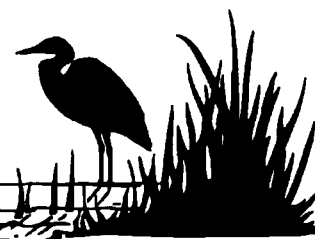


PARTNERSHIP PRESS

Maryland Conservation



Spring 2015 Volume 22 Issue 2

FARM STEWARDSHIP CERTIFICATION PROGRAM RECOGNIZES 100TH STEWARD

DR. TERRON HILLSMAN NEW MARYLAND STATE CONSERVATIONIST



Dr. Terron Hillsman has been selected as the new Maryland State Conservationist. Dr. Hillsman was born and raised on a small family farm in West Tennessee. He began his career with the USDA Soil Conservation Service in 1992, as a Student Trainee, while majoring in Agriculture at Tennessee State University. During his 23 years with the agency, Dr. Hillsman has worked as a Soil Conservationist, State Outreach Coordinator, and nine years as District Conservationist, all in the state of Tennessee, with the exception of brief detail assignments in South Carolina as the State Resource Conservationist and State Administrative Officer.

The 100th Maryland farm certified for achieving the highest level of environmental stewardship was recognized May 6th at a ceremony outside Smithsburg, Md.

Gardenhour Orchards, operated by Bill Gardenhour and his family, received the Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program (FSCAP) certificate and sign from the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts, which established FSCAP in cooperation with core agricultural and environmental partners, to recognize farmers who are good stewards of their natural resources and to encourage farmers to put additional best management practices (BMPs) on their land.

The Gardenhours are the fourth generation to operate the orchard, which encompasses 105 acres within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. In their market and pick-your-own orchards and fields, they offer apples, peaches, corn, strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries.

Secretary of Agriculture, Joe Bartenfelder, expressed how honored he is to be the Secretary of Agriculture in a state that values conservation. "The Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program is not only a way to recognize those who are already doing a great job but also encourage other farmers to install more best management practices so they can become certified." Bartenfelder stated. "Maryland agriculture is making great progress towards our 2025 Bay clean-up goals and programs like this one will continue to help accelerate that progress," he continued.

Dr. Terron Hillsman, the new state conservationist for the Natural Resource Conservation Service spoke about his excitement to work with farmers in Maryland to continue the nearly 80 years of partnership. He noted that all FSCAP-certified farmers use a suite of NRCS designed BMPs on their farms to reduce or eliminate erosion and nutrient loss."

(Continued on page 6)

Most recently, he served as Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations for the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Massachusetts. In addition to earning his B.S. in Agriculture from TSU, Dr. Hillsman also earned a M.A. in Organizational Management from Tusculum College and a Ph.D. in Business Administration from the University of Tennessee. He was adjunct faculty in the Management Department of Tusculum College from 2008-2012 and is presently a Senior Lecturer in the College of Business at Western New England University in Springfield, MA teaching courses in organizational behavior, management, and leadership. In his spare time, he enjoys outdoor activities such as cycling and hunting. He and his wife Natasha have a nine year-old son, Donovan. Welcome Terron!

SINE DIE REPORT BY LYNNE HOOT, MASCD EXECUTIVE

The biggest issue for MASCD this session was the potential loss of \$690,000 in **HB 70 & SB 55 Budget Bill (Fiscal Year 2016)** that supported 25 long term permanent positions that have been jointly funded by state grant funds and county funding. MASCD worked with MDA and the House and Senate committees to have this funding restored from the 2010 Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund. Many thanks to all the districts for all of your hard work to make this happen. In light of the budget issues this session, MASCD should consider pursuing a dedicated funding source in 2016.

(Continued on page 9)

EVENTS

MASCD ANNUAL MEETING – JULY 27-29

The MASCD Annual Meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn in Solomons July 27 - 29. The Southern Area soil conservation districts are planning an interesting and informative agenda. Meeting registration packages have been mailed. Hold the date and look forward to information sharing with your colleagues from Maryland's 24 soil conservation districts and Partnership agency staff. Registration materials will be distributed through your local SCD and made available online at www.mascd.net or by calling 410-956-5771.

NACD SUMMER BOARD MEETING AND TOUR – JULY 10-13

Registration is now open for the NACD Summer Board and Conservation Tour, July 10 – 13 in Spokane, Washington. The NACD Board will meet on Saturday and Sunday. On Sunday afternoon, attendees will participate in a special Conservation Forum with local, regional and national panelists talking about the latest issues impacting locally-led conservation and soil health, followed by a reception that evening. On Monday, take an all-day tour of the Palouse Region, hosted by the Spokane Conservation District. Among other stops, will be visiting the famous Steptoe Butte State Park, going to Sievers Farm to observe their Direct Seed practices, and hearing from a variety of expert-speakers along the way. Early Bird registration is open through June 16. For more details and to register, visit <http://www.nacdnet.org/events/summer-board-meeting>.

