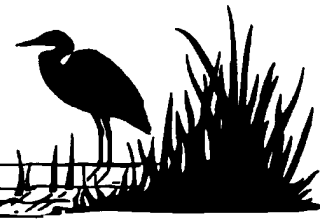


# PARTNERSHIP PRESS

Maryland Conservation



WINTER 2010 VOLUME 17, ISSUE 1

## A MESSAGE FROM R. CALVERT STEUART, PRESIDENT MASCD

One of the great advantages of bringing the Conservation Partnership together is to learn from each other. So often when we meet, one district discusses a success story or another a concern that their district is facing, and by discussing the issue in this joint forum we gain new insight. I think we work well as a team.

One of the challenges we discussed at our January MASCD Board meeting was how we can do greater outreach, accelerate BMP installation and improve performance – all without additional resources. During those discussions several suggestions surfaced.

Ideas to improve our outreach efforts to farmers who do not traditionally cooperate with us included—asking the University of Maryland Extension to provide lists of participants in small beginning farmer programs, working through county ag land assessment records, asking district supervisors to meet one-on-one with these farmers, and giving districts an assigned number of new clients that must be reached. Laptops for planners were also discussed as a way to make planners more efficient when meeting with farmers.

On improving participation in BMPs, it was suggested that farmers be taught the great benefits of cover crops on soil health, productivity and soil tilth to encourage greater understanding of the benefits of participating in the cover crop program. Other ways to improve participation included altering the standard for some BMPs such as stream fencing, providing bonuses to district staff that go above and beyond and setting up cost-share for Mennonites and Amish where they do not directly receive the cash.

I encourage you to keep your thinking caps on and talk amongst your Boards. Let MASCD know where we can help. We are happy to assist with grant writing and you can always use the MASCD 501 (c) 3 status to apply for grants where districts are unable to apply directly.

I would like to thank Bruce Young for chairing the sub-committee to establish a consensus on grandfathering of existing projects under the new stormwater management requirements. As a result of these efforts, the Board agreed on the proposed language and a letter was sent to MDE Secretary Shari Wilson outlining our comments. We noted that the soil conservation districts interest in this issue stems from our role in the review and approval of erosion and sediment control plans. Once a plan has received approval from the district, unless it needs revision, it is effective for two years (and in the case of mining and landfills five years). With the May 4<sup>th</sup> deadline approaching, we asked MDE for guidelines as to how to deal with developers seeking to renew expired plans for existing projects.

(Continued on page 8)

## NEWLY REVISED CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM IMPROVES HABI- TAT FOR WILDLIFE AND PROVIDES MORE MONEY TO PARTICIPATING FARMERS BY GLENN A. CAROWAN, JR. FARM BILL COORDINATOR, MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The new Maryland Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) offers great news for Maryland farmers, Maryland wildlife and the Chesapeake Bay. The newly revised program now provides higher annual land rental payments and a one-time bonus payment to farmers who take marginal streamside cropland out of production and install best management practices (BMPs) to restore and enhance habitat for rare and declining wildlife species. The new agreement was approved by Governor O'Malley and U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary, Tom Vilsack, on April 24, 2009.

Specifically, the new CREP amends the BMP for *Rare and Declining Species Habitat* and more clearly defines restoration requirements for the six eligible habitat types listed below:

- Shallow emergent freshwater seepage wetlands
- River systems supporting rare and declining species
- Grassland-nesting bird habitats
- Delmarva bay habitats
- Streams supporting Eastern Brook Trout
- Rare and declining forest interior dwelling species habitats

Under the new guidelines, farmers who restore or enhance the following types of habitat will receive a \$100 per acre state signing bonus, 50 percent cost-share to install eligible practices and an annual land rental payment that includes both the current soil rental rate *plus* an additional incentive payment that is 150 percent of the local soil rental rate.

For example, a farmer who creates grasslands to restore grasshopper sparrow nesting habitat on 30 acres of land with a local soil rental rate of \$80 per acre would receive a \$2,400 annual rental payment *plus* an additional incentive payment of \$3,600. The total annual land rental payment would be \$6,000 for the duration of the 10-15 year contract. In comparison to the old program, the total rental payment would increase by \$2,100 a year over the life of the contract

(Continued on page 6)

**PERSONNEL NOTES**

**MDA BIDS FAREWELL TO...**

Travis Gorleski, Equine Planner

**ANNE ARUNDEL SCD BIDS FAREWELL TO...**

Robert Miller, District Manager.

**NRCS ANNOUNCES...**

**Peggy Sue Althoff, Ph.D.**, as the Western Maryland RC&D Coordinator. Dr. Althoff previously served as the RC&D Coordinator for the Tantaka RC&D in Bison, South Dakota. **Gilbert "Buddy" Bowling, Jr.**, as the Southern Maryland RC&D Coordinator. His previous assignments included serving as Special Assistant to the Maryland Secretary of Agriculture, Executive Director of the Maryland Agricultural Commission, as well as the Department's Public Outreach Coordinator.

**Rebecca "Becky" Brown** has been selected for a career intern appointment as a Soil Conservationist in the Caroline County Service Center. Becky formerly worked for the Caroline Soil Conservation District as a grant planner and taught agriculture at the local high school.

