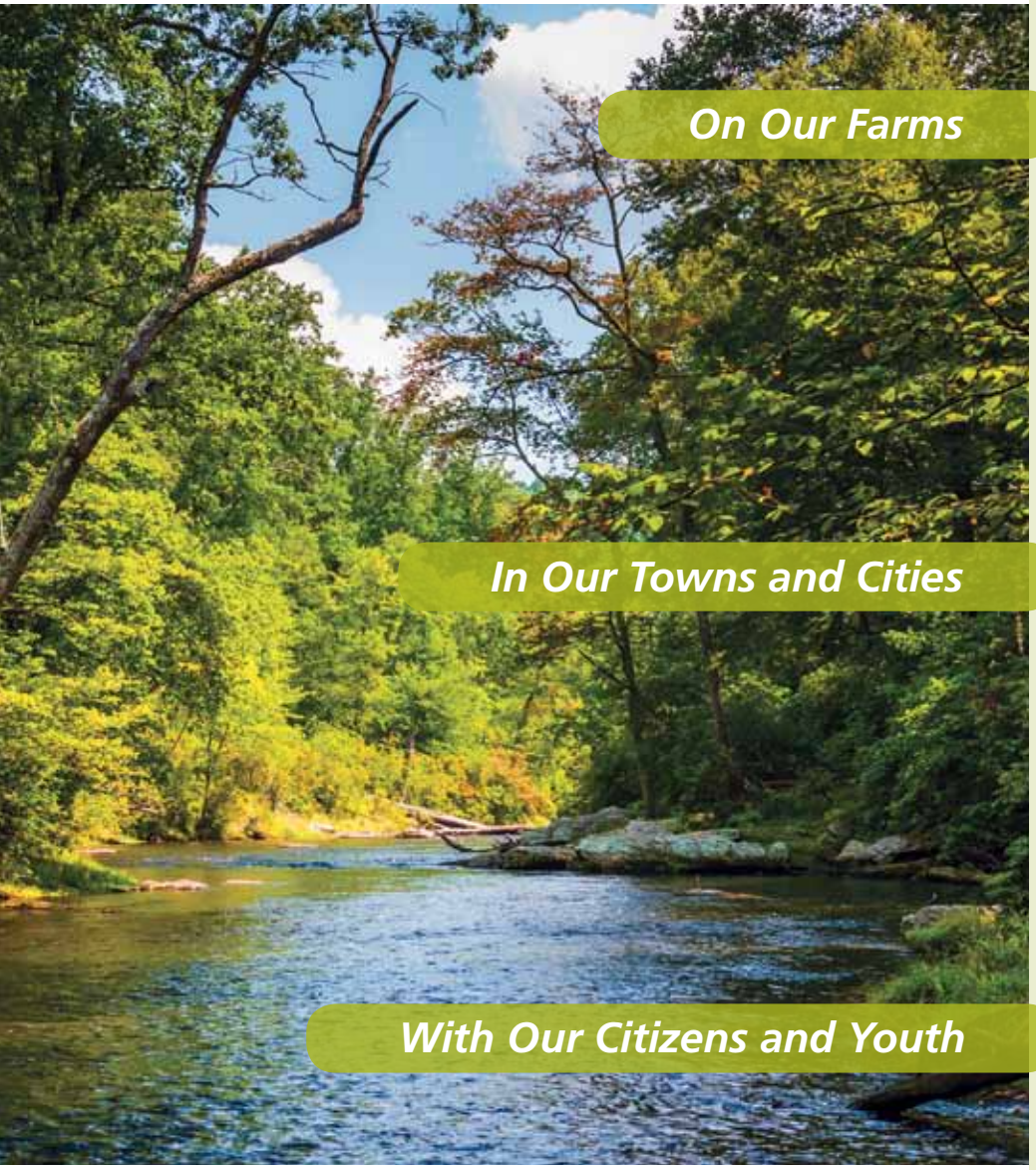
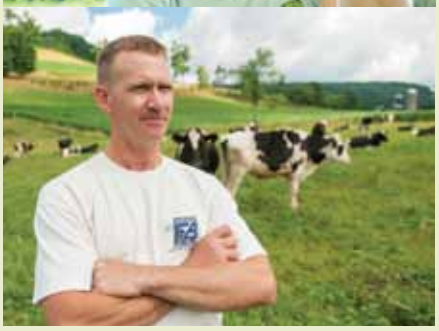
Local Soil and Water Conservation Starts Here:



On Our Farms

In Our Towns and Cities

With Our Citizens and Youth



MASCD 2014 Annual Report

Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts

Local Soil and Water Conservation Starts Here

Soil conservation districts (SCDs) are one of our nation's best-kept secrets, even though districts have been hard at work protecting natural resources for three quarters of a century.

