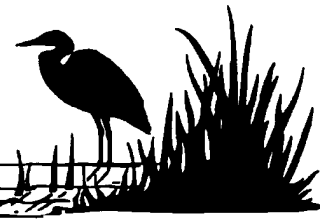


P Maryland Conservation PARTNERSHIP PRESS



Summer 2015 Volume 22 Issue 3

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT — HANS SCHMIDT

First, I would like to thank everyone who came to our annual meeting in Solomons. Attendance was up this year and we had good turnout of district supervisors and staff. It was excellent to see so many NRCS faces joining us for the event. There was a variety of discussions and speakers in the general sessions and breakout meetings. At the Opening Session, we had an opportunity to meet our new NRCS state conservationist, Dr. Terron Hillsman. We welcome him to the Partnership team. We heard about the Chesapeake Bay Land and Litter Project from Ernie Shea and from Energy Solutions about the Delmarva Poultry Eco-Services RCPP Project that incorporates a new flooring system for poultry houses with an energy producing option to deal with excess poultry litter.

Throughout the meeting we learned about using biomass sorghum for phosphorus remediation, nitrogen bioreactors from the MidShore Riverkeeper Conservancy, the status of Forest Harvest activities, SHA mitigation, and WOTUS. One important issue, with greater emphasis later in the newsletter, is what soil conservation districts need to do to prevent the occurrence, and then spread, of Avian Influenza, if and when it arrives in Maryland. Although a top priority for the Eastern Shore, this also has implications across the state. Overall, the sessions were interesting and informative and we got great feedback on the new format and variety of speakers. If you have any feedback or suggestions, please let us know.

MASCD passed five resolutions at the meeting. The most significant was for MASCD to pursue a dedicated funding source for district staff and operations. A steering committee was appointed for this effort but it is going to take a commitment from every single district supervisor and partners to achieve this enormous task. MASCD is moving forward, investigating possible sources for the dedicated funding, and engaging with partners to gain support. I encourage you to discuss this with state senators and delegates when you meet them over the next few months. At this point, 25 district staff, 14 managers and 11 secretarial positions are being funded through the Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust Fund rather than state General Funds and there are an additional 42 annual contractual planners and technicians funded through this program. MASCD believes that a permanent funding source for these employees will produce better retention rates by offering more secure long-term employment.

Other resolutions passed at the MASCD meeting:

- We recommend that MASCD work with the appropriate agencies to come up with a check list of all the necessary steps for growers to build chicken houses.

(Continued on page 11)

WASHINGTON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT CELEBRATES 75 YEARS

Surrounded by his fellow district supervisors, vice-chair of the Washington County Soil Conservation District, Harry Strite welcomed staff, cooperators, agency personnel from UMD, NRCS and MDA, local politicians and farmers to celebrate the district's 75th year. Plaques and accolades were provided by state Senators, County Commissioners, MDA, NRCS, NACD, and MASCD.

After a delicious meal that included a whole roasted pig provided by Ernst Farms and many local delicacies donated by local farmers, District Manager Elmer Weibley summed up the sentiments of the evening discussing the districts accomplishments over the past 75 years and the history of the conservation movement. He described the role of people in all these endeavors and referenced Hugh Hammond Bennett credited with being the driving force behind the conservation movement in America. He focused on the role of people. He described the people as the district supervisors today, Betty Meyers, Harry Strite, J. Scott Shank, J.D. Rinehart, and Jere Debaugh, who are now leading the conservation efforts in Washington

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Lee McDaniel, President of NACD presented a citation to Washington Co. Supervisors to celebrate their 75th Anniversary.



PARTNERSHIP PRESS ELECTRONICALLY

The quarterly *Partnership Press* is posted on www.mascd.net. In an effort to conserve, if you prefer to receive the newsletter emailed, as opposed to a mailed copy, email marguerite.mdag@gmail.com.

PERSONNEL NOTES

NRCS JOB TRANSITIONS...

Lydia Donovan, was selected as the Business Services Specialist working for the Assistant State Conservationist for Management and Strategy, at the State Office in Annapolis. She has worked for NRCS at the State Office for 20 years.

Marie Monn, was selected as the Financial Resource Specialist, working with the Assistant State Conservationist for Management and Strategy, at the State Office in Annapolis. She has 36 years of Federal service with the last 27 years working for NRCS at the State Office.

Both of these new positions are part of the USDA Administrative Transformation Project where support-service functions are standardized and centralized across the Nation for more efficient and economical operations. Odessa Armstrong is the Assistant State Conservationist for Management and Strategy.

NRCS WELCOMES...

Annette Kenney..... an 1890s student from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. She is working this summer from the Talbot County Field Office and focusing on soil sciences.

George "Ellis" Collier an 1890s student from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. He is working this summer from the Wicomico County Field Office and focusing on environmental sciences.

Josie Dallam an Earth Team volunteer working in the Harford County Field Office and with the Public Affairs Team at the State Office. She is a rising senior at the University of Wisconsin in Madison majoring in Agronomy and Ag Communications.

IN MEMORIAM...

OSCAR GRIMES

Oscar Fay Grimes, of Davidsonville, MD died at Anne Arundel Medical Center on Monday, July 13, 2015. He was 90. Born August 19, 1924 in Sudley Manor in West River, MD, Oscar attended Davidsonville Elementary School and Annapolis High School. Oscar was also an All-star member of the 4H, former Vice-president and member of the Maryland Farm Bureau, the a supervisor of the Anne Arundel soil conservation district from 1955-1977, and was active with the Anne Arundel County Antique Tractor Club. He also helped establish the Anne Arundel County Fair and served as the first treasurer.



