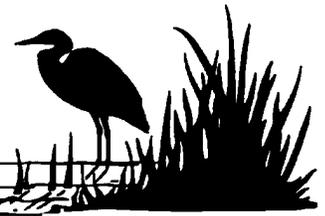


PARTNERSHIP PRESS

Maryland Conservation



WINTER 2017 VOLUME 24, ISSUE 1

PARTNERSHIP EQUALS OPPORTUNITY

BY TERRON HILLSMAN, PH.D., STATE CONSERVATIONIST, MARYLAND NRCS

Although this is a time of change for our organization, I whole-heartedly believe the strength of the Maryland Conservation Partnership leaves us well positioned to take advantage of all the opportunities a new administration provides. If there has ever been a time for a collaborative approach to working with families, private landowners, and communities, that time is now. New priorities and initiatives are undoubtedly on the horizon, and I welcome the opportunities they will bring Maryland's producers. The core of our work will remain the same as it has been for more than 80 years, to help people help the land.

For 2017, we will continue to focus on ensuring every employee has the resources they need to maintain the high quality service that "soil conservation" offices are known for. We're building on the Advisory Committee Program we started last year. Each quarter, we gather staff representing a variety of locations and positions to discuss Farm Bill program delivery as it relates to the field. The Programs Advisory Committee just released the updated Program Guidance Document, a comprehensive handbook that provides direction for administering FY17 programs at the field level. The new Technical Advisory Committee recently convened for the first time, increasing communication between field and technical staff to ensure we're focusing our energy on resources of greatest need. We can look forward to improved programmatic and technical delivery throughout the year due to the work of the teams to understand how the field and state office can help each other succeed.

Business planning offers additional support to our local offices. When I arrived in Maryland in May of 2015, the development of a state business plan was one of my biggest priorities. Now on its third iteration, the plan is one of the best tools we use as leadership team to ensure we are staying on track with our goals and objectives. This year, we're providing a customizable business plan to field offices, to ensure our statewide goals are clearly communicated, and ensure that local field priorities are supported at the state level.

The Maryland State Technical Advisory Committee will undergo a transformation this year. The committee provides recommendations to NRCS for establishing technical guidelines and Farm Bill program priorities, and the meetings provide members from a wide variety of natural resource and agricultural interests the opportunity to provide information, analysis, and recommendations to NRCS management staff. While there are members who regularly attend the meetings and contribute to meaningful discussions, we're looking for

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MASCD DAY IN ANNAPOLIS

BY LINDSAY THOMPSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MASCD

The MASCD Winter meeting was held February 6, 2017 at the DoubleTree in Annapolis. I am pleased to report that there were 120 partners in attendance including representation from all 24 districts.

The board heard updates from a variety of partners including the Departments of Agriculture and Environment, NRCS, NACD and UMD. That evening and the next day, the districts took to the State House and visited with their legislators highlighting the importance of state support for soil conservation districts and the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost Share Program.

MASCD hosted our annual legislative luncheon on February 7, 2017 where districts were joined by over 60 legislators. I was very pleased with the turn out and want to thank each and every district supervisor and staff member for their time and effort in making the legislators aware of all the great work they do!

The MASCD Board chose to take a position on the following legislation:

HB 155 - MALPF - Easement Termination MASCD: SUPPORT

SB440/HB557 - Environment - Water Management - Sediment Control at Large Redevelopment Sites MASCD: OPPOSE

HB863 State Agricultural and Conservation Property Interests - Solar Facilities (Right to Solar Farm) MASCD: OPPOSE

For more information on these bills and other legislation of interest to the districts, please visit www.mascd.net. Also, if you would like to be added to the email list to receive legislative updates, please send a message to lindsay.mdag@gmail.com.

MARYLAND CHARITY CAMPAIGN

MASCD Envirothon is a participant in the Maryland Charity Campaign, which allows Maryland state employees and retirees to give to over 700 participating charitable organizations.

To help support Maryland high school students strive to learn more about our natural world and compete at county, state, and national levels, please visit <http://www.mdcharity.org/> and enter code **6483**, or enter Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts, Inc.