MARYLAND COMMODITY CLASSIC, QA 4-H PARK – JULY 23

MPT Maryland Farm and Harvest's Joanne Clendening will be the emcee and the Peterson Farm Brothers will be the presenters at the Maryland Commodity Classic to be held on Thursday, July 23, at the Queen Anne's 4-H Park in Centerville. This annual event, sponsored by the Maryland Grain Producers Association (MGPA), the Maryland Soybean Board (MSB) and the Mid-Atlantic Soybean Association (MASA) will have a field day presentation at the Park to highlight soybean and grain checkoff funded research projects. Grant projects will also be on display at the 4-H Park. As a grant recipient, the Maryland Envirothon will have a display at the event to showcase the environmental education activities of the districts to the 250 plus farmers who attend. The event concludes with the famed Crab Feast, Pork and Chicken BBQ. Tickets are available for \$10 each for entry prior to 2:00 p.m. (\$20 after 2:00 and no entry after 3:00 p.m.) Event sponsorships are now being accepted. For more information, call 410-956-5771.

70TH ANNUAL SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION SOCIETY CONFERENCE



COMING HOME
TO CONSERVATION
PUTTING SCIENCE INTO PRACTICE

SWCS INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE – JULY 26-29

Join your colleagues July 26-29, 2015, in Greensboro, NC for the 70th Annual International Conference of the Soil and Water Conservation Society.

The conference includes workshops, concurrent sessions, and a Fellows Forum. One way SWCS is moving forward on current environmental challenges is by incorporating the former NIFA National Water Conference into the Annual Conference, which will increase collaborative opportunities for Land-Grant based scientists and educators engaged in water issues. SWCS welcomes this addition to their already diverse audience and the enhancement it will provide to all conference participants. For details, http://www.swcs.org/en/conferences/2015_annual_conference/.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

2015 NACD/AUXILIARY PHOTO CONTEST



The NACD/NACD Auxiliary Photo Contest is open to amateur photographers who are residents of the United States or its territories.

Participants can enter as many as five photos total each year. Each photo has to fit in one of the four natural resource or conservation photo categories: Conservation Practices, Close Up Conservation, Conservation in Action, Agriculture and Conservation Across America.

The deadline is **December 1, 2015**. For more information contact Susan Schultz, 317-326-2952, stewardship@nacdnet.org, or you can visit <http://www.nacdnet.org/education/contests/photo>.

MARYLAND GRAIN PRODUCERS SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

The Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board is awarding up to eight \$2,500 scholarships to deserving students enrolled in a Maryland or out-of-state institutions.

Funded by Maryland grain checkoff funds, the scholarships provide financial support to students interested in pursuing a career in agriculture.

The scholarships will be awarded to Maryland residents who are enrolled in or accepted by a four-year institution and working toward a BS degree, or students enrolled in or accepted by a two-year institution with an agricultural program.

The selections will be based on agricultural background, family farm involvement, financial need, grade point average, agriculture related studies, career goals, and extra curricular activities.

Applicants or the applicant's immediate family must be involved in the production of grain.

Application deadline is **June 1, 2015**. For an application, please call Lynne Hoot at 410-956-5771 or visit www.marylandgrain.com.

PHOSPHORUS MANAGEMENT TOOL

Royden Powell, MDA, presented an update on the regulations to implement the Phosphorus Management tool. He noted that regulations proposed during the O'Malley administration were proposed in November 2014. The Hogan Administration pulled the regulation one day before they became final creating a void as to future implementation. Senator Pinsky proposed legislation placing the November regulations in statute. Subsequently the Hogan Administration worked with the agricultural community and other interests and proposed a new version of PMT regulations on April 3, 2015. The proposed regulations utilize the November version as a starting point and add four enhancements:

1. The schedule has moved one year so producers still have the benefit of using both PSI and PMT analysis side by side for two years prior to beginning any PMT implementation of management requirements or changes;
2. Language was added to each management transition period that requires MDA to evaluate whether appropriate infrastructure is in place to move forward and if lacking, delay transition to next phase by one year;
3. A ban on the use of phosphorus on any soil with an FIV of 500 or more will take place when the regulations take effect (potentially in June, 2015); and
4. MDA will collect field scale soil test P information from consultants beginning in 2015 (information will not include identities but will include acres, FIV score and county).