ARNOLD HAWKINS

Arnold Claggett Hawkins, age 91, of Upper Marlboro, passed away on Friday, July 24, 2015, at his home. Born October 25, 1923, in Mt. Airy, MD, Arnold had been in farming for most of his life. Arnold was a very familiar face to soil conservation serving as the executive secretary to SSCC for many years. He has remained in touch with MASCD staffers and provided helpful guidance and a pair of eyes as we have kept up the MASCD

Association Manual - much of which was created by Arnold. Charity donations can be made to Bethel United Methodist Church, 16101 Swanson Rd., Upper Marlboro, MD 20774.

FRANKLIN GLADHILL

Franklin Startzman Gladhill died peacefully at home with his wife of 66 years, Bess Baker Gladhill, by his side. Franklin has a long list of leadership accomplishments in agriculture. He chaired the Frederick SCD from 1995-2014, the Ag-Complex Planning Committee, and served on the board of Goodwill Industries. He was a member of the state and local Farm Bureaus, the Grange, and the New Market Lions Club. Donations can be made to Mountain View United Methodist Church, 11501 Mountain View Road, Damascus, MD 20872.

INTERNET

PORTAL ENABLES RANCHERS, FARMERS TO REQUEST CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE ONLINE

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners can now do business with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) through a new online portal. With the launch of Conservation Client Gateway (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/cgate/>), producers will have the ability to work with conservation planners online to access Farm Bill programs, request assistance, and track payments for their conservation activities.



NACD has been pleased to be a part of the development of this new online portal, and has hosted focus groups of producers during the process to test and evaluate various components. NACD has also hosted opportunities for members to view the Conservation Client Gateway during this development period.

Conservation Client Gateway enables farmers, ranchers and private landowners to securely:

- Request NRCS technical and financial assistance;
- Review and sign conservation plans and practice schedules;
- Complete and sign an application for a conservation program;
- Review, sign and submit contracts and appendices for conservation programs;
- Document completed practices and request certification of completed practices;
- Request and track payments for conservation programs; and
- Store and retrieve technical and financial files, including documents and photographs.

Conservation Client Gateway is entirely voluntary, giving producers a choice between conducting business online or traveling to a USDA service center. For more information, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway.

PMT IMPLEMENTATION: ON-FARM ECONOMIC CASE STUDIES

Dwight Dotterer, MDA, presented information on a two year case study being run by MDA to get some preliminary result from farms implementing the PMT management requirements on some of the acres on their farms with FIV above 150. The case study includes eight farms: four poultry operations, three of which also have cropland and four dairy operations.

Participating farmers will run both the PSI and PMT on enrolled acres to see how management requirements differ, but will adhere to PMT requirements. The cost or management differences required when comparing PSI to PMT, will be used to determine farmer compensation for these case studies. Agreements and incentive payments have not been finalized, but MDA plans to provide a base per acre payment and additional incentives depending on farm specific conditions.

Although the main purpose of case studies is to get an idea of the types of costs farmers will incur from implementing PMT, MDA will collect and examine data on history of crop yields, weather, and cost of using manure/litter on farm versus transporting it elsewhere. Participating farmers have expressed concerns about lack of micro-nutrient in the absence of manure use.

PROMOTING AGRICULTURE

Rona Flagle introduced the topic of programs and messaging for promoting agriculture and conservation programs. She noted the need to identify the audience and the tools available for reaching them. There are many venues available today. Traditional media such as print media and T.V. or radio is now joined by a number of social media tools. The latter is most appealing to the younger adult. These new tools increase the opportunities to spread the word because they are not dependent on an editor or publisher being the "traffic cop" for what gets published. Social media can be controlled by the information source. New venues like web pages or Facebook need to be regularly updated to be of interest and to assure they continue to reach audiences.

News outlets are still interested in the local angle and this is a good catch for SCD information. Another good hook is to tie conservation to healthy food and water. These topics have greater resonance with audiences today. Other topics of interest are pollinators and conservation of habitat. Good visuals are helpful such as livestock management BMPs. When providing information to print media it is important to follow up with a phone call.

Another idea is tapping into weather reporters. They often feature local angles and are pleased to have items to share. They also tend

to have a good following because people from many demographics follow the weather. Flagle noted interest in agriculture is evident as MPT's *Maryland Farm and Harvest* is their top rated show.

Vanessa Orlando, who handles social media venues for MDA then presented some information on these outlets. She said the content is condensed and must be presented differently because exposure is by choice. Social media is a direct communication channel. MDA uses Twitter and Facebook and Orlando's objective is to peak interest and then drive folks to MDA's website for additional information. MDA has 5,100 followers on Facebook and 8,200 followers on Twitter. Twitter has about a 20 minutes shelf life for news items. However in a 28-day period, MDA directly reached 95,000 people using Twitter. Although it takes time to maintain these venues, the risk of doing nothing is that someone else will fill the void and tell your story from their perspective.

Catherine Shank asked if any studies indicated how much information was too much. Orlando said usually more information is better because of the short shelf life

Orlando talked about reaching the "moveable middle." There are folks who are already supporters and folks who have made up their minds in opposition to your efforts or stories, but the "moveable middle" are those who are undecided or have not formulated an opinion. These are the folks best reached with social media.

Terron Hillsman said he has encouraged his public information staff to work with SCDs to identify information needs and assist them.

Flagle wrapped up by emphasizing again the importance of visuals and how good photography on a website can go a long way to telling a story.

AGRICULTURAL CERTAINTY PROGRAM

Colin Jones, MDA, presented information about the Agricultural Certainty Program. He noted the purpose was both to accelerate BMP implementation and provide a more predictable business environment for participating farmers who would be excused from new regulations for a ten year period. He described the program requirements including periodic inspections, annual reporting and MDE's role. He noted MDA and MDE were finalizing an agreement as to responsibilities and how they would be coordinated in this new program.

