

PARTNERSHIP PRESS

Maryland Conservation



Summer 2024 Volume 31 Issue 3

A MESSAGE FROM JEN NELSON, MASCD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“Digging In” at the 2024 MASCD Annual Meeting

Thanks to those friends and colleagues who were able to come out for MASCD’s 2024 Annual Meeting in Cambridge! It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces and get to know some of us who are new to the Partnership.

There’s nothing that brings Marylanders together quite like a crab feast (especially on the Eastern Shore) and the pavilion at Horn Point Lab is an ideal spot on the Choptank River to relax and catch up after our first afternoon of meetings. Our keynote speaker and his wife, Brad and MaryJo Gingras, arrived from Wisconsin in time to dig in and learn that there’s no wrong way to pick crabs!

Over the next day and a half, we heard about policy and program updates that are significant to the districts, including post-2025 WIP plans, NRCS and MDA funding updates, Maryland legislative session wrap-up and what to expect in the next year, urban ag updates, saltwater intrusion, new outreach specialists and more.

We also spent a lot of time with our keynote speaker, Brad Gingras, talking about how new generations in the workplace and on our boards are shaping changes in the way that we work together. Brad gave a thought-provoking presentation in the opening session on Tuesday and returned to lead discussion at the SSCC training on Wednesday. If you missed his presentations, they’re available on MASCD’s website at <https://mascd.net/2024-mascd-annual-meeting/>

Brad raised several points were raised that district boards and partners should revisit and act on in the coming months:

For current board members- why do you do what you do? Passion, time and knowledge are spread thin, but VERY IMPORTANT! Why do board members leave, not join or are not engaged? Listen to the reasons that people give and adapt appropriately to address your challenges. Identify your expectations of board members and communicate them effectively. Create camaraderie amongst board members. Don’t be afraid to challenge “the way we’ve always done it” to better suit the needs and preferences of members and/or your audience.

The key takeaway that I heard in our discussions is that districts and partners that are resistant to change or are reluctant to adapt to the expectations of younger generations will struggle to stay active and relevant in their communities. Conservation districts were literally formed for the purpose of adapting to environmental changes and challenges emerging around us. The nature of this challenge is new, but how we respond is a choice.

I’m looking forward to keeping this conversation going! MASCD is currently working on plans for our 2025 Winter Meeting in Annapolis, and our Annual Meeting next summer, and should have those details available when we have our next board meeting on October 22.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT - BY MICHAEL MASON, PROVIDENCE STRATEGIES

At the 2024 MASCD Summer Conference, Michael Mason of Providence Strategies provided an update on legislation from the Maryland General Assembly 2024 Session.

The policy accomplishments detailed include the creation of a unified Soil Conservation District in Frederick County (HB1017), and a bill to introduce a fee system to cover the cost of a Soil Conservation District's review of small ponds (SB196).

With the passing of this legislation, a fee system will generate revenue to address expenses associated with small pond reviews, allowing districts to conduct more reviews, thus making the process more effective.

Additionally, Mason briefed the attendees on Governor Moore's proposed budget cuts including reductions to numerous State agencies. Despite the headwinds cooling on Maryland’s budgetary outlook, Mason shed light on reason for optimism for Maryland’s 2025 Legislative Session.

Providence Strategies is also happy to announce the addition of Andrew Griffin and Lindsay Thompson to the team.

We look forward to providing MASCD with support during the 2025 Legislative Session. Please feel free to contact Mike Mason with any questions mason@providence.llc or 443-949-9631.

PARTNERSHIP PRESS ONLINE & ELECTRONICALLY

The quarterly *Partnership Press* is posted on www.mascd.net. Please email mascdbookkeeper@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

A MESSAGE FROM ALISHA MULKEY, SSCC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Thanks to everyone who joined us at the 2024 MASCD Annual Meeting in Cambridge. The slides and materials have been shared with all Districts, but please email Alisha Mulkey with any additional questions. Highlights of recent 2024 SSCC meetings are summarized below. SSCC monthly meeting minutes can now be accessed on MDA's [State Soil Conservation Committee web-page](#).

SSCC ADMINISTRATION

New SSCC Executive Secretary: Loretta Collins (loretta.collins@maryland.gov) was introduced as the new Executive Secretary of the SSCC in June and is in the process of taking over associated responsibilities from Alisha Mulkey. Alisha will continue to be engaged in SSCC activities but focused on other priorities as Manager of the MDA's Resource Conservation, Program Planning & Evaluation.

Amy Posey, PGSCD Supervisor was selected by the SSCC to provide representation on a re-invigorated Horse Outreach Workgroup (HOW).

CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES

USDA's Climate Smart Commodity Program is designed to create a new market and recognition for crops grown with "climate smart" methods, at a federal investment of \$3.1 billion to-date. USDA selected 141 pilot projects with 25 located in Maryland. The state NRCS office and SCDs have limited roles in the projects currently. It is not known when or how BMP implementation from these projects will be reported locally. Five of the MD projects were discussed by [Suzy Daubert, MD NRCS](#) at the May SSCC meeting.

MD's Climate Vulnerability Assessment for Agriculture: The initial phase of the project ends this year with a comprehensive data set and library of tools becoming available to guide discussions with farmers and to inform decision-making. The final work products will be released this summer according to [Terry Nuwer, Harry Hughes Center for AgroEcology](#). Project information is available at: <https://agmr.umd.edu/research/research-and-education-centers-locations/harry-r-hughes-center-agro-ecology/maryland/>

The *Next Generation Adaptation Plan* developed for the Maryland Commission on Climate Change (MCCC) was presented by [Ryland Taylor, DNR](#). The MCCC advises the Governor and MD

Assembly on ways to mitigate, prepare and adapt to climate change and is organized into 8 working groups, including the Adaptation and Resiliency Work Group (ARWG), chaired by DNR Secretary Kurtz. In 2023, the ARWG released the Next Generation Adaptation Plan to guide strategies and activities across multiple agencies for the next 10 years in MD.

Climate and Equity Initiatives: It is a priority of the Moore administration to engage communities that have been disproportionately affected by climate change. MDA's Climate and Equity Initiatives Coordinator, [Nadya Chehab](#), explained environmental justice (EJ) in the context of state policy and programs. While the Coordinator works with counterparts in other state agencies, her purview is specific to MDA programs and seeks opportunities to engage further with partners throughout the MD soil conservation community. Please connect with her at nadya.chehab@maryland.gov

TOWARDS A HEALTHIER CHESAPEAKE BAY

Conowingo Dam: Dam operator Constellation needs an approved Water Quality Certification (WQC) pursuant to the Clean Water Act. MDE and the litigation parties are working toward a time-bound mediated approach, inclusive of new science about Conowingo, that can lay groundwork for a new WQC. Additionally, a Conowingo Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) has been developed with MD, PA, and NY. Available funding will provide pay-for-success and traditional cost-share grants for implementation. A pay-for-success pilot in Maryland closed January 22 with 19 proposals received. Final selections were expected to occur in May, according to [Matt Rowe, MDE](#).

MD's Clean Water Commerce Act purchases "environmental outcomes" to help the MD achieve Chesapeake Bay nutrient reduction goals. Ag projects are eligible for funding as of FY 2023. Thirty-six applications were received (22 ag projects) and 11 projects were selected. Project contracts are still proceeding, and the FY24 funding solicitation closed Jan 31, 2024. New legislation will allow MDE to make non-uniform payments for the projects over the contract term according to [Jeff Fretwell, MDE](#).

MD's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) annual progress: [Alisha Mulkey, MDA](#) presented information on the ag sector, and our continued progress toward 2025 WIP conservation goals. Though attention has primarily been placed on water quality, many parallel outcomes are being pursued by 2025 with success, such as blue crab abundance. MDA will continue to align funding incentives and programs to focus on key conservation goals,

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SSCC Report

Information from the State Soil Conservation Committee

TOWARDS A HEALTHIER CHESAPEAKE BAY

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with a greater emphasis on co-benefits under Governor Moore’s leadership. His administration has begun to consider new strategies to *reinvigorate, rethink, and reengage* on Bay restoration, in ways that will benefit the innovative and progressive stewardship of MD farmers.

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL WATER QUALITY COST-SHARE PROGRAM (MACS)

Jason Keppler presented new regulations for MACS funding that became effective on April 15. Under the new regulations, funding limits will be \$200K per project and \$450K per person for “active” contracts, for animal waste treatment practices. For other practice types, **no limits/caps will be imposed**. Cost-share for start-ups and expansions will be limited to 50% on all practices.

WOODLOT CONVERSION TO AG LAND

Several SCDs are seeking clarity and guidance for woodlots (>1 acre) being cleared to return to ag production. In such cases, forest harvest standards/permits are being largely followed for the initial clearing, but during the grubbing/stump clearing it is unclear 1) What are the E&S requirements during this phase? 2) Does it require a permit and NOI? and 3) Who is the primary oversight authority during this phase? The latter question is especially inconsistent among the county’s feedback to the SCDs and whether this is/is not an “agricultural activity”. A roundtable, facilitated by Van Funk, SSCC, was organized in March to provide an information exchange with MDE, Maryland DNR, SSCC, and SCDs. Following the discussion, SSCC is reviewing additional information and will be planning the next steps.

