A MESSAGE FROM JON HALL, NRCS MARYLAND STATE CONSERVATIONIST

As we enter into the new fiscal year 2008 we must begin to focus our attention on assistance needed by our customers in the application of conservation practices throughout the state. The application of conservation practices is an important step in ultimately implementing a strategy of conservation implementation.

Specific activities for major resource concerns such as Water Management; Animal Waste Management; Soil Survey; Wetland and Wildlife Conservation; Energy Conservation; and Air Quality have been identified in our business and performance plans for this year. The Conservation Technical Assistance in combination with other NRCS programs that are used to address these concerns has a specific scope and application programmatically. It is important that we position ourselves in a way to optimize available resources to address the state’s environmental needs.

As always, we are striving to improve our performance and results. A number of management innovations within the agency to address accountability and improve performance are already in place. The most consistently successful strategy is to reach beyond the technological improvements and emphasize enhancements in the use of teams and teamwork. With help from the conservation districts, Maryland Departments of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, University of Maryland and other partners in conservation we will stretch and reach beyond current expectations. On countless occasions teamwork strategies have effectively accomplished more work with fewer resources by streamlining processes and using “Cooperative Conservation”.

I do want you all to know that I appreciate the cooperation, hard work and dedication you are showing in achieving the goals established for Maryland NRCS. I would also like to say that I do recognize the value of working with such a dedicated group of men and women focused on getting the job done and look forward to an even more rewarding working relationship.

NACD MAKES FISCAL YEAR 2009 APPROPRIATIONS PUSH

NACD’s Legislative Committee recently approved fiscal year (FY) 2009 appropriations funding requests for NACD’s three priority appropriations: Conservation Technical Assistance, State and Private Forestry and 319 Nonpoint Source Grants. These programs were identified as top priorities by the NACD Board of Directors in July 2007 based on their national scope and their critical importance to delivery of conservation at the local level.

NACD is disappointed that the President recently released FY 2009 budget provide significantly less resources to these important programs.

Now Congress has the President’s request, subcommittees for each area of jurisdiction in the House and Senate will hold hearings and formulate their own respective proposals. NACD’s staff has been engaging key Congressional offices and submitting official requests, as well as meeting with the President’s Office of Management and Budget to discuss appropriations funding for the next fiscal year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY 2009 Conservation Funding</th>
<th>NACD Request</th>
<th>President’s Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Technical Assistance</td>
<td>$888.890 million</td>
<td>$794.733 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and Private Forestry</td>
<td>$289.021 million</td>
<td>$109.500 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>319 Nonpoint Source Grants</td>
<td>$210.536 million</td>
<td>$184.540 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NEWS FROM RENO BY LEE MCDANIEL, MASCD PRESIDENT

I have just returned from the NACD Annual meeting in Reno, NV, and confess that I don’t bring back a lot of good news. The word we all heard loud and clear was that when the 2007 Farm Bill finally passes, we need not expect any increases in funding for NRCS administration or programs. Cuts appear to be the name of the game and even though both the Senate and the House versions of the Farm Bill had $150-160 million in special funding for the Chesapeake Bay watershed—that funding is being targeted for use elsewhere. The best we can do is be prepared and see how we can work through this problem, for certain the workload won’t go away.

I do bring some good news from Reno—Washington County Soil Conservation District was honored with the District Excellence Award in the category of Forestry Resources. The award was given to recognize their efforts working cooperatively through a Memorandum of Understanding with the county to implement certain aspects of the State of Maryland’s Forest Conservation Act. They work with developers to preserve existing forests and plant new forest areas as outlined in the Act. From marketing the program and identifying landowners, to facilitating the bidding process with qualified tree planting companies, the Washington County Soil Conservation District is intricately involved in maintaining and conserving Maryland’s forest resource base. Congratulations to the team at Washington County Soil Conservation District.
MDA WELCOMES...

Jo Mercer, Nutrient Management Training Coordinator, MDA Headquarters
Louise Woodruff, Administrative Officer, Nutrient Mgmt, MDA Headquarters
Gemelle Jensen, SC Planner, Anne Arundel SCD
Stacy Staub, SC Associate, Carroll SCD
Michael Brown, SC Associate, Dorchester SCD
Colin McAllister, SC Planner, Dorchester SCD
Shawn Smith, SC Planner, Talbot SCD
Chris Burch, SC Associate, Washington Co. SCD

MDA BIDS FAREWELL TO...

Joseph Schneider, SC Planner - Prince George's SCD

NRCS BIDS FAREWELL TO...

Joan Lucini, formerly the Office Manager at the Southern Maryland RC&D Office in Waldorf. She retired on October 25.