(Continued on page 4)

AGRICULTURAL CERTAINTY (CONTINUED)

There will be two options for farmers who are interested in the program. They can apply for the full certainty program complete with a formal agreement and program oversight or they can request an evaluation to gauge where their operation stands in meeting water quality thresholds and to then assess their options for enrolling in the Certainty Program or participating in nutrient trading. By enrolling in the Certainty Program, a farmer installing a BMP to generate nutrient credits would be protected if that BMP becomes mandatory during the 10 year certainty agreement period.

MDA held training sessions for verifiers in March. The intent is to have verifiers available in most counties. SCD staff has many of the qualifications at present and funds may be available to compensate SCDs for time needed to verify farms for the program.

FOREST HARVESTING: SEDIMENT AND EROSION CONTROL

Brian Clevenger, MDE, introduced MDE's proposed changes for Forest Harvesting sediment and erosion control. He noted the process was initiated 10 years ago and the working committee at the time included SCD representatives, MDE, DNR and forestry professionals. A guidance document was never finalized and as a result there are several versions being used. To provide consistency, MDE wants to finalize and circulate one document. A consultant was hired to assemble the various versions into one document consistent with outcomes from the working committee.

Dan Rider, DNR Forest Service, noted concerns from the forestry industry regarding variability of requirements across county bounds. The main issues being addressed are the Stream Management Zone requirements, stabilization of disturbed soils and timeframes for putting controls in place, and BMPs for use when roads and trails are constructed. The buffer extension for slope has been changed from 4 feet for every 1% slope increase to 2 feet. The stabilization period is now 3-7 days, a reduction from the 7-14 days. BMPs including erosion control and re-vegetation along roads are also included. The guidance emphasizes the importance of planning. Preferred stream crossings include a bridge followed by a culvert and a ford as a last resort.

Powell asked if the manual was included by reference into regulations. Clevenger indicated that this is not required for forest harvest guidelines.

Clevenger said MDE planned to incorporate SCD input into the document before it is publicly circulated for comment. He noted that they would present information and receive feedback at MASCD but a follow up meeting might be needed to wrap up details.

Richardson asked if permits were required to install culverts. Clevenger said they were. Giese asked who determined water of the state if an abandoned drainage ditch was evident in a forest track. Clevenger said the forester made a preliminary determination but it would be subject to SCD as final decision maker. Richardson asked if the watershed size was a consideration. Rider said it wasn't.

CHESAPEAKE LAND AND LITTER PROJECT

Ernie Shea, Solutions from the Land, presented information about a project he facilitated called "Chesapeake Land and Litter Project." Recommendations were developed by a Work Group composed of a diverse cross section of grain growers, poultry producers and integrators, academic experts, extension agents, along with conservation and business partners, was formed to assess progress in managing nutrient pollution associated with the storage, transport and land application of poultry litter on the Delmarva peninsula and help support a dialogue with producers and value chain stakeholders on ways to utilize manure and poultry litter beyond what is needed to support crop production. The Work Group was asked to review the "current state" of litter management and identifying economically viable agronomic, technological or market based strategies, solutions and management models that can be deployed to abate agricultural nutrient pollution and utilize poultry litter that can no longer be land applied on phosphorous saturated soils.

They framed multiple solutions as their recommendations using 2025 as the year for outcomes. The findings include:

- In the Chesapeake Bay watershed, all sectors have a responsibility and moral obligation to reduce nutrient pollution.
- Land application of animal manure and litter (M/L) in support of the nutrient needs for crop production remains the primary method of managing manure in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. When M/L can be land applied at proper agronomic levels, this remains the most cost-effective and technologically feasible method of managing manure.
- In some areas, the long history and repeated application of manure and other fertilizers on the Delmarva Peninsula has resulted in fields having phosphorous levels in excess of levels needed for successful crop growth. Soils saturated with excess phosphorous can increase nutrient runoff and leaching to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.
- A number of technologies can recover nutrients and energy as value added by-products from animal manure and poultry litter but most are still expensive to implement and are in various stages of development. Nutrient and energy tech-

(Continued on page 5)

Information from the State Soil Conservation Committee

- nologies must be fully integrated offering economically viable solutions if they are to be commercially viable for markets in either the farming or the investment community.
- Successful alternatives to today's land application of manure/poultry litter must change the waste to a more concentrated, lighter byproduct that is less costly to transport and apply (i.e. biochar) and/or convert it to a higher value for new markets and uses including energy (heat, liquid fuels, electricity) nutrient products (mineral ash, organic fertilizers, compost) recycled material for bedding or sterile ingredients for feed.
 - Since the technologies for producing these value added products are not mature, the operation and maintenance requirements for new technology waste treatment systems are critical and are often well beyond the skill set available at the farm. Hence there is a growing need within the animal agriculture sector to have full service providers available if the technology is to be deployed appropriately.
 - Progress in land application of manure and poultry litter shows that new techniques can not only benefit crop yields, but can also make more efficient use of nutrients applied and therefore minimize nutrient loss. Research data continues to reinforce the fact that with advancements in precision agriculture equipment and technology, "nutrient use efficiency" for plants can be further improved with more precise applications like accounting for point to point field variations, soil surfing and/or the adoption of 4R techniques.
 - Government and market incentives to offset investments, costs of maintenance of existing and new technology systems and marketing of manure and litter byproducts are needed in order to enable agricultural producers to achieve pollution reduction goals while remaining economically viable in the long-term.
 - Despite regulatory concerns, moderate growth of the poultry industry continues on the Peninsula. A trend to more organic production, larger houses with larger animals is emerging.

The actions they recommended were:

1. Create and Support a Landscape Scale, Multi-Stakeholder Leadership Platform for Addressing Agricultural Nutrient Pollution
2. Invest in Mass Balance Research and Analysis
3. Support and Fund a Virtual Poultry Nutrient Management Resource and Demonstration Program
4. Standardize Regulations for Manure and Litter Storage, Transport and Use
5. Create and fund financing mechanisms that support bundled technologies.

