



## Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts is proud to announce that their Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program (FSCAP) has certified over 50,000 acres throughout the state. Established in 2010 by the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts in partnership with Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Maryland Farm Bureau, Maryland Department of Agriculture and the Natural Resource Conservation Service, this unique program recognizes and certifies farmers who have demonstrated a superior level of stewardship. Farmers must demonstrate that they are in full compliance with their nutrient management plan and are addressing all resource concerns on their owned and rented land.

By recognizing farmers with a strong conservation ethic, FSCAP aims to encourage even more Maryland farmers to achieve certification and participate in new conservation programs, thus strengthening land conservation practices in the state and improving water quality in streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. Currently, there are 138 certified farms in 22 counties, including dairy, equine, poultry, vineyards, vegetable, grain, and orchards, among others. Washington County leads the state in the number of farms enrolled with over 30 certified farms.

Lewis McDonald, of Kent County, was the most recent steward to be recognized. His addition of 3,400 acres of cropland brought the total amount of acres enrolled in the program to 50,747.53. He has incorporated many best management practices on his farm including: crop rotation and residue management, ponds, diversions, cover crops, riparian buffers and filter strips, grade stabilization structures, and wildlife management areas.

The Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program works with local soil conservation districts to evaluate farms. As part of this voluntary comprehensive review, the farm's nutrient management plan and soil conservation and water quality plan are reviewed. A site assessment and evaluation is conducted on all owned and leased property to ensure that no unaddressed environmental concerns exist. A typical FSCAP evaluation is completed within two to three hours. Among other benefits, certified farmers receive an attractive metal sign to post on their property.

If you are interested in enrolling or would like more information, please contact Gerald Talbert, FSCAP Project Leader, (410) 247-1973, email [gft@gtalbert.com](mailto:gft@gtalbert.com).

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