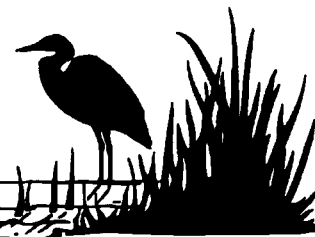


PARTNERSHIP PRESS

Maryland Conservation



Spring 2025 Volume 32 Issue 2

A MESSAGE FROM THE MASCD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JEN NELSON

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR WORKING WITH BOARDS

When I wrote my column in February for the last Partnership Press, Maryland's legislative session was getting underway and President Trump had just been sworn in for his second term. It definitely feels like that was more than three months ago! We had a huge push at both the state and federal level to educate our elected officials about the importance of conservation funding and technical assistance, and we have seen that bear fruit! At the state level, despite a very difficult budget year, our partners retained funding for technical assistance and cover crops. At the federal level, we're starting to see agreements and funding "unpause" and we're hopeful that continues in support of NRCS staff and Farm Bill Programs.

As MASCD staff turns to planning for our 2025 Annual Meeting (August 4-6 at Rocky Gap- registration is open!), I decided to use my space here for the next two issues to share some favorite resources for boards and management staff. This month, I'll share a quick summary from Erik Hanberg's book, "The Little Book of Nonprofit Leadership". While this book is meant for executive directors of small nonprofits, there's a lot of guidance that translates to district managers. (He also wrote another book, "The Little Book of Boards", that's a great resource as well!) Chapter 5 is titled "Ten Commandments for Working with Boards", and here's a quick summary of each one:

1. Let the board govern itself- "Sometimes it can be tempting to meddle in board business", Hanberg writes, "but except in the more dire of situations, you should endeavor to stay out of it." District managers are usually closest to the work and have a lot of valuable insight to inform policies and priorities. Hanberg suggests that a good approach is to provide resources and "create the space for policies to arise from the board itself."

(Continued on page 3)

LEGISLATIVE END OF SESSION REPORT - BY MICHAEL COBURN AND MICHAEL MASON, PROVIDENCE STRATEGIES

On Monday April 7th, Maryland's Legislative Session came to a close. This tumultuous session was defined by impassioned deliberations on various proposals to balance Maryland's budget. One of the most notable provisions of the final budget is the increase in income tax rates for high earners, raising the rate to 6.25% for individuals earning above \$500,000 and to 6.5% for those earning more than \$1 million, up from the previous 5.75% rate. Additionally, the budget establishes a new 3% tax on information technology and data services, expected to generate nearly \$500 million in revenue.

Atop successes from this session is the passing of the Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act (HB506). This bill establishes the LEEF program to incen-

tivize farmer's adoption of best practices for environmental conservation and community engagement; includes "regenerative practices and traditions" as part of the definition of "healthy soils" under the Maryland Healthy Soils Program; establishes a Water Quality Monitoring Program under the Department of Natural Resources; improves the Whole Watershed Restoration Partnership permitting processes by requiring timely coordination between stakeholders; establishes water quality trading credits for certain oyster restoration projects; and more.

Other policy wins from this session include the passing of House Bill 114 to limit the commercial application of restricted use pesticides by certain individuals, and House Bill 104 which provides matching funds to farmers for purchases made at certain farmers markets and farm stands using FMNP, SNAP, and WIC federal nutrition benefits.

For Soil Conservation we tracked over 50 different pieces of legislation for the Association and held our bi-weekly legislative calls with Soil Conservation District Managers and staff. For the full 90-Day legislative report please contact Mike Mason at mason@providence.llc

Providence Strategies is the lobbying firm for MASCD

NRCS MD HONORS EARTH TEAM AWARDEES DURING NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

National Volunteer Week was April 20 to 26, a time to recognize and celebrate the incredible impact of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Earth Team volunteers who dedicate their time, energy and talents to strengthening our conservation communities.