Further negotiation with environmental groups and Pinsky also created a new advisory group to review the existing infrastructure and needs to move to the next transition phase.

The legislation was not moved forward as a result and the bills died.

Welch asked if the information reporting could be used to show trends in FIV levels on a farm? Powell noted that reported FIV would have no identifying information so trend analysis not possible.

Connelly suggested that farmers may be willing to provide more details for a research project to examine trends since privacy could be assured in such a study.

Welch asked if MDA knew how many acres will be impacted from the requirement that no phosphorus be applied to acres with a 500 or over FIV? Powell said based on a sample of 1700 fields,

about 20% had issues and if extrapolated he estimated 50,000 acres. Powell said impact would be more focused on Eastern Shore and has been less an issue on dairy operations. Hoot said dairy may not be impacted by management restrictions until the final phase in period of PMT.

Myers asked if CAFO information was public and if they reported FIV? Powell said the current PSI allows continued application of 1-1.5T/ac of poultry litter because it doesn't consider subsurface flow risk in the risk analysis.

Giese asked what state actions would be taken to help farmers address excess manure. Powell said for short term MDA could prioritize operations that fall under phosphorus ban for Manure Transport Program eligibility.

NOMINATION PROCESS

State Committee discussed their appointment process. Lawrence then reviewed the shortened nomination form with SSCC. Members agreed that shortened version may be preferred. The nomination form is now shortened to three pages and available as form fill-in on the MDA website. Click on Conservation, and then Committees.

Also of concern was the lack of engagement by the Farm Bureau, who by law is required to submit three nominations for a SCD position on each board. Lawrence spoke with the Executive Director, Valerie Connelly and she agreed to bring it to the Farm Bureau Board's attention. In March, Connelly discussed with SSCC issues related to SCD nomination and appointment process from Farm Bureau's perspective. Their first concern was providing a list of three nominees for consideration for SCD Board Appointments. The main concern was providing names of individuals who would not be appointed. Connelly asked if there could be a streamlined process to provide information for the recommended name and less or just names of others to make up the required three?

Lawrence noted that State law required three nominations so that SSCC could actually make an informed appointment. If Farm Bureau only provided information on one person, they would be making a de facto appointment. Hoot said an informed appointment was unlikely unless information is provided about each candidate. Powell noted that the nomination requirement assures that a Farm Bureau representative has a role in setting conservation policy at the local level. Stanton said the issue of getting volunteers to nominate is not specific to Farm Bureau and many other groups have the same challenges. He suggested the need to

(Continued on page 4)

SSCC



Report

Information from the State Soil Conservation Committee

NOMINATION PROCESS

(Continued from page 3)

develop a process that educates young people about our programs and promotes interest in participation.

Connelly said Farm Bureau's second concern was the lack of communication with local Farm Bureau after a person is appointed to an SCD to represent Farm Bureau. She asked if it could be added to a job description. Lawrence said she would add it to information about supervisors. Myers said it is also the responsibility of the county Farm Bureau president to make sure two way communication occurs.

Connelly suggested requests for nominations be copied to her attention and emailed so she could follow up with regional staff.

CHESAPEAKE BAY MODEL

Jason Keppler, MDA presented information on BMP tracking, verification and progress runs as related to Chesapeake Bay program.

After the 2013 progress run, agriculture had achieved 93% of its 2015 nitrogen goal and 50% of its phosphorus goal. In the interim, EPA has folded in new Census information for 2012 conditions which has changed the outcomes of the model run. The new progress check reveals a 33% achievement of the nitrogen goal and a 137% achievement of the phosphorus goal. New Census information results in the model showing greater nitrogen loading on the Eastern Shore due to increased acreage of soybeans and wheat in Caroline, Talbot, Wicomico and Somerset Counties.

Swaine said that from a practical perspective the Census should also indicate reduced corn acres since there are no new acres of cropland in Talbot. Total acreage should be unchanged. Talbot doesn't have any pastureland to convert as claimed for the change. Nutrients applied to corn are more than that recommended for soybeans and winter wheat nutrient are now restricted by nutrient management requirements. He noted that to modelers these are just numbers, but the outcome of the now regulatory model results has real world implications and impacts livelihoods.

