EARL “BUDDY” HANCE — NEW SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

Governor Martin O’Malley recently announced the appointment of Deputy Secretary Earl “Buddy” Hance as Secretary to the Department of Agriculture, and thanked Roger Richardson for his dedicated service to the State of Maryland, and his work in the agricultural community. Roger Richardson, 75, announced that he would retire to travel and to spend more time with his family.

“I want to thank Secretary Richardson for his service to the State of Maryland and to the agricultural community,” said Governor O’Malley.

“Secretary Richardson is a lifelong farmer, has served in numerous capacities in Maryland’s agricultural community, and has been instrumental in working together with the environmental community to help build a sustainable future for Maryland.”

Governor O’Malley added, “I am also proud to appoint Deputy Secretary Buddy Hance as Secretary to oversee Maryland’s Department of Agriculture. Buddy is highly respected in both the environmental and agricultural communities and I am confident that he will continue the work that Secretary Richardson has done to build our vision for a smarter, greener, more sustainable State, while protecting our family-owned farms, and Maryland’s rich agricultural heritage.”

USDA RENAMES NATIONAL PLANT MATERIALS CENTER TO HONOR NORM BERG

Members of Maryland’s Conservation Partnership joined NRCS Chief Dave White and Agriculture Secretary Vilsack as they renamed and dedicate the Norman A. Berg National Plant Material Center in honor of the late Norm Berg. The ceremony took place Friday, May 15, 2009 at the National Plant Materials Center (NPMC) located in the Beltsville Agricultural Research Complex at 8840 Beaver Dam Road.

As the sponsor of the event, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) were pleased to honor Norm for his friendship and lifetime achievements in management of natural resources and the protection of America’s farmland. Congress chose to recognize Mr. Berg’s contribution by authorizing the renaming of the NPMC in the 2008 Farm Bill.

As well as his national position as Chief of NRCS, Norm Berg served as a supervisor for Anne Arundel soil conservation district from 1982 until his death last year.

MESSAGE FROM MASCD PRESIDENT
LEE MCDANIEL

First, I want to thank Roger Richardson for his service to Maryland agriculture and specifically to conservation and our districts. Roger has earned his retirement, and even though he leaves us in the capable hands of Buddy Hance, he will be missed.

Next, talking about retirement – this will be my last newsletter as President of MASCD. I don’t know where the time went but at the MASCD Annual meeting I will have completed my two two-years terms in office and, following the election of officers, will be handing the gavel to Cal Steuart. It has been a busy and, I believe, productive four years but for all our accomplishments, I leave Cal with a long list of unresolved issues just as I received from former President Bob Wilson. As they say—never a dull moment!

Plans are well underway for a full and productive NACD NE regional meeting, which will include most MASCD meetings traditionally held at our Annual event. The Administrative and Technical Committees

(Continued on page 4)

GOVERNOR O’MALLEY, USDA SECRETARY VILSACK SIGN NEW CONSERVATION AGREEMENT

Under beautiful blue skies, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Gov. Martin O’Malley recently signed a revised Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program agreement (CREP) for Maryland at the Richard Soper, Jr., farm near Westminster. With enhanced financial incentives, the new agreement is designed to encourage new enrollment and re-enrollment of expiring CREP contracts to protect soil and water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

“USDA is committed to working with state and local governments to protect and conserve our natural resources and improve the quality of life in our communities,” said Vilsack.

“We thank Secretary Vilsack for making available these enhancements to Maryland farmers, which will give a substantial boost to our Smart, Green and Growing program to restore the Chesapeake Bay, and it will help strengthen our family farms and rural economies,” said Gov. O’Malley.

“We believe that farmers will look at the enhanced program and what Mr. Soper has already done on his farm and realize that this conservation program will work for them, too.”

Under the new Maryland CREP agreement, the federal government may provide Maryland agricultural producers up to $198 million in rental pay-
NRCS WELCOMES...

Amanda Moore, the State Soil Scientist on the NRCS Maryland Management Team. Moore comes to Maryland from the NRCS National Geospatial Development Center in West Virginia where she served as a GIS Specialist. Amanda transferred to NRCS Maryland on February 1, 2009.

Michael Combs, to the Queen Anne's Field Service Center. He is a Soil Conservationist formerly with the NRCS Leesport Field Office in Pennsylvania.

Steve Latimer, a Contract Specialist on the Administrative Management Team at the NRCS Maryland State Office. Latimer served as a Contract Specialist with NRCS Utah and entered NRCS Maryland effective February 15, 2009.