Since 1985, Earth Team volunteers have provided a valuable source of talent to NRCS by working directly with conservation professionals on private lands to improve soil quality, conserve water, improve air quality and enhance wildlife habitat. In 2024, 108 Earth Team volunteers con-

(Continued on page 3)



WILLARD

Trusted Advisors. Superior Products.

www.willardag.com
(301) 662-8100



SSCC



Report

Information from the State Soil Conservation Committee

A MESSAGE FROM LORETTA COLLINS, SSCC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

New for 2025, the SSCC is conducting select meetings outside of Annapolis. I thank those that have welcomed us so far and look forward to traveling and meeting others across Maryland. The SSCC is closely watching the impacts of state and federal budgets on our Districts and is working amongst our partners on how we move forward. Highlights of recent SSCC meetings are summarized below. For more details, SSCC monthly meeting minutes can be accessed on MDA's [State Soil Conservation Committee webpage](#).

SSCC ADMINISTRATION

SSCC on the Road: In an effort to improve visibility and engagement the SSCC will be conducting some of its monthly meetings in alternative locations across the state. Traditionally, meetings have taken place at MDA Headquarters in Annapolis. In March, the Committee has its first "traveling meeting" at the University of Maryland Extension in Washington County. It was a great success. The May SSCC meeting will be held at the Caroline Soil Conservation District office in Denton, MD. SSCC monthly meetings are open to the public. *Quick Reviews:* In February, the SSCC started adding "Quick Reviews" to regular monthly meetings. These are meant to provide quick bits of need-to-know information for the SSCC membership and the District Boards around the state. After each meeting, these reviews are shared with all District Managers and Board Chairs for review and discussion at monthly SCD Board meetings.

WOODLOT CONVERSION TO AG LAND

The Forest Clearing Workgroup has had three meetings to seek clarification and guidance on forest/wooded lot clearing for ag production in regard to permitting requirements and oversight authority. The group includes district managers from across the state, as well as representatives from MDA, MDE, DNR, and NRCS.

The group is currently seeking clarification on regulatory requirements related to erosion and sediment control, stormwater management, and the Forest Conservation Act from relevant authorities. A need for general guidance exists but is complicated by differences in local county ordinances and interpretations of current regulations.

SUPERVISOR APPOINTMENTS

- Caroline SCD – Greg Turner
- Kent SCD – Tim Redman
- Montgomery SCD – Tim McGrath
- Queen Anne's SCD – Mark Sultenfuss
- St. Mary's SCD – Robert C. Cooper
- Washington County SCD – Joshua Ernst

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

DATES	CLASS DESCRIPTION
June 3 & 4	Fundamentals of Nutrient Management - A Pre-Certification Training Course This training course provides a basic overview of knowledge areas covered by the Maryland Nutrient Management Certification Examination scheduled for August 1, 2025. Topics include state nutrient management regulations, nutrient management principles, basic soil science, and soil fertility recommendations. Instructors are university and government experts.
August 1	Maryland Nutrient Management Certification Exam This exam is for farmers and consultants who want to write nutrient management plans for others. The exam will be offered at MDA headquarters, the Talbot Agricultural and Education Center and the Western Maryland Research and Education Center (WMREC). There is a \$50 non-refundable certification fee, however, government personnel are exempt with a Government Sales and Use Tax Exempt certificate.
Webinars (Available Anytime)	Learn and Earn CEUs Online The University of Maryland and other institutions provide excellent nutrient management webinars. Even if you cannot attend a session "live," you might be able to earn CEUs at a later date.

For registration information - https://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/Pages/nutrient_management_training_program.aspx

TEN COMMANDMENTS

(Continued from page 1)