Tom Wensink, formerly a Civil Engineer in Frederick, resigned from the Federal government on December 5, 2007, to return to his family business, Wensink Seeds in Monroeville, Ohio.

Debi Hepburn, formerly the Contract Specialist in the Maryland State Office. She retired on February 3, 2008, after 36 years of Federal service.

Lenore Vasilas, formerly a Soils Scientist in Cecil County, transferred to NRCS National Headquarters to work in the Soils Division.

IN MEMORIUM...

Mr. Daniel C. Poole, lifelong resident and farmer of Jefferson, died January 25, 2008 at his home in Jefferson. Born Oct. 13, 1919, Mr. Poole was 88 years old. He is survived by his two daughters, Susan Poole Kelley and husband, Michael of Jefferson and Patricia A. Brown and husband Quay of Asbury, Mo.; five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. He is also survived by one sister Mary Catherine Gordon of Jefferson.

Dan was a district supervisor with the Catoctin Soil Conservation District since 1972, a member of the Jefferson Rutitan Club, a member of the Frederick County Farm Bureau. Charter member of the Jefferson Volunteer Fire Company, member of Frederick County Farm Museum at Rose Hill Manor, former 4-H All Star and supported 4-H activities in Frederick County. He was also a member of the Jefferson Grange and a life member of the Frederick Fair Board. He was an active auctioneer for over 50 years, member of the Frederick County Auctioneer’s Association. Served one term on the Frederick County Planning Commission and was active in the Democratic political community in the county. He co-owned and operated Willowdale Farms of Jefferson for most of his life. He also was an appraiser and worked with many attorneys and families to appraise and settle their estates for the last 30 years.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Jefferson Rutitan Club, Larry Putman, Treasurer, 3395 Brockton Drive, Jefferson, MD 21755, or to Hospice of Frederick County.

ROYDEN POWELL NAMED ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF RESOURCE CONSERVATION

Agriculture Secretary Roger Richardson recently announced that the appointment of Royden N. Powell, III as Assistant Secretary for Resource Conservation for Maryland Department of Agriculture is official. Powell has served as Acting Assistant Secretary for Resource Conservation since early September after Doug Scott left the post for a job with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency in Cambridge.

As Assistant Secretary, Powell coordinates and manages the development and delivery of the agency's soil and water conservation programs. Resource Conservation administers regulatory, technical and financial assistance programs to help Maryland's farmers implement sound conservation practices to maintain productive farmland and protect our valuable natural resources.

EVENTS

MDA OPEN HOUSE, MARCH 29

Bring family and friends to a perennial favorite springtime event, the Maryland Department of Agriculture's (MDA) Open House, on Saturday, March 29, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. There is no admission fee for the Open House, which will be held rain or shine at the agency's headquarters, 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis.

This year's open house highlights how MDA serves and protects consumers. The event also celebrates the State's farmers and the important role they play in providing food and protecting the environment today and in the future.

Visitors can see the department's insect collection, make slime in the State Chemist's laboratory, enjoy a Maryland food and craft market, demonstrate their hog calling skills, take in a petting farm, milk a cow, ride a pony, and learn about the world of agriculture today through hands-on activities. Visit www.mda.state.md.us or call 410-841-5882 for more information.

NACD SUMMER BOARD MEETING WITH LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE, JULY 18-23

The NACD Board meeting and Legislative Conference will be held July 18-23, at the Washington Court Hotel. For more information contact NACD, 509 Capitol Ct. NE, Washington, DC 20002, 202-547-6223. MASCD will make Congressional visits during this time.

MASCD ANNUAL MEETING, JULY 15-17

Mark your calendars for a lunchtime kickoff on Tuesday, July 15th at the Wisp Resort in Garrett County. The Western Area is planning a full and exciting agenda including white water rafting for R&R!
Information from the State Soil Conservation Committee

MDE STORMWATER REQUIREMENTS—NOTICE OF INTENT (NOI)

At the December SSCC meeting, Herb Sachs, MDE, provided some background information and answered questions about agricultural activities as they relate to federal Notice of Intent (NOI) requirements for stormwater management. The federal stormwater requirements are enforced by MDE under delegated authority from EPA. The federal requirements take precedence over state programs.

Under the delegated MDE general permit, activities where more than one acre of disturbance occurs are required to file a notice of intent and prepare a stormwater management plan. MDE accepts existing state requirements for the erosion and sediment plan as meeting the general permit requirements.

Sachs said that farmers who conduct construction activities disturbing one or more acres should file an NOI with MDE. He suggested they could get a plan from the SCD. He said assistance could be made available to SCDs to verify the planned activity was consistent with NOI general permit standards and requirements. He also suggested that this component become part of the Interagency Enforcement MOU.

