

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE BALTIMORE COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

410-666-1188, EXTENSION 3

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2008 COOPERATORS OF THE YEAR

Each year, the Baltimore County Soil Conservation District recognizes the farmer who has done the best job in voluntarily applying conservation practices on his or her land. For the past several years, the District has added a new award category to acknowledge those who own farms that are less than 50 acres to recognize the significant number of small farms in Baltimore County. For 2008, Jay McGinnis is the Cooperator of the Year for a farm over 50 acres and Sandra Ehnen wins the Cooperator Award for a farm under 50 acres.

Jay McGinnis

As the main operator of a 1,350 acre grain operation, Jay McGinnis represents the fifth generation working on the family farm in White Hall. The McGinnis family started practicing conservation farming since the Soil Conservation Service began offering technical assistance in the 1930's. Jay's father, Wayne McGinnis, served on the District Board of Supervisors for many years and implemented his conservation plan, starting in the 1960's. Wayne installed watering troughs, stream crossings, fencing, strip cropping, diversions and grassed waterways on the same farms Jay



Left to right: Tim Clippinger, NRCS District Conservationist; Sandra Ehnen, Jay McGinnis, Charles Conklin, District Chairman and Jim Ensor, District Manager.

now operates. Most of the owned land has been enrolled with the Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation under perpetual easement.

Jay took control of the farming operation ten years ago and has carried on the family tradition of conservation stewardship. In 2008, he worked with the District to update his conservation plan and installed 2,500 linear feet of grassed waterways, which provide stabilized drainage areas to convey concentrated storm water runoff from cropfields without causing erosion. He has also been very active in the Maryland Cover

Crop program. Jay started participating in USDA's Conservation Security Program which acknowledges good conservation stewardship. He also participates in the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) with nutrient and pest management.

Sandra Ehnen

Sandra Ehnen and her husband Dan Dreyfuss bought a 47 acre property in 2002 in the Upperco area of Baltimore County near Hampstead. They enrolled their property in a conservation easement through the Maryland Rural Legacy Program, administered by the Land Preservation Trust. The District has been working with Sandra since 2006 and developed a conservation plan to guide them through the conversion of eight acres of cropland to pasture, the installation of a watering trough to keep their horses out of the stream and the establishment of a buffer area along

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the stream. Sandra was the first recipient of cost-sharing through the District's Small Farm Cost-Share Program to install the watering trough.

When the District started the Small Farm Cost-Share Program, it was targeted to reach small livestock operations that didn't qualify for traditional agricultural programs. There are so many small farms that the collective potential of pollution to Prettyboy, Loch Raven and Liberty Reservoirs and the Chesapeake Bay is significant. The initial challenge for the District was to locate and contact the owners of small livestock operations. However, in this case, Sandra found the District by referral.

"We were very pleased with the assistance we received from the District", Sandra said. "We feel that everyone should do their part to protect the environment."

2009 Farm Mentorship Program-Calvert's Gift Farm

Jack and Beckie Gurley own and operate a five acre certified organic vegetable farm called Calvert's Gift Farm on Yeoho Road in Sparks. They offer a mentoring program to provide knowledge and instruction to enable graduates to start a small organic vegetable operation with a minimal amount of capital. Calvert's Gift Farm is a good model to demonstrate how this goal can be attained. The focus will be on small scale, non-mechanized, low input production within the framework of the National Organic Program.

Vegetables, herbs and fruit are direct marketed at four area farmers' markets and through an on-farm Community Supported Agriculture Program (CSA) with which subscriptions are sold to receive weekly amounts of certified organic vegetables or cage free brown eggs. Jack and Beckie both farm full time and are completing their 13th season as vegetable growers. The 2009 mentorship program will combine classroom instruction with hands-on learning on the Gurley's farm.

The program will begin in February 2009. Hands-on farm activities will commence in early April and continue through October. The program will present several in-depth seminars in October and November on subjects determined to be most important by the participants. At the end of the program, there will be an informal meeting with landowners who are interested in leasing land to new organic farmers.

The program will hold two classroom sessions per month during the early season (February- April) and late season (October-November) periods. These classroom sessions will be part of a Continuing Education Series sponsored by the Cooperative Extension service. For more information, contact Jack Gurley at giftcal@aol.com.

District Reaches Out to Small Horse Farms

Over the last year, the District has started an outreach effort to a segment of the Baltimore County agricultural community that has been often overlooked in the past; that is, the many horse operations with one to seven horses that are too small to qualify for traditional ag conservation programs. Last October, the District announced its Small Farm Water Quality Improvement Cost-Share Program and has now fully committed its \$25,000 fund on five farms to install nine practices which included roof run-off control, automatic waterers, a spring development, a diversion, and heavy use area protection.

Last summer, the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) announced a Small Equine Cost-Share Program with funding set at \$10,000 for Baltimore County with a maximum limit of \$3,000 per farm. Funding is still available.

This growing interest in horse operations is based on ag statistics. The 2002 Maryland Equine Census found central Maryland has among the largest concentration of horses in the State. With more than 87,000 animals, the Maryland horse industry ranks second in livestock population behind poultry. Maryland has twice as many horses per square mile as Virginia, Texas, California, or Kentucky.

Ciara McMurtrie is the new MDA Soil Conservation Planner and Regional Equine Specialist for Baltimore, Harford and Carroll Counties and will be assisting with the Small Equine Cost-Share Program. Her previous experience includes work in the boarding and show aspects of the horse industry and as an assistant trainer and exercise rider with thoroughbred race horses.

