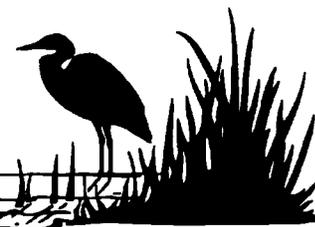


PARTNERSHIP PRESS

Maryland Conservation



Fall 2015 Volume 22 Issue 4

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT – HANS SCHMIDT



At the October 2015 MASCD Board meeting, I had the honor of thanking now retired Assistant Secretary for Resource Conservation, Royden Powell for his

service to the State of Maryland and our Soil Conservation Districts.

Royden stated during his farewell that the districts are near and dear to him because he got his start in conservation at the district level. He has also been active in MASCD over the years serving as the President from 1989 to 1992. To thank him for his service and lasting impact on conservation in Maryland, Royden Powell was presented with the MASCD President's Award and a certificate to ride the Western Maryland Railroad.

I would like to draw your attention to the MASCD Winter meeting which will be held January 26-27th in Annapolis. The luncheon will be held in the Senate Office Building on January 27th and the presence of district supervisors and staff is extremely important this year.

As most of you know, MASCD's legislative priority this coming session is to secure dedicated funding for district staff and operations. By making the annual and contractual positions official state Personal Identification Numbers, MASCD is hoping to overcome the annual uncertainty of district manager and administrative assistant positions and the high turnover rate for planners and technicians funded annually through the Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund.

I encourage all of you to schedule meetings with your legislators during the Winter Meeting to instill the importance of the work conservation districts do. Legislators want to hear from their constituents!

POULTRY MORTALITY FREEZER UNITS NOW ELIGIBLE FOR COST-SHARE FUNDS IN MARYLAND

Poultry Mortality Freezer Units Now Eligible for Cost Share Funds in MD

An alternative to composting that is more cost effective and better for bio security, Maryland poultry growers now have an alternative to composting for routine mortality. On-farm freezer collection units are now eligible for incentive payments through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This month, the Maryland Office of NRCS added poultry mortality freezer units to the list of eligible practices for the 2016 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The full 2016 MD EQIP program will be announced in the coming weeks. The deadline for county-specific funding will be mid-December. The traditional statewide funding deadline will be in January or February.

This new mortality management system is simple and has been used by poultry growers in other regions of the country for more than 20 years. Routine mortality is placed inside specially designed freezer units available for purchase from local ag equipment retailers. Once the unit is full, close it securely and a customized collection vehicle will come to pick up the mortality during layout between flocks. Routine maintenance of the units is provided as part of the collection service offered by Greener Solutions, the company that introduced this option to the Peninsula. Growers have been able to greatly reduce the time and money they previously spent on composting, realizing thousands of dollars a year in operational savings.

"For us, it's a great management tool," said Brent Willin of State Line Farms. "The guys can pick up the birds, open the lid and throw them in... The last time we touch the birds is when they drop into that freezer ... it's a really nice process," he said. Another benefit of freezer collection units is better biosecurity. By using sealed containers that lock in pathogens and lock out scavengers and flies, growers can significantly reduce their risk of loss to disease.

Nonmonetary benefits include the elimination of the smells, flies and scavengers associated with composting, so both the grower and the grower's neighbors enjoy a greatly improved quality of life. In fact, DPI recently added freezer units to its list of Best Management Practices for Good Neighbor Relations "Bottom line – we want more freezers [for our other two farms] ... it's really worked out for us," said Willin, who shared his experience during an Ag Week presentation, which you can view at www.greener-solutions-llc.com/how-itworks/.

CELEBRATE THE SEASON WITH FRESH, LOCAL FRUIT

Maryland apple season is in full swing. Now is the perfect time of year for residents to take a trip to an orchard to try all of the delicious apple varieties our state has to offer, or visit a local farmers' market and savor fresh cider, pies, and other treats. Fresh Maryland apples can also be found in many grocery stores throughout the state. If your local grocery store does

(Continued on page 6)



PERSONNEL NOTES

NRCS WELCOMES...

Jerry Lewis, an engineer providing services to the Eastern Shore Counties. He is based in the Talbot County Field Office and transferred from NRCS California on September 20, 2015.