At the January MASCD meeting additional discussion occurred regarding what information MDE would require for agricultural construction activities exceeding one acre. It was decided that MDE personnel would work with SCDs to develop a standard plan that could be used to address NOI requirements.

SSCC 2008 – WORKPLAN

The SSCC met in October to review possible topics and issues for consideration as part of their 2008 workplan. In subsequent December discussion issues were further clarified, a schedule developed and responsible parties were identified. The following chart summarizes proposed schedule of implementation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>SSCC leads</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Image Message for Agriculture</td>
<td>Develop common strategy for use in outreach campaign by ag cooperating agencies to expand outreach &amp; info in multiple media outlets</td>
<td>Lynne Hoot, Royden Powell, Jon Hall, Bebe Shortall, Bob Tjaden</td>
<td>January - March/2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCD Functionality Using New Technologies (GIS, etc)</td>
<td>Develop common platforms &amp; use modern technologies for collecting, tracking and using data</td>
<td>Jon Hall, Alison FSA, Lee McDaniel, Royden Powell</td>
<td>April/May 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting Priorities</td>
<td>Develop common interagency goals &amp; objectives to help establish joint program priorities. Steps include: 1. Identify cooperating agencies’ resource concerns 2. Compare strategic goals &amp; objectives 3. Determine how agencies complement or support</td>
<td>Jon Hall, Charles Rice</td>
<td>February, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Quantity Issues</td>
<td>Addressing how diminishing resources will impact ag appropriations &amp; future use</td>
<td>Herb Sachs, Ann Collier, Ron Hawk, Bill Giese</td>
<td>March, 2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CAFO/MAFO - MDE PROPOSAL

Ed Stone and Patsy Allen from MDE attended the SSCC meeting held in conjunction with MASCD in January to present information and answer questions about the CAFO/MAFO proposal. Stone noted that although EPA is still working to finalize guidance on issuance of NPDES permits for confined animal feeding operations (CAFO), MDE has moved forward with issuing a proposal for a general permit to govern these operations.

Under the prior CAFO general permit about 10 Maryland operations were regulated. EPA guidance may no longer redefine the regulated universe by size category, but instead will use a discharge occurrence as the trigger. However, the new MDE proposal may “capture” 200 or more “new” operations, since under the MAFO component some poultry operations will be regulated. Additionally, MDE will open the permit process to allow public comments on CNMPs mirroring EPA’s requirement.

The MAFO requirements will allow a phased in approach for operations that do not currently have a CNMP as required. Large MAFOs may take up to 3 years and medium MAFOs up to 4 years. The Notice of Intent (NOI) filing deadline for all MAFOs will be 90 days following effective date of the program. Operations will either have a CAFO permit or a MAFO permit, but not both.

Lawrence asked about EPA approval of the MDE general permit. Stone said EPA only has authority to comment on the CAFO regulatory component and MDE may elect whether to consider any EPA comments offered on MAFO component.

McDaniel asked whether the MAFO piece capture any additional dairy farms? Stone said inclusion of additional dairy operations will be based on evidence of a discharge.

Hall clarified previous discussion about restrictions of farmer eligibility for EQIP to assist with CNMP development. He said EQIP cost share is only restricted in cases where an enforcement action is underway. McDaniel expressed the need for other entities, such as SCDs, to step forward to assist producers in obtaining CNMPs. SSCC members then discussed capacity building to increase technical assistance resources available to develop CNMPs.

UPDATES

MACS 2007-2008 COVER CROP PROGRAM

Over 1200 fall certifications were processed for approximately 204,000 acres of cover crops. These include 157,000 acres of traditional cover crop (63% of approved application acres) and 48,000 (84% of approved application acres) of the commodity cover crops.

ENFORCEMENT MOU- SSCC/MDA/MDE

MDE and MDA are updating the Interagency Enforcement MOU and after a draft is developed it will be reviewed by SSCC. This updated MOU, the origins of which date back to 1986, will be expanded to reflect the complexities of agricultural related complaints which may include any number of factors such odor, sediment, biosolids, food processing waste or manure and several regulatory entities.

MEDIA IMAGE OF AGRICULTURE

Much of the media focus these days highlights what’s wrong with agriculture. The SSCC is interested in getting some of the good news stories about agriculture in the mainstream public and invited MDA public information staff to discuss what avenues may be pursued. Several groups are coordinating efforts.