PARTNERSHIP EQUALS OPPORTUNITY

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ways to expand the number and knowledge base of active members over the course of this year. I hope District Managers and Supervisors who are interested will consider representing the SCDs as members of the State Technical Advisory Committee. It is another excellent opportunity to ensure local priorities are considered during the development of NRCS' technical guidelines and programs criteria.

Working closely in partnership, we made great progress over the last year, working around obstacles and through issues to accomplish far beyond what we could ever achieve on our own. Your hard work and extra effort resulted in high quality service to help producers address their most pressing natural resource concerns and achieve their operational goals. Change is never easy and we are sure to face challenges ahead. But as a partnership, we rise and exceed the challenge every time. I'm looking forward to another stellar year of partnership and conservation in Maryland.

PERSONNEL NOTES

NRCS WELCOMES...

Valinda Clark, Program Support Specialist in Charles County, supporting Southern Maryland.

NRCS BIDS FAREWELL TO...

Gemelle Brion, Soil Conservationist in Somerset and Worcester, transferred to NRCS California.

EVENTS



American Farmland Trust is launching a new round of Learning Circles in Maryland over the next two years. These 3-session trainings are designed for women who find themselves responsible for decision making on their land but who have had less interaction with the conservation and extension agencies that could help them with financial and technical assistance.

The upcoming series are being hosted by the Dorchester and Caroline County Service centers and the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy.

- **February 16** - Conservation Planning: You and Your Land, Dorchester SCD, Cambridge
- **March 9** - Farming on the Ground: Who Can Help?, Greenage Neal Ag Center, Denton
- **March 30** - Future of Farming: Planning a Legacy, Eastern Shore Conservation Center, Easton

For more information, please contact Lori Lilly 503-791-8405 or aftwomenandland@gmail.com. Online registration is available at <http://conta.cc/2iv6fKZ>.

ST. MARY'S SCD ANNUAL COOPERATORS DINNER MEETING, FEBRUARY 24

Please join the St. Mary's SCD as they celebrate 75 years of dedicated service. The Annual Cooperators Dinner Meeting will be held at the Hollywood Fire Department, 24801 Three Notch Road, Hollywood, MD February 24, 2017, 5pm social hour, 6:30 dinner. Please RSVP by February 17 by calling 301-475-8402x3.

MASCD ANNUAL MEETING, AUGUST 7-9

MASCD's Annual Meeting will be held August 7-9, 2017 at The Turf Valley Resort in Ellicott City. The Western Area is this year's host and is excited to try a new venue. They are planning an event Monday evening that you won't want to miss. The Opening Session addressing current issue will be held Tuesday morning.

The Technical and Administrative Committee Meetings and Area Meetings will be held later in the day. Wednesday will wrap up with a general session and any new business. District supervisors, district staff and partnership agencies are encouraged to attend to share information as well as the camaraderie of your peers in Maryland's Conservation Partnership.

TRAINING

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING, FEB 28, 2017

Farmer Training and Certification - Frederick County

University of Maryland Extension, Frederick County Office
Producers with cropland and pastures who use commercial fertilizer and/or manure will learn how to write nutrient management plans for their own operations that meet Maryland Department of Agriculture regulations.

Registration Information: Space is limited and registrations are accepted on a first-come basis; therefore, register early. Paid registrations must be received 10 days before the first class. For more information, please call 410-841-5959. Classes will be cancelled if there is insufficient enrollment. For more information, visit http://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/counties/FarmerTraining2017.pdf.

POSTER AND COLORING CONTEST

MASCD encourages each soil conservation district to solicit participants for the annual poster and coloring contests. Districts can work through public and private schools, civic organizations, community associations, churches, and troops to advertise the contest and encourage students to participate.

Winners of the state poster contest will be sent to the national competition at NACD. The 2017 theme is "Healthy Soils are Full of Life." More information on the contest guidelines can be found at <http://www.nacdnet.org/general-resources/stewardship-and-education-materials/contests/>.

State winners of the coloring contest in their age groups receive \$35.00 and winners of the poster contest in their age groups receive \$100.00 for first place, and \$50.00 for second place.

DEVELOPING WIP III

Jim George, MDE, Science Services Administration, discussed the TMDL and the process for developing a WIP III plan.

