

PARTNERSHIP PRESS

Maryland Conservation



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A MESSAGE FROM MARYLAND SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE BY ROGER RICHARSON

Dear Conservation Team Members: As I complete my first three months as Maryland's eighth Secretary of Agriculture, I thought that it would be helpful to update you on the status of some of the O'Malley Administration's goals and early accomplishments.



First let me say how impressed I am by the dedication and level of expertise of the conservation professionals that I have met. It is both an honor and a pleasure to head MDA, where serving the needs of the farming community and citizens of Maryland is job one.

The efforts of the Conservation Partnership have not gone without notice. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate MDA's conservation field staff and all of the members of Maryland's Conservation Partnership on being named the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's *2007 Maryland Conservationists of the Year*. To see district staff being recognized in such a public forum shows the strides you have made in building bridges between the agricultural and environmental communities. It is gratifying to have SCDs finally recognized for the pivotal role that you play in protecting our natural resources.

Let me also add that the O'Malley-Brown Administration is committed to providing farmers with the tools they need to protect and enhance our states' two most important natural resources—our farmland and the Chesapeake Bay.

This year, a record \$70 million has been allocated to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation to permanently preserve farmland. Also, more than \$8 million will be available to help farmers plant cover crops during the 2007-2008 season.

Closer to home, and perhaps most importantly for the members of the Conservation Partnership, state funding has been restored for soil conservation district technical staff. I am pleased to report that MDA is working to fill the 12 field positions budgeted for the upcoming fiscal year.

Looking ahead, MDA will continue to work with the Conservation Partnership to examine how programs can be improved. Some of this process will be driven by BayStat and we will be looking for your assistance in presenting program data in this format. The ultimate goal is to make a good agency and conservation partnership even better for Maryland farmers.

A MESSAGE TO THE MARYLAND CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP, FROM VIRGINIA (GINGER) MURPHY, FORMER NRCS MARYLAND STATE CONSERVATIONIST

By the time you read this message, many of you will know that I have accepted a new job assignment. I will be detailed for one year to Senator Dianne Feinstein's office to work on conservation, agriculture and Farm Bill issues. Senator Feinstein is a member of the Senate Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related agencies. I am excited about the opportunity to be involved in the conservation and agriculture issues being debated during this new Farm Bill cycle, but I am also saddened to leave my position as Maryland's State Conservationist.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the two years that I spent working with you in Maryland. Together we have achieved many successes as the Maryland Conservation Partnership. We have strengthened our relationship with federal, state, and private groups working to restore the Chesapeake Bay and we have demonstrated the important role that agriculture plays in improving water quality and protecting natural resources.

My new position began on April 2, 2007. I will carry our conservation message of "Helping People Help the Land" as I work closely with legislators formulating the new Farm Bill. I treasure the time that I served as the State Conservationist and wish each of you the best in your career.

MARYLAND'S CONSERVATION FIELD STAFF TO RECEIVE CBF AWARD

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) has recognized the agricultural field staff of NRCS, MDA and the SCDs with the coveted 2007 Maryland Conservationists of the Year Award. CBF has set aside the afternoon of June 11th to honor all the agricultural field staff who work as part of the innovative Maryland partnership of federal, state, and local staff that delivers conservation programs to our farm community.

The events will start at 1:00 p.m. at CBF's headquarters in Annapolis. From 1:00-3:30 p.m., participants will have the opportunity to enjoy canoeing through Walnut Creek,

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SINE DIE REPORT BY LYNNE HOOT, MASCD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As a result of the passage of HB 558, starting in October, it will no longer be unethical for farmers to work for the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA). Actually, there are several farmers who currently work for MDA, but they were grandfathered in after the State Ethics Commission ruled in the early 2000's that being a farmer caused a conflict of interest. MDA's current farmer employees, who hold positions throughout the Department, do a great job and provide unique knowledge and skills.

For Maryland's soil conservation districts, passage of HB 558, sponsored by Delegate Paul Stull and cosponsored by 32 other delegates, means that when MDA starts hiring new field employees to work in the district offices later this year, they can include local farmers. There is a provision in the bill for MDA to work with the State Ethics Commission to prepare regulations to deal with potential conflicts of interest. Individuals with a farm background become fully functional district employees quickly and require little training. There are many farmers with small operations who cannot survive without off-farm employment and many seek positions with health insurance for their families. The technician and planner positions in the soil conservation offices provide a perfect opportunity for these farmers to work in an area where they have expertise and understanding who will be well received by the clients they serve. The farmer employees who write soil and water conservation plans and schedule the implementation of the best management practices in these plans for their fellow farmers, understand cropping patterns, farming issues and financial limitations.