Our origins date back to the Dust Bowl years of the 1930s, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt—responding to the widespread environmental damage caused by the loss of our nation's topsoil—urged states to organize independent soil conservation districts to help farmers protect natural resources at the local level.

Today, our vast network of volunteer supervisors, dedicated field staff, and cooperating landowners is responsible for the majority of the environmental improvements taking place on Maryland's farmland—more than two million acres. Given our long history of promoting voluntary conservation programs, it is no surprise that we serve as the primary local delivery system for implementing the agricultural portion of Maryland's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay by 2025.

In 2014, districts helped Maryland farmers plant a record 478,000 acres of protective cover crops on their fields, developed and updated 2,052 conservation plans to protect natural resources on 108,140 acres of farmland, and provided the technical skill and know-how to design and install complex animal waste management systems for poultry and livestock operations. Statewide, districts helped farmers place 3,156 highly valued best management practices on their fields to control soil erosion, manage nutrients, and meet Chesapeake Bay milestone commitments.

But controlling soil erosion and nutrient runoff is not limited to farmland. Construction activities and unmanaged growth continue to offset gains made by agriculture in protecting water quality. Not surprisingly, Maryland's WIP for the Bay includes a substantial urban element.

SCDs review and approve erosion and sediment control plans for local governments and assist with stormwater management for construction projects. In 2014, districts reviewed 11,753 erosion and sediment control plans for construction projects affecting 53,573 acres of land. In recent years, a number of SCDs have assumed compliance responsibilities from the Maryland Department of the Environment for urban construction projects in their counties. Many developers appreciate the improved accessibility and turnaround that comes with local oversight. In 2014, districts performed 367 pre-construction meetings and 458 inspections to ensure compliance with environmental requirements.

Education is the driving force behind our voluntary approach to conservation. Districts provide local conservation leadership, work with schools to implement environmental education requirements, and support the Maryland Envirothon, a nationally recognized outdoor natural resources competition that brings high school students together to solve complex environmental issues. In 2014, more than 1,000 high school students from 18 Maryland counties participated in local Envirothon competitions.

The Maryland legislature has been supportive of the work we do at the local level and we rely on that support to carry out our mission. Throughout our long history, districts have remained true to our founding philosophy to provide local solutions to natural resource concerns. Please read on to learn more about our accomplishments in 2014. With your support, local soil and water conservation starts here.

Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts

Hans Schmidt
President

Lynne Hoot
Executive Director

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) serves as the voice for Maryland's 24 soil conservation districts on statewide issues. Our mission is to promote practical and effective soil, water, and related natural resource programs to all citizens on a voluntary basis through leadership, education, cooperation, and local direction provided by soil conservation districts.

CHESAPEAKE BAY **MILESTONE** PROGRESS

Soil conservation districts help farmers install voluntary conservation measures on their farms known as best management practices (BMPs) that are a key feature of Maryland's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay by 2025.

In 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—under authority of the Clean Water Act—established pollution limits for the Chesapeake Bay known as the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). The TMDL represents the maximum amount of nutrients and sediment that the Bay can receive and still meet water quality standards. Maryland and the other Bay states are working to meet TMDL thresholds by implementing their federally approved WIPs.

To ensure that the Bay cleanup stays on track, a series of two-year commitments called milestones has been established. Maryland farmers—with SCD guidance and support—exceeded the first two sets of Bay milestone commitments and are on track to meet the third set of milestone goals to be completed June 30, 2015.

BMPs installed with public funds are reported to EPA using the Maryland Department of Agriculture's (MDA's) Conservation Tracker database management system. During the year, SCDs worked with farmers to verify BMPs that have been installed without public funds so that these additional resource improvements can be accounted for in the Bay Model that guides the cleanup in the future.

CHESAPEAKE BAY MILESTONES July 2013 through June 2015

Where We Stand: Halfway Point—Two Year Milestone Progress/Agricultural Sources

MILESTONE	Goal Implementation by June 30, 2015	Status As of June 30, 2014	Percent of Milestone Achieved
Cover Crops	Plant 386,007 acres annually	410,530* acres planted during 2013-2014 planting season	106%
Retirement of Highly Erodible Land	Retire 973 acres of highly erodible land by 2015	832 acres retired and planted with protective vegetation	86%
Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans	Develop plans for 926,207 acres by 2015	933,965 acres planned	101%
Streamside Forest Buffers	Plant 353 acres of forest buffers next to streams by 2015	356 acres planted	100%
Streamside Grassed Buffers	Plant 866 acres of grassed buffers next to streams by 2015	1,038 acres planted	119%
Waste Storage Structures/ Livestock	Construct 55 livestock waste storage structures by 2015	47 structures installed	85%
Waste Storage Structures/ Poultry	Construct 12 poultry waste storage structures by 2015	15 structures installed	125%

**Statewide, 423,212 acres of cover crops were planted on land both in and out of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed during the 2013-2014 planting season.*

On Our Farms

Soil conservation districts provide technical and financial resources for farmers who want to install best management practices on their farms to control soil erosion, manage nutrients, and safeguard water quality. By promoting good farming practices that keep soil and crop nutrients on farm fields and out of waterways, SCDs are helping to keep Maryland's working farms productive and improving the health of local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay.