Maryland will undergo its mid-point assessment following completion of implementation activities in June, 2017. Recently all regions were briefed on the timeline and process for developing a WIP III. MDE will need to update the decision report tool with new modeling inputs such as land use changes. There is some need to account for “lag time” of actions translating to water quality improvements. Emerging issues that will need to be addressed include Conowingo Dam sediment/nutrient storage capacity and climate change.

The WIP will also address a financially feasible path to achieve TMDL. MD has fallen short on nitrogen targets because of agricultural census changes to row crop acreage. MD is on track for the phosphorus reduction targets.

The Chesapeake Bay program has a number of expert panels deliberating on efficiencies for a several BMPs. There has been an increase in monitoring sites so data should be improved. Model changes help capture geographic differences for improved accuracy. There is a better understanding of how phosphorus transport issues influence nutrient loading calculations. The land use resolution has gone from 30 meters to 1 meter.

The Section 40 report to the Legislature documents expenditures and outcomes to date and identifies future spending needs to achieve outcomes in order to reach 2025 goals. There are some caveats including shortfalls in achieving stormwater and septic nutrient reduction goals. These will be “covered” by wastewater treatment plants’ additional capacity in the short-term. Another shortcoming is the effectiveness of regulatory enforcement. The third caveat is that Bay grant program is fully funded and applied in a cost-effective manner.

Funding strategies include Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund and Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund for stormwater, below market rate loans, bond leveraging, public/private partnerships and nutrient trading.

The draft WIP III plans should be completed in August of 2018 and finalized in December.

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE: SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT PERSONNEL AND FUNDING

Byron Petrauskas, MDA, presented an overview of the report which was requested following last year’s legislative session when a bill was introduced to increase SCD funding support for staff.

The report was to address the historical perspective of SCD funding from 2008-2016 and then project needs going forward from 2018-2022. MDA included an introductory section describing the roles of soil conservation districts, their partners and the services that are provided.

Bar charts depict the state funding sources supporting district staff historically including state general funds, the 2010 Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund and other sources, such as short-term grant projects. State law required SCD support to ramp up to \$10 million supporting a minimum of 110 technical staff positions. If all fund sources are considered, the state is meeting this requirement. If only general fund support is considered, since it has represented the most secure and long-term funding stream, there is a shortfall of the state requirement.

Information for the last eight fiscal years was presented as bar charts showing staff resources according to job description. Petrauskas then described how workload hours for each program were derived to display how staffing support was apportioned. He used 2016 activity levels for Capital BMPs (MACS & EQIP), WIP-SCWQP, BMP verification, Cover Crop Program, Manure Transport Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Animal Operation CNMPs, and MACS status reviews.

Information for 2018-2022 was projected assuming workload would remain static at 2016 levels. Ongoing challenges that couldn’t be quantified we identified to include staff retention and training, difficulty in meeting TMDL goals as BMP implementation opportunities shrink, backlog addressing cooperator BMP needs, and changing role of SCDs as they take on additional responsibilities in the natural resource protection arena.

It was noted that the 2018 budget request was prepared prior to completion of the staffing report. So if changes are warranted, they will have to be pursued in the 2019 budget cycle.

SSCC 2017 WORKPLAN DEVELOPMENT

At their December meeting, the State Soil Conservation Committee discussed issues and programs that may take the forefront in the upcoming year. Although the workplan has not yet been approved the following chart lists issues being considered.

Topics:

- Solar Energy/Wind Turbines (alternative energy and related issues)
- Urban Agriculture
- Mentorship Program- develop guidance
- Education county gov’t- SCD roles
- Soil Health- national perspective

(Continued on page 4)

Information from the State Soil Conservation Committee
SSCC 2017 WORKPLAN DEVELOPMENT CONTINUED