Rona Flagle assembles a monthly media advisory to highlight activities of cooperating agricultural agencies and there is an interest in getting more content from SCDs. A one page outline to spark some thoughts on positive stories was circulated and will be provided to SCD managers.

Stories on any number of special projects in which SCDs take responsibility, could be developed for distribution. Recent examples such as Allegany SCD removal of a dam and Dorchester SCD management of a restoration plan for Blackwater property were featured in the MASCD Annual Report. MDA’s web page will also add a link to some of the regulatory actions it takes so there is a better understanding of this role.

APPOINTMENTS

- John Brinsfield – Dorchester SCD
- Charles Miller – Kent SCD
JOIN A MARYLAND CSA

The Maryland Department of Agriculture is encouraging citizens to join a community supported agriculture (CSA) farm to support local farmers while receiving delicious, healthy, fresh produce all summer long. CSA members pay an upfront subscription fee to farmers in return for a share of the season’s harvest, which is usually provided weekly. For convenience, many CSAs deliver to central locations for pick up closer to subscriber's home or work on a certain day of the week. Still others have special rates if the subscriber helps with the harvest on the farm.

“CSAs are another way for farmers to boost their profitability and for residents to buy fresh, locally-grown food," said Agriculture Secretary Roger Richardson. "This is the time of year to join a CSA and enjoy the fruits of local farms. In addition to the fresh food consumers will enjoy, by 'buying local' we are encouraging sustainable farming and protecting the environment by keeping land in farming rather than development." It may seem early, but CSA memberships typically fill up quickly. So act now to reserve your spot. For a list of Maryland's CSA farms that have signed up with the department's Maryland's Best program, go to www.marylandsbest.net.

REPORT ON RENEWABLE ALTERNATIVE FUELS IS COMPLETE

The Task Force on Renewable Alternative Fuels has released its final report after six months of study on the industry. The report makes recommendations in three primary categories: generating a funding source to promote biofuels, supporting biofuels production, and supporting the use of biofuels.

"I want to thank each of the task force members and staff for their hard work on this study," said Agriculture Secretary and Task Force Chairman Roger Richardson. "The group had a short window of time to sift through a large amount of information, agree on recommendations, and produce a report that presents very exciting opportunities. Governor O'Malley's commitment to renewable fuels, including creating state infrastructure for ethanol fueled vehicles, is a strong and positive grounding for moving the task force's work forward."

The Task Force was established by SB 261, which was sponsored by Senator Garagiola during the 2007 General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Martin O'Malley, to study ways to integrate biodiesel and other renewable fuels into the current mix of motor fuels and the effects this could have on the economy, the environment, agriculture and related industries. The full report can be found at www.mda.state.md.us/pdf/altfuelsreport.pdf.

INTERNET

OLD LINE CHAPTER OF THE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION SOCIETY

The local SWCS chapter has a new website. Please add http://www.oldlineswcs.org to your bookmarks.

NEW DISTRIBUTIONAL MAPS ON NRCS PLANTS WEB SITE

The National Plant Data Center (NPDC) has announced that a new PLANTS Plant Profiles map is now available on the PLANTS Web site. The map depicts North America — north of the Mexican border. The U.S. portion includes Hawaii, Puerto Rico/Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia. Data for Canada, Greenland (Denmark), and the islands of Saint Pierre and Miquelon (France) were provided to us by the Montreal Botanical Garden so that PLANTS could better reflect a plant’s distribution across North America.

To access the new tool, go to http://plants.usda.gov/, click on the Plant of the Week, and scroll down to a map of the plant’s location. Definitions of the geographic jurisdiction abbreviations can be found by clicking on the Native Status link on the Plant Profile — just left of the species image at the top of the profile.

TEAM UPDATES

CFC CAMPAIGN ENDS

Corey Brink, the Coordinator for this year’s Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) provided the following update:

The Combined Federal Campaign has come to a close for the year and we came very close (79%) to our goal of $7800. Thank you everyone for your generosity!

The winning bidder of the Chris White print "What So Proudly We Hail'd" is Teresa Kampsmeier. Thank you to those who bid and congratulations, Teresa!

Those of you who haven't yet received your Bronze and Gold giving level gifts should expect them soon.

Brink said he appreciates everyone giving their time and consideration and looks forward to working with everyone on next year’s campaign.

Maryland Department of Agriculture has published its 2007 annual reports for the Maryland Nutrient Management Program and the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program. The reports highlight agriculture's activities and accomplishments in protecting water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. They are available online at www.mda.state.md.us or by calling 410-841-5863.

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts has released its 2007 annual report titled, “Every Acre Counts”. The report highlights the ways Maryland's 24 soil conservation districts work to protect natural resources. For a copy of this report, contact Lynne Hoot at 410-956-5771 or visit www.mascd.net.

