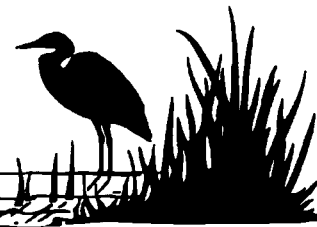


PARTNERSHIP PRESS

Maryland Conservation



Fall 2022 Volume 29 Issue 4

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JEN NELSON, MASCD

MASCD Wants to Hear from You...

MASCD is conducting a membership survey to hear feedback on how we can provide the greatest value to our members and the conservation districts. MASCD works to support our members in a number of ways. We coordinate meetings of the Board of Directors, members and committees. We sustain and strengthen relationships with conservation partners and represent Maryland's districts on state, regional and national partnership initiatives. We follow the legislative session, monitor proposed bills, provide education and outreach to elected officials and keep members up to date on important issues. We develop grant proposals and agreements that bring funding to individual districts. We recognize excellence in conservation through our annual awards program and engage a new generation of conservation enthusiasts through the Envirothon and poster and coloring contests. We publish this Partnership Press to share information from across the partnership!

We're looking to hear from members to help us continue to fine-tune our services in four areas:

- **Communications**- how do you want to be informed of updates, and how often?
- **Training for District Supervisors**- how can we offer convenient and effective training to board supervisors, both new and experienced?
- **Sponsorships**- Are there products/services/partners that MASCD can connect with the districts?
- **Key Priorities**- What sort of resources should we seek out to fulfill MASCD's goals for grant funding and advocacy?

MASCD would like to hear from District Supervisors across the state to help focus our efforts on the most helpful and effective support for our members. We encourage boards to discuss the questions in the survey at an upcoming board meeting but would prefer that supervisors answer individually to offer their own comments and perspectives. If you'd prefer to offer your feedback in a conversation, you can reach me at jen.nelson@resourcesmartllc.com or (302) 353-9733.

Please complete the survey by 12/31/2022, available at <https://tinyurl.com/2022MASCDSurvey>

The preamble to MASCD's Articles of Association states that one of our purposes for assembling is "to cultivate a love for soil as a sacred trust for unborn generations". Even in 1945, we were a forward-thinking organization. The guidance that we receive from your responses will keep us moving in the right direction.

2021 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FROM PROVIDENCE STRATEGIES LOBBYING FIRM, BY MICHAEL MASON

General Election Day is November 8, 2022

The cooler weather has arrived here in Maryland as November starts a busy month with the General Election right around the corner. Candidates are making their final push to try and persuade voters, as some Marylanders have already made their way to the polls. Early voting centers opened their doors on October 27th and will remain open until November 3rd, 7:00am – 8:00pm daily. Additionally, Marylanders have until November 1, 2022, to request a mail-in ballot.

Those choosing to vote by mail need to return their completed ballots by November 8th either by mail or placed in a designated ballot drop box. Results will be posted on the State Board of Election website on November 8th, after the last polling location has closed ([link below](#)).

Statewide Races

Governor: Wes Moore (D) vs. Dan Cox (R)

Comptroller: Brooke Lierman (D) vs Barry Glassman (R)

Attorney General: Anthony Brown (D) vs Michael Peroutka (R)

January 11, 2023 – Maryland General Assembly Convenes for the 445th Session

January 18, 2023 – Inauguration of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor

For additional information or to find your local polling location and sample ballot please visit: <https://www.elections.maryland.gov/elections/2022/index.html>

SMILE.AMAZON.COM - SEARCH FOR MASCD

Shopping season is fast approaching! Looking at ways to give back? AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. If you're an Amazon shopper, please choose MASCD as your charity option; MASCD receives a percentage of all purchases. Visit www.amazonsmile.com and under your account click "Your Amazon Smile" and then click "Change Charity" under Your Current Charity. Type in "Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts" and select as your current charity.

Thank you for your support!

PARTNERSHIP PRESS NEWSLETTER ONLINE AND ELECTRONICALLY

The quarterly *Partnership Press* is posted on www.mascd.net. Please email marguerite.mdag@gmail.com if you prefer to receive an emailed copy. Hard copies are available upon request.