Jackie Byam, who is on detail from NRCS Minnesota as the acting Assistant State Conservationist for Program through January 2016. She began working in Annapolis on October 19, 2015.

Carol Marie Rivera Gonzalez as a Farm Bill Program Specialist on the Programs Team at the State Office in Annapolis. She transferred from NRCS Pennsylvania to Maryland on November 2, 2015.

NRCS BIDS FAREWELL TO...

Tom Morgart, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs at the State Office, who left on October 5, 2015 to begin his new job as State Conservationist for NRCS Connecticut.

Nancy Basil, Program Assistant, retired from Federal service on October 3, 2015.

Lauren Bennett, Program Support Specialist, resigned from Federal service on October 16, 2015 to accept employment as a Social Media Specialist with Howard County's Recreation and Parks Department.

NRCS MARYLAND STAFF TRANSITIONING TO NATIONAL TEAMS...

As part of NRCS's National Administrative Transformation, several former state office staff are now providing business services for virtual NRCS National Service Delivery Teams. The following employees are now working on national teams and providing their teams with the following services:

Laurie Blasky - Accounts Payable support

Denise Brooks - Contracting Services support

Jean Howard - Human Resources support

Samone Scanlon - Purchasing Services support

Kalaya Washington - Grants and Agreements Services support

MDA WELCOMES...

James P. Eichhorst will serve as Deputy Secretary of Agriculture. Prior to joining MDA, Eichhorst was director of state government relations for the Biotechnology Industry Organization. Eichhorst was also director of federal government relations for BIO's Food and Agriculture Section. Previously, Eichhorst served in two positions at the U.S. Department of Agriculture as an appointee in the Administration of President George W. Bush. In those roles, he served as director of intergovernmental affairs and director of external affairs for the Farm Service Agency.

Steve Connelly will now serve as Assistant Secretary of Marketing, Animal Industries and Consumer Services. Prior to this appointment, Connelly served as MDA's Marketing Specialist for Crop Insurance to promote and manage the targeted states grant program from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Risk Management Agency. Previously, Connelly was a partner in the Capstone Group-NCH, a firm providing association management and government relations services. His career includes leadership roles with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency, Mid-Atlantic Soybean Association, Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation and Maryland Farm Bureau.

MDA BIDS FAREWELL TO...

Mary Ellen Setting – the first woman ever to serve as Deputy retired after more than 38 years of state service. “Ms. Setting is a widely respected leader throughout the agricultural industry and Maryland state government,” said Maryland Agriculture Secretary Joe Bartenfelder. “Her extensive experience and leadership within the department, the respect she has earned among industry professionals and her peers, as well as her ability to managing a diverse range of regulatory and service programs, have been great assets to the department and the people of Maryland.”

Royden Powell - served first as Chief of Resource Conservation Operations and was promoted to Assistant Secretary for Resource Conservation in 1994. He served as Assistant Secretary until 2004 when he became Town Manager of his hometown, Centreville. Powell returned to MDA in 2006 to coordinate and support soil conservation activities within the Patuxent watershed. He was appointed again as Assistant Secretary in 2007. Royden was also the President of MASCD 1989-1992. Detailed information on his role can be found at <http://mascd.net/about/MASCD7b.pdf>.

MDA TRANSITIONS...

Ashlee Harvey was selected to work with the Watershed Implementation Program as a Field Assessment Planner she will focus on inventorying and evaluating BMP implementation with the MD Certainty Program and Ecosystems Markets Program. Ashlee brings with her an extensive background on Environmental Science and Environmental Management; she has a bachelor's degree from Towson University and a Masters Degree from University of Maryland University College. She has been with MDA for two years working with MACS program. We are happy to welcome her to the Watershed Implementation Program.

IN MEMORIAM...

It is with sorrow that we must pass the news of Gene Michael Paul's death. Gene served as Vice-Chairman for the Allegany SCD's Board of Supervisors and served as a supervisor since 2009. He was also a member of the Allegany County Farm Bureau. Gene was the sole operator of The Leaning Pine Farm, his family business. He will always be remembered as a wonderful influence in this world and he will be missed.