**ENVIROTHON WELCOMES — AND CALLS TO ACTION!**

Maryland Envirothon welcomes Holly Caldwell as their new Coordinator. Holly Caldwell started working for the Maryland Envirothon in mid-November 2009. Before that she was a computer engineer for Smartronix with the Marine Corps. She and her husband have two children ages 3 and 4. So far, she has been successful in getting two grants awarded for the Envirothon.

While working on submission for several more, there is one that needs people with Facebook accounts, to help the Envirothon win. Go to the following link [http://apps.facebook.com/greenheroes/heroes/266\\_maryland-envirothon](http://apps.facebook.com/greenheroes/heroes/266_maryland-envirothon). On March 18<sup>th</sup>, if we have made it to the final round of candidates, please vote for us!! (there should be a vote button on the page-and the final votes are due in by April 18<sup>th</sup>). Your vote will help the Envirothon win a chance to win a \$15,000 1<sup>st</sup> place or a \$5,000 2<sup>nd</sup> place prize. There are many applicants so tell everyone you know to vote (kids, cousins, friends, coworkers, EVERYONE!!)

**IN MEMORIAM**

**Lester D. Shockley, Jr.** of Snow Hill passed away Sunday, Jan 17, 2010. Born November 5, 1929, he was a son of the late Lester D. Shockley, Sr. and Maude G. Shockley. He graduated from Snow Hill High School in 1946 and began his lifelong career as a farmer growing corn, soybeans, wheat, as well as raising chickens. Lester D. took over full operation of the family farm in 1960. He hated weeds and was frequently seen walking the fields with a backpack sprayer, attacking weed before they spread.

Lester D. was a member of Mount Zion Methodist Church in Whifton. He was one of several people dedicated to the preservation of Mount Zion, chartered in 1873. He attended the church faithfully until services were curtailed. After that, he attended Bates United Methodist Church in Snow Hill.

For 57 years, Lester D. was a member of Sinepuxent Lodge No. 193 AF and AM in Snow Hill and served two years as Master. He was a member of the Worcester Soil Conservation District, the Maryland Forest Association and Maryland Farm Bureau. Lester D. was considered conservative in some ways, but generous and compassionate in others. In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to Mount Zion Methodist Church, c/o David F. Shockley, 6631 Whifton Road, Snow Hill, MD 21863.

**George H. Godfrey Sr.** of Sudlersville died Tuesday, January 26, 2010, at home. He was 77. He was born Aug. 9, 1932, in Mt. Holly, N.J., the son of the late Robert E. and Hazel P. Wells Godfrey. Mr. Godfrey graduated from Moorestown High School in 1950. During high school, he was a member of the National Guard. After graduation, he served in the U.S. Army and was stationed in Germany. In 1953, he married Mary Lindsay Cauffman of Masonville, N.J. Following his military service, they moved to Maryland, where he was a lifelong farmer. Mr. Godfrey was a charter member of the Sudlersville Lions Club and a Melvin Jones Fellowship Award recipient. He served on the board of the Queen Anne's Soil Conservation District for 33 years. He also served on the State Soil Conservation Committee for eight years, two years as chairman. He was a 20-year member of the board of directors at the Sudlersville Mercantile Bank of Maryland. He was a Maryland 4-H AllStar. He belonged to Post 192, American Legion. He was a member of the Queen Anne's County Farm Bureau. He was a member of St. Andrew's Chapel in Sudlersville. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to St Luke's Parish, (St. Andrew's Restoration Fund), P.O. Box 38, Church Hill, MD 21623.

FUTURE DATES TO REMEMBER	
March 18	SSCC, MDA, Annapolis
March 23	MASCD Board Meeting, MDA, Annapolis
April 15	SSCC, MDA, Annapolis
April 25-May 2	Soil & Water Stewardship Week
May 20	SSCC, MDA, Annapolis
June 15-17	Maryland Envirothon, William Schmidt Center, Brandywine
June 17	SSCC, MDA, Annapolis
June 25	MACCA August Exam Registration Deadline
July 15	SSCC, MDA, Annapolis
July 27-28	MASCD Meeting, Solomons
Aug 1-7	Canon Envirothon, Fresno, CA
August 6	MACCA Exam, Annapolis

## CHESAPEAKE BAY & TMDL DEVELOPMENT

An Executive Order in November highlighted an increased federal role in assuring nutrient reduction goals are met in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Their role will change to one of “enforcing” a TMDL for the Chesapeake Bay since jurisdictions fell short of meeting the 2010 goal to “delist” the Bay from TMDL impairment list.

Jurisdictions will now have to develop and implement TMDL for 92 watershed segments. EPA is working with jurisdictions to establish load targets. Load allocations for watershed segments will be by jurisdiction. Bay states will then develop a process for allocating loads within these segments by partitioning them in accordance with local jurisdiction bounds. A process for development of watershed implementation plans (WIP) to address loads in each segment is due to EPA by May, 2010. EPA’s deadline to approve the WIPs is 2011.

There are 52 watershed segments in Maryland requiring WIPs. Allocations will be sector specific. Agricultural loads will be partitioned into CAFO (now defined as a point source) and agricultural nonpoint sources (NPS). It is not clear how EPA will address/assign CAFO loads or how this will change the Chesapeake Bay model.