- Review MACS funding
- Stream restoration offsets on agricultural land crediting urban (TMDL)
- Succession Planning- training
- Training for SCDs- roles & responsibilities
- Workload & Staffing: JCR report, partnership issues, TSP/NGO roles
- Sewage impacts to water quality
- USGS/Grain Producers study-irrigation & NM
- Food Safety & Water Quality
- Oyster Aquaculture
- Mitigation for development: agricultural land to forestry
- Legacy Nutrients – update
- SCD Feedback Training
- NRCS Engineering Tracking - Outcomes/Evaluation
- PMT
- MS-4 meeting permit requirements w/offsets from agriculture
- WIP
- Municipal approaches to storm water
- SCD Views on Trading
- Forestry: retention policy & who gets "credit" if afforestation for TMDL
- Farm Bill
- Update- Lead MD
- SHA Mitigation Initiatives

NOTES**Soil Phosphorus FIV Information**

MDA has documentation for over a million acres of agricultural land or 85%. The percentage of cropland falling below P FIV 150 and not required to utilize the Phosphorus Management Tool is 79% and acres above 150 FIV and required to use the PMT represent 21%. Of the acres above 150 P FIV, approximately 1.5% are 500 or above and restricted from applying any phosphorus after June, 2016.

Changes to Nutrient Management Regulation Final

Changes to nutrient management regulations were finalized at the beginning of January. They include an extension of the date allowing manure application to December 15, removing the incorporation requirement for manure application, and emergency provisions allowing MDA to work with farmers who can't meet the winter application restrictions.

APPOINTMENTS

- Allegany SCD - Ron Hawk
- Frederick SCD - Roger Troxell
- Garrett SCD - Kristen Enlow
- Wicomico SCD - Robert Guy
- Worcester SCD - Renee Winter

CIVIL RIGHTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATE**Welcome New NRCS Civil Rights Advisory Committee Members:**

- Associate Member - Amy Albright, Soil Conservationist, Allegany County
- Asian American/ Pacific Islander Special Emphasis Program Manager – Erik Hill, Soil Conservation Technician, Harford County
- Black Special Emphasis Program Manager - Christopher Townsend, Program Assistant and Soil Conservationist Trainee, State Office
- Veterans Special Emphasis Program Manager - Aaron McCann, Soil Conservationist, PG County

Awareness Month Observances

February is Black History Month. Your Black Special Emphasis Program Manager, Kimberly Whitmon, a Civil Engineer out of the Frederick office, will be sharing information to increase your awareness and understanding of the central role of African Americans in U.S. history over the coming month. If you are looking for ideas or have suggestions for ways to improve outreach to the black community, please call 443-547-3953 or email kimberly.whitmon@md.usda.gov.

March is Women's History Month. Your Women's Special Emphasis Program Manager, Sam Tyler, Civil Engineering Technician out of the Carroll office, will be sharing information to celebrate the many contributions of women to society, as well as increase understanding of the unique challenges women face. Please contact sam.tyler@md.usda.gov, 301-732-8596 for ideas on ways to improve outreach to women farmers and insure equal opportunity is present in all aspects of NRCS programs and services.

2017 MARYLAND CIVIL RIGHTS AWARD

Maryland Civil Rights Advisory Committee and Special Emphasis Program Managers are seeking nominations for the 2017 Maryland Civil Rights Award.

Nominations will be evaluated by all Civil Rights Advisory Committee Members. Award recipient(s) will be announced at the FY17 MD Operational and Business Planning Meeting.

The nomination form can be found on <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/md/about/civilrights/>

Nominations are due March 31st. For details, contact Jessica Aronhalt, Jessica.Aronhalt@md.usda.gov, or call 301-334-6956.

MASCD GRANTS UPDATE

Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program (FSCAP) –

There have been 202 reviews on 180 farms, resulting in 146 certified conservation stewards doing a great job in protecting 57,092 acres in all 23 counties across the state.

- Although the program provided 146 FSCAP farm signs with installed signposts, there are 212 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, 33 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; Anne Arundel, Frederick and Wicomico SCDs - 9; 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 were planted this fall.
- BGE Green Grant approved a second application with which we proposed to establish another 5 acres. The grant was less than the first and we applied to the Chesapeake Bay Trust Restoration Grant for additional funds which failed. We have signed up five farms and will plant next spring.
- Our 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, we will have established 59 acres on 67 farms in at least 15 counties.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

ANNUAL REPORT AVAILABLE

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts has released its 2016 annual report entitled, “We Go the Extra Mile Every Day for a Healthier Chesapeake Bay”. The report highlights the ways Maryland’s 24 soil conservation districts work to protect natural resources. Contact Lindsay Thompson, 443-262-8491 for a copy or visit www.mascd.net.

