

2023



ANNUAL REPORT

Connection Through Conservation

Maryland Association of Soil
Conservation Districts



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) serves as the voice for Maryland's 24 soil conservation districts on statewide issues. Our mission is to promote practical and effective soil, water, and related natural resource programs to all citizens on a voluntary basis through leadership, education, cooperation, and local direction provided by soil conservation districts.

A Message from the President and Executive Director

Every one of us is connected to the natural world through the food that we eat and the places where we live, work and play. Our quality of life depends on healthy soil, water and air.

Conservation is a vital thread that connects us all. Whether you're a farmer working to keep your land productive while also protecting nutrient runoff to local waterways, or a developer taking measures to prevent sediment loss from a construction project, the conservation districts are there to support and empower decision-makers.

We provide technical assistance to help identify resource concerns and design best management practices that fit the needs of every individual operation.

We connect local cooperators with local, state and federal financial resources, reducing or removing the financial burden to adopt conservation practices.

We invest in education and outreach too, so that our neighbors understand the importance of our environment and ways to care for it.

The work of conservation districts is as varied as the counties that we work in, but we share a common goal to support voluntary, locally-led conservation for the benefit of all Marylanders.

John Swaine, III, President
Jen Nelson, Executive Director

David and Belinda Burrier are recognized as 2023 Leopold Conservation Award recipient!



MASCD receives nearly \$1M from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to restore, maintain and repair public drainage waterways using natural techniques.

Maryland Farm & Harvest returns for its 11th season. Nearly 16 million viewers have learned about Maryland agriculture since the show debuted in 2013!



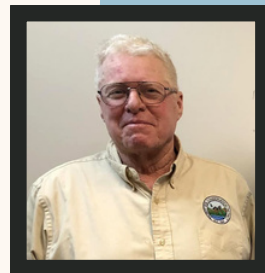
MASCD.NET



Maryland's Team places 10th in the NCF North American Envirothon Competition. North Harford High School placed 3rd in the Forestry category- great job!

Our shared success continues to grow through the connections we build together.

John Swaine, III is elected to serve as president of MASCD. A farmer from Royal Oak, John has served on the Talbot SCD board since 1989.



Our Year in Pictures

BELOW: The Calvert Soil Conservation District celebrates their 75th anniversary in 2023. Below is one of many beautiful landscapes found throughout the county.



Maryland Bay-Friendly Farming

The Maryland Bay-Friendly Farming Certification Program recognizes farmers in every county for their outstanding stewardship. Learn more: bayfriendlyfarms.com

Connecting Farmers with Funding

Another way that Maryland's Soil Conservation Districts work with farmers is by helping to calculate the cost to adopt practices and apply for local, state and federal financial assistance. While farmers typically share in the costs, districts can help to leverage different sources of funding to provide maximum support. In 2023, the districts helped farmers secure \$64.2 million in conservation assistance from these organizations:

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

- **Cover Crop Program: \$24.2 MILLION—395,000 ACRES;** Provided 1,275 farmers with cost-share grants to help offset seed, labor and equipment costs associated with planting cover crops.
- **Capital Program/Special Project Grants: \$8 MILLION;** Provided 348 farmers with cost-share grants to install 634 BMPs on farms to protect natural resources.
- **Manure Transport Grants: \$2.8 MILLION—378,988 TONS OF MANURE TRANSPORTED;** Provided cost-share grants to truck manure away from areas with high soil phosphorus levels. Poultry companies provided an additional \$700,000 in matching funds to transport poultry litter.
- **Manure Injection Grants: \$550,000** to help offset costs to inject manure below the soil surface on 12,381 acres.

USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE*

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): \$16.4 MILLION—12,600 ACRES-** Provided financial and technical assistance to help 295 landowners address natural resource concerns.
- **Conservation Stewardship Program: \$1.9 MILLION—12,200 ACRES -** Helped 53 farmers maintain and improve existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation practices to address priority resource concerns.
- **Agricultural Management Assistance Program: \$419,000—320 ACRES -** Provided financial and technical assistance to help 15 farmers improve water quality.
- **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program: \$9.9 MILLION—1,874 ACRES -** Provided financial and technical assistance to help 5 farmers protect and enhance wetlands.

*USDA-NRCS data estimates are preliminary and subject to change.



**\$64.2
MILLION**

Chesapeake Bay Check-In

A Maryland's Soil Conservation Districts work with farmers throughout the state to plan, design and install best management practices on their farms to control soil erosion and manage nutrients, including helping Maryland to meet water quality targets outlined in its federally approved plan to restore the Chesapeake Bay. These targets were updated to include the impacts of climate change. Currently, it is estimated that the State has met its sediment goals but will need to reduce an additional 6 million lbs of nitrogen and 120,000 lbs of phosphorus. The State's strategy continues to focus on additional investments in wastewater and agriculture to help meet our 2025 targets, but recognizes that additional reductions will also need to come from other source sectors in the future.