SSCC



Report

Information from the State Soil Conservation Committee

Thanks to the Board Supervisors and District Managers that joined our training “**Building Better Boards**” at the summer MASCD meeting. We encourage everyone to review the information shared following the meeting, and let SSCC know the ways we can support recruiting and retaining Board Supervisors.

The SSCC welcomes Dr. Jim George to the Committee as the new designee from the Maryland Department of Environment.

Highlights of recent SSCC meetings are summarized below.

Urban Agriculture Initiatives

In July, Neith Little, UM Extension agent in Baltimore City, shared updates on Urban Agriculture initiatives being led through the university including a new webpage, YouTube videos and webinars, and increasing farm tours for interested stakeholders. The growing demand for technical assistance and support of urban agriculture in Maryland has also led to the creation of 2 new state positions with UM Extension - urban production methods and crop management, and urban farm and agribusiness management. Funding for the positions will start in July 2023. Additionally, 1 new educator focused on local agriculture and food systems will be hired. The position will be based in Howard County.

Neith also shared the preliminary results from “The Current State of Urban Agriculture in the Northeast US”, a survey of 406 respondents. Among other questions, respondents indicated that the top barriers to success were land access, land security, balancing a living wage for farmers with selling affordable food, and regulations, zoning, and building codes.

Next, Bill Tharpe, MDA, shared information on the Urban and Small Farm programs being developed at MDA. The goal of the program is to capture the smaller operations currently ineligible for traditional cost-share through MDA. Assistance would be available through three initiatives, all still in progress: 1) a micro-grant program of \$5-10K per award to install eligible conservation practices. Applications would be reviewed and awarded competitively; 2) an annual grant program for producers with at least 5 years of production experience. Applicants could request their needed budget up to a maximum amount; and 3) an Urban Agriculture Water and Power Infrastructure Grant Program consistent with House Bill 855 that passed in 2022. Funding will become available in FY24.

Next, Rob McAfee, NRCS, provided an update on NRCS state and national efforts to expand programs for urban ag operations. In Maryland, a new DC - Colleen Keiffer - will be focused on urban ag in PG, Washington, DC, and Baltimore City. Two additional Soil Con staff to support her efforts will also be hired. In addition to increased technical assistance, Maryland NRCS is looking at practice scenarios based on key practices and scale (i.e.

square feet vs. acres) for urban farms. Nationally, an Office of Urban Ag and Innovative Production was established through the 2018 Farm Bill to better focus on the needs of urban operations. The Office is housed within NRCS and includes an Advisory Committee to develop policies and recommendations for supporting urban ag. A representative from Maryland is a member of the Advisory Committee. Additionally, USDA has established 17 county office committees for urban ag across the U.S.

Finally, Steve McHenry, MARBIDCO, spoke of his agency’s efforts, along with Maryland Farm Bureau and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, during the 2022 legislative session to increase the state’s focus and assistance for urban agriculture. This partnership generated important outcomes. MARBIDCO will focus on access to land and innovative finance and debt financing for small acreage operators. The popular Next Gen program will also continue with expanded capacity for smaller acreage. MARBIDCO is also creating a small grants program to support equipment and capital needs for urban agriculture, along with financial support to Future Harvest’s Beginner Farmer program graduates.

Following the presentations, attendees were invited to participate in a roundtable discussion of technical assistance needs of the urban and small farm operations in their areas. Highlighted needs included: land and water access, equipment, deer deterrent, stormwater capture from high tunnels, and better understanding of local zoning regulations. As an initial step to address the latter, the Harry Hughes Center and UM Ag Law Education Initiative have created a zoning matrix and leasing template as education resources for operators.

Forest Harvest E&S Process

Dan Rider, DNR, provided an update on the Forest Harvest E&S process. Dan reminded attendees that MDE has updated its guidance on E&S measures for forest harvest in 2015 to more appropriately reflect industry standards. Following the guidance update, DNR and MDE worked collaboratively to distribute outreach material and train appropriate field staff. This ultimately led to a formal MOU between the agencies in 2018 with the goal of a “predictable, consistent and efficient regulatory process” especially for enforcement related cases. The MOU outlined the protocols for addressing complaints, interpreting compliance, and sharing of information between the agencies. As a result, Maryland Forest Service has developed additional capacity to be involved in every timber harvest in the state, and to document its status. The collaboration has been well received by both agencies, and industry is complimentary of consistent guidance that acknowledges the good performers and focuses energy, rightfully, on non-compliant loggers.