MDA will utilize agricultural workgroups to assist with implementation plans for the agricultural sector. John Rhoderick and Beth Horsey will coordinate input from agricultural work groups. It is hoped that loads partitioned for each SCD would be available by watershed segment in January. There is a short turn around to establish WIPs. EPA expects WIPs to come with enforceable or otherwise ‘binding’ mechanisms for reasonable assurance that implementation will occur.

MDE held a meeting for local government and SCDs November 23 to explain the TMDL process and answer questions. The 2-year Milestones will be the beginning point of reduction plans. The state is currently in the process of analyzing the milestones and may need to shuffle existing BMP goals or add new activities /BMPs to assure the nutrient goal is met.

## APPOINTMENTS

- Frank Gladhill, Frederick SCD
- Daniel Magness, Harford SCD
- James Edelen, Prince George’s SCD

## VOLUNTARY BMP REPORTING

As accolades continue about the Conservation Tracker tool developed by SCDs and MDA, there is recognition of the need of a ‘phase 2’ effort to account for BMPs installed by voluntary means. SSCC has begun discussion of voluntary BMP reporting.

Lynne Hoot explained the interest and efforts of the Maryland Grain Producers Association in tracking voluntary implementation of BMPs. Dana York, NRCS, USDA had expressed support to assist in this effort when she was detailed to the Chesapeake Bay Program office. It is unclear if this NRCS effort will proceed in the future.

John Rhoderick suggested development of a process to identify voluntary BMPs. Two necessary steps would be to define what standards a voluntary BMP would need meet to be “counted” and then to certify their existence with field checks. He discussed possible use of the calculator tool developed for nutrient trading. Jerry Talbot is managing a grant to test this methodology and outcomes from this effort may help inform a process for capturing BMPs installed without public assistance. Another effort is underway by ARS/UM to use remote sensing tools to identify some types of farm management such as acreage using cover crop or conservation tillage.

Hoot said we also need to address nutrient efficiencies for BMPs that may not meet NRCS standards, such as fencing or buffers narrower than 35’. She noted that accurate accounting of existing BMPs will also assist the efforts to set realistic TMDL baseline information. Powell agreed that it would verify remaining opportunities for BMPs.

Bob Tjaden suggested that conservation partnership be apprised of the process for collection of this type of information. If guidelines are developed for data collection, Extension staff may be able to coordinate or incorporate field checks into their normal schedule of on farm activities. Hoot suggested that farmer sign up with FSA may also be an opportunity to document information.

Tom Godfrey, Agricultural Commission, questioned whether documentation that farmers were already doing more than originally thought would lead to increased restrictions? Jeff Horan, DNR, thought that since water quality was a modeled value, additional documentation could result in greater credit or improvement of agricultural baseline conditions.

Louise Lawrence then circulated the information Delaware Nutrient Management Program was circulating to collect farm and nutrient management data by watershed from those it regulates. They are doing pilots in the Choptank and Gravelly Branch watersheds. Hoot expressed a concern that field specific data could impact competition among farmers.

## SSCC



## Report

*Information from the State Soil Conservation Committee*

## NOTES

**CAFO/MAFO**

Legal challenges to MDE's authority to implement a program regulating MAFO have been overturned. Despite an appeal, MDE is moving forward with their program. Information was sent November 5, 2009 to anyone filing a notice of intent (NOI) for a CAFO permit. It provides a general compliance schedule and guidance. 'No discharge' standards for new operations have been approved as a result of discussions led by Kenny Bounds among state and federal agricultural agencies, DPI and farmers to recommend BMP requirements. MDE submitted MD proposed no discharge standards to EPA which included BMP recommendations from the group. They were approved by EPA. Gary Kelman, MDE, met with SCDs on December 2 to clarify any questions about requirements. DPI also sponsored a meeting between poultry producers and MDE for the beginning of December.

Royden Powell, MDA, thanked NRCS for providing CNMP training to personnel in SCDs. Jon Hall, NRCS, said "new source" BMPs may not qualify for EQIP financial assistance support. Lawrence asked if NRCS could still support the CNMP development for new operations and Hall said yes under CFP NRCS could still provide planning support.

**Cover Crops**

Maryland farmers fall certified approximately 205,000 acres of winter cover crops and commodity small grains under the MDA program for SFY2010. Despite adverse weather conditions farmers once again stepped up to demonstrate their commitment to conservation. Over 79,000 acres were planted on or prior to October 1, 53,000 acres were planted using no-till and cover crops followed manure use on nearly 49,000 acres. These management strategies are credited with maximizing nutrient reduction potential of cover crops. Due to the inclement weather, MDA extended the deadline for planting from November 1st to the 16th and farmers were able to get another 18,000 acres planted.

**Budget**

John Rhoderick briefed SSCC on MDA budget reductions and potential impact to SCD support. Currently MDA support to SCDs is approximately \$1.2 million of which salary and rent is the majority cost. General operating support for 24 SCDs is \$200,000 per year. MDA needs to reduce the budget \$55,000 in 2010. NRCS has agreed to cover phone charges and the cost of employee security checks resulting in a savings of \$20,000. MDA will make across the board cuts looking at base mission needs for agricultural programs and estimates non-essential will be about \$20,000. MDA will work with SCDs to determine how the balance of \$15,000 can be achieved. Hoot asked about support for NACD dues. Rhoderick said MDA may cap the amount, since it is a rising cost.

