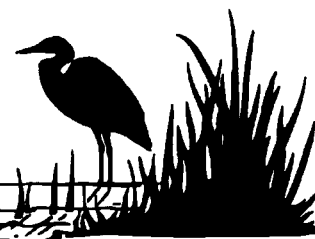


PARTNERSHIP PRESS

Maryland Conservation



Spring 2026 Volume 33 Issue 2

A MESSAGE FROM THE MASCD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JEN NELSON

CONNECTING FOR CONSERVATION: QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS FROM MASCD

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) has seen a productive first quarter of 2026, focused on legislative advocacy, regional partnerships, and planning for upcoming milestones. Here are the highlights of our collective efforts to support Maryland's conservation districts and agricultural community.

UPCOMING EVENT: 2026 ANNUAL MEETING

Registration is now officially open for the MASCD Annual Meeting, taking place August 3-5 at the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay in Cambridge. We are currently seeking agenda topics and planning for an offsite dinner and live auction.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION & TRAINING

MASCD's impact extended beyond state lines this quarter:

- **NACD 80th Annual Meeting:** Held in San Antonio, TX, where attendees discussed NRCS priorities and Jen Nelson presented on district-led technical assistance models.
- **Bay in the Balance Conference:** MASCD participated in this multi-state event in Gettysburg, joining panels to discuss the "hard facts" of meeting water quality goals in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.
- **NACD Northeast Region Meeting:** Delaware has extended their call for presentations for this event, scheduled for late August in nearby Wilmington, DE.

GRANTS, FUNDING & AWARDS

Active grant programs continue to provide vital resources to our districts. Funding remains available through the NFWF Tax Ditch Grant for implementation projects like wetland restoration and riparian buffers.

nominations are **OPEN**

for the **2026 Leopold Conservation Award!**

2025- DAVE TRIBETT 2024- HUTCHISON BROTHERS
2025- THE BURIERS 2022- THE CROTHERS 2021- PERSISTENCE CREEK FARM

Additionally, we continue to promote the Maryland Bay-Friendly Farming Program to identify new candidates for conservation excellence.

Finally, we encourage all districts to nominate their Cooperator of the Year for the 2026 Leopold Conservation Award. Nominations remain open through July 15.

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY & OUTREACH



Advocacy was front and center this quarter. In February, MASCD held its Winter Meeting and Day in Annapolis, which included an open-house breakfast for legislators and direct meetings with delegates and senators to discuss conservation funding. As the state session concluded, we successfully implemented a new structure of weekly legislative calls to coordinate positions on key bills.

On the federal level, representatives traveled to Washington, D.C. on March 25 for the NACD Fly-In. The delegation met with elected officials to emphasize the importance of conservation funding and the upcoming 2026 Farm Bill.

A VOICE FOR AGRICULTURE: THE CHESAPEAKE AG ADVISORY COMMITTEE MARKS ONE YEAR OF IMPACT

As the Chesapeake Bay Program's Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) concludes its first year, the value of having a "seat at the table" has never been clearer. Since its kickoff in March 2025, the 14-member committee—a group of farmers representing every Bay state and D.C.—has worked to ensure that high-level restoration policy is grounded in the reality of day-to-day farm operations.

A major milestone this year was the AAC's influence on the "Beyond 2025" framework. By ensuring agriculture was explicitly represented in the revised Watershed Agreement, the committee recognized the sector's leading role in meeting remaining nutrient load goals while advocating that economic viability must remain the foundation of conservation. In focusing on farm viability as an essential condition for improving water quality and habitat, they're ensuring that farmers are positioned to lead the next chapter of Bay restoration.

SSCC



Report

Information from the State Soil Conservation Committee

A MESSAGE FROM LORETTA COLLINS, SSCC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

The SSCC continues to hold some of its monthly meetings outside of Annapolis. Thanks to Baltimore County for hosting the SSCC in April. In June, the SSCC will travel to Princess Anne, MD and is looking forward to a short tour led by the Somerset Soil Conservation District.

SSCC ADMINISTRATION

Area Representatives: Van Funk (Cecil Supervisor) will complete his second term representing Area 4 (Central) on the SSCC this summer. For several years he has also served as SSCC Chair and was the primary champion of conducting SSCC meetings in alternative locations around Maryland to strengthen the relationship between the SSCC and the 23 SCDs. Van's contributions to the SSCC have been great and he will be missed.

EROSION & SEDIMENT CONTROL UPDATES

Ray Bahr from MDE's Sediment, Stormwater and Dam Safety Program provided an overview of the draft scope of work (SOW) for revisions to the 2011 MD Standards and Specifications for Erosion and Sediment Control. The SSCC was invited to provide feedback for consideration and possible inclusion in the final SOW. The process of updating the 2011 handbook is expected to take approximately three years.

FOREST TO AG LAND CONVERSIONS

In 2025 the SSCC organized a small work group to discuss and clarify concerns related to forest clearing for agricultural production. The group includes district managers from across the state, as well as representatives from MDE, DNR, and NRCS. A summary of workgroup discussions and general recommendations was presented to the SSCC in April. A full summary report will be released soon.

