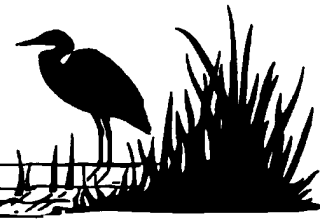


PARTNERSHIP PRESS

Maryland Conservation



WINTER 2018 VOLUME 25, ISSUE 1

ONEUSDA STRENGTHENS THE MARYLAND CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP, BY ODESSA SIRMAN ARMSTRONG, ACTING STATE CONSERVATIONIST, MARYLAND NRCS

Happy New Year! 2018 brings some temporary changes to NRCS leadership. I am serving as the Acting State Conservationist while Dr. Hillsman fills in as the acting Legislative and Public Affairs Director at our national office. Rob McAfee will take over state leadership on March 4, serving as Acting State Conservationist until Dr. Hillsman returns at the end of April.

As Acting State Conservationist, I appreciate the opportunity to use this space to focus on partnerships and opportunities we have to build on in the coming year.

USDA Secretary Perdue recently introduced his OneUSDA concept. OneUSDA is about making USDA the most effective, most efficient, most customer-focused, and best-managed part of the federal government. To meet this objective, he asked all USDA employees to consider ourselves all one family, all on the same team, and all working together to serve the American people.

The OneUSDA concept is not unlike the Conservation Partnership model we employ in Maryland. While each entity in the field office has their own priorities and goals, we all work together to provide Maryland farmers with the resources they need to sustain their farms and the environment. We understand how interconnected we are and how the work of one team complements or informs the work of another. This is particularly important now, as our ability to hire staff at the federal level remains constricted.

Over the past year, we've made strides in mobilizing our existing workforce to strengthen our customer service and improve operations at the field level. To fill in gaps due to retirements, two soil conservationists have temporarily filled vacant District Conservationist positions in Montgomery/Howard and Cecil/Harford counties. These positions provide continuity in field office operations and the customer service our producers expect, as well as opportunities for employee development in leadership areas.

One of the first steps initiatives Secretary Perdue took to support OneUSDA's goals was the realignment of NRCS, Farm Service Agency and Risk Management Agency into a new Farm and Production mission area. USDA is also working to consolidate our administrative support services into business centers at the mission area. The changes all link back to the Secretary's aspiration to make us the most effective, most efficient, the most customer-focused, and the best-managed federal agency.

(Continued on page 5)

MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY—LEGISLATIVE UPDATE, BY LINDSAY THOMPSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MASCD

The 2018 MASCD Winter Meeting and legislative luncheon was held February 7-8, 2018. The luncheon was hosted in partnership with the Rural Maryland Council and was a great success attracting over 60 legislators and Governor Larry Hogan.

During the meeting, MASCD went over legislation which may impact the Districts as well as the budget. Below is an update on the aforementioned bills.

BUDGET

The Governor's proposed budget included the following funding:

- \$2,702,776 for 43 planners, technicians and administrative staff
- \$613,775 for district operations
- \$8.5 million for MACS capitol projects
- \$22.44 million for the Cover Crop Program
- \$48.9 million for the MALPF easement acquisition

HB7/SB182 Income Tax Credit - Venison Donation - Feed the Hungry - Delegate Mautz & Senator Astle - MASCD SUPPORTS

This bill allows a hunter to claim a tax credit for \$50 in direct expenses associated with processing an antlerless deer if it is donated to a tax exempt organization. The maximum per hunting license id four deer and there is no limit on crop damage permits.

PASSED SENATE - FIRST READING HOUSE W&M

HB43 Motor Vehicles - Farm Equipment - Wide or Oversized Load Signals—Delegate Folden - FOR INFORMATION

Requiring that farm equipment or vehicles transporting farm equipment that are or may be a width of 15 feet or greater to be equipped with amber lights or signal devices and wide load signs.

UNFAVORABLE REPORT BY E&T

HB515 Agriculture - Noxious Weeds - Palmer Amaranth - Delegate Ghrist - MASCD SUPPORTS A STUDY

This bill would add Palmer Amaranth to the State's prohibited Noxious Weed List.

WILL LIKELY BE A SUMMER STUDY

SB100 Reservoir, Dam, or Waterway Obstruction Plans - Designation Authority - Chair EHEA - MASCD SUBMITTED A LETTER OF INFORMATION

This bill authorizes the Department of Environment to designate approval authority for the construction, reconstruction, or repair of certain small, low-hazard ponds, dams, or waterway obstructions, thereby exempting these activities from the requirement to obtain a dam safety permit from MDE. *NOTE:* MDE submitted testimony stating that this will only be used for state and/or federal projects and approval authority for all other projects will remain at the districts.

PASSED SENATE—FIRST READING HOUSE E&T

(Continued on page 2)

PERSONNEL NOTES

NRCS WELCOMES...