Heydsha R. Cordero-Rodriguez, to the Talbot Field Service Center effective April 12th. She is a Soil Conservationist formerly with NRCS Great Falls Field Office in Montana.

NRCS BIDS FAREWELL TO...

Bob Ellsworth, a Contract Specialist at the State Office, retired from federal service effective January 23, 2009.

Ray Sufczynski, a Soil Conservationist, transferred to NRCS Arkansas effective February 1, 2009.

NRCS TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENTS...

Effective March 2, 2009 the following employees will serve on detail assignments not to exceed 60 days:

Tiffany Laws, will serve as Acting District Conservationist in Frederick County.

Eugene Jones, will serve as Acting Farm Bill Program Specialist for WHIP, GRP and CSP.

NACD 2009 PHOTO CONTEST

It’s time once again to dust off cameras and start taking photos for the 2009 NACD/Auxiliary Photo Contest. The contest is open to both youth and adults. First place winners in each of the categories receive a $50 prize.

More information on the photo categories, contest guidelines, entry instructions and forms, as well as past contest winners, are available on the NACD web site at http://nacdnet.org/education/contests/photo/. The contest entry deadline is December 1, 2009.

PRESIDENT OBAMA, SECRETARY VILSACK ANNOUNCE INTENT TO NOMINATE PEARLIE S. REED AS ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATION

President Barack Obama announced his intent to nominate Pearlie S. Reed as Assistant Secretary for Administration at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Reed will serve with Secretary Tom Vilsack.

Reed currently is a consultant in the fields of agriculture, conservation, economic development and management. He had a singular career with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, and its predecessor agency the Soil Conservation Service. He served in four states and headquarters during his career. He was state conservationist in Maryland and California, responsible for leading comprehensive soil, water, and resource conservation and development programs in those states.

"It's a real pleasure to welcome Pearlie Reed back to USDA - where he had a remarkable career that began in 1968 and extended into the 21st Century," Vilsack said. "He will bring unique ability and experience to the position of Assistant Secretary for Administration - a position he held in an acting capacity a little over 10 years ago."

Pearlie Reed is a native of Heth, Arkansas. He graduated from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and received a Master of Public Administration degree from the American University, Washington, D.C.

DAN BARD HONORED WITH WATERSHED HERO AWARD

Dan Bard, the Western Maryland Area coordinator with the Maryland Department of Agriculture, was honored with the Watershed Hero award for his work on the Upper Potomac Tributary Team at Maryland's 13th Annual Tributary Team meeting February 7.

The award is given annually to recognize contributions of a local tributary team member to Bay health and habitat.

Established in 1995, Maryland's tributary teams are made up of more than 350 volunteer members-including citizens, business leaders, farmers, and government officials-charged with helping to implement pollution prevention measures in the state's 10 major tributary basins.

Nine other Watershed Hero Awards were also awarded by the tributary teams to their members, who made exceptional contributions in 2008. For information about Maryland's Tributary Teams, visit: http://www.dnr.maryland.gov/bay/tribstrat.
MACS 2008-2009 COVER CROP PROGRAM

The University of Baltimore Schaeffer Policy Center has completed its survey of Cover Crop Program participants and non-participants to help inform development of next year’s (FY 2010) program.

The survey was sent to approximately 2000 farmers who participated in the MACS Cover Crop Program one or more years between 2006 and 2008. Approximately 40% of this group returned their surveys. Additionally 22% of the 4000 farmers who have not participated completed a one page survey to better understand their reasons for not enrolling.

The primary reasons given for not participating or planting less than enrolled were availability of time after harvest and labor, followed by concerns about the planting deadlines. Overall farmers thought the program gave farmers an equal opportunity to participate and was fair. Most farmers indicated they were made aware of the program either through the MDA direct mailing of program information or from the SCD. Even with the array of incentives added to this year’s program over 55% of respondents thought criteria were very clear and another 37% thought they were somewhat clear. 74% of respondents thought the program did a good to excellent job conserving nutrients and 85% thought it does a good to excellent job preventing nutrient loss and protecting water quality. 91% rated customer service good to excellent.

Dawn Bradley, MACS, analyzed how the various incentives for planting date, tillage, previous crop, etc. changed planting behavior. Data comparison between the FY08 and this year’s program shows the incentives most strongly influenced tillage methods and use of cover crops when manure is a nutrient source.

