

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE BALTIMORE COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

410-666-1188, EXTENSION 3

EDITOR: GERALD F. TALBERT

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MDA ANNOUNCES NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PROGRESS

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) has re-released the latest compliance figures for its Nutrient Management Program. Established by state law in 1998, the program requires Maryland farmers to protect waterways from farm runoff by following nutrient management plans when caring for livestock and applying fertilizer, manure or other nutrient sources to crop fields.



According to the program's newly released 2008 accomplishments report, as of Dec. 31, 2008, 98 percent of the state's 6,000 eligible farmers have filed nutrient management plans with MDA. In addition, Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) describing how farmers implemented their nutrient management plans during the preceding year have been submitted for 99 percent of Maryland's farmland, or 1.2 million acres.

"This report demonstrates that the majority of Maryland farmers are committed to protecting natural resources and are complying with the Nutrient Management Law," said Agriculture Secretary Roger Richardson (now retired). "These plans not only protect the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries but are also valuable management tools that can help farmers save money on fertilizer while producing strong, healthy crops."

Nutrient management plans are science-based documents that help farmers manage fertilizers, animal waste and other nutrient sources more efficiently to meet crop needs while protecting water quality in streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. All farmers grossing \$2,500 a year or more or livestock producers with 8,000 pounds or more of live animal weight are required by law to run their operations using a nutrient management plan that addresses both nitrogen and phosphorus inputs. The requirement applies to all agricultural land used to produce plants, food, feed, fiber, animals or other agricultural products.

Nutrient management enforcement activities remained strong, with approximately 450 on-farm inspections. In 2008, MDA issued 1,700 warning letters to farmers who failed to file the AIRs, followed by 680 notifications of pending fines. Fines have been levied against 144 farmers who remain out of compliance. (See AIR notice, page 2)

In addition to farmers, MDA regulates approximately 700 individuals and companies that

apply fertilizer to 10 or more acres of non agricultural land, including golf courses, public parks, airports, athletic fields and state-owned land such as recreation areas and highway right-of-ways. Collectively, these urban land managers apply nutrients to approximately 275,000 acres of land. They are required by Maryland law to take soil tests, follow University of Maryland Cooperative Extension guidelines when applying nutrients, and keep certain records of fertilizer applications.

According to the MDA report, in 2008 MDA's Urban Nutrient Management Program inspected 52 firms and issued 12 warnings ordering urban land managers to correct their programs. Failure to take soil tests was the most common compliance issue.

Excess nutrients that run off the land from rural, suburban, urban and industrial sources are causes of Chesapeake Bay degradation. These excess nutrients fuel the growth of algae blooms that impact water quality and aquatic life. Maryland is taking a comprehensive statewide approach to reducing pollution from all sources, including wastewater treatment plants and septic, stormwater runoff, suburban lawns, and agriculture.

The Nutrient Management Program's 2008 annual report is available online at www.mda.state.md.us/pdf/nmar08.pdf. Article provided by Maryland Department of Agriculture.

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MACS Reminder

Each December, the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) sends out a Nutrient Management Annual Implementation Report (AIR). The nutrient management law requires the AIR to be completed each year and filed with MDA. Failure to file the AIR constitutes non-compliance with nutrient management regulations and ineligibility to receive payments from the Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share Program office for any payments, including cover crop. Payments will be withheld until the AIR is completed and on file with MDA. This requirement is being enforced by MDA and last year, several Baltimore County cooperators had their cost-share payments delayed. Please complete the required AIR each year so your cost share payments will not be delayed. Call the District if there are questions.

Maryland Farm Energy Audit Program

The Maryland Statewide Farm Energy Audit Program is a new program to help farmers reduce their energy costs and provides incentives to reduce the cost of new energy saving projects. A farm energy audit collects and analyzes information about a farm's energy use and recommends actions to increase the energy efficiency of the farm operation.

EnSave, a company based in Richmond, Vermont, in cooperation with NRCS, the Maryland Energy Administration, MDA, MASCD and several other organizations, will first conduct a phone interview to gather basic information and then provide a data collector to visit the farm and gather more specific information pertaining to lighting, ventilation, heating, drying, chilling, feed processing and other operations using electricity, natural gas or propane. An EnSave representative will generate a customized report that recommends energy savings potential and call the farmer to discuss the report.

There is a \$300 charge for the energy audit which will be refunded if any of the energy upgrades are installed. Financial incentives are available for the installation of energy efficient equipment whether an energy audit was performed or not:

- For qualifying lighting projects, a payment of \$0.06 per kilowatt hour of electricity saved;
- For all other eligible electric projects, a payment of \$0.08 per kilowatt hour saved;
- For eligible propane projects, a payment of \$1.50 per gallon of propane saved;
- For natural gas projects, a payment of \$1.63 per therm saved.

The incentive payments cannot exceed 50 percent of the total project cost.

The first step is to complete the program application and send to EnSave. To learn more, visit EnSave's website at <http://www.ensave.com/maryland-statewide-farm-energy-audit-program.html>. For more information, contact Corey Conant, EnSave Program Manager, at 800-732-1399 or email at coreyc@ensave.com.

An editorial Comment By Jim Ensor, District Manager

I am approaching my 20th year with the Baltimore County Soil Conservation District. I've seen a lot of changes within the District, our conservation partners and the agricultural community. Most of those changes have been positive ones resulting in a lot of conservation practices being put on the land to benefit the farming operation and at the same time, the environment. But for some in the ag community, there are questions of trust in the way the District is regarded and I feel it would be helpful to clarify the District's role and responsibilities.