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Survey

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JOHN MINNICK RECEIVES EXCELLENCE AWARD

John Minnicking, formerly the District Conservationist in Anne Arundel County and now working at the Maryland State Office, received a Circle of Excellence Award from NRCS Chief Lancaster on January 15, 2008 at a special ceremony at NHQ in Washington D.C. Minnicking received the award for his outstanding work in the provinces of Nangarhar and Laghman, Afghanistan.

Minnicking started his two tours in Afghanistan in May 2006 and most recently served as an agricultural advisor to the Commander of a US-military led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) at a forward operating base in Jalabad in Nangarhar. Minnicking described his work in Afghanistan as very rewarding. His activities have included establishing a soil analysis lab, working with Afghan officials on flood control and irrigation water management projects, and establishing an eastern region seed storage facility for native forest tree species. Minnicking felt his most rewarding experience was working with local and Peshawar scientists on the soil lab. He also described his travels to local areas where many days the temperature soared above 130°F. Water was scarce as these areas only receive six inches of water annually. “The villagers are hard working people. Families work together, from dawn to dusk, in the fields with few ag tools and almost no tractors,” said Minnicking. “The fields are small, usually less than one-half acre and must be terraced and irrigated, so water will flow into all parts of the field. Ag practices in Afghanistan do not fit into the typical American model of agriculture.” In addition to his Circle of Excellence Award, commanders of the PRT’s where Minnicking served awarded him battle coins to commemorate his work in Afghanistan.

CIVIL RIGHTS

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Eugene Jones, the Black Emphasis Program Manager on the NRCS Civil Rights Advisory Committee reports that Virginia Tech is hosting a photographic exhibit on Black Farmers in America. To view the exhibits, please use the following links:


LEGISLATIVE UPDATE BY LYNNE HOOT

As the 2008 Legislative session enters its eighth week, we start the downward spiral to the end; this is accompanied by longer days and accelerated activity. MASCD has several pieces of legislation that we are following closely and others that we are just keeping an eye on.

The Senate hearing for the Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust fund (SB 213/HB 369) has already been held and MASCD has joined forces with agricultural interests to amend the bill so that funds can be used for MACS, MDA can employee staff within the districts as well as the option for grants to be used by districts, for a minimum of 30% of the funds to be allocated to agriculture, for the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources to be added to the BayStat subcommittee, for the language preventing the use of the funding to be used for regulated activities to be deleted, and we are supporting the Delmarva Poultry Industry’s position to allow trees around poultry houses to be included as a BMP. We are encouraged by what we are hearing but expect the greatest support for our suggestions to be in the House. The House hearing is scheduled for February 27th.

Several bills have been introduced that reduce or eliminate the state’s estate taxes on agricultural land. Some raise the limit for everyone and others are specific to agricultural land values with one only for land in the ag land preservation program. MASCD has supported all these bills but expects those just for agricultural land values to have the greatest chance of passage. HB 333/SB 509/SB 165 deal with all agricultural land and SB 175/HB 1289 deal only with land preserved under MALPF. The estate tax reduction is also part of SB 434/HB 898 which is the outcome of the Incentives for Agriculture Committee report (from HB 2/2006) which reviewed all tax issues impacting agriculture.

The budget bill includes funding for increased salaries for the professional MDA field staff employees in district offices as part of the increase allowed under HB 2 the Ag Stewardship Act of 2006. For the second year, a bill flipping the percentage of the septic fee that goes for cover crops (from 40 to 60%) and septic upgrades (from 60 to 40%) has been introduced. MASCD will support the bill

(Continued on page 7)
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE (CONTINUED)

Although with $50m of new money in the Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust fund, its passage is doubtful. Efforts are also underway to allow Bay Restoration funds to be used to hook up septic users to wastewater treatment facilities (SB 831/HB 581).

Poultry litter is currently classified as a Tier 2 product when it comes to “green energy”, legislation has been introduced to make it Tier 1 therefore making it higher value to burn (SB 348/HB 1166). Although MASCD has policy seeking a study before poultry litter is burned, as the Delmarva poultry industry and Maryland Farm Bureau both supported the change, it seemed contradictory for MASCD to raise concerns. The DPI and MFB testimony did make note that poultry litter is a valuable fertilizer, that there is currently not a surplus, and that farmers are not “dumping” it in the waters of the state. The bill was introduced at the request of Attorney General Gansler.