- 2. Board members are board members first-** We work in a small community where we are often friends with our colleagues. Where that's the case, keep the supervisors' roles in mind in your interactions with them, and be careful not to put them in an awkward situation where they need to prioritize one role over the other.
- 3. Never surprise your board chair at a meeting-** You should be in regular communication with your board chair in between meetings, where you can provide updates and discuss issues in advance.
- 4. Assume leadership-** "You are in charge of the day-to-day operations of the nonprofit. Act like it" he writes. "If it's within budget, policies, and the strategic plan, it's your decision to make- not the board's." The board is responsible for setting policy and priorities; the manager's job is to execute those.
- 5. Submit a monthly written report-** "Remember, board members don't see you day in and day out. Most of what they know of your performance is what they see at board and committee meetings." Hanberg suggests writing a few big things that you want the board to know, and then a section of other tasks and accomplishments. It should be short- 1 or 2 pages.
- 6. Attend as many committee meetings as you can-** This one is pretty self-explanatory, and likely standard practice.
- 7. When in doubt, refer ideas back to the board's committees-** Do you have a board member who calls or emails you frequently with "suggestions"? The ideas may be good but challenging to implement, or they may be unworkable. Where it's feasible, direct ideas back to the board or a committee, so that you (the employee) are not the one responsible for advancing or killing a board member's idea. Hanberg points out that you can also point the board member to documents that the board itself has passed- a budget, a policy, a strategic plan- if that's appropriate.
- 8. Never fudge the numbers-** "The numbers are the numbers. Present them honestly no matter what they say."
- 9. Identify possible new board members-** "You are in a great position to see candidates that the board never would have seen. Refer them on. Just identifying good quality candidates is a solid start to making sure that in the long run, you have quality prospects to fill seats on the board."
- 10. Do the work-** "Whatever is going on with the board, you need to keep your focus on the work. This implies trust in the board, but even more than that it requires that you give up some amount of control to them... Come to meetings prepared, and do your best to support the board in their work... Do the work, and trust the board to do theirs."

This may be focused on managers, but these rules have some good insight for how the board members should work with their managers as well. Stay tuned for the next issues, when we'll put the supervisors on the hot seat with "10 Commandments for Boards"!

EARTH TEAM AWARDEES

(Continued from page 1)

tributed nearly 1,000 hours to conservation causes across Maryland. Their selfless service not only addresses critical conservation needs but also fosters a spirit of generosity and unity across the state.

Maryland's Earth Team volunteers are nationally recognized as dedicated conservationists, earning the state five national Earth Team awards for their work in 2024. Honorees include:

Harford County Soil Conservation District - National Association of Conservation Districts Earth Team Award

Harford County SCD is recognized for harnessing the power of shared leadership among district officials, NRCS employees, and Earth Team volunteers to find innovative ways to help accomplish the NRCS mission. Quintin Cornwell, SCD Manager, and Rob Weaver, NRCS District Conservationist work together to recruit volunteers and find meaningful work for them to do. Volunteers include Tim Gerber, a retired soil scientist and seasoned volunteer who helps Harford County in several ways, ranging from employee training to soil surveys. Ella Campbell is a Student Associate Board Member as part of a unique program developed by the SCD and NRCS in this office to provide students with a way to interact with and volunteer in the office. Students in this program attend board meetings to become more familiar with the work we do as a partnership.

Broadneck High School - National Partnership Earth Team Award

Broadneck High School is recognized for integrating volunteerism at USDAs People's Garden into their Environmental Literacy Program curriculum. Twice a year, students travel to the nation's capital to assist with weeding, planting, and harvesting at the garden while learning more about conservation agriculture and potential career opportunities with NRCS. The students recently took what they learned working with NRCS to create their own People's Garden at the school, where a variety of crops and flowers are grown to teach about agricultural conservation practices.

St. Mary's County - Chief's Field Award

St. Mary's is recognized for their innovative and effective use of volunteers, which has greatly benefited both the local office, and the participants involved. In 2024, the St. Mary's office had an active Friends of Conservation Group that collected volunteer hours from three people and hosted a student intern, collectively contributing 80 volunteer hours. Under the leadership of District Conservationist Rachel Yeatman, the office arranged for their summer intern to contribute to conservation efforts in multiple counties throughout Southern Maryland, enhancing the intern's experience and extending support to other NRCS teams. Rachel's strong belief in the value of volunteering has been imperative to leveraging these efforts to support NRCS's mission.

