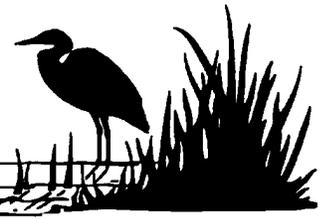


PARTNERSHIP PRESS

Maryland Conservation



Summer 2016 Volume 23 Issue 3

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR — BY LYNNE HOOT

They say that time flies when you are having fun.... And while it hasn't always been a bundle of joy, my 27 years of serving as MASCD's Executive Director may be as close as it comes! It has been a wonderful experience working with such dedicated individuals lead by some strong district supervisors and staff.

I remember the mid-80's, when I was still working for MDA, when a group of us would travel across the state to introduce the new Chesapeake Bay Initiates under Governor Harry Hughes and Secretary of Agriculture Wayne Cawley, where Don Spickler challenged districts to take on the new responsibilities that were surfacing as a result of the EPA report on the Bay. Who knew back in those days what a pivotal point those initiative would become? I remember working with Arnold Hawkins when he was the Executive Secretary of SSCC and how he managed a handful of positions, District Managers and Secretarial positions, that were funded by the state.

Things are certainly different today. For the most part, district supervisors did accept their new leadership role, and those that didn't, stepped down and new supervisors stepped up to replace them. I have always had mixed feelings during the discussion about term limits because many of our long-serving supervisors and staff are as committed today as they were when they joined the conservation partnership, but it is always important to ask yourself if you still have the passion that it takes to move the needle and make a difference and most important – that you enjoy it. I am not stepping down because of a loss of passion for the work of conservation districts and agriculture, it is to undertake another passion of mine to travel, while my husband, Jerry and I can still dive oceans and climb mountains.

I feel very confident that with Lindsay Thompson taking on the role of Executive Director that you will be served well and I am enthusiastic that with Marguerite Guare's strong history and commitment and Danielle Bauer's young enthusiasm, that MASCD will continue to move forward and be a strong organization. And I encourage you to embrace change.

I am proud that I am leaving MASCD in much better fiscal shape than when I started and knowing that today, we are recognized not only statewide, but nationally, as leaders in conservation. We have been able to secure new funding sources from many levels and yet we still have the opportunity to do more to help farmers achieve the goals established in the Watershed Implementation Plans and most important – for a clean Bay. I hope that the new state staffing report provides you with the documentation you need to expand the support for district activities.

As I prepare for my retirement on September 30th, I encourage you to come to my retirement party at the Yellowfin Restaurant on September 26th. I look forward to celebrating our past 27 years together.

NACD PRESIDENT LEE MCDANIEL EXPLAINS WHY CONSERVATION IS A COMMODITY

NACD President Lee McDaniel brought the voice of conservation to the 18th annual Maryland Commodity Classic July 29th. McDaniel, a Maryland-native, was one of four speakers to participate in a panel discussion on American agriculture. The other panelists – all of whom live in Maryland or Delaware – were Richard Wilkins, president of the American Soybean Association; Chip Councell, chairman of the U.S. Grains Council; and Jason Scott, chairman of U.S. Wheat Associates.



Those in attendance heard firsthand how these panelists – their neighbors – are working to bring an understanding of agricultural and conservation issues from the national stage to the local level. Specifically, McDaniel spoke on the importance of NACD's work on urban conservation, highlighting the association's initiative to help urban districts increase their technical assistance capacity and strengthen the urban/rural coalition.

Come join us in celebrating Lynne Hoot's retirement after working for 35 years with Maryland agriculture

Monday, September 26, 2016
5:30—8:30 p.m.
\$25.00* per person



2824 Solomon's Island Road
Edgewater, MD 21037
410-573-1333

Make checks payable to Maryland Agricultural Associates and mail to Lindsay Thompson, 53 Slama Road, Edgewater, MD 21037.

Please confirm your attendance no later than September 15, 2016 by emailing Lindsay Thompson at Lindsay.mdag@gmail.com or call 410-956-5771.

**The price does not include a gift and Lynne insists that the pleasure of your company is her fondest wish, however if you would like to contribute to a gift, Lynne has a few items she needs to purchase to support the next chapter of her life aboard Albetross.*

PERSONNEL NOTES

MASCD WELCOMES...



Danielle Bauer joins MASCD as the new Program Assistant. Danielle grew up on a grain farm in Howard county where she still enjoys helping out on her family's farm. She graduated from West Virginia University and is currently the Women's Leadership Committee Chair for the Howard County Farm Bureau and volunteers with Howard County 4-H's livestock skillathon and livestock judging programs. Welcome Danielle!