The Green Fund (HB 1220/SB 901), which would have provided significant financial resources to support agricultural best management practices, did not make it through the Senate. Originally touted as "teeth for smart growth," the bill was amended in the house to become more of a funding source rather than a way to discourage Maryland's landscape from being eaten up by random development. The bill will return next year along with other fund raising and spending programs. It is important that districts play a significant role in developing these funding options.

HB 1268 designed to change the way the septic system funds from the Bay Restoration fee (flush tax) are used from 40% for cover crops to 60%, was also defeated. This would have provided more than \$2M in additional funding for the cover crop program.

The biggest disappointment this session was that the Annual Salary Review (ASR) for soil conservation district employees was not approved. Although funding had been allocated for grade level increases for technical district field positions, it was prevented by a statewide decision by the Governor not to approve any ASR's this year because of budgetary concerns.

The funding in the MDA budget was reallocated to allow the 12 positions to be hired sooner and to provide one time grants to districts. The effort to provide higher salaries for the MDA employees working in districts will remain a top priority for MASCD.

MDA's budget remained in tact throughout the legislative process. The legislature approved \$8.3 million for cover crops, which was the same as FY07. There was a reduction in the Nutrient Management Cost Share Program of \$140,000 from FY07; and an increase in funding for the University of MD for nutrient management consultants of \$220,000 which will maintain the current staffing level. The MACS program received \$3.6M in from the Capital budget. In other agricultural funding: \$3M was provided for MARBIDCO; \$70M for MALPF (which includes state, local and federal funding and is down from \$89 million in FY07); but no funding was included for Gypsy Moth Suppression. Other capital projects receiving funding were: Montgomery Ag Activity Center Expansion—\$200,000; St. Mary's Agriculture Service Center—\$100,000; and Talbot Ag Service Center—\$100,000.

Legislation to name Sassafras Sandy Loam as the state soil did not move from committee and has provided the press with an opportunity to question the need for a "state dirt". MASCD along with several soil scientists from across the state were hoping to add Sassafras to the list of the state's symbols in time for a display on the importance of soil at the Smithsonian Institute in July 2008. Twenty-two other states have officially designated a state soil and this national recognition is encouraging several other states to follow suit this year. There is an interest in resubmitting the bill for 2008.

Several bills were introduced on stormwater and sediment and erosion control programs. HB 185 that would have required Anne Arundel Soil Conservation District to approve state sediment and erosion control plans in the Patuxent River Watershed (they already approve them

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Signing ceremony for HB 558 Department of Agriculture - Employment - Exemption from Ethics Restrictions . Front Row from left to right, Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown, Senate President Mike Miller, Governor Martin O'Malley and House Speaker Mike Busch, top row, Deputy Secretary Buddy Hance, Bill sponsor, Delegate Paul Stull, Maryland Farm Bureau lobbyist Mark Fuchs, MASCD Executive Director Lynne Hoot, Secretary of Agriculture Roger Richardson, Assistant Secretary Doug Scott, and Farm Bureau Lobbyist Valerie Connelly.

SEDIMENT & EROSION CONTROL PLAN APPROVAL: IDENTIFYING AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The SSCC has been discussing how to better define what is considered an agricultural management activity under MDE's Sediment Control law. Activities so defined are excused from obtaining an engineered sediment and erosion control plan but are required to work with the local SCD to assure sediment problems do not result.

SSCC asked a subcommittee to discuss this issue and provide recommendations for SSCC consideration. A subcommittee comprised of Louise Lawrence, SSCC; Herb Sachs, MDE, SSCC representative; Tom Devilbuss, Carroll SCD Supervisor; Bruce Young, St Mary's SCD; Elmer Weibley, Washington SCD; Jim Ensor & Tim Clippinger, Baltimore County SCD; Gary Davis, Harford SCD; Royden Powell, MDA; Dwight Dotterer, MDA; and Dan Bard, MDA met and developed recommendations. Recommendations were circulated to SCDs and presented at the March MASCD Board of Directors meeting for additional comment and feedback.

Herb Sachs, MDE, has indicated that there was wide variability among SCDs in how they interpret agricultural management activities. MDE is interested in having SCDs continue to evaluate projects and make the "call" for these types of activities but would support greater statewide consistency.

Dan Bard repeated a recommendation made at the subcommittee meeting by Tom Devilbuss, a Carroll SCD Supervisor and county planning official, that counties be notified of the policy once established.

The SSCC endorsed the following recommendations made by the subcommittee:

1. There should be statewide consistency in application of standards relating to agricultural land management activities authorized to utilize a SCWQ plan to address sediment control.
2. For a farm definition for purposes of evaluating an agricultural land management activity, SCDs should use 10 or more acres of land producing an agricultural product or management of 5 or more animal units.
3. Agricultural land management and related activities must directly pertain to management of the farm including production of food, fiber, nursery plants, and

production of livestock or poultry. They may include cultivation, housing of animals, animal waste management, best management practices or building of structures provided activities are directly tied to the business of farming.