Cards of condolences can be sent to Gene's family at P.O. Box 132, Corriganville, MD 21524.



SSCC



Report

Information from the State Soil Conservation Committee

SOIL QUALITY

Patty Engler, NRCS State Resource Conservationist, presented information on soil health to the SSCC in October. As background she discussed the importance of treating soil as a living organism and implementing practices like building organic matter to increase filtering, buffering, water retention and biodiversity. There are some basic principles such as limiting disturbance, increasing plant diversity, retaining living roots and keeping the soil covered.

NRCS has created a new division which will concentrate on soil health issues and programs. There are 12 regional teams and MD will be included in the team based out of NY. Engler will be the MD Soil Health team leader and is presently working with a group which includes agronomists, soil scientists, University of MD Extension, Chesapeake Bay Foundation and SCD staff. They meet as needed and objectives include increasing use of soil health principles. They are devising simple tools for use by farmers to evaluate their soil health including soil bucket kits and a soil health card. MD will be integrating soil health practices into their incentive programs. They have some pilot soil testing using biological testing being implemented and encourage SCDs to host soil health educational events. There are two training sessions scheduled in MD at present.

LEGAL UPDATE

Craig Nielsen, the assistant attorney general for MDA, prepared Tort Claims liability information supplement information he presented at MASCD training in July.

Nielsen explained that he worked with the State Treasurers' office on the development of additional details on Tort Claims liability. The SCDs are unique entities subject to some, but not all the requirements of an entity such as SSCC which is part of the Executive Branch. For example SCDs are subject to the Open Meeting Law and Public Information Act but not State procurement or Ethics Laws.

SCDs have their own Tort Claims Act which is administered by the State Treasurer. As long as they are conducting public duties they are covered. Tort claims does not cover gross negligent behavior or EEO complaints.

Richardson asked if the Treasurer billed SCD in liability cases. Nielsen said that the coverage limit was \$200,000 and would increase to \$400,000 in October, 2015. Any suits are capped by this limit. Nielsen recommended SCDs can get a certificate of insurance from the Treasurer's office if they get questioned about this protection.

Swaine asked about employment suits and Nielsen said employment claims are not covered under the Tort Claims Act, including discrimination or employment claims.

The second issue Nielsen described covers new changes to Public Information Act requirements. The General Assembly passed legislation

in 2015 which requires public entities to identify a person to act as point of contact for all public information requests, report the contact information to the office of attorney general and update this annually. Also SCDs should designate types of records that are readily available, such as approved minutes of SCD open meetings.

The SSCC approved sending notice of these legal issues to SCDs in writing under their auspices.

EQIP-LOCAL FUNDING POOLS

Dr. Terron Hillsman, NRCS, distributed a synopsis of the underpinnings for local EQIP funding pool priorities. He provided background about the scope of EQIP explaining \$7.5 million was allocated in 2015 and discussed the need to address local priorities through local working groups to assure resource concerns identified locally are being addressed. If fully implemented, this initiative could use up to 30% of the FFY2016 EQIP allocation. To date, 7-8 SCDs have expressed an interest in establishing local funding pools.

Guy asked who would be in charge of ranking the local pools? Hillsman said NRCS would use the same process as currently, and ranking would occur at the State office using ranking criteria established locally. Producers would only compete with others in the same county for the local EQIP pool.

Swaine asked if a producer had to choose whether to compete in local or state pool? Hillsman said the SCD should direct them to the most favorable pool.

Stanton asked about establishment of local priorities. Hillsman said SCDs would convene a local working group and information would be synthesized or filtered through the district conservationist and manager. Once established, it would be the SCD's responsibility to do outreach and work with producers to apply for local funding.

Although EQIP now has continuous sign up, the hope is to rank local funding requests early in the process and get the allocation awarded early in the process, so State demands for additional funding can be addressed. (400 requests went unfunded in 2015).

SUPERVISOR APPOINTMENTS

Baltimore SCD - Toby Mays; Calvert SCD - Thomas Briscoe; Catoctin SCD - Tod Salsbury; Garrett SCD - James Stanton; Howard SCD - William Barnes; Talbot SCD - Kyle Hutchison; Wicomico SCD - Fred Moore; Worcester SCD - Ed Phillips.