Amendments to the Critical Area Law have been introduced by the Administration that raise potential concerns (HB 1253/SB 844) as it widens the buffer from 100 feet to 300 feet. Although intended to address development in this area, the new language gives the Commission the approval to redo the regulations and they could certainly change the law as it relates to agriculture. MASCD will make sure adequate language is included to ensure agricultural viability while protecting water quality.

The Biofuels Committee established last year as a result of SB 261 recommended some changes to support biofuels production and use. SB 342/SB 343/SB 474 and SB 565 will support greater use of biofuels by the state and local governments and offer an incentive for the use of Bioheat, a blend of 5% biodiesel used for heating oil.

Addressing the concerns of the dairy industry, several bills SB 503/HB 543/SB 684/HB 1367/SB 497 deal with the establishment of a Dairy Farmer Emergency Trust Fund and selling milk below cost. Spreading sewage sludge in state parks will be curtailed and further studied if SB 261/SB 262/HB 466/HB 434 pass. Bills addressing the phosphorus level of lawn fertilizers have been introduced in both houses, both as a ban and a 5% maximum level. Another lawn care bill imposes a 10% fee on commercial lawn care applications.

Local bond bills to provide funding for agricultural buildings have been introduced for several counties. Garret County (SB 260/HB 314) is introducing local legislation to provide for agricultural districts for ag land preservation and Prince George’s County is seeking changes to their ag land preservation program.

Bills to impact the Sunday hunting laws have been introduced for Harford, Montgomery, and Washington counties and a ban on hunters under 13 years of age is also under consideration.

A Farm-to-School Program encouraging activities and promotional events in schools (SB 158/HB 696) was introduced as a special recognition for the late Delegate Jane Lawton who had started to work with her local schools to promote better and local food in schools. Delegate Lawton was the daughter of an SCS DC from Ardmore, Oklahoma and a friend of agriculture.

The Pennies for the Bay legislation discussed at the MASCD 2008 Winter meeting was put to rest by severe opposition from the utility companies. In light of big increases to their constituents electricity bills and further problems ahead, they were concerned about taking on a new role which did not directly relate to them.

If you need more information on any of these bills, please give Lynne Hoot a call 410-956-5771 or email lynnehoot@aol.com. A final review of legislation passed and failed will appear in the Spring Edition of the Partnership Press.

MASCD WINTER MEETING REPORT

At the 2008 MASCD Winter meeting, more than 170 district supervisors, staff and conservation partners met to discuss “Sustainability through Credibility”. At the end of the meeting, the body reaffirmed two resolutions; one seeking continued DNR support for the Envirothon and the other for support for Gypsy Moth spraying to protect our natural forest resources. Four new resolutions were passed:

- MASCD supports the development of a certification process for SCD staff that review and approve Erosion and Sediment Control plans.
- MASCD requests that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provide technical and soil scientist staff resources to support the Maryland Envirothon.
- MASCD is fully committed to assisting MDE with implementing the Stormwater Management Act 2007. MASCD specifically commits to helping MDE with the update of Chapter 5, development of the model ordinance and assisting with implementation at the local level.
- MASCD urges MDE to complete a comprehensive evaluation of the Erosion & Sediment Control Program in the state. We urge MDE to update the 1994 Erosion & Sediment control specs and Forest Harvest standards, and evaluate the effectiveness of enforcement activities. MASCD will research funding to assist with the manual revisions such that the revisions will be complete within 18 months.

The recently established Stormwater and Erosion and Sediment Control Subcommittee will be tackling those resolutions that directly impact their issues. Letters will be sent to address the others.

At the final Board meeting it was agreed that a letter be sent to Attorney General Doug Gansler thanking him for his remarks and offering him district assistance on his endeavor to evaluate the state’s rivers, a river at a time. MASCD also agreed to address their concerns about reduced staffing from NRCS and to seek additional funding for NRCS to support Maryland’s districts. It was felt that NRCS has lost its appreciation for the unique workload in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
NRCS SUGGESTS MD POULTRY FARMERS TO START CNMP PROCESS

“Farmers interested in having a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans developed for their ag operations need to go to their local USDA Service Center as soon as possible to begin the application process,” said Jon F. Hall, State Conservationist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Maryland.

NRCS Maryland has already received its Fiscal Year 2008 funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and funds, although limited, are still available to assist in the development of a CNMP. NRCS Maryland is accepting and ranking applications on a continuous basis. The next ranking and funding of applications will be on February 29, 2008. Farmers should visit their local USDA Service Centers NOW to apply for assistance. Farmers who apply after February 29, 2008 may be delayed in receiving available financial assistance.