SSCC



Report

Information from the State Soil Conservation Committee

MDE Guidance on Small Ponds

Jennifer Smith, MDE, provided an update on MDE's Small Pond review policy in September. MDE has been working with SCDs and MASCD for several months to finalize guidance on the engineering and technical expertise that will be required of SCDs that continue to perform some small pond reviews. The NRCS delegated engineering JAA for this activity expired January 1, 2022. In the interim, some SCDs have been sending applications to MDE for review, but the hope is to provide clear, technical guidance to support SCDs in retaining the service. As such, MDE finalized its policy in August 2022 with the following,

- Affirms MDEs support of SCDs to approve small ponds;
- Lays out expectations for qualifications of technical reviewers and approvers that is meant to equal the qualifications of NRCS staff who previously performed these reviews;
- Sets up a framework for SCDs to bring in 3rd parties to support review;
- Discusses the new cold water review process; and
- Restates many existing COMAR requirements (such as notifications to MDE of small pond approvals and as-built acceptance)

Jennifer reviewed the specifics of the policy and process, taking questions from the SCDs and SSCC throughout the discussion. Next, MDE plans to hold trainings with SCD and relevant staff, as well as notify the regulated community of the changes.

Supervisor Appointments

Allegheny SCD – Amanda Paul
Harford SCD – Kim Lewis
Charles SCD – Jeffrey Bossart

EVENTS

MD FARM BUREAU CONVENTION, DEC. 3-6

The 2022 Maryland Farm Bureau Annual Convention & Meeting of Delegates *Presented by Nationwide* will be held December 3-6, 2022 at the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Golf Resort, Spa and Marina in Cambridge, Maryland.



For registration and more information, please call 410-922-3426 or visit <https://www.mdfarmbureau.com/convention/>

MASCD WINTER BOARD MEETING AND DAY IN ANNAPOLIS

Plans for the MASCD Annual Legislative Day in Annapolis are uncertain at this time. MASCD will be in touch with information on virtual meeting or in-person event details as they become available.

MARYLAND'S BEST EXPO SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 10

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) will host the Maryland's Best Expo on Tuesday, January 10 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium in Annapolis. Returning for its 19th year, after being canceled in 2021 and 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Maryland's Best Expo provides an opportunity for Maryland farmers, seafood producers, and processors to connect with buyers from grocery retailers, restaurants, schools, food distributors, and other venues. "This premiere event plays an important role in connecting our Maryland farmers and producers to buyers from around the state," said MDA Secretary Joe Bartenfelder. "Over the past two decades, MDA's Marketing Program, Maryland's Best, has promoted our state's agricultural and seafood products, and expanded markets for our farmers and producers. I am incredibly proud of their work and grateful for their efforts."

The 2020 Maryland's Best Expo attracted more than 300 attendees. Participants included farmers, producers, watermen, aquaculturists, processors, grocery store retailers, restaurants, schools, institutions, distributors, economic development officials, University of Maryland Extension (UME) agents, and regional agricultural marketing officials. This year's event will be held in the "N Room" at the Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium, 550 Taylor Avenue in Annapolis. **Registration is required.** The deadline to be included in the expo directory is **December 9, 2022**, and the last day to sign up is **January 6, 2023**. There is a \$25 fee for a table display space. There is no fee for buyers, but they **must** register. For more information on the expo or to register, please visit the <https://marylandsbest.maryland.gov/marylands-best-expo-2023/>.

NACD 2023 ANNUAL MEETING, FEBRUARY 11-15, NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

The NACD Annual Meeting will be held at the New Orleans Marriott 555 Canal Street, New Orleans, LA 70130, \$236/night plus tax. The deadline to reserve rooms was Friday, January 20, 2023. Conference registration includes entry into the Conservation Expo; NACD General & Concurrent Sessions; Monday's Leadership Lunch, Live Auction; Tuesday's NACD Appreciation Banquet; NACD Training Sessions and Workshops. All events require badge for entry. A separate form must be completed for each registrant.