Farm Plans Protect Natural Resources

It all starts with a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan (SCWQP). These plans identify and prioritize natural resource concerns on the farm and provide farmers with a blueprint for making environmental improvements. A typical farm plan includes land use maps, soils information, an inventory of resources, engineering notes, and other supporting information. Because each farm is unique, no two farm plans are alike.

SCWQPs outline BMPs that can be installed by the farmer to protect and improve natural resources. A grassed waterway may be recommended to reduce soil erosion. Cover crops and streamside buffers help prevent nutrients and sediment from entering waterways. Other more complex BMPs such as animal waste storage systems provide water quality benefits for livestock operations. SCDs help farmers select the right BMPs for their farms, supervise their installation or construction, and develop maintenance plans to keep them in good working order.

SCWQPs are required by some federal and state conservation programs and are included in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay milestone commitments. Agricultural planners working in the SCD develop these plans for farmers free of charge. During calendar year 2014, 2,052 SCWQPs were developed or updated by SCDs to protect 108,140 acres of land. These plans contained 3,156 highly valued BMPs. Maryland has met its 2015 milestone commitment for this practice.

One-Stop Access to Financial Incentive Programs

Farmers rely on conservation grants and loans to help offset the cost of installing BMPs on their farms and comply with federal, state, and local environmental regulations. District staff go the extra mile to help farmers calculate costs to install BMPs and apply for state and federal financial assistance. In 2014, SCDs helped Maryland farmers obtain more than $38 million in grants through the following programs:

Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share Program (MACS): Helped farmers secure $27.3 million in grants to install 2,370 BMPs that will prevent roughly 2.6 million pounds of nitrogen and 111,000 pounds of phosphorus from entering Maryland waterways each year. A large cover crop planting of 423,200 acres during the 2013-2014 planting season was responsible for the bulk of the nitrogen and phosphorus savings.

USDA-NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): Helped farmers obtain $10.8 million in federal cost-share grants to protect natural resources on 18,500 acres.

USDA-NRCS Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA): SCDs helped farmers obtain $132,200 in AMA assistance to address water management resource concerns on 183 acres.

USDA-NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): Helped farmers obtain $34,800 in financial assistance to maintain and improve existing conservation systems and adopt additional BMPs to address priority resource concerns on 619 acres.

ON THE FARM **2014 ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: Helped farmers install 3,156 highly valued BMPs to control soil erosion, manage manure resources, improve nutrient efficiencies, comply with environmental regulations, and meet Chesapeake Bay milestones.

RECORD COVER CROP PLANTING: Helped Maryland farmers plant 478,000 acres of protective cover crops on their fields during the 2014-2015 planting season—the largest cover crop planting in Maryland history.

POLLINATOR HABITAT PROJECT: Worked with Maryland farmers to install 49 acres of pollinator habitat on 53 farms in 15 counties.

FARM STEWARDSHIP CERTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (FSCAP): Certified 20 conservation stewards in 2014, including seven horse farms. FSCAP recognizes farmers who go the extra mile to protect farmland and natural resources by following SCWQPs, installing BMPs, and complying with Maryland's nutrient management regulations. FSCAP partners include the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Maryland Farm Bureau, MDA, and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. To date, 92 farmers managing 25,000 acres in 16 counties have been certified by the program.

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MASCD is a proud sponsor of Maryland Public Television's production of ***Maryland Farm & Harvest.*** *Now in its second season, the show takes viewers around the state to see and experience what it's like to run a 21st century farm—from technological advances and conservation challenges to age-old complications such as weather hardships. Watch online at mpt.org/farm.*

In Our Towns and Cities

Erosion and nutrient runoff are not limited to farmland. Whenever soil is disturbed by a shovel, bulldozer, or any type of earth moving equipment, the risk for sediment pollution of nearby waterways increases.

Erosion and Sediment Control Plan Reviews

Sediment and nutrient runoff from construction, excavation, and road building projects can find their way into local streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay. Since 1972, soil conservation districts have been authorized to review and approve erosion and sediment control plans for construction and land development projects in their counties. Their work ensures that environmental safeguards are in place to minimize soil erosion, nutrient runoff, and sediment buildup in waterways. In 2014, soil conservation districts reviewed 11,753 erosion and sediment control plans for construction projects on 53,573 acres. Approximately 30 percent of these plans were approved.