4. Agricultural land management activities should be actively managed under a SCWQ plan.
5. SCDs may pursue a "general permit" designation with MDE for activities that
 - a. are of a character that is not readily defined as "agricultural land management," but occur on agricultural land,
 - b. are of a size that warrants more formalized standards, or
 - c. can be more efficiently managed absent a site specific SCWQ plan and lend themselves to standard criteria.

WATER QUALITY STANDARDS: POTENTIAL IMPACTS TO DRAINAGE BMPS

John Rhoderick, MDA, briefed the SSCC in January concerning MDE's biannual cycle for issuance of water quality standards. During the last cycle MDE advanced the need for variances from meeting water quality standards for certain modified "state waters" such as stormwater management facilities and certain man-made agricultural drainage channels. EPA regulations allow states to propose variances when feasibility of meeting water quality standards is not likely.

Subsequently, a number of environmental groups challenged the allowance of variances because of the perception that MDE was weakening water quality standards. SCDs and other interested parties countered the negative response by explaining the inherent contradiction that new BMPs being piloted within the drainage channel to reduce nutrient delivery to streams and other water bodies would be prohibited if variances from water quality standards were not allowed for certain agricultural drainage ditches. In response to conflicting input, MDE did not pursue any variances but agreed to an educational outreach effort to clarify the issue and potential outcomes of pursuing a variance.

After some discussion, the SSCC endorsed interagency efforts to inform the environmental community about the intended outcome of variances for stormwater management and man-made agricultural drainage ditches. Rhoderick indicated the timeframe to move any MDE proposal forward to amend water quality standards was the fall of 2007.

CAFO UPDATE

Doug Scott provided information at the January SSCC on the status of Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) regulations. There have been some "starts and stops" in the process as legal cases challenged different components of EPA regulations. MDE had proposed

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SSCC



Report

Information from the State Soil Conservation Committee, continued

CAFO UPDATE

(Continued from page 3)

updated regulations in Maryland for CAFO General Permits and held public hearings in 2005. The current direction is for MDE regulations to require permits based on the size of an operation. Although the federal courts found against this size threshold premise in legal challenge to EPA, MDE also implements a State law and regulations which may be stricter than federal requirements.

At this juncture MDE plans to implement a plan using 125,000 broilers or more as the threshold for CAFO permit requirement. There is likely to be limits on “uncontained” stockpiling of poultry litter on these farms for more than 14 days. MDA is working with UMD on a demonstration project to determine effectiveness of alternative short term waste containment designs.

It is likely that MDA will take a lead role in assuring operations with fewer animals than the threshold for “large” CAFOs are in compliance with nutrient management requirements and managing manure resources. MDE will need to go through the process to re-promulgate regulations and plans to hold meetings to review the proposal.

MACS UPDATE

Cover Crop Program

Robert Ensor, MACS Administrator presented proposed guidelines for the 2007/2008 Cover Crop Program to the SSCC in March. He noted that the 2006/2007 program represented the largest sign up in the program’s history and mentioned the need to streamline the program to keep it farmer-friendly. He indicated that the MACS technical advisory committee had met to discuss improvements and recommend program criteria. Ensor then went through recommendations comparing this year’s program with recommendations for next year. Differences include:

- reducing the sign up to 4 weeks rather than 6,
- requiring separate applications for traditional and commodity cover crop program sign up, and
- changing the pro-rating approval process to first-come approval with a per county allocation cap.

The planting dates and payment rates would not change. The aerial seeding pilot program in Western MD would not be continued due to poor response. There was some discussion of adapting a hi-boy sprayer that could travel through corn as an alternative to aerial seeding where harvest was late. Rice expressed concern that new participants captured this year could lose out if sign up wasn’t pro-rated. After additional discussion the program proposal was approved by SSCC.

Heavy Use Area

Robert Ensor, MACS Administrator, discussed specifications used for Heavy Use Areas (HUA) at the SSCC March meeting. MACS currently provides cost share for up to 40 square feet per animal unit. The NRCS specifications provide for an area range (for example 40-60 sq ft) per animal unit and the ranges associated with specific animal types. Ensor proposed to modify MACS to coincide with NRCS specifications. SSCC endorsed the change.

NOTES/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Emergency Toxic Permits: Management of Aquatic Weeds in Ponds

MDE regulations (COMAR 26.08.03.02) authorize SCDs to issue permits for use of toxic materials for the control of aquatic life in ponds. These permits were intended to be for emergency conditions requiring immediate attention to prevent water quality problems or to limit the need for more extensive treatment if delayed. The authorization also limits which materials could be used, time of application, and restricts permit approval to two applications.