On the Farm

Maryland's farmers are recognized throughout the country for their exceptional stewardship, and our soil conservation districts are trusted advisors to assist with every step in the implementation of best management practices in the field. Technical staff at each of the 24 districts work with farmers to assess the natural resources on the farm and to create a plan to address any concerns. They take into account the farmer's goals for the operation, and assist with the development of technical designs and management recommendations. The districts also help to match the farmers with funding sources that are the right fit for their project, and assist with implementation and maintenance plans.

The result is a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan that is tailor-made for each farm, free of charge. In 2023, soil conservation districts helped 632 farmers install 2,196 practices on their farms.



BY THE NUMBERS



2,196 Best Management Practices

2,196

Worked with 632 farmers to install a range of best management practices that prevent soil erosion and nutrient runoff to streams and rivers.

1,246 Soil Conservation & Water Quality Plans

1,246

SCDs developed or updated 1,246 plans to protect 126,293 acres.



CONNECTED TO OUR COMMUNITIES

Maryland's Soil Conservation Districts are active members in their communities, supporting outreach and education activities for farmers, homeowners, students and teachers to ensure that all stakeholders understand the importance of conservation for clean water and healthy and productive food systems. Our districts are making presentations in local schools, organizing farm tours and workshops and exhibiting at county fairs and festivals. The activities are too numerous to list, but a few examples from 2023 include:

- Bloomin' PGC Open Mic Nights for urban farmers in Prince George's County
- Pollinator Palooza in cooperation with the Master Gardeners Program in Washington County
- Rainfall simulator demonstration at the Great Frederick Fair
- Ag Connection for beginning farmers
- "Focus on the Future" career workshop for 7th grade students in Allegany County

MARYLAND ENVIROTHON

The Maryland Envirothon provides a hands-on experience for high school age students to learn about the natural world. Teams throughout the state receive training in aquatic ecology, forestry, soils, wildlife and a current issue that changes each year. 2023's current issue was "Adapting to a Changing Climate".

Teens compete at local, state and national levels. North Harford High School of Harford County won the 2023 Maryland Envirothon, going on to place 10th at the virtual North American Envirothon Competition in New Brunswick.





SILENCES REST FARM 2024 COOPERATOR OF THE YEAR

The Norris Family, Silences Rest Farm, have been cooperators with the St. Mary's Soil Conservation District for over thirty years. Their agronomic practices include crop rotation, residue management, cover crop, nutrient management, and field buffers. The Norrises were also early adopters of MDA's Cover Crop and Manure Transport Programs.

In 2019, the Norrises sought to resolve erosion issues on two farm sites. The St. Mary's District helped the Norrises to utilize multiple funding sources through MDA and NRCS to fund both of the projects. Technicians completed surveys and developed plans to stabilize the sites. The first site involved runoff to a culvert pipe, and was resolved with minor grading and the installation of a lined outlet using filter fabric, bedding stone and rip rap. The second location was more complex, involving gully and rill erosion moving into a field from the adjacent woods. The original plan included a pipe drop grade stabilization structure, but the district modified the project to include a subsurface drain tile when the crew encountered groundwater during construction. Trees were removed, and diversion dikes were constructed to divert the field runoff to the pipe drop structure. The basin area was permanently stabilized, and the pipe outlet and the subsurface drain both discharged to a rip rap plunge pool to dissipate the discharged water velocity.

REDUCING RUNOFF

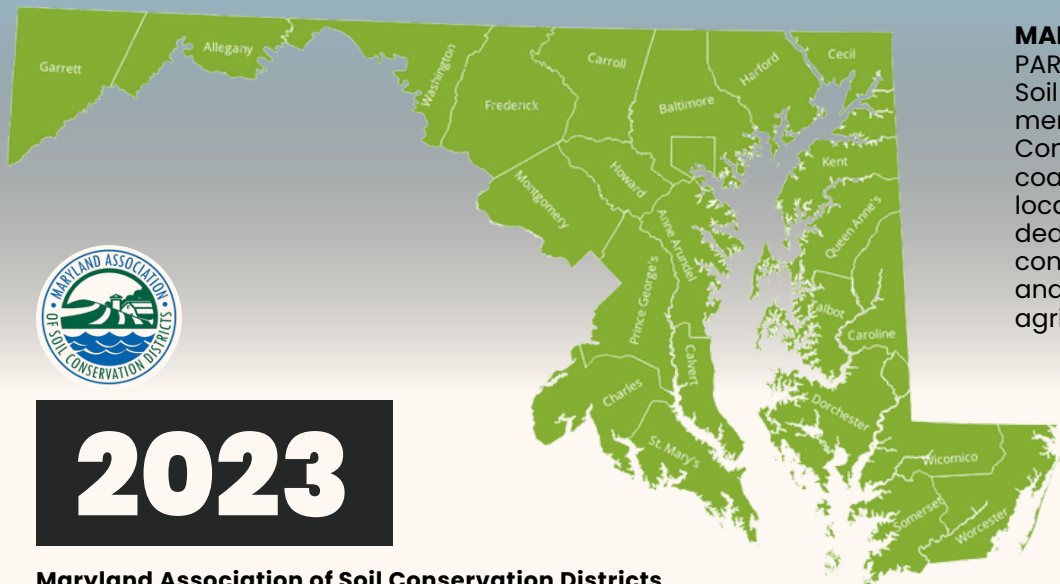
Erosion and Sediment Control Plan Reviews

