AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION NEWS

A Publication of the Baltimore County Soil Conservation District

Editor: Gerald F. Talbert

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What We've Accomplished

Maryland farmers are among the most conservation-minded in the nation and have done an exemplary job year after year in protecting our natural resource base, providing sustainable production and reducing the potential for pollution. Although there are plenty of new challenges, the start of a new year is an appropriate time to review past accomplishments. Here are some statistics recorded by the Maryland Department of Agriculture:

- Since 1984, farmers have spent over $14 million of their own money to match $100 million in state and federal funds to install over 20,000 water quality best management practices (BMP) or about 2.5 BMPs per day, every day, for 25 years. Installation of agricultural BMPs on farmland will account for 67 percent of a 2.5 million pounds of nitrogen reduction towards Maryland's 2011 Chesapeake Bay milestones.
- In 2009 alone, farmers matched a record $19 million in state grants from the Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share Program (MACS) with nearly $1 million of their own money to install 2,300 conservation projects on their farms. Collectively, these practices will prevent 1.3 million pounds of nitrogen and 86,900 pounds of phosphorus from impacting waterways each year. Their practices prevented 12,459 tons of soil annually and 1,647 tons of manure daily from entering waterways.
- Cover crops are widely recognized as one of the most cost-effective and environmentally promising ways to reduce agricultural runoff into the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. In 2004, the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund was established to create a dedicated and stable funding source for Maryland's cover crop cost-share program. In 2008, Governor O'Malley's 2010 Chesapeake Bay Fund provided millions more. Acres approved for planting in the 2009-2010 Cover Crop Program was a record 508,000 acres to take up excess nutrients and prevent soil erosion over the winter.
- Since 1999, through Maryland's Manure Transport Program, approximately 576,875 tons of excess poultry litter and manure have been transported from areas with excess manure or high soil phosphorus levels to other farms or alternative use facilities that can use the product in an environmentally-sound manner. In Fiscal Year 2009, 132 farmers received $663,177 in state grant payments to transport 119,892 tons of manure to approved farms and businesses. Delmarva poultry companies provided matching funds to transport the poultry litter.
- 99.8 percent of the state's 1.3 million acres of crop land and 99 percent of the state's 6,200 eligible farmers have nutrient management plans and are complying with the state's nutrient management law.
- Over the last 10 years, Maryland farmers have converted approximately 68,700 acres of environmentally sensitive farmland into streamside buffers, wetlands other wildlife habitat areas through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The program helps protect water quality in local streams and rivers by reducing soil erosion, controlling nu-

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trient runoff and increasing wildlife habitat.

- Approximately 22 percent of all Maryland farmland is managed as woodland, which promotes sustainable forestry to provide clean water, improve stream health, stabilize soil, reduce nutrients and sequester carbon through actively growing forest and shrub biomass.
- More than 50 percent of Maryland farmers in targeted watersheds achieved the highest assistance rate available from the Conservation Security Program - a federal program that provides funds for the farmers that go the extra mile for conservation. More farms in Maryland qualified in their first year of eligibility than any other state in the Northeast.
- The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation has permanently preserved 283,000 acres of priority farmland for farming, with a public investment of over $550 million since its founding in 1977. The Foundation has preserved farmland in all of Maryland's 23 counties.
- See www.baystat.maryland.gov for more information about agricultural conservation achievements toward the Chesapeake Bay restoration goals.

Did You Know?

- Ninety-one percent of Americans eat turkey at Thanksgiving. Maryland farmers raised 750,000 turkeys totaling more than 26.3 million pounds with a total value of $13.7 million in 2007.
- The primary species of Christmas trees grown in Maryland are Scotch pine, white pine, blue spruce, Douglas fir, and Fraser fir.
- About 2,000 communities receive mosquito control services from the Maryland Department of Agriculture.
- Maryland farmers are strong stewards of the land and water. *(See page 1, What We've Accomplished).*
- There are 42 wineries licensed in Maryland.
- MDA is a member of the Maryland Green Registry, recognized for its sustainable practices. Maryland's Green Registry includes more than 150 public and private-sector organizations that have implemented at least five practices toward a greener working environment and provides tips and resources for incorporating green practices.
- Maryland has more horses per square mile than any other state in the nation. In 2002, there were 87,000 horses on 20,200 farms covering 685,000 acres in Maryland. In Baltimore County, there were 10,630 horses on 2,100 farms in 2007.
- MDA headquarters recycled about 45.5 tons of materials last year.
- There are 90 organic farms in Maryland on 7,100 certified acres. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides, fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge, bioengineering, or ionizing radiation.
- Maryland is one of the first states in the nation to have a backyard kitchen garden at the Governor's house.
- There are 12,834 farms in Maryland with an average size of 160 acres. In Baltimore County, there were 751 farms averaging 104 acres covering 78,282 acres in 2009. The average age of an operator is 58.8 years, over 24% are women.