MASCD GRANT UPDATE

Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program (FSCAP) –

There have been 163 evaluation reviews on 144 farms, resulting in 115 certified conservation stewards doing a great job in protecting 31,806 acres in 19 counties across the state (just added Worcester, Charles and Howard for the first time). One of our new stewards is Keith Ohlinger, Associate Supervisor, Howard SCD, the 12th district official to become certified. Although the program provided 115 FSCAP farm signs with installed signposts, there are 165 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, 29 stewards have participated so far and five of them we certified as a result of meeting them as participants in Pollinator Habitat. District support: Washington Co. SCD - 27; Carroll - 12; Cecil - 10; Frederick and Wicomico SCDs - 8; St. Mary's - 7.

Translation Outreach Project –

This project ended on September 30th after four years of translating key environmental information regarding the poultry industry to 100 Korean and Vietnamese poultry growers on the Eastern Shore. During that time, we presented two workshops, 10 quarterly newsletters and five publications. We also translated four MDA conservation fact sheets in Spanish for Hispanic workers on horse and dairy farms. We translated our FSCAP brochure into Korean and Vietnamese and mailed to the distribution list and were able to certify four Korean growers, with a translator accompanying the assessor.

All translated material was sent to the Delaware Extension Office and the NRCS state and national Civil Rights Committees that distributed it across the country and territories.

Pollinator Habitat Project –

We received word that we have been approved for a small grant from the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Green Grant Program that will allow us to establish five more acres of pollinator habitat. That is our third pollinator habitat grant. Our second Pollinator Habitat Project through a Chesapeake Bay Trust Pioneer Grant established 10 acres on 15 sites in eight counties. We will be planting four of the five acres within the next few weeks and the fifth acre will be planted next spring. Our three Pollinator Habitat projects will total 56 acres on 62 farms, two agricultural centers, one school and one environmental education center in 15 counties.

Resource Improvement

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

TRAINING

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – THE #1 SECRET TOOL FOR WORKING BETTER WITH ANYONE

Sometimes, don't you just wish you had a magic wand that would make everything better with the people you work with? A magic formula, a secret potion that would make the work go better, and your working relationships run smoother? Guess what? Something exists that can help you.

One of the simplest yet most effective practices to improve your working relationships is to **acknowledge** the people around you. It's easy, fun and also substantially helps in creating more positive working relationships.

Though the two are often confused, acknowledgment is different than praise. Praise expresses your opinion and your evaluation of another person's behavior: Praise sounds like, "Great job, Joe!" and "I like how you did XYZ, Sam."

Acknowledgment instead names a specific behavior, quality or attribute and its impact on you, the other person, the project, the team or the organization. Acknowledgment can sound like this:

"Joe, when you led the meeting today, you really made sure everyone got a chance to speak their mind. I think we're all clearer on next steps now."

"Sam, your ability to get us focused on the details really helped the team get more accomplished today."

Don't get me wrong: there's a place for praise. Praise provides feedback about your opinion about another's actions: that you liked it. Giving praise isn't a problem; but know that it only provides a limited amount of information for the other person. Acknowledgment instead gives specific feedback on the other person's impact so that they know specifically which of their actions, behaviors or qualities led to a positive and desired outcome. Acknowledgment is a powerful tool at work because you let people know what you value in them and what you want to see repeated.

And by naming specific behaviors and the positive impact you experienced, you essentially hold up a mirror for the other person and allow them to learn more about themselves through your feedback. Using acknowledgment regularly can lead to more positive interactions with colleagues, reduced conflict at work, as well as improved trust and respect in teams.

There are many ways you can give an acknowledgment -- in a conversation, in a written note, a voice mail, in an email, as part of a speech, at a staff meeting....Try them all.

Notice what happens to you and to the recipients when you start using acknowledgment regularly. Pay attention to what happens in the moment, as well as later on. Note that this is a different way of communicating, and can take some practice before it feels entirely natural to either give or receive acknowledgment.

Excerpt from GovLoop newsletter, Hanna Cooper, August 4, 2015.

