Abstract: This signature Foodshed and watershed project is collectively improving watershed health in the Shenandoah and Rappahannock River basins by reducing nutrient and sediment loads and by finding common ground with farmers and the broader community around soil health, water quality improvements and farm-to-table connections. The conservation, protection, and improvement of soil, water and natural resources requires a commitment from everyone in the watershed and from the farm to the table. The content expertise, research skills, networking, and educational programming of agents and specialists can build the necessary commitment. Virginia Cooperative Extension agents and specialists are partnering with cooperating organizations and area farmers to better understand the decision-making and whole-farm planning that goes into adoption and implementation of conservation practices, while enhancing farm-to-table and water quality connections for broader collective impact. This holistic programming approach and partnerships are getting more locally-grown Virginia foods into schools, universities, hospitals and institutions. By partnering with the Northern Virginia 4-H Education Center, over $4,000 of revenue was returned to the local economy, over 2,400 camp children participated and consumed locally produced tomatoes, lettuce, spinach, cucumbers, potatoes, and an assortment of seasonal fruits. Local produce purchases made up 13% of the produce purchased for camp. The campers also consumed 824 pounds of locally grown pork sausage. This agent/specialist partnership is also practical and will reduce N losses by 48,000 pounds, P load reductions of 3,200 pounds, and 2,000 tons of sediment from participating farms, all while teaching life skills and making more local food and farm connections.

Response
A grant project team and partnership partnership and team was formed to collectively improve watershed health in the Shenandoah and Rappahannock River basins by:
- Reducing nutrient and soil pollution by utilizing farm-level nutrient balance, continuous improvement plan (CIP) development, whole-farm planning and decision-making;
- Increasing implementation of core soil health practices;
- Improving community financing and regional food infrastructure;
- Increasing local food purchases and procurement by institutions;
- Increasing size and scope of Buy Fresh Buy Local program;
- Developing and disseminating a comprehensive framework for improving soil health, reducing farm nutrient imbalances; and
- Enhancing community and regional commitment to a sustainable vibrant food system.

Healthy Farm to Table and Water Quality Connections for Collective Impact
Funding was provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s 2013 Chesapeake Bay Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grant Program in partnership with the Friendly City Food Cooperative, James Madison University, Shenandoah Forum, Shenandoah Valley Soil and Water Conservation District, USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service, Virginia Beginning Farm and Rancher Coalition, community organizations, universities and farmers.

Emerging Results
- Conducted interviews with 11 small to mid-size diversified farms on the non-financial incentives for adoption of conservation practices and 8 interviews on the financial viability of adopting conservation practices as a whole-farm planning process;
- Recruited 12 additional farms for Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) development and verification of implementation after two years;
- Formed a Farm-to-Institution Work Group to look at local food procurement and waste reduction;
- By partnering with the Northern Virginia 4-H Education Center, over $4,000 of revenue was returned to the local economy;
- Over 2,400 camp children participated and consumed locally grown fruits and vegetables;
- Recommended practices to reduce N losses by 48,000 pounds, P load reductions of 3,200 pounds, and 2,000 tons of sediment from participating farms.