## EVENTS

**2010 HOWARD COUNTY MID-WINTER AG MEETING  
MARCH 2, 2010**

The Howard Soil Conservation District, Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), University of Maryland Extension, and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service will sponsor the annual Howard County Mid-Winter Ag Meeting. Topics include: Variable Rate Nitrogen Application, Nutrient Transport: Timeline from Application to Surface Water, and Nutrient Management Updates from MDA. According to the Water Quality Improvement Act of 1998, individuals applying agricultural nutrients to 10 or more acres need to have a nutrient applicator voucher. Attending this meeting qualifies individuals for the voucher from MDA. The meeting also qualifies for two (2) Maryland Nutrient Management continuing education credits.

The meeting will be held at the Glenwood Community Center, and will begin at 6:30 PM. A light meal, sponsored by MidAtlantic Farm Credit, will be served at 6:00 PM. There is no cost but attendees

must pre-register. Call the Howard Soil Conservation District, 410-489-7987, to pre-register or with any questions. Individuals requiring special accommodations please contact the office no less than one week before the meeting.

Howard Soil Conservation District, Maryland Department of Agriculture, University of Maryland Extension and USDA prohibit discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. For more information, contact: Kristal McCormick Howard SCD 410-489-7987 or [kmccormick@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:kmccormick@howardcountymd.gov).

**MASCD ANNUAL MEETING, JULY 27-28**

Mark your calendars for MASCD's two-day Annual meeting which will be held July 27-28, 2010 at the Holiday Inn at Solomons. The abbreviated meeting will include Area Meetings, Technical and Administrative Committee meetings as well as an informative Opening Session on the many current issues involving Maryland's Conservation Partnership.

**EVENTS CONTINUED****SOIL & WATER STEWARDSHIP WEEK**

In 1955, the National Association of Conservation Districts began a national program to encourage Americans to focus on stewardship. Stewardship Week is officially celebrated from the last Sunday in April to the first Sunday in May. It is one of the world's largest conservation-related observances. The program relies on locally-led conservation districts sharing and promoting stewardship and conservation activities. Districts provide conservation and stewardship field days, programs, workshops and additional outreach efforts throughout their community to educate citizens about the need to care for our resources. Many district activities extend beyond the one week observance to include an entire year of outreach.

The Stewardship concept involves personal and social responsibility, including a duty to learn about and improve natural resources as we use them wisely, leaving a rich legacy for future generations. One definition of Stewardship is "the individual's responsibility to manage his life and property with proper regard to the rights of others." E. William Anderson suggests stewardship "is essentially a synonym for conservation."

**Upcoming Stewardship Topics**

The Stewardship and Education Committee has developed a five-year rotation for stewardship topics. NACD's Stewardship and Education Committee determine theme each year, which will be based on that year's topic. The five-year rotation of topics will be as follows:

- 2010 - Habitat;
- 2011 - Forestry;
- 2012 - Current Event (ideas welcome);
- 2013 - Water;
- 2014 - Soil.

2010 Stewardship Materials can be found at <http://www.nacdnet.org/stewardship/2010/index.phtml>.

**CIVIL RIGHTS****NRCS CIVIL RIGHTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE NEEDS YOUR HELP**

To become more connected with the field offices and better communicate the Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) message, the committee is changing the way they conduct their meetings and moving a few of them to field offices. In December 2009, an e-mail was sent out soliciting interest in hosting a meeting and to date the CRAC has received no responses. So this is another invitation for you to host a Civil Rights Advisory Committee Meeting.

If your office is conducting outreach with a minority group of producers and would like to showcase your accomplishments, this would be an excellent opportunity. If you have a speaker from a minority group of producers that would like to give a presentation to the CRAC to discuss program delivery and barriers that impact them, that would be great.

If barriers are as simple as developing brochures in a language other than English, that could be explored. We need to know what the concerns are from the field, so this is the CRAC effort to take our message to the field and hear your concerns.

If you would like to host a meeting or have a topic idea, please feel free to contact any CRAC member. If we don't hear from you, you may hear from the CRAC. For more information, visit: <http://www.md.nrcs.usda.gov/about/civilrights.html>.

**MEET THE NRCS CIVIL RIGHTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE:**

Joe Kraft, Chair  
Oliver Miranda, Vice Chair  
Lydia Donovan, Secretary  
Lori Ashbaugh, At-Large  
Gail Myers, At-Large  
Elmer Dengler, At-Large  
Heather Foley, At-Large

**Special Emphasis Program Managers:**

Megan Corey - Federal Women's  
Eugene Jones - Black  
Heydsha Cordero-Rodriguez - Hispanic  
Herman Purnell - Disabilities  
Shawn Belt - Veterans  
Lori Ashbaugh - American Indian  
Vacant - Asian Pacific

**Advisory Committee:**

Tansel Hudson  
Holly Marken  
Genevieve Backus

**Partnership Members:**

Janet Crutchley - MDA  
Katie Starr - MDA  
Marguerite Guare - MASCD

**CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP CIVIL RIGHTS & WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AWARD**

The Maryland Civil Rights Advisory Committee with representatives from the NRCS, MASCD, MDA, and the University of Maryland Extension developed and established a Civil Rights and Workforce Diversity Award. The objective is to recognize an individual employee who has significant contribution in the area of civil rights and workforce diversity. Employees from all participating agencies may be nominated. A written narrative of 250 words or less is required. The award certificate is planned to be presented during the Annual MASCD meeting.