NUTRIENT TRADING AND MARYLAND AGRICULTURE

John Rhoderick, MDA, presented information to update the SSCC on the Nutrient Trading Program and the roles for SCDs and opportunities it provided for agricultural NPS improvements. Rhoderick indicated it could provide a new revenue stream for wastewater treatment plants to conduct trades. It is calculated by evaluating farm conditions and BMPs in place and comparing them to the Chesapeake Bay program goal or TMDL requirement in the watershed. Farmers who receive public funds to install BMPs cannot use these BMPs for nutrient trading.

Possible roles for SCDs include evaluating whether or not a farmer has met the baseline nutrient reduction and is eligible to trade, verifying the BMP proposed for trade has been installed and certifying the maintenance of the traded BMP for the life of the contract.

Tjaden asked if income tax liability for a BMP that was paid for via the trading program had been considered. He suggested that tax policy issues needed to be established. Rhoderick said Doug Parker, UM Economist, was one of the project’s advisors.

Rhoderick discussed creation of a web-based tool to assist participants and track trades. He indicated he had six farmers now testing the tool and hoped it would be available for general use on July 1.

McDaniel asked about SCD roles and workload issues. Rhoderick said there would be administrative costs for the program that could cover SCD costs, but for the initial start up a grant was available to help with costs.

FORESTRY MOU

A brief discussion of MOU development among DNR, MACS, MDA, NRCS, and US Forest Service – NE Area took place at the February SSCC meeting. A similar instrument to coordinate forestry activities has been approved at the national level and Maryland Forest Service is proposing a state level agreement to support, coordinate, and promote forest management programs.

SCDs were asked to review current MD draft and provide comments to MACS. In the interim MD Cooperative Extension and the local Forestry Boards have been added to the MOU. Robert Tjaden said CE had recommended language and worked with Glenn Carowan to refine the document. He said fish and wildlife issues needed to be included as well as ecosystem management.

Hall said the national MOU established the State Forester as lead for forestry issues and MD NRCS now had a Forestry Subcommittee as part of the State Technical Committee structure and Steve Koehn, MD State Forester, was the chair.

There was additional discussion about the process to be used in review and modification of the proposed MOU. It was agreed that Hoot and Lawrence would collate comments from the SCDs and MDA with Cooperative Extension’s recommended changes for review with SSCC in April or May.
UPDATES

NEW MACS SPECIFICATIONS

Lawrence distributed MACS eligibility information for Riparian Herbaceous Cover, Filter Strips and Riparian Forest Cover. Requirements had been modified to align with NRCS changes to these standards. There was discussion about widths. Lawrence indicated filter strips were a minimum of 20 feet and riparian cover was 35’. Hawk asked about making gates eligible for cost share as part of fencing standard. Lawrence said she had gotten a similar request and it could be considered at a MACS technical advisory meeting. McDaniel moved (Hawk seconded) that SSCC approve practice changes. Motion carried.

SEDIMENT AND EROSION CONTROL SPECIFICATIONS UPDATE

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) recently committed to updating the "1994 Maryland Standards and Specifications for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control" (Standards). SCDs have been invited to participate as MDE reestablishes the technical workgroup members. In the past a technical workgroup was established through the State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC) to work with MDE and others (e.g., Natural Resource Conservation Service, State Highway Administration, etc.) in the updating of current Standards. Lynne Hoot is assembling names of volunteers.

APPOINTMENTS

- Allegany SCD – Gene Paul
- Allegany SCD – Lee Heavner
- Garrett SCD – Wayne Hamilton
- St Mary’s SCD – Stanley Boothe
- Washington County SCD – Betty Meyers

MESSAGE FROM LEE MCDANIEL (CONTINUED)

are being combined to address those issues specific to Maryland. We will have a Board meeting on Sunday and on Wednesday, we will finish up with an awards breakfast, our general session with election of officers and a final board meeting.

Missing from the NACD NE event are the Area Meetings and I ask that each region arrange to meet prior to July 26. MASC/ policy development and routine activities such as MASC/ committee assignments need to be addressed. At the request of Jon Hall, NRC/ State Conservationist, districts also need to use these Area sessions to develop suggestions on improvements to NRCS programs to be provided to the State Technical Committee (STC). To date, only the Upper Shore has provided feedback to the STC for discussion. I believe these Area Working Groups have potential to facilitate change to federal programs to address local needs. The next STC meeting is July 22.