St. Mary's County demonstrated a high level of volunteer interaction, commitment, and innovation. Their work reflects a growing culture of community involvement and collaboration, positioning them as a rising star within the state.

(Continued on page 5)

ITEMS OF INTEREST

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TREE PLANTING INCENTIVES STILL AVAILABLE

As part of [Maryland's 5 Million Trees Program](#), the **Maryland Department of Agriculture** is reminding farmers that financial assistance is available for a range of tree-planting programs that can boost farm income, improve soil and herd health, and protect local streams and natural resources. The department's tree-planting incentives support soil health and agroforestry practices that combine farming and forestry to create healthier conditions for people, animals, and crops by allowing farmers to improve natural resources and generate income by planting nut and berry trees. Eligible participants may qualify for up to 100% cost-share for selected practices and a one-time bonus payment of \$1,000 per acre for establishing riparian forest buffers. These efforts support Maryland's goal of planting 5 million trees by 2031 to capture atmospheric carbon and enhance public health.

Eligible tree-planting and agroforestry practices include:

- **Riparian Forest Buffers**—Trees and shrubs planted along streams to act as natural filters
- **Hedgerow Plantings**—Living fences of trees and shrubs that attract wildlife and boost biodiversity

- **Windbreaks**—Rows of trees planted near farm production areas to filter the air and reduce odors
- **Silvopasture**—Integrating trees and grazing livestock to improve herd and soil health
- **Tree and Shrub Establishment**—Planting trees and shrubs to provide environmental benefits
- **Alley Cropping**—Growing crops in wide alleys between rows of trees to improve soil health

Farmers and agricultural landowners who want to learn more about the department's tree-planting and agroforestry incentives should visit this [website](#). Free technical help and application assistance for most projects is available through [local soil conservation districts](#).



PERSONNEL

NRCS BIDS FAREWELL TO...

Benjamin Anderson, People's Garden Farm Manager, Plant Materials Center

Logan Arendale, Management Analyst, State Office

Rory Badger, Biologist, Wicomico County

Catlin Berchtold, Natural Resource Specialist, Wicomico County

Sharon Calisto, Soil Conservationist, Queen Anne's County

Val Cohen, Soil Scientist, Beltsville

Nora De La Rosa, Management Analyst, State Office

Annette Ensor, Soil Conservationist, Harford County

Rachel Giles, Outreach Coordinator, State Office

Lucia Gonzalez Goyco, Natural Resources Specialist, Cecil Co.

TaRain Harris, Program Assistant, State Office

Connor Horne, Soil Conservation Technician, Carroll County

Jacob Kiessling, Civil Engineering Technician, Charles County

Hunter Martin, Soil Conservationist, Baltimore County

Ashley McAvoy, Soil Conservationist, Baltimore County

Meredith Miller, Environmental Engineer, State Office

Katherine Stahl, USFWS Farm Bill Biologist

Kristina Stair, Natural Resource Specialist, Frederick County

Eve Watsky, Natural Resource Specialist, Wicomico County

Craig Zimmerman, Soil Conservation Technician, Garrett County

Nicole Zimmerman, Natural Resource Specialist, Worcester County

NRCS TEMPORARY CHANGES...

Susan Lamb is Acting Agronomist through July while Dana Rushovich is on parental leave.

Heather Beaven is Acting District Conservationist for Dorchester and Wicomico counties.

Future Dates to Remember

May 15	SSCC Meeting, Annapolis
June 19	SSCC Meeting, Annapolis
July 17	SSCC Meeting, Annapolis
Aug 4-6	MASCD Annual Meeting, Rocky Gap Casino & Resort. Meeting details page 5.
Aug 21	SSCC Meeting, Annapolis
Sept 18	SSCC Meeting, Annapolis

EARTH TEAM AWARDEES

(Continued from page 3)

Natalie Howe – NRCS Regional Employee Award

Natalie Howe, manager of the Norman A. Berg National Plant Materials Center (PMC) in Beltsville, is recognized for showing outstanding leadership in creatively and effectively utilizing volunteers to support the NRCS mission. This year, she took on the additional responsibility of managing the volunteer program at the People's Garden, where her mentorship and positive attitude fostered a welcoming and productive environment for Earth Team Volunteers. Her dedication allowed the center to expand its impact while providing a meaningful learning experience for all who volunteered.

