# AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION NEWS

*A Publication of the Baltimore County Soil Conservation District*

410-666-1188, extension 3 — Editor: Gerald F. talbert

Volume 11, Issue 2 — April 2009


# The Future of Biofuels in Maryland

The development of a biofuels market holds promise for farmers in Maryland. Biofuel refers to renewable, relatively clean burning (carbon neutral) fuel that can be obtained from a variety of biomass sources. Biofuel products are currently manufactured in two main types: ethanol, and biodiesel. Ethanol is currently made from corn, but a second generation of biomass feedstock for ethanol will be energy crops such as switchgrass or crop residues such as corn stover, wheat straw or waste products from the wood industry and promises to provide new markets for agriculture and forestry. Today, gasoline in Maryland is blended with 10 percent ethanol, called E10 and a few stations have pumps with E85, 85% ethanol, for a growing national fleet of flexible fuel vehicles (FFVs). Currently, Maryland state government has 1,000 E85 vehicles in its fleet and plans to increase this by 200 per year.

Biodiesel is manufactured from oil seed plants such as soybeans, canola and rapeseed, waste vegetable oils, rendered animal fats and one day, algae. Biodiesel can be used in most diesel engines without modifications. It is identical to #2 heating oil and can be used for home heating as well as a diesel transportation fuel.

In addition to existing federal legislation for first and second generation biofuels, USDA Secretary, Tom Vilsack, is promoting research and development to advance the expansion of biofuels . There are provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill for advanced biofuels using barley and other small grains as feedstock . Pat McMillan, Assistant Secretary of Marketing for the Maryland Department of Agriculture sees "good progress" in the area of biofuels.

The Maryland General Assembly has passed several bills to support the fledgling biofuels industry. In 2008, Senate Bill 565 provided a tax credit for individuals and businesses using a 5 percent biodiesel blend (B5) or better for heating oil. In 2007, House Bill 745 required that B5 be used in 50 percent of the heating oil and heavy equipment used in buildings and equipment owned by the State . In 2006, Senate Bill 54 established that 50 percent of Maryland's diesel vehicle fleets use a minimum of B5. In 2005, Senate Bill 740 established specified production credits for ethanol and biodiesel. Governor O'Malley has an Ethanol Coalition that supports using small grains as a second generation biofuel feedstock.

Currently, there is no ethanol production in Maryland. There were three major projects in development that would use corn railed in from the Midwest and Maryland corn and barley, but these plans are scrapped for now. There are two plants in Maryland that provide the infrastructure to process agricultural products into fuel. Commissioning has begun at the New Generation Biofuels Plant in Curtis Bay which can produce five million gallons per year but has the capacity to expand to 50 million gallons per year. This plant uses an emulsion process using vegetable oils and animal fats to produce #2 heating oil. The Cropper Oil & Gas Company opened the Maryland Biodiesel Plant in Berlin, MD in 2006 and uses soybean oil as the plant feedstock provided by Perdue's crush facility 20 miles away in Salisbury. Major clients include Johns Hopkins University and the State Highway Administration (SHA). Many of the big yellow trucks that the SHA owns run on some percentage of biodiesel to meet current Maryland regulation. Some SHA biodiesel tanks

*(Continued on page 3)*

## You Can Receive This Newsletter By Email!!

**Enjoy a full color version emailed to you as soon as it is posted to our website. Register for our email group by calling 410-666-1188, ext. 101 or emailing to essy.frey@md.nacdnet.net .**

**Time to Deal with Noxious Weeds**

Thistles, Johnsongrass and Shattercane have been declared prohibited noxious weeds in Maryland. These weeds must be controlled by anyone owning or managing land within the State. Seeds from these noxious weeds are transported by wind, water and man once the plants have matured. These weeds threaten the productive land of farmers and cause unsightly and unwanted problems in lawns and gardens of homeowners.

General control practices include mowing, cultivation and/or treatment with approved herbicide. For further information concerning the Maryland Noxious Weed Law and acceptable control practices, please contact: Pearce Norris, Weed Control Coordinator, 443-834-5573 or Leroy Sellman, MDA Weed Control Program, 410-562-3462 or 410-841-5871.

**New Policy for Fill Operations on Farmland**

For many years, farmers have utilized excess soil and fill materials from construction sites and road ditch clearing. There is a common misperception that agriculture is exempt from Maryland's sediment control laws, but that is not true in every case. In the course of routine, traditional agricultural practices, farmers are exempt from grading permits and erosion and sediment control plans and encouraged to implement a soil conservation and water quality (SCWQ) plan that was developed by the soil conservation district. However, if the placement of fill material on agricultural land is for a purpose other than a traditional agricultural use, the farmer is required to get all necessary permits and plans.

This situation concerning erosion and sediment control policies and exemptions on agricultural land as it pertains to the Maryland Sediment Control Law has been reviewed by the State Soil Conservation Committee of the Maryland Department of Agriculture in consultation with soil conservation districts across the state in order to develop a comprehensive statewide policy. That policy is currently in effect.