One item of unfinished business that I would like to complete before I leave office is the Forestry MOU that was circulated to districts in January and we have been trying to finalize since. The unfinished wording relates to the technical support for forestry that DNR used to provide to the Envirothon. I know this issue has been a concern to the districts for some time, so perhaps this MOU will provide a vehicle to address this issue.

I look forward to seeing you all at the NACD NE Regional meeting. A copy of the preliminary agenda is on page 5 and the full registration package is on our web site. Please sign up for the hotel early, as you know, overflow hotel space is very limited.

TRAINING

FUNDAMENTALS OF NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING COURSE SET FOR JUNE 24 AND 25

A two-day Fundamentals of Nutrient Management Training Course will be held June 24 and 25, 2009 in the lower level conference rooms at the Maryland Department of Agriculture’s (MDA) headquarters, 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis. The course provides participants with an overview of areas covered by the Maryland Nutrient Management Certification Exam and the nutrient management component of the Mid-Atlantic Certified Crop Advisor Exam scheduled for August 7, 2009. Call MDA at 410-841-5959 for a registration form or more information.

TURFGRASS TECHNICIANS TRAINING, JUNE 29

Practical Training for Turfgrass Technicians will be offered June 29, 2009 at the Maryland Department of Agriculture’s (MDA) headquarters, 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis. The workshop, a joint effort between the MDA and Maryland Cooperative Extension, is designed for entry level employees who work for lawn care companies. It provides information on taking a soil sample, understanding a fertilizer label, measuring a lawn, interpreting soil test results and calibrating a spreader. This class will be offered in English, with Spanish offerings scheduled for June 30 and July 13, 2009. Call MDA at 410-841-5959 for a registration form or more information.
## 2009 NACD NE Regional Meeting
### July 26—29
### Preliminary Agenda*

**Sunday, July 26th**
1:00 – 5:30  
NACDE Tour to Washington, DC  
Calvert Maritime Museum - self guided visit (Open 10:00 am-5:00 pm)

5:00 – 7:00  
**MASCD BOD**

7:00  
Dinner on your own

8:00 – 9:30  
Welcome Dessert Reception

**Monday, July 27th**

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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| 7:30 – 8:45 | Breakfast  
NASCA Breakfast | Exhibit area opens at 8:00 a.m. |
| 9:00 – 11:45 | Opening Session and State of the State Presentations (break in Exhibits/Silent Auction Room) |
| 12:00 – 1:30 | Lunch  
Side NACDE Luncheon |
| 1:45 – 3:30 | NRCS National Listening Session  
Forestry & Wildlife  
Urban Programs |
| 3:45 – 3:45 | Break (in Exhibits/Silent Auction Room) |
| 3:45 – 5:00 | NACD NE BOD  
Assessing Training Needs:  
District Official Accreditation  
Joint MD DM’s & DC’s Meeting |
| 3:45 – 5:30 | **SSCC** |
| 6:00 – 7:00 | Cash Bar Reception |
| 7:00 – 9:00 | Banquet and Live Auction |

**Tuesday, July 28th**

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<td>7:00 – 9:00</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30 – 12:00</td>
<td>Auxiliary/Spouses Tour to Sotterley Plantation</td>
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| 9:30 – 10:30 | Farm Bill Updates  
CAFO's & TMDL's  
Budgeting & Fundraising |
| 10:30 – 10:45 | Break |
| 10:45 – 12:15 | **MASCD Technical & Administrative**  
Renewable Energy, Organics  
Eco-Trading |
| 12:45 – 4:00 | Field Trips with Box lunch  
Boat trip and Shoreline review  
Agri-Tourism  
Innovations in Conservation |
| 5:30 – 9:00 | Taste of Maryland, Navy Recreational Center |

**Wednesday, July 29th**

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<th>Time</th>
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<td>7:00 – 8:00</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:00 – 9:00</td>
<td><strong>Maryland Awards Presentation</strong> (to follow breakfast)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 – 11:00</td>
<td><strong>MASCD General Session</strong></td>
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<td>11:00 – 12:00</td>
<td><strong>MASCD Board of Directors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 – 4:30</td>
<td>Green Infrastructure Training, NACD Training for 25 max</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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* Items in **Bold Italic** are MASCD Specific. Additional Information is available online at [www.mascd.net](http://www.mascd.net).
ENVIRONMENTAL COMPETITIONS

MARYLAND TEENS GEAR UP FOR FIRST ROUND OF ENVIRONMENTAL COMPETITIONS

Across Maryland, teenagers are grabbing their binoculars, pulling on their waterproof boots, and polishing their clinometers as they gear up to take part in the first round of competitions leading up to the 2009 Canon Envirothon, North America’s largest and most prestigious natural resources event for high school students. Students participating in the Envirothon have been studying the state’s natural resources for the past year. They have learned from the experts how to identify and categorize living resources, perform soil surveys, estimate wood yield from trees, and solve other complex natural resource issues.