Nomination forms may be obtained from and submitted to Oliver Miranda, USDA NRCS at 5301 Marlboro Race Track Road, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772. Contact: Phone (301)574-5162, extension 3, and email [oliver.miranda@md.usda.gov](mailto:oliver.miranda@md.usda.gov). Nominations must be postmarked by April 30, 2010.

## CREP WORKS WONDERS FOR WETLANDS, WILDLIFE AND WATER QUALITY BY STEVE STRANO, STATE BIOLOGIST, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, NRCS, MARYLAND

Wetlands, our vital link between land and water, are one of America's disappearing treasures. Considered among the most productive ecosystems in the world, wetlands provide critical habitat for waterfowl, amphibians, fish and mammals. Because of their high productivity, wetlands can support rich and varied plant and animal life. Wetlands also play an important role in filtering nutrients and sediments from waterways and controlling flooding and erosion.

In years past, however, wetlands were seen as unimportant and even unpleasant sources of mosquitoes, flies and odors. It is estimated that within the past 400 years, more than 50 percent of the wetlands in the lower 48 states were destroyed or converted to other uses. But over the past few decades we have learned a lot about wetlands. We now recognize their value as unique and productive ecosystems and many efforts are underway to protect and restore them. One of the best opportunities for restoring wetlands is through participation in Maryland's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

Many Maryland landowners and farmers own marginally productive lands that can be returned to thriving, functioning wetlands with the help of CREP. Participating landowners receive a one-time sign-up bonus of \$200 an acre plus attractive annual rental payments for up to 15 years in return for creating wetlands on their property. Most farmers will find the new formula for determining the annual CREP land rental payment quite attractive. New this year, landowners receive the local soil rental rate (SRR) plus an additional incentive payment that ranges from 100 percent to 200 percent of the local SRR, depending on the type of wetland installed.

Financial help to cover the costs of creating wetlands is also available. Maryland CREP pays landowners up to 87.5 percent of the cost of creating wetlands plus an additional practice incentive bonus payment worth 40 percent of the total installation cost. Free technical assistance to help design and install the wetland is provided by local soil conservation districts.

Beyond the financial incentives, landowners and farmers may incorporate their own wildlife habitat objectives into the restoration project. For example, if a landowner is interested in waterfowl, the wetland restoration can be restored and maintained in grass-like wetland vegetation, and a portion of it can be managed to promote natural vegetation that produces annual food crops for waterfowl. On the other hand, if a landowner has a passion for bald cypress or hardwood swamps, the restored wetland can be planted with tree seedlings to jumpstart the restoration process. Upland areas adjacent to the wetland can also be enrolled in CREP and restored to wildlife habitat for upland birds, such as the northern bobwhite, or for woodland critters, such as the American woodcock.

Opportunities for wetland restoration through CREP are not limited to cropland. Pasture areas adjacent to streams can also be restored to wetlands through CREP. Signing bonuses and compensation for

restoration are similar to those for wetland restorations on cropland. The annual rental payments are based on the local soil rental rate, plus an incentive payment that is 100 percent of the local soil rental rate.

If you are a farmer or landowner who is interested in these or other CREP options, visit your local soil conservation district or Farm Service Agency as soon as possible. Sign-up for Maryland CREP is ongoing and continues until acreage goals are met.

## CREP IMPROVES HABITAT

*(Continued from page 1)*

*plus* the farmer would receive an additional one-time signing bonus of \$3,000. Not a bad return for retiring marginally productive cropland to give grasshopper sparrows a place to nest!

Farmers should be aware that there is an enrollment cap for this practice of 500 acres for property located on the Eastern Shore (Cecil County and counties south) and 1,500 acres for farms located throughout the rest of the state.

Another opportunity provided by the new CREP program is *Expanded Buffers for Wildlife*. This practice authorizes buffers adjacent to streams, wetlands, or other water bodies to be expanded from 35 feet to a maximum width of 250 feet in order to benefit declining or at-risk wildlife species in three broad categories. These include riparian species such as the Wood Thrush; shrub land birds, such as the Northern Bobwhite; and pollinators, such as the Baltimore Checkerspot, Maryland's official state butterfly.

For these practices, the required vegetation and management activities will be identified in a management plan that is specific to the habitat needs of the species. Using an \$80 per acre soil rental rate as an example, this BMP allows the farmer to enroll additional marginal cropland or pastureland acreage and receive higher annual land rental payments ranging from \$160 to \$240 per acre. In most cases, farmers would also receive a \$200 per acre signing bonus, a 40 percent implementation bonus and up to 87.5 percent cost-share.

