



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

MARYLAND ASSOCIATION
OF SOIL CONSERVATION
DISTRICTS



PARTNERSHIP



LEADERSHIP



EDUCATION

Our Mission: To promote practical and effective soil, water, and related natural resources programs to all citizens through individual conservation districts on a voluntary basis through leadership, education, cooperation, and local direction.

MESSAGE FROM MASCD'S PRESIDENT

As the landscape changes, our mission endures.

2024 was a remarkable year. For farmers, both economic trends and weather were worrisome. The American Farm Bureau projects a 23% decrease in farm income nationally since 2022. In Maryland, farmers in many areas of the state were faced with a wet spring followed by a very dry summer and fall, resulting in reduced crop yields during a year when margins were already tight. A difficult economy can change where conservation fits within a long list of priorities on the farm.

At the same time, the federal Inflation Reduction Act brought historic investments in conservation practices that address the causes and impacts of climate change. Combined with state funding for the Cover Crop Program, Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share Program and other conservation programs, our conservation districts' ag planners and technicians have been critical to ensure the effective delivery of technical and financial assistance.

As 2025 marks the final milestone in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan, the Conservation Partnership is already looking ahead to address emerging resource concerns and incorporate new science into the restoration effort. Improved water quality remains a key commitment even as our priorities have expanded to include climate resilience, increased soil health, urban agriculture and other resource concerns.

The organizational structure of the conservation districts has always allowed us to be adaptable to changing conditions. As individuals who are closest to the work, our mission and perspective are fundamental to meet the challenges we face today.

John Swaine, III, President
Jen Nelson, Executive Director



449,981

**ACRES OF
COVER CROPS**

2024 BY THE NUMBERS

3,471

BEST MANAGEMENT
PRACTICES



977

FARMERS ASSISTED



10,092

EROSION &
SEDIMENT CONTROL
PLANS REVIEWED



1,317

SOIL CONSERVATION &
WATER QUALITY PLANS
WRITTEN OR UPDATED

133,836

ACRES PROTECTED
UNDER WRITTEN
PLANS



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The backbone of conservation delivery.

Maryland's soil conservation districts provide a wide range of services to assist farmers, residents, developers, communities and organizations to be good stewards of the land. Assistance to farmers is free of charge.

01 Soil Conservation & Water Quality Planning

Districts work with farmers to identify conservation goals for the farm, diagnose resource needs and determine the practices that are a best fit. In 2024, SCDs developed 871 new plans and updated 446 more, protecting 133,836 acres.

02 Technical Design

For structural practices, districts develop engineering designs specific to each farm and project.

03 BMP Implementation Guidance

Districts provide guidance throughout best management practice (BMP) implementation to ensure practices are effective in meeting their objectives.

04 Financial Assistance Coordination

District planners help farmers to identify and apply for cost-share programs that can defray most of the cost of implementing practices.

05 Erosion & Sediment Control Plan Review

In 2024, SCDs reviewed 10,092 plans and approved 6,492 plans, reducing the impact of construction and land development projects on 15,432 acres.

06 Urban Compliance Assistance

Some districts also perform compliance activities for MDE's Sediment, Stormwater and Dam Safety Program, resulting in faster turnaround times.

07 And many more!

Depending on the needs of their local community, soil conservation districts may also offer heavy equipment services or equipment rental, forest management plans and more.

Conservation as Collaboration: Lori Larson, Wyndham Oaks II



OUTSTANDING COOPERATOR OF THE YEAR

In 2021, Lori Larson had a need to expand her successful equine operation and purchased an adjacent cropland farm with significant resource issues. In just two years, working with the Montgomery Soil Conservation District, she transformed the property into a stunning example of conservation excellence. She established perimeter and stream exclusion fencing, remote watering facilities, a stream crossing, riparian buffers and rotational grazing.

Ms. Larson's story is a great example of the collaborative relationship between a farmer and their local soil conservation district. Working together, they were able to identify resource improvements for additional fencing and manure management, creating an admirable example of conservation stewardship for farmers in Montgomery County and beyond.

"In agriculture, you are always trying to do better. We like the challenge of always trying to improve yields and profitability while having less impact on the environment."