PARTNERSHIP PRESS ELECTRONICALLY

To receive the newsletter by email, as opposed to a mailed copy, please email marguerite.mdag@gmail.com. Past issues are also posted on www.mascd.net.

NACD PUBLICATIONS

NACD issues a number of publications to keep member conservation districts informed of recent association activity, the latest news affecting districts and their customers and newly available resources. Publications are provided to districts free of charge.

eResource - eResource is NACD's weekly news briefs issued every Tuesday afternoon. It is posted on the NACD website and emailed to most district employees and to a general distribution list. You can read eNotes online or, or have a copy sent to your inbox.

The Resource - NACD's quarterly print publication, *The Resource*, provides in depth coverage of the association’s recent activities and features columns by the NACD CEO and President, in addition to guest and partnership columns. Published quarterly, the newsletter is distributed electronically and through the mail.

MARYLAND FARM AND HARVEST IN IT’S FOURTH SEASON

Maryland Public Television’s popular original series *Maryland Farm & Harvest* is now in its fourth season with new half-hour episodes airing **Tuesdays at 7 p.m.** The series puts a human face on Maryland agriculture by telling stories of the people, skills and technology required to sustain and grow the state’s number one industry. Joanne Clendining, who earned an Emmy® from the National Capital Chesapeake Bay Chapter (NCCBC) of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for her work as *Maryland Farm & Harvest* host, returns for season four. Joining Joanne is Contributing Editor Al Spoler, who serves up the *Local Buy* segment during each episode. For upcoming episodes, visit <http://www.mpt.org/programs/farm/>.

FUTURE DATES TO REMEMBER	
February 24	St. Mary’s SCD Annual Cooperators Dinner Meeting, Hollywood
March 16	SSCC, MDA, Annapolis
March 28	MASCD Board Meeting, Prince George’s SCD, Upper Marlboro
April 20	SSCC, MDA, Annapolis
April 30 - May 7	Soil & Water Stewardship Week
May 18	SSCC, MDA, Annapolis
June 15	SSCC, MDA, Annapolis
July 20	SSCC, MDA, Annapolis
June 15-16	Maryland Envirothon, Camp Pecometh-Queen Anne’s County
June 23	MACCA August Exam Registration Deadline
July 23-29	National Envirothon Mount Saint Mary’s University, Emmitsburg
August 7-9	MASCD Annual Meeting, Turf Valley, Ellicott City
August 4	MACCA Exam, Annapolis

STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM



In 1955, the National Association of Conservation Districts began a national program to encourage Americans to focus on stewardship.

Stewardship Week is officially celebrated from the last Sunday in April to the first Sunday in May. It is one of the world's largest conservation-related observances.

The Stewardship and Education Committee has developed a five-year rotation for stewardship topics – water, soil, habitat, forestry, and a topic of interest – and determines the theme each year. **The 2017 Stewardship Theme is “Healthy Soils Are Full of Life.”**

Productive soils are the foundation of any healthy ecosystem. As the world’s population grows and demand for food production increases, it’s essential that we work together to protect and enhance our soils. Rules, entry forms, and other resources for the 2017 NACD Poster Contest and Stewardship Week – which will take place April 30 to May 7, 2017 – will be available in the coming months. For more information, <http://www.nacdnet.org/general-resources/stewardship-and-education-materials/contests/>



is a quarterly newsletter published for and about the members of Maryland’s Conservation Partnership: MD Department of Agriculture, MD Association of Soil Conservation Districts, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Farm Service Agency, MD Cooperative Extension Service, and the State Soil Conservation Committee. The deadline for articles is January 30, April 30, July 30 and October 30. Please direct comments or questions to the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts at (410) 956-5771.

The members of the Conservation Partnership prohibit discrimination in their programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USDA TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250 or call 1-800-245-6340 (voice) or (202) 720-5964 (TDD). Agencies in the Maryland Conservation Partnership are equal employment opportunity employers.

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