Schmidt noted the forum resulted in positive feedback. Giese indicated that since the poultry industry is growing, there are challenges to be addressed. Myers discussed the cyclical nature of the poultry industry and how it affected the local economy. He asked if there was serious consideration of establishing a check off program. He noted the vegetable industry seems to be a growing industry and could lead to some market shifts. There was discussion about the role environmental organizations played in report development. Shea indicated the message was identifying "solutions" instead of concentrating on problems. Stanton remarked about the importance of addressing public policy and inclusion of the private sector. Shea said the concept is not to have the government entities "in charge" but as equal participants.

NOTES

SUPERVISOR APPOINTMENTS

- Anne Arundel SCD - Herb Sachs
- Baltimore County SCD - William Suchting
- Carroll SCD - Gregory Dell
- Charles SCD - Jack Welch
- Dorchester SCD - Terry Nuwer
- Kent SCD - Charles Miller
- Montgomery SCD - Wade Butler
- Prince George's SCD - James Parreco
- Queen Anne SCD - Jean Haymaker
- St. Mary's SCD - Richard Cooper
- Somerset SCD - Robert Fitzgerald

WCSCD CELEBRATES 75 YEARS (CONTINUED)

County and giving special recognition to past supervisors Don Spickler, John Shank, Leonard Lowery, Luis Debaugh and John Herbst. He talked about the people as the staff who work as a team to deliver conservation programs and practices on the farm, and finally to the people in the fields, the cooperators who have come forward as stewards to put conservation on their farms. Elmer recognized the 27 farmers in Washington County

who are now certified under the MASCD Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program.

To the Washington County Soil Conservation District, we congratulate you on reaching this important milestone. We look forward to celebrating with all the districts over the next 18 years as each Maryland district meets this milestone. To date, Kent Soil and Water Conservation District (2013), Maryland's first district and Catocin SCD (2014) have celebrated this accomplishment.



AWARDS

MASCD AWARDS

At the recent MASCD meeting, Bill Giese, Awards Chair, announced the following MASCD award winners:

- Outstanding Cooperator** - John and Mary Fendrick, *Montgomery SCD*
- Outstanding Employee** - Dee Price, *Washington Co. SCD*
- Employee Special Achievement** - Shawn Smith, *Talbot SCD*
- Supervisor Special Achievement** - Ken Clements, *Howard SCD*
- Outstanding Contribution by a New Supervisor** - Justin Brendel, *Howard SCD*
- Outstanding Leadership** - David Cox, *Calvert SCD*
- Outstanding Associate** - Keith Olinger, *Howard SCD*
- Outstanding Contribution** - Anne Bradley, *Catoctin/Frederick SCD*
- Outstanding Newsletter** - *Howard SCD*

CONSERVATION EDUCATION AWARDS

- Conservation Education District Award** - *Cecil SCD*
- Conservation Education Teacher Award** - Dianne Miller, *Cecil SCD*

DISTRICT ATTENDANCE AWARD

The District Attendance Award was presented to the *Prince George's SCD*

SUPERVISOR PINS

At the MASCD Awards Banquet, President, Hans Schmidt, presented the following individuals with service pins. He thanked each of them for their commitment to soil conservation districts.

5 Year

- Hank Suchting, *Baltimore Co.*
- Wayne Hancock, *Charles*
- John Rinehart, *Washington Co.*
- Kirk Carmean, *Worcester*

10 Year

- Leonard Ogden, *Calvert*
- Rene Grossnickle, *Catoctin*
- Wes Messick, *Dorchester*
- Daniel Magness, *Harford*
- Pam Saul, *Montgomery*
- George Morris, *Queen Anne's*

15 Year

- Pete Peterson, *Anne Arundel*
- Gregory Dell, *Carroll*
- William Ewing, *Cecil*
- John Welch, *Charles*

20 Year

- Frank Richardson, *Harford*
- Wade Butler, *Montgomery*
- James Edelen, *Prince George's*

25 Year

- Charles Haines, *Queen Anne's*

30 Year

- Thomas D. Briscoe, *Calvert*
- Robert Fitzgerald, *Somerset*

65 Year*

- Vernon Foster, *Baltimore*

**a 65-year pin is not available, however recognition was made of Vernon's length of conservation service.*

MIDATLANTIC FARM CREDIT OUTSTANDING DISTRICT AWARD

Bruce Yerkes, from the MidAtlantic Farm Credit (MAFC), presented the MAFC Outstanding District Award plaques and monetary awards of \$700 for 1st place; \$400 for 2nd place; and \$200 for 3rd place, to the following districts:

- 1st Place - *Montgomery SCD*
- 2nd Place - *Howard SCD*
- 3rd Place - *Washington Co. SCD*

COLORING CONTEST WINNERS

Haley Carter announced the following students as the winners of the coloring contest:

- Class A (K & 1st grade): Robert Lee Smith, Dorchester SCD*
- Class B (Grades 2-3): Riley Boggs, Kent SCD*
- Class C (Grades 4-5): Megan Weishaupt, Caroline SCD*

POSTER WINNERS

Dee Price, Washington Co. SCD, announced the following poster competition 1st place winners:

- Class II (Grades 2-3): Sophia Principe, Talbot SCD*
- Class III (Grades 4-6): Miriam Pool, Talbot SCD*
- Class IV (Grades 7-9): Marina Potter, Frederick SCD*
- Class V (Grades 10-12): Grace Coughlan, Talbot SCD*

PRESIDENT'S AWARD

Congratulations to Bob Fitzgerald, supervisor with the Somerset SCD who received the President's award from Hans Schmidt.

Bob also receive his 30-year pin for his long term service to conservation. Congratulations Bob.