*Kyle Hutchison, Hutchison Brothers
2024 Leopold Conservation Award Recipient*

Chesapeake Bay Check-In

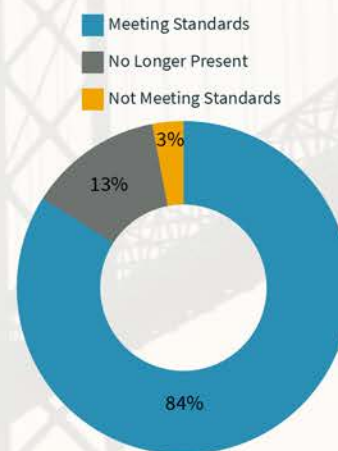
The Maryland Conservation Partnership's mission to protect and restore natural resources has a history going back many decades. The past fourteen years have spurred unprecedented investments in technical and financial assistance that have seen positive outcomes through many sections of the Bay. Looking ahead, Maryland will continue to build upon successful programs and delivery systems - thinking even more holistically about watershed restoration.

MDA'S FIELD ASSESSMENT TEAM

A vital part of reaching 2025 has been the effort of MDA's Field Assessment Team in helping to verify all BMPs across the state, to include historically reported practices that continue to be utilized beyond their original lifespan. They review conservation plans, then visit and walk the entire farm to assess and inventory the status and function of the operation's BMPs.

Over 80% of reported practices have been field verified and mapped. Any practices or areas needing attention are treated as an educational moment to provide outreach, connect them with their local SCD, and promote our many programs that help farmers put voluntary conservation measures on the ground.

Status of all WIP BMPs
Over 27,000 BMPs verified as of July 2024



Progress towards Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Goals as of July 2024

Best Management Practice	2025 Goal	2024 Progress	% of Goal
Annual Practices are impactful given their magnitude			
Cover Crops	478,391 acres	449,981 acres	94%
Manure Transported	97,366 tons	63,140 tons	65%
Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans (acres managed)	1,054,607 acres	815,524 acres	77%
Nutrient Management Plans (compliance rate)	70%	80%	
Structural Practices include the most efficient BMPs for water quality, including forest & grass buffers (with or without exclusion fencing) barnyard runoff control, land conversion to open space or pasture, animal waste management systems and ag drainage management			
Exclusion Fencing (acres of buffers)	1,867 acres	1,389 acres	74%
Grass Buffers	43,706 acres	35,412 acres	81%
Land Conversion to Open Space	23,934 acres	22,722 acres	95%
Retirement of Highly Erodible Land	33,171 acres	32,807 acres	97%
Streamside Forest Buffers	20,274 acres	21,559 acres	106%
Horse Pasture Management	2,741 acres	2,004 acres	73%
Waste Storage Structures for Livestock	99,654 animal units*	95,932 animal units	96%
Waste Storage Structures for Poultry	1,616,618 animal units	1,601,071 animal units	99%
Wetland Restoration	13,620 acres	13,795 acres	101%

*One Animal Unit = 1,000 lb of live animal weight

INVESTING IN CONSERVATION

Financial assistance for conservation adoption is especially important in an economically challenging year like 2024, when tight margins can make it difficult for farmers and landowners to prioritize conservation projects. While farmers typically share in the cost to adopt BMPs, soil conservation districts can help to leverage different sources of funding to provide maximum support.



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

- **Cover Crop Program: \$30 Million**— Includes 450,000 acres through both traditional program and Cover Crop Plus
- **Capital Program/Special Project Grants: \$7 Million**- Provided 296 farmers with cost-share grants to install 574 BMPs on farms to protect natural resources
- **Manure Transport Grants: \$1.9 Million**—364,000 tons of manure transported away from areas with high soil phosphorus levels; Poultry companies provided an additional \$671,000 in matching funds to transport poultry litter
- **Manure Injection Grants: \$496,000** to help offset costs to inject manure below the soil surface on 67 projects
- **CREP Incentive Payments: \$721,000** over 288 payments
- **Small Farm & Urban Ag Grants: \$33,000** for 26 projects

USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE*

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): \$11.01 Million** to help 290 landowners address natural resource concerns on 6,364 acres
- **Conservation Stewardship Program: \$2.75 Million** to help 57 farmers maintain and improve existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation practices to address priority resource concerns on 10,876 acres
- **Agricultural Management Assistance Program: \$482,543** to help 11 farmers improve water quality on 433 acres
- **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program: \$1.56 Million** to help farmers protect and enhance wetlands on 60 acres

\$71.4
MILLION
COMBINED
STATE & FEDERAL
INVESTMENTS

The **Inflation Reduction Act** provided additional funding to support NRCS's conservation programs that yield climate change mitigation benefits. In Maryland, funding for conservation contracts nearly doubled due to IRA, contributing to the highest total investment in private lands conservation in any year in NRCS history.

- **IRA- EQIP: \$13.95 Million** among 160 contracts on 21,075 acres
- **IRA-CSP: \$ 1.5 Million** among 33 contracts

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

MASCD SPECIAL PROJECTS

MARYLAND BAY-FRIENDLY FARMING

MarylandBFF recognizes and supports certified bay-friendly farmers who keep our waters and natural resources healthy. Learn more at BayFriendlyFarms.com (National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, the Campbell Foundation)



ACCELERATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATURE-BASED STRUCTURAL PRACTICES ON DELMARVA

Provides implementation and incentive funding for public drainage associations to create and restore wetlands, reconnect floodplains and install buffers adjacent to public ditches. (National Fish & Wildlife Foundation)

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Creates for peer-to-peer opportunities for district managers to share successful strategies and training to increase the effectiveness of their teams. (The Campbell Foundation)

NRCS COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

Adds administrative capacity to districts on the Eastern Shore, freeing up technical staff to focus on their core duties.

SHOUT OUTS

Maryland Places 3rd at NCF Envirothon

Congratulations to North Harford High School for their impressive achievement at the international competition! The team placed first at the Maryland Envirothon, an annual competition where high school students learn and apply hands-on skills in natural resource management.



Hutchison Brothers Receive 2024 Leopold Award

Hutchison Brothers is a 3,400-acre crop and poultry farm in Talbot County. Their leadership extends beyond the implementation of so many conservation practices on their farm. They've also dedicated their time on the Talbot Soil Conservation District Board and to sharing their experiences with other farmers, conservation professionals and decision-makers. Read their full profile at sandcountyfoundation.org/

Maryland Farm & Harvest Returns for Season 12

A wonderful vehicle to tell the stories of Maryland farmers and their exceptional stewardship, the popular show on Maryland Public Television has had a total viewership of more than 16.5 million people in its first eleven seasons! The show has received 42 Emmy nominations and 14 awards so far. On social media, its Facebook page has a reach of 2,164,754 and a YouTube viewership of 4.4 million.