NRCS WELCOMES...

Gretchen Esbensen, Geographer and GIS Specialist working at the State Office.

Jennifer Kemp, Soil Conservationist in Carroll County.

Aaron McCann, Soil Conservationist in Prince George's County.

Amy Albright, Soil Conservationist in Allegany County.

Megan Mauk, Soil Conservation Technician in Garrett County.

NRCS BIDS FAREWELL TO...

Carol Hollingsworth, State Public Affairs Specialist, retired after 37 years of Federal Service.

Rebecca Briggs, Soil Conservationist in Frederick County, transferred to NRCS SC.

Julie Depue, Assistant at the National Plant Materials Center, transferred to NRCS National Headquarters.

James Graham Davis, Manager at the National Plant Materials Center, transferred to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

MDA WELCOMES...

Colleen Keifer, Ag Resource Conservation Specialist, Calvert SCD

Brittini Rideout, Ag Resource Conservation Specialist, Dorchester SCD

Jennifer Lee, Ag Resource Conservation Specialist, Kent SWCD

Sam Leaverton, Ag Resource Conservation Specialist, Kent SWCD

Gregory Stavely, Ag Resource Conservation Specialist, Somerset SCD

Jeffrey Dean, Soil Conservation Associate, Caroline SCD

Nicole Brown, Soil Conservation Associate, Queen Anne's SCD

Mark Kendle, Soil Conservation Associate, Washington County SCD

Megan Eshleman, Soil Conservation Engineering Technician, Baltimore County SCD

MASCD GRANTS UPDATE by Gerald Talbert

Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program (FSCAP) –

- There have been 188 FSCAP reviews on 166 farms, resulting in 135 certified conservation stewards doing a great job in protecting 46,966 acres in 20 counties across the state.
- Although the program provided 135 FSCAP farm signs with installed signposts, there are 188 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.
- FSCAP offers perks to stewards with other projects. Through the 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, 29 stewards have participated so far and five of them we certified as a result of meeting them as participants in Pollinator Habitat.
- District support: Washington County SCD – 32; Carroll – 13; Cecil – 10; Frederick and Wicomico SCDs – 8; St. Mary's – 7.

Pollinator Habitat Project –

- The grant from the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company allowed the establishment of five acres of pollinator habitat. Three acres were planted last fall and two acres will be planted this fall. BGE Green Grant approved a second application with which MASCD proposed to establish another five acres. The grant was less funding than the first and MASCD is in the process of applying to the Chesapeake Bay Trust Restoration Grant for additional funds.
- MASCDs three Pollinator Habitat projects now totals 54 acres on 62 farms, two agricultural centers, one school and one environmental education center in 15 counties. At the completion of the new grant, there will be 59 acres in at least 15 counties.

Resource Improvement –

- MASCD was approved to receive 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.
- A total of 150 RIs were verified and recorded on 79 farms in the following counties: Washington County – 45 RIs on 16 farms; Howard – 43 RIs on 26 farms; Anne Arundel – 10 RIs on 6 farms; Caroline – 52 RIs on 31 farms.

IN MEMORIAM...

Betty Jane Meyers, 81, of Sharpsburg, MD, passed away Saturday, July 9, 2016 at her home. Born December 21, 1934 in Hagerstown, MD, she was the daughter of the late Robert Wright and Catherine Dale (Moore) Schmidt. She volunteered and had leadership responsibilities with Lions Club in Sharpsburg, Holy Trinity Memorial Lutheran Church in Sharpsburg, and the Washington County Farm Bureau. She was an active volunteer with the Mountain View Cemetery Board of Directors, Washington County Republicans, MD State Gaming Commission, Holy Trinity Memorial Lutheran Church Choir, and was a Poll Judge.

Betty served as a Washington County Soil Conservation District supervisor from May 1994 until December 2015 serving as chair from May 2000 until her retirement. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to ALS Association – DC/MD/VA Chapter, 7507 Standish Place, Rockville, MD 20855.

POLLINATORS

Sam Droege, USGS, presented information about the context of pollinators in Maryland and how it relates to efforts to enhance habitat. He noted that the honey bee, a European species, has a much different biology to native bees. Native bees tend to be solitary and are not aggressive. There are about 430 species of bees. Most locations can support a minimum of 100 species and the greater the plant diversity an area contains, the more species that will be supported.