PARTNERSHIP

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS AND CFC KICK-OFF EVENT

Breast Cancer Awareness and the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) were the topics for a joint employee awareness and outreach session held in Annapolis on October 28, 2015. More than 30 employees from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) participated in the information session which included video and PowerPoint presentations, trivia contests, personal stories and light refreshments. The event was co-chaired and organized by Odesa Armstrong, the NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Management and Strategy and Buddy Bowling, the NRCS State Outreach Officer and the agency's CFC Chair.

Armstrong was joined by Marie Monn, the NRCS Financial Resources Specialist, in providing participants with facts and educational materials related to breast cancer awareness and prevention. Attendees learned that every 12 minutes a woman in America dies of breast cancer, men can have breast cancer, and breast cancer is the second leading cause of death among women.

Bowling provided the group with an update on this year's CFC Campaign which is encouraging online donations via www.cbacfc.org through December 15, 2015. He introduced guest speakers who discussed the work of local community organizations participating in CFC. They were the Arundel House of Hope which works to shelter overnight and train homeless Anne Arundel County residents for employment. The "Feed the Children" campaign was also highlighted. This is a corporate giving program designed to provide assistance with anti-hunger and disaster relief. Both organizations are CFC-approved charities.

Following light refreshments and networking enjoyed by all, the group posed for a photo where they showed their "muscles" and how they would "fight like a girl" against breast cancer.



Maryland NRCS and FSA employees flex their muscles and show how they will "fight like a girl" against breast cancer at a recent Breast Cancer and Combined Federal Campaign Awareness event.

NPMC HOSTS CHINESE DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY DELEGATION BY: GRAHAM DAVIS, MANAGER, NORMAN A. BERG NATIONAL PLANT MATERIALS CENTER, NRCS



Chinese Ag Delegation Members tour demonstration projects at the NRCS National Plant Materials Center.

On a beautiful October afternoon, 18 delegates from China's Bureau of State Forestry Administration visited the NRCS Norman A. Berg National Plant Materials Center (NPMC). The visit was coordinated by Triway International Group, which is authorized by Chinese State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs to host activities for government sponsored delegations and exchange programs.

The purpose of their visit was to learn about the use of vegetative windbreaks for farmland and environmental protection, as well as strategies in alleviating soil and water erosion. With an interpreter's aid, information was exchanged about the Mid-Atlantic's use of cover crops, vegetative buffers to mitigate poultry farm emission, as well as the many benefits of switchgrass. We learned that over 65 million acres of forests have been planted in China since 1978. The Delegation told us that methane digesters are prevalent in China for on farm energy production. Although the use of an interpreter presented some challenges, it was an educational and mutually beneficial afternoon.

MUST SEE TV – SEASON 3 OF MARYLAND FARM & HARVEST PREMIERED ON NOVEMBER 10TH

Hosted by Joanne Clendining, Maryland Public Television's *Maryland Farm & Harvest* takes viewers around the state to see and experience what it's like to run a 21st century farm – from technological advances and conservation challenges to age-old complications such as weather hardships. *Maryland Farm and Harvest* captures the number one reason why planters and growers dedicate themselves to it all: their simple love of farming. There are a number of segments that focus on conservation, and you may see farmers you work with, or even know quite well, featured throughout the series.

The season premiere featured our very own **Dean Cowherd** in a discussion of **Soil Health**, and the **History of Soil Conservation**. All-new episodes begin November 10! **Tune in to (or DVR) MD Public TV on Tuesdays at 7 pm.** Episodes repeats Thursdays at 11:30 pm and Sundays at 6 am on MPT-HD, and Fridays at 6 pm on MPT2. You can find your local MPT stations through the MPT Channel Guide. If you miss a show, you can watch online at <http://www.mpt.org/programs/farm/>. More information, including a series preview and episode extras can be found on MPT's *Maryland Farm and Harvest* webpage.

EVENTS**MARYLAND FARM BUREAU CONVENTION, DEC. 5-7, 2015**

Hans Schmidt will serve as the MASCD Delegates at the Maryland Farm Bureau Convention and Annual Meeting, December 5-7, 2015 at the Clarion Fontainebleau Hotel in Ocean City, MD. This year marks MFB's 100th Annual Banquet!

