing funding.

**QUOTE** from SWCD director. Quote should be short. Quote should also sound like a person talking. **Formula:**

* Sentence 1: Praise for farmers.
* Sentence 2: How the SWCD can help farmers.
* Sentence 3: How conservation benefits the land and waters that we all depend on (farmers most of all!).

***Example:*** *“Farmers in the XXXX Soil and Water Conservation District are some of the hardest-working folks I’ve ever seen,” said District Director \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. “As input prices rise, we’re here to share the cost and help producers’ efforts go even further. Our farmers are leaders in conserving the resources our economy depends on, and we’re honored to support them.”*

More than 70 best management practices are eligible for VACS funding, including:

* Your district’s most popular practice
	+ One phrase stating why this is beneficial (**Example:** *“Keeps soil loose and helps it absorb water; also scavenges unused nutrients to make them available to next season’s crop.”*)
* Your district’s second most popular practice
	+ One phrase stating why this is beneficial
* Your district’s third most popular practice
	+ One phrase stating why this is beneficial

**OPTIONAL: Insert optional content here (see below)**

Farmers interested in learning more or applying can contact the \_\_\_\_\_\_ Soil and Water Conservation District at [phone number] or [email].

Soil and water conservation districts were established in the 1930s after approximately 35 million acres of formerly cultivated land were destroyed for crop production because of poor land management practices. SWCDs develop programs that conserve soil resources, control and prevent soil erosion, prevent floods, and conserve, develop, utilize and dispose of water.

Learn about all the \_\_\_\_\_\_ Soil and Water Conservation District’s programs and resources at [website].

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**Optional Content:**

**1. A quote from a farmer:** 2-3 sentences saying how he or she benefitted from VACS. Be sure to get permission from the farmer to use his or her name in a press release.

**2. Whole Farm Approach:** If your district participates in the Whole Farm Approach, that can be a big plus for your release — and your farmers! This one-sentence paragraph can say:

“The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Soil and Water Conservation District participates in the popular Whole Farm Approach, which lets a farmer submit just one cost-share application to cover multiple nutrient management or cover crop practices, on as much acreage as desired.”

**3. Small Herd Initiative:** If you have a significant number of farmers with 20-49 head of cattle, be sure to add the following paragraph.

“This year offers more cost-share for ranchers with smaller herds. The Small Herd Initiative is a set-aside just for farmers with 20-49 head of cattle. The program keeps smaller operations from having to compete with larger producers for funding. Last year’s Small Herd Initiative reimbursement cap was $35,000 per farmer. This year’s is $50,000.”