Keppler said reductions in phosphorus are due mainly to poultry populations in Dorchester County being less than projected. (The model assumed a percent increase every year.) Keppler noted improvements that could benefit agricultural performance. The cutoff of acres to apply BMPs could gain 42,000 pounds of nitrogen. Interim credits for certain BMPs could achieve up to an

additional 500,000 pounds nitrogen. Improvements to the model in the next iteration are crop yield, fertilizer sales, agricultural land use and poultry information.

The Bay program has asked the state to conduct a historical data clean up and that is now underway. The Resource Improvement Inventory (previously labeled Functional Equivalent BMPs) will be based on visual indicators which result in 0% or 100% nutrient reduction credit.

MDA is reviewing its verification protocol for BMPs and agricultural activities. Each state and sector will be required to meet some minimum standards to claim reduction credits in the future. Giese suggested that looking at nitrogen by county should result in some consistency of trends among counties, especially on the Eastern Shore.

Smith said the model will accommodate greater state specificity in the future rather than the use of averages as done currently. Swaine expressed frustration that there is little accounting for real world management in the model.

Richardson asked about water bodies that cross jurisdiction bounds and how other states fared with census. Keppler said the census information impacted other state load information.

NOTES

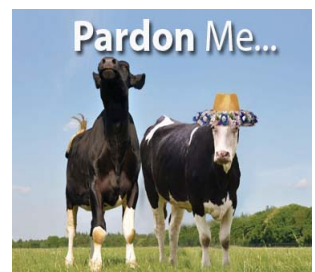
MDA PROMOTES CONSERVATION MESSAGES

MDA ran a "Manure Happens" ad campaign at the end of March to inform the general public about normal agricultural practices and the beneficial use of manure as a nutrient source. The following is one example of the four messages. More information can be found on <http://mda.maryland.gov/Pages/Manure.aspx>.

IS THAT THE SWEET SMELL OF SPRING?

If you live near a working farm, spring breezes may carry the unmistakable odor of manure. That's because farmers have begun spreading manure on fields in preparation for planting. To protect local streams and the Chesapeake Bay, Maryland prohibits farmers from spreading manure in winter.

March 1 is the first opportunity for farmers to recycle manure generated over the winter as a valuable crop fertilizer. It doesn't smell pretty, but it goes with the territory. The good news is the smell usually goes away in a day or two.



SSCC Report

Information from the State Soil Conservation Committee

SSCC MISSION/VISION STATEMENTS UPDATED

Mission:

To provide leadership statewide, guide and direct the Maryland Department of Agriculture and coordinate among represented agencies and others in matters related to soil conservation and water quality policy and program development to ensure environmental goals are met with programs that are economically, technically and socially feasible.

Vision:

The SSCC is recognized for statewide leadership in developing policy, programs and education for soil conservation and water quality programs. SSCC fosters a cadre of pro-active soil conservation district leaders working with cooperating agencies to address natural resource issues and deliver programs to farmers, landowners and others to achieve local, state and federal environmental and economic goals and an improved quality of life for all Marylanders.

SUPERVISOR APPOINTMENTS

- Caroline SCD - Greg Turner
- Harford SCD -Daniel Magness
- Somerset - Kevin Anderson
- Somerset - Anne Webster
- Washington Co. SCD - John Rinehart

MASCD GRANT UPDATE

Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program (FSCAP)

There have been 147 evaluation reviews on 126 farms, resulting in 100 certified conservation stewards doing a great job in protecting 29,630 acres in 16 counties across the state. The 100th steward is Bill Gardenhour of a fourth generation farm family operating Gardenhour Orchards in Washington County. Although the program provided 100 FSCAP farm signs with installed signposts, there are 145 signs displayed because many of the stewards believe that the recognition is also good for business.

We offer perks to stewards with other projects. Through our Nutrient Trading Project, 22 stewards have had free baseline assessments conducted that determine compliance with the TMDL plan and the number of nitrogen and phosphorus credits. Through our two Pollinator Habitat Projects, 26 stewards have participated and three of them we certified as a result of meeting them as participants in Pollinator Habitat. There are 11 Certified District Officials (Supervisors, Associate Supervisors, Board Secretaries, District Staff), about 12%. District support: Washington County SCD – 27; Carroll – 12; Cecil - 8; Frederick, St. Mary's and Wicomico SCDs – 7.

Translation Outreach Project

The Spring Newsletter was translated and mailed in April. A Late Winter Newsletter was translated and mailed in February. MDA developed a series of conservation fact sheets that we had three fact sheets translated into Spanish in January to be made available to Hispanic 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 got our second Pollinator Habitat Project through a Chesapeake Bay Trust Pioneer Grant of \$15,000 to help fund a new project to establish 10 acres. Six and one-half acres were planted last fall and three and one-half more acres will be planted this spring, totalling 15 sites in eight counties. Our two Pollinator Habitat projects will total 51 acres on 57 farms, two agricultural centers, one school and one environmental education center in 15 counties. MASCD is exploring other grant opportunities to expand the project.