Although SCDs have routinely issued these permits, MDE has requested that pond owners wanting to control pond weeds be referred to the MDE for permits in situations where an emergency does not exist. MDE can issue 5 year permits for control of pond weeds. For additional information contact Ed Gertler, 410-537-3651.

SSCC APPOINTMENTS

The following supervisor appointments were made:

- Allegany SCD – Ron Hawk
- Caroline SCD – George Landis
- Carroll SCD – Donald Maring
- Frederick SCD – Roger Troxell
- Garrett SCD – Kristen Enlow
- Montgomery SCD – Robert Stabler

Nevin Dawson, a forester hired to work from Wye Research & Education Center was introduced to the SSCC in March. The position he fills is jointly funded by Cooperative Extension and DNR. He will work on “Forestry for the Bay” program developed by Jonathan Kays to promote proper management for owners of smaller tracks of forest. He will also provide assistance to counties on forestry issues.

PERSONNEL NOTES

MASCD WELCOMES...

Cheryle Franceschi, who joined the Maryland Envirothon in late March as coordinator. The former broadcaster, business owner, and community activist was born in Washington, DC, surrounded by politics; an environment that prepared her for a role as a community activist. During her last four years as a resident of Carroll County, she started a PTA petition drive that led to the creation of Carrolltowne United. This grass-roots organization continues to work with the county land developer to ease the strain on the area's infrastructure. MASCD looks forward to working with Cheryle to continue the enthusiasm of the Envirothon program.

MDA WELCOMES...

Katie Johnson, SC Planner, Corsica River grant, Queen Anne's SCD
Jerry Hasbargen, SC Specialist, MACS

MDA BIDS FAREWELL TO...

Stewart Smith, SC Specialist, MACS
Bob Ensor, Program Manager, MACS
Eileen Pilkowski, Administrative Officer, Nutrient Management

NRCS WELCOMES...

Dan Runnels, as the Acting State Conservationist in the State Office. When a new State Conservationist is hired, Runnels will return to his current position in NRCS national headquarters as the Director of the Operations Management and Oversight Division.

Corey Brink, as Soil Conservationist in the Frederick Field Service Center. Brink joined NRCS, Maryland on April 15, 2007. He previously worked as a Soil Conservationist with NRCS in Iowa City, Iowa.

Michelle (Tiffany) Laws, as a Farm Bill Program Specialist on the Programs Staff at the State Office in Annapolis. She previously worked for NRCS in New Jersey as a Soil Conservationist. Laws served on a three-month detail to NRCS Maryland in the Prince George's County Field Service Center in the summer of 2001.

Hans Kefauver, a Soil Conservationist, formerly assigned to the Frederick Field Service Center, was reassigned to the Washington County Field Service Center in Hagerstown on April 1, 2007.

NRCS BIDS FAREWELL TO...

Andrea Clarke, formerly the state agricultural Economist and State Outreach Coordinator on the Resources Team at the State Office. Clarke accepted a position with NRCS National Headquarters on the staff of the Deputy Chief for Programs.

Virginia Murphy, former State Conservationist for NRCS Maryland, has accepted a detail to Senator Dianne Feinstein's office to assist with agriculture and conservation issues, effective April 1, 2007. As a result of this assignment, the Maryland State Conservationist position will be advertised and filled with a permanent replacement.

TRAINING

FUNDAMENTALS OF NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING COURSE SET FOR JUNE 19 AND 20

A two-day Fundamentals of Nutrient Management Training Course will be held June 19 and 20 in the lower level conference rooms at the Maryland Department of Agriculture's headquarters, 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis. The course provides participants with an overview of areas covered by the Maryland Nutrient Management Certification Exam and the nutrient management component of the Mid-Atlantic Certified Crop Advisor Exam scheduled for August 3, 2007. The \$30 registration fee is payable in advance and covers lunch and coffee breaks on both days. The registration deadline is June 8, 2007.

To download a registration form, visit the MDA's web site at www.mda.state.md.us. Scroll down the Quick Links to Nutrient Management and click on 2007 Nutrient Management Training Classes. Interested persons may also call 410-841-5959 for a registration form or more information.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

NEW NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT REPORTING SOFTWARE AVAILABLE

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the University of Maryland College of Agriculture and Nature Resources have released their new software program, Nutrient Management Reporter for Maryland (NuMan Reporter). This Windows®-based software ties in closely with the reporting requirements of the Maryland Nutrient Management Program and is designed to make annual nutrient management implementation reporting easier for farmers. NuMan Reporter software may be downloaded free of charge from the University of Maryland's web site at www.agnr.umd.edu/users/numan/reporter/. To order a free CD of NuMan Reporter or obtain information on training workshops, contact the Maryland Cooperative Extension Nutrient Management Program at 301-405-1318 or the Maryland Nutrient Management Program at 410-841-5959.