Compliance Activities

Inspection and enforcement activities ensure that builders and developers are following their erosion and sediment control plans and protecting nearby waterways. Enforcement is performed by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), delegated counties, and authorized soil conservation districts in Allegany, Calvert, Caroline, Cecil, Frederick, St. Mary's, and Washington counties. In 2014, these SCDs performed 367 pre-construction meetings and 458 inspections to ensure compliance with environmental requirements.

An urban stormwater management system is installed at the Lexington Park Volunteer Rescue Squad in St. Mary's County.

Stormwater is managed through the use of permeable pavers at this redevelopment project in Washington County.

With Our Citizens and Youth

In 2014, the Allegany SCD spearheaded the installation of rain gardens and a bioswale to capture stormwater runoff at a local elementary school.

Farmer and Community Outreach

Districts sponsor workshops, field days, pasture walks, and demonstration projects to educate farmers about the latest conservation techniques. Our education programs provide opportunities for farmers to get new ideas first-hand from other farmers about the latest conservation equipment, stream protection measures, and pasture management techniques.

Environmental Education Programs

Helping local school districts implement environmental education mandates is a major function of Maryland's soil conservation districts. In 2014, districts sponsored a number of youth education programs at local schools, including soil judging contests and poster competitions.

Many districts participate in large scale education programs at nature centers and parks within their counties. In Cecil County, the district sponsors a countywide 4th grade soils program at the Fair Hill Nature Center. In Washington County, 1,000 kindergarten students learn about life on the farm and the importance of conservation during visits to the Agricultural Education Center in Keedysville. Through its participation with the Close Encounters with Agriculture Program, the Montgomery Soil Conservation District educates more than 3,000 students and teachers on nutrition, production agriculture, and conservation. And, on the Eastern Shore, the Kent Soil and Water Conservation District provides hands-on soil demonstrations for the county's 4th graders at the Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge and Turner's Creek Park.

Maryland Envirothon

Soil conservation districts promote environmental education to high school students through the Maryland Envirothon, an outdoor natural resources competition that challenges students to identify and categorize living resources, perform soil surveys, and solve other complex natural resource issues.

Students participating in the Envirothon study the state's natural resources over the course of the school year. Working in teams, students are trained and tested by conservation and biology professionals in four natural resource areas—soils, aquatics, forestry, and wildlife plus an environmental issue that changes from year to year. This year's issue was *Sustainable Agriculture.*

In 2014, more than 1,000 students from 18 Maryland counties participated in local Envirothon competitions. A five-member team of students from Carroll County won this year's state competition. Members of the top three teams were awarded prizes and scholarships ranging from $300 to $1,000. MASCD and the State Soil Conservation Committee have sponsored the Envirothon for more than 20 years.

Students study soil formation and profiling as part of their Envirothon training.

Soil and Water Conservation Starts Here

A closer look within your own community will attest to the good work being performed by Maryland's soil conservation districts. Farm fields and streams protected from erosion and nutrient runoff, new developments and shopping centers outfitted with special sediment and stormwater management controls, and strong, conservation-minded communities are among the accomplishments of Maryland's 24 soil conservation districts.

MARYLAND'S CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

Soil conservation districts are members of Maryland's Conservation Partnership, a coalition of federal, state, and local agriculture agencies dedicated to protecting and conserving natural resources and promoting Maryland agriculture.

- Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts
- Maryland Department of Agriculture
- State Soil Conservation Committee
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- USDA Farm Service Agency
- University of Maryland Extension

The Prince George's Soil Conservation District is located in Upper Marlboro.

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Maryland's Soil Conservation Districts

Allegany	301-777-1747, ext. 3
Anne Arundel	410-571-6757
Baltimore County	410-527-5920, ext. 3
Calvert	410-535-1521, ext. 3
Caroline	410-479-1202, ext. 3
Carroll	410-848-8200, ext. 3
Catoctin	301-695-2803, ext. 3
Cecil	410-398-4411, ext. 3
Charles	301-934-9588, ext. 3
Dorchester	410-228-5640, ext. 3
Frederick	301-695-2803, ext. 3
Garrett	301-334-6950, ext. 3
Harford	410-838-6181, ext. 3
Howard	410-313-0680
Kent	410-778-5150, ext. 3
Montgomery	301-590-2855
Prince George's	301-574-5162, ext. 3
Queen Anne's	410-758-3136, ext. 3
St. Mary's	301-475-8402, ext. 3
Somerset	410-651-1575, ext. 3
Talbot	410-822-1577, ext. 3
Washington County	301-797-6821, ext. 3
Wicomico	410-546-4777, ext. 3
Worcester	410-632-5439, ext. 3