Soil erosion occurs in urban settings, too. Construction and road-building projects can increase sedimentation and pollution runoff if appropriate measures aren't in place to protect our local waterways. Since 1972, soil conservation districts have been authorized to review and approve erosion and sediment control plans for construction and land development projects in their counties. In 2023, districts reviewed 11,268 plans on 34,000 acres.

Urban Compliance Activities

Soil Conservation Districts in Allegany, Calvert, Caroline, Cecil, Frederick, St. Mary's and Washington counties perform compliance activities for the Maryland Department of the Environment's Sediment, Stormwater and Dam Safety Program. Establishing this authority at the local level makes it easier for developers to have access to enforcement officials and results in faster turnaround time for projects. In 2023, participating districts performed 283 pre-construction meetings and 368 inspections to ensure that erosion and sediment control measures are working to protect water quality.





MARYLAND'S CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

Soil conservation districts are members of Maryland's Conservation Partnership, a coalition of federal, state, and local agriculture agencies dedicated to protecting and conserving natural resources and promoting Maryland agriculture.

- Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts
- Maryland Department of Agriculture
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- USDA Farm Service Agency
- State Soil Conservation Committee
- University of Maryland Extension

2023

Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts

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 302-353-9733

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| Allegany | 301-777-1747, ext. 3 | alleganyscd.com |
| Anne Arundel | 410-571-6757 | aascd.org |
| Baltimore County | 410-527-5920, ext. 3 | bcsd.org |
| Calvert | 410-535-1521, ext. 3 | calvertsoil.org |
| Caroline | 410-479-1202, ext. 3 | |
| Carroll | 410-848-8200, ext. 3 | carrollsoil.com |
| Catoctin | 301-695-2803, ext. 3 | catoctinfredericksd.com |
| Cecil | 410-398-4411, ext. 3 | cecilsd.com |
| Charles | 301-638-3028 | charlessd.com |
| Dorchester | 410-228-5640, ext. 3 | |
| Frederick | 301-695-2803, ext. 3 | catoctinfredericksd.com |
| Garrett | 301-501-5856, ext. 3 | garrettsd.org |
| Harford | 410-638-4828 | harfordscd.org |
| Howard | 410-313-0680 | howardscd.org |
| Kent | 410-778-5150, ext. 3 | kentsoilandwaterconservationdistrict.org |
| Montgomery | 301-590-2855 | montgomeryscd.org |
| Prince George's | 301-574-5162, ext. 3 | pgscd.org |
| Queen Anne's | 410-758-3136, ext. 3 | qascd.com |
| St. Mary's | 301-475-8402, ext. 3 | stmarysscd.com |
| Somerset | 410-621-9310 | |
| Talbot | 410-822-1577, ext. 5 | talbotscd.com |
| Washington County | 301-797-6821 | conservationplace.com |
| Wicomico | 410-546-4777, ext. 3 | wicomicoscd.org |
| Worcester | 410-632-5439, ext. 3 | |

About Soil Conservation Districts

Long before the term environmentalist was coined, Maryland's soil conservation districts were working with landowners to protect natural resources on their farms. Established more than 75 years ago following the ecological disaster brought on by the Dust Bowl, districts perform a range of conservation activities aimed at keeping the soil healthy and our waterways clear and clean.

Here in Maryland, more than 120 volunteers serve in appointed positions on the governing boards of soil conservation districts. They work directly with thousands of cooperating land managers across the state, and their efforts impact almost two million acres of private land. The staff of a typical soil conservation district office includes a district manager, district conservationist, engineers, agricultural planners, technicians, soil scientist, urban reviewers, and administrative staff. Staff and operating budgets are funded through a combination of federal, state, and local sources as well as grants.

Soil conservation districts carry out many federal and state mandates at the local level and serve as the agricultural representative on local, regional, and statewide environmental task forces and committees charged with protecting natural resources and the Chesapeake Bay.