Teams are tested in five areas: soils, aquatics, wildlife, forestry and environmental issues. The county team with the highest cumulative total wins their local competition and advances to the Maryland Envirothon, scheduled for June 16-18, 2009 at Mount St. Mary’s University in Emmitsburg. The winner of the Maryland Envirothon represents the state at the 2009 Canon Envirothon. More than 300 of the brightest teenagers from across the United States and Canada will participate in this rigorous competition slated for later this summer at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. For a complete list of county Envirothon competition dates and locations, visit the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation District’s web site at www.mascd.net/envirothon. Envirothon is sponsored by soil conservation districts, the State Soil Conservation Committee and Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts.

HOMEOWNER EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

The homeowner education campaign, Take it from Maryland Farmers: Backyard Actions for a Cleaner Chesapeake Bay, kicked off the 2009 spring planting and gardening season with a series of public service announcements (PSAs) that aired during Maryland Public Television’s Chesapeake Bay Week which ran April 19 through April 26, 2009. The PSAs featured Maryland farmers offering Bay-friendly conservation tips to backyard gardeners on managing nutrients, controlling soil erosion and using pesticide alternatives. Homeowners and gardeners can log onto www.IWantMarylandsBest.com to download informational brochures, watch the PSAs, and link to additional resources. They can also call the University of Maryland Home and Garden Information Center toll-free 1-800-342-2507 (outside Maryland 410-531-1757) from 8am-1pm to speak with a Master Gardener about easy-to-follow, Bay-friendly suggestions for their lawns and gardens.

Take it from Maryland Farmers: Backyard Actions for a Cleaner Chesapeake Bay was developed by the Maryland Department of Agriculture, the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Home and Garden Information Center, Maryland Sea Grant along with Maryland farmers through an agricultural awareness group. The program was made possible through grant funding that supports the implementation of the Statewide Plan for Agricultural Policy and Resource Management.

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION SOCIETY’S 2009 ANNUAL CONFERENCE, JULY 11-15

The 2009 Annual Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) Conference will be held July 11-15 in Dearborn, Michigan. The Preliminary Program is now available and includes workshops, concurrent sessions, symposia, posters, plenary sessions, and technical tours designed to raise the awareness of conference participants to recent developments in the science and art of natural resource conservation and environmental management. More information can be found at http://www.swcs.org/.

SWCS is a nonprofit scientific and educational organization founded in 1943 that serves as an advocate for conservation professionals and for science-based conservation practice, programs, and policy. SWCS has over 5,000 members around the world. They include researchers, administrators, planners, policymakers, technical advisors, teachers, students, farmers, and ranchers. Members come from nearly every academic discipline and many different public, private, and nonprofit institutions.

MARYLAND COMMODITY CLASSIC, JULY 23

The Maryland Grain Producers Association (MGPA) and the Maryland Soybean Board (MSB) will host the Maryland Commodity Classic on Thursday, July 23, at the Queen Anne's 4-H Park in Centreville. Morning tours at the Wye Research and Education Center will highlight soybean and grain checkoff funded research projects. Grant projects will also be on display at the 4-H Park.

As a grant recipient, the Maryland Envirothon will have a display at the event to showcase the environmental education activities of the districts to the 250 plus farmers who attend.

The afternoon business meeting and program features Richard Brock, owner and president of Brock Associates, an agricultural marketing advisory service and publisher of The Brock Report, a 24-page weekly fundamental and technical newsletter. His firm also publishes Pork Profit Edge and is an advisor on purchasing strategies for many large poultry, pork and food companies. Brock writes a monthly column for two agriculture magazines and appears regularly on both Ag Day television show and US Farm Report. Brock received his Bachelors of Science Degree in Agricultural Economics from Purdue University and his Masters Degree from Cornell University.