SUPERVISOR APPOINTMENTS

- Calvert SCD – Thomas D. Briscoe
- Caroline SCD – Jefferson B. Towers
- Montgomery SCD – Robert Butz
- Prince George's SCD – Andrew V. Colevas
- Queen Anne's SCD – Steve Freeman
- St. Mary's SCD – Darrell Goode
- Washington County SCD – Harry E. Strite



EQUINE CONSERVATION SUMMIT IN SOUTHERN MARYLAND – SAVE THE DATE!

The Maryland Department of Agriculture's Horse Outreach Workgroup is excited to announce its inaugural Equine Conservation Summit! This year's event will take place on November 14th at the University System of Maryland's Southern Maryland campus in California, MD.

The summit will target horse farm owners, with workshops and panels focused on pasture and nutrient management, equine nutrition, and financial assistance opportunities for implementing conservation practices on farms. Visit maryland.gov/HOW for more information as it becomes available.

Several sponsorship opportunities are also available, featuring benefits such as digital and print advertising, complimentary registrations, booth space, and more. Exhibitor booths can also be purchased separately.

Contact Becky Remsberg at becky.remsberg@maryland.gov with questions.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

USDA LAUNCHES NEW REGENERATIVE PILOT PROGRAM

USDA recently announced a \$700 million Regenerative Pilot Program to help American farmers adopt practices that improve soil health, enhance water quality, and boost long-term productivity, all while strengthening America’s food and fiber supply.

Administered by NRCS, this new Regenerative Pilot Program delivers a streamlined, outcome-based conservation model—empowering producers to plan and implement whole-farm regenerative practices through a single application.

In FY2026, the Regenerative Pilot Program will focus on whole-farm planning that addresses every major resource concern—soil, water, and natural vitality—under a single conservation framework. USDA is dedicating \$400 million through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and \$300 million through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) to fund this first year of regenerative agriculture projects.

As part of participating in Regenerative Pilot Program, producers must: Work with NRCS staff, partners, or technical service providers to conduct a whole-farm assessment.

Use at least one primary regenerative management practice (see list below).

Agree to perform soil health testing in the first and last year of the contract (at a minimum) to establish a starting baseline and to record the resulting changes.

The whole-farm assessment includes all resource concerns, and it must meet NRCS planning criteria in the soil and water resource categories.

Primary practices include:

- Conservation Crop Rotation (328)
- Contour Farming (330)
- Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crop (331)
- Cover Crop (340)
- Drainage Water Management (554)
- Forage Harvest Management (511)
- Forest Stand Improvement (666)
- Irrigation Water Management (449)
- Mulching (484)
- Nutrient Management (590)
- Pest Management Conservation System (595)
- Grazing Management (528)
- Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (329)
- Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced (345)
- Stripcropping (585)

[Learn more about the Regenerative Pilot Program.](#)



PERSONNEL

NRCS WELCOMES...

Tonya Dennis, RC&D Program Assistant, State Office
Joey Davis, RC&D Forester starting May 11, Upper Eastern Shore
Timira Lockheart, Acting District Conservationist, Wicomico and Dorchester counties.
Hans Kefauver, Acting District Conservationist, Montgomery and Howard counties.

NRCS BIDS FAREWELL TO...

Sam Engler, District Conservationist for Montgomery and Howard counties, left federal service.
Ley Rideout, Resource Conservationist in Wicomico County, left federal service.
Kendrick Flowers, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, accepted a position with NRCS in Alabama.
Jong Kim, Structural Engineer, accepted a position with NRCS in New Jersey.
Peggy Lowman, Soil Conservationist, accepted a position with NRCS in Delaware

Future Dates to Remember	
May 21	SSCC Meeting, Annapolis
June 18	SSCC Meeting, Annapolis
July 16	SSCC Meeting, Annapolis
Aug 3-5	MASCD Annual Meeting, Hyatt Regency, Cambridge. For up to-date information, visit https://mascd.net/2026-mascd-annual-meeting/
Aug 20	SSCC Meeting, Annapolis
Sept 17	SSCC Meeting, Annapolis

CONSERVATION TRAINING VIDEOS AND RESOURCES

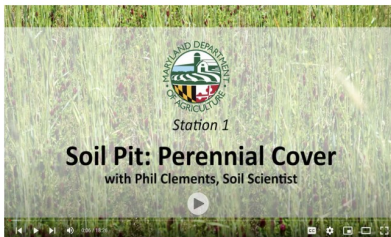
MDA's Office of Resource Conservation provides conservation training on a variety of soil health and natural resource topics. The following training videos are currently available. For more information, visit https://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/Pages/Conservation-Training.aspx



Maryland Soil Health Card

Soil Health Training | 19 min 59 sec

Join NRCS Soil Scientist Annie Rossi-Gill for an overview of Maryland's updated Soil Health Card.



Soil Pit: Perennial Cover

Soil Health Training | 18 min 27 sec

Phil Clements, Soil Scientist for the Southern Maryland region, discusses the soil health benefits of perennial cover crops.



Soil Pit: Annual Cover

Soil Health Training | 13 min 40 sec

NRCS Soil Scientist Annie Rossi-Gill reviews the soil health benefits of annual cover.

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, 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.

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.

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

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

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

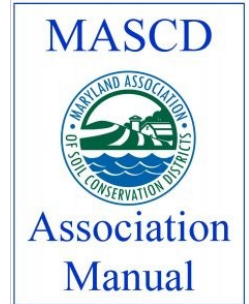
[Chapter 7](#) (History)

[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.