ENVIROTHON CELEBRATION



This year, the Envirothon celebrates their 25th anniversary providing a first class competitive high school environmental program. As part of the celebration, they spent time thanking their long-time supporters.

Craig Hartsock presented a thank you wildlife print to Dr. Teron Hillsman during the MASCD Awards banquet. NRCS is a core partner of the conservation movement in Maryland.

ENVIRONMENTAL ENDOWMENT AUCTION

The Environmental Endowment Auction held Tuesday, July 28th at the MASCD Annual Awards Banquet had a total of 36 items, 1 bag of money, and 6 Horses for "Horse Race" for a grand total of 43 auctioned items. All bets were on the horses with a lighthearted race at the conclusion of the auction. A special thank you goes out to Ronnie Farrell, Farrell Auction Service, for volunteering his time to be the guest auctioneers. Total pledges for auction items came to \$5,998.

MASCD would like to thank Haley Carter with St. Mary's SCD and many other volunteers for organizing the auction, and of course thanks to all of the supervisors, MDA personnel and district staff that bid on the fine selection of items.

MASCD GRANTS UPDATE

Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program (FSCAP) – There have been 160 evaluation reviews on 138 farms, resulting in 112 certified conservation stewards doing a great job in protecting 31,354 acres in 19 counties across the state (just added Worcester, Charles and Howard for the first time). We celebrated the 100th steward, Bill Gardenhour's Orchard in Washington County with a press conference on May 6th. Although the program provided 112 FSCAP farm signs with installed signposts, there are 160 signs displayed because many of the stewards believe that the recognition is also good for business. Every sign includes the district's name and logo.

We offer perks to stewards with other projects. Through our Nutrient Trading Project, 22 stewards had free baseline assessments conducted that determine compliance with the TMDL plan and the number of nitrogen and phosphorus credits. Through our Pollinator Habitat Projects, 26 stewards have participated so far and four of them we certified as a result of meeting them as participants in Pollinator Habitat.

There are 12 Certified District Officials (Supervisors, Associate Supervisors, Board Secretaries, District Staff), about 12%. District support: Washington County SCD - 27; Carroll - 12; Cecil - 10; Frederick and Wicomico SCDs - 8; St. Mary's - 7.

Translation Outreach Project – The Summer Poultry Newsletter was translated and mailed in July. One last newsletter is being planned before the project ends in September. MDA developed a series of conservation fact sheets for horse operations and we translated four fact sheets into Spanish to be made available to Hispanic horse farm workers. All translated material is sent to the Delaware Extension Office and the NRCS state and national Civil Rights Committees that distribute it across the country and territories.

Pollinator Habitat Project – We have been awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Green Grant Program that will allow us to establish five more acres of pollinator habitat. This is our third pollinator habitat grant. Our second Pollinator Habitat Project through a Chesapeake Bay Trust Pioneer Grant established 10 acres on 15 sites in eight counties. Our three Pollinator Habitat projects will total 56 acres on 62 farms, two agricultural centers, one school and one environmental education center in 15 counties.

Resource Improvement – We have received a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, working in partnership with another consultant company, Conservation Partners, to assist districts in verifying resource improvements, which are BMPs installed by farmers on their own without cost-sharing. After verification, the BMPs will be entered in MDA's Conservation Tracker system and eventually in the Chesapeake Bay database to increase credit for agriculture's contributions to the Watershed Implementation Plan. The goal is to verify resource improvements on 90 farms over the next year.

TRAINING

INCORPORATE BODY LANGUAGE INTO LEADERSHIP SKILLS

The way you sit and stand at meetings projects subtle clues to those around you. Whether or not you're aware of it, you're providing ideas about your trustworthiness, openness, and social stature. If you're feeling confident and in charge, you'll naturally expand to take up space in a meeting. You'll stand up straight, make expansive gestures, and hold your shoulders back. If you're feeling uncomfortable and uncertain, you'll naturally shrink to minimize the amount of space you take up. You'll sit with legs and arms crossed, you may rub the back of your neck, and you're likely to slouch.

For the most part these gestures are unconscious. If you want to be seen as a leader, though, you need to pay attention to what your body language is saying. Projecting powerful body language is important for two reasons. First, it provides a signal to others that you're a leader, that you're trustworthy, and that you should be listened to. According to social psychologist Amy Cuddy, it's possible to "fake it 'til you become it." By taking on more powerful poses we can not only feel more powerful for a moment, we can actually *become* more powerful.

Secondly, projecting the positive body language of leadership is more than standing in power poses. Being seen as authoritative and dominant may help you take control of a meeting, but you also want to project empathy and approachability so that your team perceives you as trustworthy. If you're feeling confident in yourself, it's easier to convince others. While fidgeting has been proven to burn calories, it is another habit to avoid at meetings if you want to appear credible. Scratching your neck, cracking your knuckles, or twitching your knee can give the impression that you're anxious, nervous, or even lying. Instead, tap into your inner Zen and try to stay fully concentrated on the meeting or conversation.

So what should your hands be doing? Try steepling your fingers, a classic gesture of power that helps emphasize your position. Strong eye contact is another crucial element. Strong leaders generally make uninterrupted eye contact with their audience while they're speaking, which connects them literally and figuratively with the listeners. Looking away from or past the person you're talking to can make you seem flighty or insincere. To project openness and attentiveness to your team, use open palm gestures and a friendly stance. To encourage someone to speak up, lean forward and give him or her eye contact when they're speaking. Nod your agreement, but be aware of nodding too much, which can make it seem like you're trying to please your subordinates and undercuts your authority. Be careful of crossing your arms, which closes you off and can be perceived as combative or defensive. By projecting leadership body language and confidence you'll not only start to gain the unconscious trust of those around you, you'll start to feel more confident yourself.