The event will close with the famed Crab Feast, Pork and Chicken Barbecue. Tickets are available for $10 each for entry prior to 2:00 p.m. ($20 after 2:00 and no entry after 3:00 p.m.) Event sponsorships are now being accepted. For more information, contact MGPA at 410-956-5771.
Lydia Donovan, NRCS Special Emphasis Program Manager for Asian American/Pacific Islander employees announced that the winner of the Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month poster contest is Thomas Share, on the NRCS Watershed Planning Staff, in Davis, California. He will receive a $300 spot award for his effort and the poster will serve as the agency's official poster for the 2009 AA/PI Heritage Month Activities.

Donovan said the 2009 theme for AA/PI Heritage Month is "Leadership to Meet the Challenges of a Changing World". An electronic version of the poster is available on the AAPI homepage at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/civilrights/AAPIpage.html.

Donovan said she will be distributing the posters to all field offices.

GOVERNOR O’MALLEY, USDA SECRETARY VILSACK SIGN NEW CONSERVATION AGREEMENT

(Continued from page 1)

ments, incentive payments, and cost-share payments to install, maintain, or improve conservation practices over the next 15 years.

Since the inception of CREP, Maryland farmers, ranchers and landowners have enrolled more than 74,000 acres toward a goal of 100,000 acres and removed sensitive cropland and marginal pastureland out of production. Instead of tilling these acres, they have used program incentives to plant streamside buffers, establish wetlands, protect highly erodible land, and create wildlife habitat.

When fully implemented at 100,000 acres, CREP will help Maryland to achieve its water quality goals by:

- Reducing nutrient runoff from agricultural lands by approximately 11.5 million pounds of nitrogen and 1.1 million pounds of phosphorus annually.
- Reducing the amount of sediment entering streams by approximately 200,000 tons annually.
- Establishing and enhancing 77,000 acres of riparian buffers and 5,000 acres of wetland habitat for declining, threatened or endangered species, including the bald eagle and eastern bog turtle.
- Stabilizing and protecting up to 16,000 acres of highly erodible land.

The agreement calls for incentive payments as a percentage of the weighted average soil rental rate to be paid for buffers rather than the previous tiered flat rate payment system. Additional enhanced benefits include a one-time signing incentive payment (SIP), annual rental payment, cost-share assistance, a one-time practice incentive payment (PIP) equal to 40 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs for approved conservation practices, and maintenance incentive payments.

The Maryland project was the first in the nation under USDA’s Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program when it was signed in October 1997 by then Vice-President Al Gore. Since that time, 32 states have signed a total of 43 agreements with USDA to protect approximately 1.2 million acres.

Vilsack and O’Malley also took the opportunity to celebrate Arbor Day by joining kids from a local 4-H club and the state Future Farmers of America chapter in planting trees, which will be part of a riparian buffer along Little Morgan Run at the Soper Farm. Little Morgan Run is a Class 3 native trout stream that flows through the Morgan Run Natural Environment Area before reaching the Patapsco River.

The Soper family has owned and operated the 235-acre cash grain, hay and beef farm for 42 years. Soper has installed a wide variety of on-farm conservation practices using state and federal cost-share funding, and has permanently preserved the farm through the Carroll County Agricultural Land Preservation Program. His conservation leadership was recognized through his acceptance into Tier 3 of the Conservation Security Program in 2008.

Home Grown Carroll County products from local agricultural producers were generously provided as refreshments for the event by the Carroll County Department of Economic Development, Agricultural Development Program.

Further details on the Maryland agreement can be obtained at local Farm Service Agency county offices www.fsa.usda.gov or the Maryland Department of Agriculture, www.mda.state.md.us/pdf/crepbrochure09.pdf.

CIVIL RIGHTS

MARCH WAS WOMEN'S HISTORY

NRCS announced that the theme for March 2009 as Women’s History Month was “Women: Taking the Lead to Save Our Planet,” which honored “women who have shown leadership in preserving the natural environment and reversing ecological destruction.”

The spirit of the theme honors American women who are scientists, engineers, business leaders, writers, filmmakers, conservationists, teachers, community organizers, religious or workplace leaders, or others whose lives show exceptional vision and leadership to save our planet.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service will continue to increase the diversity of their employees. It is important to embrace each others’ heritage and culture and to learn about the people we work with daily. Through understanding the differences in each culture, we can work together to improve service to our customers and employees.

MAY IS ASIAN AMERICAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

Lydia Donovan, NRCS Special Emphasis Program Manager for Asian American/Pacific Islander employees announced that the winner of the Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month poster contest is Thomas Share, on the NRCS Watershed Planning Staff, in Davis, California. He will receive a $300 spot award for his effort and the poster will serve as the agency's official poster for the 2009 AA/PI Heritage Month Activities.