EQIP funds can be used to provide farmers with an incentive payment to hire a Technical Service Provider (NRCS approved private consultant) to develop a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP). CNMPs serve as a guide for farmers that combine their skills with the science-based knowledge of conservation partners. A CNMP contains several components that include a Nutrient Management Plan, a Conservation Plan, an Animal Waste Handling and Storage Plan, and an Emergency Action Plan. A CNMP is designed to address a farmer’s entire operation as he manages all nutrients on his farm to include crop and livestock production.

EQIP sign-up information is on the NRCS Maryland homepage at www.md.nrcs.usda.gov under EQIP in the 2002 Farm Bill. EQIP sign-up information is on the Internet on the NRCS Maryland homepage at www.md.nrcs.usda.gov in the Programs Section and is also available from local NRCS offices. In addition to the program application form, there is additional application information, a list of practices and costs, and specifics on Maryland’s ranking process, including criteria used to evaluate applications.

NRCS is USDA’s lead conservation agency and has worked hand-in-hand with farmers and landowners for more than 70 years to conserve natural resources on private lands. Maryland’s landowners can learn more about conserving natural resources by contacting NRCS Maryland through USDA Service Centers collocated with their County’s Soil Conservation Districts or by visiting the NRCS Maryland homepage at www.md.nrcs.usda.gov.

BYLAW AMENDMENT CHANGES NACD BOARD STRUCTURE

The NACD Board of Directors voted on February 12th to amend the Association’s Bylaws to include additional voting members. Delegates receiving individual voting rights include Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, Federated States of Micronesia and American Samoa. The Bylaw change also assigned the territories to the Pacific Region.

The Board also accepted Nevada’s request to move from NACD’s Pacific Region to the Southwest Region, resulting in an additional Bylaw change.

KRYSHTA HARDEN CHALLENGES DISTRICTS TO PUSH BEYOND PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

In her address to the audience at NACD’s Monday morning’s general session, CEO Krysta Harden called on both personal and professional experiences to embody the theme of the conference of taking conservation beyond our usual boundaries. Harden talked about the importance of doing the hard work of what is necessary and not just the usual work of that which is comfortable. Whether that means a southerner like Harden getting to know the Midwest farmers she represented for the American Soybean Association, or an urban conservationist learning the needs of rural America, or vice verse, Harden challenged those in the room to tackle the unfamiliar: to consider running for State or National office, to address the gnawing difficulties present in conservation districts and not just assume someone else would handle it. She encouraged the crowd to stretch themselves to do what is right, even when it is uncomfortable.

Following her remarks, Harden introduced NACD Acting President Steve Robinson. Harden told the crowd that after 2007 President Olin Sims’ untimely death, Robinson did not hesitate or flinch to take on the unexpected responsibilities that were thrust upon him as Acting President. Robinson acknowledged that it had been a difficult time but spoke of the new partnerships and business decisions that NACD has successfully forged—from weaning NACD of unprofitable lines of business to working with FFA on education materials. Robinson spoke also of the many long hours devoted this year to fighting for a strong conservation title in the Farm Bill that, hopefully will work to the benefit of conservations and agricultural producers nationwide. He also called upon districts to push themselves to become more involved and engaged with their districts, state associations and national organization.

To read Robinson's speech, "Pushing the Boundaries," go to http://www.nacdnet.org/events/annualmeeting/resources/speeches/robinson.phtml.
The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) recently released the latest compliance figures for its Nutrient Management Program. Established by state law in 1998, the program requires Maryland farmers to protect waterways from farm runoff by following nutrient management plans when caring for livestock and applying fertilizer, manure or other nutrient sources to crop fields.

According to the program's newly released 2007 annual progress report, Implementing Nutrient Management in Maryland, as of Dec. 31, 2007, 97 percent of the state's 6,100 eligible farmers have filed nutrient management plans with MDA. These plans cover approximately 1.3 million acres or 98 percent of the cropland affected by the law. In addition, 94 percent of eligible farmers have filed their required Annual Implementation Reports that show how they implemented their plans during the preceding year.

"This annual report illustrates that the vast majority of farmers are strong stewards of the land and are complying with the nutrient management law," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "Farmers are our partners in protecting the environment and our treasured Chesapeake Bay. Our well-managed family farms are critical to protecting our environmental priorities. Sustainable agriculture strengthens our rural economies, keeps our land open and in production rather than being developed, and protects our natural resources and local food supply."

Nutrient management plans are science-based documents that help farmers manage fertilizers, animal waste and other nutrient sources more efficiently to meet crop needs while protecting water quality in streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. All farmers grossing $2,500 a year or more or livestock producers with 8,000 pounds or more of live animal weight are required by law to run their operations using a nutrient management plan that addresses both nitrogen and phosphorus inputs. The requirement applies to all agricultural land used to produce plants, food, feed, fiber, animals or other agricultural products.