In other words, stop slouching and you can take on the world!

Excerpt taken from GovLoop newsletter, Jesse Kwak, July 29, 2015

TRAINING

FARM BUREAU'S "WOMEN IN AG" SURVEY

Communicating effectively, establishing and achieving goals, and strategic planning ranked highest on a list of important leadership skills for women in agriculture to master, according to a new Farm Bureau survey. Nearly 2,000 women completed the informal online survey, which was conducted to determine the goals, aspirations, achievements, and needs of women in American agriculture today.

"The survey results point to a need for a deeper dive into what leadership traits women in agriculture are interested in learning about in order to achieve their goals," said Sherry Saylor, an Arizona row crop farmer and chair of the American Farm Bureau (AFB) women's leadership committee.

Another topline finding of the survey is that most of the women surveyed are comfortable advocating about agriculture, and most believe they have the necessary skills and knowledge to be successful. Social media is the preferred avenue of advocating about agriculture among the women surveyed.

"Farm and ranch women continue to be seen as credible sources of information on the production of food, fiber and renewable fuels," Saylor said. "Working to develop connections with consumers and being transparent when responding to questions about how food is produced benefits all of us in agriculture," she said.

Nearly three-quarters of those surveyed own or share ownership of a farm or ranch. One-third of women surveyed have not yet started a business but indicated they would like to do so in the future. Respondents cited obtaining financial support, business plan development, and prioritizing/finding time to accomplish tasks as their most common business challenges.

The AFB women's leadership committee sponsored the survey. All women who are farmers, ranchers, farm/ranch employees, employed in agricultural businesses, pursuing agriculture-related higher education or supportive of agriculture in other ways were invited to participate; Farm Bureau membership was not a requirement. Responses were received from women in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

The American Farm Bureau women's leadership program provides women with the training and education they need to become powerful advocates for today's agriculture. Two key programs spearheaded by the program are the annual women's communications boot camp and the year-round our food link program.

Excerpt taken from Farm Bureau e-newsletter, Kari Barbic, karib@fb.org, Washington, DC May 7, 2015

SOIL HEALTH – TAKE IT TO THE BANK

While most look to the sky for drought relief, an increasing number of farmers are looking to the soil. And for good reason: Healthy soils capture and store much more water – which can come in handy during dry spells.

So what's the water-banking secret in healthy soil? Through its "Unlock the Secrets in the Soil" campaign, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is leading the effort to get more farmers and ranchers to adopt soil health management systems for a wide range of on- and off-farm benefits. "Organic matter and living organisms provide the foundation for soil to function properly, allowing it to take in, store and deliver water to plants, among many other benefits," said NRCS' Soil Health Division Director, Dr. Bianca Moebius-Clune.

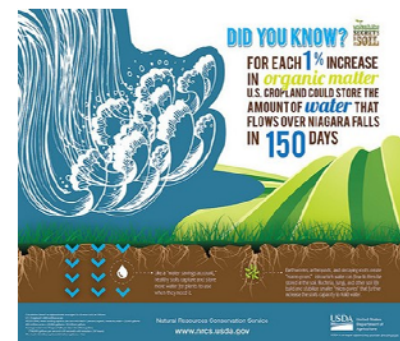
"Organic matter causes soil to form stable soil aggregates, or crumbs," she said. "With better soil structure, infiltration of water into the soil improves, which allows the entire soil profile to take in and hold more water when it rains." Healthy soil acts much like a sponge, with its ability to absorb and hold much of its volume in water.

In healthy soil, earthworms, arthropods and decaying roots create "macro-pores" into which water can flow to then be stored in the soil. "Bacteria, fungi and other soil life build and stabilize smaller 'micro-pores' that further increase the soil's capacity to hold water," Moebius-Clune said.

Contrary to conventional thought, plowing or tillage actually *reduces* the capacity of the soil to receive and hold water over time, according to Moebius-Clune. "That's because tillage destroys soil aggregates and the biologically produced glues that hold soil aggregates together," she said. "This results in the collapse of those aggregates and the pores between them, which leads to compaction, crusting, increased run-off and downstream flooding, all of which decreases the amount of water that enters the soil profile to be stored and used by crops."

But Moebius-Clune said there's good news and a new hope in healthy soil. "By farming using soil health principles and practices adapted to each local production system, such as reducing tillage, growing cover crops and diversifying rotations (including animals), farmers are actually increasing microbial activity, building organic matter and sequestering more carbon in their soil," she said. "They are improving its ability to take in and hold 'water in the bank.' They're even creating wildlife and pollinator habitat—all while decreasing risks from extreme weather and harvesting better profits and often better yields."

All of us can take those soil health benefits to the bank.
Posted as a USDA Blog on May 12, 2015 by Ron Nichols, NRCS



ENVIROTHON

STATE ENVIROTHON RESULTS

A five-member team of students from Carroll County, named Venturing Crew 202, won the 25th annual 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. More than 89 challengers from 18 counties across Maryland took part in this year's competition. The event was held June 17-18 at the St. Mary's College of Maryland in St. Mary's County.

"I am so impressed with all the students in this competition and the dedication and commitment they bring to their studies of our natural resources," said Agriculture Secretary Joe Bartenfelder. "This is not an easy competition and I congratulate all the students who participated, especially those on the Venturing Crew team. I know they will do Maryland proud at the national Envirothon."

The five Carroll County students attend different high schools in the region. Team members are: Amy Donna Bittler, Sierra Fleming, Elliot Hirtle, Jeb Fleming, and Rebecca Gross. Venturing Crew 202 will represent Maryland at the 2015 North American Envirothon, scheduled for July 27-August 2 at Missouri State University. More than 250 teenagers from the United States and Canada are expected to compete for \$100,000 in scholarships and prizes.