Opportunities for expanding buffers are also limited. The enrollment cap is 1,000 acres for property located on the Eastern Shore and 4,000 acres for farms located throughout the rest of the state.

If you are a farmer or other landowner who is interested in these or other CREP options, visit your local soil conservation district or Farm Service Agency as soon as possible. Sign-up for Maryland CREP is ongoing and continues until acreage goals are met.



**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE BY LYNNE HOOT****BUDGET LEGISLATION:**

The biggest issues for the soil conservation districts in Annapolis this year are budget related. Currently, the budget bill (HB 150/SB 140) for the Maryland Department of Agriculture includes seven additional district field employee positions as required under (HB 2) the Ag Stewardship Act of 2006. The budget analyst has suggested cutting these positions and language in the Budget Reconciliation Act (HB 151/SB 141) removes the mandatory funding for the seven positions (thereby eliminating the positions) and eliminates the language requiring MDA to have 110 field positions in the soil conservation districts. This is a major concern to the soil conservation districts.

The Capital Budget (HB 152/SB 142) includes \$12.5 million for Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share Program (MACS), which MASCD supports.

At this point, there is \$13.87 million allocated for the cover crop program, this includes \$5.63 M from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund (Flush Tax) and \$8.24 M from the Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust Funds. The latter may be vulnerable but if Maryland farmers are going to meet the two-year milestones and reach the goals of the Chesapeake Bay cleanup – funding for ag BMPs and technical assistance is imperative. District supervisors, associates and supporters are encouraged to reach out to members of the House Appropriations and Senate Budget and Tax Committees to support these funding levels for districts.

**OTHER LEGISLATION OF INTEREST TO DISTRICTS INCLUDES:**

**Stormwater Management:** Several bills have been introduced to address concerns of the construction industry related to the implementation date to incorporate Environmental Site Design. HB 964/SB420 pushes the date forward to 2020; HB 1408 pushes the date to May 4, 2012; HB 1125 lessens the requirements for redevelopment and defines preliminary approval to include earlier stages of approval than full plan approval. Just recently, MDE has provided the development community with guidelines that they feel clarifies which projects are “underway” and which would be required to start from scratch. Environmental Matters Committee Chair, Maggie McIntosh asked MDE to provide this clarification to the development community to avoid additional legislation. MASCD is watching this issue.

**SB 311/HB 943 Chesapeake Conservation Corps:**

MASCD supports this proposed legislation to establish a Chesapeake Conservation Corps to provide stipends to young people (18-25) to spend time interning in “green jobs”. This may become an excellent way to train individuals about soil conservation careers and prepare them for job openings through grants and hopefully in better times, new permanent positions.

**HB 296 Sassafras State Soil:** Del. Paul Stull (Frederick) has introduced this bill on behalf of some UMD soil scientists. MASCD has policy supporting Sassafras as a state symbol and testified in support of the bill at the hearing. Although the fiscal note indicates no cost to the state, there is always opposition to adding new state symbols, so calls to the legislature, especially those on the Health and Government Operations Committee are necessary to help get this bill passed.

**HB 974 Nutrient Trading:** This bill gives MDA the authority to verify nutrient trading credits. MASCD supports this legislation.

**Estate Taxes:** There have been several bills introduced to reduce estate taxes for ag land. Calls to House Ways and Means and Senate Budget and Tax Committees will help get favorable consideration towards this important change to Maryland’s tax laws.

**Fertilizer and Sludge:** HB 612 to add \$5 per ton to the cost of fertilizer was recently withdrawn. HB 930/SB 359 that requires field specific reporting on all pesticides and nutrients applied (similar to 2009) has been reintroduced and several bills on sludge including HB 813 that requires MDA to write regulations eliminating winter sludge application to agricultural land (same rules as ag for manure and fertilizer).

**Wildlife:** Several bills have been introduced to deal with deer. Several local bills have been introduced to allow Sunday hunting (Allegany and Garrett, Baltimore, Charles Calvert and St. Mary’s and Talbot). There is also legislation HB 502/SB 259 to expand hunting in Calvert, Charles and St. Mary’s to include training for rifle use, a three month shotgun season (January-March), expanded hunting on state agricultural land and renewals for permits only every three-years.

**Chesapeake Bay Restoration Act (flush tax):** Several bills have been introduced to impact how the Bay Restoration Funds can be used, these include serving as security for the issuance of bonds for enhancement to nutrient removal technology at waste water treatment plants, so payments would be made directly from the state to the contractor who installs the new system rather than to the homeowner, and to connect a property using a septic system to an existing municipal wastewater facility that is achieving enhanced nutrient removal level treatment. None of these impact the portion of funds to support cover crops.

**Forestry:** SB 361/HB 606 Local Forest Conservation Funds - would eliminate the requirement that unspent funds held within a local jurisdiction’s Forest Conservation Fund, after 2 years or 3 growing seasons, be returned to the person that provided the money. HB 1352/SB 914 increases the fee for outside a priority funding area from 30¢ to 36¢. HB 967 allows Washington County to set a lower fee in consultation with the Washington Co. SCD. HB357/SB 746 adds Dorchester to the list of counties DNR must notify when purchasing more than 100 acres of land.