This is the largest single gathering of Farm Bureau members in Maryland. Approximately 400 influential agricultural leaders from all 23 counties will be in attendance. To register, please call 410-922-3426, or visit <http://mdfarmbureau.com/>.

MASCD WINTER BOARD MEETING AND DAY IN ANNAPOLIS, JAN 26-27, 2016

Make plans to attend the MASCD Annual Legislative Day in Annapolis. On Wednesday, January 27, 2016, MASCD will meet in West Wing I & II in the Senate Office Building for briefings prior to our legislative luncheon. The Legislative Day follows the Board of Directors meeting on January 26th at the DoubleTree.

District Managers are encouraged to join their Chairs for this day long meeting to be briefed on the many issues impacting the daily work of districts.

2016 NACD ANNUAL MEETING, JAN 30-FEB 3, 2016

The 2016 NACD Annual Meeting will be held in scenic Reno, Nevada January 30 - February 3.

Register now and start making your plans to attend this year's meeting. The Annual Meeting will take place at the new Grand Sierra Resort and Casino. The Grand Sierra has been recently remodeled and includes dining options, a bowling alley, arcade and mini amusement park, 10 bars and lounges and a luxury spa. The hotel is nestled in the heart of downtown Reno just minutes from the airport and features panoramic views of the Sierra Nevada mountain range.

For more information, please visit the NACD Annual Meeting website, <http://www.nacdnet.org/resources/presentations/annual-meeting/annualmeeting>.

**RENOWNED NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER TO SPEAK AT NACD'S 2016 ANNUAL MEETING**

NACD is happy to announce that Jim Richardson has been confirmed to speak at this year's Annual Meeting Leadership Lunch taking place on Monday, February 1.

Richardson is a photographer and documentarian specializing in global issues and recognized for his explorations of life in remote parts of the world. His first story for *National Geographic Magazine* was published in 1985, and he has since been credited with more than 30 stories with more in the works.

ITEMS OF INTEREST**PHOTO CONTEST DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 1**

The 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, and Agriculture and Conservation Across America. NACD has provided required entry instructions with a complete description of how to submit photographs, accepted photo formats, judging, use of the photos and prizes. Please follow these instructions and guidelines carefully to ensure eligibility in the contest.

For information about the contest, how to submit your photos and forms, visit <http://www.nacdnet.org/education/contests/photo>. If you have any questions, please contact Susan Schultz at 317-326-2952 or stewardship@nacdn.net.

FRESH LOCAL FRUIT

(Continued from page 1)

not carry Maryland apples, be sure to ask a produce manager for them. For a fun, family activity, visit a pick-your-own orchard and spend the afternoon gathering apples to make your favorite dishes. "Not only are apples delicious, but they are also a nutritional powerhouse and grown right here in Maryland," said Agriculture Secretary Joe Bartenfelder. "For the freshest, best tasting apples available, choose locally grown apples."

Consumers of all ages can benefit from an apple a day. Not just a delicious and healthy snack, apples are full of complex carbohydrates, vitamin C, potassium, calcium, iron, vitamin A, phosphorus, thiamin and magnesium. Apples do not contain fat, sodium or cholesterol and with only 80 calories per apple, they fit in perfectly with a healthy lifestyle.

According to the Maryland Office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service, the state's apple production in 2014 totaled 41 million pounds. Almost every county in Maryland has at least one active commercial orchard. To find Maryland apples, easy recipes, and pick-your-own orchards, visit www.marylandsbest.net.

For fun facts, visit <http://marylandsbest.net/fun-facts-apple-varieties-growing-apples-apple-eaters/>.

Tips for Selecting the Best Maryland Apples:

- Examine the apple for any bruises or spots
- Squeeze the apple for firmness, a fresh apple should feel solid in your hand
- Look at the stem and any attached leaves for freshness
- Ask the farmer, they know their apples the best

Adapted from MDA Ag News, November 2014

SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT NOTES...