TRAINING OPTIONS FOR DISTRICT SUPERVISORS

As SSCC discusses training options for District Supervisors, Maryland district supervisors and staff are encouraged to take a look at what other states are doing to ensure that these public officials understand their public commitments.

In 2010, NACD established the District Officials State Training Recognition Program that recognizes states that have developed and implemented a statewide district official training program. To be recognized under the program, states must apply and self-assess that their state training program for district officials meets at least 50 percent of the minimum training elements.

NACD's District Operations and Member Services Committee reviews all applications. State training programs meeting the requirements are then recognized during the next NACD Annual Meeting. Links to each state's training information will be

placed on the NACD website as examples for others in developing or improving their district official training program.

NACD's District Operations and Member Services Committee reviews all applications. State training programs meeting the requirements are then recognized during the next NACD Annual Meeting. Links to each state's training information is placed on the NACD website as examples for others in developing or improving their district official training program.

To date, the following states have been recognized under the program: Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia and Wyoming. Is it something Maryland should consider? <http://www.nacdnet.org/district-official-training-program-recognition>.

FSCAP CELEBRATION (CONTINUED)

Elmer Weibley, district manager, Washington County Soil Conservation District, noted that the first FSCAP farm and the 100th FSCAP farm share something in common. "I'm proud to see that Washington County is home to not just the first and 100th farm, but also 25 other farms in between," he said. "The FSCAP program has provided an opportunity to showcase the commitment of Washington County farmers to conservation."

Lynne Hoot, Executive Director of the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts, welcomed and thanked all those in attendance. Hoot recognized the certified stewards present and stated, "We are proud to have recognized one hundred farms in Maryland that have a high level of commitment to conservation on their farms. These stewards here with us today exemplify the strong stewardship ethic seen on farms across the state."

"The Chesapeake Bay Foundation is proud to be a core partner in this program that has honored 100 farmers for being good stewards of their land and water," said Alison Prost, Maryland executive director of CBF. "Our mantra has always been that a well-managed farm is the best use of land and this program helps demonstrate that there are well managed farms with farmers working hard to protect the Chesapeake Bay. These FSCAP certified farmers, who have gone above and beyond what is required of them, deserve to be recognized," she added.

Valerie Connelly, speaking on behalf of the 30,000 farm and rural family members as executive director of the Maryland Farm Bureau, expressed her excitement over reaching 100 certified farms. "Farmers have been working diligently to minimize the environmental impacts of producing food, fuel and fiber for Marylanders, Americans and the world," Connelly stated. "FSCAP recognizes these farmers and I hope that more farmers will sign up for FSCAP assessments because I know there are more who qualify for certification."

Tom Leigh, Director of Programs and Partnerships for the Chesapeake Bay Trust, talked about how it is necessary to

recognize the conservation efforts already occurring within the agricultural community while encouraging a higher level of environmental stewardship. "Each year the Chesapeake Bay Trust funds hundreds of projects through the region that engage local citizens in efforts to improve water quality and advance community involvement. We continue to partner with the agricultural community to advance both the science and the implementation of best management practices and applaud the work of Gardenhour Orchards for their efforts to become certified."

Linda Burrier, a farmer from Union Bridge, MD, and a director on both the Maryland Soybean Board and

United Soybean Board, congratulated the Gardenhours. "Conserving our air, land and water resources is important to all farmers," she said. "Since 1980, U.S. farmers have increased the adoption of conservation tillage methods by 143 million acres. More than 70 percent of soybean farmers practice some form of conservation tillage every production cycle. Irrigated water use per bushel of soybeans has dropped by over 40 percent since 1980. Continuous improvement is a way of life for family farmers, whether we're growing row crops or fruit trees. It's an ethic that we share."

Steve Ernst, the very first FSCAP steward, noted that voluntary conservation and stewardship programs have been a backbone in Maryland agriculture for generations. The water and soil resources that have been entrusted to our families and the provision these resources have supplied are fundamental to our current and future successes as producers of food.

Bill Gardenhour told the group about the conservation practices on his farm including nutrient management planning, conservation crop rotation, micro irrigation, proper irrigation management, and integrated pest management. Bill pays close attention to the land that he rents to other area farmers to ensure they use proper crop rotations, no-till farming and compliance with nutrient management guidelines.

