

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 28, 2004

TO: The Board of Supervisors

FROM: Beth Davis, Environmental Education Coordinator

SUBJECT: Turf Love Nutrient Management Program - Contract Approval

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Turf Love is a partner program between Protecting Resources in Delicate Environments (PRIDE) and the Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE). Through public workshops and home visits, VCE Master Gardener volunteers teach homeowners how to produce healthy turf while reducing the use of fertilizers, pesticides, and insecticides which contribute to the non-source pollution of our area's rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay. Water conservation is also promoted through proper mowing techniques. This type of educational programming is called for in both the Yarmouth and Powhatan Creek Watershed Management Plans.

Any James City County resident can participate. For a fee of \$15, a "Lawn Ranger," or specifically trained MG volunteer, will go to a home and conduct a site visit, take a soil sample, measure the square footage of lawn (necessary for purchasing the proper amount of lawn care products), and offer educational information and recommendations on establishing or maintaining healthy turf. Participants receive a recommendation for fertilizing and liming their lawns and a personalized Nutrient Management and Best Management Practice plan for seasonal lawn care.

The Turf Love Nutrient Management Program began in 1999, funded by a Water Quality Improvement Grant, and has been funded by the County's PRIDE program since FY 2003. Funding in FY 2003 totaled \$17,935; in FY 2004, \$17,935, the James City Service Authority (JCSA) also provided \$500 for printing; and in FY 2005, \$25,063. The increased funding in FY 2005 will be used for administrative support, workshops, community outreach, educational material, and program expansion. Quarterly and annual reports are submitted to PRIDE representatives for program oversight.

Turf Love is currently managed by two part-time employees, one who works 5 hours per week and another who works 20 hours per week. The program's goal is to conduct 150 home visits per year which was exceeded last year by 30 percent. Over 650 home visits have been conducted thus far since the program's inception in 1999, with a total of 58 neighborhoods served. In FY 2004, Turf Love conducted approximately 4,200 citizen contacts. Turf Love also conducts two educational workshops per year. Super Turf Saturday, which is an annual workshop, held the third Saturday in August with turf experts from Virginia Tech, where enrollment has increased annually. Turf "U" is a fall and spring workshop.

In order to collect valuable data about how the program has affected participants and their behavior with turf management, both a pre-survey and post-survey are conducted. Survey results show that 100 percent changed at least one lawn care practice, 71 percent changed their fertilization practice, 37 percent changed their lawn-watering practices, and 35 percent changed their liming practices.

Turf Love's future programming direction includes Landscape Love, which is a complementary program to the Turf Love Program aimed at addressing *other than turf* landscape issues, targeting the Green Industry in order to more closely work with and educate local Lawn Care companies, and involving youth programs in order to work with local youth to train future Lawn Care entrepreneurs.

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This activity is very important to the overall water-quality educational effort in the County. Partnering with the Turf Love program is an effective technique to deliver this educational service. Staff recommends adoption of the attached resolution that authorizes the execution of a contract with Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University for the provision of the Turf Love program in the County.

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Beth Davis

CONCUR:

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John T. P. Horne

JTPH/adw  
turflove.mem

Attachment