If you have questions about any legislative issue, please call me (410-956-5771) or email: lynnehoot@aol.com. If you want updates during session, please provide me with your email address.

**MESSAGE FROM CAL STEUART (CONTINUED)**

We explained that we did not try to develop a definition for “substantially complete” or how to address the ultimate deadline for incomplete projects to convert to environmental site design to the maximum extent practicable (ESD to the MEP), but instead tried to establish recommendations that are both fair to projects that are underway, while still moving towards environmental site design for new projects. Our suggestions to MDE were as follows:

1. Projects that do not have final stormwater management (SWM) and erosion and sediment control (E&S) approval prior to May 4, 2010 must design their projects to meet the 2007 SWM regulations of ESD to the MEP;
2. Projects that have final SWM and E&S approval prior to May 4, 2010, and the E&S plan expires after May 4, 2010 may receive a plan renewal or extension to complete the project under the SWM guidelines effective at the time of the original approval, as long as the request for renewal of the E&S plan is received before the plan has expired, work has commenced at the site, and the site is in compliance with the approved SWM and erosion and sediment control plan; and
3. Plan renewals or extensions after May 4, 2010 cannot be granted for any projects that propose new or additional disturbances other than what would be necessary to adjust for field conditions.

At the Board meeting, MASCD Executive Director Lynne Hoot, discussed five parallel Chesapeake Bay issues that are impacting the soil conservation districts and Maryland agriculture.

- President Obama’s Executive Order - Signed on May 12, 2009, this required EPA to prepare several Section 202 Reports that were released to the public for comment on November 10, 2009. The reports call for lowering of the CAFO threshold and for accountability and consequences.
- By court order, under the Clean Water Act, EPA must develop Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Plans for 92 watersheds Baywide. Of these, Maryland is responsible for 52 Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) to address the TMDLs designed to put the Chesapeake Bay on a “Pollution Diet”. There is a very tight timetable for the development of these TMDLs.
- Each of the six Bay-states has established two-year Milestones. In Maryland the 27 milestones call on agriculture to carry 60% of the weight of the clean-up efforts in the first two-years even though agriculture is only 40% of the problem. The Milestones originally called for 460,000 acres of traditional cover crops each year, but this level is being revised. The Milestones are tracked on the Bay-Stat web site.
- Senator Cardin and Representative Cummings have introduced legislation to provide Congressional Reauthorization of the Chesapeake Bay Program. The legislation goes beyond just a reauthorization providing significant dollars for Bay clean-up and giving EPA additional powers to deal with states if they fail to meet their established two-year milestones.
- Another federal program being implemented by the Maryland Department of the Environment that impacts Maryland farmers is the new CAFO standards, which now include poultry litter. Over 500

*(Continued on page 9)*

**LESSONS FROM SUCCESSFUL DISTRICTS**

The list below was distributed at the February SSCC meeting showing the average acreage of cover crop planted per county for the years 2007 through 2009, the total crop acreage planted and the average percentage planted in cover crops. Accolades to Talbot SCD who has signed up 37% of the available acreage—we need to learn from Talbot and the other successful SCDs what their secret is!

As farmers are being asked to plant more cover crops on a voluntary basis—to avoid mandatory requirements—learning what makes a farmer choose to plant a higher percentage of their acreage is key. What works in your district? Please share your success stories.

Soil Conservation District	07-09 Average Cover Crop Planted Acres	2007 Crop Planted Acreage (NASS Data)	Current Average Percent
Allegany	140.08	800	17.5
Anne Arundel	1,106.57	9,200	12.0
Baltimore Co.	3,349.63	33,800	9.9
Calvert	1,501.62	6,600	22.8
Caroline	17,461.71	81,500	21.4
Carroll	13,728.90	57,500	23.9
Cecil	10,860.82	40,500	26.8
Charles	3,831.44	17,200	22.3
Dorchester	20,296.34	73,500	27.6
Frederick/Catoctin	18,584.39	69,300	26.8
Garrett	364.40	5,200	7.0
Harford	6,275.10	34,000	18.5
Howard	1,056.61	9,300	11.4
Kent	22,895.56	86,500	26.5
Montgomery	7,095.22	26,000	27.3
Prince George’s	2,134.72	9,000	23.7
Queen Anne’s	21,117.40	108,000	19.6
St. Mary’s	6,059.80	26,000	23.3
Somerset	8,591.23	31,500	27.3
Talbot	27,579.34	74,000	37.3
Washington Co.	5,130.56	29,000	17.7
Wicomico	13,162.13	46,500	7.9
Worcester	15,112.72	69,500	21.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>227,436.29</b>	<b>943,600</b>	<b>24.1</b>

## MESSAGE FROM CAL STEUART (CONTINUED)

Maryland poultry farmers have filed a Notice of Intent (NOI) and now require a new Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan to be prepared for their operation. Once approved these farmers will receive NPDES permits.

Lynne Hoot highlighted these issues as they will all put greater pressure on the districts to ensure that our agricultural clients are in compliance with new laws, regulations and requirements.