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Donovan said she will be distributing the posters to all field offices.
SINE DIE REPORT BY LYNNE HOOT, MASCD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Soil Conservation Districts did well in the 2009 Legislative Session as the budget included five new positions for next fiscal year along with the $400,000 necessary to fund them as specified in the Ag Stewardship Act of 2006. This success was because of a concerted effort by the District supervisors and staff and Secretary Roger Richardson. Teamwork pays.

Once we determined that this was not the year to introduce substruction modification legislation for nutrient reduction equipment, a good decision I might add, there was little outside the budget to fight for, although there were several issues, such as standing, forestry, and greenhouse gas legislation that involved MASCD input, and several bills of concern that were defeated.

BUDGET
Between the 2010 Chesapeake Bay Trust Funds and the Flush Tax, the cover crop program is funded at $12.2m and although Program Open Space funds were diverted to offset other state expenses, the legislature approved Bond Funds to supplement to the POS funds for Agricultural Land Preservation.

HB 100/SB 165: Budget Bill (Fiscal Year 2010) - The budget passed late in the session providing an additional five employees. With a hiring freeze and a shortage of salary funds because of the predetermined “7% vacancy rate”, I do not expect these employees to come on board early in the year, but hopefully they can be hired at some time during FY10.

HB 101/SB 166: Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2009 – If it had passed as originally written, this was bill would have eliminated the codified language stating that “The Governor shall include in the annual budget bill an amount sufficient to employ not less than 110 field personnel in the soil conservation districts under this title,” originally spelled out in the “Water Quality Improvement Act of 1998” and reaffirmed in the “Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006 and postponed the funding of five new positions for two years. Again, through a dedicated effort by the districts, the bill passed without this change which maintains the law in its original form maintaining the five positions for FY10 and the 110 field position language.

HB 102/SB 167: Maryland Consolidated Capital Bond Loan of 2009 – This bill included $7 million in funding for MACS.

BAY RELATED
SB 554: Chesapeake Bay Nitrogen Reduction Act of 2009 – Passed requiring Nitrogen removal for septic systems for new and replacement systems in the Critical Area. MASCD supported this legislation.

HB 221: Bay Restoration Fund - Disbursement of Funds – Unfavorable, had it passed this bill would have provided 60% of the funds collected from the Bay Restoration Funds from septic system users for cover crops and the remaining 40% for N removal on septic systems. MASCD supported this legislation.

HB 609/SB 553: Chesapeake Bay Phosphorous Reduction Act of 2009 - Passed. This bill requires law fertilizers for established lawns to contain less than 5% Phosphorous with levels being decreased to less than 50% for current or 1.5% for new companies.


ESTATE TAX
All bills to eliminate, or reduce estate taxes failed. MASCD supported amendments to the Estate Tax for agricultural property.

HB 157: Maryland Death Taxes - Family Property Protection Act

HB 166: Maryland Estate Tax - Exclusion for Qualified Agricultural Property.

SB 675: Maryland Death Taxes - Family Property Protection Act.

SB 691: Maryland Estate Tax - Payment Deferral for Qualified Agricultural Property.

STANDING

HB 1569/SB 1065: Standing - Miscellaneous Environmental Protection Proceedings and Judicial Review. This greatly amended version of the standing bill streamlines the current process by repealing contested case hearing provisions related to permitting decisions by the Department of the Environment and expands those who have standing in MDE’s permitting and license decisions. The permits covered under the law include those that SCDs need to obtain for certain BMP installations but, as these are generally covered under a General Permit, it should not impact individual applications. Ag Water Use and NPDES permits for CAFOs are included in the law. CAFOs will generally be issued under a General Permit but as Ag Water Use Permits are individual permits, they will be impacted by the law. MASCD expressed concern throughout the discussions that we did not want the legislation to slow down the process of installing BMPs on ag land.

FORESTRY

SB 549: Sustainable Forestry Act of 2009 - passed. This bill was amended so it did not significantly change the MALPF program and did not move the erosion and sediment control program for forestry from MDE to MDA. These were concerns expressed by MASCD.