DELANEY HOLDS AGRICULTURE WORKSHOP IN BOONSBORO WITH SECRETARY VILSACK

Congressman John K. Delaney (MD-6) recently hosted a Western Maryland Agriculture Workshop Monday in Boonsboro. The event was attended by over 230 and featured United States Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, the nation's top-ranking agriculture official.

The workshop, held at the Washington County Agricultural Education Center, included remarks by Rep. Delaney and Secretary Vilsack, a panel discussion from experts and an opportunity for local residents to speak one-on-one with agency representatives.

"Agriculture is a jobs engine in Maryland and is vitally important to the economic future of our state," said Congressman Delaney. "I am proud to represent thousands of Maryland farmers, livestock producers and small business owners who work in agriculture. I want to make sure they have a voice in Congress and this workshop was designed to bring federal, state and local agencies directly to them. I want to thank Secretary Vilsack for attending our workshop and taking time out of his schedule to see firsthand the world-class agriculture taking place in Western Maryland."

Organizations participating in the workshop included:

- USDA – Rural Development
- USDA – Farm Service Agency
- USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Maryland Department of Agriculture

- Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- The Maryland Farm Bureau
- Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation
- Maryland Department of the Environment
- The Washington County Office of Agricultural Business Development
- The Washington County Farm Bureau
- The Washington County Rural Heritage Museum



Left to right: Chris Burch MDA Engineering Technician, Ginger Noble MDA Conservation Planner, Congressman Delaney and Elmer Weibley District manager WCSCD.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

AGRICULTURE OFFICIALS REMIND FARMERS THAT WINTER NUTRIENT APPLICATIONS ARE RESTRICTED FROM NOVEMBER 16-FEBRUARY 28

Agriculture Secretary Joe Bartenfelder reminds farmers that application of chemical fertilizer and organic nutrients is prohibited between November 16 and February 28 according to the state's nutrient management regulations (COMAR 15.20.08.05). These blackout dates will change next year when Maryland's updated nutrient management regulations phase in for this practice.

The department's nutrient management regulations prohibit spreading of commercial fertilizer and stackable manure between November 16 and February 28; require stackable manure to be stored in a structure or stacked according to the department's temporary field stockpiling requirements if storage is not available; and outline specific situations in which non-stackable manure can be applied in the winter months.

An individual's nutrient management plan would reflect these conditions and farmers are urged to review their plans carefully. The department reminds farmers that fall nitrogen applications on small grains are prohibited if a fall nitrate test indicates

levels greater than 10 parts per million for wheat or 15 parts per million for barley. Moreover, cover crops must be planted when organic nutrient sources are applied to fallow ground in the fall.

"Maryland farmers are leaders in protecting our state's natural resources, especially the Chesapeake Bay" said Secretary Bartenfelder. "Nutrient management plans serve as both an important crop management tool and an environmental protection tool. I encourage farmers to read and follow their plans."

To further protect water quality, beginning July 1, 2016, all nutrient applications will be prohibited between November 2 and February 28 for farms on the Eastern Shore and between November 16 and February 28 for farms on the Western Shore. Farmers with fewer than 50 animal units have until March 1, 2020. Manure deposited directly by livestock is not restricted at any time of year.

Farmers or nutrient applicators with questions about winter application of fertilizers should call their nutrient management consultant or regional nutrient management specialist.

The headquarters phone number is 410-841-5959 and full listing is available at http://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/Pages/farmer_information.aspx.

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, 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.

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.mdag@gmail.com to be added to the email list. The Partnership Press newsletter is posted on the www.mascd.net website.

FUTURE DATES TO REMEMBER

Dec. 11	MACCA Exam Registration Deadline
Dec. 5-7	Maryland Farm Bureau Convention, Ocean City
Dec. 17	SSCC Meeting, MDA
Jan. 1	Happy New Year
Jan. 6	2016 Legislative Session begins
Jan. 21	SSCC Meeting, MDA
Jan. 26	MASCD Board of Directors, DoubleTree, Annapolis
Jan. 27	MASCD Legislative Visits and Luncheon in West Wing I and II, Senate Office Building, Annapolis
Jan 30-Feb 3	NACD Annual Meeting, Reno, NV
Feb. 5	MACCA Exams, DE, VA, & WV
Feb. 18	SSCC Meeting, MDA

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