We will do our best to keep the districts informed as these issues unfold and to represent your interests as we attend the many meetings. The next Board of Directors Meeting is March 23 at MDA. Our next opportunity to come together as an organization to share ideas and concerns will be at the MASCD Annual meeting, which will be held at the Holiday Inn at Solomons, July 27 and 28. In an effort to reduce costs, the meeting will be condensed into two days with one overnight stay. Southern Maryland has agreed to host the event. I look forward to seeing you then. Please do not hesitate to contact me in the meantime if there is anything I can do to assist you.

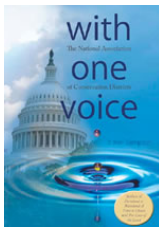
## ITEMS OF INTEREST

### ANNUAL REPORTS AVAILABLE

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) has published its 2009 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 by calling 410-841-5863 or online at [www.mda.state.md.us](http://www.mda.state.md.us).

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts has released its 2009 annual report titled, "In it for the long haul". The report highlights the ways Maryland's 24 soil conservation districts work to protect natural resources. For a copy, contact Lynne Hoot at 410-956-5771 or visit [www.mascd.net](http://www.mascd.net).

### WITH ONE VOICE: THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS BY R. NEIL SAMPSON



*With One Voice* tells the story of America's national soil and water conservation efforts through the eyes of the National Association of Conservation Districts, providing a reference for people who seek to refine and implement these programs. The chronicle of the NACD's first quarter century was contained in an earlier book—*For Love of the Land*—and this book looks at the recent quarter century. The book is available for \$44.95 plus shipping from WheatMark—

[http://www.wheatmark.com/merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store\\_Code=BS&Product\\_Code=9781604941913](http://www.wheatmark.com/merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=BS&Product_Code=9781604941913)

## CONSERVATION CONCERNS ABOUT ADMINISTRATION BUDGET—RELEASED 2.1.10

On February 1st, President Obama released the Administration's fiscal year 2011 budget. "The budget has both good and bad news for those of us who are concerned about delivering conservation to America," said NACD President Steve Robinson, a producer from Marysville, Ohio, from the Association's 2010 Annual Meeting in Orlando, Fla. following the release of the Administration's budget.

"On the bright side, we are at a historic high with regard to dollars available through Farm Bill conservation programs and have seen increases in Conservation Technical Assistance and State and Private Forestry Programs. This provides our members and our partners more opportunities than ever before to help landowners implement conservation practices on the ground.

"Unfortunately, the budget also makes cuts to several programs that are critical to delivering financial and technical assistance to landowners, including significant cuts to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. In addition, both the Resource Conservation and Development Councils and Watershed Programs are eliminated in the budget, further diminishing districts and their partners' ability to deliver conservation.

"While we understand that today's economic conditions directly impact budget development, we regret that a higher priority was not placed on these important programs that help landowners care for their lands. We look forward to being involved in the next steps of the process and will work with Congress to improve funding levels," added Robinson.

### FREE ONLINE TRAINING THROUGH EPA

EPA offers free web-based training options that districts can use to teach new employees and others. Topics range from the basics of nonpoint source pollution to refresher courses on stormwater permitting requirements.

The Watershed Academy Web offers more than 50 self-paced training modules in the watershed management field, varying from 30 minutes to 2 hours in length. The modules are appropriate for a wide array of audiences. They are organized into six themes: Introductory/Overview; Watershed Ecology; Watershed Change; Analysis and Planning; Management Practices; and Community/Social/Water Law. All are available at <http://www.epa.gov/watertrain>. The Watershed Academy also offers ongoing webcast seminars, which can be accessed live or may be downloaded later. Details are available at <http://www.epa.gov/watershedwebcasts>.

Another source for training can be found at EPA's [NPDES website](http://www.epa.gov/npdes). It currently offers 26 webcasts covering various aspects of stormwater, including communicating your message to the public; identifying illicit discharges; managing stormwater before and after construction; and using green infrastructure to manage stormwater.

## BACKYARD CONSERVATION

Whether you have acres in the country, an average-sized suburban yard, or a tiny plot in the city, you can help protect the environment and add beauty and interest to your surroundings. This colorful publication can get you started. "**Backyard Conservation**" shows you how conservation practices that help conserve and improve natural resources on agricultural land across the country can be adapted for use around your home. These practices help the environment and can make your yard more attractive and enjoyable. Most backyard conservation practices are easy to use. America's farmers and ranchers have been using these practices successfully for decades.

Printed copies of a colorful 28-page booklet on Backyard Conservation and tip sheets are available free by calling 1-888-LANDCARE (single copies only). This campaign is a cooperative project of the National Association of Conservation Districts, the Wildlife Habitat Council, and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard/>

## PARTNERSHIP PRESS ONLINE

The Partnership Press newsletter is posted on the [www.mascd.net](http://www.mascd.net) website. In an effort to conserve, if you prefer to receive the quarterly newsletter by email, as opposed to hard copy, please email [MdAgric@aol.com](mailto:MdAgric@aol.com) to be added to the list.

# P Maryland Conservation PARTNERSHIP PRESS

is a quarterly newsletter published for and about the members of Maryland's Conservation Partnership: MD Department of Agriculture, MD Association of Soil Conservation Districts, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Farm Service Agency, MD Cooperative Extension Service, and the State Soil Conservation Committee.

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.



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