Michael Mingus, Wildlife Biologist in the State Office
 Andrew Zimmerman, Soil Conservationist in Frederick County
 Tyler Witkowski, Soil Conservationist in Cecil County
 Mathew Hobart, Soil Conservationist in St. Mary's County
 Cara Green, Program Support Specialist in Frederick County
 Charlotte Brewster, Acting District Conservationist for Montgomery and Howard Counties
 Morgan McKee, Acting District Conservationist for Harford and Cecil Counties

NRCS BIDS FAREWELL TO...

Jim Meyers, District Conservationist for Montgomery and Howard counties, retired after 30 years of federal service.
 Lydia Donovan, Business Support Specialist at the State Office, retired after 21 years of federal service.

TRAINING

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING, MARCH—APRIL

Update Your Nutrient Management Plan Training Sessions

The University of Maryland Extension (UME) Nutrient Management Specialists will be available to assist you with updating to your nutrient management plan and the nutrient management planning software NuMan Pro 4.2. The sessions will be informal and participants will work at their own pace.

WHAT WILL BE PROVIDED?

Laptop computers equipped with NuMan Pro 4.2 software, printers, and technical support to make the updating process quick and easy.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

- Registration is mandatory to ensure an adequate number of computers are available.
- Each session will be limited to 11 participants so register early.
- There is no fee to attend these sessions.

March 27, 2018 (snow date 4/17)	1-4pm	Garrett County UME office Mt. Lake Park, MD
April 16, 2018 (snow date 4/23)	1-4pm	Frederick County UME office Frederick, MD

Register by contacting Paul Shipley at 301-405-2563 or prs@umd.edu

Note: Continuing education credits are not available for these sessions.

EVENTS

MASCD ANNUAL MEETING, JULY 29-31

MASCD's Annual Meeting will be held July 29-31, 2018 at the Hyatt Regency Cambridge.

The Lower Shore is this year's host. They are planning an event Sunday evening at Layton's Chance Winery that you won't want to miss. The Opening Session will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Monday morning.

The Technical and Administrative Committee Meetings and Area Meetings will be held later in the day. Tuesday will wrap up with a supervisors training and general session with 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.

MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY—LEGISLATIVE UPDATE, BY LINDSAY THOMPSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MASCD

(Continued from page 1)

SB354/HB396 - Local Government - Agricultural Land Preservation Fee - Senator Middleton & Delegate Luedtke - MASCD SUPPORTS

This bill would authorize a county with a state certified agricultural land preservation program to establish a fee to fund their easement program.

UNFAVORABLE REPORT BY HOUSE E&T

SB957 - Income Tax Credits - Poultry Houses - LED Lighting and Solar Panel Systems - Senator Eckardt—MASCD SUPPORTS WITH AN AMENDMENT

This will allow a tax credit for direct expenses for the installation of LED lighting or solar panels for on farm use in poultry operations up to \$5,000. *NOTE:* MASCD is requesting an amendment to include all agricultural operation types.

HEARING 3/14 IN B&T

HB1221 - Agriculture - Nutrient Management Plans - Protection of Personal Information - Delegate Gilchrist - MASCD OPPOSED

This bill would change language in the nutrient management law from protecting the "identity" of a farmer to "personal information." This means that the only information that would be redacted from a plan released under the Public Information Act would be an individual's name, address, driver's license number or any other identification number, medical or disability information, photograph or computer-generated image, Social Security number, and telephone number.

HEARING 2/23 IN E&T

HB1168 - Agricultural Land Preservation Easements - Surface Mining - Delegate Adams - MASCD OPPOSED

This bill authorizes a landowner whose land is subject to a Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) easement to use the land for noncoal surface mining activities in accordance with applicable State law, if the land is adjacent to a parcel of land that is covered by a valid noncoal surface mining permit issued by MDE.

HEARING CANCELLED

If you have any questions or would like a full bill tracking list, please contact Lindsay Thompson at Lindsay.mdag@gmail.com.

2018 FARM BILL STRATEGIES

Eric Hansen, NACD Northeast Region and Policy staff, presented information about the status and strategies they are pursuing related to 2018 Farm Bill. Approximately one trillion dollars is authorized through the Farm Bill. 79% of funds or \$756 billion go to food assistance programs and the next largest portion is crop insurance which comprises 9% or \$90 billion. Conservation programs currently represent 6% or \$56 billion. In the last several years, fewer dollars were appropriated to conservation programs than were authorized.

Maryland is well represented on committees that will have influence over the Farm Bill and funding decisions. Senator Van Hollen is on the Agricultural Committee and Representative Harris sits on the Appropriations Committee.