The decline of bees has resulted mostly because of the decline of habitat although populations of European honey bees have declined due to pathogen mortality. Managed landscapes tend not to be beneficial for bees. Trees and the push to provide afforestation is also not supportive of bees. Neonicotinoids can pose risks because they are persistent and they can often be found at low levels in pollen.

Native bees can replace honey bees for some functions. For example, apple orchards in PA, VA and WV depend on native bees for pollination. Honey bees can compete with native bees but they are expensive. Bees can even provide a yield boost in crops that are self-pollinated such as soybeans. There are generalist bees and specialist bees that are plant or crop specific.

In Iowa, they have been researching using diverse species such as forbs in waterways to create diverse habitat areas within fields. Forbs are herbaceous flowering plants, such as Joe Pye weed. To date, they have achieved the soil loss intended by waterway implementation and increased yields, especially when used with soybeans.

Native bees are around for a long season and need a food source throughout when designing pollinator habitat.

Xerces is the organization working with NRCS on insect conservation. They have had some interface with MD farmers but there is not a large dataset for the eastern U.S. related to habitat needs and outcomes. There is a need to conduct management trials and share outcomes. Management options such as times for mowing, winter planting, herbicide use, areas of planting- such as verges, swales, field borders, etc should be studied. Fish and Wildlife Service and DNR are experimenting with understory plants that can provide support for orchard bees. Shifting edge of field border planting from cool season grasses to forbs could support pollinators. Including flowing plants in seed mixes, mowing edges less frequently and planting diverse meadows instead of trees are all supportive of pollinator habitat.

POLLINATOR HABITAT

Steve Strano, NRCS discussed some of the programs and technical standards followed for pollinator habitat. Mixes have been developed specific to MD and reviewed by Xerces. They consider commonly available seed stock. There are three mixes for different conditions (mesic, dry and wetland). There is also an inter-seeding mix for use with grasses. The mixes are 80-90% forbs or legumes with 10-15% short statured grasses and are designed to include flowering plants throughout the growing season.

Perennials in the mixes take 3-4 years to become established. Site preparation is important especially where turf is being replaced. The first season weed control is important with ongoing mowing to keep the planting at 8-10". The second year requires mowing once and subsequent years spot spraying to control woody vegetation.

Pollinator species can be used for plantings associated with several practice standards including Conservation Cover, Hedgerows, Field borders, Riparian Herbaceous Buffers and Tree and Shrub establishment. Pollinator habitat is not a stand alone practice but included where BMPs include herbaceous plantings.

Programs that support pollinator habitat are EQIP under the wildlife, forestry and organic categories. It can also be included in a conservation activity plan developed by a TSP or an IPM plan. Many of the CREP and continuous CRP BMPs include herbaceous planting that can be pollinator plants. CSP allows pollinator habitat planting 1/2 acre for every 40 acres enrolled.

PROMOTING POLLINATORS

Ashley Jones, MDA Pesticide Section, reported on the national strategy to promote honey bees and pollinators and the resultant EPA requirement for states to create Managed Pollinator Protection Plans (MP3). MD's MP3 will emphasize flexibility. Critical elements of these plans include public participation, locating pollinators for growers and pesticide applicators, minimize pesticide use, public outreach, and a mechanism to measure effectiveness. A draft MP3 will be available in June for public comment.

MDA held a stakeholder symposium in January which included beekeepers, crop advisors, nursery representatives, University personnel, State Highway, and Utility company representatives. One of the outcomes was the identified need for more informational materials about pollinators and habitat requirements.

The legislature passed HB132 in FY16 requiring MD State Highway, Maryland Environmental Service and Department of Natural Resources to develop pollinator habitat protection plans by July 2017 and implement them by 2018. MDA is helping to coordinate this effort.

UPDATE - CHESAPEAKE BAY MODEL

Rachel Rhodes, MDA, provided an update in the EPA Chesapeake Bay Model and tracking Maryland progress. She compared the current model to the phase 6 model that is being developed. The following changes will occur:

Animal Numbers: poultry populations are currently calculated assuming their presence 365 days/year and manure generated quantities from 1980 references; the new version will incorporate NASS annual inventory numbers for poultry.

Fertilizer Inputs: Current model uses unlimited commercial fertilizer, adds manure mass balance and does not consider biosolids. The new version will cap commercial fertilizer information using reported sales data, keep manure use mass balance and add biosolids from MDE information.

Land Use: The current model uses blended information, the new model will distinguish individual land uses.