MASCD represents the 24 soil conservation districts (SCDs) which are political sub-divisions of the state charged with delivery of federal, state, and county natural resource conservation programs at the local level. The soil conservation districts work with agricultural landowners, developers, and homeowners to identify pollution problems and to design and implement corrective measures. The Core partners for the FSCAP program are MASCD, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Maryland Farm Bureau. Key funding supporters are the United Soybean Board, the Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, CBF and the Chesapeake Bay Trust. More information on the FSCAP certification process can be obtained at www.mascd.net or by contacting Lynne Hoot, lynne.mdag@gmail.com, 410-956-5771.



Julie, Bill, and Zane Gardenhour

Photo credit Maryland Soybean Board



Photo credit Maryland Soybean Board

Left to right: Secretary Joe Bartenfelder, Julie, Zane, and Bill Gardenhour, State Conservationist Terron Hillsman, Washington County SCD District Manager, Elmer Weibley.

MASCD IN DC



The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts' (MASCD) "Day in DC" took place on May 7, 2015.

Supervisors, Board members and staff, Peter Bachmann (NACD), Robert Butz (Montgomery), Steve Darcey (Prince George's), Lindsay Dodd & Lynne Hoot (MASCD), Lee McDaniel (NACD & Harford), Pete Parracco (Prince George's), David Plummer (Montgomery), Bobby Rakestraw & Denny Remsburg (Frederick), Pam Saul (Montgomery), and Hans Schmidt (Queen Anne's) split into two groups to make Congressional visits.

All of Maryland's 10 Congressional offices were visited. The main issue discussed with the Congressional staff was the importance of conservation program funding, including Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA), Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). These programs are vitally important to conservation in Maryland, during these visits it was stressed that although Congress has the capability to reduce the mandatory funding levels set forth in the Farm Bill during the appropriations process, this could have a significant impact on Maryland's ability to meet the agricultural goals under the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP).

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) was also discussed and MASCD made sure the staffers understood that while this is a new and developing program, compared to Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (CBWI), far less money is coming into the Bay watershed for conservation.

The National Association of Conservation Districts is advocating for a resolution to recognize the work of local conservation districts and that 2015 is the International Year of the Soil, as designated by the United Nations.

MASCD expressed support for this resolution and several delegation members said they would sign on. Visitors made sure the staffers understood what the districts do, our history, and role in the Chesapeake Bay conservation efforts.

Other topics of discussion including the Phosphorus Management Tool, the Waters of the U.S. proposed rule, and alternative uses for poultry litter. There was a lot of interest in farm visits for congressional members and their staff this summer.

All of the meetings were very productive and MASCD looks forward to continuing to foster these relationships.

TRAINING

HOW USING THE WORD "DONE" CAN MAKE YOU MORE SUCCESSFUL

There is one word at work that seems like a gift. It makes employees happy and brings joy to all who see it in a message. The word is "Done."

Just writing this word denotes progress and accomplishment – both as an individual and a team, and it makes you feel successful – which can lead to greater success at work.

"Done" builds confidence, and the more you are confident, the more you can achieve and take on new challenges and grow in your work skills.

"Done" also highlights your value and your contributions to the business. It also enhances your reputation for being reliable and dependable and can lead to being rewarded at work.

People who understand the power of the word "Done" are driven to achieve greatness. Their hard work drives them to achieve their goals and ensure their teams are terrific. And since how you are perceived and how you perceive yourself play a big role in your success at work – understanding "Done" is important.

Excerpted from Business Insider magazine, Jacquelyn Smith, April 2015

INTERNET

NEW NRCS APP FOR COVER CROP COSTS

Planting cover crops is a hot trend, but farmers who haven't tried it yet have one question: "What's it going to cost me?" NRCS developed a simple digital tool to answer that question.

The Cover Crop Economic Decision Support Tool is free online tool that helps farmers, landowners and others make informed decisions when considering adding cover crops to their production system. The tool is on the NRCS home page, in the Soil Health section under Cover Crop Economics www.nrcs.usda.gov. A conservation webinar is also available on the website.

The Cover Crop Economics Tool is a user-friendly economic assessment tool to assess the costs and benefits of incorporating cover crops into a crop rotation. The tool assesses both the short-term and long-term expected costs and benefits.

PARTNERSHIP

USDA ANNOUNCES CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP FUNDS AT MARYLAND FARM

Maryland farmers and conservation partners welcomed USDA Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden to an idyllic farm in Carroll County on May 5, 2015 to share in her announcement of \$235 million in conservation program funding now available through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

The partnership event was hosted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Carroll County Soil Conservation District and William and Debra McGrew, owners of Terra Rubra Farm in Keymar, Maryland.