Under Natalie's guidance, the People's Garden hosted 102 volunteers who contributed a total of 908 hours in 2024. Many of these volunteers are young people encountering NRCS for the first time, and Natalie ensured that they receive a positive and educational introduction to the agency. Natalie's work not only strengthens local conservation efforts but also has had a national impact through her leadership at the PMC and People's Garden.

Maryland NRCS – Chief's Cup National Winner

In fiscal year 2024, Maryland NRCS continued its long-standing commitment to the Earth Team Volunteer program, as they managed increased activity driven by the People's Garden and maintained strong engagement across the state. A total of 108 volunteers, including 57 individuals and 51 group participants, contributed 995.25 hours, which combines to an estimated value of \$33,778.79 in service. Volunteers supported a wide range of activities including engineering surveys, conservation planning, outreach, education, and more, with over two-thirds of Maryland NRCS offices actively participating. To show appreciation, Maryland NRCS hosted a volunteer recognition event, featuring project showcases and personal acknowledgments. These efforts displayed Maryland's commitment to strengthening and expanding the Earth Team Volunteer program. Their work reflected not only effective management but also innovation and heartfelt appreciation.

After Setting Roots 90 Years Ago, NRCS Continues to Grow Its Conservation Legacy, *By Shelby Callaway, NRCS Historian*

It is said that you can't really know where you're going until you know where you have been. Since April 27, 2025, marks the 90th anniversary of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), I'd like to take you back to the official beginning. In 1935, the United States was in the middle of a man-made natural disaster now remembered as the Dust Bowl. High crop prices and a series of wet years in the 1920s led farmers to plow up native grasslands and plant crops on the usually arid Great Plains. By the 1930s, an unrelenting drought accompanied by merciless winds hit the area, particularly in the southern plains. As crops withered, the land, now bare of both crops and native vegetation to hold the soil, simply blew away. Huge dust clouds blew across the Great Plains, dumping midwestern soil on eastern cities and even on ships far out into the Atlantic Ocean. An ongoing series of severe dust storms in the early 30s destroyed farms, killed people and livestock, and contributed to the economic ruin and displacement of thousands of people who were forced to abandon their homes and farms. In the midst of these storms, Hugh Hammond Bennett, the "father of soil conservation" led the US government's nationwide effort to halt the "national menace" of unchecked erosion. Bennett campaigned for a coordinated attack against soil erosion long before the Dust Bowl era, having seen the threat posed by water erosion early in his career as a soil surveyor for the USDA's

Bureau of Soils. He observed firsthand how unchecked sheet and rill erosion slowly degraded fields and pastures, reducing the land's ability to sustain agricultural productivity and support the rural communities who depended on it for their lives and livelihoods. Moreover, he recognized soil as a strategic natural resource and that its wastage on private lands harmed not just farmers but the wider public and the nation as a whole. As the nation's foremost advocate for a country-wide plan of research and action to attack the "national menace" of excessive soil erosion, he led the temporary Soil Erosion Service from 1933-1935.

On March 21, 1935, with the SES's temporary funds set to expire soon, Bennett testified before Congress about the need for a permanent, national, interdisciplinary approach to combating excessive erosion. The same day, a major dust storm from the Midwest hit Washington, D.C., shrouding the capitol in a "clay colored veil." The arrival of this well-timed dust storm drove home the wisdom of Bennett's urging, and Congress moved quickly to pass legislation for a permanent conservation agency. Just over a month later, on April 27, the President signed the Soil Conservation Act (PL 74-46). The act created the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) at the United States Department of Agriculture and Hugh Hammond Bennett became its first Chief.