Acreage: The old model used agricultural census, the new model will use census data with local imagery to ground truth.

Crop Yield: the old model used 112 bu/ac for corn, the new model will use NASS data multiplied by 1.1.

Sediment: the old model used Rusle 2 at the county level, the new model will use Rusle2 sat 10 meter resolution.

Soil P: This information was not addressed in old model, the new model will use Mehlich III as equivalent storage capacity and does not consider residual P.

Water Quality: The old model used data from 65,000 sampling points, the new model has 104,000 sampling sites. However the entire Eastern Shore is represented by one site on the Choptank River.

Calibration: Years for old model were 1985-2005; the new model uses 1985-2013.

BMP Verification: This was not included in the old model, but verification will follow the 2017 protocols in the new model.

SSCC members asked if the HUA pads were being counted as BMPs. Rachel said this was still an interim practice and not credited. Members discussed the shortcomings of using fertilizer sales data. They also expressed concern about the Choptank monitoring site representing entire shore. There was discussion of legacy nutrients in the sampling process. There was also discussion of agriculture being responsible for nutrient loads from (other sectors) specifically biosolids.

Rhodes said the timeframe for adopting the new model was to finalize it in March 2017, after working out any bugs, to use it to establish Basin targets in the summer of 2017 and a draft WIP III would be developed by June 2018.

UPDATES**Dashboard**

Rhodes demonstrated a "dashboard" which will be accessible through the MDA website and visually allow the public to track agricultural progress by county, region or watershed. In its first draft it allows tracking by BMP and by financial effort. MDA is continuing to refine this tool and may add programs to its capacity. MDA has been working with Salisbury University to develop this interactive design. It should be available on the website sometime in August.

Dairy Briefings

The Nutrient Management Program had three meetings in Cecil, Washington and Garrett counties with dairy industry representatives last week providing an update on regulations, discussing financial planning and the general economics of dairy farming. The outreach included representatives from MDA Marketing and agricultural economists from the University of Maryland to address related business aspects of the dairy industry and provide assistance.

Soils P FIV Information

Dwight Dotterer, MDA Nutrient Management, said soils information received to-date has been reviewed and farms identified for which information was not reported. A list of 700 farms for which soils information was not reported was provided to UM to address. An intern is calling all farmers who noted they get a plan from a private consultant. MDA is offering FFA assistance to pull soil samples from those farms who have outdated information. Currently MDA has information on 950,000 acres.

Agricultural Tax Assessment

Steve Darcey discussed an effort led by Prince George's tax assessment office to inventory all buildings on farm property. As a result of their review, questions are being raised about CREP acres meeting agriculture definition as well as property under conservation easement. The knowledge base of tax inspectors is limited when it comes to farming and Darcy was spending lots of time trying to educate them.

SUPERVISOR APPOINTMENTS

- Catocin SCD - Rene Grossnickle
- Kent SCD - Wickes Westcott
- Howard SCD - Keith Ohlinger
- Somerset SCD - Kevin Anderson

AWARDS

MASCD AWARDS

At the recent MASCD meeting, Van Funk, Awards Committee Member, announced the following MASCD award winners:

Outstanding Cooperator - Pleasant Valley Farm Partnership, LLC, *Montgomery SCD*

Outstanding Employee - Denny Remsburg, *Catoctin/Frederick. SCD*

Employee Special Achievement - Essy Frey, *Baltimore Co. SCD*

Supervisor Special Achievement - Robert Butz, *Montgomery SCD*

Outstanding Contribution by a New Supervisor - Bobby Cooper, *St. Mary's SCD*

Outstanding Associate - John Dove, *Howard SCD*

Outstanding Contribution - Jarboe Family, *St. Mary's SCD*

District Attendance Award - Baltimore County SCD

CONSERVATION EDUCATION AWARDS

Conservation Education District Award - *Cecil SCD*

Conservation Education Teacher Award - Amanda Myatt, *St. Mary's SCD*

SUPERVISOR PINS

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

5 Year

Wesley Gordon, *Allegheny*

Gareth Harshman, *Frederick*

James Stanton, *Garrett*

Lewis McDonald, *Kent*

J. Scott Shank, III, *Washington Co.*

10 Year

Kenneth Clements, *Howard*

Kyle Hutchison, *Talbot*

Harry Strite, *Washington Co.*

Edward Phillips, *Worcester*

15 Year

Ronald Hawk, *Allegheny*

Gilbert Chaney, *Calvert*

Joseph Layton, Jr., *Dorchester*

Luther Wolfe, *St. Mary's*

20 Year

Allan Bandel, *Howard*

Robert Butz, *Montgomery*

Donald Ocker, *St. Mary's*

Steve White, *Wicomico*

25 Year

David Cox, *Calvert*

45 Year

George Bishoff, *Garrett*

HOOT APPRECIATED FOR SERVICE

NRCS State Conservationist Terron Hillsman presents Lynne Hoot with a Certificate of Appreciation for her service to Maryland's Soil Conservation Districts and partnership with NRCS for the last 27 years.