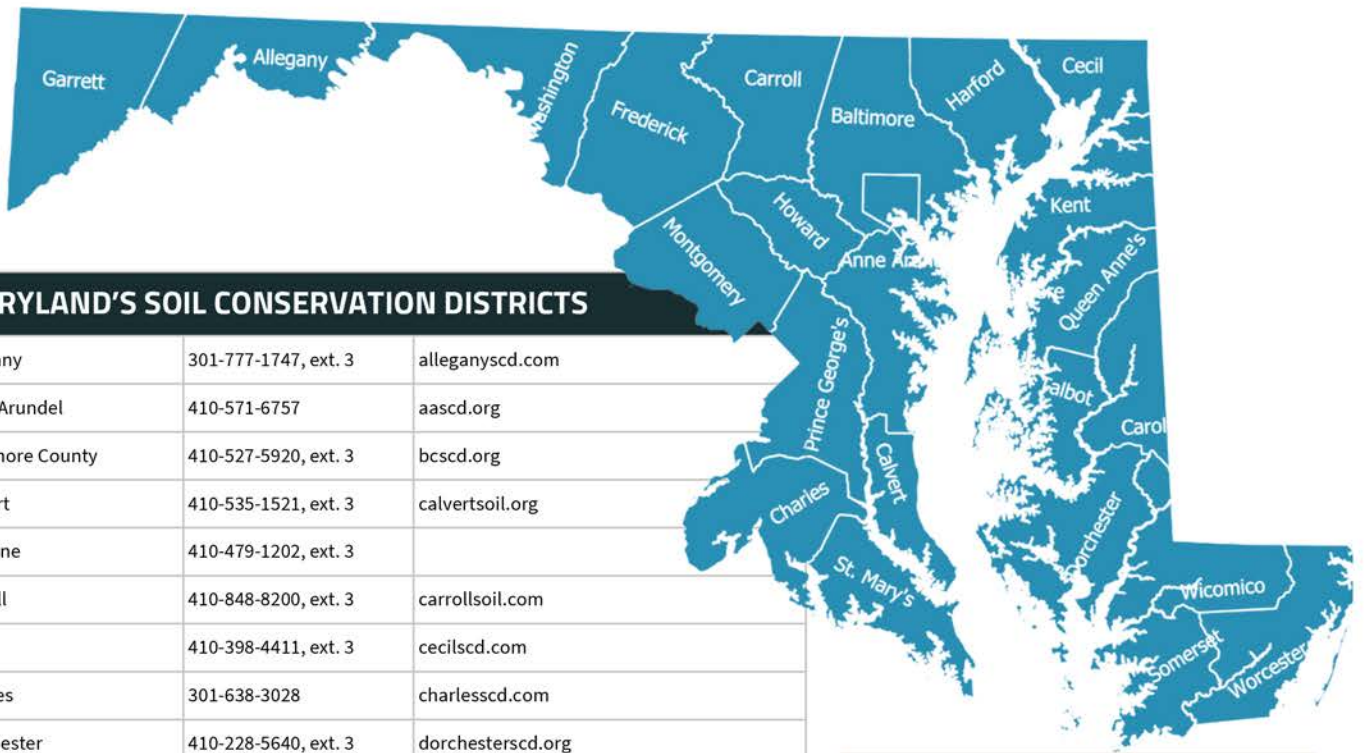
MASCD Honors Exceptional Service at our 2024 Annual Meeting

Maryland's Soil Conservation Districts rely on outstanding staff and dedicated supervisors to carry out our mission. This year, we recognized the following districts, employees, board supervisors, farmers and partners for their contributions:



Top: President John Swaine presents the President's Award to Frank Richardson; Bottom: Prince George's SCD receives 2nd place for the Farm Credit Outstanding District

- Outstanding Cooperator- Lori Larson, Wyndham Oaks II, Montgomery
- Outstanding Employee- Kathleen Sigwart, Montgomery
- Special Achievement (Employee)- Tom Koviak, St. Mary's
- Outstanding Contribution- Dr. Calvin Ball, Howard
- Outstanding Contribution by Youth- Tyler Kirk, Harford
- District Attendance Award- Baltimore County Soil Conservation District
- Outstanding Leadership- Charles Miller, Kent
- Conservation Education Teacher of the Year- Ann Stark, Allegany
- Outstanding Newsletter- Kent Soil & Water Conservation District
- Conservation Education District- Cecil Soil Conservation District
- Farm Credit Outstanding District- Montgomery 1st, Prince George's 2nd, Charles 3rd
- President's Award- Frank Richardson



MARYLAND'S SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Allegany	301-777-1747, ext. 3	alleganyscd.com
Anne Arundel	410-571-6757	aascd.org
Baltimore County	410-527-5920, ext. 3	bcscd.org
Calvert	410-535-1521, ext. 3	calvertsoil.org
Caroline	410-479-1202, ext. 3	
Carroll	410-848-8200, ext. 3	carrollsoil.com
Cecil	410-398-4411, ext. 3	cecilscd.com
Charles	301-638-3028	charlesscd.com
Dorchester	410-228-5640, ext. 3	dorchesterscd.org
Frederick	301-695-2803, ext. 3	fcscd.com
Garrett	301-501-5856, ext. 3	garrettscd.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, ext. 3	conservationplace.com
Wicomico	410-546-4777, ext. 3	wicomicoscd.org
Worcester	410-632-5439, ext. 3	worscd.org

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.

Maryland's Conservation Partnership

Maryland's Conservation Partnership is a coalition of federal, state, and local agencies dedicated to protecting and conserving natural resources and promoting Maryland agriculture, including soil conservation districts along with:

- 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



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