SIGN UP FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

The Beltsville Agriculture Research Center (BARC) is encouraging citizens to join a community supported agriculture (CSA) farm to support local farmers while receiving delicious, healthy, fresh produce all summer long. CSAs connect local farmers with local consumers. CSA members pay an up-front subscription fee to the farmers. In return, members are provided with a share of the season's harvest, usually on a weekly basis. This year BARC has partnered with Calvert Farms in Cecil County, MD to provide members with a share of the season's harvest of fresh vegetables and fruits. For information on Calvert Farm, visit www.calvertfarm.com.

ITEMS OF INTEREST *CONT'D***2007-2008 WINTER COVER CROP PROGRAM SIGN UP
JUNE 4-29, 2007****Take Cover—Protect the Bay**

Cover crops are widely recognized as one of the most cost-effective and environmentally promising ways to control soil erosion and reduce nutrient runoff into the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries during the winter. The Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program provides grants to farmers who plant cover crops in the fall to slow down rainwater runoff and recycle any nutrients remaining in the soil from the previous summer crop.

Approximately \$8 million in funding is available to farmers through this popular program for the 2007-2008 planting season. Farmers should apply at their local soil conservation district. Applications may also be downloaded from the Maryland Department of Agriculture's website at www.mda.state.md.us and faxed to the SCD.

GRAIN PRODUCERS SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

The Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board has announced that it will award two deserving students enrolled in a Maryland or out-of-state institution with \$2,500 scholarships. Funded with Maryland grain checkoff funds, the scholarships provide financial support to students interested in pursuing a career in agriculture. The scholarships will be awarded to Maryland residents who are enrolled in or accepted by a four-year institution and working toward a BS degree, or students enrolled in or accepted by a two-year institution with an agricultural program.

The selections will be based on agricultural background, family farm involvement, financial need, grade point average, agriculture related studies, career goals, and extra curricular activities. Applicants or the applicant's immediate family must be involved in the production of grain. The deadline for applications is June 1, 2007. For an application, call Lynne Hoot at 410-956-5771 or visit www.marylandgrain.com.

AG FIELD DAY SUCCESSFUL

On April 21, 2007, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with USDA-NRCS, UMD - Cooperative Extension and Frederick Soil Conservation District, held an agricultural field day at Teabow Farm in Walkersville, MD to demonstrate alternative manure application strategies. Even though the threat of inclement weather was a concern, over 140 participated in this informative field day. In addition to poster sessions that focused on nutrient management, nitrogen loss, and manure management, various manure application methods were demonstrated.

Traditional tanker, spray irrigation, injection and minimum disturbance application methods were compared during the two field demonstration sessions. As part of a two year Pioneer Grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, additional field days and research will be planned to further explore odor control and nitrogen capture associated with alternative methods of liquid dairy manure application. Many thanks to all that participated to make this a successful event.

EVENTS**MASCD SCHEDULED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE
2007 NACD SUMMER LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE
- MARYLAND TO MAKE HILL VISITS JULY 24TH**

The 2007 NACD legislative Summer Board Meeting and Legislative Conference is scheduled for July 21-24, 2007. Maryland's district supervisors are encouraged to participate in the whole program which will include a day of Hill visits to Maryland's 10 Congressional Offices on Tuesday, July 24th. Congress is expected to be in the throws of the 2007 Farm Bill and Maryland's conservation district leaders will be right in the midst of the action.

The main events will take place at the Washington Court Hotel and room rates are as low as \$207 for a single, \$227 for a double, (prices do not include tax). The joint meeting will replace the traditional spring legislative conference. It will expand the NACD Board's opportunity for exposure and interaction in Washington, and will maximize efforts to educate and influence decision makers.

District supervisors who choose not to participate for the whole event will be able to meet in Annapolis and travel to Washington, DC by van for a day on the Hill followed by the NACD Legislative Reception.

The three-day action packed agenda will keep you on your toes. For registration details, a draft agenda and hotel information: <http://www.nacdnet.org/meetings/2007Summer/> or call Krysta Harden, 202-547-6223.

**SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION SOCIETY'S
2007 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

The 2007 SWCS Annual Conference Program Committee and the Florida Chapter SWCS are proud to bring you "Conservation Challenges in a Changing Landscape" July 21-25, 2007, at Saddlebrook Resort in Tampa, Florida.

This year's conference offers 141 oral presentations, 78 posters, 16 symposia, seven tours, nine workshops and dozens of opportunities (from the Busch Gardens Networking/Social Night to the Regional Networking Roundtable Breakfasts and the Exhibitor/Poster Reception) to learn and make connections with attendees, exhibitors and speakers in a variety of traditional and non-traditional settings and sessions.