NACD's main objectives for the Farm Bill are:

- Protect current conservation funding levels and assure there are no cuts to conservation programs.
- Support technical assistance, specifically making sure the SCD role of providing vital services as part of a strong conservation team are recognized and supported.
- Repeal the Sam/Duns requirement for program enrollment. This is a priority.
- Remove conservation disincentives from the Crop Insurance Program. NACD is working with a coalition advocating for this change.
- Encourage SCD engagement in RCPP. There is a bill supported by Senators Stabenow and Ernst that seeks to triple RCPP funding to \$300 million by redirecting 20% of EQIP, CSP and ACEP funds to RCPP. (Currently 7% of funds from these programs support RCPP) and changing funding pools. Senator Van Hollen is also working on a similar bill.

NACD has the following concerns about these RCPP bills:

1. The bills propose block grants for project funding for approved partner awards. These can be used for awarding 30% of RCPP funds. They allow technical and financial assistance to be administered by grantees and replace the current NRCS delivery system.
2. The proposal redirects funds from working conservation programs-EQIP, CSP and ACEP- to expand RCPP funding.
3. The three current funding pool allocations (state, national and critical conservation areas) are reduced to two. The bills eliminate the national pool.

There are a couple of positive components to the bill such as making match requirements more flexible and better clarifying the application process.

NACD is concerned that SCDs could end up "holding the bag" for implementing grant objectives set and directed by other entities who are the grant recipients. NACD is making the case that amend-

ments to RCPP do not address the problems bill advocates have expressed concerns about.

Lawrence asked if there were any other pending bills related to the conservation title.

Holden noted there was a bill that would allow grazing CRP land as a form of mid-contract maintenance. There is also a bill to remove the Sam/Duns requirement.

Guy asked what the driving force was behind RCPP as a program. Hansen said originally it was to increase conservation funding by gaining "matching funds" from partners in order to expand NRCS program objectives. It also allows for targeting resources.

The following NACD website provides updates related to the Farm Bill:

www.nacdnet.org/get-involved/grassroots-advocacy/

EFFECT OF IRRIGATION ON NITRATE TRANSPORT TO THE GROUNDWATER

Judy Denver, USGS, presented preliminary information on her three year study conducted using paired watersheds in Maryland and Delaware.

Irrigated cropland on the Delmarva in 2012 was 17.5 % of the acreage as compared to the Chesapeake Bay watershed as a whole where irrigation was used on about 4% of all cropland. Literature searches have revealed virtually no work comparing irrigated and dryland farming and how or if their nutrient dynamics differ. However, the Chesapeake Bay program currently assume a 4% nutrient management efficiency for irrigated cropland

The study looked at two farms on Delmarva, one in Queen Anne County, MD near Andover Branch and the other in Delaware near Bucks Branch. Both farms have a history of implementing conservation practices including nutrient management plans, crop rotations, precision agriculture, cover crops, riparian buffers, integrated pest management and residue management. Both farms had a dryland field and irrigated field monitored for three years.

The Andover Branch farm soils are not well drained and have a shallow aquifer at 30 feet. Hydrological analysis estimated that it took approximately 20 years for groundwater from the cropland to be transported to the stream. The irrigation system was newly installed on the crop field prior to monitoring, so some baseline data was collected pre-installation. The stream was tested as having less than 2mg/l of nitrate.

(Continued on page 4)

EFFECT OF IRRIGATION ON NITRATE TRANSPORT TO THE GROUNDWATER

(Continued from page 3)

The Bucks Branch farm soils are sandy and very well drained. The aquifer is approximately 80 feet deep. The irrigation system had been in use for 15 years prior to the study. Depending on the location in the field, groundwater could take from 4-30 years to reach the stream. Stream samples showed nitrate levels at 10 mg/l.

Preliminary findings at Andover Branch sites indicate that irrigated soils result in rainwater running off soils faster and increasing groundwater recharge. Data still needs to be analyzed to determine proportionality for irrigated acres and contribution of nitrate to groundwater but it appears that nitrate is more elevated under an irrigated system than dryland.

In Bucks Branch fields nitrate concentrations are greater earlier in the season than at other times because of leaching. Commercial fertilizer demonstrated greater movement potential than manure sources. Preliminary data shows greater nitrate concentrations under the irrigated field.

Denver indicated that USGS would be modeling much of the data in the future and there are questions about the unsaturated zone transport and a need to better understand the soil/water recharge.

2018 SSCC WORKPLAN

SSCC met in December and selected the following topics to address during 2018.

- legal support for SCDs: non-liability issues such as human resources
- WIP III
- partnerships: SCDs working w/NGOs for conservation projects
- healthy soils: criteria, activities, education & outreach
- engagement/active participation by SCD supervisors
- carbon sequestration
- soil contamination/remediation (urban agriculture)
- water reclamation/reuse (BMPs, requirements)
- solar arrays & conservation issues
- core operating criteria for SCDs
- BMPs for nitrogen reduction
- air quality & agriculture

NOTES

POTENTIAL TOPICS FOR SUMMER WORKSHOP DISCUSSED

At the December meeting the SSCC discussed topic areas that could build the capacity of SCDs.