The second place team is the Sprouts from Harford Christian School in Harford County. The third place team, named the Duck Fizzers, is from Montgomery Blair High School in Montgomery County.



The winning team from Carroll County is Venturing Crew. Members include: Amy Donna Bittler, Sierra Fleming, Elliot Hirtle, Jeb Fleming, Rebecca Gross and Coach Nancy Bittler.

The Maryland Envirothon is held once a year at an outdoor environmental education center. Students taking part in the competition study Maryland's natural resources for a year in hopes of winning. Working in teams of five, students are trained and tested in four natural resource areas including soils, aquatics, forestry and wildlife plus an environmental issue that changes from year to year. This year's special environmental issue was Urban Forestry. Each team's knowledge, teamwork and problem-solving skills are tested and evaluated under the supervision of foresters, soil scientists and wildlife specialists.

At this year's competition, the Venturing Crew from Carroll County scored 459 points out of a possible 500. They were followed by teams from Harford County (458 points), and Montgomery County (447 points). Members of the top three teams were awarded scholarships ranging from \$300 to \$1,000 through the Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board Scholarship Program. In addition, winning team members received a wildlife print, Maryland Envirothon shirt and other prizes.

The Harford County team was the high scorer in the "Soils" category of the competition with a score of 93 points out of a possible 100. The Mid-Atlantic Association of Professional Soil Scientists (MAPSS) presented each member of the team with a cash award of \$50. In addition, the team received a print and gift cards.

Established in 1990, the Maryland Envirothon aims to test students' environmental knowledge and understanding of state resource issues and to instill a desire to learn more about the natural world. More than 30 states, Canada and Australia send teams to the international competition.

The Maryland Envirothon is sponsored by the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts and the State Soil Conservation Committee. Contributors and supporters include the Maryland Department of Agriculture, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Department of Environment, the University of Maryland College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board, Maryland Agricultural

Education Foundation, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Garrett College-Natural Resources and Wildlife Technology Program, Maryland Soybean Board, Chaney Foundation LTD, New Page Corporation, Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc., The Purkins Family, Mid-Atlantic Association of Professional Soil Scientists, Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development Board, Inc., AFSCME-Maryland and the Rural Maryland Council.

NATIONAL COMPETITION

A five-member team of high schools students from Pembroke Hill High School from Kansas City, MO are the winners of the 2015 NCF-Envirothon. **Maryland team Venturing Crew 202 came in 7th out of 52 teams!**

A week-long North American natural resource education competition, a program of the National Conservation Foundation, (NCF) working in partnership with Smithfield Foods, local conservation districts, forestry associations, educators and cooperating natural resources agencies to organize and conduct competitions on the local, regional, state and/or provincial level.

The Envirothon is North America's largest high school environmental education competition. The top winning teams were announced on Saturday August 1st, during the award ceremonies at Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri.

Over four thousand high schools were involved in the 2015 program across North America.

"The National Conservation Foundation congratulates not only the winning team, but all the students who participated in this year's competition," said Steve Robison, Chair of the NCF Board of Trustees, "We are so proud of all of the students' efforts and commitment to helping preserve our natural resources."

Forests Ontario will host the North American Envirothon in Ontario in 2016! The dates will be July 24th - July 29th, 2016 www.forestsonario.ca/.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

PROTECTING FARMERS AND THEIR FLOCKS: AVIAN INFLUENZA

During the period from December 2014 to mid-summer 2015, Avian Influenza (AI) has been detected in 21 U.S. states (15 states with outbreaks in domestic poultry or captive birds and 6 states with H5 strain detections in wild birds only.) Detections have been confirmed in backyard and commercial poultry flocks, captive wild fowl, and wild birds. It is possible that H5 strain outbreaks in birds in the United States may recur in the fall and winter. During the MASCD Annual Meeting, Dr. Jo Chapman of the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) stressed the importance of biosecurity to prevent the spread of AI. District staff can help in preventing the introduction and spread of AI by practicing biosecurity themselves and promoting it to farmers.

Dependent upon the type of operation, there are many things that can be done to prevent the introduction and spread of AI into flocks in Maryland. First, MDA is suggesting that visitors “keep their distance.” Try to minimize visits to farms where birds are present and don’t travel between farms with avian species. If you must visit, park off the farm and walk on if possible and do not go near the birds unless absolutely required. If visitors must enter the farm, it is important to clean the vehicle tires and equipment to prevent contamination from other birds.

When talking with your cooperators, be sure to stress that cleanliness is key! The MDA released guidance instructing those interacting with birds to:

- Wear clean clothes, scrub your shoes with disinfectant, and wash your hands thoroughly before entering and when leaving a bird area. For some farms this may mean showing in and out of the bird areas.
- Clean bird cages on a daily basis.
- Change food and water sources daily.
- Clean and disinfect all equipment that comes in contact with birds and their droppings and remove manure before doing so.

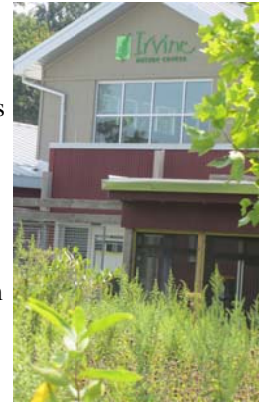
Additionally, it is very important for farmers to assess flocks regularly for signs of AI. Early detection of infection is integral in preventing the spread of the disease. Common warning signs and symptoms of AI include:

- Sudden increase in the mortality rate in your flock.
- Respiratory symptoms like sneezing, gasping, coughing and nasal discharge.
- Watery and green diarrhea.
- Lack of energy and poor appetite.
- Decrease in egg production or soft, thin and misshapen eggs.
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs.
- Tremors, drooping wings, circling, twisting of the head and neck, or lack of movement.