Harden described RCPP as one of the most important conservation tools for farmers as it focuses on partnerships and provides an innovative approach that can be used to improve the nation's water quality, combat drought, enhance soil health, support wildlife habitat and protect agricultural viability.

Remarks made at the announcement ceremony by Federal officials and national and state conservation leaders all focused on the importance of partnerships and the best use of natural resources.

Event participants heard remarks from Harden; Myron Frock, Chairman, Carroll County Soil Conservation District; Heather Campbell, representing U.S. Senator Benjamin Cardin; Lee McDaniel, President, National Association of Conservation Districts; Al Todd, Executive Director, Alliance for Chesapeake Bay; and Dr. Terron Hillman, Ph.D., NRCS Maryland State Conservationist.

"Conservation Districts are well positioned to be leaders in RCPP projects across the nation. We have the relationships with private

landowners and the demonstrated expertise to get the job done. The RCPP program expands our opportunities to reach a higher level of commitment and more effective solutions from public and private partners to deliver voluntary conservation on the working landscape in America," said McDaniel,

NACD President and farmer from Darlington, Maryland. USDA is now accepting pre-proposals from partners for RCPP through July 8, 2015.

Application instructions can be found at www.grants.gov, funding opportunity USDA-NRCS-NHQ-RCPP-15-01 or at the RCPP page, www.nrcs.usda.gov.



Conservation leaders celebrate USDA funding for partnership projects at Terra Rubra farm in Carroll County. From left are Myron Frock, Chair, Carroll County SCD; Lee McDaniel, President NACD, Dr. Terron Hillman, Ph.D., State Conservationist NRCS Maryland; Krysta Harden, Deputy Secretary USDA; Al Todd, Executive Director Alliance for the Bay; and Heather Campbell, representing U.S. Senator Benjamin Cardin.

PERSONNEL

MDA BIDS FAREWELL TO...

Mike Dryden, Engineering Technician, Somerset SCD
J. Harne, Planner, Montgomery SCD
Wil Hignutt, Technician, Caroline SCD
Jo Mercer, Nutrient Management Training/Certification Coordinator
Nick Nicholson, Technician, Frederick/Catoctin SCD
Adam Reid, Technician, Frederick/Catoctin SCD

NRCS WELCOMES...

Odessa Armstrong is the new Assistant State Conservationist for Management & Strategy. Armstrong began working at the state office in Annapolis on March 9, 2015. She is originally from a small town in Orangeburg County, South Carolina, named Eutawville. It is here that she gained her first insight into conservation, growing up at her family farm.

Odessa is a *Magna cum Laude* graduate of the South Carolina State University, where she studied Agribusiness. She holds a Master of Science degree in Agricultural Education from Clemson University.

In June 2002, Odessa began her career with NRCS as a career intern as a soil conservation technician in St. Matthews, SC. She has worked in ten counties within five field offices throughout South Carolina serving in the capacity of a Soil or District Conservationist.

In 2010, Odessa completed a detail assignment as the State Planning Specialist in Maryland. Her last position was a Conservation Program Specialist on the Financial Assistance Program Team with Florida NRCS.

Odessa is married to Jason B. Armstrong. In her spare time she enjoys traveling, watching good movies, meeting people and of course, Clemson sports.

SINE DIE REPORT (CONTINUED)

The tone of bills relating to agriculture was particularly negative this session. However, most of the bills that would have negatively impacted agriculture, and potentially conservation, were defeated.

HB 71 & SB 57 Capital Budget – Passed Enrolled

This bill allocates \$22,726 million for the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program, and \$2 million for the Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share Program in FY2016.

SB 257 & HB 381 Agriculture – Nutrient Management - Phosphorus Management Tool – Recommended

This bill would have codified the Phosphorus Management Tool, developed by the previous Administration. It would have required that all field P FIV be evaluated and the PMT to be run alongside the PSI on fields with an FIV >150 by September 1, 2016. The transition period and guidelines almost identical to those in the last version of the regulation are laid out with full implementation by 2021. This bill was recommended to the EHEA Committee by the sponsor due to efforts of the agricultural community to work with the Governor to move the PMT forward in regulation.