Since its creation as a permanent agency in 1935, the agency has developed wide-ranging technical solutions to help farmers and ranchers dramatically reduce soil erosion and to be good stewards of all our shared natural resources. Shortly after its founding, the agency expanded its scope beyond soil to include the conservation of water, wildlife, and a host of other natural resource concerns as the country's lead voluntary conservation agency for private lands. To reflect this expansion, the agency was renamed the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 1994.

Today and into the future, we at NRCS are continuing Hugh Hammond Bennett's legacy – helping people help the land – by implementing conservation practices to conserve air, water, soil, and habitat. In fact, many of the conservation activities the agency studied and refined in the days of Bennett such as terracing, cover and strip cropping, contour planting, grassed waterways and crop rotation, are practices that we still use today.

By the way, if you're interested in learning more about our conservation practices and how they work today, check out the [Conservation at Work](#) video series. These videos shine a spotlight on farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners from across the United States who tell us their own conservation stories, and how practices are helping them protect and improve resources and save time and money. While many things have changed in the past 90 years, Bennett's vision of a scientifically and technically rigorous, interdisciplinary agency that works with local partners to tailor conservation solutions to the land for the benefit of all Americans remains at the heart of this agency's mission. If you're interested in learning more about Hugh Hammond Bennett, watch the NRCS documentary: [Hugh Hammond Bennett: The Story of America's Private Lands Conservation Movement](#).

To learn more about NRCS history, see the [Story Map: 90 Years of Helping People Help the Land](#) or the [NRCS website](#).



The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts Annual Meeting will take place at Rocky Gap Casino & Resort from August 4th-6th, 2025. This year's theme is **"Economic and Environmental Resilience- Making the Connection"**.

MASCD's goal for the meeting is to build and strengthen networks between conservation districts, state and federal agencies, farmers, private industry, nonprofit organizations, and research institutions from throughout the state. For hotel, sponsor, and meeting details, visit <http://mascd.net/2025-mascd-annual-meeting>.

Keynote Speaker—Alice Crothers



Operating one of Maryland's oldest dairy farms, Alice Crothers champions sustainability in agriculture. With immense residential development pressures and proximity to the Chesapeake Bay, the Crothers family has demonstrated their commitment to conservation, earning the prestigious 2022 Aldo Leopold Conservation Award. Alice

will share insights on integrating conservation into a successful business model and its impact on profitability and stewardship. Keynote Speaker Sponsored By: Cecil Soil Conservation District.

P Maryland Conservation **PARTNERSHIP PRESS**

The 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, Maryland 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, audiotope, 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.

MASCD ASSOCIATION MANUAL ONLINE

The Association Manual has evolved over many years and contains several sections which have been prepared to describe our formation, our history, our current operating guidelines and by-laws, and our future expectations in the form of our policy.

Supervisors and award winners, since the formation of the association, are recognized and the past presidents describe the activities that occurred under their leadership.

The manual has been designed so it can be updated as new leaders take the reins and as MASCD recognizes the contributions of other individuals in the soil conservation movement in Maryland.

Please visit <http://mascd.net/about/> to learn more.

[Page of Contents](#)

[Chapter 1](#) (Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, SSCC membership)

[Chapter 2](#) (Operating rules, Committee structure and membership)

[Chapter 3](#) (Awards, Envirothon)

[Chapter 4](#) (Leaders Association, Auxiliary)

[Chapter 5](#) (Policy Book & Cover)

[Chapter 6](#) (Supervisors 1938-present)

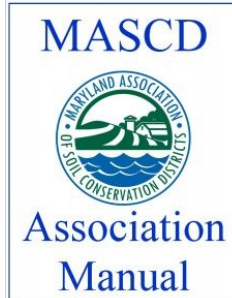
[Chapter 7](#) (History)

[Chapter 7a](#) (1935-1985 History)

[Chapter 7b](#) (1945-1969 History)

[Chapter 7c](#) (1966-2015 History)

[Chapter 8](#) (Supervisor's Handbook)



Harry Rieck, MASCD President, along with District Supervisors from seven Eastern Shore Districts greet Waters S. Davis, Jr., President, NACD, at the Salisbury airport, August 23, 1954.