Initially, the District was concerned with being able to identify and contact small horse operations. Many small operations are "hobby farms" and the owners are employed off the farm during the day, complicating the ability to contact them. Also, many of these horse owners do not have previous farm experience and are not acquainted with conservation program requirements or the Soil Conservation District. Ciara has been successful in reaching many small horse owners through posting flyers in strategic locations and through her personal network in the horse training and racing industry.

The Small Equine Cost-Share Program offers to help owners with free conservation planning and up to 75 percent of the cost of installing best management practices such as heavy use area protection, composting bins for manure, pasture reseeding and watering facilities. Cost-share recipients are responsible for maintaining the practice for a specified period of time, usually ten years. For additional information on the program or questions about horse care, contact Ciara at the District office at 410-666-1188, extension 112 or email her at ciara.mcmurtrie@md.nacdnet.net.



Honoring Dedicated Service

Loring "Bud" Sparks is stepping down from his position on the District Board of Supervisors, a position he has held for the last 34 years. During that period, he served as Chairman for eight years, but for most of those years, he served as Treasurer. He has also served as Treasurer of the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts. Prior to becoming a supervisor in 1974, Bud served as associate supervisor to the Board, a non-voting advisory position for over 10 years.

Bud started his professional career as a high school teacher in agricultural studies, first at North Harford High School for five years and then at Hereford High for 25 years. He then went on to work at MidAtlantic Farm Credit for over 23 years.

The District created a special position of Supervisor Emeritus for Bud and welcomed him to continue to participate with the Board of Supervisors. "Bud Sparks exemplifies the highest ideals of steadfast dedicated service to the Baltimore County Soil Conservation District," Charles Conklin, Board Chairman, said, "We hope to continue to benefit from his experience and good, sound ideas to promote conservation."

As shown in the picture above, Bud received two commemorative plaques from the District and a Secretary's Citation from MDA Secretary Roger Richardson.

Welcome to New District Supervisor

Mike McGinnis recently took the oath of office to become the newest addition to the District Board of Supervisors. Mike and his dad and a partner own and operate two farms on 450 acres, one in Whitehall and another in Pennsylvania, and farm 2,000 acres, growing corn, soybeans and small grains.

Mike had a conservation plan created for his farms in 2004 and has converted to no-till planting and participates in the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) with nutrient and pest management.

Before becoming a farmer, Mike was a contractor and became familiar with the District through the sediment control plans he had to submit to develop properties.

"I appreciate the opportunity to work with the District and help promote conservation in Baltimore County," Mike said. "Good conservation management is just a practical way of doing business no matter what that business is."



"...The only progress that counts is that on the actual landscape of the back forty." ..."
- Aldo Leopold

District Outreach

Speakers from the Baltimore County Soil Conservation District are available at no charge to give presentations on natural resource conservation programs in agricultural and urban areas. If your organization or school would like to hear about the ways that conservation practices can improve soil, water and air quality for any land use, contact the District office at 410-666-1188, extension 3 to request a speaking engagement.

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<http://www.mascd.net/BCSCD>



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BALTIMORE COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

A political subdivision of the State of Maryland, the Baltimore County Soil Conservation District was established in 1944. Its mission is to protect the natural resources of Baltimore County and assist landowners in implementing sound conservation measures. The District is managed by a Board of Supervisors, five appointed county residents who take an oath of office to serve their community. The staff is composed of federal, state and district employees.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

- Charles Conklin—Chairman
- Thomas Reynolds—Vice Chairman
- Stephen Smith—Treasurer
- Vernon Foster—Supervisor
- Mike McGinnis—Supervisor
- David Martin, Secretary, Cooperative Extension
- Bud Sparks, Supervisor Emeritus

ASSOCIATE SUPERVISORS

- Daniel Dorsey Pat Ghingher Lucy Wright
- Diana Gutierrez

DISTRICT STAFF

ADMINISTRATIVE

- Jim Ensor, District Manager
- Essy Frey, Administrative Assistant

AGRICULTURAL

- Tim Clippinger, District Conservationist, NRCS
- Andy Thomas, Soil Conservation Eng. Tech., MDA
- Ciara McMurtrie, Planner/Outreach Specialist, MDA
- Jared Wagner, Soil Conservation Planner, MDA
- Serafina Rayner, Technician, MDA

URBAN

- Jeff West, Urban Conservationist
- Quintin Cornwell, Urban Conservationist
- David Bachman, Urban Conservationist
- Sara Campbell, Urban Conservationist, Balto. Co.

All District services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.

LET US KNOW IF WE CAN HELP YOU!

The Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share Program (MACS) will pay up to 87.5% of the installation cost of these practices for qualifying landowners:

- _____ Waste Storage _____ Grassed Waterway
- _____ Riparian Buffer _____ Winter Cover Crop
- _____ Diversion _____ Field Border
- _____ Heavy Use Area Protection _____ Filter Strip
- _____ Roof Runoff Mngt. System
- _____ Sediment Basin _____ Stream Fencing
- _____ Nutrient Mgt. Plan _____ Strip Cropping
- _____ Spring Development _____ Stream Crossing
- _____ Trough or Tank _____ Critical Area Planting

If you would like to see if you qualify or you'd like more information on these or other conservation practices, a conservation plan for your property or updating an old plan, mail or fax this form to us and we will contact you.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone # _____

Fax to: 410-666-0179 or mail to:

Baltimore County Soil Conservation District
 9831 Van Buren Lane
 Cockeysville, MD 21030