Online registration is up and running. The early registration deadline is June 14. The complete 16-page preliminary program is available for download at www.swcs.org. Contact Saddlebrook at 1-800-729-8383 to make hotel reservations. Be sure to reference the Soil and Water Conservation Society conference to receive the group rate.

Sponsor opportunities and exhibit space is available. For more information, contact SueAnn, at SWCS, 515-289-2331.

EVENTS CONTINUED

MASCD ANNUAL MEETING, JULY 17-19, HOLIDAY INN AT SOLOMONS

The 2007 MASCD Annual Meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn at Solomons, July 17-19. The Opening Session starts off the meeting at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 17, 2007, prior to the first board meeting. The theme for the meeting is "Urban Sediment & Erosion Control - Expanding the role for Districts" and we will endeavor to explore new expectations and opportunities as greater emphasis is placed on the role of non-agricultural non-point source pollution.

A professional auctioneer has been reserved for the MASCD Environmental Education Fund Auction which is to be held during the Awards banquet. Each district is asked to provide an item to auction to raise money for the Endowment. Items from other agencies and organizations will be welcomed.

As well as urban sediment and erosion control issues, there will be discussion and updates on the 2007 Farm Bill and status reports on staffing and funding for conservation programs.

Dan Norris from Chesapeake Financial Group, MASCD's Environmental Education Endowment manager, will present seminars on financial planning during the meeting as a personal service to soil conservation district supervisors and staff.

A skipjack trip on the Potomac River has been scheduled for Tuesday evening. The trip is limited, so only the first 45 participants will get to enjoy this unique boating experience and light fare. It is important that you notify Bruce Young, 410-475-8402, ext. 3, (bruce.young@md.nacdnet.net) as soon as possible if you plan to attend so he can be sure we meet the minimum number of participants. Information on the meeting was sent to district offices on May 14th and can be viewed on the website: www.mascd.net.

MARYLAND COMMODITY CLASSIC, JULY 26

The Maryland Commodity Classic will be held at the Queen Anne's 4-H Park on Rt. 18 in Centreville, Thursday, July 26th. Morning tours at the Wye Research Education Center will be offered to demonstrate checkoff funded research.

John Phipps will be the keynote speaker. John, well known for his wit and insight, was born in 1948 and raised on a five-generation farm. Now, he and his wife Jan operate an 1800 acre farm in Illinois. John is the host of *U.S. Farm Report* and writes for *Farm Journal* (John's World) and *Top Producer* (Perspective). As an independent farmer, he has no political agenda or economic motive - just a determination to provide forthright commentary as part of his commitment to the profession he loves.

This informative day will conclude with a crab feast and BBQ. The Commodity Classic is sponsored by the Maryland Grain Producers Association and the Maryland Soybean Board. For more information contact Lynne Hoot at 410-956-5771 or lynnehoot@aol.com.

CIVIL RIGHTS

CRAC SPONSORS TAKE YOUR CHILD TO WORK DAY

The NRCS Maryland Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) sponsored the annual Take Your Child to Work Day event on Thursday, April 26, 2007.

Madisyn Hudson, the nine-year old daughter of Tansel Hudson, Assistant State Conservationist for Operations at the State Office, spent the afternoon assisting Carol Hollingsworth, Public Affairs Specialist. Madisyn helped xerox and collate materials for information folders, organized conservation temporary tattoos for community outreach events, and assisted in setting up a conference room for the following day's meeting.

She enthusiastically said that she enjoyed her time meeting employees and working at the State Office and expressed her willingness to return on school holidays. Madisyn is in the third grade.

Acting State Conservationist Dan Runnels presented Madisyn with a Certificate recognizing her participation in Take Your Child to Work Day.



Madisyn Hudson sorts through conservation temporary tattoos as part of her 'Take Your Child to Work' experience at the NRCS State Office.

MARYLAND'S CONSERVATION FIELD STAFF TO RECEIVE CBF AWARD (CONTINUED)

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explore the Bay aboard the jet boat Marguerite or tour the Merrill Center, a platinum rated Green Building.

The awards ceremony will be held at 4:00 p.m. and be followed by a reception. CBF wishes to receive RSVP's from the field personnel by May 31st. The conservation partnership agencies support and encourage field employees to attend the event. You have done the hard work—it is great to know that your efforts are being recognized.

ENVIROTHON

MARYLAND TEENS GEAR UP FOR FIRST ROUND OF ENVIRONMENTAL COMPETITIONS

Across Maryland, teenagers are grabbing their binoculars, pulling on their waterproof boots, and consulting their field guides as they gear up to take part in the first round of competitions leading up to the 2007 Canon Envirothon, North America's largest and most prestigious natural resources event for high school students.