In addition to farmers, commercial, non-agricultural nutrient applicators - including lawn care companies, landscapers, golf course managers and public groundskeepers - are required by Maryland law to follow Maryland Cooperative Extension guidelines when applying nutrients to lawns, athletic fields or other landscapes. According to the MDA report, the program's urban nutrient management section is beefing up its reviews of golf course fertilizer programs in response to nutrient guidelines released in 2007 by the University of Maryland. Additionally, MDA has reviewed the records and fertilizer programs of approximately, 250 farms. Farms receiving unsatisfactory reviews have been given deadlines for compliance and face fines for continued infractions.

"Maryland farmers and other nutrient applicators are by and large complying with the nutrient management law," said Maryland Secretary of Agriculture Roger Richardson. "Enforcement actions are underway to bring the few remaining farmers who do not have plans into compliance and our inspection team is working hard to ensure that all plans are updated and implemented as required by Maryland law."

In 2007, MDA ramped up enforcement efforts to bring the remaining farmers who did not have plans into compliance and ensure the environmental objectives of the law are met. In calendar year 2007, MDA issued 90 first notices and 43 warning letters to farmers who had not submitted plans. Most farmers subsequently submitted plans to MDA; however, 16 charge letters were sent to the remaining non-compliant farmers ordering them to comply with the law, pay the fine or attend a hearing. MDA is working through the enforcement process to bring the remaining 179 farmers into compliance.

"While we don't enjoy issuing penalties, as a regulatory agency it is our responsibility to make sure that we do everything we can to see that laws are followed," said Secretary Richardson. "It is only fair to the thousands of farmers who are in compliance with the law that we actively pursue violators of the nutrient management law."

Last November, MDA began increasing its efforts to make the public aware of the agency's regulatory activities on a routine basis. For more than 30 years, MDA has been protecting consumers and the environment and ensuring fairness in the marketplace through enforcement of the law. MDA strives for swift resolution to violations of the laws in the Agriculture Article and the deterrence of future violations by the regulated community.

The deadline for articles is January 30, April 30, July 30 and October 30. Please direct comments or questions to the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts at (410) 956-5771.

The members of the Conservation Partnership prohibit discrimination in their programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USDA TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250 or call 1-800-245-6340 (voice) or (202) 720-5964 (TDD). Agencies in the Maryland Conservation Partnership are equal employment opportunity employers.
2008 STEWARDSHIP WEEK

The Stewardship and Education Committee is pleased to announce the 2008 Stewardship theme: “Water is Life.” Stewardship Week will be officially celebrated April 27 to May 4, 2008, but we encourage you to celebrate the throughout the year. Materials for 2008 Stewardship Week are available from http://nacdnet.org/stewardship/2008/downloads. Additional “Water is Life” themed 2008 Stewardship items are available for download at no cost. Items include an adaptable press release and promotional flyer as well as a public service announcement PowerPoint, proclamation, educator’s guide and church leader’s guide. If you have any questions regarding Stewardship Week, please email stewardship@nacdnet.org.

FORMER NORTH DAKOTA GOVERNOR CONFIRMED AS USDA SECRETARY

Former North Dakota Governor Ed Schafer was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate recently as the next Secretary of Agriculture. Schafer will replace former Secretary Mike Johanns, who resigned in September 2007 to pursue a U.S. Senate campaign in Nebraska. Schafer was Governor of North Dakota, a state in which agriculture is the number one industry, from 1992 until 2000. Prior to serving as Governor, Schafer was a business executive with the Gold Seal Company located in Bismarck, N.D. NACD congratulates Secretary Schafer and looks forward to working with him as work continues on a new Farm Bill.

TRIBUTE TO A COWBOY

NACD President Olin Sims died unexpectedly from injuries suffered in a ranching accident on December 7, 2007. He was many things to many people, but to conservation districts, he was our President, our leader, our friend and a man who lived what he preached.

Olin was raised on a ranch in McFadden, Wyoming, where he his family put a high priority on caring for the land. His presence will be deeply missed, but his legacy will remain in our lives and hearts.

Maybe you've known Olin for 20 years, maybe you just met him once, or maybe you've never seen him in person but have heard his voice on his prized "America's Voice for Conservation" audio clips. He's an easy man to remember; he didn't know a stranger. NACD is collecting your stories, thoughts and memories to share with his family and to use in their Annual Report and website. If you want to share your memories of Olin in their "Tribute to a Cowboy" or read memories submitted by others, go to http://www.nacdnet.org/olin/tribute.phtml