SUPERVISOR APPOINTMENTS

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Anne Arundel SCD – Christine Catterton | Prince George’s SCD – Amy Posey |
| Caroline SCD – Chris Harris | St. Mary’s SCD – Stanley Boothe |
| Cecil SCD – Victor Priapi | Talbot SCD – Colin Jones |
| Montgomery SCD – Tom Linthicum | Talbot SCD – Gavin Roe |
| Prince George’s SCD – Andrew Colevas | Worcester SCD – David Hudson |

PERSONNEL NOTES

NRCS WELCOMES...

- Jessica Mundt, Cultural Resources Specialist, State Office
- Matt King, Farm Bill Biologist, Ducks Unlimited
- Ben Anderson, People’s Garden Farm Manager, Plant Materials Center
- Fati Toure, RC&D Agronomist, State Office
- Samantha Cox, District Conservationist, Carroll/Baltimore Counties
- Jennifer Kemp, Soil Conservationist, Baltimore County
- Jacob Koenig, Area Engineer, Western/Central
- Jack McCullough, Soil Conservationist, Harford County
- Jacob Metcalf, Soil Conservationist, Allegany County
- Nicole Zimmerman, Natural Resource Specialist, Snow Hill
- Michael Montillo, Civil Engineering Technician, Southern Maryland
- Ryan Poe, Civil Engineering Technician, Eastern Shore
- Jacob Dieguez, State Conservation Engineer, State Office

vides the framework for a planner to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. It is the agency standard for establishing an employee’s allowable scope of work in providing planning assistance.

Working through the certification process will help conservation planners to recognize that they are working in a complex natural system and decisions made about one area or concern may have impacts on other parts of the same operation and offsite as well.

Congratulations to the following conservation professionals who recently achieved a new level of planner certification:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| <u>Level 1 Certification</u> | <u>Level 3 Certification</u> | <u>CNMP Certification</u> |
| Kaitlyn Fuss | Nathan Hosely William Rawlings Emily Doney Kathleen Sigwart Julianna Burns | Nicole Davis Emily Doney |

ITEMS OF INTEREST

PLANNER CERTIFICATION UPDATES

The conservation planner certification process provides a consistent structure for supporting the technical competence of employees to perform conservation planning. Planner certification helps to ensure quality conservation treatment to address resource concerns, land-user objectives, and the wise use of technical and financial resources.

EAT LIKE A MARYLANDER!

The Maryland Department of Agriculture’s *Maryland’s Best* program has announced the launch of the “Eat Like a Marylander!” campaign, encouraging residents and visitors alike to eat fresh and iconic Maryland foods. Billboards, video spots at movie theaters, digital programming and social media will all link back to the Eat Like a Marylander website.



“With summer upon us, the goal of the campaign is to encourage eve-
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NRCS conservation planning policy, GM-180, Part 409, pro-

EAT LIKE A MARYLANDER!

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ryone to buy and eat local food which stimulates the economy and supports Maryland farmers and watermen,” said Maryland Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks. “From crabs to watermelon, sweet corn to oysters, Maryland has so many sweet and savory items so you too can eat like a Marylander.”

Supporting local also supports jobs and reduces carbon emissions as the transportation of food is reduced. In addition, eating Maryland grown food ensures freshness and peak flavor!

This summer, before heading out to eat or gathering around the grill with family and friends, head to MarylandsBest.net to find restaurants, retailers and farmers markets near you serving locally grown produce and protein. There you'll also find a list of on-farm experiences, summer favorite recipes and restaurants that are dedicated to serving local foods. Whether it's biting into a juicy burger, savoring that sweet Chesapeake blue crab meat, or indulging in a treat from the Ice Cream Trail, make sure it's Maryland grown and raised!

For more information about the campaign or the Maryland's Best Program, please contact Director of Special Projects Kristin Hanna at Kristin.Hanna@maryland.gov.

ENVIROTHON

A team of high school students from **Harford County** has won the 2024 Maryland Envirothon competition. Second place went to Montgomery; third Allegany, fourth St. Mary's and fifth place Calvert.

The National event was held at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva New York July 28 - August 3rd. Maryland came in third overall with a score of 593.33. First place went to Tennessee 623.67 and second place New York 608.

Congratulations Harford County!

For more information, please visit <https://mdenvirothon.org/>.



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Maryland Conservation



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 202-353-9733.

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 MD Conservation Partnership are equal employment opportunity employers.

Catch us at these events!

August 8

Maryland Horse Forum
Owings Mills, MD
MarylandHorseForum.com

October 17-20

Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill
Elkton, MD
Maryland5Star.us