"Envirothon is one of the best opportunities for young people to learn about the natural resources that surround us all," said Agriculture Secretary Roger L. Richardson. "Through their participation in this annual event, students display their dedication to long-term stewardship of the land. The future of our farms depends upon the hard work and understanding of the next generation."

Students participating in the Envirothon have been studying the state's natural resources all year. The learning experience and competition take place in a variety of outdoor and indoor settings.

During their training, the teenagers identify and categorize living resources, perform soil surveys, estimate wood yield from trees, and solve other complex natural resource issues. They receive hands-on instruction from natural resource professionals including foresters, soil scientists, wildlife specialists and environmental engineers from local, state and federal agencies as well as private environmental organizations.

Teams compete by applying their knowledge and problem-solving skills in these areas. The county team with the highest cumulative total wins the local competition and advances to the Maryland Envirothon scheduled for June 19-21 at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

The winner of the Maryland Envirothon earns the right to represent the state at the 2007 Canon Envirothon. More than 300 of the brightest teenagers from across the United States and Canada will participate in this rigorous competition slated for later this summer in Geneva, New York.

Envirothon is sponsored by Maryland's soil conservation districts, the State Soil Conservation Committee and MASCD. For more information go to <http://www.mascd.net/envirothon/>.

MDE AND MDA COOPERATE TO ESTABLISH NEW CAFO PROGRAM

The Maryland Departments of Agriculture (MDA) and Environment (MDE) on Friday, announced on April 27 new cooperative actions to increase effectiveness of agricultural environmental protection programs to help restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay.

Farm operations with large numbers of animals and those using organic sources of nutrients have been identified as having the greatest potential to negatively impact water quality. MDA and MDE are immediately initiating three key initiatives to address potential impacts to water quality from agriculture: beginning the public process to expand state Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) regulations; accelerating completion of annual compliance reviews of all operations currently under CAFO permits; and targeting nutrient management audits to high risk animal operations.

"EPA CAFO standards were expected by July 2007, but are now very likely to be delayed further. We are aware of what EPA is likely to require and we want to be proactive and begin moving forward on state CAFO regulations to expand water quality protections in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries," said MDE Secretary Shari T. Wilson.

The following CAFO initiatives will be implemented immediately:

- MDE and MDA are working to complete and implement new CAFO regulations to include large poultry operations by the end of this year.
- MDA, working in cooperation with local soil conservation districts, will contact all animal agriculture operators to evaluate whether or not they fall within existing CAFO permit requirements and offer technical assistance to assure all operators currently covered have the proper permits and management measures in place. Within the next 60 days, MDE and MDA will jointly inspect the 10 currently permitted CAFO facilities to ensure that all current requirements are being met.
- MDA will target 40% of its nutrient management audits to animal operations and coordinate with MDE to prioritize audits on operations utilizing biosolids. MDA will audit nutrient management implementation on approximately 600 operations in FY2008.

CAFOs are large animal agriculture operations having more than 1,000 beef cattle, 700 dairy cows, 2,500 swine, or 55,000 turkeys. When CAFOs are properly designed, constructed and managed, land application of manure according to a nutrient management plan is an agronomically important and environmentally safe source of nutrients and organic matter that increases productivity of cropland and does not cause water quality problems. Current Maryland regulations require a CAFO or discharge permit for these operations. There are now 10 permitted CAFOs in Maryland.

Although poultry operations are regulated under MDA's nutrient management law, CAFO regulations currently do not regulate poultry operations. In 2003, EPA updated federal CAFO requirements that included minimum standards for states to follow in regulating poultry operations. MDE and MDA worked together to develop proposed regulations for poultry operations and other facilities to meet the new federal rule. As proposed in 2005, the Maryland regulation would have required approximately 100 poultry operations to obtain CAFO permits for the first time. Concurrent with Maryland's process, the controversy about federal regulations resulted in several federal court challenges. The court's decision required EPA to change several key provisions of the 2003 federal requirements and to date the federal standard has not been reissued.

SINE DIE REPORT (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

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in the Severn River watershed) was withdrawn by the sponsor. Several bills were introduced on stormwater management reform. The outcome was two identical bills, HB 786 and SB 784, which make changes to the stormwater management law. The bills also require MDE to establish a comprehensive process for approving grading and sediment control plans and stormwater management plans and to specify that the comprehensive process takes into account the accumulative impacts of both plans. MDE is to work with the counties, municipalities, and other interested parties and address any reasonable concern raised by the parties. While primarily a stormwater bill, there are obvious implications for soil conservation district activities. MASCD will follow MDE's review process and ensure that district representatives are involved in the discussion.