The District is one member of Maryland's conservation partnership, working with the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which make up the local, state and federal team that works as one to assist landowners to plan and conserve their natural resources. Most of this work is provided in a voluntary approach and one of the biggest misconceptions about the District is that it is a regulatory agency. This is simply not true. The Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management (DEPRM), the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are regulatory agencies, charged with the responsibility to enforce environmental laws. The District has no such regulatory authority. It was created to provide technical and financial assistance at no cost and address the natural resource issues that you want help with to improve your farming operation.

However, if a farmer finds himself in trouble with one of these regulatory agencies, the District is often involved to work out a solution. If the farmer chooses not to follow the District's suggestions, they will still have to answer to the regulatory agencies. The District has an agreement with these agencies to take the lead when appropriate in working with the farmer in a voluntary capacity to find a practical solution to whatever environmental problem resulted in a complaint or an inspection and a reasonable timeline to implement the corrective action.

In these cases, we believe that the farmer and the enforcement agency would prefer that the District make the first attempt to work out a solution that meets the legal requirements and the farmer feels is reasonable and doable. Usually, the best management practice(s) needed to solve an environmental problem is eligible for federal or state cost-sharing to help defray the cost of the corrective action and only we can arrange that.

The District exists to support the agricultural community of Baltimore County and help it to protect and manage natural resources in a way that maintains and improves agricultural productivity. We will continue to work hard to deserve your trust.



2009 Western School of Technology and Environmental Science Envirothon Team #1– From left to right, Back row: Mark Kather (advisor), Chris Stine, Salar Khaleghzadegan, Jen Grauer, Osman Ulug. Front row: Kim Bickerstaff (advisor), Israth Farzana and Michele Liggins.

Western Tech. Team Wins County Envirothon

One of the two teams representing Western School of Technology and Environmental Science won the 17th annual Baltimore County Envirothon held April 22, 2009 at Days Cove Environmental Center in White Marsh.

Western Tech. Team #1 beat 18 other teams from 13 schools including Carver Center, Catonsville, Chesapeake, Dulaney, Eastern, Franklin, Hereford, Lansdowne, New Town, Owings Mills, Perry Hall, Sparrows Point and Towson.

Teachers Kim Bickerstaff and Mark Kather will now strive to lead their team to victory at the Maryland State Envirothon competition scheduled for June 16 - 18 at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg. The winning team from the state competition will then head to the National Envirothon to be held on August 2 - 8 at the University of North Carolina in Ashville.

The Envirothon is a unique hands-on outdoor competition for high school students designed to challenge their environmental knowledge

and problem solving skills. High school teams come together to compete with one another in five subjects: wildlife, forestry, soils, aquatics, and a current environmental issue. This year, the issue is "biodiversity in a changing world". Students work together in teams of five. These teams are often formed from school science clubs or FFA chapters. There are opportunities throughout the year for each team to receive resource materials for use in the classroom, attend workshops geared to both teachers and students, and arrange for an environmental professional to visit the school.

At the state and local levels, the Envirothon is supported by conservation districts, federal and state natural resource agencies and school districts. Nationally, the Envirothon is sponsored by the Canon Corporation and the National Association of Conservation Districts.

Article written by Essy Frey, District Administrative Assistant

District Outreach

Speakers from the Baltimore County Soil Conservation District are available at no charge to give presentations on natural resource conservation programs in agricultural and urban areas. If your organization or school would like to hear about the ways that conservation practices can improve soil, water and air quality for any land use, contact the District office at 410-666-1188, extension 3 to request a speaking engagement.

Baltimore County Soil Conservation District
 9831 Van Buren Lane
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<http://www.mascd.net/>
BCSCD



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BALTIMORE COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

A political subdivision of the State of Maryland, the Baltimore County Soil Conservation District was established in 1944. Its mission is to protect the natural resources of Baltimore County and assist landowners in implementing sound conservation measures. The District is managed by a Board of Supervisors, five appointed county residents who take an oath of office to serve their community. The staff is composed of federal, state and district employees.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

- Charles Conklin—Chairman
- Thomas Reynolds—Vice Chairman
- Stephen Smith—Treasurer
- Vernon Foster—Supervisor
- Mike McGinnis—Supervisor
- David Martin, Secretary, Cooperative Extension
- Bud Sparks, Supervisor Emeritus

ASSOCIATE SUPERVISORS

- Daniel Dorsey Pat Ghingher Lucy Wright
- Diana Gutierrez

DISTRICT STAFF

ADMINISTRATIVE

- Jim Ensor, District Manager
- Essy Frey, Administrative Assistant

AGRICULTURAL

- Tim Clippinger, District Conservationist, NRCS
- Andy Thomas, Soil Conservation Eng. Tech., MDA
- Ciara McMurtrie, Planner/Outreach Specialist, MDA
- Jared Wagner, Soil Conservation Planner, MDA
- Serafina Rayner, Technician, MDA

URBAN

- Jeff West, Urban Conservationist
- Quintin Cornwell, Urban Conservationist
- David Bachman, Urban Conservationist
- Sara Campbell, Urban Conservationist, Balto. Co.

All District services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.

LET US KNOW IF WE CAN HELP YOU!

The Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share Program (MACS) will pay up to 87.5% of the installation cost of these practices for qualifying landowners:

- Waste Storage Grassed Waterway
- Riparian Buffer Winter Cover Crop
- Diversion Field Border
- Heavy Use Area Protection Filter Strip
- Roof Runoff Mngt. System
- Sediment Basin Stream Fencing
- Nutrient Mgt. Plan Strip Cropping
- Spring Development Stream Crossing
- Trough or Tank Critical Area Planting

If you would like to see if you qualify or you'd like more information on these or other conservation practices, a conservation plan for your property or updating an old plan, mail or fax this form to us and we will contact you.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone # _____

Fax to: 410-666-0179 or mail to:

Baltimore County Soil Conservation District
 9831 Van Buren Lane
 Cockeysville, MD 21030