Any farmer in the county that wishes to receive fill material will need to first contact the Baltimore County Soil Conservation District. The District will approve use of the material for agricultural land management activities that pertain directly to the production of food, fiber, nursery plants, and production of livestock or poultry. If the request is approved, the landowner will receive written approval from the District and the District will write or revise a SCWQ plan to include the fill operation. Failure to obtain District approval may result in enforcement action from the Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management (DEPRM) or the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) who are responsible to enforce the state sediment control laws. *Article by Jim Ensor, District Manager.*

**2009 Meeting Dates**
**District Board of Supervisors**
9831 Van Buren Lane
Cockeysville, MD 21030

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| January 20 | 9:30 AM | July 21 | 9:30 AM |
| February 17 | 9:30 AM | August 18 | 9:30 AM |
| March 17 | 9:30 AM | September 15 | 9:30 AM |
| April 21 | 8:00 AM | October 20 | 9:30 AM |
| May 19 | 8:00 AM | November 17 | 9:30 AM |
| June 16 | 9:30 AM | December 15 | 9:30 AM |

Dr. Joanne McCrea

Dave Martin, MCE

**"Ride Your Horse Save Your Soils"**

On March 12th, the Baltimore County Soil Conservation District and Maryland Department of Agriculture presented an evening of information, and a wonderful meal exclusively for horse owners at the Hereford Fire Hall called "Ride Your Horse Save Your Soils". After a catered meal, 43 attendees heard presentations on such topics as the importance of keeping horses' feet dry, landscaping for erosion control, conservation best management practices, available cost share programs and pasture management. Speakers included :veterinarian Dr. Joanne McCrea; Leo Hastings with Ecological Restoration and Management; horse farm owner Fran Burns (2006 winner of the District's Cooperator of the Year Award); Extension agent Dave Martin; and District representatives, Ciara McMurtrie and Jim Ensor. Contributions were provided by the District, MDA, Baltimore County Farm Bureau, Hunt Valley Caterers and Meadows Farms. Ciara and District Associate Supervisor Lucy Wright made up the committee that planned and organized the event. "This is the first workshop targeted for small horse owners the District has ever presented," said Charles Conklin, District Chairman, who also attended. "Horse farms comprise a significant sector of Baltimore County's agricultural community. Our planning committee did a great job and we were very pleased with the interest expressed by the group."


**2008 Engineering Awards**

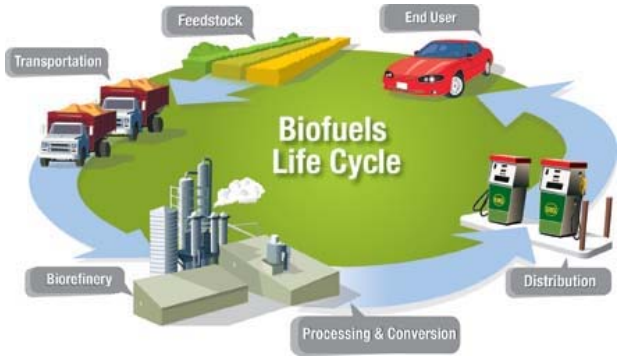
The District's 2008 Engineering Awards were presented to Daft McCune Walker, Inc. as the Consulting Firm of the Year and to Kristy Bischoff of Daft McCune Walker, Inc. as the Consultant of the Year. Above left, from left to right are Tom Repsher, President (Daft McCune Walker), Dane Bauer, Senior Vice President - Managing Director (DMW), Kristy Bischoff, PE (DMW) and Jeff West (BCSCD). Kristy has won the Consultant of the Year Award for the second consecutive year. Above right, Jeff presents the Consultant Award to Kristy Bischoff. The engineering awards acknowledge excellence in sediment control plan design and preparation. Developers are required to get a sediment control plan approved by the District before the County will issue a grading permit for a construction site.

*Photos by Essy Frey*

*(Continued from page 1)*

are located in Baltimore County and so far, that's about as close as large-scale biodiesel availability gets in Baltimore County.

Tevis Oil and TriGas & Oil are two Maryland sources of biofuel blends for transportation and heating oil. There are 11 locations statewide where biofuel is available and the current cost tends to be $ 0.15 – $ 0.20 higher than petroleum diesel. The Maryland Soybean Board and the Maryland Grain Producers are promoting the use of agricultural products and by-products for use as biofuel feedstocks. Corn and soybeans are major crops in Baltimore County but barley may gain in popularity. The Appomattox Bio Energy Plant in Hopewell, Virginia is building a 60 million gallon per year ethanol plant that will use barley as feedstock and use the hulls to make compressed fireplace logs as a byproduct. Barley production can be a cash crop that can also be utilized as a cover crop to provide water quality benefits.




Biofuels could enhance the market for some Maryland agricultural products and byproducts, help diversify current agricultural production in Maryland and Baltimore County, and help to offset current energy prices. The biggest stumbling block remains the lack of infrastructure to support the transport and production of biofuels and a fluctuating commodity price. Another key factor must be considered: whatever is done with the biofuels industry must be balanced with consideration for soil and water conservation and the poultry and equine industries.

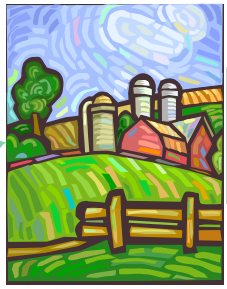
*Article written by Diana Gutierrez. Diana is a District Associate Supervisor and owns a consulting firm specializing in environmental and LEED Consulting .*

**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.

Baltimore County Soil Conservation District
9831 Van Buren Lane
Cockeysville, MD 21030
Phone: 410-666-1188; Fax: 410-666-0179
***http://www.mascd.net/BCSCD***

Spring



NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 31

## 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