Maryland's crop insurance premium program was amended by HB 1389 to allow the state to pay up to 8% of the premium cost for the USDA sponsored program. The current law allows MDA to pay up to \$2 per acre, although no funding has been provided for the program since 2003. Although no funding was allocated again this fiscal year, it is hoped that future consideration will be given to this law that brings federal payments to farmers in response to crop and income losses at a time when farmers need it most. *The Ag Stewardship Act of 2006* (HB 2), requested MDA to prepare a report on its marketing and agricultural development activities. The report assessed the agricultural support programs in the surrounding states and showed that Delaware and Pennsylvania have each provided crop insurance coverage to their farmers and as a result have received significantly more federal support dollars than Maryland through both premium support and insurance payouts. The new language in Delegate Norman Conway's HB 1389 amends the original law so that the funds can be allocated to encourage a farmer to improve his or her coverage level to a higher level (65% or above), which will significantly improve the farmer's insurance payments when a crop or income loss is experienced. MDA has made great strides in recent years working with USDA's Risk Management Agency, to ensure that crop insurance programs are designed to benefit Maryland farmers.

All farmers can be proud that their state legislature chose not to micromanage animal husbandry practices but instead be guided by scientific research. There was strong opposition from the agricultural community to legislation that would have banned the use of gestation crates that do not allow a pig to turn around without touching the sides. The American Veterinary Medical Association published a report in June 2005 in which they reviewed gestation crate housing; they determined that traditional gestation stalls are no better or worse than group housing and that both systems have advantages and disadvantages. Although the legislation would only have a direct impact on a few hog farmers in the state, there was concern from all livestock producers that this would be the first of many bills that would try to restrict a farmer's ability to determine the best scientific

researched system for their farm. The hog industry has no objection to Smithfield's recent decision to phase out gestation crates or Burger King's decision not to purchase meat from cage reared animals. These are market-based decisions that a farmer can consider when determining whether or not to use gestation stalls.

Biofuels and energy bills were in plentiful supply this year. Legislation passed requiring the state to use B5 (diesel with 5% biodiesel added) for 50% of their heavy equipment and heating use. A similar bill passed last year for regular diesel vehicle use. Legislation was amended from a statewide biodiesel use mandate (B2) to become a task force to evaluate options to increase the use of biodiesel and other renewable fuels in the state, review their impact on agriculture, and examine Maryland energy policy. Membership on the task force includes Maryland Farm Bureau, the relevant state agencies and several representatives from gasoline supply and distribution organizations. MDA will provide the staff to the task force which came back to life in the last hours of the session.

HB 1045 – Ethanol and Biodiesel Production Credit – Amounts, was amended in the house to increase the state incentive for ethanol from small grains and for biodiesel from soybean oil from a newly constructed crushing facility from the current 20¢ to 30¢; increase the fee for biodiesel from other feedstocks from 5¢ to 20¢, and add ethanol from biomass at the higher level. Unfortunately, the bill was given an unfavorable report in the Senate as the potential fiscal note on the bill was \$2 million per year, although to date no biofuels facility has applied for the incentive. To be eligible a company must provide farmers with the opportunity to be investors in the project.

The dairy industry can now haul milk in trucks up to 87,000 lbs on state roads in 10 counties (but not on Interstate roads). There is a pilot study to produce cheese from raw milk but the general public will still need to travel out of state if it wishes to purchase raw milk directly from a farm.

Somerset, St. Mary's, Wicomico and Worcester now join most other counties for the one-day hunting on Sunday but Harford County's effort to be included was not supported in the Senate. The termination provision on the Young Farmers Advisory Board was lifted and the Board now becomes a permanent fixture. The Ag Commission now has a biofuels member added to the list of commodity and industry representatives.

There were some changes made to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation program including elimination of districts and the need for a landowner to be signed up in a district before being eligible to sell an easement. A bill passed to allow MALPF to provide grants to the counties for their Critical Farms Programs, for the purchase of easements under a county installment purchase agreement program and for the payment of the debt service on county-issued bonds for the purpose of purchasing MALPF easements.

When the session ended at midnight on April 9th, it was agreed that overall, it was a good session for conservation and agriculture.

Future Dates to Remember

June 15	MACCA August Exam Registration Deadline
June 19-21	2007 State Envirothon, UMES Somerset County
June 19-20	Nutrient Management Training
June 21	SSCC Meeting, Annapolis
July 17-19	MASCD Annual Meeting, Solomons
July 18	SSCC Meeting, Solomons
July 21-24	NACD Summer Board Meeting and Legislative Conference, Washington, DC
July 24	Maryland Congressional Visits as part of the NACD Legislative Conference in DC
July 21-25	Soil and Water Conservation Society's Annual Conference, Florida
July 26	Maryland Commodity Classic, Centreville
July 29-Aug 4	2007 Canon International Envirothon, Geneva, New York
Aug 3	Nutrient Management & MACCA Exams
Aug 16	SSCC Meeting, Annapolis

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Maryland Conservation



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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 410-956-5771.

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