HB 633 - Cigarette Restitution Fund – Use of Funds – Compliance With Watershed Implementation Plans – Unfavorable Report – E&T

This bill would have allowed Cigarette Restitution fund to be used to provide financial assistance to farmers for specified purposes; established the Watershed Implementation Plan Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund to provide financial assistance to farmers for implementation of State or local watershed implementation plans associated with the Chesapeake Bay total maximum daily load; required the Department of Agriculture to administer the Fund; required the State Treasurer to hold the Fund and the Comptroller to account for the Fund. MDA would have developed the regulations which could be established in a manner that could be used to allow for funding to encourage the use of innovative practices and for evaluating their water quality benefits.

HB 536 & SB 345 Income Tax – Subtraction Modification – Enhanced Agricultural Management Equipment – No Action

This bill would have allowed for manure hauling or loading equipment and commercial fertilizer application equipment to be eligible for subtraction modification from income tax if they are required to comply with their certified nutrient management plan under the new PMT regulations.

SB 532 & HB 1019 Farmers' Rights Act – Unfavorable Report – FIN

This legislation would have required that all livestock contracts between producers and integrators cover a variety of issues including responsibility to obtain and comply with federal, state, and local law, a description of how contract disputes are resolved, and any other disclosure the Attorney General determines appropriate for disclosure. Proposed requirements were: The contract must have a cover sheet with a warning to read the contract carefully. The Attorney General has the right to review and certify contracts of this nature. Producers may cancel a growing contract within three days of execution. The bill also provided provisions for contractor non-payment protection. Finally, the bill would have codified producers' rights to join an association and decide whether or not they will keep the manure produced by the animals or notify the contractor within five days after removal of the animals that it is "excess waste" and it must be removed by the contractor at no charge to the producer.

SB 533 & HB 886 Bay Tax Equity Act – No Action

This bill would have established a chicken manure pollution fee paid by poultry integrators of 5¢ for each chicken provided by a poultry integrator to a farmer in the state, beginning October 1, 2014. The fee revenue was intended to be used by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to fund cover crop activities on agricultural lands upon which chicken manure has been applied as fertilizer. The bill also sought to repeal the current distribution to MDA of a portion of Bay Restoration fees collected from users of septic systems and sewage holding tanks which is used to fund cover

crop activities.

SB 695 & HB 755 General Provisions – Public Information Act – Enforcement, Fees, and Exemptions – Passed Enrolled

This bill initially required that the Department of Agriculture maintain a copy of a summary of each nutrient management plan in such a way that protects the "personal information" including name, phone number, email, and social security number of the individual for whom the plan was prepared. Farm address and field ID would not be protected. These records would be made available for public inspection under the Public Information Act. This language was amended out of the legislation. So, the bill establishes a State Public Information Act Compliance Board to ensure the Act is being observed and to review complaints but makes no changes to the Nutrient Management law.

HB 550 State Aid - Business Transparency and Financial Disclosure Act – Unfavorable Report - EHEA

This bill would have required reporting on numbers of individual hired for any corporation, LLC or partnership that receives state funding. Intended to see how effective job creation tax breaks and funding are, this bill would include farmers who receive cost-share funds, farms who receive State Fair Board funding, MARBIDCO fund recipients and many other state funds that were never intended to create jobs. MASCD worked with the sponsor to create an exemption for these non-job creation funds for farm operations. The bill ultimately failed.

HB 928 Sales and Use Tax – Agricultural Products and Equipment – Repeal of Exemption – No Action

This bill would have repealed the exemption for agricultural products and equipment from the Maryland state sales tax. Products currently eligible for this exemption include fencing, seed, fertilizer, crop protection products, fuel for tractors, farm vehicles, equipment to irrigate and tend soil, equipment to plant, service and harvest crops and equipment to store, clean, dry and transport crops and equipment. MASCD joined agricultural partners in opposing this legislation and there was no support for the bill.

Future Dates to Remember

June 17-18	2015 State Envirothon, St. Mary's College, St. Mary's, MD
June 18	SSCC Meeting, Annapolis
June 26	MACCA August Exam Registration Deadline
July 23	Maryland Commodity Classic, Queen Anne's 4-H Park, Centreville
July 27-29	MASCD Annual Meeting, Holiday Inn, Solomons, MD
July 28	SSCC Meeting, Holiday Inn, Solomons, MD
July 10-13	NACD Summer Board Meeting, Spokane, WA
July 26-29	SWCS Annual Conference, Greensboro, NC
August 7	Nutrient Management & MACCA Exams

PARTNERSHIP PRESS ELECTRONICALLY

In an effort to conserve, if you prefer to receive the quarterly newsletter by email, as opposed to a mailed hard copy, please email marguerite@gmail.com to be added to the email list. The Partnership Press newsletter is posted on www.mascd.net.



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, Maryland 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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