SB 666: Natural Resources - No Net Loss of Forest Policy - Forest Conservation Act – passed. This bill was originally amended to require no net loss of forestry, without the loss of “productive” farmland at the request of MASCD, which was a change from the term “Prime” farmland in the original bill. The bill was later amended to require the Department of Natural Resources to work with forestry stakeholders to define no net loss and both the productive and prime language was eliminated. Several changes, including an increase in the fee in lieu as part of the Forest Conservation Act from 10¢ to 30¢ per square foot, were passed.

HOWARD COUNTY E&S PLAN APPROVAL
Kudos to Howard Soil Conservation District for defeating the County Executives efforts to introduce legislation to have the county take over the Erosion and Sediment Control Plan review. Bob Ensor and the supervisors at the Howard SCD worked diligently to build a team of supporters to defeat this effort.

GREENHOUSE GAS

HB 315/SB 278: Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act of 2009 – Passed. MASCD worked with Environmental Matters Committee Chair Maggie McIntosh to have language included that “the Department of the Environment shall include the Department of Agriculture, the Maryland Farm Bureau, the Maryland Association-

(Continued on page 9)
SINE DIE REPORT CONTINUED

The Governor introduced several bills that added some strength to the existing growth requirements as had been recommended by a state task force. The environmental community had introduced a more restricted growth bill (HB 1116/SB 878) that was actually merged into the House version (HB 295), but this language was later removed by the Senate.

HB 294/SB 273: Smart, Green, and Growing - Local Government Planning - Planning Visions - Passed.
HB 295/SB 276: Smart, Green, and Growing - Annual Report - Smart Growth Goals, Measures, and Indicators and Implementation of Planning Visions - Passed.
HB 297/SB 280: Smart, Green, and Growing - Smart and Sustainable Growth Act of 2009 - Passed.

ENERGY

Several wind generation bills were introduced in the Economic Mat- ters Committee, none passed and it was determined that the issue will be referred to Summer Study.

SB 555/HB 1379: Biomass and Biofuels - In-State Production Incentives - This bill passed the Senate on the last weekend of session including a mandate for biodiesel use based on a volume of in state production, but there was no action in the House.

HJ 8/SJ 8: Federal Mandates Regarding Environmentally Damaging Corn Ethanol - Failed.

SB 220: State Government - Prohibition on Use of State Funds - Ethanol Derived from Corn - Failed.

AG LAND PRESERVATION

Several bills passed relating to MALPF. One bill keeps information throughout the sale/purchase process confidential, one allows the Department to impose civil penalties on farms in violation of MALPF rules, one allows farmers to let tenants move into the farm house and construct another home for themselves (with MALPF approval), one allows MALPF to work with a landowner to adjust boundary lines to better serve agriculture, one requires conservation easement to be provided to a purchaser of land, and another requires Board of Public works approval for MALPF land to be condemned. Bills that failed included allowing solar energy to be produced on up to 5% of MALPF land and requiring greater inspection.

SB 672: Environment - Stormwater Management - Stormwater User Charge - Failed on Floor.
SB 1029: Reorganization of State Government - Consolidating the Departments of Agriculture and the Environment into the Department of Natural Resources - Withdrawn.
SB 1058: Reorganization of State Government - Consolidating the Department of the Environment into the Department of Natural Resources – No action.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE BILLS

All of MDA’s Departmental bills passed.

SB 74: State Tobacco Authority - Repeal - Passed.
SB 77: Department of Agriculture - Organic Certification Program - Fees - Passed.
SB 78: Practice of Veterinary Medicine - Students - Immunity - Passed.
SB 89: Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation - Imposition of Civil Penalties by Board of Trustees - Authorization - Passed.
SB 90: Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation - Valuation of Terminated Easements - Passed.
SB 91: Lawn and Turf Grass Seed - Testing and Labeling Requirements - Passed.

HUNTING

Several bills to amend hunting laws moved in the House or Senate but with the exception of Frederick and Washington, received no action in the opposite house. A few failed in committee.

HB 663: Baltimore County - Deer Hunting on Private Property - Sundays – Unfavorable.
HB 1065: Calvert County - Deer Hunting on Private Lands - Sundays – Failed.
HB 1218: Washington County - Deer Hunting - Dogs – Passed.
HB 1245: Frederick County - Deer Hunting on Private Property - Sundays – Passed.

MASC is working with the Department of Agriculture and several agricultural organizations to arrange tours for the environmental committees and also a legislative staff tour. The objective is to demonstrate conservation activities of farmers to date and innovative opportunities for the future such as GreenSeeker™ imaging equipment.

Partnership Press
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, Maryland Cooperative Extension, 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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