PRESIDENT'S AWARDS



Congratulations to Rona Flagle, MDA Public Information Officer who received the President's award from Charles Rice for her dedication to soil conservation.

Dan Redden also received the prestigious award for his 54 years of service.



Charles Rice wished Lynne Hoot well in her retirement and presented her with a picture of Annapolis showing the State Capital to remind her of her legislative accomplishments for MASCD during her 27 years as Executive Director for MASCD.

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 - *St. Mary's SCD*, 2nd Place - *Prince George's SCD*, 3rd Place - *Howard SCD*.



St. Mary's SCD receives the MidAtlantic Farm Credit District of the Year Award

ENVIRONMENTAL ENDOWMENT AUCTION

The Environmental Endowment Auction held Monday, August 1st at the MASCD Annual Awards Banquet had a total of 44 items. Total pledges for auction items came to \$4,032.50.

MASCD would like to thank all the volunteers for organizing the auction, and of course thanks to all of the supervisors, MDA personnel, district staff and others that bid on the fine selection of items. A special thank you goes out to Denny Remsburg for volunteering his time to be the guest auctioneer.

MASCD ANNUAL MEETING

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts held their annual meeting August 1-2, 2016 at the Hyatt Regency in Cambridge, Maryland. Partners from soil conservation districts, state and federal agencies, and other organizations were in attendance. The meeting was kicked off by an exciting line-up of speakers during the opening session including Senator Addie Eckhardt who welcomed the group to the eastern shore and encouraged district supervisors to reach out to legislators. Jim Perdue, Chairman of Perdue Farms spoke about Perdue's philosophy on sustainability and Jim Schurick talked about the Oyster Recovery Project and the potential for oyster restoration to be a best management practice. The attendees also heard updates from Secretary of Agriculture Joe Bartenfelder and NRCS State Conservationist Dr. Terron Hillsman.

Throughout the two and a half-day meeting, district supervisors and staff were able to collaborate with each other and partners on a variety of topics such as staffing needs, the new engineering tracker, and Envirothon. Participants learned about non-tidal wetlands mitigation, targeted conservation, opportunities for districts in counties with MS4 permits, and the current status and future updates of the Bay Model and WIP IIIs.

Being on the Eastern Shore was the perfect opportunity for a crab feast at Layton's Chance Winery where attendees were able to get a tour of the vineyard and see the Layton's conservation practices. President, Charles Rice, hosted the annual awards banquet where supervisors, districts, teachers, cooperators, and partners were recognized for their accomplishments and contributions.



Breck Debnam and Randy Stabler receive the Cooperator of the Year Award.



Baltimore County receives District Attendance Award.



Senator Addie Eckhardt of Maryland's 37th district addressing the attendees at the Opening session.



The Jarboe Family from St. Mary's (and of the late Robert Jarboe) were awarded the Outstanding Contribution Award.

Jim Perdue, Chairman of Perdue Farms, speaking to the attendees during the opening session about the company's sustainability plan.



Frederick and Catocin District Manager, Denny Remsberg was the auctioneer for the Endowment Auction.

ENVIROTHON

CARROLL TEAM WINS MARYLAND ENVIROTHON THIRD YEAR IN A ROW



The winning team from Carroll County is Venturing Crew. Members include: Nathan Bowman, David McDaniel, Abby Bollinger, Sierra Fleming and Amy Bittler.

The 26th annual Maryland Envirothon was held June 22 – 23 on the campus of Mount Saint Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Maryland. High school students from throughout Maryland were challenged in aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and 5th issue invasive species, with a team from Carroll County taking top honors.

The "Venturing Crew", led by advisors David and Nancy Bittler, won three of the five resources stations – aquatics, forestry and 5th issue. Anne Arundel placed first in soils and Garrett County first in wildlife. Placing second overall was Harford Christian academy, third place Montgomery, fourth place Frederick, and fifth place Garrett County. Each student on the first place team received a \$500 scholarship check, second place \$300 and third place \$200. Scholarships were provided by the Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board.