Early Bird Registration is defined as registration and payments received before December 23, 2022. **Regular Registration** begins December 24, 2022 and ends January 20, 2023. **Do not** mail payment after **January 20, 2023**. After this date, you must complete payment onsite. **Special Assistance Needs:** If you have any needs addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), or dietary requirements, please call NACD at 202-547-6223 or contact us by email at events@nacdnet.org by January 20, 2023, so that we can accommodate your request.

Registration, invited speakers and more details can be found at <https://www.nacdnet.org/news-and-events/annual-meeting/>

ITEMS OF INTEREST

NACD POSTER AND PHOTO CONTEST

The 2022 Poster Contest “Healthy Soil, Healthy Life” is open for submissions until December 1, 2022. Winners will be announced during NACD’s Annual Meeting in February.



Submissions for the 2023 Poster Contest “One Water” will begin February 20, 2023 through December 1, 2023. Winners will be announced during NACD’s Annual Meeting in February 2024.

The annual NACD and NACD Auxiliary Poster Contest provides students from kindergarten through 12th grade the chance to have their art displayed as part of a national conservation outreach initiative. Each year, the winning posters reflect NACD’s annual Stewardship theme and highlight the work of conservation districts and their state conservation associations, auxiliaries and agencies to protect and enhance natural resources. The contest starts at the district level; winners advance to the state level, and then to the national level, where they receive recognition at NACD’s annual meeting.

The poster contest is open to public, private and home-schooled students. The top three posters in each category of the national contest will receive monetary prizes. First-place winners will receive \$200; second place winners will receive \$150 and third place winners will receive \$100. The NACD Auxiliary – through their quilt project proceeds, the Country Store at the NACD Annual Meeting and individual donors – sponsor prizes at the national level. Questions? Please contact stewardship@nacdn.net.

The 2022 Photo Contest is open for submissions until December 1, 2022. Winners will be announced during NACD’s Annual Meeting in February.



NACD and the NACD Auxiliary host an annual Photo Contest, open to all amateur photographers who reside in the U.S. or its territories. Contestants are allowed to enter as many as five photos each year that each fit into one of the following four categories: **Conservation Practices, Close-up Conservation, Conservation in Action and Agriculture and Conservation Across America**

Photos are judged on technical merit and composition. On technical merit, photos will be judged on whether they are well-framed, properly exposed, and sharp/clear. On composition, the photos will be judged on imagination and creativity.

One winner will be selected for each category and age division (adults are 19 and older as of December 1, 2019.) Each first place winner at the national level will receive a \$100 cash prize. Second place winners will receive \$50.

The NACD Auxiliary – through their quilt project proceeds, the Country Store at the NACD Annual Meeting and individual donors – sponsor prizes at the national level. Honorable mention award winners will also be selected for each category but will not receive a monetary award. Questions? Contact NACD at stewardship@nacdn.net.

Maryland Public Television’s (MPT) popular original series [Maryland Farm & Harvest](#) returns for its tenth season on November 15 at 7 p.m. Airing Tuesdays at 7pm on MPT and repeats Thursdays at 11:00pm and Sundays at 6am with repeats Fridays at 7:30pm on MPT2.



EPISODE 1001: Season 10 Premiere: *Veterans Day Special, Air Date: November 15, 2022.* An Iraqi War Veteran returns home where he continues to serve his country by growing the food that feeds America. Then a disabled Vietnam War Veteran dedicates his life to feeding his community while also preserving the environment for future generations. Plus, brunch with Al Spoler at Ladybrook Farm on The Local Buy and an exploration of agriculture’s wartime role in our nation’s history on Then & Now. To watch episodes online, please visit <https://video.mpt.tv/show/maryland-farm-harvest/>.

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 302-353-9733.

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.

FUTURE DATES TO REMEMBER

Dec. 3-6	Maryland Farm Bureau Convention
Dec. 22	SSCC Meeting, MDA
Jan. 1	Happy New Year
Jan. 11	2023 Legislative Session begins
Jan. 19	SSCC Meeting, MDA
TBD	MASCD Board of Directors Meeting, Annapolis
TBD	MASCD Legislative Visits and Luncheon, Annapolis
Feb. 11-15	NACD Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA
Feb. 16	SSCC Meeting, MDA