Stress to your cooperators that if birds show any signs of infection, remove the birds from the rest of the flock and be sure to have them tested. Report all sick birds to MDA! They can help determine if the birds have AI and give farmers options of what to do if they are infected. Finally, ask producers if their flock is registered with MDA. If there is a flu outbreak, they will alert registered flock owners to the danger and help protect the birds. If you have any questions or concerns, please call MDA at 410-841-5810.

IRVINE NATURE CENTER PROJECT GETS UNDERWAY

A team from Maryland’s Department of Natural Resources and Baltimore County DEP met with Lynne Hoot and Lindsay Thompson from MASCD and representatives of RNS and Biohabitat, who will be undertaking the stream restoration and wetland creation work at the Irvine Nature Center as part of the CBTF grant received by MASCD.



The group toured the site to get DNR comments which focused on existing CREP contract acreage and the need to limit the length of time water is retained behind berms to avoid increasing the temperature of the trout stream. Biohabitat and RNS are tweaking the plans for the Center before submitting them for approval and permits.

Once a working farm in Owings Mills in Baltimore County, the Irvine Nature Center is now a 116 acre woodland, wetland and meadow area providing environmental education to over 50,000 students per year and the general public who is welcome to enjoy the many trails on the property.

As well as administering the grant, MASCD’s role in the project is to provide assistance with education and outreach after the project is complete. The original project, which established our interest and involvement, was for two properties, the other property was a demonstration of nutrient trading options on a working farm. When the farm property opted out of the grant, MASCD agreed to remain involved to enable the project to move forward. Credits for the work on Irvine will be credited to the County in their effort to reduce nutrient and sediment from non-point source runoff.



MASCD AND MONTGOMERY SCD HOST CONGRESSIONAL EVENT

On Wednesday, August 12, 2015, the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) and the Montgomery Soil Conservation District hosted a congressional staff tour on five different farms in Montgomery County. The objective of the farm tour was to help the congressional staff understand how federal programs provide resources to farmers for conservation and to see conservation practices in action on a variety of operations.



Representatives from Congressional members Cardin, Mikulski, Delaney, Edwards, and Van Hollen's offices participated in the tour. Staff and interns from the Natural Resource Conservation Services attended as well. The group visited Randy Stabler at Pleasant Valley Farms, Tom and Paula Linthicum at Seneca Ayr Farm, Drew Stabler at Sunny Ridge Farm, Wade, Tyler and Ben Butler at Butler's Orchard and John Fendrick at Woodbourne Creamery.

Participants viewed many conservation practices including stream fencing and watering systems, a chemical handling facility, cover crops, grassed waterways, rotational grazing and others. Guests also got to climb up on a "high-boy" sprayer, enjoy local ice cream, walk through a grain drying and storage facility and see an automated robotic milking machine. Throughout the day, farmers, conservation district, NRCS and MASCD staff discussed the cost of these practices and the importance of cost share assistance for conservation. Farmers made sure the visitors were aware of what is required of Maryland farmers by regulation and its impact on their businesses. Every farmer conveyed that they are happy to install the conservation practices because they feel it's the right thing to do and they want to preserve the land for the next generation. The Congressional staff expressed that it was a very informative, enjoyable, and worthwhile visit.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONTINUED)

- MASCD encourages Districts to meet with those applying to build chicken houses to ensure they are meeting all of the requirements for house construction.
- MASCD recommends submitting a letter of support for the Land and Litter Project.
- MASCD supports the University of Maryland Extension "Call before you Cut" program.

Staff will be working on these and other policy positions of the organization. Remember that our policy book can be found online at www.mascd.net as chapter 5 in the MASCD Association Manual. Our existing policies are under review to eliminate or reword any completed or outdated tasks. If you have any suggested changes, please let Charlie Conklin or Lynne Hoot know.

It has been a busy summer for MASCD. After taking Dr. Terron Hillsman and other NRCS staff into DC to meet with the Congressional delegation, plans were made to take the agricultural staff from Maryland's 10 Congressional offices out on farms to see production and conservation in action! Our thanks to David Plummer and his team at Montgomery SCD for organizing the August 12th event and to all the farmers who served as hosts for the meeting.

Lynne Hoot joined Rona Flagle, Julie Oberg, Rachel Rhodes, Kevin Keenan, and Larry Fykes at the Conservation Partnership booth at the Maryland Association of Counties annual meeting in Ocean City, August 13-14. This meeting provides an opportunity to meet with many federal, state and county elected officials and agency staff in a less formal setting.

The next MASCD Board meeting is October 27th at the Prince George's Soil Conservation District offices in Upper Marlboro. Please plan to join us as we prepare for the upcoming legislative session and to provide input on our Long Range Strategic Plan. If there are any topics you wish to have included on the agenda, please let Lynne or me know. I look forward to seeing you then, in the meantime, call me with any issues.



2016 NACD POSTER CONTEST INFORMATION IS NOW AVAILABLE!

"We all need trees" is the theme for the 2016 NACD education materials and poster contest. Visit the NACD poster contest page (<http://www.nacdnet.org/education/contests/poster>) to view the rules, resources, promotional Power-

Point and note pages, visual arts standards, flyer template, entry form template and more. Many states also use this theme for their state speech and essay contests. Please share this opportunity with your afterschool programs, 4-H clubs, boys and girls clubs, local libraries and schools. Questions? Please contact NACD Education and Stewardship Specialist Susan Schultz at susan-schultz@nacdnet.org.

Future Dates to Remember

Sep. 17	SSCC Meeting, MDA
Oct. 15	SSCC Meeting, MDA
Oct. 27	MASCD Board Mtg., Prince George's SCD, Upper Marlboro
Nov. 19	SSCC Meeting, MDA
Dec. 18	MACCA Exam Registration Deadline
Feb. 5	MACCA Exam (DE, VA, and WV)



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, 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.

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