[Article provided by the Maryland Department of Agriculture]

Baseline Assessments

What is a baseline assessment? Currently, it is a term that can be applied to two environmental programs that affect agriculture. Baseline refers to either an eligibility criteria or a compliance level. Assessment is the process by which a determination can be made if baseline has been achieved.

The term has been recently used in reference to Maryland's new Nutrient Trading Program. A sophisticated internet software tool called the Maryland Nutrient Trading Tool (MNTT) contains satellite imagery and current Chesapeake Bay model data.

To determine if a farmer is eligible to trade nutrient credits, the web tool can locate the farm with Google

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Earth, outline the farm and field boundaries, enter specific data from the farmer's nutrient management plan and conservation plan and compare those results with the requirements of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Plan for that region. In order to be eligible to trade nutrient credits, a seller must have implemented his nutrient management plan and conservation plan at a level which would meet what the TMDL requires.

In light of announcements by the Environmental Protection Agency that TMDL implementation will soon be mandatory, a farmer can determine where he stands in regard to what a local TMDL requires by having the baseline assessment run by MNTT in the exact same manner as nutrient trading eligibility is determined.. If a farm does not meet the baseline, the MNTT can show which practices could be implemented to make up the difference.

Having the baseline assessment run is accomplished at no cost or obligation to the farmer. Staff in every local soil conservation district has been trained to use the MNTT. A farmer would need to drop off his nutrient management plan at the district office so the staff can enter the appropriate data. If a farmer applies less nutrients than is indicated in the plan, he should write the amount that was actually applied in the plan next to each field's recommended application rates as this could have a significant impact on the assessment.

As there is no cost or obligation to have the baseline assessment run, farmers are encouraged to get this information in order to realize where they stand for either the potential for trading nutrient credits or their future obligation to meet the requirements of the local TMDL. Once one knows if they have met the baseline, they may also make note of additional best management practices that can generate credits or if they didn't meet baseline, what is needed in order to become eligible to trade. In regard to TMDL requirements, knowing now where one stands allows maximum time to prepare to eventually meet the requirements if necessary.

2011 Board of Supervisors Meetings

The Soil Conservation District Board of Supervisors meet monthly, generally on the third Tuesday of each month. The meetings are open to the public.

January 18-9:30 AM	July 19-9:30 AM
February 15-9:30 AM	August 16-9:30 AM
March 15-9:30 AM	September 20-9:30AM
April 19-8:00 AM	October 18-9:30 AM
May 17-8:00 AM	November 15-9:30 AM
June 21-9:30 AM	December 20-9:30 AM

Bay States Preservation Goals Met

Although the portions of New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia and Virginia that drain to the Chesapeake Bay, some 64,000 square miles in total, have not yet met goals set for reducing nitrogen and phosphorus, but they have exceeded another goal for permanently preserved open space. The goal was to preserve 20% of the watershed in land that is strategically located for environmental quality. Through last year, 21.3% of the watershed in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia, 1.24 million acres, were permanently preserved through purchase or conservation easements that prevent development. That is 1,900 square miles, which is the equivalent of an area 27 times the size of the District of Columbia. Ninety percent of the cost of the preservation efforts were borne by the three states, now totaling $491 million.

A new goal set by the recent federal Bay strategy is to add another two million acres by 2025.
[source: Bay Journal, Volume 20, Number 10]

The stripped and shapely
Maple grieves
The ghosts of her
Departed leaves.

The ground is hard,
As hard as stone.
The year is old,
The birds are flown. - John Updike, American author and poet

Baltimore County Soil Conservation District
1114 Shawan Road, Suite 4
Cockeysville, MD 21030
Phone: (410) 527-5920; Fax: (410) 527-1528
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
Mike McGinnis—Vice Chair
Stephen Smith—Treasurer
Vernon Foster—Supervisor
Hank Suchting—Supervisor
David Martin, Secretary, Cooperative Extension
Bud Sparks, Supervisor Emeritus

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Alex Shindledecker, Soil Conservation Technician

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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
_____Sediment Basin _____Stream Fencing
____ Strip Cropping _____Spring Development
_____Stream Crossing _____Trough or Tank
_____Critical Area Planting ___Filter Strip
_____Heavy Use Area Protection
_____Roof Runoff Mngt. System

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) 527-1528 or mail to:

Baltimore County Soil Conservation District
1114 Shawan Road, Suite 4
Cockeysville, MD 21030