These included:

- Expanding outreach: including PR about accomplishments, new programs, target diverse stakeholders'
- Succession planning: SCD staff & Board, and
- Innovative/Alternative Funding Sources.

PILOT PROJECT: DREDGING AT CONOWINGO DAM

A request for proposals was released this past fall to conduct a pilot for dredging behind the Conowingo dam and the beneficial reuse of spoils.

The Maryland Environmental Service (MES) Request for Proposal (RFP) asked for proposals for the Conowingo Capacity Recovery and Innovative Reuse and Beneficial Use Pilot Project. MES was seeking a private sector partner that could accomplish all components of the proposed pilot project.

As planned, the Request for Proposal opens a path for progress on addressing the critical issue of sediment and nutrient buildup and leakage from the Conowingo Reservoir. MES, at the direction of the Governor's Chesapeake Bay Council, is managing the 25,000 cubic yard demonstration project to help the State determine a successful path forward for preventing sediments and nutrients from flowing down the Susquehanna River into the Chesapeake Bay, and for finding innovative reuses of the material.

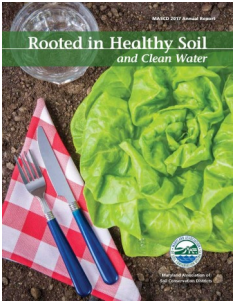
Conowingo Dam is a hydroelectric dam built in 1928 that has been trapping sediment from the Susquehanna River that could affect the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay. According to a report issued with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the dam has recently reached a point at which, over time, the same amount of pollution and sediment flowing into the Conowingo reservoir is also flowing out.

MES awarded a contract to Northgate-Dutra Joint Venture (JV), for a demonstration project at the Conowingo Dam to be initiated this year.

The next SSCC will meet Thursday, March 15, 2018 at 9:30 a.m. at the Maryland Department of Agriculture. The meeting is open to the public and will focus on soil conservation and water quality program implementation and policy development. For more information, contact Louise Lawrence, executive secretary, 410-841-5863.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

ANNUAL REPORT AVAILABLE



The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts has released its 2017 annual report entitled, “Rooted in Healthy Soil and Clean Water”.

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.

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 2018 theme is “Watersheds: Our Water, Our Home.”

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.

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 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.



FUTURE DATES TO REMEMBER

March 15	SSCC, MDA, Annapolis
March 27	MASCD Board Meeting, TBD
April 19	SSCC, MDA, Annapolis
April 29 - May 6	Soil & Water Stewardship Week
May 17	SSCC, MDA, Annapolis
June 21	SSCC, MDA, Annapolis
July 19	SSCC, MDA, Annapolis
June 14-15	Maryland Envirothon, Garrett County 4H Camp
June 22	MACCA August Exam Registration Deadline
July 29-31	MASCD Annual Meeting, Hyatt Regency Cambridge
August 3	MACCA Exam, Annapolis

USDA STRENGTHENS THE MARYLAND CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP, BY ODESSA SIRMAN ARMSTRONG, ACTING STATE CONSERVATIONIST, MARYLAND NRCS

(Continued from page 1)

At NRCS, our mission isn’t changing. We will continue to provide technical and financial assistance to farmers and foresters. Maryland NRCS remains committed to a strong conservation partnership, where agencies support each other in fulfilling our mutual goal to help Maryland’s farmers get conservation on the ground. As we chart into this unknown territory, NRCS is looking to our core partners to help guide us on a path to provide the best service we can to Maryland’s farmers.

We know there is no single government entity, individual or organization with all the resources to meet the needs of Maryland’s farmers – it’s all hands on deck. With a renewed sense of interconnectedness within USDA and Maryland’s Conservation Partnership, I look forward to even more progress in providing quality customer service to farmers in 2018 and beyond.

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 theme for NACD's 2018 Stewardship Week is "Watersheds: Our Water, Our Home."

Water is one of our most precious resources. Watersheds supply water for drinking and recreation, irrigation and manufacturing, and wildlife and bird habitat. It is essential that each of us adopts good water conservation habits so that we can keep our water resources safe and productive now and for future generations.

Rules, entry forms, and other resources related to the 2018 NACD poster contest can be found at <http://www.nacdnet.org/general-resources/stewardship-and-education-materials/contests/>.

The 2018 Stewardship Week will take place April 29 – May 6.

P Maryland Conservation **PARTNERSHIP PRESS** 

is a quarterly newsletter published for and about the members of Maryland's Conservation Partnership: MD Department of Agriculture, MD Association of Soil Conservation Districts, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Farm Service Agency, 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 443-262-8491.

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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