Reintroduced into the Envirothon this year, on a voluntary basis, was a 'presentation' component. Teams were asked to send videos of their presentation to the Envirothon Committee prior to the State event. Videos were reviewed, the top three selected, and those three presented to a panel of judges on Wednesday evening. Harford Christian School took top honors. Second place went to Carroll County and third place to Frederick County.

The 2016 Maryland Envirothon program stimulated the interest of nearly 1,200 students from throughout Maryland, and continues to be a unique partnership between students, teachers, resource professionals, conservation districts, natural resource agencies, and private environmental groups and organizations.

NATIONAL COMPETITION

Maryland's Envirothon champion, the Venturing Crew from Carroll County, placed an outstanding 5th at the 2016 North American Envirothon held recently at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario. 52 student teams from the United States and Canada, plus a guest team from China, participated in the world's largest high school-level natural resources education competition. The four teams to finish ahead of Maryland were; 1st University of Toronto High School; 2nd Pennsylvania; 3rd California; and 4th Missouri.

The 2017 North American Envirothon will be coming to Maryland, and will be held July 23-29 at Mount St. Mary's University in Frederick County. The current environmental issue for 2017 will be *Agricultural Soil and Water Conservation Stewardship*. Participants will learn about Maryland's natural resources and see first-hand the outstanding work Maryland's farmers have done installing best management practices to improve water quality. Anyone interested in helping with the 2017 event can contact Craig Hartsock, Maryland Envirothon Coordinator, at 301-777-1747 x117 or chartsock@atlanticbbs.net.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

CAL STEUART ELECTED TO THE NACD EXECUTIVE BOARD

Prince George's Soil Conservation District Supervisor and Board Chair, Cal Steuart, has been elected to the National Association of Conservation Districts Executive Board as the representative for the North East. Steuart will represent the conservation districts of Maryland and the other North East states starting in January of 2017.

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ANNOUNCES RECORD COVER CROP SIGN-UP

The Maryland Department of Agriculture announced another record-breaking sign-up by Maryland farmers for its highly touted Cover Crop Program. During the program's three-week sign-up period held earlier this summer, 1,853 farmers visited the state's network of local soil conservation district offices to apply for grants to plant 691,743 acres of protective cover crops on their fields this fall. Cover crops have been shown to reduce nutrient runoff, control soil erosion and protect water quality in streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay.

Maryland farmers have exceeded every Chesapeake Bay milestone goal for cover crops since the Environmental Protection Agency established nutrient and sediment limits for the Bay in 2010 known as the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). Based on the newly released 2016-2017 Cover Crop Program sign-up figures, farmers are on track to exceed the next two-year milestone commitment to be completed by June 2017. In addition, cover crops are considered one of the most cost-effective means of helping to restore the Chesapeake Bay. The State has allocated \$22.5 million for the 2016/2017 Cover Crop Program.

The environmental and agronomic benefits of planting cover crops are well documented. As they grow, cover crops protect water quality by recycling unused plant nutrients remaining in the soil from the preceding summer crop. Once established, cold-hardy cover crops work all winter to shield fields from erosion caused by wind, rain, snow, and ice. Cover crops improve soil health by increasing organic matter in the soil, reducing weeds and pests, and providing habitat for beneficial insects.

Top counties ranked by highest acreage of cover crop sign-up are: Queen Anne's (76,369), Kent (71,520), Talbot (66,318), Caroline (58,703), Frederick (56,613), Dorchester (56,434), Worcester (45,950), Carroll (40,646, Wicomico (34,217), Harford (25,550).

(Excerpt taken from MDA press release)

f MASCD ON FACEBOOK

MASCD's FaceBook page is kept current with events, legislative bills, FSCAP certified stewards and other items of interest, so please become our friend.

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.

Future Dates to Remember	
Sep. 15	SSCC Meeting, MDA
Sep. 26	Lynne Hoot's Retirement, YellowFin Restaurant, Edgewater (<i>RSVP deadline September 15</i>)
Oct. 20	SSCC Meeting, MDA
Oct. 25	MASCD Board Mtg., Prince George's SCD, Upper Marlboro
Nov. 17	SSCC Meeting, MDA
Dec. 9	MACCA Exam Registration Deadline
Feb. 3	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.

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 MD Conservation Partnership are equal employment opportunity employers.

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MASCD
 53 Slama Road
 Edgewater, MD 21037-1423
 410-956-5771, www.mascd.net